
Historiography in Motion

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The use of border signs in the Carpathian region: Contribution to the understanding of borders in the Middle and Early Modern Age*

PAVOL MALINIAK

Closer attention has been paid to historical phenomenon of borders over the recent years. And yet the research does not only focus on traditional themes such as e.g. stability or mobility of borders. The research evaluates borders as manifestation of proprietary, political, ethnical, lingual, cultural and religious relationships.¹ Presence and influence of borders is associated with social and religious awareness which was in different forms related to environment and influenced men's activities in the past. Borders as well as other areas marked with crosses are related to mentioned categories. Numerous studies have concerned within individual European regions with themes of crosses and signs located in the landscape, especially on stones. We are familiar with complex elaboration of this topic e.g. from Switzerland or Sweden. Within the frame of Central and Eastern Europe, systematic researches from Czech Republic and Belarus have produced remarkable results. Particular localities in Slovenia and Poland have been evaluated according to interdisciplinary procedures mostly using the knowledge from religious studies, semiotics, ethnology and archaeology.² Here we would like to focus on extension, forms, functions and meaning of border signs, mainly crosses, in the central region of Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia. The area developed in the Middle Age and modern times' Hungarian kingdom where it belonged politically. Borders gained specific function in this multicultural environment when they could often present only formal barrier within opened civilisation area. On the contrary, real proprietary and administrative division of the area determined its continual existence. The work from Hungarian ethnographer Lajos Takács, where the author have assessed modern times evidence of cultural importance of border stones in christened folk society, has enriched the research of relationship with the studied region. In our own contribution we have been concentrating on mapping of border crosses occurrence in territorial-administrative unit of Zvolen County during broader time period from the 13th till 18th/19th century.³ We will also focus on the development of border crosses and

* The study has been worked out within UGA grant (2010): *Forest history in Zvolen County since the Middle Ages until the half of the 19th century* and VEGA 1/0230/10 *Historical-geographical characteristics of production activities in the forests of selected mining towns.*

¹ SCHNEIDER, R.: *Lineare Grenzen. Vom frühen bis zum späten Mittelalter.* In: *Grenzen und Grenzregionen. Frontières et régions frontalières.* hrsg. W. Haubrichs – R. Schneider, Saarbrücken 1994, p. 51-68; POHL, W.: *Soziale Grenzen und Spielräume der Macht.* In: *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter.* hrsg. W. Pohl – H. Reimitz, Wien 2000, p. 11-18.

² SCHWEGLER, U.: *Schalen- und Zeichensteine der Schweiz.* Basel 1992; COLES, J. M.: *Patterns in a Rocky Land: Rock Carvings in South-West Upland, Sweden.* Uppsala 2000; ЛЯЎКОЎ, Э. et al.: *Культавыя камяні Беларусі.* In: *Studia mythologica Slavica.* Vol. III., 2000, p. 43-56; URFUS, V. – VÍT, J. – WIESER, S. et al.: *Kamenné kříže Čech a Moravy.* Praha 2001; PUHAR, J. – PLETERSKI, A.: *Krkavški Kamen v ustnem izročilu in v sklopu obredne prostorske strukture.* In: *Studia mythologica Slavica.* Vol. VIII., 2005, p. 57-74; MIERZWIŃSKI, A.: *Śląska ukladanka: strukturalno-semiotyczne poszukiwania kontekstu historycznego.* Wrocław 2007.

³ TAKÁCS, L.: *Idol Stones as Boundary Markers.* In: *Acta ethnographica Academiae scientiarum Hungaricae.*

symbols in Zvolen County as well as in neighbouring regions in the Middle Ages and in the early modern times. Subsequently we will interpret gained knowledge on the basis of comparative study considering the particularities of local development. On the example of selected areas, besides the characteristics of borders in formal and functional aspects, we will also point out its position within thoughts and ideas of both urban and rural inhabitants.

The oldest written property boundaries in the area of present time Slovakia contain initially just sporadic, however later regular references to border signs. First written record proving the existence of a sign at the property border present boundaries of St. Benedict over the river Hron abbey (Hronský Beňadik) in 1075.⁴ The following documents bring numerous data about signs at the borders of medieval village land areas. Besides terms *meta* or *signum* also term *crux*, generally standing for a cross, is found in different sources. Only rarely a cross located on a stone occurs amongst oldest evidence (in 1113). Usually crosses were located on trees, whereby by its closer characteristics the oaks were mostly concerned. The following tree species were also represented: beech, linden, willow tree and pear tree.⁵ Research that is using the ethnographic material links the presence of oaks in the medieval country with its versatile utilization by the nourishment of people, livestock breeding, building, handicrafts, cults and leechcraft.⁶ Except the position of trees in folk culture we can also consider its significance in religious symbolism. In biblical books the oaks are repeatedly mentioned as living monuments denoting places associated with important events. Its positive meaning has been predominating in written sources since early Christian period.⁷ According to H.-W. Nicklis, oak was identical with term border to certain degree, which could gain three meanings: border sign, border sign on trees/oaks, border.⁸

Following the oldest recorded borders' perambulations from Zvolen County the denomination *meta* gained generalized meaning when regarding directly a boundary stone (landmark). In cases when geographic object has been marked as *pro meta*, boundaries or landmarks which delimitation was based on border sign, special landmark or other orientation points are concerned. Trees with signs or landmarks repre-

Tom. XXXII., Fasc. 1-4, 1983, p. 103-122; MALINIÁK, P.: „Meta ad modum crucis sculpta.“ Kříže na hraničích majetkov vo Zvolenskej stolici. In: *Svätec a jeho funkcie v spoločnosti I.* eds. R. Kožíak – J. Nemeš, Bratislava 2006, p. 393-410 (with English summary).

⁴ in *Gran, ubi signum sancti Benedicti est in quadam arbore.* MARSINA, R. (ed.): *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae I.* (other such CDSI, Vol. I.-II., Bratislava 1971 – 1987) no. 58, p. 54. Borders of monastery properties were also defined by other signs. However boundaries present later interpolation. It is questionable to what extend the older status was taken into consideration.

⁵ CDSI I., no. 69, p. 66; no. 74, p. 71; no. 143, p. 114; no. 190, p. 145-147; no. 205, p. 160; no. 339, p. 245; CDSI II., no. 130, p. 87; no. 165, p. 110; no. 206, p. 141; no. 208, p. 144; no. 257, p. 175; no. 342, p. 238-239; no. 607, p. 421-422.

⁶ TYSZKIEWICZ, J.: Dąb w kulturze Słowian wczesnośredniowiecznych. In: *Geografia historyczna Polski w średniowieczu. Zbiór studiów.* Warszawa 2003, p. 165-171; SZABÓ, P.: *Woodland and Forests in Medieval Hungary.* Oxford 2005, p. 63, 76.

⁷ KOBIELUS, S.: *Florarium christianum. Symbolika roślin – chrześcijańska starożytność i średniowiecze.* Kraków 2006, p. 52-55; FORSTNER, D.: *Die Welt der christlichen Symbole.* Innsbruck – Wien 1986, p. 156-157.

⁸ Author assessed German-Slavic relations and ideas of borders in Elbe valley, Silesia and Prussia. NICKLIS, H.-W.: Von der „Grenitze“ zur Grenze. Die Grenzidee des lateinischen Mittelalters (6. – 15. Jhdt.). In: *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte.* Bd. 128, 1992, p. 21.

senting boundaries were quite frequent.⁹ Stones identified with border were also found in medieval sources (perambulations). Following the evidence, marked natural stones as well as fixed boundary stones were concerned.¹⁰ There are more detailed descriptions of boundary stones mentioned in documents from early modern times, which already emphasize its role.¹¹ Phrases in different language variations have been used to name these boundary stones or landmarks in younger sources from the region. Besides Latin, also Slovak and German language were used: *lapis limitaris*, *mezny kamen* or *marckstein*.¹² They have common meaning – intentionally processed and marked boundary stones.

In association with term *meta* also term *signum* occurs in documents. A source from 1282 has mentioned name *metis et signis* standing for bounds of Poniky village, whereby the first border is called *meta sive signum*.¹³ Name *crux* represented synonym of term *signum*. It could be understood mostly as a boundary sign (a cross). Less frequently designation of whole geographic object is concerned.¹⁴ From the descriptions in oldest documents emerge that crosses marked borders in documented cases. A tree with a border in form of a cross on the eastern boundary of Stojanova Lúka area is mentioned in a written document from 1285. Also documents from 1293, 1295 and 1296 mention trees marked with crosses. Elm tree with two crosses have occurred in one of the documents. One of the crosses divided the area of royal gamekeepers and the second one designated aristocratic property. The crosses were most probably located on both sides of a tree trunk. According to mentioned reference we can assume that the location of signs was determined by sides of neighbouring properties.¹⁵ When evaluat-

⁹ In 1263 *duas metas, quarum una est arbor tulgfa et alia est meta terrea*. WENZEL, G. (ed.): *Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus III*. (other such CAC, Vol. I.-XII., Pest 1860 – 1874) no. 31, p. 41. In 1285 *due mete arbo-ree*. SZENTPÉTERY, I. – BORSA, I. (eds.): *Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica II./2-3*. (other such RA, Vol. II./2-4, Budapest 1961 – 1987) no. 3245, p. 319. In 1287 *arbor pomi silvestris pro meta*. CAC XII., no. 379, p. 454. In 1340 *arbor magna theul dicta pro meta*. JUCK, L. (ed.): *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I*. Bratislava 1984, no. 159, p. 131.

¹⁰ In 1295 *ad unam metam terream in qua est unus lapis rotundus positus... ascendit iterum unum monticulum in quo est lapis unus magnus positus*. FEJER, G. (ed.): *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis VI./1*. (other such CDH, Vol. I.-XI., Budae 1828 – 1844) p. 347. In 1300 *habet metam... unum lapidem magnum inter duas arbores querci*. RA II./4, no. 4321, p. 249. In 1329 *ad quendam lapidem, qui est pro meta*. Magyar Országos Levéltár Budapest (other such MOL), Diplomatikai levéltár (other such DL) 84 686. In 1358 *duos lapides pro metis assignassent*. NAGY, I. – TASNÁDI NAGY, Gy. (eds.): *Codex diplomaticus Andegavensis VII*. (other such CDA, Vol. I.-VII., Budapest 1878 – 1920) no. 110, p. 206.

¹¹ In 1552 *saxum pro meta vicissim relinquissent et renovassent... metam unam antiquam, lapidibus erectam reperissent, quam renovassent; meta saxea antiqua in fluvio Gron... saxum unum ingentem metalem in cuius latere cruces excise essent reperissent*. In 1556 *saxum illud maximum... in signum reambulationis istius ac metarum divisionis erectum*. Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici (other such ŠA BB), Pobočka Zvolen (other such Pob. ZV), fond Magistrát mesta Zvolen (other such MZV), fasc. 12, sign. V. D 2, sign. V. D 6.

¹² ŠA BB, Pobočka Banská Bystrica (other such Pob. BB), fond Archív mesta Lubietová (other such AML), sign. ML – 70c, sign. ML – 70d; ŠA BB Pob. BB, fond Mesto Banská Bystrica (other such MBB), fasc. 3, num. 17/a, pag. 1, 3.

¹³ IPOLY, A. – NAGY, E. – VÉGHÉLY, D. (eds.): *Codex diplomaticus patrius Hungaricus VI*. (other such CDP VI., Budapest 1876) p. 286, no. 206.

¹⁴ Perambulations at the southern border of Zvolen County show different meaning of “a sign”. In 1361 *in cuius montis vertice partes signum pro meta possuissent*. In 1425 *arbor circumdatus lapidibus pro signo posito metam*. ŠA BB Pob. ZV, fond Magistrát mesta Krupina, fasc. 5, no. 43, 46/a.

¹⁵ MALINIÁK, P.: „Meta ad modum...”, p. 395.

ing polish sources, R. Kiersonowski came to a conclusion that on the contrary, two crosses positioned on a tree presented an axis identical with a boundary line, not sides of two neighbours. Crosses located this way helped to bypass the borders.¹⁶

Methods of marking out the property boundaries, especially village bounds and its parts help us to understand the content of perambulations. So far known general knowledge of delimitation can be related to different conditions in assessed region. Regarding the genesis (reasons of perambulations' formation) we can classify perambulations into three groups. The first group presents perambulations, which were formed with a purpose to write down already existing boundaries. The second group includes perambulations recorded during delimitation of re-designated properties. The third group is formed by perambulations, which repeatedly record, add or specify the progress of delimitation in two previous groups. Term repeated perambulation was also used for this type of delimitation. A certain procedure was carried out by properties delimitation, especially by the donated ones. After an order from the king or royal officers, the owner of the property was appointed and introduced to the ownership (*statutio et introductio*) on announced date in attendance of witnesses from the area, deputy of trustworthy office and royal representative. During the introduction to the ownership, authorized persons carried out boundaries delimitation and found out, whether the neighbours were not against this delimitation (*contradictio*).¹⁷

Relatively little evidence is found in the sources about the course of boundaries delimitation itself. The documents from the Arpad dynasty period describe bounds delimitation by boundaries marking,¹⁸ boundaries enclosing,¹⁹ circling (walkabouts) and marking out²⁰ or more frequently by dividing.²¹ All these terms have very similar meaning and are often synonymous. Accessibility, extent and area segmentation as well as a distance from the place, where the delimitation began could have influenced the boundaries delimitation and it's circling. These conditions also influenced the way of borders walkabouts, which was usually realized, because of the presence of officials, on the back of a horse.²² With greater accessibility of the area also the accuracy of delimitation was better. Except zonal boundaries in less accessible areas we can observe that the course of boundaries was mostly determined by lines. In general linear forms

¹⁶ KIERSNOWSKI, R.: Znaki graniczne w Polsce średniowiecznej. In: *Archeologia Polski*. Tom. V., No. 2, 1960, p. 280.

¹⁷ ŠVECOVÁ, A.: Inštitúcia hodnoverných miest ako kvázi verejných notárov v stredoveku. In: *Acta Universitatis Tyrnaviensis. Iuridica*. Tom. II., 2005, p. 175-177; LUKAČKA, J.: Ohraničovanie majetkových celkov v stredoveku. In: *Archaeologia historica*. Vol. 29, 2004, p. 61-63.

¹⁸ In 1250 *eandem terram... fecimus assignari*. CDSI II., no. 349, p. 243.

¹⁹ ++1282 *metis et signis undique circumdando*. CDP VI., no. 206, p. 286. In 1295 *statueret eisdem comiti... metis circumdando*. RA II./4, no. 2008, p. 145.

²⁰ In 1293 *presentibus omnibus commetaneis et vicinis circuendo et reambulando ac novas metas iuxta veteres erigendo*. CAC X., no. 80, p. 119.

²¹ In 1255 *super metis seu terminis... distingui fecimus*. CDSI II., no. 491, p. 341. In 1263 *a terris... fecimus separari novas metas circumquaque in eadem elevari faciendo*. MOL DL 84 671. In 1287 *erectis metis faceremus separari... ipsas terras separavit*. CAC XII., no. 379, p. 453-454. In 1291 *homine nostro metis distinctis... reambulate metis distinctis... statuisset distinctis metis*. CAC V., no. 20, p. 30-31. In 1295 *certis metis et signis distinguendam*. CDH VI./1, p. 346. In 1295 *statuisset... novis metis separando*. RA II./4, no. 4008, p. 145.

²² For the term *circumequitacio* in Silesia see KARP, H.-J.: *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa während des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Grenzlinie aus dem Grenzraum*. Köln – Wien 1972, p. 117-118.

of boundaries have been widespread since late Antiquity and early Middle Ages. Basics of linear forms of boundaries were presented by marking of boundary points and its connection with imaginary line. This type of delimitation has been used in the Eastern Europe since the 13th century.²³

Amongst the basic formulations used in documents' dispositions belongs determination of property expanse "with all utilities and supplements". Its terminological equivalent can be found "in all its boundaries and bounds as these are designated and marked all around". Both seemingly simple formulations point out different understanding and complexity of linear boundaries delimitations.²⁴ The first formulation is often connected with perambulations, however in more cases when utilizations and supplements are mentioned in documents, property delimitation is not present. This state could be partly influenced by the fact that the boundaries had already been written down in older documents. In other cases the documents state the whole villages *cum pertinenciis*, *cum appendiciis*, *cum attinenciis*, i.e. determined by boundary points, which course was preserved in the collective memory of local people. Therefore written sources, useful only for literate community, are in contrast to real social conditions.²⁵ Well known and mainly respected course of boundaries (*cursus metarum*, *cursus metales*) is besides repeated perambulation also recorded in registers of bounds appurtenances. As an example serve disputes of squires from Mičiná village over a land with their neighbours, during which they defended the ownership of occupied areas within their boundaries based on their ownership law.²⁶ Understanding of an abstract border corresponds with sporadic evidence linked with a verb representing a course or direction of border lines. According to these a border rises up on a hill or extends towards a tree – linden tree.²⁷ A simple question can be asked in term of this case, however without any simplifying answer. What was the attitude (in level of spiritual ideas) of a medieval man to the boundaries of the area surrounding him?

We only dispose of mostly indirect evidence from different sources related to the questions regarding this subject. Reconnaissance and inspections of land boundaries belong here, which are especially important for economical as well as social life of village inhabitants. In the reality these not only served during the standard process of property delimitation, which came into operation. Historical research has so far paid less attention to ritual perambulations related usually to calendar cycle. They fulfilled territorial, legal as well as religious function. According to formal signs in the region, evidence from urban environment belongs here. A brief record that mentions paying

²³ SCHNEIDER, R.: Lineare Grenzen..., p. 56-60, 67; MARKOVÁ, M.: Vymezování hranic a jejich značení v přírodě ve středověku. In: *Regiony – časoprostorové průsečíky?* red. R. Šimůnek, Praha 2008, p. 99.

²⁴ NICKLIS, H.-W.: Von der „Grenitze“ ..., p. 20-21.

²⁵ MYŚLIWSKI, G.: Boundary Delimitation in Medieval Poland. In: *Historical Reflections on Central Europe. Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies*. ed. S. J. Kirschbaum, London – New York 1999, p. 28; MARKOVÁ, M.: Vymezování hranic..., p. 103.

²⁶ In 1430 *plures particulas terrarum arabilium, pratorum, silvarum, rubetorum et aliarum utilitatum intra metas et cursus metales earundem possessionum existencium*. MOL DL 63 940. In 1506 *universas metas suas utque montes, colles..., prata, fenilia ac generaliter omnes metas suas*. MOL DL 63 982.

²⁷ In 1291 *directe ascendit ipsa meta ad montem Wrpyń*. MOL DL 84 676. In 1351 *inde iret meta ad unam hasfa meta terrea circumdata*. Slovenský národný archív v Bratislave, fond Rod Benický z Beníc, Příbovec a Rakova, Archív príboveckej línie, sign. H, fasc. I., no. 1.

for fabrics for people, who rode their horses to the cross was already found in the city book of Banská Bystrica from the 14th century.²⁸ City administration book of Zvolen contains a notarial record from 1469 according to which Zvolen inhabitants carried out boundaries perambulations on their horses during Pentecost ceremony. The town earmarked finances to pay for lunch and drinks for mentioned people.²⁹ Seemingly low statement value of records in this case does not exclude the possibility of its content interpretation. Within the central European area, especially in German speaking areas, imploring horse rides belonged to typical forms of traditional perambulation. Besides other annual ceremonies, this form of procession was carried out also during Pentecost. Imploring horse rides included a mass or a blessing from a priest, ride around the boundaries on horses back with a cross and a flag, sanctification of fields, singing, praying and refreshment for the attendants. This ritual continued in different regions even in 19th and 20th century. Following its origin it can be classified into manifestations of agricultural folk belief with the presence of both christen and non-Christian elements. At the same time it is necessary to emphasise that this is just one type (although quite distinct) of several forms of perambulations. The origin of these perambulations could have varied depending on religious ideas, social and ethnical structure of inhabitants.³⁰ Despite mentioned evidence our knowledge is mostly of a general character. After all this is understandable as the boundaries are demonstrated in preserved sources mostly in its original form.

Besides ideas linked with boundaries it is possible to observe the development and improvement of forms of land delimitation. Among the first evidence proving the presence of boundary signs related to evaluated region belongs the perambulation of properties of Bzovík monastery, which had been recorded in a written form in 1135 even before it was confirmed in 1262 by the sovereign. There are innumerable signs on trees in the area of northern border of monastery properties between a place called Lopata and a Lom plain mentioned in a written document (*innumeralia signa super arbores posita*).³¹ Probably signs (crosses) located on border trees were concerned, which were characteristic for boundaries marking in older period. According to about 200 years younger source, crosses in the same area can be found located on stones by the spring called Čierne bahno (Black morass). In the perambulations of Bzovík priory from 1471 the delimitation continued towards mentioned spring, where crosses on

²⁸ *Item quando equitaverunt ad crucem pro pannis molendinatoris consumpserunt 46 gross.* FEJÉRPATAKY, L. (ed.): *Magyarországi városok régi számadáskönyvei.* (other such Számadáskönyvei) Budapest 1885, p. 83.

²⁹ *Item dum equitamus ad metas ad conspiciendum in festivitatibus Pentecosten hominibus iisdem exposui super prandium et super potagia LXVI. d. ŠA BB, Pob. ZV, MZV, fasc. 11, Mestská kniha I. (1465 – 1503) (other such MK I.), fol. 77.*

³⁰ FIELHAUER, H.: Umritte. In: *Österreichischer Volkskundeatlas. 2. Lieferung.* Wien 1965, Kommentar Bl. 24, p. 12-14; FROLEC, V.: Das Oster- und Pfingstreiten. In: *Ethnologia Slavica. Universitas Comeniana Bratislavenensis. Facultas Philosophica.* Tom. XXIII., 1991, p. 139-145; VEČERKOVÁ, E. – TARCALOVÁ, L.: Náboženské průvody v kalendářním cyklu svátků a slavností. Na okraj studia. In: *Slavnostní průvody.* ed. L. Tarcalová, Uherské Hradiště 1994, p. 32-35; WOJCIECHOWSKA, B.: Na granici dwóch światów. Rozdroża i sakralizacja przestrzeni w przekazach średniowiecznych. In: *Ludzie, kościół, wierzenia. Studia z dziejów kultury i społeczeństwa Europy Środkowej.* Kielce – Warszawa 2001, p. 514-516; MYŚLIWSKI, G.: Boundary Delimitation..., p. 29-31.

³¹ CDS I., no. 74, p. 71.

stones were also located (*fons et cruces supra petras formatae*).³² Although trees marked with crosses still served as boundary signs, since late Middle Ages more often stones with crosses occurred. Actual appearance of these boundary crosses is known from 1516. During an official boundaries walkabout of Bzovík priory emerged that the provost had the trees marked with signs, whereby the author of repeated perambulation used the image of an isosceles Greek cross (*signa + in arboribus*) in order to abbreviate the term *crux*. The description of borders also states that these continued till the wood called Jacob's cross, Jakubov kríž in Slovak language (*lignum Jacobow cris vocatum*).³³ In this case a standing wooden cross was concerned. The attribute Jakubov can represent the name of the land owner; however relation to the grave and the name of the deceased can not be excluded either.

More particular younger sources give the opportunity to observe more detailed descriptions of boundary crosses, which were yet not mentioned in older sources. A record of land delimitation between the town of Banská Bystrica and nobles from Radvaň village from 1574 used symbols + and X to describe boundary stones, replacing the word cross. It is typical that these symbols are only found in German version of the source. It reflects practical use of living language together with the use of agreed signs. On the contrary these symbols have not been used in the official Latin source.³⁴ Both visual sources, images from 1574, as well as the written record from 1516 gain interpretive value by cognition of boundary crosses symbolism at the turn of Middle Ages and Modern times. According to the depictions, the boundary signs were of a Greek or St. Andrew's cross shape. Simple form of depiction influenced the spread and almost universal use of these symbols and signs. They can be classified into the group of archaic protective symbols due to its broad application in both religious and folk magic belief. The significance of crosses in form of apotropaic mediums got forefront as these were often used to protect against the evil and negative influence in physical and spiritual form. This is the reason for widespread of crosses at different places. Long and continuous development also influenced its adaptability even in changed cultural conditions. Thank to its universal validity they could express common values, which were formed on the base of different influences.³⁵

Besides actual shapes of crosses we can observe the occurrence of other specific boundary and orientation points, especially small sacral structures in late medieval sources. Solitary objects with religious motifs have been build on the border lines of properties, as well as inside of them by the fields, meadows, roads or directly in the

³² MOL DL 25 232.

³³ ŠA BB, fond Zvolenská župa (other such ZŽ), Kongregačný protokol I. (1506 – 1579) (other such KP I.), fol. 34/pag. 65.

³⁴ *prima meta esset posita, lapis cruce signatus... lapides crucae signate terrae impositi haberentur versus Podlavitz, ubi magnus lapis penes fluvium visitur... lapis cruce signatus reperiretur.* V nemeckom znení: *der frste marckstein gelegt und ein kreutz darein gehören ist... da ettlich marckstein mit + eingraben auf Podlawitz zu allda ein grosser stein mit einem +... ein stein mit einem X... ein grosser stein neben dem wasser mit einem X.* ŠA BB Pob. BB, MBB, fasc. 3, num. 17/a, pag. 1, 3.

³⁵ KOBIELUS, S.: *Krzyż Chrystusa. Od znaku i figury do symbolu i metafory.* Warszawa 2000, p. 221-224; MARINGER, J.: *Das Kreuz als Zeichen und Symbol in der vorchristlichen Welt.* *Studia Instituti Anthropos* 36. 1980, p. 108-110.

built-up area of villages and towns since the Middle Ages. There is a record of a field located to the north of Banská Bystrica found in town book from 1398 stating that it is situated by a cross (*circa crucem*).³⁶ The position of the field by a cross (probably wooden one) may refer to a custom of locating protective mediums in the near distance of agricultural land in order to protect fields and crop against damage, especially against atmospheric occurrences. The main role of the sign was to discourage all the evil from the sacralised place.³⁷ There is another evidence of a standing cross found in already mentioned source from 1516. As already stated, the phrase Jakubov križ (Jacob's cross) can point out the name of the proprietor; however it can as well mark a grave. Relatively often different images appeared in the region. In the sources from 1498 until 1573 in the areas of town Zvolen, village Rybáre (today's part of town Sliač) and town Slovenská Ľupča by its description we encounter with its location "by the picture" (*prope imaginem* in Latin or *u obrazu* in Slovak language).³⁸ Most probably these were the pictures of saints. Unfortunately we do not know their closer description. Single information about an object situated at the boundaries of town Ľubietová refers to certain indirect associations. According to delimitation from 1536 the boundaries passed over to some picture located at two columns (*ad quandam imaginem in duobus stipixibus*). This landmark is described as a picture or a column also in perambulation from 1566 (Latin: *statua cum cruce lignea*, Slovak: *obraz aneb stĺp z dreveným križem*). It is interesting that according to both sources the landmark was situated by a sidewalk near a meadow, which belonged to a priest from Ľubietová.³⁹ Besides highlighting the border lines, the crosses, pictures and other small sacral structures could have served as convenient orientation points. They gained this function especially if they became objects of local cult. They were mostly created in rustic style. Thus they contributed to strengthen the folk devoutness and also formed esthetical dimension of the country. They can be considered one of the long-lasting signs in numerous regions of Central European cultural area.⁴⁰

Besides collective reverence to objects with direct or indirect religious function we on the contrary also meet with individual damaging and destruction of border crosses. The oldest record of boundary cross damage is known from 1552. There is a stone mentioned in a document describing repeated perambulation of north-eastern section of town Zvolen boundaries. Formerly it had been marked with a cross however it was already peeled off by bad people (*per malenolos homines*). Therefore a border was marked out on the same stone again. Likewise according to a complaint from 1575 a border tree with a cross was cut down during deracination of disputed forest

³⁶ Számadáskönyvei, p. 85.

³⁷ WOJCIECHOWSKA, B.: Na granicy..., p. 517; SLIVKA, M.: Hranice v mentálnom chápaní stredovekého človeka. In: *Archaeologia historica*. Vol. 29, 2004, p. 11.

³⁸ ŠA BB Pob. ZV, MZV, MK I, fol. 83; TRŇOVSKÝ, K.: Popis dežmy na hájnický kostol zo zemí v Rybároch z roku 1556. In: *Kultúra. Časopis Literárno-vedného odboru SSV*. Vol. III., No. 11, 1931, p. 805; ŠA BB Pob. BB, fond Mestečko Slovenská Ľupča, Mestský majetkovoprávny protokol (1541 – 1688), fol. 11, 37.

³⁹ ŠA BB, Pob. BB, MBB, fasc. 23, num. 23; ŠA BB Pob. BB, AML, sign. ML – 70d, ML – 70c.

⁴⁰ HÁJEK, T.: Křížek a strom v úsilí o vydobyť identity. In: *Tvář naší země – krajina domova. Svazek 6. Krajina v ohrožení*. Lomnice nad Popelkou 2001, p. 160-167; BUGANOVÁ, K.: Mimoliturgické prejavy úcty ku křížom. In: *Kult a životy*. ed. L. Tarcalová, Uherské Hradiště 1999, p. 45-55.

neighbouring with the Mičiná village bounds.⁴¹ Such references impair the idealized image we could get by mechanical observation of crosses, pictures or other objects. Regarding the evidence of frequent borders transgresses it is necessary to consider the relation with its intentional damaging. Symbolic boundary protection was one of the functions of border crosses. Although both borders and crosses presented generally comprehensible facts, they were put in risk of damage by individual human contact. Its validity was limited in form of material fact and symbol.

There is evidence from the early modern times regarding the attitudes, relations and ideas present in the society, which are in conflict with traditional understanding of christen values. The discrepancy in official tendency of contemporary cultural orientation is not belittled by the fact that this has so far been just sporadic information. A legal action can be included here according to which a servant of the count of Zvolen County accused a woman in the Zvolen County justice's court, which was supposed to lay a horse head on a stone in 1536 in order to perform certain spiteful act.⁴² It is a well known fact that within folk society ideas and practices linked with both christen and pre-Christian spiritual foundations persisted. However these were formed and spread also as a result of actual cultural influences as well as spontaneously due to people's superstitiousness. Many of them are seemingly of an archaic character although we do not know its exact genesis. As if accidentally there are stones marked with crosses with "Paromova skala" rock behind them found at the borders of Železná Breznica village in 1638.⁴³ Regarding the dialect the name of the rock is related to the name of Slavic god of thunder and lighting Perun. The motive of the name selection is not known, however following a source there were also other rocks marked with crosses located in the near distance. We cannot rule out the possibility that besides the boundary function they also served to overlay the meaning of original cult place. The local metaphoric names reflect not only the sacralisation of the area but as well the negative ideas related to borders. Concerns and fear played important role in keeping these ideas in collective awareness of people, which explains their long-lasting persistence.⁴⁴

A process of passing down the knowledge about boundaries to the next generations was also connected with fear feelings. Beating, a direct physical violence carried out during boundaries perambulations belongs here. Young burghers took part at the repeated perambulation of Banská Bystrica boundaries in 1574.⁴⁵ Their presence could be motivated by the intention to familiarise them with the process of border delimitation, when they attended in the role of witnesses. They were expected to keep the role of witnesses also for the future. Since 1643 we have known a record from town Krupina, according to which adult witnesses had beaten a youngster with a whip during an urban boundary walkabout in order to make him "remember where the border

⁴¹ ŠA BB Pob. ZV, MZV, fasc. 12, sign. V. D 2; ŠA BB, ZŽ, KP I., fol. 316/pag. 573.

⁴² ŠA BB, ZŽ, KP I., fol. 123/pag. 240.

⁴³ *na križowe skaly dve, od tey na malu križnu skalu a odtud na Paromowu skalu*. ŠA BB, ZŽ, Litteralia privatorum, A – IV., sect. 592, fasc. V., inv. no. 43.

⁴⁴ TAKÁCS, I.: *Idol Stones...*, p. 116-117.

⁴⁵ ŠA BB Pob. BB, MBB, fasc. 3, num. 17/a, pag. 1.

line was". The custom when young boys (usually sons of present older witnesses) were beaten during boundary walkabout and inspection is known from different localities in the region of Zvolen County also in the following period. It was being carried out even in the first half of the 19th century. The older men beat the young boys with a whip, rod or with a stick. After the beating the boys were usually given a reward, e.g. a cake.⁴⁶ The ritual of the beating during the boundary perambulations could be of even older origin. There is evidence of such rituals in German, Czech and Polish society in the modern times. The beating was carried out directly at the border point (stone), whereby this procedure could have gained more mass range (several tens of boys). Making a oath followed this ritual.⁴⁷ These practices of passing down information of boundaries were abandoned probably because of the beginning of accurate registers of borders thank to cadastral surveys and its record into maps in the 19th century.

Together with the development of different forms of border signs also the evidence of border points changed. While until the 16th century the border signs were in form of crosses, since the 17th century also other different types of signs have occurred. Epigraphic landmarks were quite often. These occurred in 1656 during the boundaries description between the town Brezno and village Polomka at the upper reaches of the river Hron. There was a cross found located together with a letter A on a spruce and a cross with letters B and F on a fir tree and a beech. Letters in combination with crosses are often found also on other trees.⁴⁸ It seems like the letters carved in the trees were supposed to mark the initials of the owners of neighbouring grounds. In other cases, these initials could belong to names of neighbouring villages, eventually names of local area districts. Increasing number of literate people as well as the need to extinguish accurately individual boundary points was related to spreading of the use of letters to mark the borders. The persisting significance of traditional boundary marking with crosses is obvious from the connection of crosses and letters at various boundary points. These could be marked at the same time or were added to the older signs (crosses).

There has been evidence of the use of special sign known since the half of the

⁴⁶ MAJTÁN, M. – SKLADANÁ, J. (eds.): *Pramene k dejinám slovenčiny*. Bratislava 1992, no. 46, p. 118-119; Štátny ústredný banský archív v Banskej Štiavnici (other such ŠŮBA), fond Hlavný komorskogrófsky úrad (other such HKG), Dominialia, fasc. 6033, no. 90, fasc. 6034, no. 138.

⁴⁷ ŠLÉZAR, P.: Sádky, kopy a „výprask na pamětnou.“ Hranice ve středověké krajině Dražanské vrchoviny. In: *Vlastivědný věstník moravský*. Tom. 59, 2007, p. 155-156; WARNKE, M.: *Politische Landschaft. Zur Kunstgeschichte der Natur*. München – Wien 1992, p. 16-17; BUJAK, F.: *Studia nad osadnictwem Małopolski*. Poznań 2001, p. 147, note 153.

⁴⁸ *ad arborem pinum, in qua crux et litera A. excisa cernitur, circumfusa lapidibus et terra in formam erecti cumuli... tres arbores, unam abietem et binas fagos angulariter consitas, in quarum interstitio, signum metale erectum ex lapidibus, in acroem comportatis, terra mixtum appareret et crux ac litera B. ac F. excisa extaret... ad semitam vulgo lenivoy chodnik nuncupatam, penes quam semitam binae abietes procerosae extarent, in quarum una crux et litera H. consignata visitur... crassa fagus existeret, in qua binae cruces, et in tiliis J. et K. literae excavatae conspiciuntur... arbores abietum quatuor sunt consitae, in quarum inferiori et crassiori crux, in superiori autem litera M. excisa cerneretur... ad arborem abietem, in qua ex parte inferiori crux, ex superiori litera N. incisa visuntur... in arboribus abietum in ibi exurgentibus litera O. et P. essent consignatae... binae arbores abietis, ex inferiori et superiori partibus fulcirent, quarum superior arbor R., inferior autem O. literas incisas porrigerent... pinus, in qua incisae literae M. et B. conspiciuntur... arbor pinus consita literas J. et H. excisas exhibet. ŠA BB, ZŽ, Litteralia privatorum, A – IV., sect. 592, fasc. VI., inv. no. 116.*

17th century. There is a record of boundary delimitation between villages Dubové and Bacúrov from 1656. Following this source, a sign of a hand comprised of five fingers was found at one section of the boundary (in Hungarian language: *kész formara eőt ujnak*). A document from 1676 mentions at the same place near the localities Haj and Vtacnik a stage of boundaries proceeding towards “five-finger rock” (*na pat prstovu skalu* in Slovak language).⁴⁹ Evidence of existence of boundary signs in this case proves its long-term continuous use. In 1805 a detailed boundaries repeated perambulation was created between the castle domains of Zvolen and Dobrá Niva and coparcenary in Bacúrov. Fifth boundary point, which was composed of two big stones located on a hill behind village called Háj is mentioned in the perambulation. One of them was marked

with a star of five rays or fingers ✕ on its northern side and also with letters CE CV SE. Such sign was called a *petoprstnica* (in Slovak literally: a sign with five fingers). Neighbours from Dubove called this landmark a saddle stone.⁵⁰ The origin of the name – the star (cross) is indirectly explained in the document. According to the name “*pätoprstnica*”, a symbol referring to plant species, which was applied in religious symbolism representing a Christ’s palm tree, could be concerned. In this case, we may assume it was a motif of a palm cross, which was adapted in folk environment. Semantics of Latin *palma* refers to a palm tree as well as to a palm or a hand. Depicted five fingers therefore also point out universally used symbol of a hand. It presented e.g. the god’s mightiness, delivery of happiness, power and blessing, but also the law.⁵¹ It is interesting that according to descriptions from the 17th century the sign did not change until the 19th century, whereby time of its origin is not known. Regarding the information from 1805, already the inhabitants of one village called the landmark with the sign a “saddle stone”. This name was probably derived from the shape of the rock debasing the presence of the sign. Carved letters reflect the application of more rational approach to boundaries delimitation.

In 1700 county officers carried out a repeated borders and border signs inspection at the western border of the Zvolen County. The border line of Hronská Breznica bounds went towards the south till the row of stones and turned to the boundary, which composed of five bigger stones called “*Na križnu skalu*” (To cross rock). One of the stones facing east was marked with the “oldest” cross on its side. This border was marked epigraphically as well. Above the cross a letter L was situated. A neighbouring stone facing north was marked with a cross too.⁵² Near the hill called Handel the border line was formed by two massive oaks at one hundred steps distance. The trees were marked with old crosses. The following boundary point was a rough stone with signs carved in called *Na cipov*. A niche in shape of a foot sole was found on the west-

⁴⁹ ŠA BB, ZŽ, Litteralia privatorum, A – IV., sect. 591, fasc. III., inv. no. 120, sect. 594, fasc. XVII., inv. no. 265.

⁵⁰ *per iugum montis za Haj procedentes, in eius summitate reperimus duo grandia saxa in quorum uno in latere versus orientem stella cum litteris C.E. C.V. S.E. ✕ quinque seu radios, seu digitos prae se ferente, quod signum Baczurovienses quidem incolae petoprstnica, Dubovienses autem sedlova skala cuius formam, ac similitudinem prae se fert, appellarunt.* ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 147.

⁵¹ MALINIÁK, P.: „Meta ad modum...”, p. 403; KOBIELUS, S.: *Krzyż Chrystusa...*, p. 73-75; LURKER, M.: *Wörterbuch der Symbolik*. Stuttgart 2005, entry hand.

⁵² ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6033, no. 108, fol. 514.


ern side of the stone. On its southern side, a sign in shape of a sphere was located. In Slovak it was called cipov, however in Latin a cake, from which according to a document a folk name cipov is derived.⁵³ Term cipov was used to name a loaf of bread or a cake. This appellation refers to Latin name *libum*. The reason for forming this metaphoric designation is not clear. We cannot exclude the possibility that application of this name was only conditioned by the shape of the rock.

Other types of boundary signs became more significant in the 18th century. Following the state in 1756 the representatives of Kremnica town from the aristocratic family of Radvansky and Zvolen County carried out in 1786 a repeated perambulation of boundaries at a place called "Na Tri kríže" – At Three crosses (*in loco ad tres cruces dicto*) above Ortúty valley. The delimitation started at the landmark, which was dividing the area of zvolen dominion, Radvaň and Kremnica. The border line went to the north following a path alongside trees marked with crosses till a big rock. There were trees located on the boundary, which had been marked off with crosses already during the last repeated perambulation. Other trees were marked the same way. On the top of a hill in the place called Bulovo lovisko a stone marked with a cross had been recorded during a repeated perambulation in 1756, however it was not found later. Therefore a triangle stone marked with a broken wheel of St. Catherine, the town crest of Kremnica



, was placed there. From the north it was marked with a letter R. Another broken stone marked with a cross was found during a repeated perambulation in a place called Nad Lopusným. There was the boundary of Kremnica marked with a cross sign located on a pile of stones and with a letter R from the northern side. Three cut around stones were found on a slope of a hill in radvan bounds.⁵⁴ Another record of using both heraldic and religious motifs by boundaries marking comes from the same period.


In 1786 by the attendance of an officer, gamekeepers and representatives of Badín village also a repeated perambulation of western borders of Ortúty bounds was carried out. The border line descended southwards alongside a path surrounded by beeches and firs marked with crosses towards three stones with boundary signs on. One of the stones marked with letters DZ was denoting the border of zvolen dominion.


A sign  demonstrating Kremnica area was carved to another stone.⁵⁵ The border then passed a triple cross (*iuxta crucem tripplicatam*), which was located at a traverse to Banská Bystrica. At the next stage the border was formed by five trees with crosses, as well as border stones with letters of Zvolen dominion and Kremnica town crest carved. The boundaries passed along various border signs till the Železná brána (The Iron


⁵³ *ad certam petram hirsutam na czipou vulgo vocari solitam, in qua petra haberentur exsculpta certa signa, utpote versus occidentem excavatio adinstar plantae cothurni, versus autem meridiem adinstar cuiusdam globi seu sclavonico idiomate czipou, latine autem libo cognominati, unde etiam deductionem et vulgarem denominationem eadem petra czipou obtinuisset. ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6033, no. 108, fol. 514-515; MALINIÁK, P.: „Meta ad modum...”, p. 400-401.*

⁵⁴ ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 127.


⁵⁵ *frequentioresque arbores faginaceas et abietinas cruce signari procurando reperimus tres lapides ex terra prostantes, quorum uni territorium Zolyense versus litteras D.Z. designantes Dominium Zolyom ex parte vero Cremnicziensis*

territorii  *seu insigne civitatis dictae insculpi fecimus. ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 140.*

gate). Besides crosses on trees, boundary landmarks were also piled up or renewed at the border. There were crosses located on the trees from both sides at some places. On the southern part of the border line behind an old coalman's road a sign + marking a boundary stone was recorded in repeated perambulation together with a broken wheel .⁵⁶ From a distance of a few centuries again a picture of an isosceles (Greek) cross is concerned.

Another repeated perambulation of boundaries above Ortuty valley was carried out by the representatives of Zvolen and Dobrá Niva dominion, the Badín district, Kremnica town and a county surveyor in 1797. The border line started again on the ridge and descended alongside beeches and firs marked with crosses southwards to three landmarks marked with letters DZ and with a Kremnica town crest . The border line led towards a triple cross (*versus tripplicatam crucem*), which was located by a footpath to Banská Bystrica. Several fathoms further trees marked with crosses could be found. Latin crosses with a crutch-finished arms were recorded as a sign † in this place as well as in other places according to a document. The following stage of the boundary was formed by a big mill stone marked with a Kremnica town crest and letters of Zvolen dominium. Then the border continued to the Iron gate. Each point on the border line was accurately defined by steps. The older signs were repaired or there were new landmarks piled up using soil and stones. The boundary then continued southwards to the old coalman's road. By the description of signs on a boundary stone, where according to a repeated perambulation from 1786 a broken wheel as well as an isosceles cross was found, already a † mark symbolizing a Latin cross was used.⁵⁷ The border by the road was formed by trees marked with signs, which were recorded as X in the text at different places.⁵⁸ It was an image of already mentioned St. Andrews cross. The source distinguishes between two types of crosses. Comparing the mark used to picture the Latin cross with the evidence from 1786 we can consider just a schematic image of a cross sign in some of the cases.

The sources from the Middle Ages till more comprehensive references from the modern times have been substantiating the use of a cross in form of a boundary sign. The original religious and cult symbol gained different, changed functions due to its secondary use. Regarding this fact it is necessary to consider and distinguish different types of crosses during different time periods. The images of a Greek and a Latin cross occur at first in historical sources, also a specific sign with five fingers as well as records of double and triple crosses, which image is not known. Greek, Latin and St. Andrews cross was found by closer description at the end of the 18th century. The St. Andrews cross was also found in the sources from the 19th century. In some cases, this

⁵⁶ *Servata meridionali linea pervenimus ad lapidem metalem signis +  notatum.* ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 140.

⁵⁷ *iuxta vestigia metalis semitae pertigimus ad metale saxum signo crucis † et eidem incisio distinctum.* ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 126, 139. The mark mentioned was also used by the transcript of a document from 1797. ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 127.

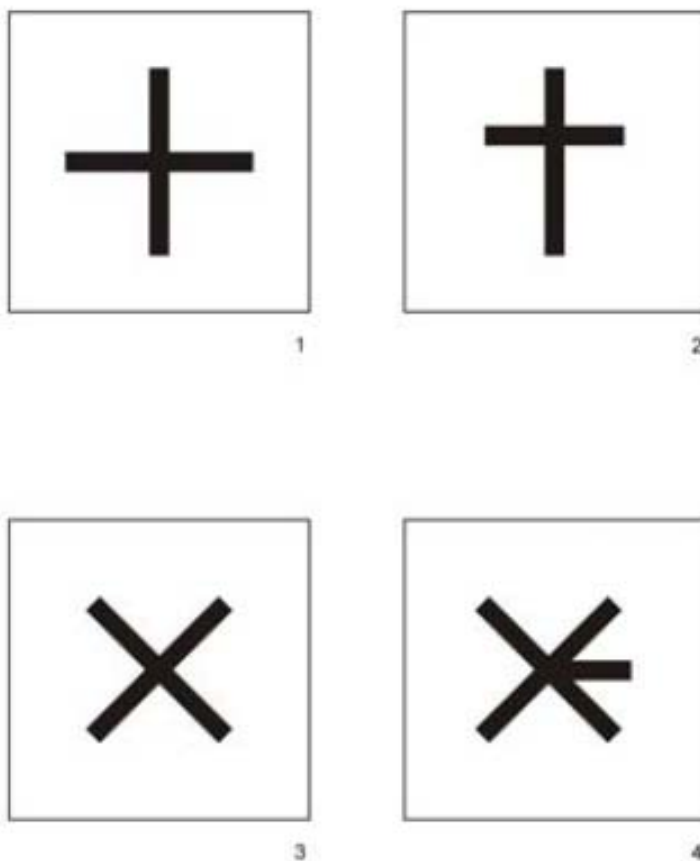
⁵⁸ *intra duas signo X distinctas arbores pertigimus ad struem lapidum.* ŠÚBA HKG Dominialia, fasc. 6034, no. 126, 139.

type of a cross served as a general sign of the term *crux*. Perhaps already by the oldest evidence about tree and stone marking using a cross, mostly this sign in form of a letter X reminiscent of martyr's cross of St. Andrew was concerned.⁵⁹ Simple image of the cross influenced its widespread and almost universal use of the symbol and the sign. The cross located on the border did not only represent the dividing line between two areas. It also pointed out the presence of a significant place and protected symbolically the border itself.

Reconstruction of the meaning of the cross in folk environment must avoid generalization within local conditions. This can be based on concrete although just a few sources. In 1829, Alois Mednyanszky published in his work *Erzählungen, Sagen und Legenden aus Ungarns Vorzeit* a legend of a magical cross inside a tree. According to the legend after the uprising of Francis Rákoczy (1711) a gang of outlaws raged in the western Carpathians. The outlaws killed a merchant on the top of the hill Barvinek. A cross was placed on a hundred years old oak there. Later they decided to attack merchants again at the same place. Their leader Rajnoha wanted to push the cross down from the tree with his axe "when the tree opened up, hugged the cross with its branches inclining above the cross and the cross disappeared in front of the outlaws. Hissing and humming could be heard as if the forest came alive, the earth shivered, thunder rumbled, trees and people had been pushed and thrown down the valleys and chasms. After the bandits had recovered they were alone in different countries, away from the crime scene. Many of them gave up blasphemous life and the cross inside the protective bark of the tree fought off all the evil. It has become a sign of comfort for everyone travelling there ever since and no one has ever after forgotten to pay tribute to it with a short prayer or a pious thought. Everyone with a heart of gold walks peacefully, undaunted with danger of body and soul, which brings the villains on the road to perdition."⁶⁰ The contrast between the cross and the outlaw highlights religious and moral appeal in this case. According to the story the cross does not only symbolize faith and sacrifice, it also represents an instrument of higher power and a mean of atonement. Its location on an old oak purports characteristically, in which it finally blends. Comparative research may contribute with new findings in the future to the knowledge about the role of borders and boundary signs in men's minds, ideas and activities of communities. Examples from different regions show that elements with common cultural models can be found in this sphere. These were formed by local influences, which developed autonomously or more often as a result of effects from opened environment.

⁵⁹ MALINIÁK, P.: „Meta ad modum...“, p. 403-406; KIERSNOWSKI, R.: Znaki graniczne..., p. 278.

⁶⁰ In Slovak language MEDŇANSKÝ, A.: *Dávne povesti o hradoch*. Bratislava 2005, p. 107-108.



Appendix: Types of border cross according the sources from the 16th till 19th century. Greek cross (1). Latin cross (2). St. Andrew's cross (3). Star with five fingers – „pätoprstnica“ (4).

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