Abstract

By reminding the criteria of separation of Boyko Land as a cultural and historic territory and the Boykos as an ethnographic group the author aims to convince that we are not dealing with history of exploring the ethnographic areas, but the history of inventing them. Talking about the Boykos in Boyko Land is synonymous with commitment to a number of ideas from the history of science, the old concepts of culture, folk culture, ethnicity, cultural-historical school and anthropogeoghraphy, physical anthropology, and physiognomies, folklore and ethnography. Contrary to Boyko Land researchers the author claim that since the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day in Ukraine they deal not with a great ethnic group – the Boykos, but with many local communities of Ruthenian mountaineers – the ethnographic groups. The old and popular in the north-eastern Carpathians depreciating words related to the alien, such as “Boyko” or “Lemko”, were released from the meaning by the intellectuals who were engaged in science, literature and politics in order to apply them to name the groups and their territories.

Keywords: Boykos, Boyko Land, ethnographic group, mythologisation

The borders of the Western Boyko Land were set by Jan Falkowski and Bazyli Pasznycki and “finally terminated” by Roman Reinfuss (Olszański 1991). Supplemented and improved by Jerzy Czajkowski, they were “accepted by academic research institutions”, “have come to be recognised as part of the main body of academic knowledge” and “have come to be the Sanok Museum of Folk Architecture’s official stance on the matter” (Ossadnik, Radwański 2008: 348).

Maintaining the border, persistently trying – with the precision of a land surveyor or census taker – to make it even more precise (Within the present borders of Poland, there were 124 Boyko localities, 31 Boyko-Dolyna localities, where “homes” and “lives” can be counted (Czajkowski 2006; Ossadnik, Radwański 2008) means respecting the principle: “We act the way our ancestors did”, and therefore it can be described a traditionalist activity, an obvious case of acade-
mism. However, this border existed and still exists only in the minds of those who invented it and those who believed in it. Advocating for “the Boykos in the Boyko Land” means being attached to many ideas in the history of science, to old theories of culture, folk culture, ethnic group, anthropogeography and the cultural and historical school, to physical anthropology, physiognomics, characterology, ethnology and ethnography..., mechanically adopting scientific and practical (political) principles and objectives, setting the territories of ethnographic, dialectological, anthropological, ethnic, religious, statistical groups....

Reminded of the criteria for separating the Boyko Land as a historical and cultural territory (and the Boykos as an ethnic group), one should believe that what we are talking about is not the history of discovering ethnographic units, but rather the history of inventing such units. At the same time, this illustrates the fact that academic projects reproduced for a longer period of time come to be recognised as part of the main body of knowledge and as such – properly disseminated and popularised – are adopted by academic circles in related academic disciplines (where, in most cases, they are essentialised) and non-academic circles (where they are easily modified and combined – for various purposes – with social and political ideologies). As time goes on, they may reach the right social groups that can use these products as part of their own traditions. Academic projects, even the most fantastic ones, sometimes bring real effects, which is best confirmed by society’s response to the ethnographic groups and maps created as a result. Finally, there is my general tendency: setting cultural borders in space is as problematic as setting time borders in history – in setting such cultural borders today, “the Boyko Land” and “the Boykos” cannot be ignored.

One of the first most influential and long-lasting theories of identifying separate ethnographic areas and groups was anthropogeography. Before it was recognised as a science, anthropogeography was part of ethnology. The principal and simple theses of the anthropogeography of the 19th and 20th centuries are transformations, as part of subsequent philosophical and academic systems of the old and common topos of mythology and folklore, art and literature, medical doctrines (especially the humoral theory adopted by Hippocrates and Galen). Anthropological thinking was and still is part of pre-academic thinking – common and para-academic knowledge, as was the case with the literature of the 19th century. This explains the great role of descriptions of people in their relationships with nature in ethnology (Each monograph begins with such descriptions, e.g. O. Kolberg’s monograph), in history (J. Lelewel’s), in geography (and ethnography: W. Pol’s), in geology (and ethnography: J. Zejszner’s), in literature (E. Orzeszkowa was writing her *Nad Niemnem* with the help of H. Taine’s work), etc.

Therefore, the creation of ethnocultural identities with the use of geographical and natural determinants which are expected to strongly affect “particularly those cultures which are at a low level of development” (Kirtchiv 1983) can be found in the work of Ignacy Lubicz Czerwiński (where such determinants are
used intuitively and spontaneously), Wincenty Pol (who cites W. Humboldt and K. Ritter), Jak Falkowski and Roman Reinfuss (based on the anthropogeography of the then influential cultural and historical school in Poland), Czajkowski and his colleagues. Using the theses of anthropogeography, to a varying extent and degree, not always leads to setting ethnocultural borders. After all, these were not, contrary to the Ukrainian ethnographer’s arguments (Hudasz 1983) a problem for Ignacy Lubicz Czerwiński, who did not look on the Boykos as a separate ethnographic group, nor did he imply the fact that the Dniester River marked the border of the Boyko Land in the early 19th century. Nor were they a problem for Yuri Levitsky, Paweł J. Szafarik, Ivan Vagilevich or Jarosław Gołowacki.

The borders of the Boyko Land were originally determined by the geographer and ethnographer Pol (1851, 1875–1878, vol. VI, 1966) thanks to, above all, his methodical use of anthropogeography (and with knowledge of the work of his predecessors, particularly Ivan Vagilevich). The anthropogeographical theses that “the divisions of nature set the limit for family (tribal) divisions”, that “nature determines the main family characteristics, physiognomic, characterological and anthropological differences, that “nature dictates the way of living, differences in clothing, construction, customs...” resulted in Pol’s ethnography being mainly concerned with the question of ethnographic group borders. ”The influence of the local nature” determined Pol’s first and most general description of the borders of the Boyko family: “in the north, its settlements do not go beyond the reaches of the rivers; in the west, its end is marked by a range of the mountain pastures of Sanok; only later across the inhabited Wallachian villages; in the east, the impenetrable Black Primeval Forest separates it from the adjacent Huculi” 1875–1878, vo. VI: 114). These findings by Pol, especially those regarding the western border of the Boyko Land, were repeated by August Bielowski (1857), adopted in Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego (Kingdom of Poland Geographical Dictionary) (1881, vol. 1), but also questioned and corrected, based on, inter alia, the principles of anthropogeography, by Izydor Kopernicki, Falkowski, Reinfuss, and Czajkowski.

During his expedition across the land of Ruthenian highlanders, Kopernicki (1889) discovered that the border between the land that is different from the land of the Lemkos is the village of Bukowsko, on the way to Baligród, and that the differences between the two lands become more distinct between Osława and Hoczewka, i.e. the first tributaries of the River San, even further in the mountains, right at the foothills of the Beskid Mountain Pastures, in the valleys of the Solinka and Wetlina rivers. The differences in the geography and natural environment of the two lands are accompanied by differences in the settlement of the lands, in buildings, clothes, physiognomy and character, and by anthropological differences. That is how Kopernicki described the Poloniniec people (the people inhabiting the area described above) as a separate ethnographic group. However, this group was classified by Stanisław Leszczycki (1935), similarly to Pol, as the Lemkos, while Falkowski and Paszyncki classified them as the inhabitants of the border-