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**THE DETERMINANTS OF THE LANDSCAPE
OF EUROPEAN CIVILISATION**

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WHAT IS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE?

Cultural landscape is not only defined in a variety of manners, but is also intuitively very differently understood. This fact found its expression many times over in the work of the Commission on Cultural Landscape of the Polish Geographical Society, in particular – during the conference “Landscapes of River Valleys”, organized in Chernovtsy in 2007 (Myga-Piątek, 2007). In general terms, two approaches can here be distinguished.

The first of these is the classical one, deriving from the anthropogeography of F. Ratzel. It places main emphasis on transformation of natural environment by people, and on the way of conducting developments in the environment. For many years the most commonly considered factor was agriculture, as the large-area sector of economy, closely related to natural environment. Cultural landscape had in this context a lot to do with the Latin meaning of the word *cultura*, referring to cultivation of the land (thereafter in a broader sense, like in **maricultura**, **aquacultura**). This stream of work includes, for instance, the studies of C. Sauer and his school (e.g. Sauer, 1925). Emphasis on the transformations of geographical environment was also emphasized by M. Dobrowolska (1948). This meaning of the term “cultural landscape” appears to be acceptable for physical geography. During the conference in Chernivtsy, mentioned above, numerous geographers, present there, spoke primarily of the degree of transformation of the natural environment in the past centuries and of the ways of reconstructing the respective image.

The second, different approach is declared by the geography of culture, and especially by the so-called new geography of culture. Cultural landscape is supposed to be a reflection of human culture, both material and non-material, a kind of imprint of the specific features of culture, left in a given location. Landscapes are the effect of impact of definite politics, way of executing power, etc. (Samuels, 1978, after Rembowska, 2007). This, however, is not a new approach, since its roots can be traced back also to F. Ratzel (1889-1891), and then to numerous studies of E. Huntington from the beginning of the 20th century, and of P. Vidal de la Blache (1922, with emphasis being placed on the variety of ways of adapting to the same conditions of the natural environment), and, again, to M. Dobrowolska (1948)¹. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, they are rather complementary. Both underline the visual aspects of landscape², both treat cultural landscape in a dynamic perspective, as something that is only now becoming, but already has its history and prehistory (relic features of the cultural landscape, sometimes called relic landscapes). One can imagine a legend for a map of cultural landscapes in the form of a matrix, accounting for two groups of variables: one of them would be constituted by the differently transformed types of natural environment, and the second – by the imprints of different cultures (cultural circles, civilizations), having varying intensity.

While, however, in the case of the classical understanding of cultural landscape we dispose of a significant typological and cartographic stock of results (owing, in particular, to C. Sauer and his school, as well as the studies from the borderland with physical geography), the situation is definitely worse in the second case. In terms of certain aspects we can even speak of a definite regress in comparison with the classical period of French geography of one hundred years ago. At that time the analysis of landscapes was conducted at various levels of detail, from the global one to the local studies (*pays*). Landscape was perceived as a synthesis of relations between man and nature (see the classical work of Vidal de la Blache, 1908). Nowadays, typologies are developed mainly at the highest level of generalization. It is often limited to the distinction of cultural circles (civilizations). In Polish geography we also dispose of numerous detailed descriptions of cultural landscapes of particular places, usually very vivid, frequently emotionally tainted. Attention is paid to the specificity of a place, unique character of landscape, the *genius loci*, but

¹ The authors mentioned do not negate, though, the influence of the natural environment on human activity and the shape of cultural landscape. Moreover, they attach such an importance to this factor that F. Ratzel, together with E. Huntington, and even P. Vidal de la Blache, are often classified as “determinists”.

² This is unambiguously expressed by M. Degórski (2005), for whom landscape is an “objective visualization of phenomena and processes”.

one can hardly identify landscape types on the basis of these descriptions. The descriptions often mix (without providing respective mixing ratios) landscape features conditioned by the given cultural circle and the natural environment of a given area. Rather than a synthesis, we obtain a conglomerate. At the same time, the “new geography of culture” attaches a very high importance to the differences in perceptions of the particular groups of people, or even individuals, and to the factors conditioning these differences. This allowed for the overcoming of the narrowly modernist paradigm, for undermining the trust in that “objective visualization” (like in Degórski, 2005), but, on the other hand, introduced a threat of such a strong subjectivism that might nullify the possibility of any scientific dialogue.

THE DETERMINANTS OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AS THE BASIS FOR IDENTIFICATION AND DELIMITATION

The present report belongs to the second stream of geography of cultural landscape and concerns the landscape differences at the level of civilizations (cultures, cultural circles³). As we have assumed that one of the fundamental tasks of geography of culture is to show the ways of expressing the diversity of cultures in space, the key issue becomes to indicate these elements of landscape, which can be considered as characteristic for the particular civilizations, being their determinants. It is also justified to look for the spatial patterns, specific for particular civilizations⁴. These specific landscape reference elements should be treated as leading elements, similarly as leading fossils in geology or the so-called flagship species in biology (Pullin, 2004). This is, however, not similarly simple, since in the case of cultural landscapes we deal with the effects of mutual pervading of cultures, appearance of the surviving elements, as well as with the omnipresent globalization. Hence, one should reject even those elements that, although originating from the circle of a given civilization, have become in conditions of globalization the elements typical also for other circles of culture (like, e.g., the high-rise building quarters). It is, on the other hand, advised to try to grasp, besides the strictly material objects, also human behaviors, characteristic for the concrete circles of culture, especially those that can be easily observed and hence can be treated as elements of landscape.

³ The terms of civilization, culture, or cultural circle are being defined in a variety of manners. In the present report the meaning of the notion of civilization is analogous to the one adopted by A. J. Toynbee, F. Koneczny or S. Huntington. The notion of cultural circle is currently less frequently used, but in the case of cultural landscapes it appears to be fully adequate.

⁴ Similarly as in physical geography, the characteristic spatial patterns can be constituted by vegetation zones in the mountains or catena on the slopes.

Thus, we pay attention to the specific elements, even if they do not occupy the biggest segment of space in a given landscape, even if they can only be compared to raisins in a cake. These elements, though, like raisins, endow the landscape with an original imprint, are constitutive for its individual character.

The search for the specific elements can most easily be carried out with the method of confrontation, by looking for differences in cultural landscapes typical for the areas belonging to different civilizations.

DETERMINANTS OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE EUROPEAN AND ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS

In principle, all the classifications of the contemporary civilizations (see, e.g., Huntington, 1915; Toynbee, 1934; Koneczny, 1935; Huntington, 1996; and many others) agree in distinguishing the European civilization (which they also call Christian, Western, Western-European, Latin). It encompasses the western and central parts of Europe, from the British Islands down to the fragments of the Balkan Peninsula (Slovenia, Croatia), Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland included. This is an approximate eastern border, for the delimitation with the Eastern Orthodox civilization, situated more to the East, is over many segments not sharp, and, besides, it has been moving. Islamic (Muslim) civilization extends over northern Africa and the Near East. These three civilizations are treated on a par, placed at the same taxonomic level, that is – as mutually similarly distant. In the analysis below we shall consider the significant differences between the European and Islamic landscapes, which are visible in the landscape.

These civilizations were distinguished on the basis of the religious criterion. A simplified opinion on Islam, common in Europe, says that “Moslems cannot drink alcohol and eat pork”. These two interdictions, and especially the first one, have visible effects in landscape. Although grape-vine growing originated from the South-West of Asia and very good conditions exist there for cultivating vineyards, they are a very rare sight in the Islamic countries, in distinction from the countries of Mediterranean Europe⁵. In Islamic countries grapevine serves first of all to produce raisins, fruit juices, and immediate consumption. Although in the period, when Algeria belonged to France, vineyard cultivation developed there, and for a short period of time this country became the fourth wine producer in the world, but soon after independence had been gained a reaction came and vineyards were destroyed. Development of vineyards in Algeria can, therefore, be treated as an expression of an

⁵Naturally, in countries of Northern Europe there are no vineyards, neither, but this is due to climatic conditions.

aggression of European civilization against the world of Islam. The prohibition of drinking alcohol is expressed in landscape not only through lack of vineyards, but also through lack of drink-bars, pubs and drunken people in the streets.

Less visible, on the other hand, are the differences associated with the interdiction of eating pork, or, more precisely, with treating pigs as impure animals by Islam. Pigs are, in fact, not present in Islamic countries, not just in terms of animal husbandry. Even the respective editions of Winnie-the-Pooh have been in many countries censored and Piglet was removed from them, there are neither boars nor pigs in the zoological gardens (like, e.g., in Cairo). We should remember, in this context, that natural conditions do not hamper pig raising. Pigs were bred in ancient times in Near East (numerous biblical passages), while boars live in the rests of the oak woods of Northern Africa. Lack of pronounced landscape differences results also from the fact that in Europe pigs are almost always raised in closed buildings, so that they are little seen, although sometimes quite well smelled.

The differences between the two religions ought not to be reduced to these two interdictions, as this would not only be a simplification, but outright vulgarization of religion. A natural determinant of the cultural landscape of Western Europe is constituted by Christian temples, constructed in different architectural styles, but always surmounted by a cross. There may be different shapes of crosses, the most common Latin cross, but also Lorraine, Catalan and other crosses. Islamic civilization is characterized by the mosques, also differing as to their style, the minarets usually topped by the crescent. In distinction from the Christian churches, the Islamic temples do not host figural sculptures and other wall ornaments than based on plant shapes or verses of Koran, their interiors are empty, though frequently beautifully ornamented rooms for prayer assemblies. Walls are often in green or blue colors, and an important role in the mosques is played by water (the necessity of ritual washing when entering, so that a fountain is often located there).

Although there are temples of other religions on the territories of both these civilizations, but even here the differences are visible. On the Islamic areas, Christian churches must be lower than mosques. The presence of monumental mosques in Western Europe, like, for instance, in Paris, constitutes visual evidence not only of large Muslim immigration, but also of a bigger openness of Christianity. The proof of this openness is also provided by the fact that mosques exist even in Rome, considered to be the holy city of the biggest Christian denomination – Roman Catholicism. At the same time, in Mecca and Medina, not only no Christian churches exist, but the infidels cannot even enter these cities, and that under the death penalty. In the European tradition the entry to the church is open to everybody, also to the faithful of other religions and the atheists. Alas, nowadays, the majority of churches are

closed during the period when liturgy is not celebrated, or one can only enter the vestibule. The principle of equal treatment of the faithful of other religions is, however, preserved. In Islam, the majority of mosques are accessible only for the Moslems.

With respect to human behavior, a characteristic element of the landscape of the Islamic countries, is the common presence of prayer. This can be seen not only in the mosques (much more filled with people than the churches in, for instance, France, Germany or United Kingdom⁶), but also in the street. Even in large cities one can observe as, responding to the muezzin's call, people interrupt their work, stop cars, pull out the praying rugs, and turn with their faces towards Mecca... This, however, is not a proof of the deeper religious feelings, since Islam places bigger emphasis on public profession of faith, while in Christianity there is also a strong Evangelical principle of praying and giving alms "covertly" (Matthew 6,3; 6,6).

On the other hand, not working on Sundays in Europe is a much more common habit than not working on Fridays in Islamic countries. On Fridays, in Islamic countries, offices, schools, etc., are closed, but trade on bazaars and work in craft workshops goes on almost without interruption.

The interdiction of representing people and animal images causes that in Islamic countries there are no monuments, and naturalist advertisements are indeed a rare sight. The few monuments (there are a couple of them in, e.g., Cairo) are treated by Moslems as giving in to idolatry and the European influences. In this context the spontaneous demolition of the monument of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad after the Americans took the city in April 2003 is highly telling. This act was not only an expression of the hatred with respect to dictator Saddam Hussein, but also – and for many perhaps first of all – of satisfaction that Americans allowed for the return to the Islamic fundamentalism. We do not find in the Islamic countries, neither, the counterparts of the European wayside crosses and figures of saints, for this would be an expression of idolatry. There are, on the other hand (though not everywhere) the venerated tombs of the saintly men. The isolated tombs, usually very modest, are, anyway, quite a characteristic element of landscape in the countries, where burial should take place immediately after the death.

There are also essential differences as to the aspect of the cemeteries. They occupy in Europe large areas, in some cities they have grown to such an extent that they constitute a significant obstacle to the spatial development of these cities. The

⁶It is often noted that mosques are filled with the faithful, as opposed to the empty churches in Europe. This observation is, in principle true, but it should be also noted that there are exceptions. It is, namely, telling that in Kabul the Taliban forced with bats the merchants from bazaar to the Friday midday prayers.

European cemeteries are dominated by stone, with well developed sculptures. In Moslem countries cemeteries are much more modest, there are no figurative sculptures, the place of burial is mostly indicated by a simple stone in vertical position. Such a simple tomb becomes quickly hardly visible, the consecutive burial is done in the same place, and, consequently, cemeteries occupy smaller areas. There are exceptions to the rule described, as there are magnificent mausoleums of the rulers in the Islamic countries (like, e.g., in Meknes, Rabat, Taj Mahal in Agra), there is the City of the Dead in Cairo – one of the largest necropolises of the world. The differences, though, remain perfectly visible, when we compare, for instance, a village cemetery in Poland or in Germany with a village cemetery in Egypt or in Morocco.

There are also other visible differences in the organization of space between Europe and Islamic countries. In the European countryside the remnants of the medieval striped pattern of fields have been preserved in places. They are best visible in landscape in the hilly and rolling areas, like, in case of Poland, in Roztocze Hills or in Holy Cross Mts. Multiple divisions among the descendants, with effort made to secure the same quality of land for all of them, brought about the appearance of long, narrow stripes of fields, stretching from the crest to the bottom of the valley. One can hardly find such a pattern in the Islamic countries, where terracing of slopes was much more common (like in Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen).

The patterns of the historical European cities reflect strong autonomous position of the urban self-government, as well as the division of the authority between the lay and the churchly. This is clearly visible, for instance, in Cracow. There are two centers in the city: the urban one, surrounded by walls, and the ducal, thereafter royal, castle on Wawel Hill. These two centers formed almost independent defense systems, often looking at each other with apprehension, jealous for privileges, sometimes in open conflict (like the mutiny of the marshal Albert against duke Władysław Łokietek in 1311), but in case of external threat they could support and complement each other. The ducal (royal) center underlined its prestige with the Wawel Cathedral, but the proud city of Cracow boasted the powerful church of Our Lady. One can find a similar pattern in many European towns, also in Warsaw. In Venice, which was a republic, and had no symbols of ducal power, the dominating buildings in the downtown are the Palace of Doges (lay power) and St. Mark Cathedral (ecclesiastic power). In the towns built later on under the influence of the European civilization from the scratch in Latin America we observe the successive stage of separation of powers: emancipation of the judicial power. The three sides of the central square are occupied there by the palace of the governor, the church, and the court building.

The hard to implement principle of giving unto Caesar what belongs to him and to God what is godly (Matthew 22.21) is alien to Islam. For a Moslem community and ideal, *umma*, would be to concentrate the entire power in the hands of *khalif*. The appointment of *khalif* has been since the very beginning an object of controversies, and became the reason for the split into Sunnis and Shiites, and after the downfall of the Ottoman Empire this title was abolished by K. M. Atatürk in 1924. All the later attempts of reviving the caliphate failed. Yet, the tendency of uniting the lay and religious power was and still is very strong (e.g. imam in Yemen before 1962, or, in a different form, contemporary Iran). In cultural landscape this finds its reflection in the existence of large palace-and-temple complexes (like, e.g. the Citadel and the Muhammad Ali mosque in Cairo).

A different organization of space than in Europe is also forced by the principle of isolation of the genders and hiding of women, common in the Islamic countries. In European tradition the views on the place of women in public life have been undergoing important changes, over centuries their role was being limited, but they were never "removed from landscape". In Middle Ages ladies would occupy prominent places during knightly competitions, in order to watch the combats and to award the winners, and one can hardly imagine a European marketplace without tradeswomen. In churches women often prayed in a different nave than the men, but they were always present in the temple itself. The cultural changes, which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries, brought the presence of women in virtually all the domains of public life and the establishment of a common public space. The situation is different in the Islamic countries. Isolation of genders means there separate education of girls and boys (sometimes even at the universities), commuting with different buses to work, special subway cars, meant for women, traveling not in the care of a man (Cairo, Teheran), separate voting facilities, prayers in separate mosques, separate cafes (or meant only for men), at the beginning of 2008 the first high-class only-for-women hotel was opened in the Near East, etc. One sees rarely a woman selling goods in a marketplace, or a woman working in a field (although, for instance, in Morocco, women look for fuel in the mountains). Conditions allowing, the properties are separated from the street by a high wall. Inside a homestead the tendency towards hiding of family life (and women) is signaled by a clear separation of the inner and outer yard, houses being also divided into the male and female parts.

A spectacular and clearly emphasized difference in the landscapes of the countries of European and Moslem civilizations is constituted by the difference in garments, first of all of women. It can be said that while contemporary Europe tries to conceal the differences in clothing between the genders, and also tries to undress, the

Arab countries tend to be fully covered. In this case we do also observe an increasing difference, first of all due to the changes in the clothing of the European women during the last one hundred years.

A significant factor, differentiating the landscapes of particular civilizations, is constituted by the alphabet. The visitors from another circle of cultures encounter thereby an additional aspect of alienation, since they cannot even decipher the name of the street, or guess whether an inscription is an absolute “no entry” sign, or just information on attorney’s office. A typing or computer keyboard, bearing signs of another alphabet, buttons of a ticket-vending machine, or even notation in a lift (the so-called “Arab digits” are only partly similar to the ones used in Latin alphabet) make a given device completely useless for a foreigner. The differences associated with the use of different alphabets play an increasing role, since the ability to read and write became common in Europe in the 19th century, and in the countries of Islam in the second half of the 20th century. In this connection the number of inscriptions rapidly increased, while the share of pictograms dropped. In order to overcome alienation, in Europe, in the quarters, where a large proportion of the population originates from the Arab countries, the inscriptions in Arab language appeared, while in the Arab countries – in the tourist centers – the English language inscriptions. This, however, makes the French feel foreigners within the suburbs of Paris, and Egyptians in Karnak.

The present text pays attention to only some of the differences, appearing in the cultural landscape of the areas belonging to the two civilizations considered. There are many more such differences, and some of them require a more detailed study as to the degree, to which they are conditioned by the differences in geographical environment (that is – they are in a way independent of civilization), and to which they result from the internal features of the civilizations. This, in particular, applies to the aspect of mountains, the degree of their forestation and degradation within the northern, as well as eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. The eastern coasts are characterized by a longer period of human pressure, while eastern and southern coasts – a drier climate, which may constitute an explanation of the lower forestation and bigger degradation of the environment in the Near East and in Atlas Mts. Degradation, however, might also, even though only partly, be associated with the Islamic custom of animal sacrifices, and hence of the necessity of maintaining numerous herds of goats and sheep, pastured, in particular, in mountain woods. On the other hand, in Southern Europe cultivation of grapevine contributed to the conservation of the mountain slopes (partial terracing of the slopes, roots preventing soil flow, retention of the surface runoff). The landscape differences are,

therefore, the effect of synergistic action of the natural and cultural factors, with the shares of the two hard to unambiguously determine.

Two or one cultural circle in Europe

The adoption of the here described references for the cultural landscape of western civilization inclines to the reflection, which goes beyond the analysis presented. It can namely be presumed that the differences between the most frequently identified circles of cultures, considered to be on a par, are in fact of a different rank. While, namely, we find clear differences in the cultural landscape of Western Europe and the world of Islam, the cultural landscapes of Western and Eastern Europe (the latter identified with the civilization of Byzantium or Eastern Orthodoxy) display several similarities. Various Christian denominations form similarly constructed cultural landscapes. There are, of course, differences between them. They concern not only, for instance, the shape of the religious buildings, but result also from a different economic history. In the East of Europe the traditional striped pattern of fields is nonexistent, there are few typical family farms, while in the majority of these countries the large-scale post-socialist farm enterprises dominate, and perhaps the remnants of the *obshchina* ("commons") can yet be found. Of importance is the difference of alphabets, which has not been appropriately accounted for till now. Yet, the difference between the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabets are essentially smaller than between these two and the Arab alphabet, and, besides, in entire Europe the same system of writing down digits exists. It can be therefore proposed that in Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals" we deal with two sub-types of the same cultural landscape, within the framework of one, broadly understood circle of cultures. This statement is, anyway, quite obvious, considering that the scholars, having identified the civilizations, paid special attention to religion. And so, in the entire Europe, "from the Atlantic to the Urals"⁷ we stay within the realm of the Christian culture, or at least Christian tradition. The distinction of two civilizations in Europe, while Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism are treated as monolithic, is at least a misunderstanding. The landscape differences of similar rank as between the Eastern and Western parts of Europe, can appear, for instance, in the landscapes of the world of Islam, e.g. between the areas inhabited by the Sunnis and the Shiites. This issue would require further study.

The division into two circles of culture in Europe, firmly rooted in science, may actually be conditioned by the aspects of history of development of science. At the beginning of the 20th century, when European scholars divided the world into

⁷ With exception, of course, of Albania and Kosovo.

civilizations or cultural circles, the cognition of the non-European cultures was decidedly insufficient and hence perception of differences among them was inadequate. The more detailed division of Europe would, then, constitute a symptom of Eurocentric attitude. Yet, sticking to this division in the later years could have been dictated by the political and ideological reasons. One should remember that in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century a great intellectual debate took place in Russia as to whether Russia constitutes a part of the cultural circle of Europe, or a separate civilization. One of the founders of identification of civilizations in the West is Oswald Spengler, whose main work was being elaborated during the World War I, when Germany and Russia were in a deadly combat. During both World Wars the war propaganda of both Germany and Russia (Soviet Union) referred willingly to the conflict of civilizations. The work of F. Koneczny appeared in Poland after the Polish-Bolshevik war, while those of A. J. Toynbee, S. Huntington and many others – in the period of the “cold war”, when emphasizing the differences between the East and the West was in the interest of both sides of the conflict. The question of separateness of cultural landscapes, their structure and hierarchy requires further study and elaboration of a detailed methodology.

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SUMMARY

Virtually all of the classifications of the cultural circles (civilisations) are in agreement in that they distinguish the European (western, western-European, Latin) civilisation. The fundamental tasks of geography of culture include the presentation of the manners of expressing the differences between various cultures in space. Thus, it becomes important to indicate the characteristic features of the aspects of the areas, over which a given civilisation (in this case – the European one) stretches. In the analysis, though, these elements, which, having originated from a concrete civilisation, became in conditions of globalisation the typical elements of other cultural circles, as well, should be rejected. Identification of the distinguishing elements is most easily performed by the comparison (search for differences) with another cultural circle. For this purpose the civilisation of Islam (Muslim civilisation) was selected.