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Ziya Gökalp's idea of cultural hybridity

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a reflection on the distinctiveness and scope of the ideas of Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), who played a key role in the formation of the ideology of the Turkish Republic created in 1923. Gökalp is generally cast by interpreters as a 'Westernist' or 'modernist' nationalist thinker, like many other thinkers in late developing societies, whose chief concern was the establishment of a modern Turkish nation-state and who, therefore, tried to combine Western knowledge with the culture of his own society. Contrary to received wisdom, I argue that Gökalp developed not just a model of modernity befitting Muslim Turks but also a distinctive general theory of social life, according to which the cultures of all societies are hybrid, i.e. blends of other (past and present) cultures. If this is correct, then Gökalp's social thought is more than a mere specimen of late nationalist ideologies; it is applicable to all forms of social life just as much as the ideas of the European social theorists he cited.

Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) was an influential nationalist political thinker at a critical juncture in the history of Turkish political thought. He was 'the leading ideologue' of the Committee of Union and Progress, the political party that ruled the Ottoman Empire during its final decade.¹ He also played a central role in the development of the ideology of the Turkish Republic, created in 1923 on the ruins of the empire.² He drafted some of the most innovative parts of the first republican constitution, such as the clauses concerning secular government and the freedom of conscience.³

Gökalp is not generally regarded by historians of Turkish political thought as a notable figure outside the Turkish context. The common tendency among scholars is to cast him as a nationalist thinker, whose main concern was the creation of a 'modern' Turkish nation-state and, therefore, whose scholarly endeavour was devoted primarily to combining Western knowledge with the institutions of his own society.⁴ There are two versions of this portrayal of Gökalp. In the first version, not only were the basic concepts he used to describe and

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¹Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 62.

²Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 1–9; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst, 1964), p. 445.

³Niyazi Berkes, 'Ziya Gökalp: His Contribution to Turkish Nationalism', *The Middle East Journal*, 8(4) (1954), p. 376.

⁴See, for example, Berkes, 'Ziya Gökalp: His Contribution', p. 388; Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism* (London: Luzac, 1950), p. x; Robert Devereux, 'Preface', in *Ziya Gökalp: The Principles of Turkism*, trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: Brill, 1968), p. xi; Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 22.

explain social phenomena of European origin, but the type of Turkish nationalism he embraced was also an imitation of a 'Central European' variety.⁵ In the second version, although Europe's traditions in social and political theory were indeed 'indispensable' to Gökalp's thought, his nationalism was not a mere implementation of a European variety, for it was rooted in an understanding of what distinguishes Turks from other peoples.⁶ The claim here, instead, is that it was one thing for Gökalp to learn from the West and another to imitate it. Accordingly, in this version, Gökalp's nationalism is best understood as a 'way of modernization' befitting Muslim Turks.⁷

It is thus not surprising that Gökalp is sometimes seen as caught in what is called the 'paradox' of late nationalist ideologies.⁸ The paradox is said to arise from the fact that, by demanding national independence, such ideologies in effect adopt a social and political ideal defined by pre-existing nation-states such as France or England, even while advocating the distinctiveness of nations.⁹ That is, late nationalist ideologies both imitate and seek to differ from the examples of older nation-states. It is not hard to see how Gökalp's thought could be seen as caught up in that paradox, for his idea of Turkish nationhood explicitly draws on an understanding of the nature of modern European nation-states as well as of the 'master codes' of European intellectual traditions.¹⁰

Contrary to received wisdom, I argue in this paper that Gökalp was a comprehensive thinker in his own right, whose scholarly work included but was not confined to an effort to determine what it would take to create a 'modern' Turkish nation-state. In particular, I claim that his commitment to that ideal was embedded in, and supported by, a general theory of social life that he developed. In that theory, social culture (*hars*) is what constitutes a society and distinguishes it from others. However, this theory regarded social culture not as a self-contained and self-sustaining entity, but rather as a constantly evolving hybrid or 'eclectic'¹¹ phenomenon, which entails the existence of a diversity of cultures influencing one another. Notice that this conception of social culture provides a way of dissolving the alleged paradox of late nationalisms, because if all social cultures bear the traces of other (past or present) cultures, there can be no contradiction in a culture's being influenced by another.

Gökalp often cited other (European and non-European) thinkers in his writings to provide support for his own ideas; but on rare occasions he also sought to set out what was distinctive about the conception of social culture he endorsed. On such occasions, he argued that this conception differs both from European views that regard a specific culture as superior to all others, and from European views that reject cultural diversity altogether and uphold a

⁵Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, p. 165.

⁶Andrew Davison, 'Ziya Gökalp and Provincializing Europe', *Comparative Studies of South Asia and the Middle East*, 26(3) (2006), pp. 87–90; Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, pp. 25–34; Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 92.

⁷Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, p. 95.

⁸Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, p. 165. See also Ayşe Kadioğlu, 'The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32(2) (1996), pp. 183–184.

⁹Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed, 1986), pp. 1–2; Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 30; Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 118–145.

¹⁰Davison, 'Ziya Gökalp and Provincializing Europe', p. 80.

¹¹Gökalp in fact used the term 'eclectic' as an individual rather than a collective quality. I am suggesting here that he saw social cultures as eclectic as well.

universal idea of culture.¹² Gökalp also rejected the ‘purist’ or essentialist approach to culture advocated by some of his fellow Turkish nationalists.¹³

Such statements indicate to us that Gökalp had in mind a distinctive general conception of social culture, and did not seek simply to interpret or apply the idea of modern nationhood, the prevailing political ideology of his day. Yet, unfortunately, he did not consistently pursue a claim to authorship of such a conception throughout his writings; it seems that he was generally more content to employ it implicitly. This may explain why (to my knowledge) there is no systematic treatment in Gökalp scholarship of what he had to say about societies other than his own.

The failure to recognize Gökalp’s general conception of social culture in the secondary literature also stems, I believe, from an exclusive emphasis on his remarks on how to ‘modernize’ the Turkish nation. Yet when duly examined, his engagement with Western sources in formulating his notion of Turkish nationhood should not prevent us from recognizing that it is built upon the general notion of cultural hybridity. This is what I intend to show in this paper. Thus I do not examine in detail Gökalp’s remarks on how the Turkish nation is best modernized, secularized or democratized, matters on which much has already been written. Instead, I try to elucidate his account of the general phenomena of social culture. I begin with a sketch of the intellectual and political context in which Gökalp became a Turkish nationalist and developed his conception of social culture. Then I consider the European views of society and culture from which he wished to distinguish his work. Finally, I spell out his conception of social culture and offer some tentative comments on its place in the history of ideas.

Nationhood and cultural hybridity

Gökalp grew up in the Ottoman Empire during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a period in which it was becoming increasingly clear that the empire could no longer continue in its current state and that it faced disintegration along ethno-religious lines—a predicament that it shared with the other empires in Europe, i.e. the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.¹⁴ After all, this was, as Gökalp often stated, the ‘age of nationalism’. Like the other members of the Ottoman literati, he pondered what the future might hold for the Ottoman society. Regarding himself as a Muslim Turk, he was especially keen on identifying the prospects for the Muslim Turks and took part in related debates with like-minded individuals. Four options were considered in those debates.¹⁵

The first called for saving what was left of Ottoman society by reforming it: namely, by revoking the existing legal differences between the officially recognized religious groups in the empire (i.e. the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities) and defining Ottoman

¹²Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism* (hereafter *Principles*), trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: Brill, 1992 [1923]), pp. 75, 81–84. See also Gökalp’s ‘Milli Terbiye [1916]’, translated as ‘National Education’ in *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization* (hereafter *Turkish Nationalism*), ed. Niyazi Berkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 244–245.

¹³Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 81–84.

¹⁴See, for example, Stanford Shaw and Ezel Shaw, *The History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Benjamin Braude, ed., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, The Abridged Edition* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2014).

¹⁵My remarks here are based on Gökalp’s own account of these debates. See his *Principles*, pp. 12–16, and ‘Üç Cereyan [1913]’, translated as ‘Three Currents of Thought’ in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 71–76. See also Berkes’s recounting of these debates in *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, pp. 325–356.

citizenship in a new, egalitarian way. The hope here was to create a multicultural Ottoman society like 'America'.¹⁶ The second option was Pan-Islamism, which advocated the unity of all Muslims. The question raised by this option was the geographic extent of such a union. The third option was Pan-Turkism, according to which Turks could best secure their continued existence by uniting with other Turks including those in distant lands, such as Central Asia and the Caucasus. Finally, Westernization was also seen as an option for Turks. This was often taken as a comprehensive project entailing the adoption not only of the material sciences and technologies developed in the West but also of Western social institutions.¹⁷ Westernists tended to see that project not as an end in itself but only as a means to universality; that is, they saw Western societies as examples to follow only because those societies had reached the hitherto highest level of civilization, the shared goal of 'mankind'.¹⁸

These options were not generally seen as fixed, discrete policies but as ideals that could be combined. For instance, Namık Kemal, an earlier reformist thinker and a celebrated playwright, argued that the revitalization of the ancient Islamic institution of 'consultation' could save the Ottoman government from corruption and so help it to function more effectively in an increasingly competitive economic world order.¹⁹ Similarly, Ahmet Rıza, a founding member of the Committee of Union and Progress, held that true Islam was compatible with the 'positive' sciences developed in the West.²⁰ The general consensus among the commentators of Gökalg is that he too was open to drawing together ideas from different traditions. Indeed, Gökalg is perhaps best known for his proposal for a threefold combination of the ideals of Turkism, Islamism and becoming 'contemporary' with the Western world. He introduced and elaborated on these ideals in a series of papers between 1912 and 1913, reprinted in a volume in 1918 under the title *Turkification, Islamization and Modernization*. However, there is no consensus among commentators on precisely how Gökalg defined each of those ideals and the relations among them. This is mainly because Gökalg's thoughts on those ideals underwent changes throughout his life. Worse, in his earlier writings he was not committed to this particular combination of ideals. The changes in his views were accompanied, and perhaps explained, by the massive upheavals in the social and political world in which he lived, and by the related fluctuations in his professional life. During the period between 1909 and 1923, the Ottoman Empire went through a 'constitutional revolution' (1908), two wars in the Balkans (1912–1913), the First World War (1914–1918), and the war of 'independence' against the European powers encroaching upon the remaining Ottoman territories, which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the empire and the creation of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

These changes not only complicate the task of correctly describing Gökalg's views at any time, but also make it difficult to provide a definitive periodization of his work. Following Taha Parla,²¹ I believe that the evolution of Gökalg's thought can be divided into three phases. The first phase is defined by his commitment to Ottomanism, as he then believed that, with the onset of the constitutional era in 1908, the multi-linguistic and multi-religious Ottoman

¹⁶Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarzı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1926), p. 26.

¹⁷Şükrü Hanioğlu, 'Batıcılık', in *Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 5 (İletişim: İstanbul), pp. 1382–1988.

¹⁸Gökalg is referring here to a poem by Tefik Fikret. See his *Principles*, p. 73.

¹⁹Namık Kemal, 'Disagreement in my Umma is a Blessing [1869]', in *Selected Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Alp Eren Topal and Einar Wigen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

²⁰Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 200–212.

²¹Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, pp. 25–38.

society could become ‘the free and progressive America of the East’.²² In his early writings Gökalp also supported the unity of the international Islamic community, emphasizing its import for the continuance of the Ottoman Empire.²³ Discouraged by the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in 1912 and the escalation of nationalist sentiments among the Arabs, however, Gökalp began to move away from Ottomanism and international Islamism toward nationalism.²⁴ From then until about 1918, he published many papers on the history and culture of the Turks and composed his best-known nationalistic poems.²⁵ In some of those papers he even explored the possibility of the political unification of all Turks in the world, i.e. the option of ‘pan-Turkism’ mentioned above.²⁶ In this period, he also closely followed the developments in the emerging academic field of sociology, especially the work of Durkheim. He rose up in the ranks of the Committee of Union and Progress and was appointed as the first professor of sociology in the country although he had never earned a college degree.²⁷ The last phase of Gökalp’s thought was induced by the Ottoman Empire’s defeat in the First World War and the arrest of the leading members of the Committee, including Gökalp himself, by the occupying British forces in 1919. In prison in Malta, he gave lectures to his fellow inmates on such abstract philosophical topics as metaphysics and logic.²⁸ After his release from prison in 1921, he distanced himself vigorously not just from Ottomanism and Islamic internationalism, but also from ‘pan-Turkism’. In his remaining writings until his death in 1924, he endeavoured to define the ‘principles’ of a new, democratic Turkish Republic on a par with modern European nation-states, which to some extent he achieved as a co-drafter of the first republican constitution.

Given these revisions in Gökalp’s thought, it is not surprising that many commentators have deemed him to be an inconsistent thinker.²⁹ Even sympathetic readers have tried to discern the distinctive aspects of his work rather than looking for coherence in the overall body of his writings. Taha Parla, for instance, has argued that Gökalp’s idea of Turkish nationhood was ‘normatively progressive, egalitarian and pluralistic’ and therefore ‘closer to liberal democracy’ than those of his contemporaries.³⁰ And according to Markus Dressler, what distinguished Gökalp from his peers was that he reconciled Islam with ‘the requirements of the modern nation-state’ without resorting to secularism, for he embraced a social rather than political conception of Islam.³¹

I agree not only with these sympathetic readings of Gökalp’s work but also with the common complaint that he was not committed to a stable picture of the social and political world. However, these judgments do not conflict with the general interpretive claim I stated at the outset of this paper, namely that Gökalp regarded social culture as a hybrid phenomenon. This claim allows for variation in the ways in which human societies are formed and/

²²Gökalp, ‘Yeni Osmanlılar [1909]’, in *Ziya Gökalp’in İlk Yazı Hayatı*, ed. Şevket Beysanoğlu (Istanbul: Şehir Matbaası, 1956 [1894–1909]), pp. 105–106.

²³See, for example, Gökalp, ‘Medreseler [1909]’, in *Ziya Gökalp’in İlk Yazı Hayatı*, pp. 115–117.

²⁴Gökalp, ‘Türklüğün Başına Gelenler [1913]’, in *Kitaplar*, ed. Sabri Koz (Istanbul: YKY, 2007), pp. 61–66.

²⁵İsmet Binark and Nejat Sefercioğlu, *Ziya Gökalp Biyografisi* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1971), pp. 159–169.

²⁶Gökalp, ‘Türk Milleti ve Turan [1913]’, in *Kitaplar*, pp. 74–77.

²⁷Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 14.

²⁸Ziya Gökalp, *Felsefe Dersleri*, ed. A. Utku and E. Erbay (Konya: Çizgi Yayınları, 2005 [1919–1921]).

²⁹See, for instance, Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 2; Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 64–65.

³⁰Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 83.

³¹Markus Dressler, ‘Rereading Ziya Gökalp: Secularism and Reform of the Islamic State in the Late Young Turk Period’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47(3) (2015), pp. 511–531. For an earlier statement of this point, see Andrew Davison, ‘Secularization and Modernization in Turkey: The Ideas of Ziya Gökalp’, *Economy and Society*, 24(2) (1995), p. 209.

or defined: what the claim entails is that all societies, whatever their size or level of complexity, inevitably embody a multiplicity of past and present cultures. Similarly, the claim is not undermined by the fact that Gökalp advocated different political ideals in different periods of his life, so long as it can be shown that those ideals also instantiate cultural hybridity—a task which I intend to achieve in the remainder of this paper.

As indicated earlier, Gökalp did not explicitly pursue a claim to have authored a distinctive, general conception of social culture. Yet statements about his general outlook on social and political phenomena are not totally absent in his writings. In a paper from 1917, for example, he formulated his outlook as follows:

As no nation ever lived in isolation without having any contact with other nations, there has always been exchange of institutions among those who were in contact with each other ... When a nation borrows certain institutions from another ... they enter into the national life, assume new meanings which become indigenous and sincere sentiments evolve in the national conscience.³²

This passage spells out what it means for a nation to be hybrid. The basic claim here is that when a nation 'borrows' institutions from another, it does so according to its own internal structure and dynamics, thereby creating its own synthesis of external and internal elements, which in turn constrains how that particular nation evolves thereafter. Thus, despite their permeability, Gökalp did not believe that the boundaries of nations would eventually disappear and that there would emerge a universal society of individuals. For, in his view, nations discover, add to, as well as eliminate or reduce their mutual differences when they come into contact with one another. Thus, while there is no reason to suppose that any particular nation will last forever, Gökalp held that there will always be a diversity of nations, since human beings are capable not only of learning from one another but also of perceiving and sustaining differences of language, religion, lifestyle and other things, and thus of forming or remaining in different nations.

Gökalp referred to the entire body of distinctive qualities of a nation as 'culture' (*hars*), and to shared qualities of nations as 'civilization' (*medeniyet*). Given what he states in the passage cited, it is clear that he did not regard culture and civilization as mutually exclusive phenomena; rather, he saw them as separate yet mutually reinforcing. This is because, as he stated in a later work, 'each of us lives two social lives, one national, the other international'.³³ In constantly interacting and borrowing institutions from one another, nations give rise to civilizations, i.e. compilations of common resources. However, the differences between nations do not necessarily disappear as a result, even if what those differences are may change over time. This being the case, the particular set of qualities that typify a nation at any point in time, i.e. the 'culture' of that nation, must be seen as 'hybrid', i.e. as malleable and permeable rather than fixed and impermeable.

I take Gökalp's report on the reception of the idea of national self-determination by the Turks to be an illustration of hybridity, so construed. Indeed, he went out of his way to concede that nationalism as a political ideology was not original to the Turks, but was in fact conceived in Europe.³⁴ So it was no surprise to Gökalp that the scientific study of the Turks also began in Europe. He argued that the Turks developed national self-awareness only in response to the rise of separatist nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ When the

³²Gökalp, 'Cemiyette Büyük Adamların Tesiri [1917]', translated as 'Manifestations of the National Ethos' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 167–168.

³³Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 74.

³⁴Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 1–11; see also Gökalp, 'Üç Cereyan', pp. 71–76.

³⁵Gökalp, 'Türklüğün Başına Gelenler [1912]', in *Kitaplar*, pp. 61–66.

empire began to crumble along religious and linguistic lines, he explained, the Turks could not but think that their survival as a people required the establishment of a Turkish nation-state.³⁶ Also, as his proposal for a 'modern' Turkish nation-state makes clear, he held that the future of the Turkish nation lay in some combination of Western 'civilization' and the culture of Muslim Turks.

So far I have considered Gökalp's idea of hybridity in relation to his account of nationhood. But it is crucial to note that the centrepiece of Gökalp's general outlook on social phenomena is not the concept of nationhood but that of culture: he regarded the concept of culture as more basic than that of nationhood, in that social culture is inclusive of but not reducible to nationhood. This is evidenced, as we will see, by the fact that cultural communities have existed long before the idea of national self-determination entered the hearts and minds of human beings. For Gökalp, then, the nation-state is a form of social culture. In this respect, there is an affinity between Gökalp's social thought and the 'ethno-symbolic perspective' recently developed by Anthony Smith and others, which emphasized the social and symbolic 'antecedents' (such as myths, memories and literary traditions) of modern nations.³⁷

Gökalp was aware that the culture-based account was not the only way to explain nationhood, but he rejected alternative views as flawed.³⁸ He discussed, among others, three other views: (i) that nationhood is a political construct; (ii) that nationhood stems from common ancestry; and (iii) that nationhood is a matter of social contract. For Gökalp, nationhood cannot be seen as a mere political construct, as political governments cannot invent collective identities from without; on the contrary, to effectively govern a society, a political regime typically must adopt the prevailing traditions of that society.³⁹ This does not mean that collective identities are impervious to political rule. Given the global history of conquests and of subsequent changes in the make-up of societies, Gökalp argued, it would be 'absurd' to believe that political rule is irrelevant to the making of collective identities. Thus, just as nations cannot be seen as political constructs, so too is it wrong to think that nationhood stems from common ancestry. Finally, nationhood for Gökalp also cannot arise from an agreement among otherwise unrelated individuals: human beings are socially and historically situated agents, so the nations they create bear traditions that are already to some extent shared by the parties.

For Gökalp, nationhood is thus best explained by a concept of culture that accommodates not only the diversity of collective forms of life but also the permeability of the boundaries that separate them. Such a concept, he argued, was yet to be articulated. Turkish intellectuals, he argued, had failed to account for their own national culture.⁴⁰ He found European scholars also to be unreliable, tending toward being 'chauvinistic' or 'fanatic', in that they either defined 'culture' exclusively in reference to European societies, or ignored the diversity of societies altogether and upheld a universal notion of culture.⁴¹ According to Gökalp, such views need to be replaced by a 'historical-comparative' account of cultures, which would explore not

³⁶Gökalp, 'Milliyet Mefkuresi [1913]', translated as 'The Ideal of Nationalism' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 79–82.

³⁷Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 16. See also Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion. The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 81–95.

³⁸My analysis here is based on the second chapter of Gökalp's *Principles*.

³⁹Gökalp wrote, 'No legislation can make institutions which are rejected by social conscience; no instruction can make beliefs which are rejected by social conscience' (Gökalp, 'Cemiyette Büyük Adamların Tesiri', p. 165).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 165–166.

⁴¹Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 75; Gökalp, 'Milli Terbiye', p. 244.

only the differences and similarities between societies but also the global socio-political history of the constitution of such differences and similarities.⁴²

It is thus clear that Gökalp was not simply interested in 'modernizing' Turkish culture; he also wished to provide a broader concept of social culture to explain the phenomenon of nationhood generally. And he formulated his views through critical engagement with his European as well as his Turkish-Ottoman counterparts. To see the full extent of his work, therefore, we must consider the European conceptions of culture from which he wished to distinguish his work.

European conceptions of culture

Gökalp's references to European conceptions of culture are sparse and are scattered throughout his writings. He distinguished between three senses in which the concept of culture and its cognates were used in European scholarly circles.

The first is the individualist conception of culture, which Gökalp traced to Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau and Kant.⁴³ Kant had defined *Kultur* as the development of the ability of an individual to pursue 'any end whatever'.⁴⁴ Such development entails (i) the cultivation of the mental ability to control one's natural impulses and set one's own ends, and (ii) the attainment of external skills for actualizing one's ends. So, culture is the process of becoming a free and efficacious agent. For Kant, culture is not something teachable, for it is an essentially self-directed endeavour; thus, he distinguished culture from 'civilization' which involves 'communicable' skills, such as decorum, which facilitate one's adjustment to society. Kant did not think that culture requires isolation from society, yet he warned that exclusive concern with civilization renders one mentally submissive and so unsuited to being truly cultivated.⁴⁵ Here Kant explicitly followed Rousseau's remarks on the alienating effect of 'civilized' urban life.⁴⁶

The second European conception of culture Gökalp identified focused on the historical development of collective forms of life, rather than on individuals. A preliminary formulation of that view was provided by Herder, who held that different societies, despite their distinctive traits, can be classified in terms of the successive stages of a cumulative progress from simple to advanced forms of collective life; whereas some societies are in the 'infancy' of this process, he argued, others have reached 'adulthood'.⁴⁷ Herder employed the term *Kultur* (*pace* Kant) in the singular to designate this progress.⁴⁸

It is doubtful whether Gökalp had read Herder, but he was familiar with the nineteenth-century versions of the collective and developmental conception of culture, and, respecting the terminology adopted by its proponents, he used the term 'civilization' to refer to it.⁴⁹ He distinguished between two versions of this conception. The first version consisted

⁴²Gökalp, 'Cemiyette Büyük Adamların Tesiri', pp. 167–173.

⁴³Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 72; *Felsefe Dersleri*, p. 116.

⁴⁴I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §83.

⁴⁵I. Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History', in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Heiss (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 49.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷J.G. Herder, *Auch Eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, ed. Hans Irmischer (Hamburg: trediton GmbH, 1990), pp. 21–26.

⁴⁸Raymond Geuss, 'Kultur, Bildung, Geist', *History and Theory*, 35(2) (1996), p. 156.

⁴⁹Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 38–39.

of teleological explanations of social phenomena, according to which all human societies have an inherent tendency to evolve toward a particular kind of society and where deviation from the course of that evolution needs explaining (i.e. an account of the factors that impede progress). Gökalp ascribed this outlook to Comte, Spencer and Hegel, among others.⁵⁰ Indeed, all of these thinkers used the term 'civilization' in the sense of unilinear, universal social evolution.

The second version of the developmental conception of social culture explained social events in terms of efficient causes rather than a trans-historical ideal.⁵¹ That is, this version explained social change by the antecedent conditions of a society rather than by the end-result of change. Gökalp associated this outlook with the emerging field of sociology, and especially with the work of Durkheim, who is rightly held by interpreters as having the most influence on his thought. For Gökalp, Durkheim had identified two sets of conditions to explain the formation of the later stages of a society: (i) 'collective representations', i.e. shared beliefs and attitudes in a society, and (ii) the 'morphology' of a society, including (among others) the size and density of its population and the nature of its economy. Gökalp considered Durkheim to be a 'determinist' inasmuch as he 'reduced all social phenomena' to antecedent factors internal to a society.⁵² Gökalp was probably referring here to something like Durkheim's statement that 'the causes of social phenomena are internal to the society', not in its 'external' environment.⁵³

The third European conception of culture Gökalp identified saw culture as a collective yet stable phenomenon that exhibits not just plurality but also diversity.⁵⁴ This conception emphasized the distinctive enduring qualities of collective forms of life, rather than speculating on what they may have in common in the future. This conception did not allow for judging societies as primitive or childlike, because it saw cultures as self-enclosed units of social life, each with its own historical trajectory.⁵⁵ For Gökalp, this conception of culture was well suited for the world at the end of the nineteenth century, which was marked by the end of empires and the rise of nation-states.⁵⁶ Indeed, this period saw a proliferation of social theories that associated 'culture' with 'nationhood'.⁵⁷

A leading model of such a theory was provided by Tönnies, whose work was evidently known to Gökalp.⁵⁸ Tönnies used the concept of culture to account for a 'genuine, enduring life together', i.e. a 'community' (*Gemeinschaft*). A community, he argued, emerges around 'common custom and belief' which make 'mutual sympathy' possible.⁵⁹ He used the term *Kultur* to refer to the totality of distinctive qualities of a community, which can be as small as a village or as large as a nation-state. Tönnies saw *Kultur* as a spatio-temporally bounded phenomenon which therefore admits of diversity. He did not rule out the possibility of a

⁵⁰Gökalp, *Felsefe Dersleri*, p. 267.

⁵¹Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 49–61.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵³Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: The Free Press, 1982), p. 141.

⁵⁴Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 72–73.

⁵⁵Gökalp, 'İçtimai Neviler [1914]', translated as 'Classification of Social Species' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 123.

⁵⁶Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 60.

⁵⁷See, for example, Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 8–24. See also Geuss, 'Kultur, Bildung, Geist', p. 158.

⁵⁸Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 32, 165; Berkes's introduction to *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, p. 22.

⁵⁹Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, trans. Margaret Hollis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 18–19, 34–35.

universal *Kultur*, but he thought it unlikely given the current rise of nationalism in Europe and elsewhere.⁶⁰

The rise of nationalism as the dominant political ideology at the end of the nineteenth century was accompanied by a surge in comparative studies of societies, which improved on earlier similar studies by Humboldt, Herder and others. Gökalp was following these developments through the writings of French sociologists such as Levy-Bruhl, Mauss and above all Durkheim, whose works were translated into Turkish under his direction.⁶¹ Indeed, in his later works Durkheim used the term 'civilization' in the plural to refer to large-scale social phenomena comprising societies with similar customs, religions, and histories. In those works, the word 'culture' also appears in the plural in the sense of the individual societies that constitute a civilization.⁶² Yet even then, Durkheim still seemed committed to the image of societies as discrete units of collective life, each driven by its own inner dynamic toward a higher and more inclusive form of civilization.⁶³ This, anyway, was how Gökalp interpreted Durkheim.

Gökalp's conception of culture

Having seen how Gökalp perceived the European conceptions of culture, let us turn to the way he himself defined 'culture'. We will see that while Gökalp learned from those European conceptions, he ultimately developed his own conception of culture as a hybrid phenomenon. We will also see that this conception of culture does not require that cultures remain constant and distinct even when they interact with and influence one another; rather, it supports the stronger claim that not all cultures survive the test of time and that the residual cultures are nothing but amalgamations of other (past and present) cultures.

As indicated earlier, in his early writings Gökalp was committed to Ottomanism, i.e. to defending the maintenance of the Ottoman social and political order in, and despite, the 'age of nationalism'. For Gökalp, this commitment requires, first of all, being willing to reform Ottoman social and political institutions according to new standards.⁶⁴ More importantly, however, it requires properly defining and promoting the Ottoman 'national' identity, which must simultaneously accommodate and transcend the differences in religion, language and other forms of particularistic identity within Ottoman society. In a paper from 1909 titled 'The New Ottomans', he stated the latter point as follows:

Among those who belong in the Ottoman society, Turks would say 'We are first Ottomans and then Turks', the Arabs 'We are first Ottomans and later Arabs', the Armenians, 'We are first Ottomans and then Armenians' and the Greeks 'We are first Ottomans and then Greeks'. All the other constituents of the Ottoman society, such as the Kurds, Albanians, Bulgarians and Jews ... would reiterate this national principle with respect.⁶⁵

In another paper from the same period, Gökalp went out of his way to stress that the Ottoman national identity is not to be conflated with Turkishness.⁶⁶ The Ottoman state and society,

⁶⁰*ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

⁶¹Paul Magnarella and Orhan Türkdoğan, 'The Development of Turkish Social Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, 17(2) (1976), p. 264.

⁶²Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 243–244; Durkheim and Mauss, 'Note on the Notion of Civilization', in *Classical Readings in Culture and Civilization*, ed. John Rundell (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 151–154.

⁶³Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 426.

⁶⁴See, for instance, his 'Bir Devlet Nasıl Gençleşir?', 'Eskile ve Yeniler' and 'Medreseler', all in *Ziya Gökalp'in İlk Yazın Hayatı*.

⁶⁵Ziya Gökalp, 'Yeni Osmanlılar [1909]', in *Ziya Gökalp'in İlk Yazın Hayatı*, p. 106.

⁶⁶Ziya Gökalp, 'Türklük ve Osmanlılık [1909]', in *Ziya Gökalp'in İlk Yazın Hayatı*, p. 99.

he explained, had emerged from the combined efforts of many peoples, such as the Greeks, Arabs, Kurds and Turks. Relatedly, Ottoman language, literature, social mores and institutions are all 'products of the Ottoman experience of six centuries' and are therefore unique to Ottoman society as a whole. So, Gökalp concluded, it would be a mistake to reduce Ottoman nationhood to anything Turkish.

In his early writings Gökalp did not use the term 'culture' (*hars*), but his remarks on Ottoman national identity make clear that he identified societies by their distinctive traits, such as language and social mores, to which he later referred as 'culture'. And, clearly, what he took to be the Ottoman national culture was a complex, historical hybrid of different forms of collective life. In this period, Gökalp used the term 'civilization' (*medeniyet*) to refer to historically durable, large-scale social phenomena with some degree of ideational and institutional coherence, which in his view were best represented by universal religions such as Christianity and Islam.⁶⁷ Gökalp then took the Ottoman Empire to belong to the 'Eastern' civilization, which in its current form was defined by Islam. From 1912 onwards Gökalp began to use the term 'culture' in his writings. For reasons stated earlier, his writings thereafter also displayed an increasing concern with the history and traditions of the Turks. Relatedly, he began to regard Turks as a distinct cultural group. To understand what exactly he meant by 'culture', let us look at a passage from a collection of papers written in 1912 and 1913:

Religious beliefs, moral duties, aesthetic feelings, and ideals are ... of subjective nature and are the accepted norms of a certain culture-group. Scientific truths, hygienic and economic rules, practical arts pertaining to public works, techniques of commerce and of agriculture, concepts of mathematics and logic are all of an objective nature and are the accepted norms of the civilization-groups ... Scientific concepts, technical knowledge and the tools of economic production in a civilization pass from people to people by imitation or by exchange ... If humanity were composed only of a civilization-group made up of individuals, it would be possible to attribute the diffusion of social facts to imitation... Humanity is, however, not a civilization-group composed of independent individuals. Individuals are incorporated into culture-groups, such as family, clan, commune, corporation, class, ethnic unit, religious community and the state. [Culture] answers the question 'why live' ... [Civilization] answers the question 'how live'?⁶⁸

Gökalp defined the concept of culture here in relation to 'civilization'. He portrayed culture as a collective phenomenon that arises from shared 'subjective' mentalities rather than from an 'objective' feature such as race or common ancestry.⁶⁹ In particular, he defined 'culture' as an array of shared moral, religious and aesthetic beliefs and attitudes that govern the actions of individuals. Part of Gökalp's point here is that the principles of religion, morality and beauty are always defined in and for particular social settings, so there can be no universal standard for such pursuits. Accordingly, he argued, there can be no universal culture and humanity will always be divided into cultural groups. By contrast, he saw 'civilization' as a set of resources that can be shared by different cultural groups—here he pointed to the material sciences and technologies (such as medicine and economics) as examples. While such resources are always devised by specific individuals in specific societies, he argued, they do not belong to any individual or society, as they abide by objective criteria which can be applied by other individuals in other societies.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ziya Gökalp, 'Medreseler [1909]', in *Ziya Gökalp'in İlk Yazın Hayatı*, p. 115.

⁶⁸Gökalp, 'Cemaat ve Cemiyet [1912]', translated as 'Community and Society' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 97–99.

⁶⁹See also Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 28.

⁷⁰Gökalp, 'Cemaat ve Cemiyet', p. 102.

In the volume from which the above extract was taken, Gökalp explained that culture is primarily a linguistic phenomenon, as it is by means of a shared vernacular that human beings develop their beliefs and desires, convey them to one another, and so create or sustain a culture.⁷¹ He submitted, however, that not every linguistic practice facilitates the building of a culture: rather, culture emerges mainly from spontaneous, amiable and face-to-face interactions among persons, involving myths, proverbs, plays, songs, poems and the like.⁷² This is because such linguistic practices do not require a specific type of education in order to be grasped, and so they are more inclusive than other uses of language such as the scientific. Also, such linguistic practices store and reinforce values regarding divinity, morality and beauty, the main elements of a culture.

In the passage just quoted, Gökalp stated that culture facilitates the building of social institutions such as families, tribes, religious associations and nation-states. One crucial implication of this observation is that there is no single, universally valid way of defining the boundaries of cultural groups, for such groups can have different sizes and forms. They can be as small as a family or as large as a nation-state. And while some cultural groups are politically independent (as nation-states are), others live under foreign rule, which is typically the case for small communities. Moreover, the boundaries of a cultural group may overlap with those of a religion, as exemplified by the Jewish culture. Yet religion does not always define the boundaries of cultural groups: the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian minorities in the Ottoman Empire shared the same religion, although other aspects of their cultures differed.⁷³ This applies to language as well: while the boundaries of some cultural groups are defined by their respective languages (as exemplified by regional languages spoken by small communities), this is not always the case. For instance, French-speaking Protestants were not welcome in Catholic France in the sixteenth century, so they had to migrate to Protestant German territories.⁷⁴

Again in the same volume, Gökalp portrays cultures as phenomena which are continuously evolving rather than static; following Bergson, he calls them processes of 'creative evolution'.⁷⁵ This means that the historical endurance of a culture is not a matter of preserving old ways of thinking and living; rather, it requires flexibility and openness to change. To endure, Gökalp explained, cultures sometimes have to 'reform' some of their institutions to adapt them to new circumstances; at other times, they must discard their old, 'lifeless' institutions and 'invent' new ones to exist in 'different environments at different times'.⁷⁶

Like the nineteenth-century social evolutionists, Gökalp believed that cultural groups evolve from 'primitive' to 'advanced' forms.⁷⁷ But unlike those thinkers, he argued that such evolution is driven not only by factors internal to cultures but by external or 'civilizational' factors as well. Yet the recognition of the role of external factors added an element of contingency to Gökalp's account of cultural evolution, as he had to examine the varying circumstances of contacts among cultural groups and of the unpredictable ways in which such contacts alter those groups. We shall return to this point.

⁷¹Gökalp, 'Milliyet Mefkuresi', p. 80.

⁷²Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 24–25.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷⁴Gökalp, 'Milliyet Mefkuresi', pp. 80–81.

⁷⁵Gökalp, 'Anane ve Kaide [1912]', translated as 'Tradition and Formalism' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 93.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Gökalp, 'Bir Kavmin Tetkikinde Takibolunacak Usul [1915]', translated as 'The Scientific Study of Communities' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 118–123.

For Gökalp, the first cultural groups were 'primitive' communities of a few hundred or thousand persons united by family ties or by a local religion. Such communities typically consist of individuals with similar 'skills', and therefore contain hardly any division of labour.⁷⁸ Yet despite their internal similarities, these communities resist unification and are torn by their parochial loyalties. Gökalp deemed such communities 'pathological' for the reason that they lack the institutional resources to accommodate change. Drawing on Durkheim's account of social transformation, he held that human societies experience a variety of internal pressures for change, such as a rise in population, a related increase in economic activity, new discoveries in technology, the division of labour, shifts in political loyalties and related shifts in common notions of legitimacy.⁷⁹ When faced with such developments, Gökalp argued, 'primitive' societies tend to dissolve and capitulate to larger societies that unite smaller groups under a broader framework.⁸⁰ Gökalp called such larger societies 'nations'. The nature of the emergent nation is defined by its unifying framework. If the framework is provided by a religion, then the nation will be a 'theocratic nation'. If, on the other hand, the unifying framework of a nation is provided by shared political institutions, then that nation will be a 'legislative nation'. Finally, if the nation emerges from the sharing of all aspects of a culture, not only from a shared religion or political regime, then it can be called a 'culture-nation'. Whatever form it takes, Gökalp supposed that nations are more resilient than 'primitive' communities, for they are complex societies with functionally differentiated institutions capable of accommodating changes in social and political life. They are especially resilient when they are politically independent, since such societies have their own institutions of collective decision-making; so they have some control over their own fate. Thus Gökalp submitted that nation-states present themselves as the 'future' of cultural groups.⁸¹

Gökalp's account of cultural evolution differed from standard nineteenth-century evolutionist views in two further respects. First, his account did not take cultural evolution to be unilinear, since 'institutions found in a certain social species will not be found in another and are not valid there.'⁸² Second, Gökalp's account did not consider cultural evolution as necessary or irreversible: this is because when 'primitive' communities unite under a nation, local identities do not necessarily disappear as a result; emotional attachment to narrower identities may linger and threaten the national identity.⁸³ Hence, it was no surprise to Gökalp that primitive communities continued to exist in some parts of the world.⁸⁴

As stated earlier, for Gökalp cultural evolution is also driven by external factors. He provides an example of such factors in the passage cited most recently: the transfer of material sciences and technologies from one society to another. What makes such resources internationally valuable, he argued, is that they can help to sustain different forms of individual and collective life; that is, they can serve as the means of different kinds of cultural ends. It is not hard to see how the introduction into a society of material sciences and technologies

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 117–118.

⁷⁹Gökalp, 'İçtimai Neviler', p. 125; 'Millet Nedir?', translated as 'The Rise of the Nations' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 132–133; 'Türkiye Asri Bir Cemiyet mi?', translated as 'Is Turkey a Modern Nation?' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 142.

⁸⁰Gökalp, 'Bir Kavmin Tetkikinde Takibolunacak Usul', pp. 118–122.

⁸¹Gökalp, 'Millet Nedir?', p. 128.

⁸²Gökalp, 'İçtimai Neviler', p. 124.

⁸³Gökalp, 'Cemaat ve Cemiyet', p. 100.

⁸⁴Gökalp, 'Şehir Medeniyeti, Köy Medeniyeti [1923]', translated as 'Villages and Commune' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 138–141.

developed elsewhere could have a transformative effect: these sciences and technologies would take over functions hitherto fulfilled by local know-how embedded in local institutions. Gökalp acknowledged this when he observed that the introduction of 'positive' sciences developed in Western Europe into Ottoman society had led to a reduction of the role of traditional Islamic practices in the legal, economic as well as educational institutions of the empire.⁸⁵

Most interpreters of Gökalp have argued that the kinds of 'objective' or 'value-free' judgments that govern the 'positive' sciences and technologies are what define Gökalp's notion of civilization.⁸⁶ While there is no doubt that Gökalp regarded such judgments, and the sciences and technologies they support, as constitutive of a civilization, it is I believe a mistake to conclude from this that his notion of civilization is confined to such judgments, sciences and technologies. For his writings abound with remarks on other kinds of exchanges among cultural groups, such as linguistic and religious exchanges. He reported, for instance, that German-speaking communities in Europe had emulated each other's religious practices and mostly adopted the Protestant form of Christianity, whereas Latin-speaking populations followed one another in embracing Catholicism.⁸⁷ In other cases, it was religion rather than language that determined the cultural orientation of communities: 'the Protestant French became Germanized when they were expelled from France'.⁸⁸ For Gökalp, the fact that cultural groups are influenced by one another's languages or religions constitutes a threat to certain national unification efforts, such as 'pan-Turkism', which he advocated in the second phase of his writing career. Thus, he lamented that the 'northern Turks', i.e. the Turkish communities living under Russian rule, had become influenced by Russian culture, whereas the Ottoman Turks, due to their proximity to Europe, 'found inspiration' in French and German cultures.⁸⁹ No doubt this revealed an incongruity between Gökalp's social scientific findings and his political preferences: it is no accident then that Gökalp eventually abandoned pan-Turkism.

The general point here is that, for Gökalp, any aspect of the culture of a society (e.g. its musical motifs, political institutions or science) can be both 'cultural', i.e. the distinctive trait of that society, and 'civilizational', i.e. the shared trait of a number of societies.⁹⁰ This means that Gökalp's distinction between culture and civilization is a dynamic one, which constantly needs redefining. Some interpreters (e.g. Berkes, Davison and Parla) have recognized the latter aspect of Gökalp's work.⁹¹ For instance, Davison wrote that the 'content' of culture is constituted 'in and through relationships with other civilizations and cultures'.⁹² Yet these interpreters have not arrived at the general conclusion that, for Gökalp, any aspect of any culture, not only the truly universalizable norms and values (such as those of ecumenical religions or natural sciences), could in principle become a civilizational resource. This is

⁸⁵Gökalp, 'İslam Terbiyesinin Mahiyeti [1914]', translated as 'The Nature of Islamic Education' in *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 233–235.

⁸⁶See, for example, Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 28; Davison, 'Secularization and Modernization in Turkey', pp. 204–205; Niyazi Berkes, 'Ziya Gökalp: His Contribution', p. 388.

⁸⁷Gökalp, 'Milliyet Mefkuresi', p. 80.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Gökalp, 'Türk Milleti ve Turan', p. 74.

⁹⁰Gökalp 'Millî İctimaiyat [1917]', in *Ziya Gökalp. Makaleler VIII* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1981), p. 120.

⁹¹Berkes, 'Ziya Gökalp: His Contribution', p. 388; Davison, 'Secularization and Modernization in Turkey', p. 213; Parla, *The Social and Political Thought*, p. 30.

⁹²Andrew Davison, 'Laiklik and Turkey's "Cultural" Modernity', in *Remaking Turkey*, ed. Fuat Keyman (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), p. 44.

because, I believe, these interpreters have overrated Gökalp's commitment to modern 'positive' sciences and technologies developed in the West and underrated his commitment to the plurality of civilizations as well as of cultures.⁹³ Also, these interpreters have been concerned exclusively with Gökalp's remarks on the possible modernization of the Turkish culture and have therefore overlooked the scope of his conception of social culture, namely that this conception is meant to apply to all societies, not only to late developing societies like Turkey. These aspects of Gökalp's thought were most explicit in his writings during the third phase of his life, such as the following passage from a book titled *The Principles of Turkism* published in 1923:

There is both similarity and difference between culture and civilization. The similarity is that both encompass all aspects of social life—religious, moral, legal, intellectual, aesthetic, economic, linguistic and technologic. ... [But] culture is national, while civilization is international. ... Civilization is a mutually shared whole of the social lives of nations. ... For example, Western civilization is a civilization shared by the European nations living on the continents of Europe and America. In this civilization there are English, French, German, etc. cultures. ... Secondly, civilization is the sum total of social phenomena produced by method and individual wills. For example, our knowledge and theories relating to ethics, law, fine arts, economics, philosophy, language, and technologies have been created deliberately through method. The elements of a culture have not been created by individuals deliberately. Just as plants and animals develop naturally and spontaneously, so too arise the elements of a culture.⁹⁴

Here Gökalp compared the ways in which cultures and civilizations take shape. While both 'encompass' all aspects of social life, culture emerges from the 'natural and spontaneous' life of a society. By contrast, civilization is a matter of conscious learning and decision. Gökalp emphasized that neither culture nor civilization is a seamless whole; that each comprises distinct yet interrelated fields of institutionalization, such as politics, economy, religion and art. The fragmented character of social life is what enables societies to share one another's resources without thereby losing their integrity or distinctive nature. Yet to understand how, in Gökalp's view, societies with different cultures come to share qualities, and so create a 'civilization', we need to look at what he had to say about inter-societal contacts. While Gökalp himself did not provide a systematic analysis of such contacts, he makes observations that indicate he had in mind three kinds of inter-societal contacts.

The first kind of contact consists in the exposure of the 'educated' members of a society to the cultural traditions, such as literature and music, of other societies.⁹⁵ Such exposure includes training in the sciences and humanities of other societies. Gökalp described such experiences as 'feasts' to which each nation brings its own culture.⁹⁶ Educated people are in a position to have such experiences, for they tend to be misfits, 'bored' with their own culture and seeking 'exotic' experiences. Echoing Kant, who defined 'culture' as individual development, Gökalp regarded intercultural experiences as conducive to the refinement (*tezhib*) of the individuals involved, which amounts to the acquisition of the ability to appreciate different kinds of cultural phenomena.⁹⁷ Since refinement results from exposure to diverse cultures, it implies being 'eclectic': it makes one 'more benevolent and eclectic towards all other individuals and nations.'⁹⁸

⁹³Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 39.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 72–74.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 72.

Gökalp noticed that refinement, so construed, is not limited to the elite; through the dissemination of the works of its educated elite an entire society becomes exposed to other cultures: 'while the elite of any nation are set apart from the masses by their higher education and learning; they 'carry civilization' to the people. As an example, Gökalp referred to the Italian Renaissance artists who drew on the great works of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In his view, these artists did not 'imitate' those works; rather, they 'synthesized' what they had learned from them with the sensibilities of the Italian people and thus created the 'national art' of Renaissance Italy.⁹⁹

Secondly, intercultural contacts can be established directly by entire societies: societies that live in close proximity can enter into 'commercial, intellectual and technological relations with each other' and the extent of 'these relations grows wider and wider'.¹⁰⁰ Such relations thus generate a civilization, a body of shared practices and institutions that pertain not only to 'high' culture but also to the ordinary lives of individuals. The nature of the emergent civilization mirrors the particular qualities of the societies involved. What Gökalp called the 'Mediterranean' civilization, for instance, emerged from the interactions among Middle Eastern communities, such as the ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, Hittites, Arabs, Armenians and Greeks, over extended periods of time.¹⁰¹ This civilization comprised religions, political structures, musical forms, architectural styles, literary motifs and worldviews, from which later communities could draw. For Gökalp, the Ottoman Empire had drawn on and contributed to that civilization as well.

It was crucial for Gökalp to note that Turks entered the Mediterranean civilization after they migrated to Anatolia from Central Asia, where they had 'belonged to' the 'Far Eastern' civilization.¹⁰² In Central Asia, Turks lived in nomadic tribes and their religious beliefs and practices were shaped by the related traditions of the region, such as sky worship and Buddhism. Upon settling in Anatolia, Turks accepted the religion of the Arabs and Persians, i.e. Islam. From the Arabs, they also learned the various sciences (such as mathematics and rhetoric) which the Arabs had borrowed from the Greeks. Following the political traditions of their new homeland, Turks embraced the sultanate, now entrusted to the Ottoman dynasty, as their political regime. Gökalp saw the Ottoman Empire as a civilization in itself, for it was a regime shared by different religious and linguistic communities.¹⁰³ In the nineteenth century, however, Turks realized that they could no longer depend for their survival on the sciences that they had acquired from the Arabs, or on the Ottoman Empire; they had to adopt up-to-date sciences and technologies from the West and create a nation-state similar to the nation-states in Europe. They thus adopted the contemporary 'Western' civilization.

Stated in more general terms, Gökalp saw human societies as being constantly 'torn between different civilizations'.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, it was no accident to him that throughout their historical evolution Turks have adopted three distinct civilizations, the Far Eastern, the Mediterranean and contemporary Western civilizations, with Turkish culture bearing the

⁹⁹Gökalp, 'Dehaya Doğru [1922]', translated as 'Toward Genius' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 264.

¹⁰⁰Gökalp, 'Cemaat ve Cemiyet', p. 101.

¹⁰¹Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 41.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 28–33.

¹⁰³Gökalp, 'Cemaat ve Cemiyet', p. 102; Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁴Gökalp, 'Milli Terbiye', p. 240.

'traces' of all three.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the ancient Greeks and Romans were initially part of an all-inclusive Mediterranean civilization. Yet once these populations abandoned paganism and accepted Christianity, they drifted apart from the Islamized Mediterranean peoples and formed what can be called the 'Christian' civilization. With the conversion of the Germanic and Slavic societies to Christianity, that civilization grew and fortified its boundaries with the 'Islamic' civilization.¹⁰⁶ Even so, different societies chose different versions of Christianity: whereas the Romans adopted Catholicism, the Greeks and the Slavs embraced 'Orthodoxy'. In contrast to both, the Germans invented Lutheranism. Yet with the rise of nation-states and the advances in material sciences, Gökalp observed, the dominance of religion-based civilizations has eventually declined.¹⁰⁷

These are only some of Gökalp's examples of intercultural exchanges and of the formation of civilizations. They make clear that not all aspects of a culture grow 'naturally and spontaneously' from the internal life of a society, for the culture of a society undergoes changes as that society interacts with other societies. For Gökalp, when societies come into contact with one another, each society makes a fundamental decision on how to relate to the other, a decision which comes down to whether to protect itself from the influence of the other society by 'erecting cultural frontiers' against it, or to be open to learning from it.¹⁰⁸ Such a decision cannot be explained by the preferences of particular individuals; it is better understood as the attitude that an entire society takes toward another. After all, it is only when a society as a whole decides to take on the institutions of another that those institutions enter into the cultural life of the receiver society, and 'assume new meanings and become indigenous.'¹⁰⁹ Also, a society that adopts the institutions of another does not necessarily lose its distinctive character; for example, the Irish adopted the English institution of the parliament but they 'remained non-Anglicized because of their Catholic tradition.'¹¹⁰ The adoption or rejection by societies of each other's traits thus explains the formation and vanishing of civilizations.

Two additional points that emerge from Gökalp's remarks on cultural borrowings are worth noting here. The first is that different groups or individuals in a society can make different cultural choices. For instance, when Turks settled in Anatolia, not all Turks converted to Islam; some turned to Christianity and others to Judaism.¹¹¹ During the wars of religion in Europe, European societies also became divided along sectarian lines. Secondly, cultural communities are not always committed to preserving their own culture; some entirely abandon the culture of their ancestors and embrace the culture of others.¹¹² For instance, when the German Franks migrated to Gaul, they 'adopted the Latin language and became Catholic'. Similarly, when the Bulgars settled in the Balkans, 'they forgot their religion, embraced the Christianity of the Slavs and became Slavic.'¹¹³

So far we have looked at intercultural contacts that are intended and amicable. Yet Gökalp pointed to a third type of intercultural contact, one which is unsolicited and hostile. We have

¹⁰⁵Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁶Gökalp, 'Three Currents of Thought', p. 74.

¹⁰⁷Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁸Gökalp, 'Milli Terbiye', p. 240.

¹⁰⁹See no. 29.

¹¹⁰Gökalp, 'Millet Nedir?', p. 130.

¹¹¹Gökalp, 'Milliyet Mefkuresi', p. 80.

¹¹²Gökalp, 'Millet Nedir?', p. 130.

¹¹³Ibid.

seen that, on his account, cultural groups tend to evolve from small and 'primitive' to large and complex. Yet he also observed that most cultural groups undergo their historical evolution under foreign rule, which can be a multicultural empire or another cultural group.¹¹⁴ He did not assume that all forms of foreign rule are detrimental to the culture of a society, but he found that in many cases foreign rulers seek to 'subjugate' the cultures of the societies they govern, which amounts to 'colonialism'.¹¹⁵

Gökalp noted, however, that colonialism does not always achieve its desired ends. He identified four possible outcomes of colonialism.¹¹⁶ The first is total success. The Romans, for instance, were able to 'impose their language upon the Gauls and Spaniards through their state, their religion and their civilization' to a point where the cultures of those peoples 'could never be resurrected'. The second possible outcome of colonialism is total failure: the 'Poles maintained their identity in spite of all attempts by the Orthodox Russians to assimilate them'. Third, colonialism can yield the opposite of what it seeks: the assimilation of the culture of the colonizer to that of the colonized. For example, the Romans became 'Hellenized' while they were 'dominating' the Hellenes. More ironically, the Christian Crusaders ended up being influenced by the Islamic civilization when they captured the Holy Land.¹¹⁷ Finally, colonialism can prevail temporarily until the colonized society 'experiences a rebirth after losing its character': for example, 'although the Czechs in Austria had become assimilated with the Germans, they started a national movement with a Czech Renaissance... and the Czech language and literature, and so the Czech nationality, were reborn'.¹¹⁸

For Gökalp, the survival of a culture under foreign rule indicates the 'strength' of a society. Such strength, he argued, is a matter of degree and a function of two factors:¹¹⁹ (i) the 'solidarity' of the society, the degree to which its members are committed to the cultural values of the society; and (ii) the ability of the members of the society to act in concert in defending, preserving or reforming their society's culture. Having so defined the strength of a society, it is no accident that Gökalp saw the nation-state as the 'future' of cultural communities. The nation-state, as he defined it, transcends the lesser cleavages in a society and thus renders it stable. In addition, he proposes, nation-states are individuated and preserved by their institutions of collective decision-making and action. The thought here is that cultural groups can survive external threats insofar as they have the capacities best exemplified in nation-states.

Yet Gökalp's endorsement of the nation-state as a viable form of society had a caveat. Given the facts that cultural communities live in overlapping territories and have intertwined histories, he observed, it seems impossible for there to be a culturally homogenous state: it was therefore in his view no accident that there has never been such a state.¹²⁰ But in his view this was no cause for concern, since it is possible for different cultural groups to coexist in harmony in a state. Indeed, this is what the 'advanced' states of the world, such as those of France, Great Britain and Japan, have achieved: thanks to their inclusive, democratic legislative institutions, these states were able to accommodate and preserve the religious and

¹¹⁴Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 32, 60.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 58–61.

¹¹⁶My remarks here are based on Gökalp's 'Millet Nedir'.

¹¹⁷Gökalp, 'İslamiyet ve Asri Medeniyet', translated as 'Islam and Modern Civilization' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 222.

¹¹⁸Gökalp, 'The Rise of the Nations', p. 131.

¹¹⁹Gökalp, *Principles*, pp. 62–71.

¹²⁰'The state ... should in its ideal form be national, like culture. But this ideal form has scarcely materialized up to our time' (Gökalp, 'Asri Aile ve Milli Aile [1917]', translated as 'Modern Family and National Culture' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 248).

linguistic diversity in their respective societies.¹²¹ In Gökalp's catalogue, these societies would be cast as 'legislative nations' rather than as 'culture-nations'. Hence, when Gökalp portrayed his own times as the 'age of nations', it seems that he had in mind mainly the rise of 'legislative' nations rather than culturally uniform political entities, and so perhaps anticipated Habermas' idea of 'constitutional patriotism'.¹²²

Gökalp's endorsement of the 'legislative' model of the nation-state as a viable form of society found expression in his expectation that the nascent Turkish nation-state could only be a 'legislative nation' rather than a culturally homogenous one, since post-Ottoman Turkish society was a multi-religious and therefore multicultural society with a Muslim majority and several non-Muslim minorities.¹²³ Hence, he warned that if 'the majority acts as if there are no non-Muslims in society', they would be exercising the 'tyranny of the majority'.¹²⁴ To obviate that, he submitted, the Turkish state has to ensure that minorities are represented in government.¹²⁵

Conclusion

If my analysis of Gökalp's remarks on social cultures is sound, then we are warranted to conclude that he drew on all the Western conceptions of culture he identified. He welcomed the Kantian outlook that emphasized the ability of individuals to achieve refinement with some distance from the norms of their own society. He also drew on the conception of culture as a distinct and enduring form of collective life, which he associated with contemporary European theories of nationhood. Finally, he agreed with Durkheim and the nineteenth-century social evolutionists that societies are evolving rather than static entities.

But the conception of culture Gökalp ultimately embraced was not reducible to any of the above conceptions: it both accommodated and transcended them. This, at any rate, was how Gökalp presented and defended his own conception of culture: contrary to the European views of culture, he declared, the conception he endorsed enabled him to 'value and respect all cultures' and to 'admire their civic and cultural works and venerate their thinkers and artists'.¹²⁶ In this paper I have called Gökalp's conception of culture a 'hybrid' one. We have seen that, on his conception, the refinement of an individual is a result of exposure to diverse social cultures rather than a solitary task. We have also seen that, for Gökalp, social cultures emerge and evolve through inter-societal contacts; accordingly, societies cannot be viewed as discrete entities, for their boundaries are inevitably always permeable and malleable.

¹²¹Gökalp, 'İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Münasebetiyle [1916]', translated as 'State and Religion' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 206.

¹²²Jürgen Habermas, 'Struggles for Recognition in Constitutional States', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1(2) (1993), pp. 128–155.

¹²³This is consistent with Murat Somer's observation that many of the first Turkish nationalists, who wished to build a nation from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, tried to be as inclusive as possible in their conceptions of national unity. See Murat Somer, *Milada Dönüşü* (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2015), pp. 114–120. See also Frank Tachau, 'The Search for National Identity among the Turks', *Die Welt des Islams*, 8(3) (1963), pp. 165–176.

¹²⁴Gökalp, *Felsefe Dersleri*, pp. 403–404.

¹²⁵Gökalp was close to the circles that made the decisions leading to the forced deportations and mass killings of the Ottoman Armenians in the 1910s in the Ottoman Empire; see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler III* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), pp. 207–208; Hilmar Keiser, *The Extermination of Armenians* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2014), pp. 60–61. While it is not certain that he was himself involved in the making of those decisions, this is clearly a possibility. In any case, if my interpretation of his social and political writings covered in this paper is accurate, a justification of such genocidal acts would not directly follow from those writings.

¹²⁶Gökalp, *Principles*, p. 75.

Before concluding, we should observe two further aspects of Gökalp's conception of culture, by way of emphasizing that the hybridity of cultures was not a claim he made in passing, but rather was deeply rooted in his social thought. The first is anti-essentialism, which clearly comes into view in Gökalp's remarks on Turkish language. He went out of his way to cast doubt on the claim of the 'purist' Turkish nationalists that there was a true, essential Turkish language. He submitted, to the contrary, that the Turkish dialect spoken by the Ottoman Turks included words from European languages as well as from Arabic and Persian, a historical fact that distinguished that community from any other, including the Turkish communities in other parts of the world. Thus Gökalp emphasized not only the irreducibly local nature of the vernaculars spoken by particular cultural groups, but also the fact that such groups bear the traces of other cultures with which they have interacted throughout their histories.

The idea of cultural hybridity is also reinforced by Gökalp's recognition of the role of choice in the evolution of a society. We have seen that Gökalp did not think that social phenomena are governed by deterministic laws, for the choices individuals and collectivities make in response to intercultural contacts alter their society's development thereafter. Referring to the emerging nationalist movement among Turks, he wrote:

The followers of the New Life will not go forward toward preconceived goals with preconceived programs ... We cannot ascertain and predict the ends to which it will lead us and which consequences it will bring forth.¹²⁷

Similarly, Gökalp did not see the evolution of societies and their cultures progressing from 'primitive' to 'complex' as the inevitable unfolding of a preordained plan; rather, he regarded it as the result of a confluence of factors, including dynamics internal to societies, intended or unsolicited encounters between societies, the unpredictable ways in which such encounters affect those societies, and the choices individuals and groups make regarding the future of their society. Gökalp therefore took exception to standard nineteenth-century theories of social evolution, refusing to see any culture or civilization as the pinnacle of human development: 'the investigator engaged in research on the national mores,' he wrote, 'should not have any monopolistic bias in favour of any of the civilizations to which the nation belongs.'¹²⁸

Yet how would Gökalp respond to the claim made by some interpreters¹²⁹ that precisely by justifying the blending of institutions from different social cultures, he was caught in a contradiction? According to Davison, for instance, Gökalp's thought is best construed as an attempt to combine the 'master codes of Western modernity' with the culture of Muslim Turks. Thus, he argued, Gökalp's thought was 'split' between the two contradictory goals of, on one hand, showing the 'indispensability' of Western modernity for Muslim Turks and, on the other, establishing that this goal is not completely realizable in the case of Muslim Turks. Davison therefore concluded that Gökalp could be likened to the post-colonial thinkers who wished to 'reject Europe's adequacy' without 'discarding Europe.'¹³⁰

If my account of Gökalp's thought is sound, then he would not have objected to being compared to such post-colonial thinkers—even though the Ottoman society was never

¹²⁷Gökalp, 'Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymetler', pp. 57–58.

¹²⁸Gökalp, 'Milli İçtimaiyat [1917]', translated as 'The Methods of Cultural Sociology' in *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 183.

¹²⁹See, for instance, Davison, 'Ziya Gökalp and Provincializing Europe' and Kadioğlu, 'The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism'.

¹³⁰Davison, 'Ziya Gökalp and Provincializing Europe', p. 90.

formally colonized—since he too wanted his nation to become a nation-state similar to modern European nation-states without giving up some key aspects of Turkish culture. Yet, he would not have regarded this wish as contradictory or paradoxical. This is because he did not see societies or their cultures as self-enclosed, impervious entities; rather, he considered them as inevitably always susceptible to the influences of other societies and cultures. Hence, Gökalp's social thought was motivated not by a concern to discover the true authentic identity of societies, but rather by a concern to understand what it takes for social cultures (post-colonial or not) to endure in the varying circumstances in which they find themselves. He did not assume that all social cultures can last forever; nor did he believe, however, that cultural diversity in the world will eventually disappear. Finally, though, Gökalp would have objected to his work being seen as pertinent and meaningful only to Muslim Turks, for his conception of social culture purported to be universally applicable, just as much as the ideas of the European thinkers he cited.

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