Book Reviews

Eve Hepburn (ed.), **New Challenges for Stateless Nationalist and Regionalist Parties**, *London: Routledge, 2011, 186 pp., (ISBN: 1317965965).*

This book, based on eight collections published in Regional and Federal Studies – a refereed social science journal which provides an academic forum for the publication of leading international research on various aspects of regionalism and federalism – explores how stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) are facing the emerging challenges stemming from multi-level politics (i.e., operating at regional, state and European levels) and multi-dimensional ideological space. The book, edited by Hepburn, investigates a number of empirical case studies to illustrate how SNRPs are responding to these twin challenges. In fact, one can argue that the study of sub-state territorial mobilisation is not new and has mainly focused on SNRPs as niche parties.

The chapter by Anwen Elias presents a new perspective on the study of sub-state territorial actors. Elias argues that SNRPs can no longer be described as niche parties since they moderated their core business and adopted new ideologies. To endorse this claim proposed by Elias, Emanuele Massetti in his chapter elaborates how SNRPs sucessfully position themselves in different ideological spaces along left-right, center-periphery, and EU cleavages. In a similar fashion, the chapter by Kris Deschouwer takes a closer look at the Belgian case, whereby he examines the success of regionalist parties in the 1960s and 1970s when they became parties of government, often challenging and partnering with state-wide parties when their regionalist agenda began to change the Belgian state structure towards a federal logic. In addition, the chapter by Peter Lynch evaluates the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) as one of the success cases among SNRPs, as it was able to achieve ideological adaptation into multi-level election, and party systems.

Contary to the success cases of SNRPs, this study also examines the failed cases of sub-state territorial mobilisation to shed more light on the highs and lows of SNRPs. The chapter formulated by Hepburn crystallises not only the conditions that help SNRPs to be successful in their respective territories but also puts forward the conditions that caused the failure for SNRPs in Italy. Likewise, the section by Don Hough and Michael Koss demonstrates another failed case of SNRPs through examining the (eastern) German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) that tried to expand its electoral base into western Germany after German unification but whose move largely failed.

Given these case studies selected, New Challenges for Stateless Nationalist and Regionalist Parties is clearly written and well structured, particularly in terms of the challenges that SNRPs face and the impact of these challenges on sub-state territorial mobilisation. The book is well referenced and also offers detailed illustrations through charts and tables, particularly in the chapters by Massetti, Elias, Deschouwer, and Hepburn. By making sure that an accurate and updated bibliography is utilised, the book aims to achieve both a detailed theoretical investigation and comprehensive discussions of the empirical material it exercises. Moreover, the book does not hold back from some of the substantial debates regarding the ideological positioning of SNRPs along different cleavages, the reasons behind the successes and failures of SNRPs, the electoral rise and fall of SNRPs, and how SNRPs have challenged the exisiting state structure in Western European contexts over time. That being said, below I would like to highlight three main strengths of the book but also draw attention to its shortcomings.

First of all, this book can be considered a very instrumental volume in the study of sub-state territorial mobilisation in the contributing authors' extensive research through mixed methodological approaches on the emergence and transformation of SNRPs. As a matter of fact, it is one of the few books investigating a large number of political parties that are classified under the SNRP party grouping.

Secondly, the collection is remarkable in its empirical scope. It focuses on a number of case studies of SNRPs from various western European countries. Considering this wide geographical scope the study also employs rich material from different forms of election results, party manifestos, and assessment of party leanings in different ideological spaces. The combination of these particular case studies of SNRPs is in itself interesting because it enables scholars of this particular field to engage in a comparative and cross-case analysis. This also makes the book relevant for emerging studies on intense interactions between these parties not only at regional, and national levels, but also at the EU level.

Third, the book offers an inspiring approach in the chapter written by Jefferey to the argument that SNRPs as sub-state territorial actors become a part of mainstream politics where they partner with state-wide parties. This intersection between state-wide parties and sub-state territorial actors suggests new thinking on some of the related terms such "as sub-state actors" and "mainstream politics," which constitute an emerging nexus, but one which remains largely underdeveloped. Comparatively, this book signals that many previous studies have either disregarded this intersection or have taken SNRPs into their research fields predominantly on the topic of sub-state teritorrial mobilisation. Therefore, this study is very much needed for anyone who has a keen interest particularly in studies of de-centralisation, regionalism, and party politics.

However, the book could be more comprehensive if two additional dimensions had been put into perspective. First of all, the selected case studies are entirely from western European democracies, where this study mainly focuses on the SNRPs that function in multi-level political systems within a multi-dimensional ideological space. Second, selecting a number of non-Eurocentric SNRPs' cases from countries where multi-level politics is not present might be more constructive and overarching.

In conclusion, this book contributes to the emerging course of more complex approaches to sub-state territorial mobilisation through highlighting the ideological transformation of SNRPs as a shift "from protest to power". It certainly contributes to a number of scholarly fields such as regional and federal studies, studies of territorial party politics, and studies of party competition. Particularly for the field of sub-state territorial actors this book provides a very productive and rich content both theoretically and empirically on the role of SNRPs, the emerging challenges they face, and the impact they assert on mainstream politics.

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Paul White, **The PKK: Coming Down From the Mountains***, London: Zed Books, 2015, 216 pp., (ISBN: 9781783600373).*

The PKK: Coming Down From the Mountains is published as part of Zed Books' *Rebels* series. It is composed of a short introduction followed by seven chapters and designed as an update to White's prior study on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernisers?* (2000), also published by Zed Books. White's previous study was critiqued for its insufficient use of primary sources, inadequate coverage of Kurdish nationalism as an ideology, and its failure to provide a convincing account of the mobilisation of a significant number of Kurds by the PKK during the 1980s and 1990s (Gunes, 2012). In contrast, this study uses more primary sources and makes an attempt to outline the PKK's organisational and ideological transformation in the past 15 years.

The introduction provides a brief overview of White's earlier study and then briefly sets out what his new book covers in terms of material and developments discussed.

Chapter one provides a brief overview of the economic underdevelopment of Kurdish regions in Turkey and the historical context within which the PKK emerged. The chapter explores the rise of the Turkish left during the 1960s along with the impact on Turkish politics of that decade's military coups. The organisational development of the nascent Kurdish movement is very briefly mentioned and includes the establishment of the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKDP) in 1965 and the Revolutionary Cultural Centres of the East (DDKO). However, the growth of the Kurdish national movement needs to

be discussed in more detail and in particular the author needs to provide an account of the Kurds' separation from the Turkish left during the 1960s and 1970s and the establishment of their own political organisations.

Building on this brief background information, chapter two looks at the establishment of the PKK and its ideological formation. It surveys the early years (i.e., 1979-80) and then focuses on the period from 1999 onwards. The author does not address the PKK's ideological evolution in the intermittent period. The author then turns to the PKK's military organisation and the stages that its guerrilla campaign has passed through since it began its armed operations against Turkey on 15 August 1984. The chapter also discusses the PKK's organisation and membership and lists the claims made by numerous people about the PKK's internal power struggles and the attitude of the PKK's Alevi members, whom the author claims (following the reasoning by journalist Emrullah Uslu) are "unhappy about making peace with Ankara while Turkey is opposing Assad" (p. 27). It is not clear why the author mentions hearsay without making an attempt to either provide supporting evidence or fully assess the validity of Uslu's claim. Furthermore, the account the author presents of the PKK's leadership fails to mention that since the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 the PKK has adopted a collective leadership structure. In fact, the author completely ignores this fact and claims that "Bayık remains a PKK leader with an alternative perspective" (p. 26).

Chapters three and four focus on the PKK's ongoing insurgency against the Turkish state. In chapter three, the author briefly covers the early years of the PKK and the evolution of its insurgency. The chapter also provides some background information on the PKK's activism in Europe and how it has organised itself within the Kurdish diaspora community. Chapter four examines the evolution of the insurgency and mentions the PKK's unilateral ceasefire and its end in 2004. The author also addresses the subsequent periods in which the PKK ceased its armed activity along with an overview of the evolution of the conflict. Overall, these two chapters are quite descriptive and fail to develop an analytical argument to explain the main question of why and how the PKK managed to mobilise a significant number of Kurds since the 1980s.

Chapter five moves from the "insurgency" proper to the next period, characterized by attempts to find a political solution to the conflict, and the author does this by looking more closely at the dialogue between the PKK and the state in Turkey. The analysis unpacks to a certain extent the difficulties Turkey has been facing in its attempts to solve the Kurdish conflict. It covers some of the activities of the "deep state" and how it has been a central part of Turkey's Kurdish conflict. The hostile attitude of the powerful Gülen movement towards the Kurdish national movement is also addressed, and the author does well to provide reflections on some of the sermons of the preacher Fethullah Gülen in which he advocated harsher military and security measures against the Kurds. The discussion does, to a certain extent, answer why the

conflict has continued despite the transformation experienced in Turkey and within the Kurdish movement during the past 15 years.

In the final two chapters, the focus becomes the PKK's transformation and the steps it has taken towards moving away from armed struggle to becoming a non-violent movement. Despite the efforts, the PKK continues to be listed as a terrorist organisation by international powers and Turkey. Chapter six outlines the PKK's ideological evolution and discusses the way the PKK adopted a new framework for solving the Kurdish question in the Middle East. It briefly mentions the alternative organisational framework the PKK has developed and draws appropriately upon the research of Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden (2011). However, the author fails to elaborate on the alternative framework the PKK seeks to develop and does not refer to the key texts through which the PKK introduced its new ideology. The PKK's appropriation of feminist discourse is also mentioned, and that part of the author's analysis benefits from its extensive use of the work of researcher Handan Çağlayan, who examined the process in detail in a recent study. Chapter seven offers more reflections on the peace process between the PKK and the Turkish state and discusses some of the developments in Kurdish politics over the past few years. However, it does not provide a deeper analysis of the difficulties that came to the fore in the state's and PKK's attempt to end the conflict peacefully or what needs to be done in order to overcome them.

Given that the book is written with a generalist readership in mind and as an update to a previous book, it is perhaps unfair to expect the kind of depth and coverage we might anticipate from a study intended for specialists. It does provide a synopsis of the developments that Kurdish politics in Turkey has experienced in the past 15 years. In some parts of the book, the author needs to offer references to support his claims or clarify what he means: for example, he suggests that the PKK engaged in self-criticism of its attacks against other Kurdish political groups in its first congress (p. 17) but bolsters this assertion with no reference or supporting evidence. He argues that the PKK had no intellectuals among its ranks (p. 18), but it is not clear what is meant by "intellectuals"; in fact, many of the early cadres of the PKK fit neatly into the description of "organic intellectuals" developed in the writings of Antonio Gramsci. The main weakness of the book is that it does not make any attempt to illuminate the complex process of the PKK's mass mobilisation of the Kurds during the 1980s and 1990s. Such an explanation is needed to understand the PKK as a movement.

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Ibrahim Sirkeci, Jeffrey H. Cohen & Pınar Yazgan (eds.), **Conflict, Insecurity and Mobility**, *Transnational Press London, London, 2016, 184 pp., (ISBN: 978-1-910781-09-8)*

Why do people migrate and what are the consequences of mobility? This question has been the core question of Migration and Ethnic Studies for the past decades. An answer to this question, however, is not straightforward. Motives for leaving one's home, family, friends and neighbours are manifold. Apart from expats and highly skilled workers, people do not migrate when their lives are comfortable. Economic factors, for instance, are often intertwined with conflict. War paralyses the formal economy and makes it extremely hard, if not impossible, for citizens to make a living. Conflict, Insecurity and Mobility is about the complexity of migration motives and highlights how security and insecurity are related to other factors, such as the economy, that tend to play a more central role in research. The authors emphasise four intersecting points. First, migration has consequences not only for the people who migrate. Mobility triggers changes in the region and country of departure, places of transit when moving from one place to another, and migrants' arrival points, either temporarily or for good. Second, migrants may have to cope with new insecurities in the country or city of destination. Their skills are oftentimes not transferrable in the new setting, which requires them to settle for jobs that do not match their degrees and experience. Third, mobility that is traditionally conceptualised as a constellation of economic pull- and push factors that trigger migration due to the surplus or lack of opportunities on the labour market. Hence, migration, so the argument, is generally also fuelled by the narratives of co-nationals or ethnics who are already settled in the country of destination. Fourth, migration is costly, financially and socially.

These intersections are obviously not new. An established body of literature focuses on the multiplicity of migration motives, integration processes as a multiway process driven by actors in the country of destination, transit countries, the country of origin and on a supranational level, as well as the transnational consequences of migration (for a recent overview see Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx 2016; Mügge 2016). Although the relation between conflict and migration is a topic of inquiry in international relations and political geography, it is less central in migration and ethnic studies. This is

exactly the main contribution that Sirkeci, Cohen and Yazgan make. The book consists of a collection of twelve chapters which are predominantly written by young scholars who focus in their ongoing dissertation projects, or spin-offs thereof, on Kurdish and Turkish international, as well as internal mobility. The result is a deep and rich account of cases on the relation between conflict, insecurity and mobility of Kurdish people. The authors demonstrate that insecurity does not end with moving from one place to another. Instead, new insecurities and forms of conflict arise in the transition. The book is organised along themes of conflict and insecurity around borders with Turkey and neighbouring countries, regions within Turkey, and neighbourhoods within cities of destination. The contributors of the book focus on gang wars in Copenhagen, relations between Syrian and Kurdish migrants in Istanbul, and the Gerdi tribe's perception of borders at the Turkish-Iraqi border. A next set of chapters delves into governance by scrutinising the role of the diaspora in Turkey's European Union accession process and local policy-making in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood in Berlin. This is followed by chapters that address military service, violence, and statelessness.

The volume is of interest to students and scholars of migration who want to learn more about experiences of migration on the ground. For example, in the chapter "As if all life had vanished… The return of Kurdish villagers to their hometowns", Şemsa Özar describes the experience of Kurdish villagers who return to their homes from which they were evacuated in the 1990s. Central in this chapter are the stories and memories of the villagers of Kavar, located between Van and Tatvan. In direct quotes, illustrated with pictures, Özar gives villagers a voice and explains through their words what conflict, violence and migration actually does to people and how they navigate political and military actors that determine where they can or cannot reside. Villagers remember how soldiers entered their village in the middle of the night, shot their relatives, and set their houses on fire. They were forced to flee to Istanbul, where they struggled to survive in a hostile environment, going from one temporary contract in construction to another. In 2000, around a third of the villagers returned to the region. Upon their return they were not allowed to stay in their villages to rebuild their ruined houses. In the process of resettlement, a committee was installed to foster the peace process. One of the women tells the committee: "They first broke my husband's legs in front of our children. Then they took him out of the house and killed him brutally and then ridden over [sic] him with a panzer 4-5 times […] I scraped his flesh from the ground" (Özar 2016: 112). The woman asks the committee to free Öcalan and to recognise the Kurdish language and identity so that her husband, who was unarmed, died for a cause.

Like Özar, all contributors draw on rich material that has been collected in many years of research. That said, in some of the contributions the relation between a general literature review and genuine research findings is somewhat imbalanced. The authors clearly have exceptional in-depth knowledge of the

communities under study. As a reader I would have liked to see more of the empirical material and less discussion on how container concepts, which are rooted in Western thought, apply to the cases under study. Post-colonial critique might have been a more appropriate theoretical lens. Given the current uncertainties in Turkey and the region and the ongoing violence that citizens cope with, it is worthwhile to show this in more detail to the general public.

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Janroj Y. Keles, **Media, Diaspora and Conflict: Nationalism and Identity Amongst Turkish and Kurdish Migrants in Europe**, *London: I.B. Tauris, 2015, 256 pp., (ISBN: 9781784530396).*

This book, based on the author's PhD dissertation, studies how media are sites of identity struggle. Taking Turkish and Kurdish communities in Europe as case studies, Keles studies how identity formation and media texts interrelate with each other. The study of transnational communication technologies among diasporic populations is not new, and has mainly concentrated on the potential of emerging technologies such as satellite television and the Internet. Keles brings a new perspective to this established field of research by focusing on how "homeland" conflicts play out in diasporic communities, thus drawing attention to both national and transnational dynamics in diasporic identity formation. As such, the study joins an emerging trend of more sophisticated approaches to (ethno-national) conflicts as de-territorialised and multifaceted phenomena.

Media, Diaspora and Conflict is excellently written and well referenced. It holds a balance between in-depth theoretical considerations and accessible discussions of the empirical material. Moreover, the author does not eschew important debates on multiculturalism, nationalism, marginalisation and oppression, providing arguments for a more nuanced view on diasporic identity and conflict. Below I want to focus on what I consider as the three main strengths of the book.

First of all, the study is extraordinary in its empirical scope. It focuses on Turkish and Kurdish communities in London, Berlin and Stockholm. Within this wide geographical scope the study also employs rich material from different

kinds of interviews. The focus on these three multicultural cities is interesting not only because it enables a comparative, cross-national analysis, but also because it brings to the fore the intense interactions between Turkish and Kurdish communities at the urban level. This makes the book relevant for emerging studies on urban communications and the mediated city.

Secondly, Media, Diaspora and Conflict engages with a broad range of theoretical frameworks. The most prominent theories of nationalism are discussed alongside Gramsci's concept of hegemony and recent theories of diaspora and transnationalism. The way in which Keles weaves together these different complex debates into a coherent framework for his study is impressive. The result is an analysis of media and language as sites (or battlefields) in which a struggle for hegemony becomes manifest. Transnational media thus turn out not to be the simple means of communication, as they are so often thought to be. Rather, they are an essential part of identity formation processes in the context of conflict.

Finally, the book heralds an emancipatory approach to Kurdish identity. Keles rightly notes that many previous studies have either ignored Kurdish communities in Europe or have subsumed Kurds into research on the Turkish diaspora. The present study is much needed because it provides an alternative account of the rich cultural and media life of Kurds in Europe, but without reinforcing or repeating the common polarisations.

In summary, this is a rich and bold book that will undoubtedly contribute to a number of scholarly fields such as ethnic and racial studies, communication and media studies, and conflict studies. For the field of Kurdish Studies in particular it offers a theoretically and empirically rich account on the role of media technologies and language among diaspora communities.

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Abdullah Öcalan, **The Political Thought of Abdullah Öcalan, Kurdistan, Woman's Revolution, and Democratic Confederalism**, *London: Pluto Press, 2017, 153 pp., (ISBN: 9780745399768).*

The Political Thought of Abdullah Öcalan is a collection of four key texts extracted by his translator and editors from the prison writings, a massive collection of manuscripts and books written by Öcalan since his incarceration in the Imrali Prison Island in 1999. The first text, "War and Peace in Kurdistan: Perspectives on a Political Solution to the Kurdish Question" gives a brief outline of the history of Kurdistan. It evaluates the creation of a modern nation-state system in the region as the most destructive event in the history of the Kurds. This text also introduces the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, the political organisation Öcalan helped to establish in the 1970s and which he led until his

abduction from Kenya in February 1999. Here, he provides a general critique on politics and the way politics was pursued by the PKK.

Declaring the nation-state and nationalism as a polity and ideology of social aggression, "War and Peace in Kurdistan" provides a general framework for another form of politics. Analytically, Öcalan makes a distinction between the idea of the state and the idea of government. While the first, in the form of the nation-state, comes with oppression and homogenisation, the second is thought from the idea of self-organisation and self-government. Within this context, democratisation emerges as the advancement of the capacity for self-organisation and self-government. This idea of self-organisation is the subject of further interrogation in the second text, named "Democratic Confederalism", in which Öcalan embeds a discussion on self-organisation and self-government in a broad historical perspective, which is characteristic of his approach.

"Democratic Confederalism" starts with a discussion of the emergence of the nation-state, which Öcalan analyses as an institution that monopolises political, cultural and economic processes. It then goes on to explain the contradiction between the nation-state and society, arguing that historically a strengthening of the nation-state went hand-in-hand with a weakening of the self-organising and self-governing capacities of people. This treaty on democratic confederalism as a method of and structure for the organisation of government takes the enhancement of society against the state as a key starting point.

The third text, named "Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution", discusses the development of the state system and capitalist modernity in relation to the "woman question". Öcalan argues that the nation-state and capitalism represent the institutionalisation of the dominant male. He discusses this institutionalisation of the dominant male from the perspective of what he refers to as two, historically situated "sexual ruptures". The first rupture that occurred in dual-voiced society was that of "religionisation" around the idea of the strong man in the Neolithic era, dated at some 4,000 years ago. A masculine single voiced social culture developed, which came together with a process of silencing and "housewification" of women. The second "sexual rupture" is referred to as the intensification of patriarchy through monotheistic religions. In the previous world of multiple gods, women were attributed creative powers, but in the narrative of the monotheistic religions, the position of women shifted from the creator to the created, symbolised in the claim that woman was created from a man's rib. In this rupture, the female body becomes the locus of man's sexuality, and his honour. Öcalan argues that when analysed from this perspective, it is clear that the abolition of this form of masculinity has to be the objective of emancipatory movements, which he refers to as the "killing of the dominant male".

The fourth and final text is named "Democratic Nation". Here, Öcalan argues that socialism cannot be realised by mimicking the capitalist form, that

is, through the establishment of the nation-state. Instead, a progressive politics should be based on the idea of a democratic nation, which he defines not in terms of a shared language or ethnicity, but as a community sharing the same mind-set. This allows him to think of the nation not in terms of linguistic, ethnic or cultural homogeneity, but in terms of common values established through deliberation. Öcalan relates this idea of a democratic nation to the politics of democratic confederalism, but also to the need to sustain oneself through control over the means of production, which he defines as "economic autonomy", and to self-defence, which is not solely or even principally defined in terms of the use of force, but rather in terms of the ability to develop one's values and ideas.

These selected texts provide a good introduction to Abdullah Öcalan's thoughts on society, history, religion and politics. Öcalan is a remarkable political thinker, and the extent and depth of his writings are noteworthy given the extraordinary conditions under which they have been written. He has written his books in almost solitary confinement, without being able to discuss his thoughts with others, and after the manuscripts left prison, he has never been able to read or correct them. Nevertheless, in these texts, Öcalan relates and enters debate with several contemporary political theorists.

His analysis of capitalist modernity as a world system is clearly influenced by the writings of Immanuel Wallerstein; his writings on the historical development of the state and capitalist modernity recall the historian Ferdinand Braudel, who coined the term the "*longue durée*" to identify and understand the long-term historical structures underlying contemporary form; and in his analysis of patriarchy and gender and the development of social hierarchies as part of such a *longue durée*, Öcalan turns to Maria Mies and her thesis of women as the last colony on its head, defining them as the first colony. In his references to the (pre)Neolithic as "primitive communism", we recognise the work of Lewis Henry Morgan along with, of course, Marx and Engel. Comparisons of his work with that of Bookchin are obvious, yet Öcalan's writings on democratic confederalism have many resemblances also to the work of Hannah Arendt on assemblies. In his belief in consensus and deliberation as a basis for politics, meanwhile, Öcalan comes close to the definition of politics by Habermas. And when he defines the struggle of the PKK as one involved in making the Kurdish issue visible, a theme from recent work by Judith Butler on politics and visibility comes to mind.

Without being exhaustive, this brief overview indicates the actuality and importance of Öcalan and his work in the context of political theory and debates today. My recommendation for a second edition would be to elaborate the introduction to the book with a brief discussion in which Öcalan and his work is placed in this wider context, showing the relevance of his thinking and the issues with which he is engaging. What is beyond the scope of this book, but equally needed, is a critical conversation on the thought of Öcalan, such as discussed in the introduction by Nadje Al Ali when she questions the idea in

Öcalan's work of sex and *jineology*. A deepening of this conversation as an extension towards Öcalan's conceptualisation of state, nation and politics would be more than welcome.

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Mistefa Aydogan, **Rêbera Rastnivîsînê**, *Istanbul: Rûpel, 2012, 298 pp., (ISBN: 978-605-86516-0-9).*

The modern Roman-based Kurdish writing system was developed by Celadet Alî Bedirxan (Djaladat Ali Bedir-Khan) in the early 1930s and implemented first in the *Hawar* magazine, published intermittently from 1932 to 1943. It was part of a larger initiative of modernising and standardising Kurdish, hitherto written in a highly variant Arabic-script alphabet adapted to Kurdish along the lines of the Persian writing system. C. A. Bedirxan's so-called *Hawar*-orthography has been used by most of the Kurds in Turkey and Syria, and recently also by the Kurds in the Caucasus, in the writing of Kurmanji and Zazaki. Only some among a number of orthographic principles of this writing system were explicitly set in a series of articles by C. A. Bedirxan (cf. Bedir-Xan, 1941) while many others were fixed by their systematic use in the writings of the magazine. Except for a few deviations (e.g. separate writing of the verbal negation prefix, the form of the clausal conjunction *ko*, which is nowadays seen mostly as *ku*), most of Bedirxan's orthographic preferences were widely adopted by Kurmanji publications in subsequent decades, especially during the "renaissance" of written Kurmanji in diaspora in the 1980s and 90s. With the gradual proliferation of written Kurmanji over the past several decades, however, the need was felt to standardise the language, an important dimension of which concerned its orthography. The *Rojnameya Kurmancî*,[1] published by the Kurdish Institute of Paris, made significant efforts in this endeavour by sporadically publishing pieces on questions of orthography (e.g. the spelling of place names and the integration of technical terms borrowed from European languages, etc.), while the grammars written by Kurdish authors also included sections on orthography. The first "style guide of orthography", in its modern sense, however, would appear in 1997 as *Bingehên Rastnivîsandina Kurdiyê (Kirmancî)* [The Foundations of Kurdish (Kurmanji) Orthography] by Arif Zêrevan (Zêrevan, 1997). This work basically followed principles set out in *Hawar* but systematised and supplemented them. Despite its many qualities, this guide was not widely embraced by the practitioners of the language probably because on various points it disregarded the existing widespread practices among Kurdish authors. In this relative void, more recently some publishing houses and media outlets have started to implement their own set of orthographic rules for writing in

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[1] The first forty volumes of this publication were gathered in a single volume; see *Komîsyona Kurmancî* (2010).

Kurmanji, following mostly the conventions of Turkish orthography (e.g. the capitalisation of language names and using a period as an ordinal indicator, etc.).

It is against this background that *Rêbera Rastnivîsînê*[2] [The Guide of Orthography] by Mistefa Aydogan, a Kurdish author based in Sweden, appeared in 2012. Aydogan's work is prepared as a comprehensive guide for establishing the principles related to writing in Kurdish. In conformity with its intended task, the author consulted the opinion of a number of Kurdish authors on the principles proposed in the guide.

The book consists of a preface, thirty two chapters on orthography, a glossary of grammar and orthography terms, references, and an index. The chapters can be regrouped for their scope in the following way: terminological issues (§1); letters of the Kurdish-Latin alphabet (§2); syllabification (§3); spelling and standardization of the names of cities, countries, peoples, directions, days, seasons, months, and foreign titles (§4-10); spelling of some individual sounds (e.g. writing of <î> before <y>) (§11-12-13-15-16); spelling of some words which form a group for their particular phonemes and morphemes (§14-17); transliteration of foreign names (§18); integration of borrowings from other languages (§19); capitalisation (§20); abbreviations (§21); questions regarding the standardisation of the form and spelling of nominal inflectional markers (§22-24) and pronouns, adjectives, verb forms, adpositions (§25-28), numerals (§29); citing calendar date (§30); punctuation (§31) and various symbols (§32).

Rêbera Rastnivîsînê thus goes beyond the usual domain of "orthography", which is often limited to punctuation, spelling and capitalisation, instead trying to also standardise the grammatical and some terminological variation in the language. It can thus be seen more as a manual for modern standard Kurmanji as written in Kurdish-Latin alphabet. In term of its extent, it is the single most comprehensive guide for written Kurmanji. It can serve practitioners, individuals or institutions, both as a pedagogical manual and as a reference work on Standard Kurdish orthography.

Some of the issues covered in the guide, such as syllabification, abbreviations, and transliteration of proper names, are probably being treated systematically for the first time in Kurmanji writing. In some other cases, the author revises established practices by reviewing the variation with regard to the specific orthographic issue and then proposes a standard way of dealing with it. The author's propositions come almost always with rather lengthy justifications. For instance, on terminology (§1), the author suggests using the Arabic borrowing *herf* instead of *tîp* (from French/English "type") on the grounds that the former has had a longer presence in written Kurdish; or for the terms "vowel" and "consonant" to use *dengdêr* and *nedengdêr*, instead of *dengdar* and *dengdêr* (coined by C. A. Bedirxan). The author also tries to revitalise

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[2] The term *rastnivîsîn* is a compound infitive corresponding to the Greek term *orthography* "correct writing" . An alternative as *rênivîs* (composed of *rê* "road" + *nivîs* "writing"), and its Sorani form *rênûs*, is also used.

the term *komek* "sentence", widely seen in *Hawar* but only rarely afterwards, instead of the relatively widespread neologism *hevok*. The author also addresses the often confusing multitude of month names in Kurdish. He examines the authenticity and commonness of the existing names against their occurrence or absence in Kurdish folklore and pre-modern Kurdish literature (before 20th century), and proposes a set of names as standard.

In the preface the author argues for the necessity of the standardisation of the principles of orthography and notes that his approach to standardisation is informed both by the grammatical particularities of Kurmanji and the general consensus among the language users. A closer look at the posited orthographic principles makes it clear that this "rationale" sometimes relies on a subjective and prescriptive understanding of the grammar (of Kurmanji) while the language users in question are mostly the speakers in Turkey.

Given that Kurdish is a dominated language in all countries it is spoken, the borrowing of foreign words – especially modern-technical terminology from European languages – takes place through the dominant contact languages, Turkish in Turkey, Arabic in Iraq and Syria, and Persian in Iran. For instance, the Latin word *machina* is used and pronounced in Iran as *maşîn* following the Persian form, while in other countries it is based on the Italian pronunciation of the word as *makîna*, *makîne* or *mekîne*. This poses a serious problem for a pan-Kurdish standardisation of modern terminology. The author of *Rêbera Rastnivîsînê* extensively treats the issue of loan words (pp. 94–123) and for European modern technological terminology sets the principle following their French form and – allegedly – Kurdish pronunciation (p. 94). Thus, the suffix –*tion* of Latin-origin words is seen as –*sîyon* (e.g. *înformasîyon* "information"), or the Greek –*logia* is seen as –*lojî* (e.g. *bîyolojî* "biology"). This preference is practical for the speakers of Kurdish in Turkey since Turkish too mostly adopts the French forms of the modern technical terminology. However, in Iraqi Kurdistan the source language for such technical modernisation of both Kurmanji and Sorani is mostly English; thus, the example items are more commonly seen as *înfirmeyşin* or *bayolocî*. Such discrepancies are not addressed in the guide; thus, it is not clear how this and similar other principles can be implemented, for instance, in the Kurmanji in Iraq (known as Badini or Behdini). Moreover, corpus planning is one area where Kurdish varieties (e.g. Kurmanji, Sorani) could be better harmonised, for instance, by setting shared principles in terminological modernisation. *Rêber* ignores this potential contribution of orthography development. In addition, by relying exclusively on the French form/pronunciation, "native" Kurdish procedures of "borrowing" are disregarded. For instance, in Kurdish spoken in Turkey (until recently in the whole Ottoman Kurdistan), a <k> sound of a loan word is pronounced as <q> in the environment of a back vowel (<a, o, û>). For example, the Turkish verb stem *kurtar-* of *kurtarmak* "to save" is seen both in Sorani and Kurmanji as *qurtal/qurtar* in *qurtal kirin* "to save". The words *cariola*, *calorifère*, *camion*, etc., are pronounced in Kurmanji of Turkey with an initial <q>,

but following the rule in *Rêbera Rastnivîsînê* they should be spelled with a <k>. Similarly, many words such as those for "banknote", "television", "telephone" have been "kurdicised" as *panqanote* and *panot, têlevizyon, têlefon* in most of the Kurmanji-speaking areas. *Rêber* disregards these historical phonological changes and reverts the forms to an ideal beginning in their slightly-adapted French pronunciation as *banknot, televizyon, telefon* –which amounts to making them identical to their spelling and pronunciation in Turkish.

In the study of writing systems a fundamental distinction is made between a deep and shallow orthography. In the former, the underlying forms are represented and subsequent (morpho-phonological) changes in the realisation of the forms are disregarded in writing. In the latter, the forms are spelled the way they are closest to their surface realisation, noting thus also morpho-phonological changes in their pronunciation (cf. Coulmas, 2003:101-102; Seifart, 2006:279). In general, *Rêber* conforms to deep orthography principles for Kurmanji. This informs quite a few of the justifications provided by the author. For instance, in the Kurdish-Latin alphabet, an <î> is spelled as <i> when preceding a <y> (i.e. îy becomes iy). Thus, the word *diyarî* "gift" is spelled as *diyariya te* "your gift", since the <î> is considered to be more centralised in this environment. This rule seems to have been proposed for the first time by C. A. Bedirxan (in Bedir-Xan, 1941) and implemented in *Hawar* (although an equivalent practice exists in the traditional Kurdish-Arabic writing system, seen in texts from 18th century on). It has been one of the most commonly followed particularities of Kurmanji orthography. Aydogan proposes to abolish this rule (p. 76), that is, not to convert a combination <îy> to <iy>. Avoiding such a conversion helps preserve the identity of the words (for instance in searching for them in dictionary) and, following deep orthography principles, avoids coding a surface phonological change in spelling. Like any convention, however, this one also has its downside. To put it roughly, following Kurdish phonotactics (i.e. possible combinations of sounds/phonemes) there are hardly any combinations of an <i> and <y>. Thus, a general piece of information in literacy teaching as "the <i> in almost all combinations spelled as <iy> is lexically (i.e. in its underlying unchanged form) an <î>" would be sufficient for the readers to know the identity of the words. This would at the same time relieve the orthography from noting the circumflex diacritic (^) in a significant proportion of the occurrences of the sound <î>.

In short, *Rêbera Rastnivîsînê* by Mustafa Aydogan is a valuable and timely contribution to the field of Kurmanji writing. Its unprecedented coverage attests to the expansion of the domain of Kurmanji writing over the past several decades. The author's general approach in anchoring Kurdish orthography at a "deep" level, disregarding thus much dialectal variation as well as phonological changes in the surface forms, is probably well suited for a language like Kurmanji which is dominated/minoritised everywhere it is spoken and which shows relatively high regional variation. However, some of the justifications provided for the proposed conventions might not be satisfactory from a

linguistic point of view. Finally, in addition to ignoring the Badini semi-standard in Iraq (thus the pluricentricity of Kurmanji), the author does not consider the potentials that the orthography (i.e. the conventional and not purely linguistic dimensions of the language) offers for bringing the Kurdish varieties closer to one another. These dimensions, however, could be considered as stemming from the special situation of Kurmanji and Kurdish in general.

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