'Civilization' and 'Culture'

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Abstract

As semantic entanglement exists between 'civilization' and 'culture' in civilizational studies, almost everyone feels free or even obliged to make up his own definition, with the consequence of serious confusion. This article discusses the historical usages of 'civilization' and 'culture' in the 18th and 19th centuries and the various definitions advanced by important thinkers such as Oswald Spengler, Fernand Braudel and Philip Bagby and puts forward its own way of dealing with the terms. It advances the views that the emphasis of 'civilization' is often on a historico-cultural entity or congeries of peoples sharing a common geographic locus, common values and social institutions, rather than on a particular set of values or beliefs itself, and that the distinction between 'civilization' as the largest and highest socio-historical unit and 'culture' as something smaller, lower and subsumed under 'civilization' is productive for a meaningful explanation of the ubiquitous phenomenon of cultural appropriation and civilizational hybridization. It believes that any attempt at a brief, accurate yet cognitively meaningful definition of the two terms does not help; rather, a seemingly clumsy way of giving a detailed depiction might be constructive for disentangling the entanglement, clarifying the concepts, thus promoting civilizational studies.

Key words: Civilization, culture, religion, globalization, Bagby, Braudel.

1. A description rather than definition of 'civilization'

A major difficulty in civilizational studies at present time is how to deal with the concepts of 'civilization' and culture'. As these terms not only are distinct from but overlap with one another in meaning, and as they are not merely disciplinary but historical, they constitute a perfect case of semantic entanglement. Confusion would arise if efforts were not made to clarify them. In fact, the entanglement could sometimes be so grave that we will find that their meanings not only are

interchangeable but to a great extent depend on what stance or perspective those engaged in this field of study adopt. Understandably, those engaged in civilizational studies feel free or even obliged to make up his own definition of the terms, often confounding them. This is certainly not incremental to a better understanding of the ubiquitous phenomenon of cultural appropriation and of the ever closer interactions, which are happening everywhere and are gaining momentum every day in this increasingly globalizing age, between the major geopolitical and economic powers such as America, China, Europe, the Arab world, India, Russia and Japan.

It is thus necessary to clarify the possible meanings of 'civilization' and that by contrasting them with the various meanings of 'culture'. For such a purpose, especially when the fact that there is already serious confusion (see discussions below) is taken into consideration, it might be a good idea to attempt a description rather than a definition of civilization. We may start simply by asking: What is a civilization?

In its traditional sense, a civilization is a way of thinking, a set of beliefs, or a way of life. It is a spatio-temporal continuum and a long-term dynamic structure. [1] It is the product of human evolution or a new phase in human evolution, in which cities emerge and urban ways of life begin to prevail. Even at its initial stage, a civilization has a large population and considerable geographical scope. As it grows, it incorporates a huge number of ethnic groups or peoples and a variety of customs, habits, languages and even religions.[①] A civilization possesses a particular set of values (in most cases embodied in a religion [②] and the behavioral pattern requested by the religion). A civilization usually commands a developed economy [③] and fairly developed sciences and technologies. A civilization usually boasts a sophisticated writing system, literatures, arts and music, and also a developed legal system, sophisticated social institutions and sophisticated political and military organizations, with all their corresponding material manifestations.

A civilization is composed of constituent elements or 'cultures' which are interwoven with one another and are in constant interaction with those of the external world. These elements not only make up a civilization itself but are exactly what distinguishes one civilization from another. Based on them, a civilization provides

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① In a very straightforward manner, the American anthropologist Rushton Coulborn argues that the differences between a 'civilized society' and 'primitive society' are mainly in the way of 'quantity' or 'amount'. For instance, a civilized society possesses more knowledge about the natural environment than a primitive society; it possesses more wealth not only in terms of absolute amount but on a per capita basis; in addition, the geographical area a civilized society covers is much larger than that of a primitive society. (Rushton Coulborn, *Origins of Civilized Societies* [1959], Princeton: Princeton University Press, 16-17) Highly possibly, Huntington's conception of civilization as 'culture writ large' (see below) might have originated here.

② In the case of Chinese civilization, it's not a matter of only one developed religion, but of several developed religions, like Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

③ In pre-modern China there were several naturally formed economic zones, which could be seen as separate economies, as geographically they were obviously distinct from each other; yet, not all of them could be said to be developed by modern criterion.

identity to those who belong to it and are committed to it. Through a common geographical locus and through a common set of values and social institutions based on the locus, one civilization enables those belonging to it to identify with one another, making them differ from those of another civilization. In other words, based on a common geographical locus, common codes of conduct, common social institutions and a common historical memory, a civilization endows cohesion, coherence and consistency upon those who are of and are committed to it.

A major civilization such as India, China, the West and the Arab world which took shape a long time ago and have continued all the way through history to the present time, boasts a profound historico-cultural memory, a huge population and an immense geographic scope.[①] A major civilization may undergo vicissitudes in history or even be extinct, yet if it is still there and alive, it is necessarily growing rather than stagnant, diversified rather than homogeneous, open-minded rather than closed-minded, inclusive and all-encompassing rather than exclusive and restricted.

In this connection, special attention should be drawn to the fact that 'civilization' in its current usage often denotes a historico-cultural entity or an aggregation of peoples or ethnic groups [②] sharing a common geographical locus and a common set of values and social institutions based on it, rather than the values themselves, even though there must be people to practice them. In fact, this latter sense of 'civilization' overlaps with the meaning of 'culture' (in the sense of the prosperous discipline of 'cross-cultural studies'). In other words, apart from denoting a particular set of values, or a particular 'culture', the emphasis of the term 'civilization' is often on a super social, economic, historical and political congeries of peoples sharing a common geographic locus, common beliefs and common social institutions, thus constituting the largest geo-political and geo-cultural player in the interactions of human societies.

Thus, when Samuel Huntington advances his 'clashes of civilizations' or even 'civilizational wars' scenario, what he intends to say is not conflicts or even hostilities between the Islamic, Western or Confucian value systems as they are understood, but conflicts or wars between the Islamic, Western and Confucian societies. In fact, he does not take much of an interest in the actual differences or clashes between the values, habits and customs of the peoples of these historico-cultural entities, but is perversely fascinated by what he believes to be the imminent wars between major 'civilizations' or congeries of peoples sharing common geographic loci and common values. When he makes the self-fulfilling prophecy of 'civilizational wars', he is actually courting suicide of mankind as a species, since advances of technoscience have supplied humans with so cheap and easy a means of mass destruction.

2. The origins of the modern usages of 'civilization' and 'culture'

Although the two meanings of 'civilization' are very clear to the present paper, it is

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[①]   In this connection, Japanese civilization is probably an exception.
[②]   Once again, Japan is an exception in that it is mono nation or consists of just one single people and it is meaningless to talk about 'ethnic groups' so far as its ethnic constitution is concerned.

not so with most of the other users. To a great extent, this has to do with the historical and current entanglement between the meanings of 'civilization' and 'culture' and the semantic confusion it has created.

It may have been noticed by many that the content of the word pair of 'civilization' and 'culture' is synonymous and even interchangeable in meaning in a very salient aspect. For instance, when the specific thinking and behavioral modes of a people or an aggregation of peoples or ethnic groups are being discussed, both 'culture' and 'civilization' can be used. This is the case not only historically---Hegel himself used the two words interchangeably in his lectures in the 1830s[2] ---but at present time. This means that if, when talking about both 'Indian Culture' and 'Indian Civilization' and both 'Chinese Culture' and 'Chinese Civilization' one intends to denote the exact meaning as indicated above, it is perfectly acceptable.

According to the French historian Fernand Braudel, 'civilization' in its modern sense was first used in 1752 by the French scholar Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, who was then writing a history of mankind. Yet prior to this, expressions like 'civilized' and 'to civilize' had been in use back in the 16th century. These words came into use during the Renaissance first in the Romance languages, 'probably in French and derived from the verb *civiliser*, meaning to achieve or impart refined manners, urbanization, and improvement'. [3] In its received sense at the time, a 'civilized man' was just the diametrical opposite of savages. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, two Enlightenment scholars in the middle of the 18th century --- Honoré Mirabeau and Adam Ferguson---began to use 'civilization' and 'civilized' directly opposed in meaning to 'savagery' and 'savage'.[4] In actual fact, this usage had become so deeply rooted in the minds of the French at the time that not even the 'savages', of whom Jean-Jacques Rousseau was so enthusiastic in his praise, were seen as 'civilized'.[5] At the same time, the word 'culture', which was semantically almost equivalent with 'civilization', was circulating together with the latter, despite the fact that as early as in Roman times Cicero the politician and philosopher had used 'culture' in the sense of *Cultura animi* or cultivation of the soul.[6]

To complicate things further, around 1819, the hitherto singular 'civilization' now began to be used in the plural---'civilizations'. Though this usage seemed not very conspicuous at the time, it actually marks a major semantic shift. Because what it expresses is both closely associated with and clearly distinct from what 'civilization' in the singular conveyed, that is, propriety and elegance of manners considered as the result of one's upbringing and cultivation, whereas 'civilization' in the plural could mean the specific way of life of a specific nation or nations at a specific time. [7] It is exactly this usage, i.e., 'civilizations', that constitutes a key concept in the civilizational studies of the present time, upon which is based the theories advanced by a series of important thinkers like Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Philip Bagby, Samuel Huntington and etc. Using this concept, it is perfectly alright to talk about not only Chinese, Indian and Arab civilizations, but those of Cyrus's Persia or of the Medieval Europe.

Meanwhile, Edward Burnett Tylor the anthropologist published his *Primitive*

Cultures in 1874 , in which he makes no distinction between 'civilization' and 'culture' and is heavily dependent upon 'culture' for his argument, because 'his concept of civilization would not have allowed him to construct a progressive historical narrative from simple beginnings to higher forms of development', and because 'civilization would have implied too high a stage of human society in the beginning.' [8] Ever since, anthropologists and ethnographers in the West have used 'culture' in their reporting of the primitive societies they study, while 'civilization' has to a large extent been reserved for describing modern society. Hence the present situation in which it is perfectly unproblematic to say 'Western Civilization' or 'Western Culture', and 'primitive culture' or 'primitive cultures', but totally unacceptable to say 'primitive civilization' or 'primitive civilizations'! [9]

3. The overlapping of 'civilization' and 'culture'

It is natural for words to remain relatively stable in meaning or pick up new meanings, yet semantic change or non-change concerning the entangled word pair 'civilization' and 'culture' can sometimes be puzzling. For instance, it is perfectly alright to say that a 'civilization' is the sum total of 'cultures' it contains; that the geographic locus a 'civilization' possesses is its 'cultural' domain; that the history of a 'civilization' is the history of its 'cultures'; and that elements of one 'civilization' that manage to diffuse into another are its 'cultural' heritage. However, in contrast to such changes in meaning, the German adjective '*kulturell* ' that came into use around the 1850s has remained virtually immune to the semantic vicissitude the corresponding adjectives in other major European languages have since undergone. [10]

One of the reasons for the semantic entanglement of 'civilization' and 'culture' is that when theorists try to define 'civilization', they consciously or unconsciously take advantage of 'culture'. In other words, even if some part of the semantic content of 'culture' coincides with that of 'civilization', it does not prevent them from using the former to define the latter. They seem to forget that the use of 'culture' to explain 'civilization' would entail the necessity to define 'culture' itself, which would seem impossible without defining 'civilization' first. Thus, when Samuel Huntington offers his definition, he not only places the two terms on a par, but defines one with the other: 'Civilization is culture writ large'. [11] Similarly, Immanuel Wallerstein uses 'culture' to define 'civilization' and believes that a civilization is 'a combination of world outlooks, customs, structures and cultures.' [12] Fernand Braudel, too, regards culture as a specific stage in the overall evolution of mankind, which is lower than civilization. As a matter of fact, he even believes that culture could be seen as a 'semi-civilization'. [13]

However, even though the content of 'civilization' heavily overlaps with that of 'culture', still for some theorists, the differences between the terms are too simply conspicuous to be dismissed altogether. Apart from an almost unanimous preference for 'civilization' when representing modern societies while favoring 'culture' when reporting primitive societies, these theorists tend to distinguish the meanings of the

terms in another sense: to place 'civilization' on a higher category than that of 'culture' in a kind of conceptual hierarchy. To put it simply, they tend to include the semantic content of 'culture' in that of 'civilization', rather than the other way round.

In this connection, Christopher Dawson's method deserves special attention. This British religious sociologist proposes that 'civilization' boasts a broad and profound 'cultural' diversity; it is justified to talk about French, German and British 'cultures' and at the same time maintain that they are all part of or subsumed under a higher phenomenon, namely, Western 'civilization'. [14] This in fact is a more explicit distinction between the terms than that of other theorists, as it takes 'civilization' to be the largest socio-historical phenomenon of high spiritual dimensions, above which no other socio-historical entity larger and higher exists. In direct contrast, culture cannot lay claim to such a lofty status, for towering over it there is indeed a larger socio-historical reality of grand spiritual dimensions there, namely, civilization.

4. The dichotomy of 'civilization' and 'culture'

Although 'culture' and 'civilization' often coincide semantically, their differences in the way of the conceptual hierarchy become highlighted if Dawson's methodology is adopted. Among all the semantic differences between 'civilization' and 'culture', that regarding the conceptual hierarchy is perhaps the most important. However, Immanuel Wallerstein disagrees with his approach, maintaining that in certain non-English usages, 'civilization' refers to quotidian affairs, whereas 'culture' indicates things refined and elegant.[15] He might have had in mind, when making this point, the 18th- and 19th-century German antithesis of culture and civilization in which the former enjoys the prestigious position of higher moral goals, whereas the latter indicates mere proper behavior. [16]

How did this antagonism between the two terms come about in German? Norbert Elias's provides an answer in his *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*. According to him, the difference between the French term *civilisation* and the German word *Kultur* did not originate in the nationalism rampant in 19th-century Europe, but in the struggle of enlightened German citizens against aristocracy. [17]While French was the language of prestige of the upper class in all German states in the 18th century, German remained the medium of civil society and in it the classical works of Kant, Goethe and Schiller were produced. It was the 'severe social conflict' or class struggle between the bourgeoisie and aristocracy that led to the dichotomy of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. In *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, Kant attacks aristocracy in a rather straightforward manner by depreciating the French term *civilization*: 'While the idea of morality is indeed present in culture, an application of this idea which only extends to the semblances of morality, as in love of honor and outward propriety, amounts merely to civilization.' [18] Thence, 'culture became associated with the higher goals of moral cultivation and civilization with mere good behavior.'

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This important antithesis between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* in the German language persisted well into the 20th century and provides a good explanation as to why in Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1919) the relationship between 'culture' and 'civilization' differs so drastically from that in other major theorists. Though Spengler's 'civilization' is higher than 'culture' in the sense of a progressive historical narrative, it is so only when 'culture' or the so-called 'great culture' has evolved into its apex and starts to 'decline and fall'. Thus, in Spengler, civilization is perceived in a very negative light. It is seen as the consummation of culture or even the inescapable 'fate' of culture. Civilization is simply a situation where things coming into being replace things having taken shape. In a blunt and somewhat sensational manner, he even portrays civilization as 'death following life and rigidity following expansion'.[20] Of course, the overriding theme of *Decline of the West* is none other than the author's perceived decline and fall of the West, which he clearly deplores, yet the 'decline' here is not to be understood in its usual sense, for it refers to a situation where a culture (specifically Western culture) has realized all the potentials its inner logic allows it. In other words, it has culminated in the final stage of 'death', 'rigidity', or the decay of 'Civilization'.

5. Philip Bagby's definition of 'civilization'

However, the most provocative distinction between 'culture' and 'civilization' is perhaps that proposed by the American anthropologist Philip Bagby. Adopting an etymological approach, he believes that civilization is the kind of 'culture' found in cities,'[21] or such kind of 'culture' in which cities are found.[22] If this definition were to be adopted, the essential characteristic of civilization would be the building and inhabiting of cities. Meaningful and useful as it may be in civilizational studies, the question immediately arises: what is a city? Obviously, a village or a small town cannot be considered a city since its population is too small. If this is the case, then how large a population could meet the criterion of a city? There is the problem of the population density too, for if a certain number of people, say 30000, are scattered over too wide an area, it is hard to determine if a city has come into being or if it is still rural with only a few small villages or settlements scattered around. Shall we take 5000, 10000, 20000 , 30000 or 100000 to be the criterion? Clearly, it is hard to decide. For technical difficulties and lack of written and archaeological evidence, it is almost impossible to come up with a feasible criterion to measure if it is still a mere cluster of settlements or if it can already be seen as a city.

To solve the dilemma, Bagby proposes that if the majority of the inhabitants of an area are not directly engaged in the production of food, the essential criterion of a city is met. According to him, in pre-historical times it was of paramount importance to be liberated from the time-consuming task of acquiring or producing food. This would lead to division of labor which, however elementary at first, would bring about increased productivity. This would in one way or another and sooner or later lead to

greater refinement and sophistication of life. The newly acquired freedom and leisure would enable the inhabitants of a certain area to travel around, conduct commercial, technological, military, religious or intellectual activities and thus disseminate their ways of thinking and living or 'values' to a much broader area. In this very process, civilization emerged. Although writing could possibly have been invented outside a city, it could be improved upon and perfected only by experts within it, as they did not have to spend their time and energy in the business of securing food. Even for sustained and systematic rational thinking to originate, city was needed, for this required that those engaged in it be not subject to the changing moods of Nature. Hence, Bagby puts forward his own definition of 'civilization': culture of the city. As an anthropologist, Bagby believes that there is sufficient evidence to prove that the historical rise of city coincided precisely with the rise of the new 'cultures' or the epoch-breaking new values and institutional practices usually associated with the 'Axial Age' hypothesis. In fact the emergence of the city itself means the birth of civilization. [23]

Although Bagby's definition is intellectually stimulating, it contains obvious conjectural elements for it is not on quantitatively hard evidence. For even though the key criterion of 'the majority of the inhabitants of an area are not directly engaged in food production' is introduced, it is still a colossally difficult task to decide upon a quantitatively meaningful and feasible criterion in terms of the demographic size and density. This may create an impression that efforts at defining 'civilization' cannot possibly be productive, if not entirely futile. Nevertheless, even for the purpose of a proper understanding, evaluation and appreciation of the work of those engaged in civilizational studies, it is worthwhile to make such attempts.

On the other hand, even if the inadequacy of Bagby's approach is obvious, it is perhaps not due to any personal fault on his part, but because of the unquantifiable nature of social sciences itself. Not only he himself is not to blame, his definition has in fact been regarded as workable and even adopted by some theorists. When Fernand Braudel attempts to distinguish 'civilization' from 'culture' in his *A History of Civilizations* (1994), he explicitly echoes Bagby by saying that the most salient difference between 'culture' and 'civilization' is to be found in whether towns and cities have come into being; in a culture, they are in a germinal state, but in a civilization, they would prosper. [24] In his *Ecrits sur le Capitalisme* (1969), Braudel even more explicitly agrees with Bagby's seminal view by stating that 'civilization' should be used when cities are referred to, and 'culture' is to be used when rural areas not yet urbanized are discussed; in other words, civilization for him seems to be a kind of advanced culture, or an advanced stage of culture. [25]

Other ways of dealing with the concepts

Probably due to difficulties in attempting a clear definition of 'civilization', Arnold Toynbee the philosopher simply offers no definition, even in his massive twelve-volume *A Study of History* (1934-1961). Though such escapism may have a

reason to be, it clearly does not help in our current situation, in which on the one hand the interactions between the major geopolitical players such as America, China, the Arab world, etc are gaining momentum every day, on the one hand a multitude of usages of 'culture' and 'civilization' are gravely entangled with one another, creating confusion and failing to offer a cognitively meaningful medium for a better explanation of the world.

Yet there is no lack of theorists who do give brief or even minimalist definitions to 'culture' and 'civilization'. Apart from Samuel Huntington who defines 'civilization' by 'culture' (see above), Braudel, too, makes use of 'culture' and gives a minimalist definition to 'civilization' by saying that it is 'a space' or 'a cultural sphere'. [26] Though Dawson makes a clear distinction between 'culture' and 'civilization', he, too, uses 'culture' in the sense of 'civilization' and offers a too brief definition of 'civilization': 'a common way of life'. [27]As he makes the point that the historical interaction between various peoples or ethnic groups are an essential aspect of or even a prerequisite for a civilization's origination and growth, Dawson's succinct and insightful representation of human history serves as a workable definition of civilization, too: 'an immense system of transcultural relationships'.[28] Even if this is not strictly a definition of civilization, it is helpful for understanding the vicissitudes that the major civilizations have undergone and for envisaging their future performance.

However, though minimalist approaches have their advantages, they have obvious disadvantages, too. In fact, civilization is so rich and complex in meaning that attempts at an all-encompassing representation aiming at both economy in expression and adequate cognitive value are unproductive, if not entirely impossible. Nevertheless, it may be constructive not to try to offer any short, clever and once-for-all definition but to adopt a seemingly clumsy method, that is, to provide a somewhat detailed yet more informative description, as is attempted at the beginning of this paper.

6. The entanglement that still is

Despite this paper's attempt at a description of civilization, it is still hard to say if it is already adequate. Even if a concept like 'secondary civilization' is introduced, as is in Braudel's approach, it would still seem unsatisfactory for the representation of such a massive, complex and variegated phenomenon as civilization. In Braudel, Western civilization includes such 'secondary civilizations' as Europe, America, Russia and Latin America; below them, there are such 'tertiary civilizations' as France, Britain, Germany and etc; again, below these, there is an even lower order, that is, the 'civilizations' of Scotland, Ireland, Catalonia and etc.[29] Yet obviously, even when such an complicated and even tedious way of classification is adopted, it would still be insufficient, if not downright counter-productive, for the purpose of representing that much more complex reality --- 'civilization' as discussed in this paper.

For instance, Russia is the most important successor to the Byzantine Eastern

Orthodox society, and the latter shares a close family resemblance to the Occidental Christian Civilization of the late Roman Empire (West Rome), which in turn is the predecessor of the Western civilization of today, and to which both the West European and American civilizations are successors. Taking all this into consideration, isn't it justified to put the Byzantine Eastern Orthodox civilization and the Western civilization in a common category, i.e., Christian civilization? If it is, isn't it reasonable, too, to put a mainly Christian country like the Philippines in this super civilization?

Then, isn't it justified, too, to believe that there was once a Nestorian Civilization in the Middle East and Central Asia in the sense that other major Christian denominations formed in ancient times like Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church are seen as closely associated with the Western and Eastern Orthodox civilizations? [30] Historically, the Nestorian Church was a powerful Christian sect, boasting a huge number of followers and covering an immense area from Palestine to Iran, and from Central Asia to northern China. Since the criterion of religious faiths is so commonly used as measurement for civilizations, what reasons do we have for not believing that a Nestorian Civilization once existed?

The entanglement also lies in the approach of taking all the civilizations in the traditional sense to be 'pre-global' and subsuming them under one super 'global civilization' or simply 'civilization'. [31] Wolf Schäfer maintains that 'the fact that technoscience is on a global romp means that civilization is progressing from a local to a planetary scale. We can situate the emerging global civilization in the pluriverse of local cultures and local cultures in the universe of global civilization.' [32] This globality hypothesis is valid to the extent that civilizations on this planet are all undergoing a profound technoscietific revolution, which is undeniable and will change the future of mankind in a way it has never experienced before.

This hypothesis may give the impression that it contains a sharp deviation from the traditional perspective, but a closer examination will reveal that it is not diametrically opposed to the traditional concept that has been in use for nearly two hundred years. [33] The geographical, historical and psychological differences between the civilizations are so engrained that they cannot possibly be eliminated in any way in the foreseeable future, even by the explosively growing technoscience which is believed to be so omnipotent. After all, this super 'global civilization' with local cultures subsumed under it is still in its initial stage. This means that even if the current revolution of globalized economy and technology may generate an unprecedented homogeneity in the lifestyles of major civilizations, it is impossible to change their respective values in the foreseeable future, let alone their geographic loci and spiritual identities. Nevertheless, the globality hypothesis deserves the credit of highlighting again the entanglement of 'culture' and 'civilization', for 'civilization(s)' in the sense of a common historico-geographical identity and a common set of values or beliefs is in actual danger of being replaced by 'culture(s)'.

Although civilizational studies is a largely interdisciplinary pursuit involving history, geography, religion, philosophy, sociology and anthropology, it after all is not

natural science. Since the concepts it develops or employs are not strictly scientific, entanglement and confusion in meaning are unavoidable. This is why almost everyone engaged in this field of study feels so free to offer his own definition of 'civilization' and 'culture' or his own system of concepts. Nevertheless, this does not mean that attempts should not be made to attain some kind of consensus concerning the exact meaning of such key concepts as 'civilization' and 'culture', and to be coherent and consistent once a cognitively productive terminology is decided on.

7. Cultural appropriation and civilizational hybridization

As is mentioned above, Dawson's distinction between the terms 'civilization' and 'culture' is more explicit than that of the other theorists. According to him, 'civilization' is the largest and highest socio-historical phenomenon, whereas 'culture' is something smaller, lower and subsumed under 'civilization'. In fact, this distinction has a big advantage in that it provides a useful medium for a meaningful explanation of the ubiquitous interaction between civilizations and the ubiquitous appropriation by one civilization of the cultures of another without jeopardizing its own identity.

To illustrate the point, we may consider China's transplantation of Buddhism. Admittedly China's adoption of Buddhism is the appropriation not merely of a religion but of Indian cultures via that religion. The ancient Indian civilization or culture had actually no other way of disseminating to the other parts of Asia than through Buddhism. If we examine the Buddhist doctrines in Chinese, we will find an abundance of Indian cultural elements there. These are not exclusively of Buddhism as a religion, since they are also shared by other religions of ancient India: Brahmanism, Lokayta, Ajivakism and Jainism; [34] and it is clear that key concepts like *dharma*, *atman* and *vimoksa* and a variety of mythologies, legends and customs are not confined to Buddhism, but are found in Indian civilization as a whole. On the other hand, after Buddhism with the accompanying Indian cultures had gained a foothold in China, it would sooner or later be sinocized. At last Zen, the famous sinocized Buddhist denomination, did emerge. Thus, with the adoption of Indian cultures, Chinese civilization became enriched. Yet it still remained Chinese civilization, just as the considerably Buddhismized Confucianism and Daoism still remained Confucianism and Daoism.

With Christianity, it is not merely one society absorbing the cultures of another; it is actually the integration of cultural elements of at least two ancient civilizations in order to form a new religion or civilization. Christianity is generally believed to be the offspring of two parent civilizations, one Greco-Roman and the other Hebrew or Syriac. [①] As a matter of fact, Christianity in its formative years incorporated loads of

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[①]   Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (12 volumes), (1935-1961), Oxford: Oxford University Press, everywhere. Behind such familiar terminology as 'Hebrew', 'Hebrew culture', 'Hebrew civilization' and 'Jews', 'Jewish culture' and even 'Jewish civilization', there was a historico-cultural entity that was much more profound and boasted a much larger scope than just one 'Hebrew' or 'Jewish' nation with the corresponding 'Hebrew' or 'Jewish' culture or civilization. Historically, such a civilization of much larger dimensions called by Toynbee as

cultural (or/and religious) elements that for centuries had been evolving in the West Asian and Mediterranean World, which was admittedly an cultural 'cauldron' in antiquity and in which, before Christianity arose, there had occurred a great deal of cultural 'melting' or encounters, engagements, conflicts and integrations between various cultures or civilizations, more than anywhere else in the ancient world. Thus it can be safely assumed that if a civilization has survived the vicissitudes of history and is still alive and active today, it is invariably a hybrid, a product of cultural hybridization, or indeed an offspring of civilizational hybridization.

A noticeable phenomenon in history is that various human societies displayed a powerful capacity for incorporating heterogeneous cultures of other societies. For instance, ancient Germans adopted Christianity of the Greco-Roman and Syric worlds; ancient Arabs appropriated the cultural-religious elements of the Greco-Roman and Syriac societies too, or in religious terms they integrated important ingredients of Judaism and Christianity into their own tribal culture, the result of which was a new religion or civilization---Islam; Eastern Slavs introduced, almost wholesale, the culture and religion of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which is in fact a slightly different version of Occidental Christianity; the ancient Japanese imported Chinese culture in a similarly enthusiastic manner. Based on a cultural autonomy that had been there and with the socio-economic conditions given, hitherto primitive societies could be selective when incorporating the cultural elements they were borrowing. That is, they could accept or reject certain aspects of the culture they were learning from. More importantly, they could conduct their own innovations and could even improve on what they had adopted. Yet, it has to be remembered all these ancient societies inherited cultures that had been evolving somewhere else for centuries and were thus much more advanced than their own. To put it differently, they all had one or more than one cultural parent.

At present, cultural appropriation is taking place on an unprecedented scale never seen in ancient times, the result of which is a new round of civilizational hybridization. If by the 11th century none of the civilizations---neither Indian, nor Islamic, nor Chinese, nor Japanese, nor Western civilizations---was still 'pure', or all of them had been hybrid in one way or another, now in beginning of the 21st century all these hybridized civilizations have almost finished a new round of hybridization. If before the 21st century it was mainly Japanese, Chinese, Indian and Islamic civilizations that made vigorous attempts to incorporate Western technology, institutional practices and ideologies, now in the 21st century the West finds itself increasingly dependant on products and services provided by none-West societies (it is also true vice versa) and with economic and political power shifting daily to Asia, that eventually the West will in a wholesale manner adopt the technologies, institutional practices and ideologies developed there, even though developed there as a result of globalization and

'Syriac Society' or 'Syriac Civilization' was not only there, but was given various names by academics, like the 'Semitic', the 'Canaanite', or the 'Levant', or even 'Near Eastern' civilization. Clearly, this civilization was not created by the Jews alone, but the product of a variety of ancient peoples , some of them not even Semitic, like the Philistines and Samaritans, who shared the same geographical locus, values and social institutions as the Semites. (Toynbee, 1935-1961)

civilizational interactions. With rapid advances of technoscience and with globalization gathering momentum everyday, this process will only quicken rather than slow down in the foreseeable future.[①]

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[17] Schäfer, "Global Civilization and Local Culture", (16 (3) (2001), 306-307.

[18] Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Political Writings*, (1977) (translated by H. B. Nisbet), quoted by Schäfer, "Global Civilization and Local Culture", 16 (3) (2001), 307.

[19] Schäfer, "Global Civilization and Local Culture", 16 (3) (2001), 307.

[20] Oswald Spengler , *The Decline of the West.* (2 Volumes, translated from the German by Charles Francis Atkinson), (1932), New York, vol. I, 31.

[21] Etymologically, the root word 'civic' in English is derived from the Latin *civilis*, *civis* or

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civitas, which mean respectively 'of citizens', 'citizen', 'city' or 'polis' or 'metropolis'.

[22] Bagby, *Culture and History*, (1963), 162-163.

[23] Bagby, *Culture and History*, (1963), 63.

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[29] Braudel, *A History of Civilizations,* (1994), 12.

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