

COMPARISON OF THE USE OF MYTHOLOGY  
IN THE WORKS OF ZIYA GÖKALP AND MEHMET EMIN  
YURDAKUL, CONSIDERING THEIR CONTRIBUTION  
TO NATIONAL IDENTITY BUILDING

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Mythology with its various possibilities of interpretation is a suitable device for influencing national feelings and that is why it is often used in the period of national identity building. This paper analyses the interpretation of mythology in the poetry of two founders of Turkish nationalistic literature and contributors to the new Turkish identity Ziya Gökalp and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul.

**Key words:** mythology, nationalism, poetry, Turan, Turkish identity

Interaction of mythology and nationalism can be traced back to the time when Herder's demand for common territory, culture, language and history became a part of the definition of a nation. Thus the pure political identification with the nation, as a community of people with common rights on the common territory, as the definition of nation was understood in the time of the French revolution, developed into an identification based on common culture, language and history, which is thus perceived to our days.<sup>1</sup>

This change, which influenced above all the branch of history, being radically altered by engaging in the "national issue", brought an outstanding revival of mythology, because mythology became politically useful in the light of new definition of the nation. By reviving the myths and by their proper interpretation it seemed to be possible to create an impression of togetherness and belonging to one common community, that is to one nation. It is done in the first place by referring to the history, to the golden age of the nation, which should arouse pride,

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<sup>1</sup> KOHL, P.L., FAWCETT, C.: Nationalism, politics and the practice of archaeology, Cambridge, 1995, p. 14.

to the legendary heroes-role models who should be looked up to and to the territories once inhabited by the particular nation.

It was no different in the case of the national awakening of the Turks and Turkish national identity building. Mythology, which was in the first instance activated by archaeological discoveries in the region of north Mongolia, then by European historiography circles and later also by Ottoman historiographers, who recalled the fact that history of the Turks does not begin with the rise of the Ottoman Empire, took its advantage here as well. These findings spread from intellectual quarters to the common people, as in many European nations, and foremost the “small ones”, by the activity of national awakeners, who were recruited mainly from poets.

Therefore, it is the poetry of two of the most energetic national awakeners, namely Ziya Gökalp and Mehmet Emin, which is the subject matter of this essay. However, its objective will not be to analyse the life or work of these authors, who are, as well as their work, quite satisfactorily covered by the other essays, but comparison of their usage of mythology in their books of poetry. Simultaneously, this paper tries to answer the questions of “how they perceived the national history”, “what their vision of the newly-forming national identity was”, “what place in the world belongs to the Turks and Turkey” and “what the purpose of involving mythology in their own poetic activities was”.

In doing so, I will first briefly introduce the Turkish mythology in general terms. Having done so, I will proceed to compare the mythological material, which they used in their poems and which will be divided into three groups, based on the character of the material itself. Thus, in the first group the use of sacred animals and celestial bodies from Turkish mythology will be compared, in the second group legendary heroes and in the last one the territory once presumably occupied by Turks as well as time period related to the birth of the Turkish nation. In the framework of this comparison for better understanding of the way mythology was being used to influence the formation of national identity, an explanation of the genuine meanings of mythological figures will be added.

## CELESTIAL BODIES AND SACRED ANIMALS

The religion of the old Turks was pagan monotheism. The most important figure was the God of heaven (Göktanrı) who provided the life, happiness as well as cosmic, political and social order. Turkish rulers were considered to be his descendants. Other powers, spirits or gods were always dependent on Göktanrı, being connected with him. Representatives of these spirits were above all sacred places, mountains, water, springs and rivers. In heaven the most important objects were the Sun and Moon as well as the Pleiades and Venus.<sup>2</sup>

In the religious ideas of the old Turks animals were of great importance. Among them wolf, bear, deer, horse, lion and eagle enjoyed the biggest popularity. All of them were considered to be God’s assistants who were announcing God’s will to

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<sup>2</sup> BONNEFOY, Y.: *Antik dünya ve geleneksel toplumlarda dinler ve mitolojiler sözlüğü*, p. 342.

people. The wolf was supposed to be the ancestor of both Turks and Mongols and became taboo over the centuries. He was a guide and protector of Oghuz Turks. The deer was believed to be in the contact with the enlightened ones and God himself and bring good luck to the place it was passing through.

Despite the fact that the God of Heaven was the most important figure in the religion of the old Turks, Gökalp did not devote much attention to him. He mentions him only once in the poem of Ergenekon, where he says "We are five sons of the Turk Khan, the true slaves of the God of Heaven."<sup>3</sup>

More ideological use of Göktañrı can be seen in Yurdakul's poetry. In one of his poems he addresses praise to Ahmed Refik Bey, saying: "You came to this nation like a miracle sent by the God of heaven."<sup>4</sup> Or in "Hey, Turk wake up" he asks: "who is the khan of those heroes with swords who swore their lives to the God of heaven for the sake of the homeland?"<sup>5</sup> We can see that in both cases Göktañrı is somehow connected with the homeland, with the nation, and he is supposed to be protective of the Turkish nation. The same approach can be seen in the following verse where Yurdakul says: "Have a look God of heaven, Asia, which was cruelly subdued, is bleeding."<sup>6</sup> In this poem he challenges Göktañrı to protect and save his people.

Even though, neither authors used Göktañrı in their poems too much, we can still recognize the association with nation and usage of mythology for arousing national consciousness.

Among other heavenly bodies Gökalp uses the moon quite often. The was moon believed to be created by the sun, which is by some researchers considered to be the God of heaven himself. It has an important place in Turkish mythology<sup>7</sup> and its connection with the Turkish nation is reflected through its image on the flag of many Turkish tribes long before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.

The moon has got three functions in Gökalp's poems. One of them is as the name of the main hero or usually heroine, who is serving to his or her country; the other is the name of ancestor of Turks, usually male ancestor; the last one representing Turkey itself. In *Kızılelma* it is the name of the main character, a girl who is striving to recreate Turan, the mythical land of the old Turks. "Her name was Miss Moon (Ay Hanım), she was from the family of khans, and her mother was a Kirghiz, from the tribe of Konrad." In a poem about two poor children a girl Moon and her brother Star, who are banished from home by their stepmother, the moon represents Turkey; Star represents Islam and the stepmother England. In the words of Gökalp: "Ay Hanım is Turkey, Star is Islam and the stepmother is treacherous England."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Şiirler ve halk masalları, Türk tarih kurumu basım evi*, Ankara, 1952, Ergenekon, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> YURDAKUL, MEHMET EMİN: *Şiirler, Türk tarih kurumu basım evi*, Ankara, 1969, Selam sana, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> YURDAKUL, M.E.: *Ey Türk uyan*, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> YURDAKUL, M.E.: *Gülsün artık*, p. 252.

<sup>7</sup> URAZ, M.: *Türk Mitolojisi*, Ankara, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Kolsuz Hanım*, p. 207.

In another poem called the Flood of Turks, the moon is the name of one of the six sons of Oghuz Khan. "I will have six sons, Turan will be born from us: Day khan, Moon khan..." That means the moon in this poem is considered to be ancestor of the Turks. The function of being the ancestor of the Turks is also ascribed to the Moon in other poems such as *Yaradiliş* (Creation).<sup>9</sup>

The function of representing Turkey seems to be the most common one since the moon together with a star is a part of the Turkish flag. We can see that in the poem "On the road to Galicia": "The son and daughter of this country recognized the Moon-Star,"<sup>10</sup> which is in the meaning of flag, symbol of Turkey. In the poem "Green bead" we can see it used very similarly: "on the bead there is a beautiful girl, she has got a picture with the moon and star."<sup>11</sup> Unlike Gökalp, Emin uses the term *ay*, only in connection with a star as the symbol of flag, as in: "The flag with moon and star will wave for us."<sup>12</sup> He says so in the poem about the army, challenging soldiers to fight in order to save their country.

The Pleiades (Ülker) are the second most often mentioned heavenly object. The old Turks considered this constellation to be the sign of good luck, causing good crops.<sup>13</sup>

Yurdakul uses this object in its original meaning, that is as a Turkish star of good luck: "You are the country of those, who were born from the Turan race, the Pleiades themselves blessed you."<sup>14</sup> Even though Pleiades are used in their original meaning, the connection between the mythological object and its use for arousing the national consciousness is obvious. Pleiades, the star of the old Turks, is blessing the Turks of nowadays because they are from the Turanian race. A very similar approach we can be seen in the poem "National spirit": "the star of my nation is shining like the Pleiades."<sup>15</sup> In the poem called Lullaby, devoted to the girls of Turan, Yurdakul wishes the Pleiades to give light for the new Turan: "Let the Pleiades light for you..."<sup>16</sup>

Gökalp uses the Pleiades as a name and as a symbol for the Turks: "we are the true Turks you are Aydın and my name is Ülker (Pleiades),"<sup>17</sup> says he in the poem Pleiades and Aydın," which is a story of two siblings, a girl called Pleiades and boy Aydın, who is changed into a gazelle by their stepmother and who regains his shape again after taking a look at Turan, who is the new born son of his sister Pleiades. We can see that Gökalp, as well as Yurdakul, uses the Pleiades in connection with Turan and hereby trying to point out that Turan is blessed by luck represented by this constellation.

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<sup>9</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Yaradiliş*, p. 295.

<sup>10</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Galiçya yolunda*, p. 292.

<sup>11</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Yeşil boncuk*, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ordudan bir ses*, p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> ÇORUHLU, Y.: *Türk mitolojisinin anahatları*, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ordunun destanı*, p. 204.

<sup>15</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *National spirit*, p. 320.

<sup>16</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ninni*, p. 243.

<sup>17</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Ülker ile Aydın*, p. 26.

As for animals mentioned in the poems of the two authors, we will focus on the two most important ones for the Turks: the fallow deer (Alageyik) and grey she-wolf (Bozkurt). Alageyik in Gökalp's poems assumes two forms. One of them is the form of Mother of the Turks, the other is that of the one who is showing the right way. Both of these forms are known from the myths.

Alageyik as mother of the Turks is mentioned in the poem about the creation, where she is written in the long list of ancestors of the Turks.<sup>18</sup> In the poem "Golden light" Alageyik is a 14 year-old when she becomes surrounded by the golden light. As a result of this event she becomes pregnant and later she gives birth to a girl called Turkan and a boy called Turk, who become the Adam and Eve of all Turks.<sup>19</sup> Except for retelling the old myths in modern poems the form of Alageyik being mother of the Turks is used in several other poems where the Turkish nationality of the main character is to be accentuated, as we can see in the poem Ülker and Aydin: "my mother is Alageyik and my father is Bozkurt, I, the son of Turk, would I run away from death?"<sup>20</sup>

The case of Alageyik assuming the form of the one who helps and shows the way we can be found in several poems such as Ergenekon, A little prince or in Alageyik, which is the poem inspired by the myth. It is about a boy who has a plumb and this is stolen by Alageyik, the boy tries to pursue her and thus gets lost, however she shows herself again in order to give him a hand and shows him the way to a golden pavilion, where he eats a magic apple and enters the world of magic, Alageyik turns out to be a beautiful Kyrgyz and together led by a wolf they set out for the journey to Turan.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas Gökalp's usage of the Alageyik is bound to the original myth about alageyik assuming either the form of the mother of the Turks or the form of the guide showing the right path to Turan, Yurdakul uses Alageyik only twice in his work. And what is more, alageyik is not the main character, nor does she lead or show the way to anyone. In one of his poems it stands for luck: "you are the homeland, which my spirit is searching for, stars have shown me where you are, you, the beauty from elevated gardens, you the place which Alageyiks loved."<sup>22</sup> As we can see, it is connected to the homeland, nation and mythical territory of Turan. In the other one, she represents a Turk and a Hungarian girl, to whom the author is confessing his love accentuating their and his Turanian origin.<sup>23</sup>

In the similar way Yurdakul uses the grey wolf (Bozkurt) and other mythical animals in his poems. We do not come across any epic story where wolves are present or any character carrying this name. Instead, we can see the usage of a Bozkurt as a metaphor, representing love for the homeland. It is clearly visible in the poem "Open up your chest we have arrived": "Let the flames lit up by Bozkurts

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<sup>18</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Yaradılış*, p. 295.

<sup>19</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Altun ışık*, p. 287.

<sup>20</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Ülker ile Aydın*, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Alageyik*, p. 52-54.

<sup>22</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Aç bağrını biz geldik*, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Macar kızına*, p. 318.

moan with the sound of victory of Turan coming out of drums, let them hear the announcement of the great leader of the Turks..."<sup>24</sup> The same function of Bozkurt can also be seen in the poem where he celebrates his beloved girl, he says that her "fingers lit up the flames of bozkurts in me"<sup>25</sup> and later "I will become hero fighting for my homeland".<sup>26</sup> In both cases the fire lit by bozkurts means the love for nation, since the bozkurt, as we have already seen, saved the Turks by lighting the flame and providing the Turks with a passage through the rocks thus saving the whole nation.

Ziya Gökalp uses the wolf similarly as he did the fallow deer. He uses him as a character in an epic story having all the attributes of the legendary bozkurt such as providing help and guidance. In the poem "Ergenekon", he poeticized myth of Ergenekon, which will be analysed later in the part on territory. In his poem "Alageyik" the same story about guidance and showing the way leading to the Turkish territory is repeated.

Apart from these stories related to his sort of imagined promised land, Gökalp also uses the wolf in poems related to the reality of his life: "God raise the old wolves from dead",<sup>27</sup> in this exclamation we can see his request for someone who would show the Turks the right way out of the then-situation. The verses: "Let our country be purified, let the wolves alone stay in the nest"<sup>28</sup> or "save our homeland bozkurt!",<sup>29</sup> are other examples of such a demand.

From the above examples we can see that celestial bodies as well as sacred animals from Turkish mythology are being used in the name of national awakening, arousing of national consciousness and thus in building the national identity.

There is no big difference between the usage of celestial bodies and sacred animals in the poems of Yurdakul and Gökalp concerned with the new identity building. Both of them use mythological objects to arouse national consciousness among the Turks, whether by retelling of old myths in new way or by using mythical figures in poems describing the present political situation as was the case of Yurdakul. More about the different approach to the nation and the contribution of these two poets to national identity building will be evident in the next two chapters.

## THE LEGENDARY HEROES

Among many Turkish heroes such as Asena, the founder of Tu-kue dynasty, Uygur Gugu Khan, Satuk Bugra Khan who was the Karahan ruler, Attila, the ruler of the Huns, who defeated Rome and conquered south eastern Europe in the 4th century AD or Jenghiz Khan, the famous Mongol ruler who united the Mongol tribes and conquered a great part of Asia during the 12th and 13th centuries, all of

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<sup>24</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Aç bağrını biz geldik*, p. 149.

<sup>25</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Bana Kevser sunana*, p. 248.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>27</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *İlahi*, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Ötüken ülkesi*, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Çocuk duaları*, p. 141.

whom Turks even today usually consider to be their ancestors,<sup>30</sup> it was Oghuz khan, who has always enjoyed the biggest interest of the Turks.<sup>31</sup>

That is why it is no surprise that both Gökalp and Emin mention him in their poems most often. According to legend, Oghuz khan was unique from the day he was born, after the first sip of milk from his mother's breast he refused to consume it any longer and demanded to be fed on meat. He grew up in forty days. Later he became famous for his strength and fighting and hunting skills. He married two girls of divine origin, who gave birth to his six children: Sun, Moon, Star, Heaven, Mountain and Sea.

In Gökalp's poems Oghuz khan is referred to as a father of all Turks, whom the Turks should be proud of, the ruler of Turan and the fighter for his homeland.

We can find Oghuz khan mentioned as an ancestor of the Turks in a poem Turan, which actually meant the beginnings of the Turkish nationalistic literature, in which Gökalp says: "Oghuz khan who lives in my veins and his glory and grace fills my heart with inspiration, that not the Turkey, nor Turkistan is homeland of the Turks, but the great and everlasting land of Turan"<sup>32</sup> as well as in the poem of Arslan Basat, another Turkish hero, who, when asked about his origin, said: "if you are asking my origin, I am from the clan of Oghuz, from the tribe of Kayi..."<sup>33</sup> identifying himself with Turan which is mentioned quite often in this poem. An interesting change occurs in the poem called Kavm (tribe, nation) written in 1917, where Gökalp stops identifying himself and the Turks with Turan: "Hun is the wrong term, neither am I from the Mongol clan, I am from Turkish clan, my place among Turks is clear, I am from the area of Oghuz..."<sup>34</sup> and ever since then he did not use the term Turan anymore.<sup>35</sup>

We can see that not only historiographers but poets and people generally considered Oghuz Khan to be "in their veins" and since he was so well known and admired it was worth making him the ruler of a Turkish "promised" land, that is of Turan, and fighter for Turkish nation out of him.

Oghuz khan as a ruler of Turan is used in Gökalp's poems to focus the attention of the Turks on the idea of the Turkish nation and Turkish homeland; it is an attempt to awaken the national consciousness. "But never forget, you, the descendant of Oghuz Khan, the land called Turan, never forget that name,"<sup>36</sup> or "there is someone who used to say that Turan, the land that let itself be known by you today, is my land and it was Oghuz Khan."<sup>37</sup> Naturally, Oghuz Khan never said anything about Turan, since the land he was supposed to be inhabiting was known as Ötüken, but as the term "Turan" was becoming a sort

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<sup>30</sup> BONNEFOY, Y.: p. 534.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 534.

<sup>32</sup> GÖKALP Z.: *Turan*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Arslan Basat*, p. 246.

<sup>34</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Kavm*, p. 123.

<sup>35</sup> ABDULLAH, F.: *Ziya Gökalin şiirleri ve halk masalları*, p. XVI.

<sup>36</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Türklük*, p. 276.

<sup>37</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Meşhed'e doğru*, p. 81.

of a symbol for national awakening and unification of Turks at the time Gökalp wrote these poems, he adapted the name of country to the situation and aims he was pursuing.

Another modification can be seen in the poem "Flood of Turks", where Gökalp is telling the story of Oghuz Khan, once again adjusted to the situation in which the Turks were at the time he wrote this poem. The "sick"<sup>38</sup> Ottoman Empire is in this story represented by a girl with just one arm, who is met by Oghuz Khan, marries him, gets miraculously healed and gives birth to Oghuz Khan's six children. By this occasion Gökalp lets Oghuz Khan state that: "Turan will be born from us". The story is ended with a threat that: "if no Oghuz Khan appears, let us know that we will not survive!"<sup>39</sup>

This threat represents the last form of usage of Oghuz Khan by Gökalp: Oghuz Khan as a fighter for his homeland. Gökalp wanted to give rise to an idea of having a national hero, who would help to finish the creation of a newly emerging nation and at the same time save the homeland which his nation seemed to be losing at that time. The request of the necessity of a fighter for the nation can also be seen in the poem called "Golden country": "Let Oghuz Khan lead the armies to the east and to the west,"<sup>40</sup> in order to recreate the Golden country of Oghuz Khan, Gökalp is writing in 1912 bearing in mind the necessity to defend the Ottoman empire attacked in Libya and in the Balkan's.

Yurdakul's usage of Oghuz Khan is very similar in one point to that of Gökalp. Yurdakul too mentions Oghuz in connection with Turan although, as was mentioned above, there was never such a thing as Oghuz living in the land of Turan. Similarly to Gökalp he too wishes the emergence of a Turan state. "Know, that your crown will be thrown by the Kyrgyz, your throne will be capsize by the nation of Oghuz, the great Turan state will rise against you,"<sup>41</sup> he says in a poem devoted to the tsar, which he wrote on 19 July 1917.

There is one difference between Yurdakul and Gökalp as for connection of Oghuz to Turan. Yurdakul often accentuates the purity of blood and the fact that Turks have got the longest history in the world.

In his poem called Epos of the army he encourages the soldiers in this way: "O, those who have the pure blood of Oghuz Khan, O, sparkling eyes of heroes, O, lions of Turan!"<sup>42</sup> And he does not limit it to this one poem. Quite the contrary a lot of Yurdakul's poems are characterized by his claim of superiority of the Turks whether by emphasizing the pure blood of the Turkish race or its the history, according to him the longest in the world: "We are the Turks from the Oghuz clan, we are those who first lighted up the flame, who sowed the first seed with the first

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<sup>38</sup> The world powers after the Congress of Vienna held in 1878 started to incline to the idea of dividing the Ottoman Empire and began to use the nickname of the sick man on the Bosphorus for it.

<sup>39</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Türk'ün tufanı*, p. 279.

<sup>40</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Altun yurt*, p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Çar'a*, p. 251.

<sup>42</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ordunun destanı*, pp. 186-187.

plough to the ground, who layed the foundations of the first dynasty"<sup>43</sup> This is claimed in the poem called "The ballad of my race".

Nevertheless, the poem "Hey Turk wake up!" deserves no less of our attention. It is in this poem, where Yurdakul claims that his nation lived in the Altai 5000 years ago, was welcomed in China, India and Egypt, and was so heroic and great that humankind has never seen any nation like it since the day it was born.<sup>44</sup> Of course, among the ancestors of Turks he does not forget to enumerate Oghuzes as well: "your ancestors who were enlarging your chest are Karahans, Oghuzes, Attilas, Jenghiz Khans, Timurs and Yavuzes."<sup>45</sup>

This idea not only gained the attention of the world but also got an important place in so called "Türk Tarih Tezi" (Turkish thesis of history) the official historiography of the early republican Turkey.

Apart from that, Oghuz Khan is often mentioned in Yurdakul's poems in connection with the earth. In a short poem addressed to a young peasant he claims: "They say we Turks are peasants, yes, we have had a sickle in our hands since the days of Oghuz Khan, for us the earth is the most sacred thing."<sup>46</sup> It is very interesting to see Oghuz name in connection with ground because it is battle or rule he is usually admired for. Moreover, in the Epos of Oghuz Khan we cannot see Oghuz working in the field either.

That is why, we can conclude that the mythology is being used here to focus the minds of people on the field in order to encourage agriculture, because on the one hand of the need to feed the army and citizens during the war and on the other hand, to claim the land of Anatolia as the land of their ancestors for a long time, at a time when it was endangered by world powers attempting to divide the country among them: "Open up your chest, so that the fields of Oghuz may live again and let your descendants be saved from Moscow's shackles<sup>47</sup> or "The state of the Turks has always achieved the great fame, the fathers' soil on which no foreigners has ever set foot will remain the area of the Oghuzes,"<sup>48</sup> claims Yurdakul putting an accent on fathers ground.

Other legendary heroes in the poems of Gökalp and Yurdakul are represented by Attila and Jenghiz Khan.

Gökalp uses Attila and Jenghiz Khan in two forms, one of them is making of Attila and Jenghiz ancestors of the Turks, the other is making an example of them, worth being followed.

In the Ballad of the Turks he challenges the Turks: "Do not forget that you are the son of Attila!"<sup>49</sup> "Do not forget who the Attilas are..."<sup>50</sup> says Gökalp pointing

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<sup>43</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *İrkamın türküsü*, p. 108.

<sup>44</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ey Türk uyan*, p. 129.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 129.

<sup>46</sup> Yurdakul, M. E.: *Ey genç çiftçi*, p. 84.

<sup>47</sup> Yurdakul, M. E.: *Aç bağrım biz geldik*, p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> Yurdakul, M. E.: *İstiklal destanı Türk ordusuna*, p. 378.

<sup>49</sup> Yurdakul, M. E.: *Cenk türküsü*, p. 277.

<sup>50</sup> Gökalp, Z.: *Türklük*, p. 276.

out the fact that they were the predecessors of the Turks. Jenghiz Khan too was a Turk according to Gökalp: "This young man became Jenghiz Khan and he was preaching about the great work, wherever the Turk sets his foot, that place turns into the Golden country."

In the poem of Turan he compares Attila and Jenghiz with Caesar and Alexander.<sup>51</sup> In another poem Gökalp says: "Be Attila!"<sup>52</sup> thus challenging the Turks and he continues by recommending conquest of the territory that once belonged to them. And there is one more poem in which Gökalp pictures the Turks as new Attilas saying: "O Europe, where will you hide yourself from this catastrophe? Because of this Attila you will shed a lot of tears!"<sup>53</sup>

In Yurdakul's poems we can see the same usage of Attila and Jenghiz as we have seen in Gökalp's. He uses them as ancestors of the Turks "The victorious Huns, who made Rome pay taxes to them are our ancestors,"<sup>54</sup> says he in the "Ballad of my race" or "...your ancestors are Karahans, Oghuz, Attilas, Jenghiz Khans, Timurs, Yavuzes..."<sup>55</sup> as he says in "Hey Turk, wake up". In the poem devoted to Ismail Gasprinski, who was a Crimean Tatar,<sup>56</sup> one of the founders of the Turkish nationalistic movement, he says: "...let the descendants of victorious Jenghiz Khans save himself from the Slav claws..."<sup>57</sup>

In this poem Yurdakul is not only pointing to the famous origin of the Turks, he also uses Jenghiz as a role model for his generation and challenges it to imitate him and fight against the enemy, represented, in this case, by Russia. We can see Jenghiz and Attila having the same role also from these examples: "Be a new Hun fighter..., ... sing a song of new Attila, lead a war against today's Romans, burn Rome!"<sup>58</sup> or "...I will set up a great Turan state with my own hands, at the place where Temudzin called up his assembly, I will stand with a flag with nine tails."<sup>59</sup>

Concerning Attila and Jenghiz Khan Gökalp and Yurdakul seem to use them in the same way, whether the form they assume in poems is that of ancestors of Turks or role models, examples worth following, they actually stand for a symbol of great warriors, who the Turks should imitate in order to be able to defend their country and keep their territory untouched.

As for their attitude to the national identity of the Turks we can learn that from the very choosing of Attila and Jenghiz as the heroes of the Turks. It is clear that both authors identify the Turks with the whole Turkic and Altaic population.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Gökalp, Z.: *Turan*, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Gökalp, Z.: *Ergenekon*, p. 89.

<sup>53</sup> Gökalp, Z.: *Yeni Attila*, p. 69.

<sup>54</sup> Yurdakul, M. E.: *İrkımın türküsi*, p. 109.

<sup>55</sup> Yurdakul, M. E.: *Ey Türk uyan*, p. 129.

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<sup>57</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *İsmail Gaspirinski' ye*, p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Mustafa Kemal Zafer Ismail Pasaya*, p. 339.

<sup>59</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Aç bağırnı biz geldik*, p. 152.

<sup>60</sup> At the time they wrote these poems, they were not the only writers who did so. Turanism was quite widespread a movement. At this point, it is important to emphasize that around the year 1917, Gökalp stopped identifying himself with this idea of being connected with non-Turkic

However, the character of Oghuz Khan sheds more light on this issue. He was used by both of them most often and yet not exactly in the same manner.

While Gökalp approached him as a father of the Turks, a great fighter and ruler, thus trying to save the Ottoman Empire from being robbed of territory, since the poems featuring Oghuz were written between years 1911 and 1915, Yurdakul's use of Oghuz Khan focuses more on the identity of the Turks. He makes the Turks look like the oldest race in the world with the longest history and at the same time he makes them as we have seen attached to the field, to the land of their fathers. The immediate feedback to his challenges was supposed to be national awakening, realizing the fact that they were Turks, which was also the case of Gökalp, naturally.

A few years later in the republican era, when the new republican historiography was being constituted, Yurdakul's view was taken into account to the point that according to the official historiography the Turks were considered the oldest nation, sowing civilization on the territories they entered. Except for that, the field became an important issue as well, whether it was in connection with peasants whom Atatürk wanted to encourage or in connection with Anatolia, the land considered in this period to have belonged to the Turks from time immemorial.

## TERRITORY

The territory where mythical events were supposed to be located has an important place in mythology. In the case of Turkish mythology the mythical territories are Ergenekon, Ötüken, Turfan, Orhun, Altai, Kızılelma and Turan. The first two of them are places with mythological stories attached to them, the last two being territories which became known thanks to the nationalist writers in the 19th and 20th centuries and the other were rather geographical names related to the early whereabouts of the Oghuz Turks.

That is why Orhun, Turfan and Altai generally stay in the shadow of Turan which, as will be explained below, became the term covering all the places where Turks were living in old times.

Gökalp as well as Yurdakul use them instead of or as part of Turan. For example in the poem "Kızılelma" Gökalp speaking of Ay Hanım, who was establishing the school in Turan, says this: "when she finished her job in Turfan she left for Orhun."<sup>61</sup> Commenting on the necessity of education he states: "She knows one day the national culture will be born and the new Orhun and new Turfan will be born."<sup>62</sup> In one of the Yurdakul's poems we can read that: "In the waters of rivers such as Orhun and Kızılırmak souls will be shining,"<sup>63</sup> speaking of a new Turan, that would be embracing these places.

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nations such as Huns and Mongols in some way as it was mentioned above. He started to focus on turkification by which he understood a return to the roots, to the ethnic culture of the Turks. (see in: Celnarová, X.: *The religious ideas of the early Turks from point of view of Ziya Gökalp, Asian and African Studies*, 6, 1997, p. 108).

<sup>61</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Kızılelma*, p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *İrkımın türküsü*, p. 108.

The mythical territories of Ötüken and Ergenekon are used very little considering their importance in Turkish mythology. Ergenekon represents a country where, according to legend the Turkish tribes took refuge after a lost war and where they were forced to dwell, just to be striving to find the way back 400 years later. While trying to do so, a grey she wolf appeared and showed them a path through iron mountains, which they enlarged by means of fire used and succeeded in leaving Ergenekon.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the significant importance of this legend, this mythical land is not mentioned by Yurdakul at all and Gökalp mentions it only in two poems. One of them is Ergenekon, where the legend is retold with the stress on the misfortune of being forced to leave ones country. Gökalp in this poem says: "If the country falls into foreign hands, there will be another Ergenekon." The other poem is that of Arslan Basat, where a main character Arslan is about to get rid of a Tepegöz who is killing and then consuming his fellow citizens. Before leaving home Basat says to his father that: "I am going, if I attack him and end this last Ergenekon, you may stop grieving..."<sup>65</sup>

Ergenekon stands here for the situation in which nation of Basat is trapped, that is a situation in which people are not able to leave a territory they are trapped in. In the words of the 20th century we can analyse it this way: Basat is Atatürk, who tries to liberate his nation from the world powers (Tepegöz) which are trying to grasp its territory and people after the First World War. If they succeeded like Tepegöz did, it would cause the situation in which they would live in a small territory, endangered by world powers, unable to find a way out of this situation (Ergenekon) for a long time (mythical 400 years).

Ötüken was the land of Oghuz Turks and of all the heroes Dede Korkut is talking about and yet Yurdakul does not mention it at all and Gökalp like Ergenekon only twice in the poem called "The country of Ötüken" and "Golden light" saying: "...The Turk must strike iron roots and he must stay in the land of Ötüken."<sup>66</sup> "The flower lowland of Ötüken was a nest of angels"<sup>67</sup> The land of Ötüken in both cases represents the land where the Turks come from and where they should live. That means it is very similar to the Turan land, which is probably why Ötüken is so little used, namely, its place has been taken by Turan being politically more suitable a term, able to arouse much more emotions.

Another territory neglected by Yurdakul is Kızılelma (Red Apple). It was a dream of the pre-Islamic Oghuz Turks representing the symbol of world rule. The Red Apple was supposed to be located somewhere in the west. This myth was kept alive among the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks as well. In the 14th century the Turks believed that the Kızılelma was situated in Istanbul in Hagia Sofia and once that Istanbul was conquered the world rule would belong to them. After conquering Istanbul, Kızılelma was believed to be in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> URAZ, M.: pp. 296-298.

<sup>65</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Arslan Basat*, p. 242.

<sup>66</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Ötüken ülkesi*, p. 65.

<sup>67</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Altun ışık*, p. 287.

In Gökalp's poems however, Kızılelma was presented as the capital of Turan, which, after being discovered, was supposed to bring happiness to all Turan. Gökalp talks about Kızılelma in three of his poems: Kızılelma, Ötüken country and Osman Gazi at Kurultay. In all three cases, we can see that Kızılelma is not pictured as a real place; it keeps the aura of a legend, dream or metaphor for happiness rather than world rule.

In Ötüken ülkesi Kızılelma is described in this way: "The ruler silenced. The Turkish youth was marching, behind them a lot of shops, and army of work. However, this was the real Kızılelma of the Turks, thus says the law of Oghuz Khan."<sup>69</sup> Gökalp perceives Kızılelma as a new nation represented by youth and a lot of work. A similar approach can be found in the poem Kızılelma itself.

In Kızılelma, which is a story of a young girl Ay Hanım who is returning from her studies in Europe back home to Turan in order to set up schools there in which she will start teaching and of a young boy Turgut who desperately longs to find Kızılelma, the mythical capital of the Turks, Kızılelma is described as follows: "Does Kızılelma not exist? It certainly does, but in a different sphere, its basis is a thought, its heaven is a dream, one day reality, but at the moment a mere fairytale."<sup>70</sup> Very similar conclusion with an extra encouragement to work can be found in a following verse "Kızılelma does not exist, but we need it, its existence is necessary to Turanian life, every dream can come true, why do we not do it right now?" And in the following verse: "While you were creating Kızılelma, I was travelling around the world to find it,"<sup>71</sup> lies the recipe for creating a new and happy nation. It is useless to search for it as Turgut does in this poem, it is necessary to create it by teaching western science and eastern morals at schools as Ay Hanım does and Gökalp advocates in his works.

The story ends by authors stating "Kızılelma became a beautiful paradise and hence the happiness spread throughout the Turan," and he adds a praise: "Oh Lord, answer this prayer, let us reach Kızılelma, too."<sup>72</sup> We can see that Kızılelma is actually the Gökalp's idea of a state where Turkish culture embracing ethnic and Islamic elements at the same time and western civilization unite.

Out of mentioned territories both Gökalp and Yurdakul use Turan most often, because it became the symbol of national awakening. Turan is originally the name Iranians gave to the territory north of Iran.<sup>73</sup> As far as we know, among Turks, it became known no sooner than in 19th century thanks to the European Turkologists,

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<sup>68</sup> Türk Ansiklopedisi, cilt 22, Ankara, 1975, pp. 94-95.

<sup>69</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Ötüken ülkesi*, p. 66.

<sup>70</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Kızılelma*, p. 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>73</sup> The first mentioning of Turan was in Persian Avesta and it was the name of one not very important person and of a nomadic tribe, probably of Turks. Another mentioning of Turan can be found in *Şahname*, where it is a name of one of three sons of the last world emperor Faridun, who divided his country to them, Turan getting the part of central Asia. In Europe the country Turan was for the first time mentioned by d'Herbelot in *Bibliothèque Orientale* in 1697.

especially those in Hungary, where panturanism, a movement claiming the racial togetherness of Turks, Hungarians, Mongols and Fins, was born.<sup>74</sup>

The first Turk to write a poem about Turan was Hüseyinzade Ali. Nevertheless, Turan written by Ziya Gökalp in 1911 enjoyed much more attention. Gökalp defines the term in this way: "The homeland of the Turks is not Turkey nor Turkistan, but the great and everlasting Turan"<sup>75</sup> In this poem he not only introduced a new mythical land, where all the Turks and other Turkic nations were supposed to have lived and hopefully will again live "their golden age" but he created a new nationalistic movement "Turancilik", that emerged from this idea. This poem was in both cases written in order to awaken the pride of the Turks in themselves, awaken their national consciousness and self-esteem.

In Gökalp's poems Turan is pictured as something real, not a dream or some kind of hope as we might presume. With these solid shapes, Turan is described either as a country in danger, or a newly re-established country or a great and everlasting country as mentioned above.

Poems such as Golden epos, Golden country, Arslan Basat, The flood of Turks and the Epos of the Balkans belong to the first category, "the country in danger".

In this category we can see Turan in danger. This danger is generally represented by "Foreign countries [which] set up their "kingdoms" in Turan," as Gökalp states and then he adds a question: "Who will cast them away from Turan?"<sup>76</sup> In another poem we can see that "the darkness fell upon Turan"<sup>77</sup> because it has been attacked by Karahans. Fortunately, Oghuz Khan appears and saves Turan thus letting the author end the poem by a challenge: "If another Oghuz does not appear, there will be nothing left of us."<sup>78</sup>

All of these poems were written between 1912 and 1914 and that is why it does not take much imagination to realize that Turan stands for the Ottoman Empire and that Gökalp is actually talking about Ottoman Empire being attacked by Italy in 1911 and by the Balkan states in 1912 and 1913. There is one more poem called Epos of Balkans related to Balkan wars, by means of which Gökalp encourages the Turks to take back what belongs to them by saying "Wherever the Half-moon has entered, there is Turan, take it back..."<sup>79</sup>

In Arslan Basat the hero chops off the head of the Tepegöz, who clearly represents the world powers in this poem and says he does so, "so that the Turan may live again."<sup>80</sup> In the poem called Golden country Turan is presented in this way: "The country of Turan is asleep, the khans remained without ruler..."<sup>81</sup> As both of the poems were published in the year 1922 it is not hard to realize that

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<sup>74</sup> İslam ansiklopedisi, cilt 12/2, İstanbul, 1997 p. 107-112.

<sup>75</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Turan*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Altın Destan*, p. 85.

<sup>77</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Turkun tufani*, p. 278.

<sup>78</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Turkun tufani*, p. 282.

<sup>79</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Balkanlar destani*, p. 100.

<sup>80</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Arslan Basat*, p. 246.

<sup>81</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Altın yurt*, p. 77.

Turan stands for Ottoman Empire after the lost world war and is in a desperate need of a ruler or anyone who would save it from the verdict of Sevres. To sum it up we can conclude that in this category Gökalp uses Turan as a metaphor for the Ottoman Empire which is endangered by the Libyan, Balkan and the World war.

Turan as a newly re-established country represents the second category. There are only two examples of this category. One of them a poem called *Te New Attila* was published in 1913 and it contains this statement: "Take a rest, the whole world became the old Turan! The whole Earth's surface became homeland!"<sup>82</sup> The other poem of this nature is *Çanakkale*, published in 1915, "Turan you are not a dream anymore, you came true."<sup>83</sup>

In *Kızılelma* the main character Ay Hanım is from a Turan land, from Baku, and she wants to build schools there in order to put the light of the truth into the souls of her fellow citizens.<sup>84</sup> That means she actually lives in Turan she does not look for Turan. The same approach can be seen in *Alageyik*. The main character meets *alageyik* and she says: "At this moment 100 million Turks are awaiting you in Turan."<sup>85</sup> Or in the "Path of life" he says "I was searching for that beauty in heaven, but I have not found her there but here on earth, in Turan."<sup>86</sup>

Even in this poem he is referring to Turan as to something that exists naturally and for a long time. In the poem *Language* we can see that he is discussing language of Turks and takes for granted that there is a land Turan. "There are not more languages in Turan, there is only one language within our group, there is only one Turan country and only one language."<sup>87</sup> "Hey son of the Turk, there is nothing like me and you and him anymore, there are no nations, no races, the only thing that there is, is a great Turan."<sup>88</sup>

The usage of the word Turan in Yurdakul's poems can also be divided into three categories. In the first category Turan represents, as well as in the case of Gökalp, the country in danger: "...their cries for help made us hurry to save the captured Turan"<sup>89</sup> says Yurdakul in *Open your chest we have arrived*, which is a poem written after Balkan wars two months before World war began. Turan is again metaphor of Ottoman Empire made captive by Balkan states and endangered by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Russia. The way out of this situation he outlines in another poem from the same collection "My needle, sew!": "He [every Turk] wants the salvation of Turan and says: Uzbek, Tatar, Kamuk, Fin all children of my race unite yourselves and thus reach for your freedom."<sup>90</sup> From this poem we can conclude that he sees the solution in uniting the Turkic nations in Turan.

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<sup>82</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Yeni Attila*, p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Çanakkale*, p. 286.

<sup>84</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Kızılelma*, p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Alageyik*, p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Hayat yolunda*, p. 68.

<sup>87</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Lisan*, p. 120.

<sup>88</sup> GÖKALP, Z.: *Millet*, p. 114.

<sup>89</sup> YURDAKUL, M.E.: *Aç bağrım biz geldik*, p. 149.

<sup>90</sup> YURDAKUL, M.E.: *Ey ignem dik*, p. 158.

Nevertheless, Yurdakul as well as Gökalp uses the endangered Turan as a way to awaken national consciousness.

A second category includes poems that call either for the defence or creation of Turan. Calling on defence we can see in: "Hey, lions of Turan! Stand like rocks against every power of those who will cross the border and smash them like lightning."<sup>91</sup> "Let the drums of great Turan sound and announce the victory, let announcement of the great leader be heard everywhere"<sup>92</sup>

In the poem "Toward Turan" there is an urgent call for the creation of Turan present: "let the New Turan be born already, nanny!"<sup>93</sup> And Yurdakul actually shows the way how this goal should be reached. According to him not only soldiers should be fighting for Turan, but also women should be part of nation creating.

In the poem called "Sew my needle!" Yurdakul challenges mothers and nannies to raise a new Turk with love for Turan: "Let every child be rocked by a lullaby from Turan"<sup>94</sup> and "make heaven out of Turan, lullaby!"<sup>95</sup> From his point of view women generally should help so that Turan can be born: "My needle, sew! The shadow of the red flag with moon and star, which I have cut out, will cover the whole of Turan,"<sup>96</sup> says Yurdakul in the name of the sewer making cloths for army and concludes the poem by letting the sewer say: "to live for Turan, to stroke my spirit with the dream of my race, to hope and to believe. That is my life..."<sup>97</sup> He said that hoping more people whether, soldiers, nannies or working women, would follow this example in order to achieve the dreamt of Turan. From the way he advocates the creation of the Turan it is clear that he is talking about the new state unlike Gökalp advocating Turan as a reality, in which Turks live at that moment.

The third way how Yurdakul uses Turan in his poems is connected with future. He anticipates the creation of Turan. In contrast to Gökalp however, he does not talk about Turan as of something existing already, he refers to it as to something that will exist some day in the future, and where Gökalp uses the present simple, Yurdakul, with one exception, prefers the future tense.

He describes the dream of Turan as a new, happy and rich country without enemies: "In the New Turan the Neronian cruelty has never hurt you; your freedom in that happy country was not blooded by the wildness of the gladiator."<sup>98</sup> In this poem he is comparing the foreign countries to the Roman emperor Nero and gladiators. On the contrary, in his vision presented in "Hey Turk, wake up", it will be the Turks who will be "endangering" the world, particularly that of business: "on the great Turanian territory there will be a new Japan and a new America.

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<sup>91</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ordunnun destanı*, p. 187.

<sup>92</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Aç bağrını biz geldik*, p. 149.

<sup>93</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Turana doğru*, p. 245.

<sup>94</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ey iğnem dik*, p. 159.

<sup>95</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Turana doğru*, p. 244.

<sup>96</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ey iğnem dik*, p. 160.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>98</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Selam sana*, p. 118.

Across the seven seas in every harbour the ships will be loaded with Turkish goods.”<sup>99</sup> And thus: “The beauty of New Turan will shine on the new world and that day the national dream will pat our foreheads!”<sup>100</sup> says Yurdakul in his “Epos of Army”. From Yurdakul’s approach to Turan in this third category, it is even clearer that he is talking about the new state and Gökalp talking about the present situation using the present tense, is still talking about the Ottoman Empire.

Turan is the best basis on which we are able to say to which identity the poets were inclining and what their images of the Turkish state were.

According to Gökalp the Turks should embrace their pre-Islamic and Turkish heritage and live in the Ottoman Empire, whereas Yurdakul was more inclined to see the future of the Turks not in the Ottoman Empire but in some kind of newly created state.

To sum up, from the above examples we can see that mythological figures such as celestial bodies and sacred animals, legendary heroes and mythological territories were being used by both authors in the name of national awakening, arousing of national consciousness and thus they were contributing to the building of national identity.

Celestial bodies such as Göktañrı, the moon and Pleiades were used by both authors in a very similar way. They mention them in connection with the origin of the Turks and the mythical land of Turan emphasizing the luck they are bringing to the Turks. Mythical animals were also mentioned in connection with the Turkish nation, as its guides and protectors while the attitude of them toward the Turkish identity and territory the Turks should inhabit is clearer from their usage of legendary heroes and mythical territory.

The Use of Jenghiz and Attila in almost the same way means both of them inclined to Turanian identity, however, we can get a better picture from the usage of Oghuz khan, which was used by both of them most often and yet not exactly in the same manner.

Whereas Gökalp’s approach was to picture him as father of the Turks, a great fighter and ruler, thus trying to save the Ottoman Empire from being robbed of territory, Yurdakul made Oghuz’s race the oldest race in the world with the longest history, the Turks to be disseminators of civilization attached to the field, to the land of their fathers.

From their usage of Turan we can conclude, that while Gökalp is talking about Turan in present tense, picturing how it looks like, Yurdakul is using the future tense. Taken into consideration the time when these poems were written we can conclude that Gökalp wanted the Ottoman Empire to be Turan, whereas Yurdakul wanted a new state to become the Turan, he was describing.

However we must not forget that after 1917 Gökalp stops using the term Turan and replaces it with the new term Turkey as it is evident in his poem “Kavm”, where Oghuz Khan is not put into connection with Turan but with Turkey. Thus

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<sup>99</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ey türk uyan*, p. 137.

<sup>100</sup> YURDAKUL, M. E.: *Ordunun destanı*, p. 193.

Gökalp instead of focusing on Turan and Turanian identity moved his attention to Turkey and laid the basis of the new Turkish identity and that is why he is considered to be the main ideologist of the new Turkish republic.

Yurdakul's contribution to the new Turkish identity was definitely in his focus on the place of the Turks in world history in which he ascribed to them the role of disseminators of civilization, which remained a very important part of official Turkish historiography for quite a long time.

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