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Historical geography: the analysis of geographic condition of Egyptian and Chinese civilizations

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Abstract. The activity of human being can't be divided by either time or space elements. Some particular activities or circumstances are always related to the place in which they occur. A study of historical geography examines the relation between space and time in the past which demonstrates particular phenomenon exploratively at that time. This study aims to identify the effect of geographic situation which affects the two biggest civilizations in the world, namely Chinese and Egyptian. The current research takes form of *expos facto* research. The finding indicates that the natural environment in both civilizations give significant influence on the development of civilization in Egypt and China. The natural situation both in Nile and Hwangho waters is the main geographical factor that supports the persistence of high cultural communities in the region.

1. Introduction

Historical geography is one of the studies which involves several field of studies in social context in general, in particular history and geography discipline as well [1]. In order to acquire the main difference between those two context, in-depth study concerning history and geography contexts is required to identify each parts in certain circumstances history as well as physical and non-physical symptoms in geography

Some experts try to provide fundamental arguments concerning where historical geography stands. The main question raised from historical geography is whether it belongs to history or geography discipline?. Some experts in history and geography discipline try to examine historical geography by focusing on the differences of the methods used [2][3][5]. Historical geography as a field of science also possesses research methods which are tried to be formulated by experts [11] including (1) Spatial Data Digitizing. This effort can be held using maps, satellites or aerial photographs; (2) Unification of all data; (3) Interpreting the structure of space; (4) vectorization of elements in space packed in the form of qualitative data; (5) Quantitative analysis and spatial data statistics.

Several previous studies, it seems, have encountered difficulties in firmly distinguishing the field of discipline for historical geography. The main underlying issues are (1) Previous studies was still in a form of descriptive which focused on theoretical explanations concerning historical geography; (2) The difficulties in determining the subjective and objective concepts in a historical geography research. This difficulty is mainly focused on the obscurity to determine which one is the formal objective and which one is the material objective in historical geography discipline; (3) The low frequency of the discussion from previous studies that describe the difference between the two objectives; (4) There was no obvious research objectives in historical geography research. We, in general, find some findings and results in historical geography research which only discuss some particular field of studies in domain such as in history aspect as well as geography; (5) The low frequency of correlation between those two aspects, namely history and geography, to combine the two aspects into single study field which in this context is referred as historical geography [1].

Historical geography is the branch of geography which is focusing on the field of work to the relevance between humans, space, earth and time which also requires other social fields [6]. The existence of human being in geography concept is hardly separated from space. This situation occurs since humans occupy a region with physical conditions along with certain goals. During the process of



human being occupation and settle in certain period of time, they are included into the concept of time, whether they like it or not. This condition often stimulates an underlying question; how long do they occupy certain region and why do they settle in there?. Another specific question can be taken from history discipline; Why does a certain historical event occur in that region? [7][8].

Other experts also confirm that researches in historical geography discipline possess its own specific focus of studies which examine certain existence at a specific time or period in the past. The study of historical geography emphasizes the object of spatial studies that takes place in the past. The following are the aims of historical geography: (1) Historical geography deals with the changes which is related with time; (2) The aim of historical geography takes place on the interpretation of several facts at a specific time or period in the past; (3) The study of historical geography examines every phenomenon and events which are extremely unique on a certain place or region; (4) The main source of the study applies a holistic approach to the geography discipline; (5) The study emphasizes on the development of historical geography discipline itself; (6) Historical geography mainly focuses on the place and period only regardless of the time and space; (7) The previous researches has become the object of the research in historical geography [4].

Another in depth study concerning the essence on historical geography research can be elucidated with the following description [1]: (1) Historical geography is included in the field geography discipline; (2) Historical geography explains the way to identify how the past and the present related to each other. Historical geography is an instrument of reconstruction to elucidate some particular past phenomena concerning territory and space; (3) Historical geography examines any changes which occur at a specific time or period in the past. This is, obviously, different from historical fields which are more focusing to the concept of time-space, while historical geography emphasizes the concept of space-time; (4) Historical geography examines which is concerning the changes during certain period of time in the past. If such hypothesis dealing with the situation of a particular region is believed to be true in the past, then it could also be applied in the present period of time; (5) Historical geography aims to elucidate every single detail and function of territory discipline in certain period of time in the past; (6) The study of historical geography also concerns the application of historical geography erudition such as the discussion of the maintenance of historical monuments, spatial planning or regional planning

Based on some experts' arguments and theoretical review mentioned above, this research aims to identify the implementation of historical geography study based on the analysis of territorial discipline, spatial along with its changes from historical perspective. The geography circumstance and situation will be drawn taking into account the certain periods of time. The situation of territory in the past, which is selected as the main focus of this study, is to cover the historical situations of the world. The referred situation of the world includes Egyptian and Chinese civilizations.

2. Method

This research takes form of *expos facto*. An *expos facto* research is a research which examines the correlation between two items related to each other with circumstances and event [9]. The steps of *expos facto* research are as follows (1) Describe the problem; (2) Discovering some relevant literatures; (3) Constructing hypothesis; (4) Developing promise to respond hypothesis; (5) Validating data; (6) Describing, analyzing, and interpreting the result of the study [10].

The problem that forms the basis of this research is how the geographical environment correlation between Egypt and China gives an influence on the development of the evolved civilizations in history all over the world. This study also reveals resolutions concerning every factors underlying the wealth of these two territories which cause these two region emerge as an area which has a high influence on the development of historical civilizations in the world.

3. Results and Discussion

The process of apprehension of historical study concerning some considerable circumstances and situation which give effects on human civilization seems quite insufficient with a question of how it occurred, but it also requires to be examined more deeply on where the circumstances and situation take place. The study concerning of the changes and spatial of human being is mostly examined in geography discipline while in history field study discusses about discovery of human being history in certain period in the past. This chapter will discuss concerning the existence of correlation between

period time in the past within spatial concept and territorial study. One of the examples of considerable number of civilization in the past is the civilization of Egyptian and Chinese. These two examples of civilizations are huge civilizations which cannot be separated from their spatial situations.

3.1 Historical geographic of Egypt

Egyptian civilization is an example of the magnificent culture of human being in the past. Some experts in history discipline as well as archeology, until now, is still trying to discover the remain civilization in that greatness period of time. The Egyptian civilization also became one of the main references in gaining history information dealing with others massive civilization.

This wealth civilization of the Egyptian can be observed through the discovery of archeological wreckage which possess correlations with religious life, governor affairs, science, medical techniques and even astrology. This Egyptian civilization in 3000 BC period of time can also be identified from its heritage which takes form of the famous great pyramid we can happily enjoy the beauty of it.

The geographic situation of Egypt cannot be separated from the existence of a river that becomes the main source of life for the Egyptians [7]. This geographic situation, which is located along the Nile river, is in lowland contained with fertile soil. Such situation, it appears, is also influenced by natural disaster which befall this area in every year. Flood, for example, provides negative and positive impacts at the same time for the development of Egypt geography. The over-loaded Nile river is commonly caused by the flood, resulting in an overflow of mud around the riverbank. This overflow of mud has become the main cause for its fertile soil quality and it's continuously increasing in that area [12]

Based on the geographic condition mentioned above, it also gives beneficial to the economic sectors and livelihood for the communities in Egypt. The Egyptian mostly do farming and animal husbandry. They usually do harvesting around three times in a year. The characters of communities and its culture are influenced by the condition of the plain where they live in. Its land and soil condition give impact to the way on how they do farming as well as their living which Egyptian possesses.

There will be explanations about geographical conditions of the Egyptian region in this section. This country, which refers to Egypt, is divided into three parts. The Narrow Nile valley, the wide delta section and the desert area with oases which flank the Nile. Such geography condition is the main reason why Egyptian encounters significant differences between the fertile soil and the barren land. This also becomes the main issue for the governments, which is pharaoh, which is trying to concentrate between upper Egypt and lower Egypt due to the geographical differences.

The existence of the Nile also affected the Egyptian economy. The Egyptian economic is agriculture with a centralized system of planting that allows abundant yields. It shows that the industry already existed in the ancient Egypt. The Nile would overflow Every July and it would turn into a in November very dry. This has long been anticipated by the Egyptians by doing varied farming. The development of copper, the use of glass materials, stone mining and Egyptian carving techniques have been very advanced. This could not be found in Europe until the period of the industrial revolution.

Egypt progressed very rapidly in commercial matters along the Nile. Sea expeditions in the red sea by boat have long been carried out. Boat technology and shipping techniques are developing very advanced. This also affected Egypt's social structure which positioned traders to occupy medium social stratification. The influence of the Nile has a lot of impact on economic development and social political life.

The Egyptians can claim that they were the first people who designing a boat. Since 2750 BC Egyptian boats sailed along the East Mediterranean coast to Phoenesia. The trade route passes through a canal constructed as a link between the Red Sea and the eastern Delta. Egyptian boats carry goods to the south. The caravans established trade contacts with Mesopotamia and southern Syria. The fact of Egyptian trade history are found in Greece. Religion and art form began to be adopted by Greece. Egyptian imported are camel skin, weapons from metal, spices, gold, wood and rugs. While Egyptian exported are wheat and linen [14].

The Nile also influences the Egyptian cultural life. The rise and fall of the Nile is a symbol of the death and resurrection of gods that are celebrated every year. Egyptian beliefs are always associated with the existence of the gods in Egypt. Mythology about Osiris continues to be associated with the Nile. Osiris who was killed by Seth through cutting Osiris's body was then spread throughout the Nile

valley. Isis who felt lost in gathering back pieces of Osiris's body. Finally rose again and became immortal. Finally Horus Osiris's son retaliated by attacking Seth [15]. The Nile existence also gives suggestions to the Egyptians Mythology.

The effect of Nile river existence is the main factor of the magnificent civilization of Egyptian. The high level quality possessed provides some beneficials for its communities to develop into an advanced civilization. The correlation between geography and the wealth of Egyptian civilization can be identified as follows [7].

- a) Flood as the natural disaster in every year in Nile river has caused an overflow mud in the riverbank and it affects the agricultural sector to produce excellent yields in Egypt territory.
- b) The situation and condition of the fast-flowing rivers provides the potential to become a good habitat for fauna including birds, aquatic animals, mammals etc. Apart from that, the geographical conditions of the desert in this area also provide good environment for vegetation of plants and desert animals
- c) The large size of the desert provides positive impact which can be used as a protection from wild animals such as reptiles
- d) The cloudless subtropical sky in this area throughout the year inspires the Egyptian to find ideas and knowledge such as astronomy etc.

3.2 Historical Geography of China

The Chinese civilization is also considered as one of the magnificent civilization aside from Indian, Egyptian and Babylonian. The considerable number of geographical potential possessed by China also contributes to the development of this nation's culture from time to time. The natural environment in China is pretty much extreme. Most of the Plains in Northern China area sustains dry geographical condition. Such condition is different compared to what Yangtse river sustains, which is moist and prosperous. This geographical condition causes the high dense population and settlements in Yangtse river valley compared to other regions [13]. The Canton area is an area which possesses the highest rainfall, which is > 1750 mm [7][8].

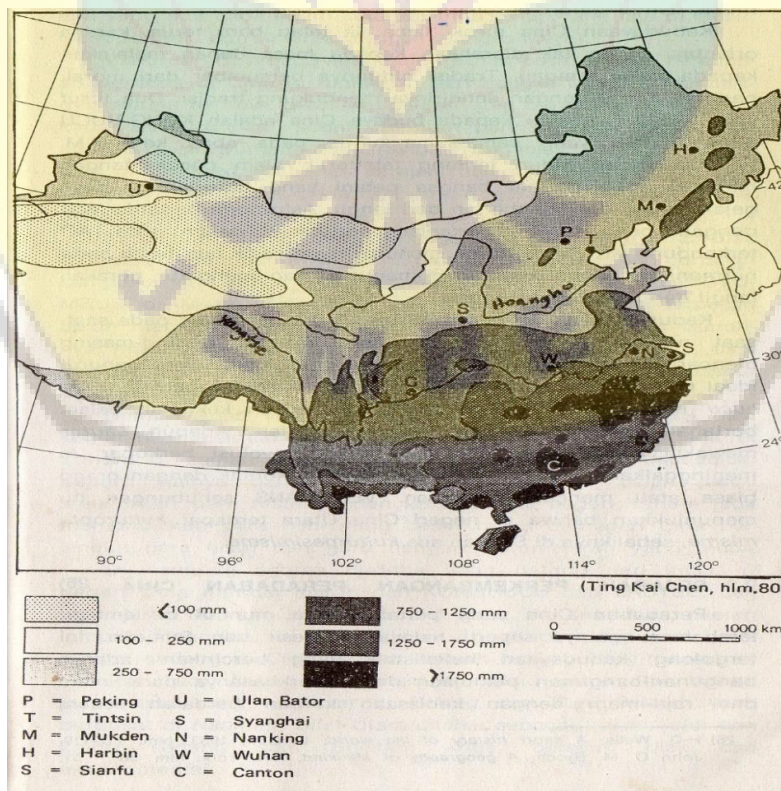


Figure 1. Precipitation Map in China

The yellow river is sourced from the Kwen-Lun Mountains in Tibet and flows through the mountains of North China to form a lowland and empties into the Yellow Sea Tsii-Li Bay. It is in this fertile river valley area that the Chinese culture began. This river makes it difficult for ancient Chinese people to carry out their life activities because of the ice freezing in the winter. When the ice begins to melt, it causes floods. These difficulties and challenges pushed the Chinese people to think and overcome them by building dams along the river. The Yellow River Valley began to develop into a cultural center with archaeological discoveries in Banpo, Xi'an. The color of the Yellow River is caused by loess piled on the banks of the river and surrounding land. This loess will be immersed by the river flow and cause a yellowish color in the river water.

There is a fertile lowland China in Downstream of the Yellow River and it is the nodal of Chinese life. Chinese society generally cultivates wheat, rice, tea, corn, and soybeans. Ancient Chinese agricultural activities are the best with the main commodity being rice. In addition there are also other agricultural products such as tea, soybeans, and flax. Agricultural activities progressed rapidly in the Qin Dynasty government. In the Qing dynasty, Chinese people were familiar with fertilizers, irrigation and expansion of wheat fields.

The high agricultural life in China is also influenced by the existence of the Hwang Ho river. Dams are built in the yellow river valley to cope with floods. In addition, the dam also functions to irrigate agricultural crops. This dam was also built in the Han River valley with the same purpose. The yellow river and the Han river have a lot of influence on the Chinese economy and culture development. Both of these rivers have become places of growing great civilization in China.

Chinese culture which is influenced by the existence of the Yellow River valley can be seen from its cultural heritage in the form of paintings, ceramics, temples and palaces. The development of painting can be seen from the many paintings by famous figures who adorn the palaces and temples. The paintings on display are generally in the form of paintings of the universe, paintings of gods, and paintings of kings who once ruled. Chinese ceramics are the result of very high value folk culture and became one of the commodities of commerce at that time. Ceramics paintings are also found with many waters of the Nile. This shows that Chinese people are very dependent on the river.

As what Egyptian civilization mentioned above, Chinese civilization is also inseparable from the geographical situations of the large rivers in the two regions. Hwangho river, also known as Yellow river, shares the similar geographical with Nile river. The Hwangho river is also considered as the river of misery for Chinese civilization since it causes flood in every year. Several attempts to solve this flood issue in 200 BC had been conducted by constructing canals toward the downstream of the Hwangho river, to be moved from Hanchow to Peking within 1200 Km [7].

The fountain of Hwangho river takes place in Tibet, Tsinghai province. There is an industrial city, namely Wuhan, in its downstream which is also crossed by Han river inside this city. There is also a massive bridge in this territorial which takes part as a link for southern and northern China. This bridge was constructed in 1957. The existence of the large Hwangho river in this region of China also takes part on its cultural development. The following factors are considered as the main causes of its magnificent culture in China.

- a) The sufficient water is available for irrigation and transportation sectors.
- b) The considerable number of flora and fauna in the region.
- c) Some couch grass varieties can be consumed for daily food.
- d) The massive flood, which is occurred periodically, is selected as information for the community to do certain agricultural and livestock occupation.

4. Conclusion

Historical geography is a study which examines the geographical situation and condition of a place or region at a specific time or period in the past. An Occurrence or phenomenon which takes place in certain period of time in the past is related to the spatial and time elements. The analysis on why some events occur in certain period of time and in certain regions can be conducted by applying historical geography discipline. The two big civilizations which have influenced both in historical and cultural fields are Egyptian and Chinese civilization. The analysis of these two big civilizations is influenced by the geographical condition and situation, which is referred as the two massive rivers namely Nile river and Hwangho river.

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