

**Ali HATAPÇI: *Kurdish Identity and The Revolutionary Left in Turkey: From The Eastern Question to The Kurdish Question (1960-1990)*, MA Thesis, ELTE Budapest – CUNI Prague, 2015, 108p.**

### **Report of the MA thesis by co-supervisor**

The master thesis written by Ali Hatapçı represents a valuable and innovative contribution in the field of nationalism studies, in which the Kurdish question has been approached from the original and – indeed – very interesting perspective of the successive discourses in the revolutionary left in Turkey.

The thesis is very logically structured into the theoretical chapter and three chronologically delimited empirical chapters that covered the leftist discourses on Kurds in the three successive decades. In the first chapter, which is devoted to theories of nations and nationalism, Ali demonstrates his very good orientation and clear understanding of major theoretical positions and concepts in the field. The very analysis of the major conceptual shifts, or discontinuities, in the discourse on Kurds in Turkish left, is pursued in the three following chapters.

Chapter two is framed by the new political context in Turkey in the 1960's, which opened up a space for leftist political parties and subjects to enter political and discursive arena. Ali focuses on the leftist intellectual journal *Yön*, which brought the Kurdish question, masked as "Eastern question", to the fore, and reconstructs very convincingly the basic structure of the discourse as well as its embeddedness in the broader narratives of development, national security, and socialism that was linked with the tradition of Kemalism.

Chapter three follows the genealogy of the so-called Kurdistan-as-colony thesis as a new discourse, which was deployed by specifically Kurdish leftist intellectuals in the 1970's. In this part, Ali relies on the memoirs of the main protagonist Kemal Burkay, as well as on the analysis of the political journal *Özgürlük Yolu*, linked to TKSP. Again, the analysis carefully reconstructs the major argumentation of the thesis and links it with the gradual emergence of the Kurdish question as a theme, which was still closely linked with, yet clearly autonomous from, the agenda of the left in Turkey.

The fourth chapter moves to the 1980's and the reconfiguration of the discourse under the guidance of PKK and its main leader Abdullah Öcalan. In focus is especially the *Manifesto* of the party, in which the Kurdistan-as-colony thesis is maintained, yet the discourse comes with new elements. These pertain to creation of new historical myths and inventions of traditions related to old Kurds and their presumed ancestors. In this sense, the discourse of the Kurdish left takes on the classical attributes of (cultural) nationalism that strives to create the community of shared myths.

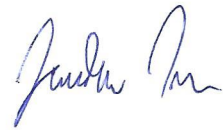
The thesis of Ali Hatapçı can be praised for several reasons: the author follows very systematically his main theme; the text is very focused and disciplined. Also I should highlight very good work with the sources. The argumentation is clear and conclusions are convincing and sufficiently supported. The main theme is perfectly set in the more general historical context. Theoretical knowledge is neatly linked with the empirical analysis. Last not least, the whole thesis is written in very good academic style and in perfect English.

If any critical remarks or rather suggestions should be stated, I would make two minor: First, a slightly broader source-base would be fine. Author himself admits limitations to representative samples due to time constraints; thus especially the fourth chapter relies basically on one text. But given the main objectives of the thesis that are oriented to major discursive shifts followed on major concepts and ideas rather than discourses as such, this limitation can be justified. Another point would relate to

methodology that should be more explicitly discussed (the part called "methodology" in fact does not discuss the methods); it is nevertheless apparent in the text that Ali does apply methodological tools (i.e. discourse analysis, conceptual analysis) in conscious, well-informed and adequate manner.

To sum up, Ali Hatapçı wrote an excellent Master thesis which, according to my opinion, meets high standards of the scholarly texts and rightly deserves to be graded with best possible marks. I suggest, therefore, the grades 1 in Czech and 5 in Hungarian system.

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