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Tarihi Rus Haritalarında Osmanlı Devleti (1700-1917) [The Ottoman Empire in Historical Russian Maps (1700-1917)]. Author of text Mikhail Bashanov, transl. and ed. by İlyas Kemaloğlu, TDBB, 2023.*

Başak Kuzakçı**

History can be defined as the actions and words of people, but it is important where, in what situation, at what distance all these occurred, and what kind of natural events affected these actions. In addition, cartography is used to examine the locations of communities, both old and new city names, and their geography through maps and general descriptions. History is doomed to fail in its search for truth without the information the map gives about geography. The book titled *Tarihi Rus Haritalarında Osmanlı Devleti (1700-1917)* [The Ottoman Empire in Historical Russian Maps (1700-1917)], prepared for publication by Mikhail Bashanov and İlyas Kemaloğlu, significantly contributed to Turkish history literature in this context. In this book, the mapping process of the Ottoman geography by the Russians is discussed in depth, based on Russian archive records.

Turkish communities and states, which have been skilled in adapting to geography and turning geographical conditions into economic, political, and military advantages since the beginning of history, do not have a strong tradition in mapping and recording the geography in question. The origins of scientific geography, cartography, and atlas production date back to the Ptolemaic period in Europe in the 2nd century BC. With the contribution

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of the scientific experience in question, cartography, and atlas printing emerged as one of the most powerful areas of print capitalism in *the Age of Discovery* and early modern Europe from the 15th to 16th centuries. Netherlands and Venice became two major production centers in this area. In the book prepared by Mikhail Bashanov and İlyas Kemaloğlu, based on this historical background, the process of Russia's mapping of the Ottoman geography and the political, military, and economic factors behind this activity are discussed. The authors explain the mentioned issues based on Russian archival sources.

These were commercial and political targets during the Age of Inner Asian Discovery of the Russian Tsardom, which started approximately in the second half of the 17th century and reached its peak during the reign of Tsar Peter, like Europe's adventure of discovery of the New World in the 15-16 centuries. At the same time, the main goal of the Russians was to map unknown geographies and make them known. For this reason, embassy convoys sent to the interior of Asia were accompanied by cartographers and geographers, without exception. Although not as deep and rooted as in Europe, cartography in the European sense began to flourish in the Russian Tsardom in the 17th century, especially with the contributions of the Dutch cartographer-ethnographer-historian such as Nicholas Witsen.[1] Despite the time shifts, in other words, synchronization differences, in the history of Ottoman and Russian modernization, the most common motif identified is the role of foreign experts. In the field of cartography, the Ottoman Empire primarily benefited from foreign experts. Early scientific maps developed in Russia and the Ottoman Empire as translations of European maps. However, it should be added that Russia benefited from European experts on a much larger scale than the Ottoman Empire. It should be considered that the developments in question took place in the 18th century in Russia and in the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire.

This book explains the role of foreign experts in the development of cartography in the Russian Empire and the transition period from archaic efforts to scientific methods. In addition, the study directly deals with the birth, development, and institutional progress of the science of cartography in Russia. In addition, it reveals in a very concise manner the systematic policy-making process of the Russian Tsardom in the field of cartography

and the institutional developments in cartography. Based on this ground, it focuses on the policy development process of the Russian Tsardom to map the Ottoman's northern borders, the Balkan lands, and subsequently the entire empire's geography for commercial, military, and political reasons. The military revolution in Europe, the transition from mercantilism to capitalism, the emergence of world economies, and print capitalism enabled cartography in Europe to be based on very precise, calculated, and scientific foundations. Russia, which inherited this tradition, established its own cartography infrastructure in the 18th century. The book reveals the importance of the personal patronage and initiatives of the tsars and tsarinas in the development and institutionalization of scientific cartography in Russia. These developments are directly explained in the context of state policy.

This book is not only one of the rare studies on cartography in Turkish historical literature but also, for the first time, in a comprehensive and methodological manner, Ottoman maps, which exist in Russian state archives, libraries, and statesmen's collections. The author of the book examined the Russian map collections that developed at the beginning of the 19th century and identified maps and geography works in manuscripts and prints, Russian and other European languages about the Ottoman lands and seas. In this respect, it went beyond the theoretical-encyclopedic explanations of Russian cartography and the mapping of the Ottoman Empire and made a very valuable contribution to Turkish historical literature.

Russia's process of mapping the lands of the Ottoman Empire began with the Ottoman-Russian wars that spanned the 18th century. The authors state that the mapping activity in the first half of the 18th century was limited to the topographic examination of battlefields and front lines and the work of military survey engineer officers and topographers, and state that the military character of the mapping studies of this period was dominant. They also determined that in addition to the land parts of the empire, they also mapped the coastlines, especially the Black Sea.

In the second half of the 18th century, especially during the Ottoman-Russian wars that started in 1768 and lasted intermittently until 1792, Russian cartography also witnessed scientific revolutions. Tsarina Catherine's reforms that transformed Russia also manifested themselves in the field of

cartography. Thus, imperial institutions and schools directly responsible for topography and cartography were established. During the wars that continued a wide front extending from the north of the Black Sea to Romania and the Balkans, the Russian general staff, and military strategists experienced difficulties in terms of command and administration due to the lack of detailed and accurate topographic maps. For this reason, they began to work on mapping almost the "four corners" of the empire. In the book, it is stated that during this period, Russian cartography was still not at the European level, the maps made were far from meeting military needs, maps were generally brought from Europe, and the measurements made by Russian engineers were incorrect. For this reason, mistakes occurred in the operational plans of a great military strategist like Rumyantsev. It can be said that the Ottoman wars served as an incentive and, in a way, a catalyst in the development of scientific cartography in Russia. During these wars, initiatives were initiated to map not only the Ottoman Balkans, Crimea, and the Black Sea, but also the Bosphorus and the Mediterranean coasts. During *the Çeşme Raid/Battle of Çeşme*, the Russian Navy benefited from European guides and hydrographic maps and assigned officers to conduct scientific investigations between the Mediterranean and the Sea of Marmara to produce its own maps.

The Russian Tsardom, which included cartographers and geographers in its embassy convoys for the exploration of Inner Asia during the time of Tsar Peter, continued the same tradition within the framework of the 19th century policies on the Ottoman Empire and in the process of mapping the Ottoman geography. Russia, which continued its strategic policies not only during war periods but also during peace periods, included survey officers and topography experts in the delegations and enabled them to make measurements and prepare maps along the route. In the book, historical maps found in Russian catalogs and their technical features, their common features with Ottoman cartography, and map preparation methods of the period are included in detail. Additionally, photographs and visuals of the tools used in the map preparation process are also included. The academic rigor of Bashanov and Kemaloğlu, who published the book bilingually in Turkish and Russian, in the publication process of the visuals, emphasizes Ottoman relations in the development of Russian cartography by bringing together historical, technical, and strategic data. In addition, in the study,

the technical aspects and strategic features of the Ottoman maps in the Russian archives are revealed very clearly in terms of historical methodology.

Strategies against the Ottoman Empire, military operations, and the expansion policy towards the Caucasus and the Balkans are the main motivational sources in the development of cartography in accordance with European technical and scientific principles in Russia. As stated by the authors, although Russian cartography was in the development phase from the 16th century to the end of the 18th century, it appeared far from Europe's scientific certainty and technical infrastructure. With the Ottoman-Russian wars that started in the last quarter of the 18th century, topographic Ottoman maps for military purposes began to be prepared both in the new structure of the military administration and in the cartography, departments established within the Russian general staff. The institutional structure in question has developed rapidly since the 19th century. In the book, the development process of Russian cartography is not explained only by institutional and technical developments. The development of Russian science academies, advances in the field of astronomy, and the progress of military and civilian higher education institutions are evaluated in the context of their contributions to cartography. In fact, this point of view in the book shows that military or technical developments cannot be permanent and successful without scientific mentality and institutional development. From this point of view, the reasons why progress in technical fields such as cartography was quite slow in the experience of the Ottoman Empire become apparent. Cartography based on scientific foundations is only possible with a stable institutional structure that provides education in fields such as trigonometry, astronomy, topography, and geography. In this study, current scientific developments in Russia, which date mainly to the first half of the 19th century, are included in this framework.

During the Age of Empires in the 19th century, Russian cartography entered a new phase. Thus, both the borders of Russia and the Ottoman geography began to be mapped in accordance with scientific principles and in various types of maps that were not only of a military nature. While maps prepared in the archaic periods of Russian cartography were largely in German and Russian, French replaced German in the 19th century. The authors, who emphasize the European influence on the birth and progress

of cartography in the Russian Tsardom from this perspective, also explain with examples that the scientific mentality in Europe was not fully adopted. Unlike European cartography, Russian maps are not offered for sale or shared. Since maps were considered very important strategic products, they were kept in high secrecy. During the scientific map period of the Russian Tsardom, the nature of Ottoman maps naturally changed. In the study, it is stated that studies in the form of Ottoman maps in the 19th century began to develop during the 1828-1829 war. Scientific detailed maps of a part of the European territory of the Ottoman Empire, Memleketeyn, and the Bosphorus region are examined as examples. Another important evidence of the transformation of Russia's 19th century cartography is that, unlike the previous war periods, the regions for which there was not enough data were left blank instead of being mapped incorrectly. Care was taken to ensure that the scientifically based Ottoman maps, which were compiled using various foreign sources and astronomy sources, were as accurate as possible. As emphasized in the book, this quality is one of the concrete indicators of the mental transformation in Russian cartography. Other examples also prove that the contributions of Ottoman wars to Russian cartography continued to intensify during the 19th-century wars.

During the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War, geodesy, topography, and astronomy studies were carried out simultaneously with the conflicts, especially on the battlefield. The mentioned war, as strongly emphasized in the study, is seen as the first experience of the new scientific era in the context of Russian cartography and Ottoman maps studies in Russia. For the first time in cartography, topography units were assigned to war and made first-hand scientific systematic markings, geodesy studies, and astronomical measurements in a wide area on the front. The first studies on mapping the inner regions of the Ottoman Empire, except Rumelia, Memleketeyn, the Bosphorus line, and the Black Sea coast, began during the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War period. Topography expert officers who were captured in the Ottoman territory or undertook various diplomatic duties made measurements and drawings on the routes they passed and prepared data and maps about the eastern and inner regions of the Ottoman geography.

This study on the Ottoman Empire in historical Russian maps (1700-1917) not only discusses the emergence of scientific Ottoman maps in Russia in a historical context but also provides data about technical features and map-making methods. In this way, the subject is examined in a holistic manner with its history, and technical, scientific development processes. In addition, examples of maps in Russian archives and private collections symbolizing the periods mentioned were included to visualize the subject. In this book, in addition to military and official maps, developments and map examples in private and civilian Russian cartography that emerged with the technical and scientific advances in the 19th century are included, and the effect of military control on this process is revealed.

Russia's comprehensive and revolutionary military reforms throughout the 19th century were directly reflected in Russian cartography. *Russian Military Topographic Depot*, the center of Russian military cartography, was transformed into *the State Cartography Department/Russian Geographical Society*. In addition, a major educational reform was carried out by transferring Russian military education to academies. Another issue that is constantly emphasized in this book, which we have reviewed, is the reforms in military training, dispatch, and administrative structure. As a matter of fact, these themes are among the main factors that enable the development of Russian cartography. After the Russian military reform in the 1830s, geodesy, topography, and optical surveying were included in the core courses of the military academy training curriculum, and Russian military cartography was placed on a very solid scientific foundation. New studies on mapping the Rumelia regions of the Ottoman geography, as well as the Caucasus and Anatolia, where Russia concentrated its strategic goals, began in the same period. As evaluated in the study, the strategic goals of the Russian Tsardom and the General Staff and the deficiencies experienced on the battlefield determined the direction of cartography activities. As a matter of fact, during the period of softening in Ottoman-Russian diplomatic relations in the early 1830s, especially after *the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi/the Treaty of Sultan's Pier* in 1833, topography expert officers were sent to remote provinces of the Ottoman geography on secret missions during peacetime. The officers who made measurements and collected data here also examined the geography and road networks and presented this information to *the Russian Cartography Departments*. In addition to the

terrestrial Ottoman maps of Russia, hydrographic maps are also discussed. Studies on almost every type of cartography have been carried out, and maps have been prepared that specifically identify land borders as well as the Ottoman coastline and sea routes.

Cartography was identified as one of the tools of imperialism in the 19th century. For many reasons such as military strategy, ethnology, determination of natural riches, and determination of transportation areas, European countries have devoted resources to mapping the surrounding geographies. In the Ottoman example, as stated in the study, there is an imperial competition. The race of England, France and, after the 1870s, Germany to map the Ottoman geography accelerated the policy of Russian cartographers to produce new maps based on this data. The data in question makes it possible to evaluate the 19th century projects for the Ottoman Empire from a new perspective, in terms of mapping activities.

During Russia's military revolution in the 1830s, whose scientific quality increased in the 1820s, the cartography process, supported by academy education, continued its development during *the Crimean War* and largely during *the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War*, and successful quality map production continued. Especially after the war in question, detailed geodesy and topography studies were accelerated in the Rumelia lands and the Caucasus geography, which were captured by Russia, and complete maps were prepared. Russia's mapping activity entered the second phase during the modernization period after 1878. Thus, open, or secret cartography measurements were carried out over the entire Ottoman geography, from the Straits to the interior of Anatolia. As Bashanov and Kemaloğlu put forward, Russian cartography continued uninterruptedly from the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, in other words, until the beginning of *the First World War*. Continuous updating of old maps by directly applying new measurement techniques and scientific methods was the basis of Russian military policies. One of the main goals was to perfect the existing maps in every respect by constantly updating the missing data regarding Ottoman geography with confirmation from various sources. In this respect, this book which we are considering can be considered as the exhibition of the development process in question with historical methodology through examples.

The book titled "The Ottoman Empire in Historical Russian Maps (1700-1917)" is not content with introducing the Ottoman maps prepared during the Russian Tsarist period and providing encyclopedic information in Russian archives, private collections, and library warehouses. In addition, the study also considers the process of mapping the Ottoman geography by Russian cartographers, the contributions of Russian military modernization, and Ottoman-Russian relations to this process. The maps in the study were obtained from the *Russian State Military Archive*, *Russian State Archives of Ancient Documents*, *State Historical Museum*, *Russian State Library*, *National Library of Russia,* and museum collections in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The book explains the motivating role of Ottoman relations in the development of Russian scientific cartography, the contributions of the scientific revolution to the advancement of cartography, and the manifestations of imperialist competition on Ottoman geography in the field of cartography. In this respect, it offers original, new perspectives in the context of Ottoman and Turkish historiography. Beyond this, by bringing to light the Ottoman maps of Russia that are outside the focus of Turkish historical literature, it brings to the agenda of Turkish historiography a previously unexamined aspect of 19th century Ottoman-Russian relations. It is certain that this book, which was brought to the attention of the Turkish readership and the scientific community, will lead to new scientific studies on Ottoman cartography, cartography and military, scientific investigations, and projects on Ottoman geography in Europe.

Notes

1 Keuning, Johannes. "Nicolas Witsen as a Cartographer." *Imago Mundi*, 11, 1954, pp. 95-110.