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BORDERS OF EUROPE AS CULTURE CONTINENT

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Abstract

Although the subject of Europe as a culture continent has been worked on continuously, it is not emphasized that where the borders of Europe should pass, as a culture continent. If Europe is a cultural continent, the areas where the cultural differences appear should be determined and where the borders will pass through in these areas should be discussed.

In this study, it is discussed, where and according to which criteria the cultural borders of Europe should pass through, and then the suggestions are presented.

Keywords: culture continent, borders, Europe

Introduction

Europe is not a continent from the physical point of view. It is a huge peninsula naturally elongated toward the east of the Asian continent. There are no visible natural boundaries that separate the peninsula from the mainland. From this point of view, the border that is said to pass through the Bosporus and Dardanelles which separates Turkey into two is also not a natural one. Both Bosporus and Dardanelles used to be natural river valleys until the 3. geological period. As of today with a depth of less than 200m it is part of the land and it is not possible to talk about a frontier in Terms of geomorphology. The Bosporus being 700-3600m wide and Dardanelles 8km wide have no difference in their natural features. It is certain that there are also no differences in terms of humanity. The English Channel (Mansh Sea) being 30 Km in the narrowest part does not separate Ireland from Europe then how can Bosporus and Dardanelles being much narrower can separate Anatolia from Europe. According to which criteria Cyprus and Malta Islands, located at the tip of Rhodes, Crete, East Mediterranean on the Mediterranean route, can be considered Europe? (Yomralıoğlu, 2004)

Ural Mountains that are said to separate Europe and Asia do not have the necessary features to separate the two Continents. It even connects the two sides in terms of economy. As far as economic connection between the Kuznetsk and Donets River basins is concerned it actually connects the east and west Russia (Tümertekin, Özgüç: 2004, 57). Consequently, Ural Mountains are located in a region where there are no physical differences such as climate, drainage, soil and plantation or no humanity differences such as population Ethnic and cultural structures, settlement areas and historical background, there are even no differences between the way they use the land and the way they are ruled (Yiğit, 2000; 39).

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In short, Europe does not fit to the definitions of a continent and does not have a certain natural geographical character and therefore it is obvious that no clear borders can be set. The existing borders are not drawn according to any scientific criteria thus has no scientific value. As a result, it is mentioned that the European continent has a different cultural structure and for that reason it is separated from Asia. Consequently, it is claimed that Europe is a continent not in terms of natural differences but in terms of cultural structure; the borders too should be drawn according to the cultural structure rather than natural structure. In this study, we will put forward the criteria according to which the borders should be drawn and where should it pass.

Method

Before the geographical borders of a region are defined, the geographical character should be defined first. The borders are drawn according to the mentioned criteria. The regional character of Europe is based on cultural features; the borders also should be drawn according to that. The borders that form the cultural region are; ethnographic features, cultural structure, settlement areas, economic structure and means of transportation. When this is done, ethnographic borders are drawn according to ethnic identity and linguistic features; cultural borders according to religious beliefs and sects; settlement area borders according to settlement areas; and transportation borders are drawn according to means of transportation in each region. However the criteria taken into account cannot be clear-cut definitions for each degree of classification. They need to be defined separately for each condition. That is to say, regional borderline principles should be flexible and criteria that are used should differentiate according to scale, place and time. As a result, it is not possible to think that the region mentioned as Europe can have an accurate and permanent borderline. The region mentioned as Europe went through a lot of differences throughout history. Previously the narrowest part of Europe was the borderline; the area between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea (European Isthmus). However, in this case Europe being too small to be a continent and Russians gaining pre-eminence in the world politics resulted in the extension of the border line towards the east. The borderline was stretched towards the Don River in the 18th century, later to Volga river and finally at the end of the 18th century towards the Ural mountain and before the 1st World War, on the condition that it was in accordance with the administrative line, it was extended to the east farther than the Ural Mountain (Yiğit, 2000; 38).

In this study, the aim is not to draw a cultural borderline for Europe. It is not even possible to do that. We will try to show the areas in Europe that separate them from other regions. By doing a detailed study in these regions more accurate and clearer lines can be drawn.

The Effect of Natural Characteristics on the Culture

Natural geographic characteristics such as; topography, climate, soil and plantation affects the people and the activities of the people. This case is important in both formation of similar geographical characteristics in similar Regions and formation of the culture. According to geographer HETTNER physical geographic characteristics played an important role in the formation of Orient and Orient culture. The east and west of Iberia Peninsula, where similar climate conditions are seen, share many similarities with the Orient culture. In this point of view, in places naturally similar to Europe, cultural similarities should also be seen. According to LOUIS, Europe has such a geographic landscape that agricultural land with adequate rain and increase in population, in parallel to the rainfall, spread all over the country. Dry and cold pole regions do not fit in with the geographic landscape of Europe. To limit these conditions, heat from the north and rainfall from the south can be taken as measures. According to this, the part on the 60° north latitude is left to Asia; in the south

based on an isohyet's line of roughly 250mm, Turkey is included in Europe; following the north of Caspian Sea, Aral and Balkhash lakes the border is connected to the middle part of Yenisei River which flows from north. (Louis 1954.) In this case it will be difficult to separate the culture in a place where the landscape is so similar. Again, according to HETTNER, all the countries situated in the Mediterranean river-basin share the same culture due to similarities in the landscape. (Hettner, 1931, 199) The fact that Europe is considered to be a separate continent in terms culture continent should also be taken into account. When this is the case; Mediterranean Coast does not belong to Europe, Asia or Africa. The border of Africa starts from the south of the vast Sahara Desert. The Peninsulas of Europe (Iberia, Apennine, Thessalia) that extend into the Mediterranean are different from the other parts of Europe. The borders of Asia in the east are beyond the deserts of Syria and Saudi Arabia. The fact that Anatolia does not extend from north to south like other Peninsulas but from east to west, gave it the privilege of being a natural bridge between the continents (Fisher of Halikarnas, 1971; 15-17).

Although the religions that were born in the Orient culture long before Christianity spread around from Anatolia, today Muslims live in the centre of this culture. For this reason, Orient culture and Islamic culture integrated. When the southeast borders of Europe were drawn it was affected by the mentioned facts in terms of culture. The similarity between south coast of Europe and the north coast of Africa exceeds the similarity between the south and north of Europe. Therefore, agriculture and settlement areas affected by physical circumstances do not play an important role in the borders of Europe as a culture continent. Ethnic roots too are not taken into consideration to be a European. Albanians who belong to Epirs, one of the oldest races in Europe or the Bosnians who belong to the Slav race are not considered Europeans by the rest of the Europe. The most important reason is probably that they do not belong to the Christian culture which is prevalent in Europe. On the other hand, in many updated maps Israel which neighbors Syria, Egypt and Jordan and share the same geographical characteristics is actually shown in Europe. It is notable that, two of the three Caucasus countries, Armenia and Georgia are considered European whereas Azerbaijan is left out. All things considered, the factors that formed the concept of Europe are rather cultural than geographical and out of the cultural facts, the religion factor stands out.

Europe as a Culture Continent

Besides the studies that regard Europe as a sub continent of the Old World continents, like India or East Asia (Louis, 1979) there are also studies that defend the fact that Europe is a totally different continent. Those who are against this idea claim that Europe does not have a cultural uniformity and that it consists of many different cultures. There actually is no European type in terms of culture. Europeans not only differ from each other by their nationalities but also by their languages, traditions, patriotisms, cultural backgrounds, religions and ideologies, they seem to represent different nationalistic groups. Although, many of European languages belong to the India-Europe language family they split into many groups and sub groups. Other differences must be added to differences in language, which caused the establishment of many governments one after another. The national groups that became aware of their existence stood up for themselves with a great determination, worked hard for their independence and succeeded in that. The number of governments in Europe increase each day. Europe, which was under the control of a few empires in the 20th century, housed more than 30 governments, big and small, after the II World War, towards the end of the 1980's and in the beginning of 1990's Yugoslavia and Russia fell apart and Czechoslovakia split into two. Today there are close to 50 governments in Europe.

In short, the features that characterize Europe culturally are quite different from each other. This difference often caused fights among the European groups. However, they sometimes united to fight the same enemy. The tendency to fight against the same enemy initially started with the Hun and Avar invasions, Islamic Civilization improved afterwards, especially the Ottomans were seen as a real threat to European culture. They formed the Crusade to fight this enemy. Their cultural prejudice that forms the essential characteristics of their national identities also played a part in the formation of their European identity as a united threat to outer forces. The prejudice strengthened in the minds of people through the years and passed down from generation to generation. The concept which is accepted by many Europeans and talked about by European historians, sociologists and politicians from time to time, is the fact that Turks are their enemy. Christianity was seen as the unifying factor that brought them together against the same enemy and European culture became religion centered. Similarly, RATZINGER (Pope XVI Benedict) the leader of Catholic belief made a statement before he became the Pope, saying that the geographical concept of Europe is of second importance, what comes first is the cultural and historical importance, added that European Union cannot only be defined as geographical and economical unity and the fact that there was not enough emphasis on Christianity was not right. (Die Zeit, 50/ 2000)

Christianity being the vital factor in the formation of the European identity and its association with a religion centered opposition made it clear that Turkey's membership was always opposed by the Christian Europe. The foundation of the European Union cannot mask the regional and local differences. In this point of view, it is questionable that it will last long. Empires fall apart because of multi-nationality. The strengthening of local, regional and ethnic identities will exhaust the upper European identity and without the upper identity there will be no union in Europe.

The situation of the original Europe or the centre of Europe is discussed in many studies. In many of these studies it is emphasized that Europe is identified with a line that stretches from London to Rome and the farther you go, the more characteristics of Europe vanish. Iberia Peninsula, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe are considered distant suburbs of Europe. The definition of Europe; Germen- Latin originated and Catholic centered genuine Europe and on the other side Orthodox Europe and others trying to be part of the real one. As a matter of fact, the Crusade Union was directed by the Pope and the Orthodox Christians were considered second class citizens. Today the European Union is controlled by the Catholic and Protestant Christians, and Orthodox East Europe is treated as second class. Europe took advantage of the East Christians by provoking them against the country they live in to destroy the Ottomans and to turn the land Ottomans ruled, into their colony. In the meantime, Europe did not act as a real protector, but used the East Christians (Orthodox Christians) for its own advantage.

Cultural Borders of Europe

If Europe is a continent in terms of culture, the areas where cultural differences are found and where the borders should be in these areas must be discussed. Religion, Language and ethnic roots determine cultural differences. The customs and traditions among people should be the starting point. Arts of culture and civilization are the physical indicators of these. In this case; it is difficult to find areas where there are clear differences, enough to separate Europe as a continent. However, there are indefinite transition areas among different cultures. Although, unclear there is a line that passes through the Balkans, Caucasia and Idel-Ural regions and separates culturally Christianity based Europe from the East culture. In this case, the borders of Europe should be sought in the Balkans and Caucasia and not in the centre of Turkey. In his study published in the Foreign Affairs in 1993 which caused great

debate, Samuel P. Huntington claims that the struggles in future will be mainly cultural rather than economical or cultural and that it will take place among 7-8 civilizations. The fights will take place along the cultural fault lines which separate one civilization from another. (Huntington-1995).It is also known that one of these fault lines pass through the Balkans and the other through Caucasia. We will have a closer look to these regions now:

The Balkans is on the border of East and West cultures. It is one of the rare places that accommodate both Islam and Christianity under one roof. It is on the area where many celestial religions were born and on a transitional route that carried many important civilizations to Europe. As a result of the historical developments it has a complex ethnic pluralism; differences in language and literature, and eventually vast cultural differences. These structures have caused the Balkans to be a region of depression and instability throughout history. The Ottomans started their movement of invasion in 1353 by conquering Gallipoli and completed it at the end of the 14th century. Ottoman pre-eminence in the Balkans lasted until 1832 when the Mora Peninsula was separated from the Ottoman Empire and later in 1878 Romania, Serbia, Montenegro; in 1908 Bulgaria and in 1912 Albania and Macedonia separated from Turkish lands and the borders of Turkey shrank back to the Maritsa River. Many Turks from Anatolia settled in the Balkan Peninsula, which was under the control of the Ottomans, from the mid 14th century until the end of 20th century and lived there for 5, 5 centuries. However, when the Ottomans lost control a large number of Turks in the area (4, 5 million) had to go back to Anatolia. In spite of all the pressure they were exposed to, more than 2 million Balkan Turks still live there (Yigit, 2000; 152).

The Balkan Peninsula, are more enlivened by different cultures, sub-cultures and issues of identity rather than geographical characteristics. Situated on an area of 700000 km² with a population of 60 million, South Slavs, Greeks called as Romanians and Epirs from the Latin roots and Albanians live in the Balkans. All these tribes belong to the Aryans and are Orthodox Christians. Different from these, Turks, Muslim Bosnians, Muslim Bulgarians and Gypsies are also part of the Balkan community. Today in the Balkans approximately 12 million Turks and/or Muslim population live. The people, who emigrated to the Balkans and live there currently, continue to be an important factor which connects Turkish community to the Balkans. The previous home town of many people, now living in Turkey, used to be the Balkans.

In short, the Balkans is an area where many Muslims and Christians lived together for more than 6 centuries and where many works of Islamic art survived. The borders of east and west cultures can be drawn by doing a detailed study in the region, it should not pass through the middle of Istanbul, a city which is culturally uniform.

Another border region between the east and the west is the Caucasia. Having a great strategical importance Caucasia has never been dominated by any power throughout the history. Located on the two sides the mountains which do not give way, the two sides flourished on different valleys independent of each other and this geographical structure and the improvements in history caused it to have a complex structure in terms of society. Caucasia has a great variety of languages and religions and Caucasian race that has a completely different race and language belong to the Caucasian groups which are formed of a few hundred thousand Muslim tribes. Caucasians, Abhazas, Chechen tribes, Ingushes, Lezgins and Osets being the first, they are close to 50 groups in total. There are also Turkish tribes in Caucasia, who are mainly Azerbaijani. These are; Azerbaijani, Karachays, Kipcaks, Balkars (Branch of Kypchak Turks), Nogays (Turkish tribe in North Caucasia), Kundurs and Turkomans (Yiğit, 2000; 52).

Even though there are Georgians and Armenians, who belong to Christian groups, on the south of the Caucasian Mountains, Islamic culture that was dominant on the northern skirts of the mountain mingled with other cultures and started to have a complex structure as it went further to the north. This complex structure can be clearly seen in the lower part of the Idel region.

Strategically important lower Idel region connects Middle Asia, Caspian Sea and Black Sea regions to Middle and West Russia and covers the area of the Idel -Ural region that stretches towards the Caspian Sea and Volga delta and Don-Volga Canal. The region is a transitional area by all means and allows transition between Kazakhstan and Ukraine as well as Caucasia and Idel -Ural region. The region which belonged to the khanates of Astrakhan and Nogays that were established after the Altınordu (Golden Horde) government collapsed, was also an area where Orthodox Christians, Muslim and Buddhist civilizations and different ethnic groups interacted with each other (Yiğit, 2006; 77).

The Idel-Ural region located on the north of this region is where old Turkish Idel Tribe Bulgarian Government settled (8-14th century) followed by Kazan khanates (1437-1552) and today Turkish and Finn tribes as well as Russians reside in the area. This region which covers the mid section of Idel (Volga) River, Kama River and Ural Mountains, 3 Turkish Republics (Chuvashia (ethnic tribe on the Volga), Tartarstan, Bashkortostan), 3 Finn republics (Mari-El Udmurt and Mordovia) and 8 administrative regions (oblast) are situated in the mentioned region which covers the central Idel (Volga) River, Kama River and Ural mountains. Both Tartars and Bashkir who belong to the Turkish groups in the region presented a strong cultural and population uniformity throughout history and were the outcome of the union of nomadic Turkish groups with Fin-Ogur groups. Turkish people started to come to Idel-Ural region in 670-740 A.D and Turkish settlement reached its highest point in the XI-XII centuries. Later the settlement continued with Kypchak Turks coming to the area and a new formation was established with the Mongolian invasion in XIII century. Islam was introduced to the region by the Arabs who were doing trade in the area. Some historians considered the Bulgarian government to be a real colony of the Muslims. The Tartars settled in the mentioned lands in the middle of the XIII century and gained control over the Bulgarians. The Kazakh khanate that was established after the Altınordu government collapsed in XV century, and carried on a long lasting struggle against the Grand Moscow Princedom which came to an end when Ivan (Terrible Ivan) conquered Kazan in 1552, many rebellions following the invasion were harshly suppressed (Yiğit, 2000; 34). As a result, in the region that was under the control of Russia for 4, 5 centuries, more than 8 million Turks live today. The symbol monuments of Islamic civilization can be seen in these lands and today they still continue to decorate the important cities in the area.

Crimea Peninsula is an important Islamic cultural region that belonged to Crimea Tartars who fought for their existence for more 3 centuries. When Crimea separated from the Ottoman Empire in 1774 it was invaded by the Russians in 1783 who brutally massacred the Crimeans in an effort to erase them from the surface of the earth. The Crimean Tartars who escaped the massacre immigrated to Turkey in large groups. Close to 300 000 people until 1790 and 142000 people between the years of 1860-63 immigrated to Turkey and in 1874-75 and 1891 when many more did so, population was imbalanced. In 1783 census, Crimean Turks formed the 83% of the total population and 70 % in 1863 census finally in the census of 1897 only 35% of the total population were Crimean Turks (188 000). Tartars declared their freedom following the Bolshevik revolution. However, in 11.11.1920 Crimea was completely under the control of the Bolsheviks and in 18.10.1921 autonomous Crimea USSR was declared. According to the census of 1926 the Crimea Tartars only made up the 25% (180000) of the total population and 23, 1% (218000) as a result of the 1939 census. In 1944 Crimea

was invaded by the Soviets for the second time and in May, 18, 1944 the Crimean Turks were crammed in railway carriages, normally used for animal transportation and they were all banished. Until the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, Crimea was a state under the rule of Ukraine (oblast) Russians declared Crimea an autonomous republic in 1991 and an independent republic in 1992. This situation was not acknowledged by Ukraine and caused conflict between Ukraine and Russia. In 1992 it was accepted that Crimea would be autonomous republic under the control of Ukraine. The truth that Crimea is a part of the Islamic cultural region is still valid despite the fact that, approximately 300 thousand Crimea Tartars, a minority today, are still struggling to regain their land

Result

If we think of Europe as a continent of Christian culture and civilization, the borders should start from the Don River leaving out the Idel-Ural region, a Turkish native country, in the east and reach the Black Sea region leaving out Crimea, which is located on the north of the Black Sea.

A line should be drawn starting from the Black Sea, leaving out the Danube Delta, Dobrogea, Bessarabia; Bulgaria, South Dobruja on the north of the Balkan mountains, Rodops region, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Sandjak region and stretch towards Bosnia-Herzegovina and eventually reach the Adriatic Sea.

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