



DENOTATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF “HOMELAND” IN WESTERN (BRITISH AND AMERICAN) CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC CONTEXTS

Yusuf YAYLACI

Süleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Philology, Researcher-Instructor

Abstract

The concept of ‘vatan-homeland’ constitutes the core elements of national identity with its connotations in the native language. In this article we aim to identify and describe different connotations of the concept of ‘vatan-homeland’ in the contexts of British - American culture and language. The investigation and comparison in the context of Turkic languages – Kazakh and Turkish, is intended to be the subject of other articles, which is believed to give the reader further insights into the contribution of national-local values (of the concept of ‘vatan-homeland’ and its denotations) to the mentality of generations.

In this article, we use “concept” in the following sense:

“A concept is an abstract idea or a mental symbol, typically associated with a corresponding representation in language or symbology, that denotes all of the objects in a given category or class of entities, interactions, phenomena, or relationships between them. Concepts are *abstract* in that they omit the differences of the things in their extension, treating them as if they were identical. They are *universal* in that they apply equally to every thing in their extension. Concepts are also *the basic elements of propositions*, much the same way a word is the basic semantic element of a sentence. Unlike perceptions, which are particular images of individual objects, concepts cannot be visualized. Because they are not, themselves, individual perceptions, concepts are *discursive and result from reason*. They can only be thought and designated by a name.

A ‘homeland’ is the concept of the territory (cultural geography) to which an ethnic group holds a long history and a deep cultural association with —the country in which a particular national identity began. As a common noun, it simply connotes the country of one's origin. In this article we will use the term ‘homeland’ in a general sense as an umbrella term for ‘motherland’ or ‘fatherland’, which also refers to the country of origin and native land.

Key Words: concept, homeland, native land, motherland, fatherland, country, flag, national anthem, patriotism, patriotic, songs, poems, symbols, holiday rituals.

İNGİLİZLERDE VE AMERİKALILARDA KÜLTÜREL VE DİLSEL OLARAK ANA YURDU BELİRLEME KAVRAMLARI

Özet

Bu makalede “vatan” ya da “anavatan” sözünün bizde neleri uyandırdığı (tarih, derin kültürel ilişkiler, millî kimlik gibi) ve bu kavramların nelerle simgeleştirildiği; ayrıca İngilizlerin ve Amerikalıların söz konusu kavramları hangi unsurlarla (bayrak, millî marş, amblem vb.) ifade ettikleri anlatılmaya çalışıldı. Sonrasında ise bu kavramların Türk dillerinde (özellikle Kırgızca ve Kazakça) hangi anlam çerçevesi içinde kullanıldığı, bunun dışında politikacıların söz konusu kavramlar aracılığıyla kendi toplumlarını nasıl yönlendirdikleri ifade edilmek istendi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: konsept, anlam, vatan, yurt, memleket, ülke, bayrak, millî marş, vatanseverlik, vatansever, şiirler, destanlar, semboller, gelenekler.

“The infants love their cradles, children love their playground, young people love the place where they earn their living, the old people love the lonely corners where they might think they belong to, the sons and daughters love their mothers, and the father loves his family in the same way that one (anyone) loves their home country - vatan” (Woodlands Junior Shool’s Website, 2007: 102).

A well-known Turkish National poet - Namık Kemal

The Concept of “Homeland” in the Symbols of the United Kingdom

The images that are associated with England and Britain are found on souvenirs. Most commonly depicted are the flag of England (St George’s Cross), Royal Guardsmen, Double deck Buses, Red Post Boxes, Telephone kiosks, The Royal family, Buckingham Palace, Houses of Parliament, St Paul’s Cathedral, Policemen, The London Eye, Pub Signs and Tea (Soars and Liz, 1998: 57). Another traditional symbol of England is The Three Lions Coat of Arms, which is usually used as a badge, for instance as the emblem of the English National Football Team.

The English national flower is the Red Rose, which can be found on the badge of the English Rugby Union Team. The English ‘red rose’, which was adopted as England’s emblem around the time of the War of the Roses - civil wars (1455-1485) between the royal house of Lancaster (whose emblem was a red rose) and the royal house of York (whose emblem was a white rose). King Richard III and the Yorkists were defeated at Bosworth on 22 August 1485 by the future Henry VII. The two roses were combined to make the Tudor rose (a red rose with a white centre) by Henry VII when he married Elizabeth of York. The oak tree is also another traditional symbol of England (Soars and Liz, 1998: 57).

The British people and the government demonstrate the love of their country by using these symbols in intercultural relations when they teach their language as the international *lingua-franca* and when they take part in international sports competitions or by any other means. These symbols inspire highly strong feelings of patriotism when people of other nationalities recognize them as “The English”. Once being described as “the empire where the sun never sets”, the English is commonly recognized to be very proud of their own national identity, refusing to learn about other languages and cultures. They are famous for their cold-bloodedness and stubbornness in this respect (Miller, 2001: 126).

Besides the symbols mentioned above, each part of the United Kingdom has its own national flower. In addition to *the English ‘red rose’*, each part of the United Kingdom has its own national flower. Shamrock is the national flower of Northern Ireland. *The shamrock* is a three-leaved plant similar to a clover. It is said that St. Patrick used the shamrock to illustrate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Thistle is the national flower of Scotland. *The thistle* is a prickly-leaved purple flower which was first used in the fifteenth century as a symbol of defence. The national flower of Wales is usually considered to be *the daffodil*. However, *the leek* has even older associations as a traditional symbol of Wales - possibly because of its colours, white over green, echo the ancient Welsh flag (Soars and Liz, 1998: 84). The people of the United Kingdom make associations with their home countries and these flowers, which grow on their lands. They attribute to the symbolic powers of these flowers to unite them as different nations with a self identity and self proud. These symbols remind them of who they are and what for they are supposed to work and live with highly appreciated feelings of patriotism.

The symbolic interpretations of the British patriotism are also reflected in their holidays, songs and poems as well as in other aspects of their cultural life. The following excerpt from the poem (*Poem lyrics of My Native Land* by Sir Walter Scott) is just one of these:

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,

Who never to himself hath said,

This is my own, my native land!

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,

As home his footsteps he hath turn'd

From wandering on a foreign strand!

If such there breathe, go, mark him well;

For him no Minstrel raptures swell;

High though his titles, proud his name,

Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;

...

The poet uses and deliberately chooses strong words of high emotions for the love of his native land (see the underlined words in the poem). This also proves that how proudly and unlimitedly feel the poet devoted to his home country.

One of the famous British patriotic songs, *Land of Hope and Glory*, is also a very good example of the strong British patriotic feelings for their home country. The following encyclopedic information, extracted from an internet encyclopedia, presents the history of the song and rituals associated with it:

“Land of Hope and Glory is a British patriotic song, found to an extent throughout the Commonwealth Realms. It is particularly noted for being played on the occasion of the Last Night of the Proms amidst much flag-waving, and for having long been seen as the unofficial anthem of the Conservative Party. The tune for the song was taken from the first of Edward Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance marches, which is used as a graduation march in some American universities and high schools.

The song is also used as the anthem of England at the Commonwealth Games; England, as part of the United Kingdom, has as its anthem God Save the Queen (or King).

The music to which the words below are set is the trio theme from Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1. Words were designed for the melody on the suggestion of King Edward VII who told Elgar he thought the melody would make a great song. When Elgar was requested to write a work for the King's coronation, he worked the suggestion into his Coronation Ode, for which he asked the poet and essayist A. C. Benson to write the words. The seventh and last section of the Ode uses the march's melody.

...

The reference to the extension of the British Empire's boundaries seems to reflect the Boer War, recently won at the time of writing, in which Britain gained further territory, endowed with considerable mineral wealth.

The writing of the song is precisely contemporaneous with the publication of Cecil Rhodes' will — in which the great empire builder bequeathed his considerable wealth for the specific purpose of promoting "the extension of British rule throughout the world", and added a long detailed list of territories which Rhodes wanted brought under British rule and colonised by Britons (Wikipedia, 2007: 26).

It is obvious that *the patriotism* and the symbols that denote 'the love of one's home country' find its roots in the history of the country, as this is the case in the cultures and languages of other nations of our concern.

The Concept of "Homeland" in the Symbols of the United States

Among the most commonly used symbols that are associated with the "American" identity, the first one that comes into one's mind is the Statue of Liberty. The history of the famous *Statue of Liberty*, is presented by the National Park Service, as well as the *Independence Hall*, which is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Independence Hall was built between 1732 and 1756 as the State House or capitol. At this building, colonial leaders met to plan the future of the new nation. Many of the most important documents in U.S. history were written at Independence Hall. The Declaration of Independence was adopted here on July 4, 1776 (Independence Day). The Articles of Confederation were ratified here in 1781. The Constitution was written here and signed on September 17, 1787. Independence Hall was also the home of the Liberty Bell for over 200 years) (Appiah, 2005: 67). A complete history of the *Great Seal of the United States*, detailing its development and uses is presented by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, (as of September 1996) (Smith, 2005: 98). The famous American oath, *the Pledge of Allegiance*, claims that the Americans swear to support their governments (regardless of differences in political views) to realize the American ideals. This oath is presented in government's official websites to keep the citizen's devotion to the country 'awakened' (Mazlish, 2005: 102).

The American flag is definitely the strongest symbol of 'homeland' and 'patriotism' for Americans, which also inspired the National Anthem of US. The Flag has thirteen equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white; there is a blue rectangle in the upper hoist-side corner bearing 50 small white five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars; the 50 stars represent the 50 states, the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies; known as Old Glory; the design and colors have been the basis for a

number of other flags including Chile, Liberia, Malaysia, and Puerto Rico from *The CIA World Fact book* (Spolsky, 1998: 12).

The specifications for the colors of the flag are: Blue PMS 281 and Red PMS 193. The first flag was made by Betsy Ross. Information on Betsy Ross, the history of the flag and on flag etiquette may be found at the *Betsy Ross Home* (Schendle, 2001: 56) Page maintained by the Independence Hall Association of Philadelphia.

The history of the flag, graphics of historic and current flags, neat graphical representations of how to hang and display the flag, etc.

The recent very strong display of patriotism in American life was after the terrorist attack on September 11, which was deliberately lead and provoked by the government in order to get the political power in the international fight against terrorists elsewhere in the world and in their declaration of war against Saddam Hussein in Iraq. An American writer, *Donald W. Miller, Jr.*, who is a cardiac surgeon in Seattle, describes the situation in his article as follows:

“In the wake of the September 11 attacks, Americans are showing their patriotism with fervor comparable to that seen after the attack on Pearl Harbor sixty years ago. Children once again recite the Pledge of Allegiance in their classrooms. People fly the American flag on their automobiles and sing the Star Spangled Banner at public events with heightened passion.

Such act of patriotism date back to this country’s founding. Americans have displayed their flag ever since the Continental Congress certified its initial design, with thirteen stars, in June 1777. Francis Scott Key wrote the lyrics for the Star-Spangled Banner in 1814 to celebrate America’s victory against the British in a battle at Baltimore in the War of 1812. He penned these lyrics to what was then a popular pub song, written in 1770 by John Smith (Congress passed an act in 1931 making it, with Key’s lyrics, the national anthem).

The United States has gone through three stages in its 225-year history. They started out as a republic (1776-1864). When the South lost the Civil War it became a nation (1865-1916); and when President Wilson sent American troops overseas to fight in the Great War in Europe the United States became an empire (1917-the present). Patriotism in America has also gone through various phases, like the country it honors.

America’s first patriots included the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence. In this declaration they mutually pledged to each other “our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor” in their decision to secede from British rule. All of the signers, except one, were wealthy landowners and thus had a lot to lose. These patriots were willing to sacrifice their lives and property to establish a republic that was based on classical liberal ideas of individual liberty, the rule of law, personal responsibility and constitutionally limited government” (Cook, 2003: 25).

The underlined words in the extract explain how Americans describe their fervour for their homeland, especially when they think the national pride (that is also fed by patriotism) is in danger of outsiders’ attack. Obviously, there are more terms that describe their emotions in jolly days and holy days. However, according to *Donald W. Miller, Jr.*, the US government preferred to use the public fervour just before the declaration of war against Iraq (Cook, 2003: 25) I think this was because they had believed that the American patriotism (or say ‘nationalism’) has been fed by the dangers from the enemy attack rather than the peaceful means which keep the great majority of people together.

Summary

The indications of the strength of the concept of ‘vatan-homeland’ and respectively ‘patriotism’ can be observed in the British and American national symbols that are famous and popular for the citizens (flags, anthems, songs, poems, flowers, etc), which gives us opportunities to examine the nature of relationships between various terms in our future research. The following key words, some of which constitute national symbols, have been found to be in relation to the concept of ‘vatan-homeland’: patriotism, patriotic, flag, country, territory, family, home, native, land, nation, nationalism, shamrock, thistle, daffodil, leek, white, green, flowers, national, anthem, holiday, melody, spangled, banner, march, music, song, sing, pub, minstrel, rapture, honors, heart, passion, independence, life, fortune, proud, sacred, sacrifice, hope, glory, wealth, save, rule, ally, swell, great, seal (of US), fervor, pledge, allegiance, star, fight, battle, war, troops, law, responsibility, government, constitution, breath, high, boundless, royal, guardsmen, (double deck) buses, (red) post boxes, telephone kiosks, (Buckingham) palace, (Houses of) parliament, (St Paul’s) cathedral, policemen, tea, souvenirs, lions, badge, emblem, football, team, rugby, union.

The observation of the British and American national symbols in relation to the concept of ‘vatan-homeland’ and respectively ‘patriotism’ also reveals that how governments manage to manipulate public opinion by means of scientific knowledge and methods (with the knowledge of applied linguistics and semiology) to attain their goals (actually hidden from the public) in the countries mentioned in this article.

References

- Appiah, Kwame Anthony & Myers, Joanne J. *The Ethics of Identity*, www.cceia.org/, 2005
- Cook, Guy. *Applied Linguistics*, Oxford University Press, 2003
- <http://www.nps.gov/stli/>
- http://www.state.gov/www/publications/great_seal.pdf
- <http://www.bcpl.lib.md.us/~etowner/flag.html#pledge>
- <http://www.cia.gov/>
- <http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/index.html>
- <http://www.2001LewRockwell.com>, dmillerjr@earthlink.net, October 30, 2001
- Mazlish, Bruce, “*The Global and The Local*”, *Current Sociology*, January 2005, Vol.55 (1), www.sagepublications.com/
- Schendl, Herbert. *Historical Linguistics*, Oxford University Press, 2001
- Soars John& Liz, *Headway Advanced, Coursebook*, Oxford University Press, 1998
- Spolsky, Bernard. *Sociolinguistics*, Oxford University Press, 1998
- Smith, Sam. “*Reflections on Patriotism: Whose Land Is It Anyway?*” www.futurenet.org/, 2005
- The internet encyclopedia; Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>, (May 2007), <http://kalemzede.wordpress.com/2006/10/18/vatan-sevgisi/> (May 2007)
- Woodlands Junior School’s Website; <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/> (June 2007)