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R O Z P R A W Y

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Cultural Frontiers of Early Modern Europe¹

The history of travel was one of the main interests of Antoni Mączak². It is difficult to imagine a history of travel without a discussion of frontiers, and Mączak devoted two chapters to this theme. Since his book was published, scholarly interest in frontiers has been on the increase, among anthropologists as well as among historians, as three recent collections of essays in English suggest³. However, frontiers are a problematic concept, especially in the early modern period, as was pointed out long ago by Lucien Febvre and the British historian George Clark. Both scholars emphasized how, in an age of state-formation, what was once a frontier zone gradually became a line⁴.

The idea of a cultural frontier is still more problematic. Linguistic borderlands are one major type of cultural frontier that has long attracted attention⁵. Religious frontiers are another⁶.

For example, the German scholar Herbert Schöffler, writing about the Reformation, noted the importance of the river Elbe in separating German cities of Roman origin, to the west, from later ones without a Roman heritage. This frontier or *limes* marks what Schöffler called *ein tiefer Graben in deutscher Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. Wittenberg for

¹ This article is the revised and expanded version of a lecture given at a plenary meeting in Naples of the European Science Foundation group studying „Cultural Exchange”, directed by Robert Muchembled, as well as the University of Greifswald and the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge. My thanks to the listeners for their questions and comments.

² A. Mączak, *Życie codzienne w podróżyach po Europie w XVI i XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1980.

³ *Border Identities*, T. M. Wilson and H. Donnan (eds), Cambridge 1998; *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, D. Power and N. Standen (eds), Basingstoke 1999; *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, D. Abulafia and N. Berend (eds), Aldershot 2002.

⁴ L. Febvre, „Frontière: le mot et la notion”, reprinted *Pour une histoire à part entière*, Paris 1962, p. 11–24; G. N. Clark, *The Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 1929, p. 140–152. Cf. Power and Standen (eds), *Frontiers in Question*.

⁵ L. Dominian, *The Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe*, New York 1917; V. Cornish, *Borderlands of Language in Europe and their relation to the historic frontiers of Christendom*, London 1936.

⁶ For an overview, *Les frontières religieuses en Europe du XVe au XVIIe siècle*, R. Sazet (ed.), Paris 1992, and *Frontiers of Faith*, E. Andor and I. G. Toth (eds), Budapest 2001; for a case-study, E. François, *Protestants et catholiques en Allemagne: identités et pluralisme Augsburg 1648–1806*, Paris 1993.

example was 'far from the *limes*', in *koloniale Vorgelände* while Luther was criticized by three faculties of theology 'behind the *limes*', in Köln, Paris and Leuven. The author's conclusion was that attempts at Reformation had different outcomes on opposite sides of the imperial frontier⁷.

Readers may be thinking that they have heard this before. Early in his famous *Méditerranée* (1949), Fernand Braudel discussed the importance of *frontières culturelles* such as the Rhine and the Danube from ancient Rome to the Reformation. In a late essay, he developed the argument that it was no accident that the frontiers of Catholicism, the Rhine and the Danube, were also the frontiers of the Roman Empire. 'Broadly speaking, on the European mainland, the frontiers of Catholicism were the Rhine and the Danube. Unmistakably, these were the former frontiers of the Roman Empire'. Although Braudel does not refer to Schöffler, it is likely that he had read him, perhaps in the library of his prison camp in the Second World War⁸.

Despite Braudel's use of the phrase *frontières culturelles*, it is only relatively recently, in an age when everything seems to be described as cultural, that the term has come into regular use in different languages (*Kulturelle Grenze*, *fronteras culturales* and so on)⁹. In similar fashion, an ambitious reinterpretation of medieval Europe by the British historian Robert Bartlett stresses the importance of 'race relations on the frontiers of Latin Europe' and the way in which the expansion of the frontiers led to cultural change and to the making of Europe itself¹⁰.

The idea of a cultural frontier is an attractive one, not least because of the opportunities that it offers to discuss cultural invasion and the defence of one's territory against it. The problem is that the idea is too attractive, like that of 'culture' itself, and means different things to different people. There is a constant danger of slippage from the literal meaning of the term to various metaphorical uses, such as Norbert Elias's famous 'frontier of embarrassment' (*Schamgrenze*), or the frontiers between social classes, between elite and popular culture, between the sacred and the profane, the serious and the comic, history and fiction, or, to cite an example from Maćzak's book, the 'boundaries of the permissible', in other words the sexual behaviour of travellers¹¹. In what follows, I shall be using the term 'frontier' in its primary, spatial sense, and 'culture' in its broad, anthropological sense, to refer to values and their expression or embodiment in artefacts and practices.

In what sense do cultures have frontiers? Travelling Europe with an eye open for old buildings (constructed before the railway age which made transport of materials for construction cheaper than before), it is easy enough to discern a geography of building styles and materials. There are regions of baroque and of classicism, for example, and of

⁷ H. Schöffler, *Reformation*, Frankfurt 1936, p. 108, 110, 114, 131, 184.

⁸ F. Braudel, „The Rejection of the Reformation in France”, [in:] *History and Imagination*, H. Lloyd-Jones (ed.), Oxford 1981, p. 72–80.

⁹ J. Osterhammel, „Kulturelle Grenzen in der Expansion Europas”, *Saeculum* vol. XLVI, 1995; *Entre dos mundos: fronteras culturales y agentes mediadores*, B. Ares Queija and S. Gruzinski (eds), Seville 1997.

¹⁰ R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350*, London 1993.

¹¹ A. Maćzak, *Życie codzienne*, ch. 13.

wood, brick and stone. It was, for instance, a surprise to early modern travellers from Western to Eastern Europe to discover that even fortresses might be made of wood¹².

However, cultural frontiers are generally invisible — frontiers of language, for instance, or frontiers of truth: as Montaigne once remarked about the Pyrenees in an age of religious warfare, *Quelle vérité que ces montagnes bornent, qui est mensonge au monde qui se tient au delà?* (Book 2. chapter 12).

The brief account that follows is constructed around two dichotomies: objective versus subjective frontiers and barriers versus meeting-points.

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE APPROACHES

It may be illuminating for historians — following the anthropologists who in turn followed the linguists — to work simultaneously with two complementary conceptions of cultural frontier.

The first is the more common approach, the view from outside, treating cultural frontiers as relatively objective and even mappable. The distribution maps of universities and printing presses, in early modern Europe (the presses radiating from Germany, the universities from Italy and France) offer vivid illustrations of this approach. Literacy has been mapped along the famous diagonal line from St Malo to Geneva, distinguishing 'the two Frances', a literate North-East and an illiterate South-West¹³. Demographers speak of the 'Hajnal line' from Trieste to St Petersburg, separating two cultural systems: relatively late marriage west of the line, relatively early to the east¹⁴.

Again, linguists distinguish frontiers such as the 'Benrather line' separating Low from High German. As for religions, the American Lionel Rothkrug has argued that in the Middle Ages, the Benrather line also separated 'a southern plenitude and a northern paucity of shrines dedicated to saints' in the German-speaking world, adumbrating the later separation between Catholics and Protestants. Rothkrug refers neither to Schöffler nor Braudel, but appears to support their emphasis on the continuing effects of the Roman *limes*¹⁵.

In all these cases, mapping frontiers helps historical analysis by showing correlations and raising problems, although maps can also mislead by implying homogeneity within a 'culture area', what German geographers and anthropologists have long known as a *Kulturkreis*.

¹² On artistic frontiers, R. Haussner, „Kunstgeographie: Aufgaben, Grenzen, Möglichkeiten”, *Rheinische Vierteljahrbücher* vol. XXXIV, 1970, p. 158–171; J. Biłostocki, „The Baltic Area as an Artistic Region in the Sixteenth Century”, *Hafnia* 1976, p. 11–24; T. Dacosta Kaufmann, *Towards a Geography of Art*, Chicago 2004.

¹³ M. Fleury and P. Valmary, „Les progrès de l'instruction élémentaire de Louis XIV à Napoléon III”, *Population* 1957, p. 71–92; cf. R. Chartier, *The 'Two Frances', in his Cultural History between Practices and Representations*, Cambridge 1988, p. 172–200.

¹⁴ M. Mitterauer, *Die Entwicklung Europas — ein Sonderweg?*, Wien 1999, p. 48; cf. J. Hajnal, „European Marriage Patterns in Perspective”, [in:] *Population in History*, D. Glass and D. Eversley (eds), London 1965, p. 101–135.

¹⁵ L. Rothkrug, „Popular Religion and Holy Shrines”, [in:] *Religion and the People. 800–1700*, J. Obelevich (ed.), Chapel Hill 1979, p. 20–86, at 55.

The old historical geography might have stopped at this point but today scholars are increasingly aware of the need for a subjective or inter-subjective approach, studying the experience of identity and otherness. Roger Chartier, for instance, differs from earlier scholars in approaching the 'literacy line' primarily as an example of the history of the stereotypes of North and South in France¹⁶.

Anthropologists in particular have pointed to the importance of distinguishing oneself from others as part of the construction of collective identities, marking out the symbolic boundaries of imagined communities. In a path-breaking study, John Cole and Eric Wolf examined two neighbouring villages in North Italy, one German-speaking, in the province of Bolzano, and the other Italian-speaking, in the province of Trento. Despite the interaction between them, each village emphasized its difference from the other, the ties to German culture on one side and to Italian culture on the other¹⁷. The objective difference between self and other may not be very great, but it is often magnified: following Sigmund Freud, the Dutch anthropologist Anton Blok speaks of 'the narcissism of minor differences', clear enough in contemporary Europe, from Belfast to Sarajevo, to say nothing of other parts of the world such as Rwanda¹⁸.

The narcissism of minor differences was also to be found in early modern Europe. As a shrewd English traveller to Russia, Samuel Collins, pointed out in a book published in 1671: 'Because the Roman Catholics kneel at their devotion, they [the Russians] will stand — — Because the Polonians shave their beards, they count it sinful to cut them. Because the Tartar abhors swine's flesh, they eat it rather than any other flesh'¹⁹.

From this point of view, Collins chose a good moment to visit Russia, since the Russian Orthodox Church was split into two in 1667, when a church council, meeting in Moscow, supported recent innovations and excommunicated the supporters of tradition, who were later known as the 'Old Believers'²⁰. The explicit issues in this debate appear to have been trivial. Should the gesture of blessing be made with two fingers or three? Should the name of Jesus be spelled with one i (*Isus*) or two (*Iisus*)? For rationalist historians, this episode revealed nothing but human folly. Today, we may be more ready to accept that small differences may make powerful symbols of identity.

BARRIERS

Another kind of distinction is that between what Lord Curzon, writing in 1907, called 'frontiers of separation' and 'frontiers of contact'; in other words between barriers and contact zones, locales in which cultural exchanges take place²¹. Both models are useful in

¹⁶ R. Chartier, *The Two Frances*.

¹⁷ F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Bergen 1969; J. W. Cole and E. R. Wolf, *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley*, New York 1974.

¹⁸ A. Blok, 'The Narcissism of Minor Differences', reprinted in his *Honour and Violence*, Cambridge 2001, p. 115–131.

¹⁹ S. Collins, *The Present State of Russia*, London 1671, p. 67.

²⁰ A useful short account in J. H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, New York 1966, p. 144–162.

²¹ Curzon quoted in D. Power, 'Frontiers', [in:] *Frontiers in Question*, D. Power and N. Standen (eds), p. 2.

different circumstances — in different regions or in different cultural domains some frontiers are more open, others more closed.

Since we hear so much today about frontiers as meeting-points, it may be illuminating to begin by thinking about barriers. Walls and barbed wire cannot keep out ideas but that does not mean there is no such thing as a barrier in the realm of culture. At the least we may identify a series of obstacles which slow down cultural movements, filter them or divert them into different channels.

Physical features such as mountains, forests, or a low density of population all create barriers to communication or exchange²². They delay, even if they do not prevent, the transmission of information. For example, when Maximos the Greek went to Muscovy in 1515, he discovered that his hosts had not yet learned about Columbus's discovery of America. Military borders, like the Roman frontier emphasized by Braudel, or the *Militärgrenze* of Habsburg times, are another kind of barrier. Language and religion may also act as obstacles to the movement of cultural 'goods'.

Let us take the case of language²³. The border between German and the Romance languages, for instance, running more or less from Aachen to Gravelines, has shifted remarkably little over the centuries, suggesting that it was an effective barrier to expansion in either direction. The frontier between Basque and Spanish functioned as a barrier, given the difference between the two languages, although it was unstable, with Basque in retreat before the advance of Spanish over the centuries (like Breton before the advance of French or Welsh or Irish before that of English).

The frontier between the literate and the illiterate was another important barrier in early modern Europe, even if it could be bridged by reading aloud. Differences in writing systems created additional obstacles to communication. For example, it proved almost impossible for Renaissance art and literature to cross the frontier where the Latin alphabet was replaced by Cyrillic or Glagolitic.

The territories of the Latin alphabet were of course more or less the same as the territories of the use of the Latin language and the practice of Latin Christianity. We might say that Eastern or Orthodox Christianity was the real barrier to the spread of the Renaissance eastwards. Religion is perhaps the fundamental symbolic system, crucial in the construction of identity even in a secular age and even more so in an age of religious wars like the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Think of the local conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in the South of France around 1572 and again around 1685, for instance, the popular pressure for the expulsion of the 'other' in what looks today like a movement of 'ethnic cleansing'²⁴.

This kind of symbolic frontier is linked to what Braudel called 'refusal to borrow' (*refus d'emprunter*), which he associated with the resilience of civilisations, their power of survival, their *force de résistance*. Braudel's characteristically wide-ranging examples include the Bulgarians under the rule of the Turks, the Moriscos under the rule of the

²² On forests, S. C. Rowell, „The Lithuanian–Polish Forest Frontier, c. 1422–1600”, [in:] *Frontiers in Question*, D. Power and N. Standen (eds), p. 182–208.

²³ L. Miliš, „Taalkonflikt und taalgrens als onderwerp van historisch onderzoek”, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, vol. LXXXVIII, 1975, p. 301–312.

²⁴ N. Z. Davis, „The Rites of Violence”, reprinted [in:] *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, Stanford 1975, p. 152–188; E. Labrousse, *La révocation de l'édit de Nantes: une foi, une loi, une roi?*, Paris 1990.

Spaniards; and the Japanese resistance to the chair and the table, as well as the rejection of the Reformation in Spain, Italy and France.

Curiously enough, Braudel did not discuss one of the most remarkable cases of cultural resistance in the early modern world: the Islamic rejection of the printing-press — not only Gutenberg's but also the Chinese block press — creating a barrier which may have prevented the press from arriving in the West centuries earlier. The so-called 'gunpowder empires' (Ottoman, Persian and Mughal) were not hostile to innovation in technology but they remained 'manuscript empires' or 'calligraphic states' until as late as the year 1800. The short-lived permission for books to be printed on a single press in Istanbul in the early eighteenth century reveals the religious origins as well as the strength of the forces of resistance²⁵.

Viewing frontiers as barriers helps to solve the problem of their archaism. There is a case for viewing some frontier zones at least as ecological niches preserving medieval culture in early modern times. Examples include the Anglo-Scottish border, the frontier between Christendom and Islam in Spain until 1492, and the one in East-Central Europe until 1699 or even later. In the case of social structures, one thinks of the persistence of serfdom; in the case of technology, of the continuing importance of castles, bows and arrows, and coats of mail, like the sixteenth-century 'hauberk' (as it would have been called in the twelfth century) now in the Hungarian National Museum, or others used by Polish hussars of the same period²⁶. Medieval European society was a society organised for war, and this situation continued on the periphery.

In the case of literature, from Spain to Bosnia, the survival into the sixteenth, seventeenth and even eighteenth centuries of the medieval genres of the epic and the ballad may be linked to two features of the frontier. In the first place, the low rate of literacy, encouraging oral poetry. As the Canadian media theorist Harold Innis wrote in his notebook, 'oral tradition more powerful on frontier'²⁷. In the second place, the condition of permanent warfare, making the stress on strength and valour more relevant than in other parts of Europe. What the English poet Sir Philip Sidney remembered so vividly from his visit to Hungary that he mentioned it in his *Defence of Poetry*, was the singing of martial songs at feasts, which he linked to the 'soldierlike' values of that nation. The forms and values of chivalry survived on the military frontier²⁸.

Another example of apparent archaism on the periphery is that of witch-trials, which both began and ended later in northern, eastern and east-central Europe (in Sweden and Iceland, Finland and Estonia, Poland and Hungary), than they did in western Europe,

²⁵ T. F. Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China and its Spread Westward 1925*, revised ed. New York 1955; B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*, Berkeley 1993; F. Robinson, „Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XXVII, 1993, p. 229–251.

²⁶ Illustrated in R. Brzezinski, *Polish Armies 1569–1696*, London 1987, p. 7.

²⁷ *The Idea File of Harold Innis*, W. Christian (ed.), Toronto 1980, 6.

²⁸ W. J. Entwistle, *European Balladry*, Oxford 1939; A. Angyal, „Die Welt der Grenzfestungen: Ein Kapitel aus der südosteuropäische Geistesgeschichte des 16. und 17. Jhts”, *Südost-Forschungen*, vol. XVI, 1957, p. 1–42; A. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Cambridge, Mass. 1960; J. Reed, *Border Ballads*, London 1973; A. Mackay, „The Ballad and the Frontier in Late Medieval Spain”, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. LII, 1976, p. 15–33.

where they were concentrated into the period 1550–1650. In other words, the spread of witch-trials may be and has been studied as a case of the diffusion of innovation²⁹.

MEETING-PLACES AND LOCALES OF EXCHANGE

Alternatively, we can view frontiers as meeting-places, zones of transition, locales in which cultural exchange takes place and new hybrid forms emerge. In his famous essay on *The Frontier in American History* (1893) Frederick Jackson Turner called it the ‘meeting place between savagery and civilization’. Lucien Febvre emphasized this function of frontiers in general. More recently, the critic Mary-Louise Pratt and the historian Peter Sahlin have produced influential reformulations of the same central idea. Paradoxically enough, in the process of exchange or ‘trans-culturation’, the periphery played a central part³⁰.

Political peripheries, remote from the control of the central government, were often important in this way. During the Reformation, three frontier cities, Antwerp, Strassburg and Basel, played an important role in the production of Protestant literature. In the eighteenth century, at a time when books and journals published in France were subject to censorship, publications in French were produced beyond the frontiers, in Neuchâtel or Geneva or Amsterdam, and smuggled into the country, thus introducing new or foreign ideas to French readers³¹.

Religious frontiers were also meeting-places as well as barriers, even if most people on both sides of the border would probably have been quick to deny this. One example from the early modern period is that of Lorraine, a frontier of Catholicism in which the Church pursued two opposite strategies, reconquest and reconciliation. It has been suggested that the strength of Jansenism in Lorraine may be explained by contacts and exchanges between the local form of Catholicism and the Protestantism on the other side of the border³².

Another fascinating case is that of Silesia in the seventeenth century, the locale in which a major school of German poetry flourished in the period, a group that included Martin Opitz, Andreas Gryphius, and Angelus Silesius. One explanation for this creativity might be that Silesia was situated at a linguistic cross-roads between German, Polish, and

²⁹ B. Baranowski, *Procesy czarownic w Polsce*, Łódź 1952; *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, B. Ankarloo and G. Henningsen (eds), Oxford 1990, especially p. 301–302.

³⁰ L. Febvre, *La terre et l'évolution humaine*, Paris 1922; P. Sahlin, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, Berkeley 1989; M.-L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 1992.

³¹ J.-F. Gilmont, „Trois villes frontières: Anvers, Strasbourg et Bâle”, [in:] *La Réforme et le livre*, J.-F. Gilmont (ed.), Paris 1990, p. 187–90; R. Darton, *The Business of Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Mass. 1979; *Histoire de l'édition française*, H.-J. Martin and R. Chartier (eds), vol. 2, Paris 1938, p. 304–359; E. Eisenstein, *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French Cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution*, Oxford 1992; R. Darton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, New York 1995.

³² P. Chaunu, „Jansénisme et frontière de la Catholicité”, *Revue Historique*, vol. CCXXVII, 1962, p. 115–138.

to a lesser extent Czech. It was also a region where Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist cultures met³³.

Since the frontier between Eastern and Western Christianity was cited in the previous section as a barrier, it should be added that in the early modern period it was sometimes a contact zone. The point might be illustrated with the example of two famous Orthodox (yet unorthodox) churchmen, Cyril Lukaris and Peter Mohila. Lukaris, the Patriarch of Constantinople, was sympathetic to English and Dutch Calvinism, while Mohila, the Metropolitan of Kiev, was influenced by Catholicism, and in particular by Jesuits.

Again, between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries, if not for longer, the city of Lviv (Lehmburg, Lwów) was a multi-cultural city in which people of different religions interacted. When the Armenians constructed their cathedral in the fourteenth century, they commissioned an Italian architect, and so did the Orthodox when they built a new church at the beginning of the seventeenth century. German, Italian and Armenian craftsmen all had their share in the creation of a hybrid style of architecture which combined elements from their different traditions³⁴.

Religious frontiers are not always as impassable as they look. We might even say that these peripheries are also centres, centres of cultural hybridization. Some of the most striking examples of cultural exchange across religious borders come from the frontiers between Christianity and Islam. In the Middle Ages, Spain was the locale *par excellence* of such exchanges, with its Mozarabs (Christians living under the rule of Muslims) and Mudejars (Muslims living under the rule of Christians). Some people wrote Arabic in the Latin script, others wrote Spanish in the Arabic script, and poets might mix the two languages in their lyrics, while churches were built by Muslim craftsmen decorated with the geometrical designs customary in the case of mosques. There were shrines, such as that of San Ginés, which attracted devotion from Muslims and Christians alike³⁵.

We find a similar exchange on the Muslim-Christian border in East-Central Europe in the early modern period. The Turkish scholar Halil İnalcık has described the culture on the Ottoman side of the border as very different from that of Istanbul, less official and less orthodox. The frontier zone, whether Muslim or Christian, had much in common culturally, in contrast to the rival centres of Istanbul and Vienna³⁶. In the Balkans, for instance, some Christians used to visit Muslim shrines and some Muslims to

³³ H. Schöffler, *Deutsche Osten im Deutschen Geist von Martin Opitz zu Christian Wolff*, Frankfurt 1940; M. Szyrocki, *Martin Opitz*, Berlin 1956; B. Ravičovič, „Les conceptions religieuses de Martin Opitz”, *Études Germaniques*, vol. XXI, 1966, p. 329–347; M. Szyrocki, „Deutsche–polnische Austauschprozesse auf der Wende vom 16. zum 17. Jht”, [in:] *Internationaler Osnabrücker Kongress zur Kulturgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, K. Garber (ed.), Tübingen 1989, p. 688–700.

³⁴ N. A. Yevsina, „L'viv”, *Dictionary of Art*, J. Turner (ed.), vol. XIX, London 1996, p. 835–837.

³⁵ A. Castro, *España en su historia: cristianos, moros y judíos*, 1948: second ed., Barcelona 1983; *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain*, V. Mann et al. (eds), New York 1992.

³⁶ H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, London 1973, p. 6–9, 186–202. Vide also W. H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier*, Chicago 1964. For an earlier period, cf. D. Obolesky, „Byzantine Frontier Zones and Cultural Exchanges”, *Actes du 14e Congrès Internationale des Études Byzantines*, 1974, p. 301–313.

frequent Christian shrines. There is some reason for following David Abulafia and describing the frontier as 'a state of mind'³⁷.

In the course of their wars with the Turks, the early modern Hungarian and Polish nobility adopted some Turkish modes of combat, such as the use of the scimitar (the Englishman Fynes Morison, one of Mączak's favourite travellers, described the 'Polonians' as armed with 'a Turkish scimitar'). These nobles might even be perceived as Turks by travellers coming from Western Europe. Such a perception was encouraged by the use of the kaftan, or Persian carpets or horse trappings of oriental design, whether these items were imported or made in Poland (in Lwów, for example, or Zamość), in an oriental style. A study of 430 inventories from seventeenth-century Kraków revealed the importance of Turkish textiles and ceramics in the daily life of the burghers³⁸. The price of 'Sarmatism', of the desire of the Poles to distinguish themselves from Western Europeans, led to them being perceived as 'orientals' in the age of what has been called the 'invention' of Eastern Europe³⁹.

In Transylvania, at a time when its rulers paid tribute to the sultan, Christian churches were decorated with Turkish carpets, while the pulpit of the Calvinist temple in Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca) was decorated with floral designs reminiscent of the ceramics of Iznik. In the early eighteenth century, in newly-reconquered Hungary, some covers for communion tables in Calvinist temples were embroidered in a hybrid Turkish-Hungarian style⁴⁰. In architecture, churches in Pecs and elsewhere were turned into mosques after the Ottoman conquest. When they returned to Christian use. The minarets added by the Turks were not demolished.

On the basis of these examples I should like to draw two general conclusions, or at least to propose them for discussion. In the first place, borders or 'marches', as they were sometimes called in early modern Britain, often appear to be zones with their own distinctive culture or customs, distinguished by archaism and by unusually intense cultural exchange. They were not so much cultural frontiers as frontier cultures.

In the second place, this intense exchange does not imply that individuals and groups living in these zones believed or felt that they belonged to the same culture. We have to consider the problem of the meaning of the frontier for the people who inhabited this zone, the problem of border identities⁴¹. The early modern Hungarian and Polish nobility fought the Turks and described themselves as the defenders of Christendom or Europe from the Muslim or Ottoman menace.

³⁷ F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols., Oxford 1929; D. Abulafia, „Seven Types of Ambiguity”, [in:] *Medieval Frontiers*, D. Abulafia and I. Berend (eds), p. 1–34, at 34. Cf. Ch. Halperin, „Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. XXVI, 1984, p. 442–466.

³⁸ J. Bieniarz, „Die türkischen Einflüsse in der bürgerlichen Kultur Krakaus im 17. Jahrhundert”, [in:] *Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen der Türkenkriege*, O. Pickl (ed.), Graz 1971, p. 152–158.

³⁹ T. Mańkowski, *Orient w polskiej kulturze artystycznej*, Wrocław-Kraków 1959; S. Cynarski, „The Shape of Sarmatian Ideology in Poland”, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, vol. XIX, 1968, p. 5–17; L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994.

⁴⁰ G. Palotay, *Lés éléments turcs-ottomans des broderies hongroises*, Budapest 1940. Cf. *Siebenbürgen als Beispiel europäischen Kulturaustausches* P. Philippi (ed.), Cologne and Vienna 1975.

⁴¹ T. M. Wilson and H. Donnan (eds), *Border Identities*.

The case of medieval Spain is more complex, since Christians and Muslims often lived in peace and a Christian might make an alliance with a Muslim to attack a Christian neighbour. All the same, the evidence of late medieval Spanish pogroms (by Christians against Muslims as well as Jews) shows that cultural exchange was not always accompanied by cultural solidarity. As a preliminary hypothesis I would suggest that border identities were even more multiple and fluid than identities usually are, often shifting from solidarity to conflict and back again.

As in the case of the two villages studied by Cole and Wolf but on a much grander scale, we find competition between groups on opposite sides of the border and the 'heightening' of differences, however great the number of shared cultural items. The narcissism of minor differences is sometimes accompanied by collective amnesia or denial of cultural borrowing from the other side. It is unlikely that Christian borderers in Spain or East-Central Europe admitted that their scimitars or kaftans or carpets or the floral decorations in churches were all Arab or Turkish in origin.

HOW MANY EUROPES?

Even a brief survey of cultural frontiers in early modern Europe can hardly avoid confronting a very large question, what were the main cultural divisions of early modern Europe? How many Europes were there? To answer such a question requires a book rather than a short article, but it is at least possible to examine a few of the answers given in the past and to distinguish different cultural domains.

In the case of language, we can speak of three Europes, since the major division was and is between the areas dominated by the Romance, Germanic and Slav languages (even if a number of languages, from Basque to Finnish, fall outside this classification). In the case of religion, we might speak of two Europes in 1500, Western and Eastern Christendom, turning into three after the rise of Protestantism (without forgetting the Jews and Muslims or indeed the conflicts between different kinds of Protestants).

Divisions by material culture, political culture and social customs were also important. In the case of culinary culture, for instance, we may distinguish two Europes, divided by the frontiers of wine and beer, oil and butter⁴². In the case of housing, or what the Germans call *Wohnkultur*, there were three Europes: the stone, brick and wood regions, more or less corresponding to Mediterranean, Northern and Eastern Europe.

In the second place, political culture. In 1500, there were about 500 independent political units in Europe. A glance at the map shows that small states were generally located in the centre, in the Holy Roman Empire, the Netherlands, North Italy and Switzerland. A substantial number of those small states were republics in an age of monarchies. Why? The obvious answer is that these states were located on Europe's 'trade-route belt', as Stein Rokkan called it, and were dominated by commercial cities, while some of them were true city-states. At the risk of paradox it might also be suggested that these small states, despite their central position, occupied a border zone,

⁴² M. Montanari, *The Culture of Food*, Oxford 1993.

a zone between larger and more powerful state that allowed them to flourish like flowers in the interstices between rocks⁴³.

In the third place, even a cultural approach to Europe should take into account the geography of early modern social structures, structures that may be translated into cultural rules or customs. The Hajnal line has already been mentioned⁴⁴. The difference between the two demographic regimes west and east of the line might be explained in terms of collective strategy, viewing late marriage and celibacy, especially for women, as responses to high densities of population and forms of birth control. The rise of serfdom east of the Elbe at a time when it was in decline west of the Elbe might be explained in a similar way. In the West, land was the scarce factor of production, so the ruling class tried to take it from the agricultural workers. East of the Elbe, the scarce factor was labour, so that it was more profitable to tie the workers to the land.

However, if historians wish to divide early modern Europe into culture-areas, they need to superimpose the maps of language, religion, politics and so on. Language and religion (Romance and Catholic, Germanic and Protestant, Slav and Orthodox) overlapped in early modern Europe but they obviously did not coincide, as the example of *Slavia Romana* shows. Similar qualifications need to be made about attempts to link Protestantism with capitalism, with science or with classicism in the arts, as a number of distinguished sociologists and historians have attempted to do⁴⁵.

One of the scholars most concerned with this problem was the Hungarian medievalist Jenő Szűcs. He distinguished three Europes, Western; Eastern (Russia) and Central (distinguishing East-Central Europe, oriented westwards, from South-Eastern Europe, which looked east)⁴⁶. This suggestion obviously needs to be placed in the political context of the time in which it was formulated, the 1970s, and viewed as an anti-Soviet move, but that is no reason for not taking the idea seriously today or trying to refine it. The most serious weakness in the scheme, in my view at least, is the lack of a place in it for the important cultural differences between North and South, between Scotland (say) and Sicily.

Adding a Mediterranean element to the model would give us four Europes. Still more useful, however, at least in my opinion, is an older model that gives us five Europes — Atlantic or Western Europe; Baltic Europe; Mediterranean or Southern Europe; Central Europe; and Eastern Europe⁴⁷. In the case of the early modern period, given the importance of maritime transport, the organization of this model around three seas makes it particularly attractive, in line with the work of Braudel on the Mediterranean and Białostocki and Małowski on the Baltic⁴⁸.

⁴³ S. Rokkan, „Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building”, [in:] *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Ch. Tilly (ed.), Princeton 1975, p. 562–600, at 576; Y. Durand, *Les républiques au temps des monarchies*, Paris 1973.

⁴⁴ J. Hajnal, „European Marriage”.

⁴⁵ M. Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, 1904, reprinted Tübingen, 1920; R. Merton, „Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Osiris* vol. IV, 1938, p. 360–620; V.-L. Tapié, *Baroque et classicisme*, Paris 1957.

⁴⁶ J. Szűcs, „The Three Historical Regions of Europe”, *Acta Historica*, vol. XXIX, 1983, p. 131–184.

⁴⁷ H. Hassinger, *Das geographische Wexen Mitteleuropas*, Freiburg 1917.

⁴⁸ J. Białostocki, „Baltic Area”; M. Małowski, *Croissance et régression en Europe*, Paris 1972.

Problems remain. Britain, for example, is surely closer to Sweden than to Portugal, to which it is linked in H a s s i n g e r ' s Atlantic region. The model might be refined by taking more account of the North Sea and the Black Sea. The reason for introducing the model, and indeed the main point of this article, is to encourage historians of early modern Europe to think comparatively, following a path already trodden by that observant traveller in the past, Antoni Mączak.