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**THE NATURAL GEOGRAPHIC PREREQUISITES OF THE FORMING OF  
ROAD COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TERRITORY OF SLOBODA UKRAINE  
AND FEATURES OF ITS FUNCTIONING IN THE XVIII CENTURY**

**Summary**

In the article, based on the theory of geographical determinism, namely on the theory of Borders, is highlighted the influence of natural and geographical conditions on the formation of land road communications on the territory of Sloboda Ukraine in the XVIII century. It was considered as a result of this scientific research on how relief and climatic features and the river system contributed to the establishment of a road communication system in Slobozhanshchyna. Namely, the functioning of the road in the territory of Sloboda Ukraine is due to the natural and geographical conditions of the Livoberezhzhya, including the features of the physical and geographical zones in which it is located – the forest-steppe and the steppe. And also the hydrographic system of eastern Ukraine had influenced the genesis of the network of land-roads in this region. The hydrographic system of eastern Ukraine formed by such rivers as the Seversky Dinets River, is the

largest right of the tributary of the Don; Vorskla River, Seim River and Psel River – the left tributaries of the Dnieper River. The roads are mainly concentrated between the aforementioned rivers and their tributaries, that is, they were mainly between watersheds. The water system of the region was previously one of the main factors had been influenced the functioning of land roads. The article focuses on the connection of the development of transport communications with the establishment of a network of bridges and river crossings in the region in the XVIII century. The peculiarities of the build bridges on the roads of state, district and rural significance are described. The author has researched the evolution of the formation of a system of bridges on the territory of Slobozhanshchyna in the XVIII century. There is noted that for the first half of the XVIII century were characterized the river crossings to across the rivers, while in the second half of the XVIII century appeared bridges built by the fashynyi method. The special significance of water mills in the formation of a network of bridges in Slobozhanshchyna is emphasized. After all, the dams themselves were often as bridges. The system of service and exploitation of bridges is outlined. Namely, based on archival data, difficulties were observed in the construction and repair of bridge crossings. Separately the author investigates the influence of the region's climate on the functioning of the bridge crossing network.

The land-road communications, as well as bridges, served for satisfied the economic needs of the Sloboda Ukraine population. Repair of bridge crossings was carried out at the expense of local resources and forces of the local inhabitants. In the article was paid to the fact that their build and service was carried out by the peasantry as one of their duties. The special government agencies only regulated and provided recommendations for their retention.

The author has established that the river system contributed to the location of the main roads by using the cartographic retrospective method. The natural and climatic features of the forest-steppe and steppe zone of the region had influenced the nature of the functioning of road communications, and in particular, their seasonal use has been

determined. However, natural and geographical factors the main, but not the only factor that directly influenced the formation and function of the road communication system in Sloboda Ukraine in the XVIII century.

***Key words:*** *land road communications, Sloboda Ukraine, river crossings, bridge building.*