

Kurds and the Left in Turkey in the 1970s: Imperialism as a "Traveling Theory"

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The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.



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Abstract

Kurds and the Left in Turkey in the 1970s:
Imperialism as a "Traveling Theory"

Ozan Polat, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute
for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2025

Professor Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Thesis Advisor

This thesis explores the intellectual and political framework of Rizgari, a socialist journal collective active in Turkey during the 1970s. Positioned at the intersection of the Kurdish political movement and the socialist tradition, Rizgari developed a distinctive conceptual approach shaped by both local dynamics and global theoretical debates. The study focuses in particular on the group's interpretation of sub-imperialism, a concept introduced by Ruy Mauro Marini. Rather than adopting it directly, Rizgari adapted this concept to analyze Turkey's regional role and its relationship with Western powers. In parallel, the group proposed a critical perspective on the administrative, cultural, and economic practices implemented in Kurdish-populated areas, which they viewed as mechanisms of control and integration. The thesis uses Edward Said's notion of "traveling theory" to trace how certain theoretical tools are reshaped through different historical and political contexts. By analyzing selected publications of Rizgari, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how global leftist and anti-systemic ideas were received, reinterpreted, and localized by political actors operating in Turkey during a transformative decade.

36,468 words

Özet

1970'lerde Türkiye'de Kürtler ve Sol:

Bir "Gezgin Teori" Olarak Emperyalizm

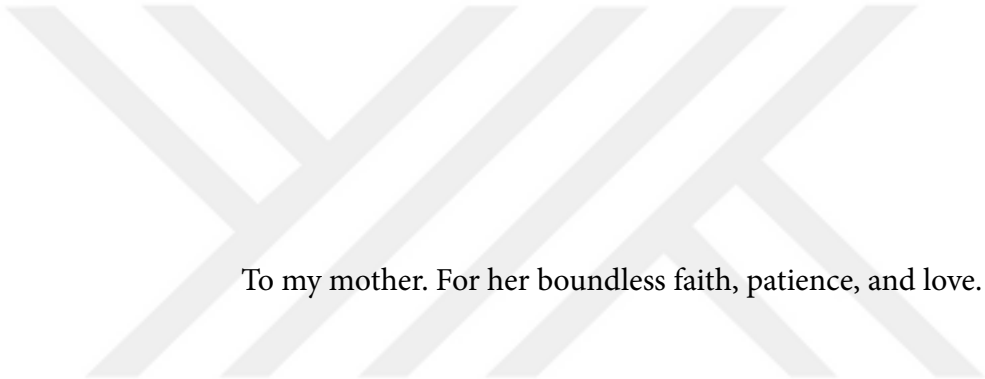
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Profesör Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, 1970'lerde Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren sosyalist bir dergi kolektifi olan Rizgari'nin entelektüel ve siyasi çerçevesini incelemektedir. Kürt siyasi hareketi ile sosyalist geleneğin kesişim noktasında konumlanan Rizgari, hem yerel dinamikler hem de küresel teorik tartışmaların şekillendirdiği kendine özgü bir kavramsal yaklaşım geliştirmiştir. Çalışma, özellikle Ruy Mauro Marini tarafından ortaya atılan "alt-emperyalizm" kavramının grup tarafından yorumlanmasına odaklanmaktadır. Rizgari, bu kavramı doğrudan benimsemek yerine, Türkiye'nin bölgesel rolünü ve Batılı güçlerle ilişkilerini analiz etmek için uyarladı. Buna paralel olarak, grup, Kürt nüfusun yoğun olduğu bölgelerde uygulanan idari, kültürel ve ekonomik uygulamalara, kontrol ve entegrasyon mekanizmaları olarak gördüğü eleştirel bir bakış açısı getirdi. Tez, Edward Said'in "gezgin teori" kavramını kullanarak, belirli teorik araçların farklı tarihsel ve siyasi bağlamlarda nasıl yeniden şekillendirildiğini izlemektedir. Rizgari'nin seçilmiş yayınlarını analiz ederek, çalışma, dönüşümün yaşandığı on yıl boyunca Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren siyasi aktörler tarafından küresel sol ve sistem karşıtı fikirlerin nasıl karşılandığı, yeniden yorumlandığı ve yerelleştirildiğinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

36,468 kelime



To my mother. For her boundless faith, patience, and love.

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Glossary of Non-English Terms

Rizgari	Liberation
Komal	Society



Abbreviations and Acronyms

CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DDKD	Devrimci Doğu Kültür Dernekleri
DDKO	Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları
FKF	Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu
IKDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq
KAK	Koma Azadiya Kurdistan
MDD	Milli Demokratik Devrim
MİT	Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê
TİİKP	Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi
TİP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi
THKO	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu
THKP-C	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi
TKP	Türkiye Komünist Partisi
TKP/ML	Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist
TKSP	Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi
TKDP	Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi
T'de KDP	Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi

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Introduction

This thesis aims to analyze the Rizgari group, an essential and unique political formation at the intersection of the socialist movement and the Kurdish political movement in Turkey in the 1970s, in the context of its conceptual production and especially its reinterpretation of Ruy Mauro Marini's concept of "sub-imperialism". However, as the following sections of the study will show, Rizgari's conceptual intervention is not limited to the framework of sub-imperialism. While Rizgari analyzes Turkey's administrative, cultural, and economic policies in the Kurdish geography, the group re-functionalizes the concept of "colonialism" concerning the concept of sub-imperialism; it takes this concept beyond the classical imperialism debates and turns it into a theoretical tool specific to its historical context. At this point, Edward Said's "traveling theory" approach provides a functional ground for understanding a theoretical transformation process in which sub-imperialism and other concepts, such as colonialism, are localized and reconstructed.

§ 1.1 Purpose, Scope, and Method of the Thesis

The study aims to discuss the theoretical relationship between the basic concepts of "colonialism", "national liberation," and "imperialism, sub-imperialism", which occupy a central place in the political discourse of the Rizgari group and the Kurdish political movement through the reinvention and

localization of these concepts. The main theoretical framework of the thesis is based on Edward Said's traveling theory¹. This critical lens allows for analyzing how theories are transformed and reconstructed as they are transferred from one context to another.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, there has been a significant increase in the global popularity of socialist ideas. This rise was not limited to classical centers such as Europe or Latin America but also to Asia and Africa, especially in societies that had long lived under colonial rule. For many newly independent countries, socialism came to be seen as both a modernization project and a means of consolidating national independence.² This global orientation coincided with the rise of anti-imperialist national liberation movements. The Cuban Revolution in 1959, the Vietnamese resistance in the mid-1960s, and popular uprisings in various Latin American, African, and Asian countries showed that socialism was moving to new forms of struggle and geographies. This transformation affected the societies struggling for independence and the multinational states with unresolved national problems. Turkey was one of the countries affected by these developments; the socialist movement found a response, especially among university youth, and paved the way for new political organizations.³

The Constitution of 1961 of Turkey, adopted in the aftermath of the coup d'état of 27 May 1960, led to a loosening of restrictions on expression and organization.⁴ This environment allowed for the emergence of new political organizations inspired by socialist and national liberationist movements among Turkish and Kurdish youth. The political mobilization developed in universities, trade unions, and student associations included criticism of the existing

-
- 1 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).
 - 2 Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, trans. Marjory Mattingly Urquidí (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 166.
 - 3 Kuzey Fırat, "Dünyada ve Türkiyede 68", *İleri*, no. 36–37 (2008): 101.
 - 4 Sinem Birol, "1961 Anayasasında İfade Özgürlüğü," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi* 20, no. 1 (2010): 73–90, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/iuifd/issue/22893/244996> (Accessed May 27, 2025).

order and the imagination of an egalitarian, just, and libertarian alternative order.

One of the most prominent outputs of this new political energy, especially for the politicized Kurdish youth, was the Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths (DDKO).⁵ This structure, active between 1969 and 1971, had a remarkable impact at the organizational level and in the field of discourse despite its short life.⁶ Suppressed by the security reflexes of the state, this structure continued its intellectual and political legacy through the Revolutionary Eastern Culture Associations (DDKD), which was founded in 1974. The Rizgari group, which emerged from the Ankara branch of the DDKD, has readdressed this legacy with a more comprehensive theoretical perspective.⁷

Rizgari, which translates as "Liberation"⁸ in English, was first formed by a young cadre gathered around a journal. These cadres argued that political struggle should be addressed not only in its practical aspects but also in its theoretical and ideological dimensions. It emphasized a strategic understanding of the struggle with intellectual depth. This approach was one of the main characteristics that distinguished the Rizgari group from the Turkish left and other structures within the Kurdish political movement. The group systematized its intellectual production by establishing Komal (Toplum in Turkish, Society in English) Publishing House⁹ in 1975. It carried this production into the public sphere through the *Rizgari* journal¹⁰, which was published between 1976 and 1978. In a short period, the journal became a publication that sparked

5 Mehmet Orhan, *Political Violence and Kurds in Turkey: Fragmentations, Mobilizations, Participations & Repertoires* (London: Routledge, 2015), 51.

6 Cengiz Güneş, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2013), 68.

7 Kamil Yılmaz, *Disengaging from Terrorism: Lessons from the Turkish Penitents* (London: Routledge, 2014), 32.

8 "Sevgili Xece: Hatice Yaşar ile Newsirwan Mustafa Üzerine," *Zagrosname*, <https://zagrosname.com/sevgili-xecehatice-yasar-ile-newsirwan-mustafa-uzerine.html> (accessed May 15, 2025).

9 Rizgari Case Indictment, prepared by Ankara Martial Law Command Military Prosecutor's Office, 1981, 23.

10 Raşit Kısacık, *Rizgari ve Ala Rizgari* (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2015), 123.

debates and became the focus of polemics not only in its circle but also in various socialist circles in Turkey.

What distinguished Rizgari from its contemporary Kurdish-socialist groups and rendered it a subject worthy of scholarly attention was its deliberate effort to establish a connection between the Turkish context and universal theories of imperialism and colonialism. Starting from this point of departure, Rizgari oriented itself towards the Latin American countries, where, due to political, economic, and cultural reasons, theories of imperialism were being intensively debated throughout the 1960s. Within this framework, Rizgari developed a particular interest in Dependency Theory, one of the most prominent and controversial theories concerning the transition to capitalism and the dynamics of development and modernization within the capitalist system. As a consequence of this interest, the group engaged with concepts emerging from this literature—most notably the concept of imperialism, which holds central significance in the critical analysis of external-structural relationships that are considered to directly affect a country's development level and, consequently, its political and economic independence. One of the most significant figures—albeit not explicitly named—within Rizgari's engagement with this literature was the Brazilian economist-sociologist Ruy Mauro Marini, whose work, especially through his adaptation of the concept of imperialism to the Brazilian context, fostered noteworthy dialogues and debates.

Dependency Theory, which emerged primarily in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, is a Marxist-rooted yet structurally distinct theoretical approach that sought to explain the processes of development and underdevelopment. Its central thesis posits that the unequal and exploitative relationship between the core (developed, industrialized countries) and the periphery (underdeveloped, dependent countries) within the global capitalist system is the primary cause of underdevelopment in the periphery. According to Dependency Theory, the inability of peripheral countries to achieve development is not rooted in internal factors such as insufficient capital accumulation, technological backwardness, or lack of education, but rather in the structural dependency relationships embedded within the international

capitalist system.¹¹ This dependency transforms peripheral countries into raw material producers and low value-added economies shaped according to the needs of core countries. Among the prominent proponents of Dependency Theory were figures like Raul Prebisch, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Theotonio Dos Santos, and Andre Gunder Frank. These theorists, along with other critical development scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein and Samir Amin, engaged in polemics with various Marxist actors concerned with structural inequalities and phenomena like imperialism within the international capitalist system.

Ruy Mauro Marini, recognized as one of the key representatives of this theoretical tradition, became particularly renowned for his critical analysis of the developmental trajectory followed by Brazil during the 1960s. In numerous articles published across various platforms, Marini argued that Brazil had become one of the destinations for capital exports by the American bourgeoisie. He maintained that through investments particularly in sectors like automotive, petrochemicals, and energy, American bourgeois fractions, acting through their multinational corporations, transferred decommissioned equipment—resulting from new fixed capital investments in the United States—to Brazil, thus fostering the growth of the Brazilian industrial bourgeoisie.¹² According to Marini, this process not only contributed to industrial expansion but also led to a social transformation characterized by improved living standards for the masses and a simultaneous rise in their socio-economic demands. Analyzing the 1964 Brazilian coup d'état within this context, Marini asserted that the military intervention aimed primarily to slow down this process of social development and rising popular demands, while also seeking to remove barriers that hindered the strengthening of key sectors of the landed aristocracy, financial capital, and the emerging industrial bourgeoisie. In Marini's view, in order to guarantee the continuation of this North America-centered development model and the ensuing economic

11 James C. W. Ahiakpor, "The Success and Failure of Dependency Theory: The Experience of Ghana," *International Organization* 39, no. 3 (1985): 535–52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300019172>.

12 Ruy Mauro Marini, "Brazilian 'Interdependence' and Imperialist Integration," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 7 (December 1965): 21–24.

growth, the Brazilian bourgeoisie and military—though not imperialist powers themselves—assumed the role of a “sub-imperialist” state. As an extension of imperialism, Brazil, according to Marini, simultaneously engaged in competition with rival bourgeoisies within Latin America (such as the Argentine bourgeoisie) and acted as a battering ram for the United States against revolutionary uprisings, most notably those inspired by the Cuban Revolution.

It was within this atmosphere—and, to be precise, with the caveat that in-depth interviews would be necessary to definitively establish the extent of influence—that Rizgari, under the influence of Turkish leftist circles also engaged with imperialism and its derivatives, appears to have drawn inspiration either directly from Marini himself or at least through selective appropriation of his theory. Rizgari ultimately decided to employ this theoretical framework to reinforce its own colonialism-centered argument.

In this thesis, in line with the historical and political context outlined above, the intellectual-political production of the Rizgari group, especially within the framework of the theoretical contributions of Orhan Kotan, who can be considered one of the ideologues of the group¹³, will reveal how the concept of sub-imperialism is re-conceptualized in the context of Turkey and what kind of localization and reappropriation practices this conceptual transfer process has witnessed. Edward Said's traveling theory approach will be used in this context as the theoretical framework and methodological tool.

In addition to this theoretical transfer through the concept of sub-imperialism, Rizgari's intervention in the concept of colonialism is of special importance. In this context, for Rizgari, colonialism is treated not only as a form of historical relationship but also as a reconstructed theory to make sense of the practices of the Republic of Turkey in the Kurdish geography. This conceptual rewriting shows how Rizgari re-engages with imported concepts and the critical potentials these concepts carry. In the following sections of the thesis, this double theoretical intervention will be discussed in the context of both sub-imperialism and colonialism.

13 "Orhan Kotan," *biyografi.net*, <https://www.biyografi.net/kisi-orhan-kotan-3849/> (accessed May 15, 2025).

The sources of the thesis include the published issues of *Rizgari* journal, Komal Publishing House books, and other publications of the socialist movements of the period will be included. In the introduction, the main subject and methodology of the study will be presented, followed by the theoretical background. In the second section, the emergence of DDKO and DDKD and the historical development of the conceptualizing and naming of the Kurdish issue will be discussed; in the third section, the intellectual orientations and theoretical translation processes of the *Rizgari* group will be addressed. The fourth section will present a discourse analysis of the *Rizgari* journal. The findings will be evaluated in the fifth and final section, and contributions to the literature and suggestions for future research will be presented.

§ 1.2 Global Context: Socialism, Anti-Imperialism and Postcolonial Theory

Throughout the 20th century, social revolutions and national liberation movements have been two fundamental phenomena that have profoundly influenced the political, cultural, and academic spheres worldwide. This process, which gained momentum, especially after the Second World War, created a historical dynamic directly linked to the struggle for national independence of peoples who had lived under colonial rule, and revolutionary politics and anti-imperialist discourses became intertwined. However, since the 1970s, these political processes have moved to a different level. After this date, postcolonial thought, in other words, postcolonial theory,¹⁴ has emerged, which examines the mentality and practices of the colonial period that have influenced the political, social, and cultural spheres of these countries through a critical interpretation of literary works, especially in countries that gained their independence after colonialism.

In its early phase, this approach, which was based on literary texts and mainly on the methodological-theoretical pursuits of literary critics, gradually

14 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 168-73.

spread beyond its borders to other disciplines and gained more credibility.¹⁵ There are several reasons behind the spread of postcolonial theory to different academic fields. The first reason is that postcolonial theory offers a multidimensional perspective that can be used in literary analysis and in analyzing social power relations, cultural representations, and forms of knowledge production. Another reason is that cultural studies have gradually gained an independent academic identity since the 1970s, and in this process, postcolonial theory has become a central theoretical place.¹⁶

Another important reason for the wide acceptance of postcolonial theory is that the ruling classes in newly independent countries are criticized by their intellectuals as a continuation or extension of the colonial period. This situation has paved the way for postcolonial theory to gain visibility in academic circles and among the wider political and social masses and for debates to be conducted at the abstract level and through concrete political practices. Thus, postcolonial theory has become a theoretical framework and a tool for analyzing concrete historical experiences.

Influenced by postcolonial theory, thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Samir Amin, Achille Mbembe, and Partha Chatterjee have argued that the independence achieved in the postcolonial period often does not mean absolute freedom and that dependency relations continue only by changing form.¹⁷ According to these thinkers, although the new regimes gained legitimacy with the discourse of national independence, they often reproduced the mechanisms of oppression, corruption, and exploitation of the colonial regimes in different forms. For this reason, postcolonial theory, especially within the framework of the conceptualization of "Neocolonialism"¹⁸, has become one of the crucial topics of discussion in the academic world in

15 Masood Raja, "What is Postcolonial Studies?," *Postcolonial Space*, April 2, 2019, <https://postcolonial.net/what-is-postcolonial-studies/> (accessed May 10, 2025).

16 Ibid.

17 Paul Michael Lützel, "Postcolonial Studies-A Literary Perspective," *TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, no. 11 (2001), <https://www.inst.at/trans/11Nr/luetzeler11.htm> (accessed May 15, 2025).

18 John Scott and Gordon Marshall, "Neo-colonialism," in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199533008.001.0001>.

direct connection with the character and practices of political regimes in post-colonial independent countries.

However, the rise of postcolonial theory was not limited to its contribution to the analysis of everyday political practices. Throughout the 20th century, radical transformations in the processes of acquiring and producing knowledge were closely related to the increase in technological possibilities and the development of critical approaches to knowledge. In this process, knowledge has come to be seen not only as an object to be consumed passively but also as a dynamic field whose sources, conditions of production, and ideological contents should be approached with a critical eye. Critical evaluation, appropriation, and alternative knowledge production have become the cornerstones of constructing a new epistemological paradigm.

In such a context, the concept of "theory"¹⁹, which in scientific terms means the explanation of a phenomenon based on continuously verified observations and experiments and which can also be regarded as a kind of condensed and verified knowledge, ceased to be static during the 20th century and became a structure that constantly traveled from one part of the world to another and was reshaped in different geographical, cultural and political contexts. This circulation of theories allows us to understand how concepts are received in other contexts and what kind of transformations they undergo in these contexts. The movement of theory from one context to another should be seen as a complex reproduction process that generates new meanings, new tensions, and new creative possibilities rather than a simple transmission process. Therefore, studying the travels of theory is not only about tracing specific ideas but also provides essential insights into the emergence and development of new epistemological paradigms.

This part of the thesis will theorize how a theoretical framework is transformed and reproduced in a specific historical context to achieve the aforementioned general aims of the thesis. In this sense, Edward Said's conceptualization of traveling theory is fundamental to explaining how theories take on different functions when they change context. Similarly, James Clifford's

19 "What Is a Theory?," *American Museum of Natural History*, <https://www.amnh.org/research/paleontology/paleontology-faq/what-is-a-theory> (accessed May 17, 2025).

conceptualization of the mobility of theory concerning local contexts and Homi Bhabha's concepts of cultural translation, hybridization, and refraction provide analytical tools for understanding the processes of theoretical transformation discussed in this study. In the following sections of the thesis, the transformation of a Latin American socialist concept by a Kurdish political movement operating in Turkey will be discussed in the light of this theoretical framework.

§ 1.3 The Mobility of Theory: Edward Said's Traveling Theory

The movement of theories from one context to another and their transformations in this process have been the subject of increasing interest in contemporary social sciences. In this context, Edward Said's essay on traveling theory²⁰ in his book *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) has become one of the fundamental texts for understanding the transformations of theoretical structures as they move across geographies, times, and political contexts. In this work, Said argues that theories are not static, fixed, or universally valid structures; on the contrary, they are transformed in content, orientation, and function when moved from the specific historical context in which they are produced to other places.²¹ In this framework, theories are conceptual forms quoted in academic texts and intellectual tools embedded in political, cultural, and historical processes and reconstructed in context.²² Said's theoretical intervention has been particularly influential in postcolonial thought and cultural studies, allowing for conceptualizing issues such as the circulation, localization, and rewriting of theories.

The traveling theory approach argues that theories are not only concepts that move at the intellectual level but also constructs that take shape within political struggles, cultural conflicts, and ideological frameworks. Theories are not only "read" but also "written", "transformed," and "operationalized". Said states this mobility occurs in four basic stages: origin, transmission,

20 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 157-158.

21 Ibid., 158.

22 Ibid., 173.

acceptance and settlement, and transformation.²³ These stages suggest a chronology and provide an analytical framework explaining how theories shift and acquire meaning in context, undergo a hybridization process, and become political tools.

The first stage, "origin", refers to the specific historical, cultural, and political conditions in which a theory emerges.²⁴ According to Said, theories are not abstract intellectual productions; they are intellectual responses to concrete political and social problems. Theories address specific problems, answer specific questions, and reflect the ideological orientations of particular actors in the context in which they are born. This rootedness determines the potential orientations of the theory as much as its content. For example, Ruy Mauro Marini's concept of sub-imperialism in the late 1960s is a conceptualization that points to the active role played not only by external imperialist powers but also by regional powers in Latin America's structural dependency relations.²⁵ This conceptualization, just like colonialism, is a proposition about the political regime in a country in addition to its place in the international system. Therefore, Brazil's economic and military relations with imperialist centers form the background for Marini's development of this theory. That's why the concept in question can be seen not only as an economic-political analysis but also as a critical intervention into the orientation of the Brazilian left at the time.

The second stage, "distance", refers to the movement of theory away from its origin and into another geographical or historical context.²⁶ This transfer involves not only a physical but also a contextual, ideological, and epistemological distance. When a theory moves to a new context, it cannot maintain its previous orientation, content, or goal; it encounters new questions, power relations, and cultural codes. According to Said, this contextual deviation makes visible aspects of the theory previously invisible, brings some of its conceptual

23 Ibid., 157-158.

24 Ibid., 157.

25 Ruy Mauro Marini, "Brazilian 'Interdependence' and Imperialist Integration," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 7 (December 1965): 26-28.

26 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 158.

components to the fore, and pushes others to the background.²⁷ This situation may lead to erosions in the identity of the theory, but it also opens up new creative possibilities. The transposition of sub-imperialism and colonialism concepts in the Turkish context directly reflects this process. These concepts are rethought and repositioned not only about the system of economic dependency in Latin America but also concerning Turkey's position in NATO, its military relations with the US, and its regional policies toward neighboring countries.

The Rizgari group, one of the direct interlocutors of this transfer process, bears a vital originality not only on the ideological but also in the theoretical context. While bringing the Latin American concept of sub-imperialism into the Turkish context, the Rizgari group also included the concept of colonialism in the debates within the left, transformed the original form of sub-imperialism along with colonialism and reconstructed it in a new ideological-discursive unity. Through this concept, the group theoretically and politically differentiated itself from the established Turkish left by reinterpreting the Republic of Turkey's economic, political, and cultural presence in the Kurdish geography.

The third stage, "acceptance and accommodation", refers to adopting, internalizing, and re-functionalizing the theory in the new context.²⁸ At this stage, theory is no longer merely an imported form of thought but a structure reshaped according to local actors' agendas, strategies, and ideological orientations. Rizgari's theoretical orientation is a typical example of this process. The group does not reduce the concept of sub-imperialism to an analysis of economic dependency; it relates it to Turkey's military, cultural, and political strategies in the Kurdish regions. This is where sub-imperialism comes closest to the concept of colonialism in its acceptance and settlement. This interpretation changes the function of the theory: The concept now becomes a tool to explain not only an analysis of regional power but also the nature of the political regime facing the Kurds. In the process, the concept goes beyond Turkey's

²⁷ Ibid., 158-159.

²⁸ Ibid., 173.

foreign policy and provides a basis for a critique of its domestic political structure.

The fourth and final stage, "transformation", is where the theory is accepted, applied, rewritten, transformed, and endowed with new meanings.²⁹ Although Said does not call it this way, this process can be explained by two main concepts: vernacularization and reappropriation. Localization refers to adapting the theory to the local context³⁰; reappropriation refers to using the theory in the new context differently from its previous functions and gaining new meanings.³¹ In this process, the theory is no longer controlled by its original author and is reproduced in new discursive contexts by new political actors. At this point, theory becomes a conceptual tool and the language of political struggles. Rizgari's theoretical position reveals this process. The group used the concept of sub-imperialism not only as a theoretical framework but also to define Turkey's political practices in the Kurdish regions, which they defined as colonialism, to legitimize resistance to these practices and to justify its political program.³² As Said describes it, theory regained its function, transformed, and became a political tool in a new context.

The fact that Rizgari did not limit this transformation practice to the concept of sub-imperialism but also carried out a similar transformation process through the concept of colonialism paved the way for the re-theorization of the Republic of Turkey's military-political domination relations, language policies, educational and economic centralization attempts in the Kurdish geography by comparing them with classical colonial models. In this framework, the concept of colonialism is reappropriated in the local historical context, outside of classical colonial typologies, but by establishing theoretical links with them.³³ Thus, as Said defines it, colonialism becomes a traveling theory that shifts places, transforms in contact with the context, and gains function in political struggle.

29 Ibid., 174.

30 Moya Lloyd, "Travelling Theories", *Redescriptions*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2015), 121-122.

31 Ibid.

32 Orhan Kotan, *Koçgiri Halk Hareketi (1919-1921)* (Istanbul: Komal Yayınları, 2006), 16.

33 "Kapitalizmin İnsanlık Tarihine Vurduğu Yüz Karası : Sömürgecilik", *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976), 48.

According to Said, this transformation does not render theory dysfunctional; on the contrary, it makes it a more creative, more effective, and more context-specific tool. The theory is no longer merely an intellectual form that circulates between texts; it is a structure reshaped in political practice, molded by conflicts, and reconstructed by local demands. Traveling theory is, therefore, an approach that explains how theories spread and how they are reproduced, transformed, and integrated into new arenas of struggle.³⁴

From this perspective, it would not be wrong to consider Rizgari's theoretical intervention as a concrete and explanatory example of the concept of traveling theory. A concept developed by Marini for Latin America has acquired a different function in the context of Turkey and has also been used in the Kurdish political process. In this transformation, not only has the content of the concept been rewritten, but its critical potential has also been rewritten. Said's approach provided both a theoretical ground and a methodological tool to make sense of such theoretical mobility. This approach, which argues that theories are not static constructs but rather are differentiated and reconstructed according to historical, cultural, and political contexts, is an essential point of reference for making sense of Rizgari's theoretical transformation.

The mobility of theories is a fundamental area of debate that shows the developmental process of theoretical thought and how knowledge production is positioned and reshaped. Along with Edward Said's traveling theory approach, another vital contribution to this debate comes from James Clifford, a leading figure in cultural studies. Clifford's article "Notes on Theory and Travel" stands out as an original attempt to address the relationship between theory and displacement, contextualization, and cultural encounter. In this work, Clifford argues that theories are not only textually but also culturally and spatially mobile, produced not from a fixed center but from temporary, multiple, and encountered locations. According to him, producing theory is

34 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 65.

possible through traveling and dynamic relations with different contexts rather than remaining fixed in a particular place.³⁵

§ 1.4 Theoretical Travels and Localization: Clifford and Bhabha's Contributions

This approach questions not only the practices of theory production but also the epistemological underpinnings of this production. In Clifford's perspective, although originating from a specific historical and cultural location, theory does not remain fixed when transferred to different geographical and social contexts. On the contrary, it is reconstructed, acquires new meanings, and assumes different functions within these contexts.³⁶ This also determines Clifford's relationship with postcolonial theory, as he underlines that re-functionalizing theories in other geographies by detaching them from Western epistemologies is a reception and a creative intervention.³⁷

Clifford's approach begins with a reference to the etymological origin of theory. According to him, the word "theory" is derived from the Ancient Greek verb "theorein", which refers to the witnessing of an observer sent to another city.³⁸ From the outset, this definition associates theory with an abstract way of thinking and a physical and cultural practice of displacement. Based on this historical meaning, Clifford conceptualizes the production of modern theory not from a fixed location but through positionings in motion. For him, producing theory is "leaving home";³⁹ but this leaving does not involve the idea of a fixed center to return to. Modern theorists constantly enter different contexts and reproduce their theoretical position through the relations they establish with these contexts. This defines theory not as a fixed and

35 James Clifford, "Notes on Theory and Travel," in *Traveling Theories: Traveling Theorists*, ed. James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar, *Inscriptions* 5 (Santa Cruz: Center for Cultural Studies, 1989), 179.

36 Ibid., 179.

37 Ibid., 180.

38 Ibid., 178.

39 Ibid.

closed set of structures but as a constantly reshaping, context-sensitive, and transforming process.

This perspective emphasizes that theory is not only an intellectual production but also a product of historical, cultural, and political relations. Clifford's theoretical approach can be explained in terms of Paul Fussell's tripartite distinction of travel categories: explorer, traveler, and tourist.⁴⁰ The explorer is the figure who moves towards the unknown and gains prestige and authority with knowledge. The traveler oscillates between the unknown and the known, relying on experience and observation. Conversely, the tourist is an actor who visits safe, commercialized, and coded spaces and acts within stereotypes. Clifford relates these three figures to historical typologies of theory production. He argues that the modern theorist, in particular, is engaged in a travel practice that is too complex to be reduced to these categories. According to him, theoretical production today operates outside this tripartite structure as a contradictory, hybrid feedback loop open to mutual influences.⁴¹

In this context, Rizgari's theoretical intervention in bringing Marini's concept of sub-imperialism from the Latin American context to the specific social and political conditions of Turkey is close to the figure of the "explorer" in Clifford's triadic distinction quoted from Fussell. Rizgari did not merely import this concept; it attempted to reconstruct it in a way to solve the specific problems of the Kurdish national struggle, to reconcile the voyage of the concept of colonialism with the journey of sub-imperialism, and thus to open a new epistemological horizon in an unknown field. In contrast, Marini's theory, as a "traveler," as Clifford describes it, exists in a hybrid and contradictory circulation dynamic, reshaped in different ways in different contexts, without a fixed direction. On the other hand, Clifford's figure of the "tourist" represents actors who tend to consume such theoretical journeys in superficial, safe, and codified patterns. Here, the schematic and universalist tendencies of some sections of the Turkish socialist movement in their treatment of colonialism, dependency, and imperialism can be associated with such a "tourist" position. Thus, through Clifford's framework, Rizgari's move can be understood as the

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 184.

practice of an "explorer" who actively intervenes in the hybrid and contradictory course of traveling theory. At the same time, some strands of the Turkish left can be considered "tourists" who simplify this journey and consume it in codified forms.

At this point, Clifford also directly references Edward Said's concept of the traveling theory.⁴² Reminiscent of Said's four stages of transformations that theories undergo during their circulation across contexts, Clifford emphasizes that the transformations experienced during the travel of theories are not unidirectional, linear, or pure transmission processes. According to him, as theory moves from one context to another, it transforms its content, critical orientation, discursive power, and functional capacity.⁴³ Moreover, this transformation does not only occur in the new context; sometimes, the theory returns to its original context and transforms it as well. In this context, Clifford cites the reinterpretation of Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" by the Subaltern Studies group in India, which then returned to the US and influenced the Gramsci literature.⁴⁴ This process demonstrates that theories are received, rewritten, recirculated, and even transformed into original meanings.

Another essential concept in Clifford's theory is "location".⁴⁵ According to him, the theory is produced not from a fixed epistemological center but by a subject who travels between different cultural, geographical, and political locations. These travels hybridize, pluralize, and destabilize theory. Citing Adrienne Rich's "location politics", Clifford argues that theory is not born from a particular "home" but from historical movements such as migration, exile, and displacement.⁴⁶ Modern theorists do not speak from a fixed intellectual position; instead, they constantly redefine their theoretical production as a subject moving between multiple locations. This results in a flexible, shifting, and contradictory theory structure, both contextually, discursively, and politically.

42 Ibid., 185.

43 Ibid., 180.

44 Ibid., 184.

45 Ibid., 186.

46 Ibid., 186.

Clifford's approach also assumes that theory is always political.⁴⁷ Theories are shaped not only in academic contexts but also in specific identities, alliances, conflicts, and struggles. The theorist has to address not a particular readership but a multitude of interlocutors coming from different contexts, attributing different meanings standing in various positions. This makes theories vulnerable to misunderstanding. According to Clifford, instead of weakening the theory, this risk increases its capacity for transformation and contextual sensitivity. Therefore, theory should not be considered a fixed and closed set of structures but a mode of production that gains meaning through its relationship with historical, cultural, and political contexts.⁴⁸

This theoretical framework also illuminates the conceptual orientation of the Rizgari group examined in this thesis because Rizgari is an organizational practice that uses existing theoretical sources and transforms and re-functionalizes them according to its political context. As a structure that imports Marini's concept of sub-imperialism and rewrites this concept concerning Turkey's political, social, and historical conditions, Rizgari is a concrete example of Clifford's theoretical understanding of travel. Thus, drawing on Clifford's reflections on hybridity, feedback loops, and the non-linear circulation of theory, these concepts become functional tools for understanding Rizgari's theoretical production — even though they are not all original terms coined by Clifford, they are effectively deployed in his framework to describe the complex movements of theory across geographies.

James Clifford's relationship between theory and travel is a holistic approach that argues that theoretical production is not only a process of content transmission but also of contextual rewriting. According to Clifford, theories are not fixed, universal, and central constructs; instead, they are structures that are shaped, transformed, and re-functionalized through historical, cultural, and political encounters. This approach is explanatory and theoretically deepening to understand the theoretical orientation of the Rizgari group analyzed in this thesis. Clifford's conceptual tools for explaining the process of circulation, localization, and reappropriation of theories provide a solid foundation

⁴⁷ Ibid., 180.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 184.

for studying the transformation observed in Rizgari's approach to the concept of sub-imperialism.

Although one of the main theoretical frameworks used to understand the transformations of theories as they move between contexts is Edward Said's conceptualization of traveling theory, one of the critical interventions that both deepens and complicates this debate has been made by Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha, who brought new conceptual tools to postcolonial theory, especially with his work *"The Location of Culture"* (1994), tries to explain how not only theories but also identities, ideologies, and political positions are transformed through concepts such as cultural translation, hybridity and crises of representation. Bhabha's approach offers a perspective directly related to the theoretical orientation of the Rizgari movement discussed in this thesis, especially in analyzing how Western theoretical structures are reproduced in other geographies and incorporated into processes of resistance and rewriting.

According to Bhabha, a theory or a cultural narrative cannot function as a fixed structure when it is moved to another context; each new temporal and spatial context transforms this theoretical framework's content and direction.⁴⁹ Theories, therefore, undergo a process of "cultural translation"⁵⁰. The cultural translation here refers to a linguistic transfer and the rewriting of theory under the influence of historical experiences, political needs, and social dynamics. Bhabha sees this process not only as an interpretation or a shift in meaning but also as a process of creation, hybridization, and reconstruction. Theories become not fixed, closed, and universal knowledge structures but variable, contextual, and politically operative productions in this context.⁵¹

This approach rejects the surrogate subject's passive reception and application of theoretical frameworks. According to Bhabha, when a theory moves to another context, there is a formal transfer and a transformation of meaning, critique, and political position. This transformation is often incomplete, distorted, or interrupted. However, Bhabha does not see this lack as a problem but as a creative potential. This potential is expressed in the concept of

49 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 36-37, 44.

50 Ibid., 172-173.

51 Ibid., 25.

"hybridity".⁵² Hybridity defines an intermediate zone where two or more cultural, political, or epistemological forms come together, but none can completely dominate. This intermediate zone is the "third space", one of Bhabha's most well-known concepts.⁵³

Third space refers to hybrid spaces in which theories in new contexts neither fully retain their original form nor transform into a completely new and pure form. These spaces are simultaneously old and new, oppression and resistance. Bhabha argues that it is in this space that theory becomes re-functionalized and gains meaning for new struggles. Therefore, the third space refers to a space where theories are not simply transferred from one place to another but are recreated, meaning is negotiated, and representation is reconstituted in contradictory ways.⁵⁴

This approach has an explanatory power regarding the theoretical orientation of the Rizgari group analyzed in this thesis. Rizgari, as an organization that emerged in Turkey in the 1970s and waged a socialist political struggle with a specifically Kurdish identity, not only adopted existing theoretical frameworks but also reproduced them following its own historical and political context. In this process, Ruy Mauro Marini's concept of sub-imperialism holds a special place. This concept, developed by Marini in the Latin American context, was transferred to the Turkish context by Rizgari; however, this transfer process was not a mere reception but a process of cultural translation in the sense defined by Bhabha. The group reinterpreted the concept to explain dependency relations in Latin America and analyze Turkey's political and economic policies in the Kurdish regions. This made possible the simultaneous theoretical journey of the concept of colonialism in addition to sub-imperialism, providing the group with one more instrument to use politically.

This reinterpretation process is where theory hybridizes, transforms, and acquires new meanings. Rizgari has distanced itself from some of the dominant concepts of the Turkish left in general and turned to theoretical tools that correspond to its historical reality. As a result of this orientation, the concept of sub-imperialism has been used to analyze the Turkish state's position in

52 Ibid., 112-14.

53 Ibid., 54-55.

54 Ibid., 55.

international relations and to develop a critique of the governance practices in the interior regions that Rizgari considers colonial. At this point, Bhabha's third space concept provides an explanatory framework: Rizgari's theoretical activity is neither an exact repetition of the Latin American context nor a completely independent theoretical construction specific to Turkey. It is an encounter, contradiction, and reconstruction process between the two contexts.

According to Bhabha, such processes of theoretical hybridity transform not only the theory itself but also the position of the represented subject. In this sense, theories transform not only on the conceptual level but also in the processes of subjectivization. In the case of Rizgari, this is embodied in the Kurdish political movement's effort to make its own historical experiences visible. Marini's concept becomes a discursive tool that enables this visibility. This tool has not only an analytical but also a political, representational, and strategic function. Thus, theory becomes an explanatory framework, subject-forming, struggle-directing, and politically legitimizing function.

Another essential element in Bhabha's theoretical approach is the crisis of representation.⁵⁵ He says Western theories cannot fully represent the subjects, especially when transferred to other contexts. This gap in representation should not be seen as a crisis for theory but rather as an opportunity for creative interventions developed by local subjects to fill this gap. Rizgari's theoretical orientation is also meaningful in this respect. The group objected to some of the general assumptions and forms of representation of the Turkish left and tried to develop a specific discourse that would make visible the historical and political experience of the Kurdish people following their position. In this process, theoretical frameworks were rewritten, concepts were transformed, and political strategies were shaped according to this new conceptual ground. This coincides with Bhabha's emphasis on the productive nature of the crisis of representation.

Bhabha also argues that processes of cultural translation are asymmetrical. When a theory is transferred to another context, this process never proceeds in a one-to-one correspondence. Each transfer involves an incompleteness, a

55 Ibid., 36-37, 146-47.

shift, or a distortion.⁵⁶ However, according to Bhabha, these distortions do not indicate the theory's weakness but its contextual sensitivity and creative potential. Rizgari's theoretical approach reflects a similar process. The group reproduced Marini's concept not as it was but according to the specific class structures, state-society relations, and Kurdish political demands in Turkey. This production should not be seen as a deviation of the theory from its original context but rather as a creative reinterpretation according to the needs of this new context, with contributions from the theory of colonialism.

Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical approach provides a powerful tool for analyzing the transformations of theories as they travel across contexts. The concepts of cultural translation, hybridity, and third space are particularly useful for making sense of the theoretical orientations of postcolonial and anti-dependency political movements. In this context, Bhabha's thought makes it possible to consider the theoretical activity of the Rizgari group not merely as a transfer of concepts but as a contextual rewriting, a creative process of theoretical reproduction. Theories are not fixed and universal constructs; they are molded, reshaped, and given new meaning through political struggles, historical experiences, and cultural contradictions. The example of Rizgari provides a concrete example of this theoretical map drawn by Bhabha. Therefore, in this thesis, Bhabha's theoretical orientation provides both a complementary and deepening theoretical basis for analyzing the conceptual framework of the Rizgari group.

§ 1.5 Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Structure of the Thesis

In conclusion, the theoretical framework presented in this chapter is not limited to a chronological or categorical listing of the approaches of specific thinkers; it aims to establish a functional conceptual ground by relating them both to each other and to the theoretical interventions of the Rizgari group at the center of the study. Before moving on to the general aim of the thesis, which is to analyze the unique intellectual framework Rizgari constructed

⁵⁶ Ibid., 163-64.

around the concepts of sub-imperialism and colonialism, it was essential to clarify what kind of intellectual mobility this framework can be considered theoretically. To this end, conceptual tools developed by thinkers such as Edward Said, James Clifford, and Homi K. Bhabha were utilized to demonstrate how theories are reconstructed, hybridized, and transformed when moved from one context to another.

The basic assumption common among the theorists discussed in this chapter is that theories are not fixed, universal, and context-free constructs. Said, Clifford, and Bhabha argue, albeit from different perspectives, that theories are differentiated and reconstructed according to historical, cultural, and political contexts and that this process involves intellectual and political intervention. This approach is directly related to the historical development process and practices of theoretical production, which will be discussed in this thesis's second and third chapters. In particular, Rizgari's intellectual sources bear more concrete traces of this theoretical journey. Tools such as translation activities, journal publishing, organizational documents, and political polemics will be analyzed as the basis for this rewriting process.

Before proceeding to the second chapter, it is important to briefly outline the structure of the thesis and summarize the content of each chapter in relation to the research objectives.

The second chapter focuses on the historical evolution of Kurdish political consciousness in Turkey from the 1940s to the early 1970s. It traces the development of organizational structures, political discourses, and conceptual frameworks that laid the groundwork for Rizgari's later theoretical intervention. Particular attention is paid to the formation and dissolution of the DDKO, the emergence of the DDKD, and the gradual adoption of colonialism as a conceptual tool within the Kurdish movement. Through an analysis of key moments such as the 49's Trial, the establishment of the T-KDP, and the ideological shifts within the Turkish left, the chapter highlights how the discourse of colonialism gradually moved from implicit expressions to explicit theoretical formulations. This historical narrative provides the necessary context for understanding the political environment in which Rizgari emerged.

The third chapter examines the formation process, intellectual orientation, and organizational trajectory of the Rizgari group. It analyzes how Rizgari emerged from the Ankara circle of the DDKD, how Komal Publications and the Rizgari journal became instruments of theoretical and political intervention, and how the group engaged with both Turkish and Kurdish leftist organizations. The chapter situates Rizgari's ideological break with the Turkish left within the broader landscape of Marxist-Leninist and anti-colonial thought, exploring how the group positioned itself as both a Kurdish national liberation movement and a socialist organization. It also evaluates Rizgari's reception and reinterpretation of Ruy Mauro Marini's sub-imperialism theory in light of Edward Said's traveling theory model, James Clifford's notions of positionality, and Homi Bhabha's theory of cultural translation.

The fourth chapter presents a detailed discourse analysis of the Rizgari journal, aiming to reveal how the group operationalized the localized and reappropriated concepts of sub-imperialism and colonialism in its intellectual production. By examining key articles, theoretical debates, and polemics published between 1976 and 1978, the chapter demonstrates how Rizgari deployed these concepts both to critique the Turkish state and to position itself within the Kurdish socialist movement. The analysis focuses on Rizgari's strategic use of theoretical language to legitimize organizational independence, articulate a national liberationist discourse, and challenge both the Turkish left's reductionist approaches and competing currents within the Kurdish political field.

Finally, the fifth chapter offers a general evaluation of the findings, discusses the contributions of the thesis to the literature on postcolonial theory and leftist movements in Turkey, and outlines methodological reflections and suggestions for future research. This concluding chapter also addresses the challenges encountered during the research process, including source limitations and terminological sensitivities, while emphasizing the significance of Rizgari's intellectual production as a case study of theory transformation and political subjectivization.

Early Kurdish Political Organizations and the Conceptualization of the "Colonial" Concept (1940-1975)

In the previous section, theories such as "sub-imperialism" and "colonialism" were analyzed within a specific conceptual framework regarding the historical dynamics and political motivations through which they came into circulation. This section, on the other hand, will examine how the theory of "colonialism," in particular, has historically reached the Kurdish political organizations and especially the Kurdish left, what stages it has passed through in this process, and what kind of transformation it has undergone on the basis of debates and polemics. In this context, how the leading socialist organizations and figures of the Turkish left have dealt with the concept of colonialism and how they have adapted this concept to Kurdish geography stand out as critical historical processes that need to be emphasized. The transformation of colonialism theory in the Turkish left context is not only a process of theoretical reinterpretation but also provides important clues to the network of relations - partly based on solidarity and partly on ideological conflict - that have taken shape between the Turkish left and the Kurdish left.

In the history of the Republic of Turkey, modern Kurdish groups with a specific political organization, coming together around a specific program and

charter, first emerged in the late 1940s.¹ In particular, the children of Kurdish elites who were exiled to various cities as a result of multiple rebellions and uprisings in the Kurdish regions went through an intensive politicization process in Istanbul and Ankara, where they came for higher and university education in the mid-1940s, encountering a small number of Kurdish students from the Kurdish regions.² Due to both the influence of their family's political memory and the existence of situations such as rebellion or post-insurgency status in the Kurdish areas of the neighboring countries, which emerged as a result of World War II, this politicization process evolved into a co-mobilizing situation in specific contexts.

§ 2.1 The Birth of Political Consciousness in Istanbul and Ankara: Dicle Student Dormitory and the "Association for the Rescues of Kurds"

One of the first places where this joint action materialized was the Dicle Student Dormitory. Opened in 1941 by Faik Bucak, Mustafa Remzi Bucak, Musa Anter, Yusuf Azizoglu, and Ziya Şerefhanoglu, the dormitory was supported by the CHP government for "students from the southeast of the country to study".³ In this dormitory, students discussed the Kurdish issue and organized picnics and nights to promote Kurdish culture.⁴ When news of the establishment of the Kurdistan Republic in Iran in 1946, the content of the meetings and gatherings began to change. Names like Ali Karahan, Faik Bucak, Mustafa Remzi Bucak, Musa Anter, Aziz Gülbeden, and Şevket Çelikkanat invited people like Tarık Ziya Ekinici to their meetings. They held discussions on how to defend the newly established Kurdistan Republic.⁵

1 Béatrice Garapon and Adnan Çelik, "From Tribal Chiefs to Marxist Activists: Kurdistan from 1946 to 1975," in *The Cambridge History of the Kurds*, ed. Hamit Bozarslan, Cengiz Güneş, and Veli Yadırgı (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 234.

2 Ibid., 233-34.

3 Ibid., 234.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 233-34.

In December 1946, following the destruction of the Kurdistan Republic by Iranian forces, Mustafa Remzi Bucak, Yusuf Azizoğlu, Ziya Serefhanoglu, Faik Bucak, and Musa Anter, who were among the founders of the Dicle Students' Dormitory (Dicle Talebe Yurdu), came together in 1948 to form a group called "Association for the Rescue of Kurds" (Kürtleri Kurtarma Cemiyeti).⁶ Although this mini-organization failed to gain significant political and public significance, its very existence provided essential clues about the horizon it pointed to for modern Kurdish politics in Turkey and the imagination this horizon required. The group members swore an oath on a flag and promised to remain committed to the cause until the end.⁷ This group, which never had more than five founding members, can be considered a cornerstone in the Kurdish political and social sphere regarding the nature of agendas and possible new tools to achieve those agendas.

In Iraq, however, in 1958, a junta led by Abdulkarim Qasim came to power, after which the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (IKDP) led by Mustafa Barzani returned from the Soviet Union to Iraqi Kurdistan in exchange for the freedom of association and freedom of association for its members. This, in turn, increased the re-engagement with nationalist agendas in other Kurdish-populated regions, which in turn made it possible for these agendas to be more widely discussed in the geography of southern Turkey with which they interacted.⁸ In the rest of Turkey, a different atmosphere prevailed at the time. Following the coup d'état of May 27, 1960, which removed the Democrat Party from power, 1961 saw an event that marked a confrontation with the state for the nascent Kurdish intellectuals and politics, a confrontation that was more open in terms of its consequences, and a discovery of the continuity of the May 27 coup with the Democrat Party and previous governments in specific contexts.

Musa Anter, who published the newspaper *İleri Yurt* together with Yusuf Azizoğlu and Canip Yıldırım, was prosecuted for the Kurdish poem "Qimil" (Kımıl) published in the newspaper in 1959. Fifty people who were thought to support Musa Anter were detained. When Mehmet Emin Batu, one of the

6 Ibid., 234.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 243-44.

detainees, died of gastric bleeding, the case and the trial became known as the "49s Case", referring to the remaining 49 people.⁹ Although the investigation and trial process began in 1959 when the Democrat Party was in power, the junta that carried out the May 27 coup d'état in 1960 continued the process. Although the junta issued a general amnesty in October 1960, the 49s on trial with Musa Anter were excluded from the amnesty¹⁰, and the first hearing of the 49s Trial was held on January 3, 1961. After a long silence, the 49s Trial represents an essential stage in revitalizing the Kurdish political sphere, especially youth-centered. Important actors of the Kurdish political struggle, which would later continue with the T-KDP, such as Sait Elçi and Sait Kırmızıtoprak, also met during this trial. This once again shows that the 49s Trial was a crucial stop for the Kurdish movement in Turkey in terms of paving the way for modern Kurdish organizations such as the party.

§ 2.2 The Line That Becomes Clear During Defenses: T-KDP and the Antalya Case of 1968

Following the "Kurdish Rescue Society" and the 49s Trial, the Turkish Kurdistan Democratic Party (T-KDP), the first Kurdish party in the modern sense in the history of the Republic of Turkey, was founded illegally in 1965.¹¹ Sait Elçi, Şerafettin Elçi, Şakir Epözdemir, Ömer Turhan, and Derviş Akgül were among the founders of the party, and lawyer Faik Bucak, one of the founders of the Dicle Student Dormitory and the "Kurdish Rescue Society", was elected as its secretary general. In its program, the T-KDP positioned itself as a "peaceful, democratic, humanitarian and republican party" and declared it was

9 Ayşe Hür, "'Qimil' Olayından 49'lar Davası'na," *Haksozhaber*, <https://www.haksozhaber.net/kimil-olayindan-49lar-davasina-6614yy.htm> (accessed May 23, 2025).

10 Celal Temel, "The 49'lar Olayı: Doğrular-Yanlışlar," *Nerina Azad*, <https://m.nerinaazad2.com/tr/columnists/celal-temel/49lar-olayi-dogrular-yanlislar-681eed2fa8d9e> (accessed May 23, 2025).

11 Mesut Yeğen, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey, 1898-2018," in *The Cambridge History of the Kurds*, ed. Hamit Bozarslan, Cengiz Güneş, and Veli Yadırgı (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 318

"committed to the UN Charter".¹² Emphasizing that it was "committed to the borders of the Misak-ı Milli" and claiming that it "believed in the Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood", the T-KDP had three main objectives stated in its program. The first of these was "the recognition in the Constitution that Turkey is composed of Kurds and Turks, and the proportional representation of the Kurdish population in the parliament and bureaucracy", the second was "Kurdish to be the official language in Kurdistan and education in the mother tongue", and the third was "75% of the revenues generated by processing the minerals and underground resources extracted in Kurdistan in Kurdistan to be used for Kurdistan."¹³ The TKDP, which first became influential among small urban tradesmen and craftsmen and then gradually among Kurdish students in the Turkish metropolises, came under surveillance by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) in 1966 and 1967, and as a result of the investigations, in 1968, 17 people suspected of being members of the TKDP were tried in the TKDP Trial in Antalya and sentenced to various penalties.¹⁴

The defenses made during the hearings in Antalya generally referred to the period of the War of Independence, mentioned "imperialists intent on stirring up Turkey", emphasized that "the Kurdish people are united in destiny with the Turkish people,"¹⁵ and claimed that the T-KDP did not intend to secede from the Republic of Turkey. Indeed, the above quotations from the articles of the T-KDP program show that these arguments are not inconsistent. The T-KDP essentially favored a particular kind of administrative autonomy, which it explicitly advocated in its party program. However, while these hearings and defenses were going on, another first took place, the example of which would later be seen in part in the DDKO trials and the trials of the 1980s.

In their defense, T-KDP secretary general Sait Elçi and member Şakir Epözdemir claimed that "what has changed in Kurdistan is only the

12 Şakir Epözdemir, *Türkiye Kurdistan Demokrat Partisi-Antalya Davası Savunmaları: 1968/235* (Istanbul: Doz Yayınları, 2023), 20.

13 Ibid., 198-99.

14 Ibid., 202.

15 Ibid., 25.

signboard",¹⁶ "Whether it is called a semi-colony or indirect colony, in the end, Kurdistan has been a colony of Turkey for 46 years."¹⁷ Interestingly, legal and illegal Kurdish organizations can be traced back to the early 1900s, starting with the Kurdistan Azmi Kavi Society founded in 1904, the Kurdistan Teali Society (1918), Azadî (1921), the Kurdish Students' Hêvî Society (1912) and finally Xoybûn (1928), neither in the texts they published, which could be considered political programs nor in the publications that could be regarded as related to them (Hawar, published by Celadet Bedirxan, Rojî Kurd (later Hewawî Kurd) published by the Hêvî Society, Agirî Newspaper published by Xoybûn) did not identify "colonialism" concerning the geographies that started with the T-KDP and which they considered themselves politically representative.¹⁸ -This, of course, neglects Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the other countries in the region where the Kurds began in large numbers, and refers only to the process that culminated in the Republic of Turkey in the modern sense and the Kurdish regions of this republic. The fact that Elçi and Epözdemir, members of the T-KDP, the first political party in Turkey to address the Kurdish issue as an ontological issue, made allegations of colonialism in their defense statements signaled the beginning of an interesting period in the history of Kurdish political parties, with political defense statements being used in court. Because these arguments in the defenses made the Kurdish issue its *raison d'être*, it became a line that could not be fallen behind for many legal and illegal parties to be established after the T-KDP, and the Kurdish political sphere and the Kurdish left in particular, placed this determination at the top of its ideological-political discourse.

In this context, the emphasis on colonialism in Elçi and Epözdemir's defenses can be read as a historical determination and an early intervention to reinterpret the concept of colonialism in Turkey. Recalling Edward Said's approach to traveling theories¹⁹, what is happening here is not merely the

16 Ibid., 43.

17 Ibid., 43-44.

18 *Belge ve Bellek*, "Hoybun Cemiyeti'nin Propaganda Faaliyetleri", YouTube video, published February 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaFNgyCJ8tg> (accessed May 23, 2025).

19 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 157.

importation of an external concept; on the contrary, it is a process of rewriting, localizing, and operationalizing the concept of colonialism within the Kurdish political experience, just like the concept of sub-imperialism later on. This conceptualization, which started with the cadres of the T-KDP, has content comparable to similar examples of theoretical transformation in different geographies from Latin America to Asia, Africa to the Middle East.

Of course, the Kurds, especially the Kurdish youth, have been engaged in social and political mobilization since the 1960s, and this cannot be limited to the "Kurdish Rescue Society" and the T-KDP. An increasing number of Kurds were being organized, especially within the TİP, founded in 1961, and the FKF, founded in 1965. There was even a group within the TİP called the "Easterners Socialists"²⁰ with members from Kurdish regions. As a result of all these developments, it was possible to organize a series of rallies, the first of which was in 1967, under the direct directive influence of "Easterners" who were members of or sympathetic to the TİP and members of the T-KDP, under the name of "Eastern Rallies" and to discuss the demands of the people of the region in the public sphere.²¹ These rallies had begun with Nihal Atsız's writings targeting the Kurds and calling for their deportation or marriage with "Gypsies" to solve the "Gypsy and Kurdish Problem" in Turkey.²² Until 1969, rallies were organized in different cities with increasingly differentiated demands. The politicization and mobilization brought about by activities such as "Eastern Nights", which started with local higher education associations and continued since the Dicle Student Dormitory, combined with organizational self-confidence with the Eastern Rallies, and all these situations created a suitable ground for the establishment of DDKO.²³

20 Mesut Yeğen, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey, 1898-2018," in *The Cambridge History of the Kurds*, ed. Hamit Bozarslan, Cengiz Güneş, and Veli Yadırgı (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 318-20

21 Raşit Kısacık, *Rizgari ve Ala Rizgari* (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2015), 17.

22 Ruşen Arslan, *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük: Kürt Örgütlenmesi DDKO* (Istanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2020), 127.

23 Ibid., 126.

§ 2.3 DDKO: The Emergence of a Hybrid Political Formation and the Deepening of Colonial Consciousness

Founded in 1969 with 24 members, DDKO was, in fact, a natural outcome of the Kurdish youth mobilization that emerged during the "Eastern Rallies" and was carried into the political and social sphere. According to Mümtaz Kotan, one of the founders of the DDKO and a lawyer practicing in Ankara at the time, the founders of the DDKO were "able to represent all Kurdistan provinces and elements of all views in a balanced way"²⁴. The association's rented premises in Ankara, close to the Maarif College, had many guests, including students from Kurdish provinces and Kurdish residents of Turkey's metropolises. The association organized cultural studies and pieces of training, seminars, and panels on various topics. The DDKO also published a monthly bulletin, and the articles in its bulletins generally talked about the economic problems in the "east" of Turkey, the persecution of Kurdish peasants, especially by tribal chieftains or aghas, or the effects of commando raids on the Kurdish population.²⁵

In a short period, DDKO attracted considerable interest among Kurdish youth, but its sole purpose was not only to organize the activities mentioned above. According to Kotan, a group within DDKO, including himself, was operating as a secret organizing committee to "turn DDKO into a Kurdistan-wide organization".²⁶ As a result of this situation, the DDKOs, which had been established only in Ankara and Istanbul, soon opened branches in Ergani, Silvan, Kozluk, Batman, and Diyarbakır.²⁷ Thus, by early 1971, the DDKO had partially achieved Kotan's stated goal.

24 Mümtaz Kotan, " Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi Üzerine Somut bir Örnek: DDKO (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları)," *Kovara Bîr*, no. 6 (Winter 2007), <https://kovarabir.com/13791/8142-2/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

25 Raşit Kısacık, *Rizgari ve Ala Rizgari* (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2015), 31.

26 Ibid., 20.

27 Ibid., 32, quoted in İbrahim Güçlü.

Founded in the late 1960s, the Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths (DDKO) can be considered one of the turning points where Kurdish youth turned towards a politically autonomous line, not only with its foundation but also with the ideological legacy it left after its closure by the state after the March 12 1971 Memorandum. The emergence of the DDKO constituted a historical threshold regarding the reactions against the suppression of Kurdish identity taking an organizational form. In this context, it can be said that this organization was instrumental in a leap of consciousness that re-established the relationship between identity and politics in Kurdish youth. After its closure in 1971, various lawsuits were filed against DDKO members due to DDKO's activities. During the trials, DDKO members, under the influence of the political atmosphere of the period and the conditions of judicial pressure, generally defended DDKO and its activities and refrained from directly defining colonialism.²⁸

However, this distant language does not hide the intellectual orientation underlying the line of defense pursued. This line of defense, which is woven with determinations such as "the prohibition of the Kurdish people's language, systematic discrimination in the fields of education and culture, exclusion from political representation, and deprivation of economic development", indicates that the DDKO members "clearly believe in the existence of a practice of colonialism", as can be seen in their later interviews.²⁹ It is in this context that Ruşen Arslan, one of the most prominent of these names and who was put on trial in the DDKO case, refers to the defenses made in the DDKO trials by quoting Cemil Uybada, one of the first interior ministers of the republic, as saying that "Although it is considered beneficial to establish an administrative Inspectorate-General in the Orient with extensive powers and budget, to establish a Governor-General's Office and to apply the same style of administration in the Orient as in the colonies... Since the establishment of this organization is currently dependent on time and money, until this is achieved, it

28 Ruşen Arslan, *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük: Kürt Örgütlenmesi DDKO* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2020), 322.

29 Adnan Çelik, "Ruşen Arslan: Kürt Gençliğinde 'Milliyetçi ve Sosyalist' Ayrışma 49'lar Davasıyla Başladı," *Kürt Araştırmaları*, October 22, 2021, <https://kurdarastirmalari.com/yazi-detay-oku-141> (accessed May 23, 2025).

has been considered appropriate to establish administrative, public order, and intelligence branches at the headquarters of the Army Inspectorate and to ensure that the intimacy of the Orient is carried out under the supervision and administration of the Inspectorate."³⁰ and that the state was "already looking at Kurdistan as a colony".³¹ Therefore, regardless of the concepts' directness, the anti-colonialist attitude that has begun to take shape in the political consciousness of Kurdish youth is also intuited in the DDKO defenses.

When viewed through Said's traveling theory framework, this anti-colonialist position, which is implied but not directly expressed in some of DDKO's defense texts, marks the early stage of a conceptual transformation. The understanding of colonialism here does not refer to the direct domination of an imperialist state in the classical sense but to a set of relations constructed by the modern nation-state through its internal colonial mechanisms, linguistic and cultural prohibitions, and economic exclusion. At this point, the concept of the colony has broken away from its historical origin and recirculated with a new meaning within the specificity of the Kurdish experience.

Although not directly and systematically expressed in the defenses in the DDKO trials, the references in secret meetings of the members to the conceptualization of the geography they define as "Kurdistan" as a "colony" (müstemele) can be considered a harbinger of a "colonial consciousness" that is becoming increasingly evident in Kurdish political discourse. For those who prepared the collective defenses in the DDKO trials, this can be considered both as a result of the impact on them of the wars of national liberation that were going on in many parts of the world in those years and which closely affected the socialist youth movements and as a result of their political imagination towards the geography where they were born and raised and to which they still feel a strong attachment. Eventually, this determination became a

30 Gülistan Yarkın, "İrksallaştırılmış Toplumsal Rejim, Sömürgecilik ve Kürtler," *Kurdoloji Akademisi*, December 2021, <https://www.kurdolojiakademi.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Irksallastirilmis-Toplumsal-Rejim-Somurgesellik-ve-Kurtler.pdf> (accessed May 23, 2025).

31 Adnan Çelik, "Ruşen Arslan: Kürt Gençliğinde 'Milliyetçi ve Sosyalist' Ayrışma 49'lar Davasıyla Başladı," *Kürt Araştırmaları*, October 22, 2021, <https://kurdarastirmalari.com/yazi-de-tay-oku-141> (accessed May 23, 2025).

widespread, widely accepted proposition that started with the T-KDP and gradually affected all Kurdish organizations, legal and illegal, in the following years. It began to be defended more systematically and collectively.³² In this sense, the defenses based on the concept of colonization, which emerged at the intersection of the political intuitions and political horizons of the DDKO cadres, was not only an external and imported theory but would later turn into a historically and institutionally ownable political line.

As can be seen from these defense texts, the period in question was a reaction against oppression for the Kurdish youth and the construction of a hybrid ideological formation that developed at the intersection of socialist ideals and nationalist demands and has been ongoing since the 49s Trial.³³ This formation paved the way for the Kurds to express their political demands for the right to self-determination in a more systematic and organized manner in the following years, and the concept of "colonialism" became a theoretical basis for the justification of these demands. At this point, concepts such as "separate organization", "autonomous political line", "equal citizenship," and "cultural rights" began to take a central place in the Kurdish political movement's constitutive vocabulary.

The lack of a strong and explicit use of the word colonial in DDKO's defenses is understandable, given the political and legal conditions of the period. However, despite this discursive caution, the emphasis on national rights, the demands and expectations for the recognition of the Kurds as a "separate people" between the lines of the defense texts show that a more and more pronounced "anti-colonial consciousness" is sprouting.³⁴ In this respect, DDKO should be considered not only as a political breaking point where the Kurdish youth gradually diverged from the Turkish left but also as the threshold of a new conceptualization and political imagination regarding the status of the Kurdish geography. The concept of "Müstemleke" was placed at the center of

32 Ruşen Arslan, *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük: Kürt Örgütlenmesi DDKO* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2020), 161.

33 Adnan Çelik, "Ruşen Arslan: Kürt Gençliğinde 'Milliyetçi ve Sosyalist' Ayrışma 49'lar Davasıyla Başladı," *Kürd Araştırmaları*, October 22, 2021, <https://kurdarastirmalari.com/yazi-detay-oku-141> (accessed May 23, 2025).

34 Ibid.

this new imagination and became one of the theoretical and strategic references in the political struggles of the Kurdish left in the following years.

§ 2.4 The Kurdish Question in the Turkish and Kurdish Left: TKP, TKSP and Soviet Influence

Chronologically, following the Antalya Trial of TKDP members and the trials of DDKO members, Kemal Burkay was another important figure who programmatically defended the thesis of "colonized Kurdistan". Burkay, who had been active in the socialist opposition in Turkey for many years and as a leader in the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), was particularly notable for his original and systematic views on the Kurdish issue.³⁵ In 1971, Burkay was arrested as a result of the state pressure that intensified after the March 12 Memorandum of March 12 and was released after being imprisoned for about a year. However, due to the repressive nature of the political atmosphere, he could not stay in Turkey and had to leave the country via Lebanon.

Written in 1972 under the pseudonym "Hıdır Murat", his book "The Kurdish People's Struggle for Liberation under Turkey's Conditions"³⁶ was a systematized expression of the ideas. Burkay had discussed with his circle, known as the "Eastern Socialists" group within the TİP. This text is a personal assessment and a preliminary document that attempts to provide a theoretical and political basis for the Kurdish left's search for an independent organization. In the book, Burkay states, "Kurdistan has been divided and colonized among the states in this region following the interests and efforts of the imperialists."³⁷ According to Burkay, the states in this region are Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and the consequences of this division are not limited to economic exploitation. At the same time, there was a relationship between the regional states

35 "Kurucu Genel Başkanımız - Kemal Burkay," *Özgürlük Yolu Vakfı*, <https://ozgur-lukyolu.com/2-kurucu-genel-baskanimiz.html> (accessed May 23, 2025).

36 "Burkay: Marksizm'den AKP'ciliğe Yolculuk," *soL Haber*, August 2, 2011, <https://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/burkay-marksizm-den-akp-cilige-yolculuk-haberi-45082> (accessed May 23, 2025)

37 Public Prosecutor of Diyarbakır, Indictment against the Türkiye Kurdistan Socialist Partisi (TKSP), Case No. [1982/384], Diyarbakır, n.d., 21.

and "Kurdistan", which Burkay called a colony, similar to metropolis-colonial relations in all social, political, and cultural fields. This view would later be adopted as the programmatic text of the Kurdistan Socialist Party of Turkey (TKSP), founded in 1974 under Burkay's leadership.³⁸

However, despite all these efforts, the organizational call and programmatic framework of the TKSP had a limited impact, primarily due to its distanced relationship with the main body of the Turkish left and its pro-Soviet tendencies. One reason for this situation is that Burkay came from a parliamentary wing of the Turkish left (TİP). Although he advocated the necessity of a separate organization from the Turkish left, he did not develop a clear and decisive position on the post-revolutionary process "oscillating between federation and independent state"³⁹; in other words, his ambivalent and ambiguous line regarding the relationship between the national liberation struggle and the socialist construction process was met with hesitation both within the Kurdish movement and in the general socialist public opinion. Although the TKSP's program "defines Kurdistan as a colony", the strategy envisaged for getting out of this situation considered a joint struggle with the Turkish left and a united liberation as almost mandatory, and wrote that only after a victory could "either a federation be formed in Turkey or the Kurdish people will establish an independent state".⁴⁰ This imprecise contingency, which permeated the party program in general, formed the basis of criticism against the party. For this reason, the theoretical position of the TKSP and Burkay had a limited impact compared to the more radical or differently oriented Kurdish leftist circles of the period.

While this was the case for the legal and illegal Kurdish organizations, for the TKP, which was the leading subject of the left in Turkey until the 1960s, the Kurdish issue became a highly political issue in the mid-1920s. The TKP's stance on the Kurdish issue, as mentioned above, varied according to the situation of the CPSU at the time, its relations with the Turkish government, and the TKP's situation/constriction within Turkey. While the Comintern had not yet disintegrated, the Kurds and the Kurdish issue were included in the

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 22.

40 Ibid.

documents of the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Congresses of the Comintern with various observations and suggestions, and the Kurds were recognized as a nation.⁴¹ This was most concretely manifested in the December 5, 1922 session, where the question of "Kurdistan" was also discussed on behalf of the Comintern.⁴² As a result of the 4th Congress, which included this session, the Comintern adopted the document "Theses on the Eastern Question", which set out its theoretical framework for revolutionary struggles in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

This document, prepared by the Comintern's Eastern Section (Vostochnyy Sekretariat) and discussed at congresses held in the early 1920s, was the direct product of an effort to analyze the social structures in Asia and the Middle East. According to the document, "...the links between the native bourgeoisie and reactionary feudal elements pave the way for the imperialists to smash the national movement (China, Persia, Kurdistan, Mesopotamia) by exploiting feudal anarchy, the rivalry between different leaders, races, and tribes, the opposition between rural and urban, and the struggle between castes and national-religious sects."⁴³ This assessment reflects an attempt to identify the internal and external obstacles to national liberation movements, especially in colonized or semi-colonized geographies. The mention of "Kurdistan" in this context reveals that the Comintern treated the Kurdish issue as an example of colonial-type national oppression and considered it as part of its broader Eastern policy.

In these years, the political attitude of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) was also shaped in line with this general line of the Comintern. The TKP, among the first parties in which the Comintern accepted its program, exhibited a political orientation in this direction even at its foundation stage.

41 Communist International, "Theses on the Eastern Question," in *Lenin Döneminde Komünist Enternasyonal, Vol. II*, trans. and ed. by Orhan Dilber et al. (Istanbul: Maya Kitapları, 2002), 336.

42 John Riddell, "The Comintern in 1922: The Periphery Pushes Back," *Historical Materialism* 22, no. 3-4 (2014): 76, <https://johnriddell.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/comintern-in-1922.pdf> (accessed May 23, 2025).

43 Communist International, "Theses on the Eastern Question," in *Lenin Döneminde Komünist Enternasyonal, Vol. II*, trans. and ed. by Orhan Dilber et al. (Istanbul: Maya Kitapları, 2002), 336.

In 1920, in its first congress held in Baku and officially named "Baku Congress of the Türkiye Communist Organizations (Türkiye İştirakiyun Teşkilatları)", discussions on the national question took a decisive place.⁴⁴ TKP member Ahmet Cevat, who took the floor at the congress, said, "...Like every nation, Arabs, Kurds, and Bulgarians will decide and determine for themselves how they will live. This principle should be accepted not only by us but by all nations." His statement shows the TKP's clear position on the right of nations to self-determination in this period and that it acted in complete parallelism with the Comintern.⁴⁵

However, the transformation in the Comintern's policies also significantly affected the TKP's approach over time. Especially from the Fifth Congress (1924) onwards, the idea of supporting anti-imperialist governments led by the national bourgeoisie came to the fore. The more radical national liberationist perspective adopted at the Second Congress (1920) gradually gave way to a more cautious and realpolitik approach. One of the most essential phases of this evolution was the "Popular Front against Fascism" policy developed at the Seventh Congress in 1935. Accordingly, the Comintern called on the communist parties of the world to form alliances not only with socialists but also with liberal-democratic elements and, in some cases, even with bourgeois governments.⁴⁶ This strategic shift directly reshaped the political orientation of the TKP.

In this direction, especially from the mid-1920s onwards, the TKP became closer to the Kemalist government and began to see it as a historically progressive force, fighting against feudalism and oriented towards national independence. This attitude can be clearly seen in the March 5, 1925 issue of the party's press organ, *Orak-Çekiç*. In an article published on the occasion of the Sheikh Said Rebellion and titled "The turbans of the bigots should be a white shroud for the bigot community! Down with its Bigots, Aghas, Sheikhs, Caliphs,

44 Erden Akbulut and Erol Ülker, *Komintern, TKP ve Kürt İsyanları* (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2022), 81.

45 Ibid., 87.

46 Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933-39*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 54.

Sultans!"⁴⁷ The article's title represents a radical stance against religious reaction but also against the traditional Kurdish social structure and its leadership figures. This discourse also reflects the TKP's approach, which considers the Kurdish rebellion as class reactionary and representative of feudal remnants. However, the TKP, which compresses politics into an almost Jacobin "forward-backward" dichotomy, will be accused of being "social-chauvinist" by the Kurdish left in the coming years, quoting Lenin.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, it is impossible to say this is accepted in every situation and absolute terms within or around the party. The tension between conditional and tactical loyalty to the Comintern's line and original assessments of political developments in Turkey has led the TKP to display contradictory positions in its approach to the Kurdish issue and the Kemalist regime. In this context, the historical line of the TKP has been shaped on a border that, on the one hand, recognizes the right of nations to self-determination at the theoretical level and, on the other hand, takes care not to fall into contradiction with the central power in putting this right into practice.

§ 2.5 Kivılcımlı and the "Yol" Series

While discussing the political position of the TKP, one of the leading actors of the Turkish left, on the Kurdish issue in its historical course, it is also necessary to mention the observations and analyses of Hikmet Kivılcımlı, one of the early TKP cadres who was well-known among the Turkish left. One of the first instances in which the argument of "colonized Kurdistan" was articulated openly and in line with a political goal was put forward by Dr. Hikmet Kivılcımlı⁴⁹, who was a member of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) in the early 1930s and was arrested as a result of operations against this party. Kivılcımlı, who had been actively involved in the TKP since the mid-1920s and had been an essential figure in the Turkish socialist movement for

47 Erden Akbulut and Erol Ülker, *Komintern, TKP ve Kürt İsyanları* (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2022), 121.

48 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 21, 199-203.

49 "Hikmet Kivılcımlı", *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/kivilcimli/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

generations with both his theoretical production and his practical contributions, had been elected in February 1925 to the party's seven-member executive committee, the Central Committee, as the youth officer. Kıvılcımlı, who was arrested as a result of an operation against the TKP in 1929 during a period of intense repression and relentless operations against the communist movement in Turkey, was sent to Elâzığ Prison, where he began to write his famous series of articles known under the title "Yol (The Road)" to overcome the ideological and organizational blockage in the TKP during his imprisonment.⁵⁰

The eighth book in this series, *İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)* (Caution Force: Nationality (Orient)), is a text in which Kıvılcımlı systematically presents his early approaches to the Kurdish issue and develops theses that can be considered quite radical given the conditions of the time. In his book, Kıvılcımlı argued that the region within the borders of the Republic of Turkey, called "Eastern Vilayets" in the official discourse, had, in fact, historically "had two names, be they ancient, famous or obscure, and one of them was "Kurdistan", and that this definition had been systematically eliminated.⁵¹ According to him, the geographical names used in the Ottoman period, such as "Kurdistan" and "Armenia", were replaced with the vague and ideologically neutralized term "East" during the nation-state building process of the Republic.⁵² Kıvılcımlı argued that this preferred definition was a form of ideological cover-up and functioned as a means for the state to deny the national question.

Kıvılcımlı stated that the Kemalist cadres' refraining from using the term "Kurdistan" and preferring instead expressions such as "Eastern Vilayets" was not accidental but part of a conscious strategy. According to him, such conceptual euphemisms involved a geographical name change and the ideological legitimization of the colonization process. This nomenclature, which he described as "...such a dark idiom..." allowed the state to interpret the Kurdish geography as it wished and to impose this interpretation hegemonic.⁵³

50 Ibid.

51 Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç: Milliyet (Doğu)*, originally published 1978; digital edition by KöXüz, 8, <https://koxuz.net/yayinlar/yedek-guc-milliyet-dogu/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

52 Ibid., 15.

53 Ibid., 5.

Beyond this, the strategic approach behind Kivılcımlı's focus on this issue is also quite remarkable. Defining the large, industrious, and historically oppressed masses in the Kurdish geography as "an important reserve force for the strategy of revolution", Kivılcımlı emphasized that this region was not only subjected to national oppression but also had a revolutionary potential.⁵⁴ According to him, the success of the socialist revolutionary strategy in Turkey required an orientation that considered the demands and specificities of these oppressed masses.

Even though the book titled "*İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)*" was an internal text written to be presented to the TKP Central Committee, the ideas it contained were quite advanced and contradictory for its period and the following years. For this reason, the text remained unknown to socialist circles for many years. It was only in 1978, when some parts of the book came to light, that some circles within the Turkish left began to re-evaluate Kivılcımlı's early statements on the Kurdish issue.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it can be said that Kivılcımlı himself did not directly embrace these views in the following years or even reproduce these theses in his political practice. This situation can be considered a periodic search rather than a continuity in his intellectual history.

Nevertheless, Kivılcımlı's early evaluations are vital as they represent one of the first systematic and open discussions on the Kurdish issue within the Turkish socialist movement. This approach, which opposed the state's official discourse and claimed that the Kurdish geography was a colonized region, would later become an indirect reference point for the Kurdish socialist circles that would begin to develop, especially from the late 1960s onwards. The fact that these observations had a limited impact in their own time does not negate their historical originality; on the contrary, they provide essential data for understanding the discontinuities and inconsistencies in the Turkish left's approaches to the national question.

54 Ibid., 197.

55 Ahmet Kale, "Ölümünün 42. Yılında Dr. Hikmet Kivılcımlı ve Eserleri," *Bilim ve Gelecek*, October 1, 2013, <https://bilimvegelecek.com.tr/index.php/2013/10/01/olumunun-42-yilinda-dr-hikmet-kivilcimli-ve-eserleri/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

Following the 7th Congress of the Comintern in 1935, the decision of "decentralization" or "separat"⁵⁶ taken by the TKP in 1936-37, in line with the perspectives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, represented a significant turning point in the restructuring of the party's organizational existence. Following the Comintern's adoption of the People's Front Against Fascism policy, this decision aimed for the TKP, like many communist parties following similar lines, to withdraw its organizational activities temporarily and to carry out its activities on a mass level. According to the decision, illegal publishing activities were to be renounced, the party's visibility was reduced, and forms of struggle were carried out mainly in the legal field.⁵⁷ This orientation reflected not only an ideological change of position but also a strategic transformation that prioritized the establishment of the broadest possible political alliances against the global rise of fascism.

However, this process led to a severe weakening in the organizational presence and social influence of the TKP. The decline in the party's visibility in the public sphere, including its publications, has led to a weakening of the ties of cadres and the rank and file with the party. On the other hand, it was not only a tactical response to the threat of fascism but also a change in the foreign policy of the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The Comintern's gradual shift away from the strategy of world revolution, especially since the second half of the 1930s, and its prioritization of the reel-political interests of the Soviet Union also had a decisive impact on the TKP's line.⁵⁸ Therefore, the TKP, after 1942, began to see the revolutionary struggle not as a part of international socialist solidarity but as a limited field of activity to be carried out on a parallel line with Soviet foreign policy.

Although the TKP continued to support the principle of the right of nations to self-determination at the theoretical level, the applicability of this principle was now limited to the framework of Soviet foreign policy. National

56 Hazal Yalın, "Bir Komintern Belgesi," *Gelenek*, no. 159 (January 2022), <https://gelenek.org/bir-komintern-belgesi/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

57 Ibid.

58 Bülent Gökay, "Turkish Neutrality in the Second World War and Relations with the Soviet Union," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 23, no. 6 (2021): 847, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2021.1935082>.

movements not in line with the interests of the Soviet Union in the international arena were no longer supported in absolute terms as they had been in previous periods of the Comintern. This led to serious debates, especially on the Kurdish issue. According to the theoretical approach developed around the TKP, The Right of Nations to Self-Determination should be based not only on cultural factors such as a separate history, language, and culture but also on economic infrastructure.⁵⁹ In this context, it was argued that the geography where the Kurds lived - the region that would later be called Kurdistan by Rizgari and some other Kurdish leftist organizations - did not have an independent internal market, so The Right of Nations to Self-Determination would not apply in this case.⁶⁰

According to this view, with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, all national communities on the country's territory were integrated into the Turkish domestic market through capitalist market relations, and the bourgeois-democratic revolution was completed. In this framework, the realization of economic integration at the level of a single internal market and the fact that workers belonging to different ethnonational groups were involved in similar relations of production made it necessary for the class struggle to be common and for all components of the working class to be organized under the umbrella of a single proletarian party. Therefore, the legitimacy of political organizations divided on national grounds was rejected, and such tendencies were considered detrimental to class unity.

This approach extended the Soviet Union's foreign policy doctrine, which was shaped in the aftermath of the Second World War. It was based on preserving its sphere of influence rather than the world revolution. With the Soviet Union's assumption that "all peoples would inevitably adopt socialism in the future", the idea that national problems would be solved spontaneously with socialism became widely accepted in the Soviet official ideology and the communist parties affiliated with it.

59 Hazal Yalın, "Tarihsel Seyri İçinde Ulusal Sorun ve Parti: Devrimin Kaderini Tayin Hakkı," *Gelenek*, no. 159 (January 2022), <https://gelenek.org/tarihsel-seyri-icinde-ulusal-sorun-ve-parti-devrimin-kaderini-tayin-hakki/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

60 Ibid.

However, this economic reductionist and centralist approach would be severely criticized by the emerging Kurdish socialist movement and many circles within the Turkish left towards the end of the 1960s. In particular, students and intellectuals who were the predecessors of organizations such as Rizgari, Kawa, and DDKD described this approach as "economist", "schematic," and "insensitive to the question of nationalities".⁶¹ In this period, the relatively widening political freedom following the coup d'état of May 27, 1960, provided a platform for political awareness for Kurdish youth attending university. With the increase in press and broadcasting opportunities, access to information also expanded. Knowledge and ideological frameworks that had previously been monopolistically shaped in a particular center were now being questioned based on both regional and class differences, and new political orientations emerged among Kurdish youth.

Over time, this orientation led to the emergence of criticism of the TKP's theses and the general line of the Soviet Union. Thus, different tendencies emerged within the Kurdish left, critical of the Soviet line, yet eager to engage with it without intermediaries such as the TKP, interested in alternative socialist experiences such as Cuba, China, and Albania, and seeking to develop ideological and strategic frameworks specific to their national struggle.⁶² These critical tendencies will be essential dynamics that will feed the theoretical richness and pluralism of the Kurdish political movement in the future.

As part of these dynamics, the concept of colonialism became not only a political tool against the reductionist Marxism of the TKP but also a theoretical narrative that was reclaimed and transformed by the young Kurdish cadres of the period. The concept was no longer just a Western or Third World terminology but a unique framework to explain how the Kurdish geography in Turkey was governed, the practices of cultural suppression, and economic marginalization. In this context, colonialism is also a traveling theory, as Said describes it, and even before Rizgari, it began to show signs of transformation.

61 Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, "Kürt Hareketi'nin Örgütlenme Süreci Olarak 1970'ler," *Toplum ve Kuram*, no. 1 (2013): 45, <https://backoffice.biblio.ugent.be/download/4109742/6801640> (accessed May 23, 2025).

62 Ibid., 15.

§ 2.6 Contradictions of the Colonial Concept: The Example of Avcıoğlu

Having talked about the Turkish left's approach to the Kurdish issue and its views on imperialism and colonialism, it would be appropriate to mention the opinions of Doğan Avcıoğlu. In the 1960s and 1970s, Avcıoğlu came to the forefront not only as a journalist and writer but also as the representative of a radical political mind that advocated the reorganization of the state.⁶³ With his circle formed around the *Yön* and *Devrim* journals, Avcıoğlu addressed Turkey's structural problems within a historical-sociological framework and developed a unique ideological stance that synthesized leftist thought and national developmentalism. His effort to unite Kemalism and socialism was the main characteristic that distinguished him from other leftist movements of the period.

Doğan Avcıoğlu's intellectual and political importance lies mainly in his analysis of Turkey as a semi-colonial country and his proposal for a revolutionary transformation based on the military-civilian bureaucracy. His comprehensive work "*Türkiye'nin Düzeni*" became a reference text that attracted the attention of the Turkish left and the statist developmentalist bureaucrats and young military officers of the period. In this respect, Avcıoğlu, although not an organizational leader in the classical sense, became both the ideologue and the theoretical pioneer of the movement called "revolutionary nationalism" in Turkey.⁶⁴

Although Avcıoğlu was politically positioned between Kemalism and socialism and was the ideologue of a kind of "developmentalist and revolutionary nationalism", one of the things that made him interesting was that he made some statements on specific events that could be considered radical differences from his political stance. Avcıoğlu made one of the most important of these outbursts in 1970. In May 1970, during a football match in Siirt, soldiers opened fire on the orders of the Governor of Siirt and killed two people,

63 "Doğan Avcıoğlu," *Türkiye Kaynakçası*, Hacettepe University, <http://kaynakca.hacettepe.edu.tr/kisi/98000/dogan-avcioglu> (accessed May 23, 2025).

64 "Bir Zamanlar Devrimci-Milliyetçiler Vardı," *Anadolu Sanat*, http://anadolusanat.org/kc/kurcep1/kc104_2.html (accessed May 23, 2025).

sparkling a wave of protests in the city. As a result of the incidents, 30 people were injured, and there were large-scale shutdowns and sit-in protests in the province.⁶⁵

In the May 12, 1970 issue of Devrim Newspaper, Avcıoğlu made a connection between the protests that started with the Eastern Rallies and targeted the commando oppression and underdevelopment in the Eastern provinces and the Siirt Incident in question and stated that this was a result of the Republic of Turkey's administration style in the region in question. According to Avcıoğlu, the policy pursued by the state in the East is "a kind of 'colonial' policy," and this claim is "not an exaggerated claim."⁶⁶ Again, in Avcıoğlu's words, "in this region of aghas, beys and sheiks with ethnic characteristics, there are many examples of the administration behaving with a colonialist mentality." Even though it is clear that Avcıoğlu was cautious in making the "colonial" determination and that he saw the problem in the region as the result of a reactionary compromise between the remnants of feudalism and the state, the fact that a figure like Avcıoğlu, whose nationalism outweighs his socialism and who does not hide the fact that he believes in a revolutionary nationalism, makes these determinations is crucial in terms of showing how the Kurdish issue has a dominant position in many debates that determine the horizon of the Turkish left.⁶⁷

In conclusion, the political consciousness that began to take shape in the 1940s with the children of exiled Kurdish families coming together in centers such as Istanbul and Ankara began to mature institutionally and ideologically by the 1960s. Structures such as the "Kurdish Rescue Society", the Dicle Students' Dormitory, the T-KDP, and the example of the DDKO established in this period herald the transition of the Kurdish political subject from a reactionary quest against the repressive regime within the borders of the Republic of Turkey to a more holistic and programmatic political vision. The argument of "colonized Kurdistan", which is clearly expressed in the TKDP's defenses,

65 "Siirt'te Gergin Hava Hala Devam Ediyor," *Milliyet*, May 6, 1970, 1, <https://www.gastear-sivi.com/gazete/milliyet2/1970-05-06/1> (accessed May 23, 2025).

66 Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Atatürkçülük, Milliyetçilik, Sosyalizm: Yön ve Devrim Yazıları* (Istanbul: İleri Yayınları, 2006), 728.

67 Ibid., 728-29.

and the demands for national equality and rights of the DDKO, which are intuited between the lines but discursively conveyed in a more cautious language, show that this political consciousness is gradually gaining a more organized and theoretical framework. At the same time, this process also made visible the contradictions within the Turkish left regarding the national question and the experiences of socialist actors with different ethnic identities, especially the Kurdish youth, in the face of being pushed to melt under the discourse of "common struggle" brought about the need for a separate organization.

One of the characteristic features of this period was that not only the denial of Kurdish identity but also the defense and naming of this identity became a serious political risk. The concepts and discourses used by structures such as the TKDP and DDKO in their programmatic documents or defense texts are the product of a political choice and a strategic language developed against the state's repressive apparatuses. However, behind this cautious language, it is seen that the demands for the recognition of the Kurdish people as a separate national identity have deepened and that these demands have created a new ideological formation by articulating socialist ideals. In this context, it is not a coincidence that the notion of "detachment" has taken an increasingly central place in Kurdish political discourse; it reflects a collective consciousness supported by historical documents and social memory. This collective consciousness articulates a historical experience and the product of a conceptual transformation process. In the hands of Kurdish political actors, the term "colonialism" has become a traveling theory that has been adapted to the local context, re-functionalized, and subjected to ideological-political instrumentalization. Just like the localization of the concept of sub-imperialism by Rizgari, colonialism is now turning into an original theoretical field of production for the Kurdish movement in Turkey.

As can be seen in the light of the actors, texts, and cases analyzed in this chapter, by the end of the 1960s, the Kurdish issue paved the way for the emergence of a "Kurdish left" that began to form an independent line against both the security reflexes of the state and the ideological dilemmas of the Turkish left. In the next section of the thesis, the formation and intellectual framework of the Rizgari group, which institutionally and theoretically embodied this

line, will be examined; in the construction of this framework, in line with Said's traveling theories approach, it will be discussed how concepts originating from Latin America were localized in the Turkish context.



Rizgari: Localization of Theory

After the March 12, 1971, military intervention and the closure of DDKOs, Kurdish politics and the Kurdish left embarked on a search for new subjects to represent their demands. The Kurdish organization, which found expression in the TİP and TKDP throughout the 1960s, changed its form after the DDKO was established in 1969. After the 1971 crackdown on DDKO, its founding cadres began regrouping under new associations they called DDKD. During this process of reunification, a group gathered around the Ankara branch of the DDKD and led by Mümtaz Kotan, Orhan Kotan, Ruşen Arslan, and Şerafettin Kaya founded Komal Publishing House.¹ This group, who would later be known as Rizgari about the journal Rizgari they published from this publishing house, embraced the thesis that the provinces in the Kurdish geography, which they called Kurdistan, were governed by a kind of colonial administration and formulated this thesis as 'Kurdistan is a colony of 4 separate states'. With this argument, the Rizgari circle, in a sense, defined its theoretical raison d'être and reached a wider discursive hegemony and sphere of influence than the groups that had previously put forward this thesis.

1 Raşit Kısacık, *Rizgari ve Ala Rizgari* (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2015), 60.

§ 3.1 Rizgari's Intellectual Origins

The thesis of "colonial Kurdistan" advocated by Rizgari in this period had already been expressed by Hikmet Kıvılcımlı in the 1930s and TKDP cadres in the 1960s. However, these previous discourses were limited to making a definitional determination. Rizgari, on the other hand, systematically theorized this concept, making it not just a political statement but a theoretical framework. For this reason, the concept of colonialism, like sub-imperialism, was localized, rewritten, and turned into a traveling theory in Rizgari's hands. In this respect, Rizgari's discourse was constructed not only with imported concepts but also by transforming these concepts according to the needs of the Kurdish political struggle.

Through this thesis, the Rizgari group, first of all, separated itself from the Turkish left and ignited a conscious separation whose effects would continue to expand. In a process that can be dated back further than the efforts of the Rizgari group, the demands for separate organizations within the Kurdish left began to be discussed increasingly loudly as a tendency to become independent from the Turkish social opposition and left. These debates, while laying the theoretical groundwork for the idea of a separate organization, also led Rizgari to develop a discourse that legitimized its separation from movements within its own defined geography of 'Kurdistan,' however vague or undefined its boundaries may be, that had strayed from or not yet embraced this thesis. Thus, Rizgari built its independent political line on this distinction. After two periods in the 1930s and 1960s, when this colonialist argument about the legal status of the Kurdish geography was openly mentioned within the Turkish left and Kurdish politics and voiced as a declaration in prisons and courts, this argument became more frequent and more widely discussed in the 1970s.² This argument, which Hikmet Kıvılcımlı expressed in the 1930s and TKDP cadres in the late 1960s, was used as a determination and a principle rather than a concrete material for politics. However, the Rizgari group aimed to

2 Until the 1970s, there were two names who mentioned these theses systematically and consistently: Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, a member of the TKP of that period, who wrote about it in his Yol series, and Şakir Epözdemir, a member of the TKDP, who made this determination in his defense in the TKDP Antalya Trial.

transform this thesis from an abstract line of distinction into a line of distinction with a concrete and political appearance. This situation could not be separated from the winds of the youth movements of May 1968, which had been evident worldwide since the last years of the 1960s, and the social awakening that had been developing in Turkey throughout the 1960s.

After the establishment of the DDKOs in 1969, both the work and discussions within the DDKOs and the attitudes of the DDKO members in the courts during the DDKO trials after the state put an end to the organizational existence of the DDKO in 1971 catalyzed the spread of the colonialism debate in the context of the aforementioned May 1968 winds and the effects of social awakening. As a result of the 1971 trials, the DDKO members who were sentenced to various penalties made various defenses defending the organizational and intellectual existence of DDKO throughout the court process.³ Both during these trials and in prison, they stayed together in the in-prison commune they called "Ocak" (Hearth).⁴ On the one hand, these communes opened up the possibility of critically evaluating the DDKO process. On the other hand, they served as a center where DDKO cadres discussed what they could do after their release from prison, expressed certain views, and reached certain decisions.

During the DDKO trials, Kurdish politicians, mainly from the university youth, started a tradition of collective political defense that went beyond the founding boundaries of the DDKO. Although the emphasis on constitutional Turkish identity in the defenses did not disappear, the discussions in prison, especially around the "Ocak" Commune, in which names such as Orhan Kotan, İsmail Beşikçi, Ali Beyköylü, and Yümnü Budak participated, were indicative of the arrival of a new era on issues such as "colonialism, the nation-country reality of Kurdistan, and separate organization".⁵ The Kurdish geography, which they called "East", was still used extensively in the 1971 Trial about the Kurdish provinces, the geography that Rizgari would later call

3 Ruşen Arslan, *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük: Kürt Örgütlenmesi DDKO* (Istanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2020), 322-27.

4 İsmail Beşikçi, "Kurdiana Dügümü," *Rûpela Nû*, July 13, 2024, <https://www.rupelanu.org/kurdiana-dugumu-29405h.htm> (accessed May 24, 2025).

5 Ibid.

Kurdistan, but the existence of DDKO and the Kurdish people in general, and the right to organize, were claimed through collective defense. While the DDKO was still in operation, DDKO members occasionally published statements and bulletins in which they specifically referred to the separatist nature of the "Commando Raids" and argued that the real separatism was committed by those who carried out the raids. It is clear that the DDKO members' emphasis in their court defense that they were "patriots from Turkey" was also expressed with such a political consciousness and in a more cautious tone, so to speak, due to the conditions of the period.⁶ Therefore, it can be said that both the defenses during the trial process and the DDKO communes, where personalities such as Orhan Kotan and İsmail Beşikçi, who had previously thought about this theoretical problem, stayed together, intensified the discussions on the determination of colonialism and separate organization, which had already started to be discussed in some way.

In 1974, after the release of those sentenced in the DDKO case, Kurds from various social strata, such as shopkeepers, students, and others, quickly set about establishing new organizations. The first of these organizations, Komal Publications, founded by a group from the Ankara branch of the DDKD, began publishing books and brochures on Kurdish history. It also published texts on current political debates and polemics, including defenses of İsmail Beşikçi in the trial for his theses and responses to articles in various leftist journals.⁷ However, one of the most important debuts of the group, which would later be referred to in the same way, was the launch of the *Rizgari* journal on March 21, 1976. Throughout its publishing life, which began with the article "Neden Yeni Bir Yayın? (Why a New Publication?)"⁸, the Rizgari group and the journal entered into polemics with many actors from the Turkish left and sometimes from the Kurdish left, especially on why the Kurdish left should be organized separately, and came to the fore as an essential actor that shaped the Kurdish left's world of thought between 1975 and 1980.

6 Ruşen Arslan, *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük: Kürt Örgütlenmesi DDKO* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2020), 326.

7 Raşit Kısacık, *Rizgari ve Ala Rizgari* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2015), 62.

8 "Neden Yeni Bir Yayın?," *Rizgari*, no. 1 (21 March 1976): 2–14 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

§ 3.2 Sub-imperialism and the Appropriation of Traveling Theories

As the theoretical framework was outlined in the first chapter, the conceptual circulation of traveling theories, their rewriting in local contexts, and their articulation with practices of struggle constitute the main trajectory of this study. The example of Rizgari is a concrete example of this trajectory. Even before Rizgari journal was published, the book titled "Koçgiri Halk Hareketi" written by Orhan Kotan, who would later be considered the theoretician of the modest group that would publish this journal, caused intense interest and debates within the Turkish and Kurdish left public opinion. This book, published anonymously by Komal Publications, is based on Orhan Kotan's research and describes the various stages of the Koçgiri Rebellion⁹ between 1919 and 1921. In this book, Kotan discusses the development of the Koçgiri Rebellion and makes various analyses and inferences based on his reading of history. However, the theoretical conclusions in the book's preface attracted much more attention than the historical analysis of the rebellion. In the book's foreword, Kotan first mentions the contentious relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Kurdish local elites. Then, based on the similarities between the rebellions in the early republican period and the practices of the republican administration, Kotan concludes that "... Therefore, today, the Kurdish people's main conflict is with the Central Authority, which denies their existence, usurps their democratic rights, and confiscates all their natural wealth."¹⁰ Kotan, who wants to combine this determination with the current ideological and political perspective in which he is currently positioned, characterizes the Republic of Turkey, which he sees as the "Central Authority", as "a sub-imperialist unit and a colonialist state dependent on the imperialist world system".¹¹ The propositions in this categorization can be considered necessary in several respects.

9 "Koçgiri Rebellion," *Wikipedia*, last modified May 24, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko%C3%A7giri_rebellion (accessed May 24, 2025).

10 Orhan Kotan, *Koçgiri Halk Hareketi* (1919-1921) (Istanbul: Komal Yayınları, 2006), 16.

11 Ibid.

First of all, the concept of "sub-imperialism" mentioned by Kotan was first used by the Brazilian sociologist and economist Ruy Mauro Marini, who can be considered a follower of the Dependency Theory School pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein, Theotonio dos Santos, etc., in the 7th issue of the *Monthly Review* in 1965, to describe the political position of the junta in international relations after the military coup in Brazil in 1964.¹² Marini put forward this concept in the context of the Brazilian junta, representing the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie in Brazil, determining policy concerning political events in Latin America according to the interests of the United States to guarantee the flow of North American capital to Brazil, which it needed. Therefore, Marini thought that Brazil, which could not be considered an imperialist center, functioned through the junta regime as an extension of American imperialism on the continent.¹³

Marini's analysis is directly linked to the basic arguments by Vladimir Lenin in his 1916 work *"Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism"*. According to Lenin, imperialism was a capitalist stage based on the domination of monopoly capital and finance capital, in which the export of capital came to the fore, leading to the division of the world among the great imperialist states.¹⁴ Within this framework, the imperialist centers established forms of domination directly through colonies and indirectly through the mechanisms of capital export and financial dependence. In this structure described by Lenin, the domestic bourgeoisie and ruling classes in the dependent countries contributed to the functioning of this structure, often acting in harmony with the interests of the imperialist centers.¹⁵

In this context, Marini's concept of "sub-imperialism" takes the Leninist analysis of imperialism one step further and points to a specific situation in which countries dependent on the imperialist center try to produce a regional

12 Ruy Mauro Marini, "Brazilian 'Interdependence' and Imperialist Integration," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 7 (December 1965): 26.

13 Ibid., 27

14 Vladimir I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 90, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/imperialism.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2025).

15 Ibid., 87.

hegemony through local class factions.¹⁶ In this context, Orhan Kotan and the Rizgari group defined Turkey as an actor that was economically and politically dependent on American imperialism but, at the same time, tended to establish hegemony on a regional scale and thus assumed a sub-imperialist function.¹⁷ At this point, it should be emphasized that Rizgari not only imported but also transformed the concept of sub-imperialism. Edward Said's Travelling Theory suggests that such conceptual circulations are not only geographical but also intertwined with processes of political reconstruction. Theories change meaning and function in the new context to which they are transferred. Therefore, Rizgari did not apply Marini's theory directly but reconstructed it according to its context of political struggle. This perspective has made it possible to understand Turkey among the actors of the Kurdish left not only as a passive extension of imperialist centers but also as an actor seeking to maximize its interests on a regional scale.

Therefore, as they put it, "Kurdistan was being exploited by the state of the Republic of Turkey in this context in line with the interests of imperialism." However, Kotan and his colleagues considered the "Turkish bourgeoisie and ruling classes" as an autonomous and active class faction that benefited from the interests of imperialism in line with its class interests and strategically aligned with these interests rather than as a passive instrument. This approach was a unity of analysis based on Lenin's analysis of imperialism and Marini's interpretation of structural dependency and regional collaborationism.

What is noteworthy at this point is that Rizgari restructured the concept of sub-imperialism and the concept of colonialism in a way that makes it theoretically functional. Edward Said's discussions on the traveling theory shed light on the process of rewriting and localizing these two concepts together. In Rizgari's discourse, sub-imperialism is operationalized to explain not only Turkey's position in the imperialist system but also the colonial domination of what Rizgari calls Kurdistan. Thus, both sub-imperialism and colonialism became traveling theories for Rizgari, reconstructed and articulated into political struggle.

16 Ruy Mauro Marini, "Brazilian 'Interdependence' and Imperialist Integration," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 7 (December 1965): 18.

17 Orhan Kotan, *Koçgiri Halk Hareketi (1919-1921)* (Istanbul: Komal Yayınları, 2006), 18.

Although it is known that debates on the colonial status of the Kurdish geography have been on the agenda with periodic waves since the 1930s¹⁸, the redefinition of the concept of sub-imperialism in the Turkey context by Orhan Kotan and the Rizgari group in 1975 reflects a process that is not merely a theoretical transfer but carries the traces of political intervention. In this process, Rizgari, caught within the confines of the mainstream of the Turkish left, had to cross geographical and intellectual boundaries to go beyond traditional analyses of colonialism. The emphasis on semi-colonialism in Turkey, prevalent throughout the socialist movement, was limited by a reductionist perspective that saw the Kurdish issue as an extension of the class struggle. However, Rizgari believed that this approach was insufficient "to explain the Kurdish experience of national oppression and the assimilationist policies of the Turkish state". It is, therefore, essential to analyze the theoretical position of the Rizgari group to understand the group's political strategies and how the intellectual resources on which these strategies were based were transformed. In this context, discussing how Ruy Mauro Marini's concept of sub-imperialism was adapted to the historical-social conditions specific to Turkey provides an essential entry point. Edward Said's conceptualization of traveling theory offers a fruitful framework for making sense of this process. According to Said, when a theory leaves the context of its birth, it is transported elsewhere and reconstructed, transformed, and reclaimed within local conditions. This process can be seen as importing a concept and its vernacularization and political reappropriation.

Rizgari's use of Marini's concept of sub-imperialism provides a specific example of this multi-layered process of theoretical transmission. This concept, which took shape in Latin American dependency theory, is reconstructed by Rizgari to explain Turkey's practices of regional hegemony, state violence against the Kurds, cultural assimilation, and the denial of national identity. Sub-imperialism is thus given an expanded theoretical grounding that includes economic dependencies and forms of national oppression in a

18 Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç: Milliyet (Doğu)*, originally published 1978; digital edition by KöXüz, 197, <https://koxuz.net/yayinlar/yedek-guc-milliyet-dogu/> (accessed May 23, 2025).

postcolonial context.¹⁹ Rizgari's intervention can be considered a concrete and creative example of how theories can be transformed in line with the needs of political struggles in other geographies.

In the background of this theoretical journey, Rizgari's effort was to read the experiences of different geographies instead of articulating them with the traditional sources of the Turkish left. In the case of Rizgari, this effort to read the experiences of different geographies was related to the goal of building the theoretical basis for organizing separately from the Turkish left. In this context, James Clifford's concept of theoretical situatedness reveals that Rizgari not only took the concept of sub-imperialism from another geography but also repositioned this concept according to the political-social thresholds in the Kurdish geography of Turkey. According to Clifford, theories gain legitimacy when aligned with local political and epistemological needs.²⁰ Rizgari, in its search for a theoretical ground appropriate to local needs, reshaped these external concepts not only for intellectual interaction but also to correspond to the specific political demands of the Kurdish movement. Analyses of imperialism by *Birikim* journal, the way the book *Monopoly Capital* analyzed monopoly structures in Turkey, and the works of Türkkaya Ataöv and Atilla Aksoy on the state and the international system were essential references in this process.²¹ However, the above sources were not directly copied but used through a critical filter. For example, *Birikim*'s class-centered approach was blended with the specificity of the Kurdish national struggle; Ataöv's readings on imperialism gave Kotan a perspective on Turkey's regional role outside the mainstream. This synthesis was not only a theoretical diversity but also a practical necessity. Rizgari felt the need for an organization autonomous from the

19 Ruy Mauro Marini, "Brazilian 'Interdependence' and Imperialist Integration," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 7 (December 1965): 18.

20 James Clifford, "Notes on Theory and Travel," in *Traveling Theories: Traveling Theorists*, ed. James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar, *Inscriptions* 5 (Santa Cruz: Center for Cultural Studies, 1989), 185.

21 Atilla Aksoy, ed., *Az gelişmişlik ve Emperyalizm* (Istanbul: Sorun Yayınları, 1977). See also: <https://www.nadirk kitap.com/azgelismislik-ve-emperyalizm-kitap30603312.html> and Rupert Emerson, *Sömürgelerin Uluslaşması*, trans. Türkkaya Ataöv (Ankara: Türk Siyasi İlimler Derneği Yayınları, 1965). See also: <https://www.kitapyurdu.com/kitap/somurgelerin-uluslasmasi-kod-12b11/541021.html>

Turkish socialist movement and sought a theoretical framework to legitimize this autonomy.

Based on this need, the concept of sub-imperialism has been adopted and localized. The assumption that Turkey 'imposes repressive policies against Kurds within its borders and aims to become a regional power abroad' and the establishment of a political link between these two propositions constitute the core of Rizgari's theoretical approach. It would not be wrong to say that Homi Bhabha's concept of "cultural translation" comes into play here. According to Bhabha, a transferred theory or concept is not merely translated in the local context; it often takes on a different function and meaning.²² Rizgari's conception of sub-imperialism is also the product of such a process of cultural translation since this concept is not only the transfer of specific conditions in Latin America to Turkey but also the transformation of the Kurdish political struggle according to the specific needs of Rizgari. In other words, the concept of sub-imperialism was also subjected to the translation process by Rizgari; it was transformed into both an ideological tool of differentiation and a practical strategy of organization.

Likewise, the concept of colonization is redefined by Rizgari not only in terms of geographical occupation or economic exploitation and cultural, political, and ideological relations of domination. In this context, Bhabha's concept of cultural translation provides a convenient tool for understanding a multi-layered theoretical intervention in which not only sub-imperialism but also the concept of colonialism is transformed and operationalized by Rizgari. Rizgari's theoretical endeavor is thus a creative example of re-institutionalizing two traveling theories - sub-imperialism and colonialism - in the context of the Kurdish struggle.

The "distance" and "localization" stages emphasized by Said in his traveling theory model also play a critical role here. Marini's theory was developed to understand Latin America's relationship with imperialism, but it needed to be given a new meaning in the Turkish context. In a conscious deviation from Marini's economic determinism, Rizgari and Kotan emphasized the primacy of the national struggle. For example, in the books published by Komal

22 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 227.

Publications and the themes covered by *Rizgari* journal, "How capitalist modernization has eroded Kurdish identity and the colonial logic of state violence" were emphasized.²³ This meant that the "center-periphery" relationship of the original theory evolved into an "oppressor nation-oppressed nation" conflict. As Said points out, the conditions at the theory's point of departure made its transformation inevitable.²⁴ Turkey's control mechanisms in the Kurdish geography - suppression of rebellions, assimilation policies, and cultural oppression - enabled the concept of sub-imperialism to materialize in the local context. Here, a theoretical concept became a political tool and a dynamic framework that responded to the practical needs of *Rizgari*.

In this transformation process, *Rizgari*'s turning to sources different from the mainstream of the Turkish left was decisive. In particular, the reformist line pursued by movements such as the Kurdistan Socialist Party of Turkey (TKSP), led by Kemal Burkay, became a matter of severe criticism for *Rizgari*. The TKSP's search for an alliance with the Turkish socialist movement and, unlike *Rizgari*, its invisibility of the difference between the demand for an independent state and the demand for a federation was seen by *Rizgari* as a "deviation from the independent revolutionary line". *Rizgari*'s main claim at this point was that the Republic of Turkey's presence in the Kurdish geography was not only an oppressive nation-state practice but also a form of sub-imperialist functioning.²⁵ In this context, *Rizgari*'s emphasis on sub-imperialism was not merely an economic or diplomatic positioning; it functioned directly as an explanation of the political and social relations of domination in Kurdistan. This understanding went beyond a theoretical divergence and became the manifesto of an organizational and ideological rupture.

Rizgari's critique of reformism was based on the Marxist-Leninist premise that class struggle and national liberation are not separate but intertwined processes. According to them, reformism was a deviation that disrupted this dialectic, conditioned its liberation on the liberation of the oppressor nation, and

23 "Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkci-Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine — II", *Rizgari*, no. 2 (21 April 1976): 26 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

24 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 157.

25 Orhan Kotan, *Koçgiri Halk Hareketi (1919-1921)* (Istanbul: Komal Yayınları, 2006), 17.

did not explicitly embrace the idea of a new state, thus postponing or substituting the idea of revolution. In this sense, for Rizgari, the TKSP's understanding of a solution centered on "essentially one part of Kurdistan"²⁶ and leaving the other parts to time meant accepting the "political legitimacy of the colonial state". On the other hand, revolution meant a radical rupture of this structure for Rizgari and the intertwining of the peoples' right to self-determination with class struggle. For this reason, Rizgari coded the lines it defined as reformist as passive or inadequate and as political orientations that objectively contributed to the reproduction of colonialism.

Unlike the TKSP, the political pole to which Rizgari positioned itself was not Soviet Union-centered real socialism, but rather the revolutions and national liberation struggles of the Third World. In this context, the series of revolutionary struggles from the Cuban Revolution to Angola, from Vietnam to Palestine, occupied a constitutive place in Rizgari's internationalist imagination.²⁷ In this framework, Ruy Mauro Marini's analysis of sub-imperialism functioned as both a theoretical tool and a political direction. Defining Turkey as a sub-imperialist power became a prerequisite for claiming a place in this revolutionary front. Thus, for Rizgari, the claim to socialism became defined not only in terms of the relations of production but also in terms of taking an anti-colonialist position, relations with imperialist structures, and practical forms of struggle.

In this context, the concepts of sub-imperialism and colonialism became not merely imported explanatory tools in Rizgari's discourse but constitutive elements of a new political imaginary. As Edward Said has noted, when a theory reaches another geography, it loses its fixity and is reconstructed according to local needs.²⁸ Rizgari's theoretical practice offers a unique example of not just one concept but two separate conceptual systems - Marini's sub-

26 Public Prosecutor of Diyarbakır, Indictment against the Türkiye Kurdistan Socialist Partisi (TKSP), Case No. [1982/384], Diyarbakır, n.d., 22.

27 "Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçi-Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine — II", *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976): 16, Published by Çağdaş Basımevi.

28 Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 159.

imperialism and Leninist-colonial theory - simultaneously localized, transformed, and placed on the strategic ground of political organization.

In this framework, Rizgari defined itself not only as a socialist movement sensitive to the national question but also as the representative of a revolutionary pole positioned against imperialism, colonialism, and collaborationism. However, this position was not limited to an ideological stance but also led to a constitutive transformation at the theoretical level. As Edward Said points out, in the framework of traveling theory, a concept is not only transferred; it also takes on new tasks in a new context. Both the concepts of sub-imperialism and colonialism exemplified this transformation in Rizgari's discourse by serving not only as a means of explanation but also as a means of organizational justification and polemic generation.

Movements like the TKSP, according to Rizgari, were outside this pole, obscuring and muddying the process of revolutionary creative destruction, adopting a reformist line, and reducing the historical demands of the Kurdish people to conditional solutions.²⁹ However, Rizgari's conception of revolution envisioned a radical rupture against capitalist relations of exploitation but also against structural forms of national oppression.³⁰ For this reason, reformist lines, in Rizgari's eyes, assumed a role that both limited the struggle and reproduced the imperialist-colonialist order of domination. The criterion of socialism was the ability to distance oneself from the oppressor nation and to carry internationalism and anti-imperialism together rather than discourses on the mode of production.³¹ In this context, Rizgari's theoretical positioning was not just a set of ideas but a holistic strategic orientation that determined its political line of action, forms of struggle, and international alliances. This redefinition of Turkey's class structure at the national and international levels served a decisive function in Rizgari's discussions with the Turkish left. In this framework, it is necessary to examine more closely the differences between the approaches of leftist organizations in Turkey to regime analysis and Rizgari's position.

29 "Kürt Halkının Anti - Sömürgeci Ulusal Demokratik Mücadelesinde Sağ Oportünizm ve "Özgürlük Yolu"nın Eleştirisi", *Rizgari*, no. 7 (November 1978): 13.

30 Ibid., 20.

31 Ibid., 36.

§ 3.3 Regime Debates within the Turkish Left

This theoretical move not only criticized the 'semi-colonial' analysis of the Turkish left but also aimed to overcome the structural limitation of this analysis that articulated the Kurdish issue to Turkey's general democratization processes. Rizgari, by asserting Turkey's sub-imperialist character, defined the forms of domination in the Kurdish geography not as a reflection of the internal workings of the imperialist world system but rather as an active form of colonialism with its dynamics, carried out in line with Turkey's regional and domestic interests. Therefore, according to Rizgari, identifying colonialism based on Turkey's sub-imperialist structure constituted the theoretical basis for the Kurds' necessity to realize their national freedom through a separate organization, not to index their national destiny to Turkey's democratization processes.

This thesis, collectively defended by Orhan Kotan and thus Rizgari, which evaluated Turkey as a "sub-imperialist unit and a colonialist state", differed not only from the general lines of analysis of the political and economic regime in Turkey but also from the regional assessments of the leftist movement, which had risen within the youth movements in Turkey since the 1960s and became increasingly militant in the early 1970s. In particular, it was recognized that Saudi Arabia and pre-revolutionary Iran were the two leading powers in the region, acting per American interests and pursuing a certain degree of regional hegemony.³² These two states were seen as the implementers of America's plans in the area, given their strict anti-communist regimes, their natural resources, and thus the opportunities they offered, and the fact that they represented sectarian opposites in the Middle East. However, as a direct consequence of their political and organizational intentions, Rizgari and Kotan assumed that Turkey was as much "one of the pillars of imperialism in the Middle East"³³ as Iran and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, according to Rizgari, there were some nationalist reflexes within the Iranian left that fought against the

32 Banafsheh Keynoush, *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Friends or Foes?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 9.

33 Orhan Kotan, *Koçgiri Halk Hareketi (1919-1921)* (Istanbul: Komal Yayınları, 2006), 16-17.

Shah of Iran, just like the Turkish left, and this situation prevented the Iranian leftist movements from grasping the essence of the issue.

Undoubtedly, one of the most frequent polemics that Rizgari engaged in with the Turkish left during the period when it was not published as a periodical was the debate on the current regime in Turkey and the status of "Kurdistan". As the interviews with those who were part of the editorial board of *Rizgari* journal and who were organized in this circle at the time reveal, there is, of course, a special reason for this interest. The Rizgari group and its ideologue Orhan Kotan and its leading members, such as Hatice Yaşar, İbrahim Güçlü and İkrâm Delen came from illegal and semi-legal organizations such as the KDP in T ("KDP in Turkey" or KDP-T differently from Turkey's Kurdistan Democratic Party or T-KDP) and the DDKO, which could be considered the leading organizations of the Kurdish left.³⁴ They, therefore, had similar views on two fundamental issues: A socialist national liberation struggle with its ideological-political principles firmly protected and thus likely to receive support from socialist countries and an independent and separately organized national-revolutionary organization that could win the direct interlocutors of revolutionaries in the oppressor nation. These two fundamental determinations were critical for Rizgari and all other groups on the Kurdish left. Rizgari, with regular interest and patience, has always dealt with similar ideological-political issues and tried to take positions consistent with its ideological-political stance on political developments in Turkey - for example, the attitude to be adopted in the elections. Therefore, the question of the nature of the regime was one of the most relevant issues for the Kurdish left as well as the Turkish left. Before discussing Rizgari's polemics with the Turkish left on this issue, it would be appropriate to briefly mention the organizations that determined the regime's nature in the 1960s and early 1970s and weighed the masses.

During the first half of the 1960s, the most active socialist organization in Turkey was the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), in which Turkish intellectuals, trade unionists, and students played a significant role. The party generally demanded a fairer distribution of labor and greater democratic freedoms for

34 "Hatice Yaşar ile Söyleşi: Kürdistan, Siyaset ve Kadın," *Kürt Araştırmaları*, no. 3 (December 2023), <https://kurdarastirmalari.com/yazi-detay-oku-273> (accessed May 24, 2025)

working people, and its support base was primarily composed of university youth, unionized workers, and petty-bourgeois professional groups. The TİP's analysis of the regime in Turkey was set out in party congresses, programs, and publications (Social Justice, Labor). According to the TİP, Turkey was a country characterized by capitalist relations and was in a transitional period in which capitalism was not yet complete with all democratic institutions.³⁵ The TİP did not use definitions such as "semi-colony" to describe the position of the Republic of Turkey in the international system. Still, it criticized foreign dependence and argued that transformation was possible within the parliamentary system. Regarding the political regime, the TİP identified a bourgeois parliamentary system with authoritarian characteristics but did not call it structural fascism or colonialism.³⁶

The Federation of Intellectual Clubs (FKF), which was born under the influence of the TİP, essentially adopted the TİP line in its regime analysis until 1968. According to the FKF, Turkey was a capitalist country that had not completed its democratic revolution.³⁷ This definition acknowledged the existence of capitalist relations of production but emphasized that democratic tasks such as land reform, secularism, and genuine popular sovereignty were missing. Although groups close to the National Democratic Revolution (MDD) line were influential within the FKF from time to time, these differences became more pronounced in the Dev-Genç period after 1968.

When the FKF was renamed the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (Dev-Genç) in 1968, the line identified with the TİP weakened. Within Dev-Genç, radical tendencies that would soon give birth to organizations such as THKO, THKP-C, and TİİKP came to the fore. These organizations defined Turkey's international position and domestic political structure with different theoretical frameworks. Dev-Genç and its successors had in common the thesis that Turkey was a "semi-colony" within the imperialist system and "semi-feudal" in terms of its internal class structure. This double analysis emphasized the necessity of a democratic revolution in Turkey before a socialist revolution.

35 Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi İkinci Büyük Kongresi: Alınan Kararlar ve Yapılan Seçimlerin Sonuçları* (Ankara: Başnur Matbaası, 1966), 3-4-5.

36 Ibid., 5-6.

37 Türk Solu, January 14, 1969, 12-13.

The People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO) defined Turkey as "a semi-dependent country under the economic, political, military and cultural exploitation of imperialism".³⁸ According to the THKO, capitalism had developed in relations of imperialist dependence, which condemned the Turkish economy to assembly industry and foreign-dependent consumption. Regarding the political regime, the THKO saw Turkey as an oppressive order ruled by imperialism through domestic collaborators; instead of the conceptual definition of "fascism", it emphasized a more structural relationship of exploitation that emphasized this colonization.³⁹

Unlike the THKO, the THKP-C, led by Mahir Çayan, argued that Turkey had become a "hidden colony" since the 1950s.⁴⁰ According to the THKP-C, imperialism had established indirect domination over the local ruling classes through "neocolonialism" instead of direct rule. According to this understanding, the regime had the characteristics of a "fascist dictatorship", but this fascism was not the classical Nazi type; it was a neo-colonial type of state that practiced systematic violence against the popular classes.⁴¹

The Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey (TİİKP), under the leadership of Doğu Perinçek, applied the classical Maoist scheme and defined Turkey as a "semi-feudal and semi-colonial" country.⁴² According to the TİİKP, the "dictatorship of the collaborationist monopoly bourgeoisie and landlords", subcontractors of imperialism, constituted the regime. The political regime was considered a "fascist" repressive regime. Still, this fascism was described in more specific terms as "colonial-type fascism" or "military-fascist dictatorship based on the bureaucratic bourgeoisie".⁴³

TKP-ML and its leader, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, similarly defined Turkey as a "semi-feudal and semi-colonial" country.⁴⁴ Kaypakkaya emphasized that the

38 Hüseyin İnan, *Türkiye Devriminin Yolu* (İstanbul: Ulusal Kültür Yayınları, 1991), 30.

39 Ibid., 61.

40 Mahir Çayan, *Kesintisiz Devrim II-III*, <http://anadolusanat.org/kc/eris/kesdev1.html> (ccessed May 24, 2025)

41 Ibid.

42 Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi, *Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi Davası: Savunma* (İstanbul: Aydınlık Yayınları, 1974), 378.

43 Ibid., 18.

44 İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazıları* (İstanbul: Umut Yayıncılık, April 2020), 128.

ruling classes in Turkey were the comprador bourgeoisie and that this class acted as a direct extension of imperialism. For the political regime, he used the concept of "colonial-type fascism" to explain both the continuity of national oppression and the centralized state apparatus of violence. Kaypakaya presented a radical break by evaluating Kemalism as the ideological carrier of this structure.⁴⁵

The Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), whose legal status had been banned since 1925, had a unique analysis of Turkey in the 1960s, even though the TİP overshadowed it. According to the TKP, Turkey had experienced the capitalization process, which was intertwined with feudal remnants. Therefore, TKP defined Turkey as "a country on the path of capitalist development, economically and ideologically dependent on imperialism".⁴⁶ Regarding the political regime, the TKP identified a bourgeois order with authoritarian tendencies but avoided the definition of a full-fledged "fascist regime". The two different lines of the TKP in the 1960s, led by İsmail Bilen and Zeki Baştımar, led to periodic changes and different emphases in these analyses.

§ 3.4 The Intellectual Veins Feeding the Rizgari

What makes this effort of theoretical and political intervention even more remarkable is how the Rizgari group and Orhan Kotan became aware of Marini's article and these debates. Although concepts such as "underdevelopment" and "imperialism" have almost always been discussed within the left in Turkey, the first serious theoretical productions on these concepts were published by professors such as Türkkaya Ataöv, Atilla Aksoy and *Birikim* journal in the mid-1970s. However, for example, the first issue of *Birikim* journal in which sub-imperialism was mentioned as a concept was the 20th issue of October 1976.⁴⁷ However, Rizgari's first use of this concept was about a year and a half earlier than *Birikim* journal's term use. When the references in both the journal articles and the books published by Komal Publications are analyzed, it can be

⁴⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁴⁶ R. Yürükoğlu, *Emperyalizmin Zayıf Halkası Türkiye* (İstanbul: İşçinin Sesi Yayınları, 1980), 32.

⁴⁷ "Birikim: Aylık Sosyalist Kültür Dergisi," no. 20 (October 1976). See also: <https://birikim-dergisi.com/dergiler/70-lerin-birikimi/2/sayi-20-sayi-20/1594>

argued that Rizgari and Orhan Kotan's awareness of the concept of sub-imperialism and Marini's work could have been realized to a large extent and most probably through close relations with the circle around the *Birikim* journal.

As Rizgari's political determinations in the following years and the interviews of prominent Rizgari activists in various media, the main direction of the aforementioned theoretical interaction is from *Birikim* to Rizgari. However, the fact that Orhan Kotan used the concept for the first time and embodied it in a political context gives Rizgari a theoretical specificity regarding historical pioneering. This should be read as the early circulation of a localized concept through an unexpected actor rather than an "influence" in the classical sense. On the other hand, Rizgari's relationship with this concept not only remains at the theoretical level but also evolved into hard political positions that led to open polemics with some sections of the Turkish left, especially with movements such as Devrimci Yol, Ürün, and Parti Birliği. On the other hand, with some of the continuators of the Mahir Çayan line, especially the Liberation Movement, there was an area of practical affinity and overlap due to the use of common concepts such as "colonial-type fascism". The colonialism thesis developed by Rizgari was not limited to its political line. Still, it became one of the basic assumptions of most of the legal and illegal organizations that emerged from the Kurdish left, including the PKK, especially after 1980. For this reason, the direction of interaction is not a fixed singularity; the network of relations that changes over time diversifies according to who, how, and for what purpose the established concepts are used. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to approach the issue as a multifaceted map of interaction involving polemics, synchronization, and mutual transformation rather than a straightforward influencer-influenced relationship.

In this framework, clues as to how the chosen concept of sub-imperialism was interpreted within the Rizgari circle can be seen in the printed publications and various statements published by the group's cadres and other actors within the Kurdish left. In this context, Rizgari and Kotan, in particular, were influenced not only by the leading discussion platforms of the Turkish left, such as the *Birikim* journal but also by more marginal and critical circles of thought that extended beyond this platform, paving the way for his criticism as a "Trotskyist" and "left deviant" in the years to come. There is an interaction

between Kotan and the circle around the *Birikim* journal, not only on an intellectual level but also based on organic relations. However, Rizgari was not limited to this interaction; it was also engaged in theoretical pursuits beyond the ideological lines widely accepted in the Turkish left of the period.

Within the framework of these searches, the tendency towards Marxist veins fed by Trotsky's criticisms of Stalinism; thinkers such as Althusser, who was influenced by the critical Maoist tendencies that came to the fore in Europe during the 1968 Uprisings; and economists such as Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran, who had both followers and critics in the Marxist literature with their original analyses of capital accumulation processes, is striking. Rizgari, who accessed the thoughts of these names through various translations and interpretations, shows a different orientation from the ideological sources that the revolutionary wing of the Turkish left concentrated on at the time. Therefore, Kotan and Rizgari had direct or indirect contact with intellectual circles outside the dominant socialist paradigm in 1970s Turkey, approached it with a critical distance, or at least followed the publications of these circles carefully. At this point, the question of why Kotan and Rizgari needed such an orientation and what kind of theoretical-political strategy this orientation corresponded to gains importance.

The first reason for this theoretical journey, which also involves a process of vernacularization and reappropriation, is the self-confidence and legitimacy that the groups and actors of the early 1970s - later known as the 'Kurdish left' - gained in the eyes of the masses. The establishment of the DDKO and two crucial events that developed simultaneously with it had a decisive impact on this process. On the one hand, the emergence of the 'Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey', founded under the leadership of Sait Kırılmaztoprak and initially seen as the left wing of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (but later emphasized by its members as an independent party)⁴⁸ and the circulation of an anti-colonialist, national liberationist socialist discourse; on the other hand, the adoption by these movements of a broad repertoire of actions, including armed struggle. For the future actors of the Kurdish left, all these

48 Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi, Birinci Kongre Tutanakları (n.p., n.d.), 1, <http://www.drsivan.info/uploads/belgeler/max/t-kdp-ilk-kongresi.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2025).

developments were a grand entrance into history. Having been in the shadow of the TKP, TİP, FKE, and various student movements for many years, Kurdish subjects gained theoretical-political and organizational-practical self-confidence following these developments that became concrete in the early 1970s. On the other hand, the position of the leftist movements in Turkey remained static in certain respects. It was sometimes characterized by the "arrogance of the sovereign nation" following the literature of the day. This new intellectual quest was one of the first signs of the ideological rupture between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish left.

This rupture manifests in both the selection of theoretical sources and how these sources are re-functionalized. As Clifford notes, a theory is always a situated practice⁴⁹; Rizgari's positioning, on the other hand, has been reshaped to offer a national and internationalist projection, originalizing the concepts conveyed in this context. While this intellectual diversification reflects the multi-layered process of reconstruction outlined by Edward Said in his traveling theory approach, Rizgari's theoretical orientations can be evaluated more clearly through Clifford's concept of situatedness and Bhabha's concept of cultural translation.

§ 3.5 Sub-imperialism and the Debates within the Kurdish Left

This reconstruction of the concept of sub-imperialism in Rizgari's discourse directly and theoretically justified the need for the Kurdish left to organize separately. Defining Turkey as a "sub-imperialist power and Kurdistan as a geography colonized by this power" meant that for Rizgari, alliances with the Turkish socialist movement were no longer possible both in practice and on a theoretical level. While the 'semi-colonial' analyses dominated by the Turkish left reduced Turkey's regional and internal relations of domination to its class contradictions, Rizgari argued that these contradictions had a national dimension and could be explained by identifying sub-imperialism. Thus, for Rizgari,

49 James Clifford, "Notes on Theory and Travel," in *Traveling Theories: Traveling Theorists*, ed. James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar, *Inscriptions* 5 (Santa Cruz: Center for Cultural Studies, 1989), 184.

the concept of sub-imperialism functioned as a theoretical analysis and a conceptual framework that necessitated a separate organization, an independent revolutionary strategy, and an ideological break with the Turkish left.

Intensifying in 1974 and extending until the coup d'état in 1980 to the establishment of different organizations, the division of the established organizations, and even the conflict between these organizations, understanding this process of separate organizations as a one-sided imposition and fait accompli from the Kurdish left to the Turkish left would lead to an incomplete understanding of the issue of separate organization. On the contrary, this process has evolved to include all-around processes of discussion, reconciliation, and separation with the Turkish left. These debates have generally taken the form of organizations from the Turkish left constructing their theoretical and political arguments from a defensive position to respond to the increasing number of questions posed by Kurdish cadres in their ranks. In contrast, the new actors of the Kurdish left have taken a new, law-making and offensive stance. However, these confrontations did not always produce negative results; for example, movements such as the Kurtuluş Movement, which claimed to be the intellectual and political continuators of Mahir Çayan's ideas, adopted the thesis of a separate organization. Some movements and political circles, including the Kurtuluş Movement, gave rise to factions or sections that determined specific policies for the geography they called Kurdistan in accordance with this thesis.⁵⁰

As mentioned above, with the general amnesty in 1974, many politicians from the Turkish and Kurdish left, including those who had served time in the DDKO trials, who had been tried and sentenced to imprisonment for being a member of various organizations (TİP, TKDP, T-KDP, KAK)⁵¹ or for playing politics in these organizations, were released. As a result, the discussions on

50 Hazal Özvarış, "Kaçaroğlu: 10 yıl hapiste, 6,5 yıl hücrede, 76 gün işkencede kaldım, elektrikli çarmıha gerildim!," *T24*, May 5, 2015, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/mustafa-kacaroglu-lastikle-sikistirirken-hem-falaka-devam-etti-hem-penisime-elektrik-verdiler,295622> (accessed May 24, 2025).

51 Adnan Çelik, "Ruşen Arslan: Kürt Gençliğinde 'Milliyetçi ve Sosyalist' Ayrışma 49'lar Davasıyla Başladı," *Kürt Araştırmaları*, October 22, 2021, <https://kurdarastirmalari.com/yazi-de-tay-oku-141> (accessed May 23, 2025).

separate organizations within the Kurdish left intensified and gradually began to form a concrete mobilizing attitude. The first outcome of this situation, the illegal Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan, founded in 1974 by the exiled Kemal Burkay, was the fact that the party and its natural leader, Burkay, came from a wing of the Turkish left that was seen as reformist/parliamentarian - so much so that even when Burkay was Secretary General of the TKSP, he was among the founders of the 2nd TİP⁵²-. For this reason, the TKSP politically oscillated between the perspective of ensuring the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination after the revolution it wanted to carry out in the geography it referred to as Turkish Kurdistan and the perspective of achieving general liberation in a joint revolution with the Turkish left. Although the TKSP and Burkay advocated separate organizations, due to the ambiguities in the TKSP's program and Burkay's political background, the TKSP was seen as one of the advocates of the "struggle dependent on the Turkish left" within the Kurdish left.

After Burkay, Orhan Kotan, a former member of Dr. Sait Kırmızıtoprak's T-KDP, which can be seen as one of the original organizations of the Kurdish left in its infancy compared to Burkay's,⁵³ and thus the Rizgari group, brought this thesis to the agenda. While Kotan's background undoubtedly paved the way for him to think on a more "national" ground than figures from the Turkish left, such as Tarık Ziya Ekinçi and Kemal Burkay, it also created the ground for Kotan to put forward a more socialist idea of national liberation such as "national liberation is not possible without social liberation" against figures from the more traditional wing of Kurdish politics such as Sait Elçi and Şakir Epözdemir. Thus, this theoretical and political flexibility that Kotan and later, relatively speaking, the Rizgari group gained allowed Kotan's and Rizgari's theses to find a much wider audience and to be discussed in wider circles. In this way, the thesis of "colonized Kurdistan" was localized and circulated following the jargon of the international socialist movement.... different from the times when it had been expressed before. It was re-appropriated by

52 Ruşen Arslan, *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük: Kürt Örgütlenmesi DDKO* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2020), 363.

53 "Orhan Kotan," *Biyografi.net*, <https://www.biyografi.net/kisi-orhan-kotan-3849/> (accessed May 24, 2025).

organizations and militants who were not sympathetic to Rizgari. The adoption of the colonial thesis by the Kurtuluş (Liberation) Movement, which comes from the Mahir Çayan tradition, as early as 1975, can be considered an important example when the interaction between Rizgari and the Liberation Movement, in particular, and the increasingly close and complex relations between the Kurdish left and the socialist left in Turkey, in general, are taken into account.

Kotan and the Rizgari group's localization and adaptation of Marini's concept of sub-imperialism to the Turkish context profoundly impacted the debates on imperialism on the Turkish left. At the same time, this adaptation process led to a reappraisal of the concept of imperialism within the Turkish and Kurdish left concerning the analysis of colonialism developed in connection with the regime debates in Turkey. The definition of semi-colony traditionally adopted by the Turkish left was questioned in Kotan and Rizgari's later works and treated as an argument that needed to be turned on its head. Drawing a parallel framework to the literature on imperialism and dependency debates, Kotan and the Rizgari group tried to explain Turkey's position in the imperialist hierarchy with theses that differed from the general tendencies of the Turkish left and could be considered more oppositional. In this context, Kotan's identification of Turkey as a "sub-imperialist unit" stems from the need to criticize the theoretical foundations of the Turkish left and to develop a coherent political argument for the Kurdish movement.

In this framework, Rizgari's emphasis on sub-imperialism was not only about analyzing Turkey's international position. For Rizgari, this concept directly assumed a critical function in explaining the nature of Turkey's forms of domination in the Kurdish geography. Turkey's status as a sub-imperialist unit within the imperialist system was the theoretical basis for its colonialist practice not only outside but also inside. In other words, "Turkey's domination in Kurdistan" was no longer a center-periphery relationship of a backward capitalist state in the classical sense; on the contrary, it was a sub-imperialist operation that was integrated with the pursuit of regional hegemony and exploited Kurdistan as an intrinsic component of the construction of this hegemony. For Rizgari, this determination became a theoretical imperative through the concept of sub-imperialism, "making the redefinition of

Kurdistan's status as a 'colony' not merely an ethical or political stance". Therefore, for Rizgari, a separate organization was not only a practical necessity but also a theoretical and political necessity deriving from Turkey's sub-imperialist character. Consequently, for Rizgari, the concept of sub-imperialism enabled a reconceptualization not only of Turkey's international position but also of the forms of domination in the Kurdish geography. This conceptual reconstruction constituted the founding backbone of Rizgari's political intervention, functioning as a framework that made both a theoretical break with the Turkish left and an independent organizational model of the Kurdish national movement inevitable.

These theoretical-political positions did not only remain at the textual level; they formed a broader political line through polemics, translation activities, and strategic literature in the Rizgari journal. The discourse analysis in the fourth chapter of the thesis will discuss in more detail how this theoretical framework is articulated in Rizgari's literature.

Ideological Rewriting in *Rizgari* Journal: Discourse, Polemic and the Localization of Marxist Theory

Developed based on Lenin's theory of imperialism and becoming a political indicator during the bloc formation process of the international socialist movement in the 1960s, Ruy Mauro Marini's argument of sub-imperialism has become an essential concept in political and activist discourse, first within the Rizgari movement and then within the Kurdish left in general. The determinations of sub-imperialism and colonialism in the preface of "Koçgiri Halk Hareketi", the first book published by Komal Publishing House, which constituted a kind of umbrella for the Rizgari group and represented an essential stage in their coming together, turned into a political instrument in the hands of Rizgari and Orhan Kotan, as mentioned in the previous sections as an example of traveling theory. In this way, ideological-political agitation was appropriate and compatible with socialist literature.

Of course, handling the concept of sub-imperialism and its localization and reappropriation was not sufficient for Rizgari's political aims on its own. *Rizgari* journal, which would later be published in 9 issues to be identified with the group, would take the ideological and political determinations in the preface of Kotan's book Koçgiri Halk Hareketi further, make suggestions on the field of practical politics through its issues, and gain a unique place within the broader left through its polemics with the Turkish and Kurdish left who thought differently from it.

§ 4.1 Theory Travel and Discourse Analysis: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

The discourse and content analysis of selected issues of *Rizgari* journal (issues 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7), which were made available through archival searches and personal efforts in the fourth part of this study, not only constitutes a collection of documents on Kurdish political thought of the period but also provides a ground where the processes of the travel, localization, and reappropriation of theories can be directly traced. Journal issues are essential primary sources for understanding the political orientation of the Rizgari group, primarily how it engaged with international socialist literature through Ruy Mauro Marini's concept of "sub-imperialism" and how it localized and reconstructed this theory. When evaluated within Edward Said's conceptualization of the traveling theory framework, these texts provide concrete examples of theoretical translation, conceptual adaptation, and political repositioning processes.

The writings in the journals not only quote Marxist classics but also articulate these texts with the political conditions specific to the Turkish context. In this respect, *Rizgari* constitutes a unique example to observe how Latin American dependency theory¹ or Third World socialism is rewritten. How concepts such as "colony", "annexation", "national liberation", "armed struggle", and "dictatorship of the proletariat" are used in the pages of the journal reveals that these concepts are not only imported but also intersect with the Kurdish movement in specific ways. *Rizgari*'s publishing practice can also be read as a theoretical rewriting process in this context.

The journal's contents are also of primary value for observing the theoretical-political routes through which the Kurdish left of the period diverged from the Turkish socialist movement. Against the dominant semi-colonial and semi-feudal analysis within the Turkish left, the *Rizgari* group's definition of Turkey as a sub-imperialist link in the imperialist chain and the related

1 Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, *Dependency and Super-Exploitation: The Relationship Between Foreign Capital and Social Struggles in Latin America*, dossier no. 67 (São Paulo: Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, August 2023), 10-11, <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-67-dependency/> (accessed May 25, 2025).

reference to Turkey as colonialist² ; presents not only a political positioning but also a specific world-system analysis. These discursive differences document the theoretical objections to hegemonic understandings within the Turkish socialist movement.

These journals' analysis also aligns with the thesis's overall methodological choices. In seeking to understand the theoretical formation of a particular political subject (Rizgari), the study turns not only to ideological positions but also to the concrete texts, narrative structures, and discursive strategies through which these positions are produced. Thus, the methodological bridge between discourse analysis and historical materialist reading aims to make the social dynamics behind the narratives visible and how these dynamics are conceptualized. Therefore, in this section, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 6th issues of *Rizgari*, which reveal the general outlines of Rizgari's politics and contain articles on themes that can be listed under the headings of "imperialism, colonialism, organization and methods of struggle", will be analyzed in detail; a discourse analysis will be made by emphasizing the importance of various articles in the 4th and 7th issues within the course of the journal, and finally, an inventory of all publications published by Komal Publishing House will be given.

§ 4.2 Rizgari's Manifesto: Analysis on the First Issue

Rizgari journal was published for the first time on March 21, 1976, the day of the Newroz/Nevruz holiday, a day that would undoubtedly later become more than a symbolic embrace for the Kurdish political movement. On the cover of this issue, there was a group photo with the caption "Dersim-1938" and the words "*Bimre Koledarî, Bimre Zordestî, Bijî Azadî, Bijî Rizgari*" (Down with Slavery, Down with Tyranny; Long Live Freedom, Long Live Liberation) written in Kurdish on the photo. The 111-page journal was owned by Ruşen Arslan and edited by Mehmet Uzun.³

2 Orhan Kotan, *Koçgiri Halk Hareketi* (1919-1921) (Istanbul: Komal Yayın Yayınları, 2006), 16.

3 *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

In the first issue of *Rizgari*, there is an introductory article explaining why the group came together and the aims of *Rizgari* journal, a polemic on the agenda, an article on the Sheikh Said Uprising, a translation text, and various events, poetry, literary articles, as well as the first version of a dictionary. It would be appropriate to mention the introductory article of the first issue and a few later articles to trace the intellectual and political aims of the *Rizgari* journal.

The article titled "Neden Yeni Bir Yayın? (Why a New Publication)" in the first issue of *Rizgari* should be considered not only as an introduction to the journal but also as a manifesto-like text that reveals the ideological positioning, theoretical orientation, and political analysis of the Kurdish socialist circles of the period.⁴ The article draws on the historical context of the national liberation struggles developed against the imperialist-colonialist world system; it emphasizes that these struggles continue in a wide area from Latin America to the Far East and Africa to the Middle East. In this context, "the struggle of the Kurdish people" is positioned as a part of similar anti-imperialist revolutionary popular movements, thus establishing a dialectic between the localism and universality of the Kurdish political struggle.⁵

An essential discursive strategy that draws attention in the text is constructing a language of resistance woven with metaphors such as "breaking the rotten links of the imperialist-colonialist chain".⁶ This language carries an ideological call for mobilization and attributes a historical task to the reader. At the same time, the emphasis on the fact that the Kurdish people are kept in a "prison of plunder and oppression" and yet resist "outdated policies" both underlines victimization and reconstructs the imagination of a subjectivized people.⁷ What is striking here is the definition of a line of national liberation complemented not only by cultural and linguistic demands but also by the perspective of economic independence and proletarian revolution. In this context, it is argued that the liberation of peoples is possible by establishing a

4 "Neden Yeni Bir Yayın?", *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976) , 2-14 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

5 "İlhan Selçuk'un Bir Yazısı Ve Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine", *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), 38 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

6 "Neden Yeni Bir Yayın?", *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), 2 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

7 Ibid., 6.

state and targeting the economic and class foundations of imperialist forms of domination.

In the Turkish context, the Kurdish issue is directly linked to "the success of the revolutionary struggle in Turkey".⁸ This discourse can be read as a criticism of the Turkish socialist movements. According to Rizgari, "the denial of the existence of the Kurdish people and the indifference shown by the Turkish socialist public opinion on this issue" is reflected in the text as the exposure of a "regime of silence" on the national question. Moreover, it is understood that the theoretical orientation felt throughout the text is based on dialectical materialism in line with the principle of "concrete analysis of concrete conditions". This means "a break with Kemalist dogmas and socialist positions that compromise with Kemalism" on the one hand and an expression of *Rizgari's* claim to establish its original theoretical line on the other.⁹

While reproducing classical Marxist discourse within an anti-colonial framework, the text conceptualizes the Kurdish issue not only as a minority problem but as an intrinsic part of the international revolutionary struggle. In this context, the association of the Right of Nations to Self-Determination with concrete processes of organization and subjectivization, rather than mere rhetoric, is one of the main elements determining Rizgari's theoretical political position. It can be said that the article indirectly intervenes in the debates within the Turkish left of the period and, therefore, has a polemical language from both inside and outside.

Another article that follows, "Neden Yeni Bir Yayın? (Why a New Publication?)", which should also be mentioned because it reflects a clear example of Rizgari's political position and style, is the article by İlhan Selçuk, a writer for the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, in which he compares Mustafa Barzani, the leader of the Kurdish movement in Iraq, with Alpaslan Türkeş, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party. By targeting the approach of İlhan Selçuk, one of the most influential Kemalist intellectuals of the period, the article attempts to expose the Turkish "progressive" public opinion's view of the national question at a discursive level. The strategy adopted by Rizgari in this article is to

8 Ibid., 13.

9 "İlhan Selçuk'un Bir Yazısı Ve Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine", *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), 25 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

expose the "denialist and assimilative character" of the Turkish intellectual tradition towards the Kurdish question by focusing on the concept of "oppressor nation" nationalism. Throughout the article, it is emphasized how an intellectual position that can be defined as "Kemalist-left", despite its claim to establish an anti-imperialist and populist discourse, actually functions in the reproduction of chauvinism.¹⁰ This is conceptualized as a progressive politics of denial that denies the oppressed nation's right to self-determination.

The text analyzes İlhan Selçuk's language on the Kurdish issue. It exposes concepts such as "social integrity", "brotherhood," and "unity", which he frequently uses in his writings, as an ideological cover. It is argued that, in practice, these concepts have become a means of denying the existence of the Kurdish people as a separate nation.¹¹ The notable discursive strategy here is the positioning of seemingly universal and unifying discourses as instruments of hegemony that mask the interests of the ruling nation. Rizgari's text constructs a counter-hegemonic reading by intervening in such concepts with phrases such as "progressive chauvinism" or "left Kemalist nationalism".¹²

The theoretical backbone of the article is based on the idea that the oppressed nation's right to self-determination must be defended and that this right must be recognized in principle, not conditionally, by the intellectuals of the oppressor nation. In this respect, Rizgari both leans on the Leninist approach to the national question at a theoretical level and questions the extent to which socialist movements in Turkey have internalized this principle in practice. The "intellectual statism" and the "nationalist left" tendency, which is revealed in the person of İlhan Selçuk, is coded as the carrier of the cultural discourse in the suppression of the national question in Turkey. The article points out that this approach is not merely a discourse choice but directly plays a functional role in the ideological production of the state's policy of denial.

Within the framework of this analysis, Rizgari's position does not attribute the solution of the Kurdish question to the "enlightenment" of the intellectuals on the oppressor nation front; on the contrary, it bases it on the necessity of the Kurdish people to create their political subject. It is not only İlhan Selçuk

¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹¹ Ibid., 32.

¹² Ibid., 26.

who is criticized here; it is the historical-political position embodied in his person. Thus, the article can be read as a powerful ideological intervention aiming to cause a discursive rupture in the Kemalist-socialist public of the period. In this respect, Rizgari calls for a reckoning against the "denialist positions of the Turkish left on the Kurdish issue," both on a theoretical level and in political practice.

The article that follows this one is a translation and perhaps one of the most interesting articles in the first issue of *Rizgari*. The fact that the translated article was selected from *Tricontinental*, one of the most famous opinion-discussion journals of the period and a well-established journal that covered revolutionary events, situations, and debates, especially from Latin America and other parts of the world, hints at the limits of Rizgari's intellectual horizons, especially on the issues it aimed to create public opinion.¹³ "Lenin ve Ulusal Kurtuluş Hareketleri (Lenin and the Wars of National Liberation)", written by Gregorio Ortega, is not only an attempt to bring an essential piece of classical Marxist literature to Kurdish readers but also a strategy of the Kurdish leftist movement of which Rizgari considers itself a part, to legitimize its political position theoretically. The fact that this text has been selected and translated indicates Rizgari's internationalist and theoretical orientation. Through this text, Rizgari introduces Lenin's theses on the national question and creates an opportunity to link its political line to these theses. In this way, it establishes a link with an intellectual tradition and presents the demands of the Kurdish movement as part of a historical continuity.¹⁴

Lenin's translated text is of critical importance, primarily as it unconditionally defends the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. By publishing this translation, Rizgari tries to show that the "demands of the Kurdish people" are theoretically recognized and justified by one of the central figures of Marxist theory. This discursive strategy includes a polemic against the Turkish left and aims to establish theoretical credibility with the Kurdish

13 "İlhan Selçuk'un Bir Yazısı Ve Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine", *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), 38 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

14 Gregorio Ortega, "Lenin ve Ulusal Kurtuluş Hareketleri," *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), 38 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

readership. In other words, this translation is a transfer of knowledge and an activity of legitimacy production, discursive positioning, and political persuasion.

With this translation, Rizgari ceases to be a publication addressing only a local field of struggle; it positions itself as a link in international Marxist thought. This can be seen as a move from the intellectual periphery to the epistemological center. The translation of the text reflects Rizgari's attempt to frame its political claim in a kind of "Leninist orthodoxy" and, at the same time, theoretically discuss the specific position of the Kurdish people within this orthodoxy. Lenin's arguments, such as his emphasis that "the distancing of the socialists of the oppressor nation from the demand for independence of the oppressed nations contradicts proletarian internationalism", are re-functionalized as a critical tool aimed directly at the Turkish socialist movement.¹⁵

Therefore, this translation shows the importance Rizgari attaches to theory and reveals that it pursues a strategy of theoretical alliances. For Rizgari, this strategy is not only to raise the voice of the Kurdish left but also to make this voice heard and discussed in an international universe of political thought. Here, translation becomes not only a linguistic but also a political, discursive, and epistemological act. In this way, Rizgari makes its struggle speak in international Marxist terminology, which creates ideological continuity and reduces the risk of theoretical isolation.

The last article to be analyzed in this issue is the article on the revolt led by the Azadi Organization in 1925, which is in line with Rizgari's revisionist historical narrative. The uprising, which is also called the Sheikh Said Rebellion in the official history theses in Turkey because it is identified with the personality of Sheikh Said, is seen by Rizgari as one of the "continuous resistance movements" following its position and positions itself as its continuator within this continuity.¹⁶ The article titled "Şeyh Said 1925 / Silahlı Miting (Sheikh Said 1925 / Armed Rally)", which will be continued in the second issue, is a text that combines two different historical moments on the same ideological plane and thus aims to establish the continuity of the Kurdish political movement. While

15 Ibid., 56.

16 "Şeyh Said 1925 / Silahlı Miting", *Rizgari*, no. 1 (March 21, 1976), 62-63 (Ankara: Çağdaş Basımevi).

the first part of the article, the section on Sheikh Said seeks to move the history of the Kurdish revolts out of the state-centered and denialist framework internalized by the Kemalist left, the second part, the section titled "Silahlı Miting", positions the current street practice of the Kurdish political movement in the 1970s as a continuation of the historical tradition of resistance.¹⁷ Thus, while Rizgari makes a discursive intervention in the reinterpretation of history, it also constructs an ideological continuity by linking this reading of history to contemporary political strategy.

One of the main strategies of the article is to remove the Kurdish people's history of resistance from the mold of "reactionary" or "feudal uprising" and place it on the same theoretical ground as modern national liberation movements. In this context, the Sheikh Said Movement is seen as a political objection to national oppression, not class-based.¹⁸ This discourse is a direct challenge to the official Kemalist historiography and the "enlightenment-progressive" understanding of the history of the Turkish socialist movement. At the same time, this article points to constructing an alternative theoretical framework that interprets historical materialism in a way that puts the history of oppressed nations at the center.

In the "Silahlı Miting" section of the text, the protest action held in Diyarbakır on February 29, 1976, is constructed as a continuation of the historical pattern. The meaning of the rally is not limited to being a contemporary protest; it is also a symbolic line between the "gun that exploded in Piran" of the past and the present.¹⁹ In this way, Rizgari connects historical memory to contemporary political practice and derives the legitimacy of the national movement from historical continuity. The metaphors used throughout the article - for example, the exposure of the label "reactionary" or the critical analysis of the functioning of the "İstiklal Mahkemeleri (Courts of Independence)" - aim to expose the repressive apparatuses of the state while portraying the resistance of the Kurdish people as a political subject that is constantly suppressed but is rising again.²⁰ This biaxial analysis - the political re-reading of

17 Ibid., 65.

18 Ibid., 62.

19 Ibid., 76.

20 Ibid., 62.

1925 on the one hand and the ideological positioning of the 1976 rally on the other - is the product of Rizgari's effort to unite history and the present within the same ideological continuum. In this respect, the article is more than just a historical analysis or a report on an action; it functions as one of the discursive constitutive texts of a political subjectivation project. Here, Rizgari reconstructs the history of the Kurdish people not merely as a narrative but as a political force shaping the present, integrating the revolutionary potential of the past into the practice of struggle today. In this respect, the text is a product of the Kurdish movement's effort to construct its history with its lexicon and analytical terms.

The first issue of *Rizgari* on March 21, 1976, is a publication that offers political content and a discursive step taken by the Kurdish national movement towards establishing its intellectual tradition. The issue presents a multi-layered structure interwoven with historical rewriting, contemporary political analysis, and translated texts. This diversity reveals that the journal is an organizational manifesto in the narrow sense and a "founding text" for establishing collective memory and political imagination.

The second issue of *Rizgari*, dated April 21, 1976, is a publication that questions the political-social framework of the period and functions as an oppositional space of knowledge production, not only in its content but also in the context of its publication. In response to the confiscation of its first issue on the day it was published, the journal devoted its second issue to exposing the ideological and institutional reasons behind this ban. In this context, especially in the introductory article titled "Rizgari Neden Toplatıldı? (Why Rizgari was confiscated?)", The limits of freedom of expression in Turkey are evaluated in relation to the ideological functioning mechanisms of the ruling class. The article emphasizes that the militarist bourgeoisie possesses not only the apparatus of repression but also the means of intellectual hegemony that the demands of the Kurdish people are excluded in a political environment where progressive, anti-colonial, and scientific publications are suppressed. At the same time, racist and chauvinist discourses are encouraged.²¹

21 "Rizgari Neden Toplatıldı?", *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976), 7 (Istanbul: Murat Yayıncılık).

This framework is carried to a theoretical level in the article titled "Kapitalizmin İnsanlık Tarihine Vurduğu Yüz Karası: Sömürgecilik (Capitalism's Disgrace to Human History: Colonialism)", which contains a more in-depth analysis of colonialism: Colonialism", which includes a more in-depth analysis of the issue of colonialism. This article, which appears between pages 33 and 52, constitutes the central axis of this issue of the journal both in terms of its scope and the theoretical expansions it contains. In the article, unlike the classical imperialist center-colonial relations, Turkey's domination over Kurdistan, as Rizgari calls it, is conceptualized not as an internal-colonial order but as a colonial relation within the formation of international colonialism. In this context, Turkey "maintains its control over Kurdistan not only for its capital accumulation but also for the general needs of the imperialist system."²² This observation is directly related to the concept of sub-imperialism, which is central to this thesis. Here, Turkey's position on the periphery of the capitalist world system and its oppression of other people in its periphery - the Kurds - can be read in the context of sub-imperialist structures.

The article draws historical and structural parallels between classical forms of colonialism and Turkey's "practices in Kurdistan". It compares Portugal's policies in its African colonies, Belgium's methods in the Congo, and specific practices of British colonial administrations with Turkey's attempts at demographic, legal, and cultural engineering in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces. In this framework, the statement that "Turkey administers Kurdistan as an international colony" is not merely a political slogan but is justified by historical, economic, and legal indicators.²³

This article, concerning Edward Said's concept of traveling theory, is an essential example of the re-functionalization of Latin American theories of dependency, especially the notion of sub-imperialism, in Turkey and Kurdistan. The content of the concept is not merely imported but reinterpreted within the local historical and political context; that is, it is subjected to a process of rewriting, as Said describes it. Rizgari's article is a clear example of this process: sub-imperialist relations are redefined within intertwined multi-

22 "Kapitalizmin İnsanlık Tarihine Vurduğu Yüz Karası: Sömürgecilik", *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976), 48 (Istanbul: Murat Yayıncılık).

23 Ibid., 49-50.

layered relations of exploitation rather than a center-periphery dynamic. In this respect, Rizgari's analysis of colonialism places special emphasis not only on class dynamics but also on ethnic, cultural, and historical components.

Other articles in this journal issue complement this general theoretical framework. For example, in the article titled "Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine — II (The Racist-Schovenian Reactionary Character of the Nationalism of the Oppressor Nation - II)", the denialist attitudes of prominent journalists of the period, such as Nadir Nadi, İlhan Selçuk and Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu towards Kurdish identity are criticized. Through these articles, the assimilationist functioning of Kemalist ideology within the Turkish nation-state project is exposed. The criticisms are directed not only at individuals but also at the intellectual positions represented by these figures. In particular, the discourse of "equality before the law" is defined as a hegemonic language that covers up the structural oppression of the Kurdish people.²⁴

Similarly, in the historical analysis titled "Şeyh Said 1925 / Silahlı Miting", how rebellions in the early Republican period were suppressed, how national demands were criminalized, and how this resembled colonial reflexes are described. It is noteworthy that the Sheikh Said movement is not considered as a simple reactionary uprising but as one of the historical expressions of Kurdish national consciousness. This historical reading is part of Rizgari's tendency to consider the process of the Kurdish people's national-democratic struggle as a continuum.²⁵

Another contribution to the theoretical infrastructure of the journal is the translation of Marxist concepts under the title "Berkeşan" into Kurdish. The Kurdification of basic categories such as "mode of production", "relations of production", "substructure," and "superstructure" is conceived not only as a language issue but also as a means for the Kurdish people to meet scientific

24 "Ezen Ulus Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Şoven Gerici Karakteri Üzerine — II," *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976), 2-9 (Istanbul: Murat Yayıncılık).

25 "Şeyh Said 1925 / Silahlı Miting," *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976), 65-67 (Istanbul: Murat Yayıncılık).

knowledge in their mother tongue.²⁶ In this context, the journal sees theoretical translation as a kind of political action, and this process provides an essential example of the localization of traveling theories.

Taken together with these articles, the second issue of *Rizgari* can be seen not only as a publication responding to current political conditions but also as an organic expression of the rewriting of socialist theory and localized theoretical interventions within the Kurdish movement. The theory of sub-imperialism developed in Latin America is not merely a theoretical reference here; on the contrary, according to Rizgari, it is articulated with the historical-political specificity of Kurdistan and transformed into a new theoretical formation. This presents an essential theoretical moment within the scope of the thesis as an example that embodies the stages of re-functionalization and re-appropriation mentioned by Said in the context of the journey of theories.

This issue of Rizgari, when examined in the context of the circulation, localization, and reproduction of theory, should be considered a political publication and a tool of theoretical intervention. The Rizgari group, the subject of this intervention, not only expresses the political demands of the Kurdish people but also stands out with its effort to reconstruct international socialist thought in the historical-political contexts specific to the Kurdish regions of Turkey. In this respect, the journal's second issue deserves to be analyzed as a critical text in transforming the theory of sub-imperialism into a traveling theory.

Current developments in the later issues of the journal exemplify the application of the theoretical framework to practical politics. The third issue of *Rizgari*, dated May 1977, with the theme of the 1977 elections and titled "Kürt Halkının Anti-Sömürgeci Ulusal Demokratik Mücadelesinin Seçim Siyaseti (The Electoral Politics of the Kurdish People's Anti-Colonialist National-Democratic Struggle)", as the title suggests, conveys the perspective to be followed by the movement's supporters for the 1977 Local Elections, while at the same time conveying the perspective to be followed in the Kurdish left. He was engaged in polemics over electoral politics with other actors, such as Özgürlük

26 "Berkeşan: Üretim / Pergalen Berkeşane: Üretim Araçları / Hezen Berkeşane: Üretim Güçleri / Tevlaya Berkeşane: Üretim İlişkileri / Cura Berkeşane: Üretim Tarzı / Bingeh: Alt Yapı / Sergeh: Üst Yapı," *Rizgari*, no. 2 (April 21, 1976), 91-98 (İstanbul: Murat Yayıncılık).

Yolu, the publication of the illegal Kurdistan Socialist Party of Turkey (TKSP-PSKT) led by Kemal Burkay.

§ 4.3 Against "Reformism and Social-Chauvinism": Constructing a Discourse on the Axis of Electoral Criticism

The first article published in the third issue of *Rizgari*, titled "Kürt Halkının Anti-Sömürgeci Ulusal Demokratik Mücadelesinin Seçim Siyaseti", contains a sharp criticism not only of Turkey's parliamentary system but also of the different ideological orientations within the Kurdish movement. The text treats elections not only as a tool of the ruling system but also as a tool of the legalist tendencies that seek to integrate the Kurdish people into the order. In this context, both the mainstream representatives of the Turkish left (especially the CHP) and the "reformist tendencies" within the Kurdish political movement (primarily Özgürlük Yolu) are targeted.²⁷

One of the central claims of the article is that Turkey's "bourgeois democracy" is de facto invalid in "Kurdistan" and that elections have become a mechanism for generating legitimacy for this system of denial. The CHP's "savior" discourse towards the Kurdish provinces in the context of the 1977 elections is addressed in the article in a tone that is both cynical and exposing. The CHP is portrayed here not only as a party of order but also as an actor that gives a left legitimacy to the Kemalist politics of denial. With statements such as "The torturers and mass murderers in Kurdistan are today CHP candidates for parliamentary seats", the historical complicity of the CHP, as well as its current roles, are pointed out. In this respect, *Rizgari* defines voting for the CHP as a political mistake and an ideological deviation.²⁸

However, the criticisms directed at the circles within the Kurdish movement that support these intra-systemic tendencies are more striking. In particular, the Özgürlük Yolu tradition is targeted between the lines of this article, but openly at times. The participation of the Özgürlük Yolu line in the

27 "Kürt Halkının Anti-Sömürgeci Ulusal Demokratik Mücadelesinin Seçim Siyaseti," *Rizgari*, no. 3 (May 1977): 77-84 (Istanbul: Üçler Matbaası).

28 Ibid., 104-107, 123-125.

elections is evaluated as a deviation from the revolutionary line of struggle. According to Rizgari, this understanding produces a legalism that "distracts, pacifies and draws the Kurdish people into the order". The fundamental error of this line, according to Rizgari, is that it considers reformism possible and legitimate under colonial conditions. However, as repeatedly emphasized in the article, the electoral system in "Kurdistan" is a colonial mechanism that makes representation of the people impossible; therefore, voting here does not express the free will of the people; on the contrary, it contributes to the reproduction of the colonial regime.²⁹

In this article, the Özgürlük Yolu line is criticized for following a "wrong tactic" and failing to comply with Kemalism. In this respect, Rizgari positions itself as representing an ideological clarification within the Kurdish political sphere. The claim that no line that does not confront the denialist legacy of Kemalism can be revolutionary constitutes the basic framework of the text.³⁰ Here, not only political attitude but also theoretical positioning is decisive. It goes beyond a tactical discussion such as "participation/non-participation" in the elections. It emphasizes that a revolutionary political line can only be based on an anti-Kemalist and anti-colonialist ideological ground.

Rizgari's language follows a strategy that exposes this internal polemic rather than suppressing it. Its description of reformist lines with concepts such as "passive resistance", "false consciousness," and "false hope" aims to break the illusion these movements create in the eyes of the people. Thus, the line of the Özgürlük Yolu is exposed politically and ideologically. At this point, the idea that the fight for hegemony in the Gramscian sense must be fought not only with the state but also with "hegemonic tendencies within the oppressed"³¹ is embedded in the text.

Rizgari's second article, "Genel Olarak (Sömürge Olgusuyla İlgili) Bazı Belirlemeler ve Bu Belirlemeler Işığında Takınılacak Tavır (Some

29 Ibid., 125.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 124; "Hegemonya: Sosyalistlerin Durumu, Açmazları ve Çıkış Yolu Üzerine Bir Tartışma," *Elyazmaları*, July 9, 2021, <https://elyazmalari.com/2021/07/09/hegemonya-sosyalistlerin-durumu-acmazlari-ve-cikis-yolu-uzerine-bir-tartisma-2/> (accessed May 27, 2025).

Determinations (on the Colonial Phenomenon) in General and the Attitude to be Taken in the Light of These Determinations)", forms the basis of the article titled "Electoral Politics" and makes the first theoretical expansion of the text, establishes the political position of the Kurdish people through a historical and structural analysis of colonization. This chapter functions as a theoretical introduction and constitutes the epistemological and political infrastructure of the following electoral critique. The anti-electoral attitude emphasized in the first analysis takes shape here due to a broader political-social reading: the attitude to be brought against the electoral system is only possible through a correct understanding of the status of the Kurdish people.

In this context, Rizgari tends to explain the situation in "Kurdistan" in terms of "classical colonialism". However, this explanation is not based on a straightforward analogy; on the contrary, it is argued that Kurdistan has been economically, politically, and ideologically subjected to a regime of domination centered in Turkey in the process of internal colonization that has continued from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. The text defines colonialism not only in the narrow sense of military occupation or tax collection but also as a multifaceted relationship of domination ranging from relations of production to population policies, from education to language.³² In this respect, the text makes a political determination and approaches an analysis of ideological hegemony in the Gramscian sense.

Another noteworthy element in this section is that the colonial people concept is addressed in terms of oppression and its potential for political subjectivation. Rizgari positions the people not as passive victims but as revolutionary subjects. In this context, the people's awareness of their colonial condition is conditioned by the rejection of consent-generating mechanisms such as the electoral system. This shows that the "call to boycott the elections" emphasized in the first analysis is based on a structural, not psychological, foundation. In other words, participation in the electoral system is not just a tactical mistake but a direct reproduction of the colonial order.

32 "Genel Olarak (Sömürge Olgusuyla İlgili) Bazı Belirlemeler ve Bu Belirlemeler Işığında Takınılacak Tavrı", *Rizgari*, no. 3 (May 1977): 7-21 (İstanbul: Üçler Matbaası).

Furthermore, this section emphasizes the "not only oppressive but also assimilationist" character of the state. At this point, the "education system", "one language," and "one nation" discourses are exposed as tools of cultural colonization. According to Rizgari, these tools serve not only the physical but also the symbolic destruction of the Kurdish people.³³ Thus, Rizgari's political discourse reaches a hybrid structure that combines classical Marxist economic analysis with a critique of cultural colonialism. In a way that opens the door to Edward Said's conceptualization of "cultural imperialism", it is stated that domination continues concerning production and systems of representation, symbols, names, and education.

In this context, the "attitude to be adopted" is presented not only as a political orientation but as an ontological break: Either the Kurdish people will integrate into the order and deny their national existence and melt into the opportunist wings of the Turkish left, or they will build an independent line and launch their unique anti-colonial struggle. In this framework, formations such as the Özgürlük Yolu that advocate "parliamentary struggle" are accused of a practical mistake and a theoretical deviation.

Beginning with theoretical determinations on the "phenomenon of colonization in general", the second part of the follow-up article, entitled "A Brief Overview of Ottoman-Kurdish, Turkish-Kurdish Relations and the Functions of Parliament", aims to give historical depth to these claims. This section, titled "Osmanlı-Kürt, Türk-Kürt İlişkilerine Kısa Bir Bakış ve Parlamentonun Fonksiyonları (A Brief Overview of Ottoman-Kurdish, Turkish-Kurdish Relations and the Functions of Parliament)", defines the colonization of Kurdistan not only as a situation specific to the Republican period but as an ongoing regime of internal domination since the Ottoman period.³⁴ This historical emphasis on continuity occupies a central place in Rizgari's discursive strategy; thus, narratives of the "progressivism" or "revolutionism" of the Republican regime are invalidated from the outset.

The text portrays the Ottoman policies of "separate order" and local collaborative structures such as the Hamidiye Regiments as the institutional

³³ Ibid., 10.

³⁴ Ibid., 29.

pillars of domination over Ottoman Kurdistan. In this framework, modernization processes do not mean equal citizenship for the Kurdish people but a more systematic mechanism of control, assimilation, and domination. However, Rizgari's criticism of the Ottoman Empire and the Kemalist state structure that followed it reveals how the same logic of sovereignty is perpetuated by changing its form. This claim of continuity, in line with Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined community", approaches the criticism that the nation-state tends towards the construction of a monist identity by eliminating differences within itself.³⁵

Particularly noteworthy is the discursive analysis of the Republican-era parliaments. The article claims that the parliaments never functioned as a real representation mechanism for the Kurdish people. This claim is not just an abstract assessment; the article gives historical exposure by directly referring to the parliamentary minutes of the period, parliamentary speeches, and election campaigns. This technique offers Rizgari's discourse an ideologically documented and legitimizing basis. For example, it is emphasized that the CHP's campaigns on Kurdish parliamentary candidates aim to support the people to the order. These candidates are mostly chosen from within the military-civilian bureaucracy. These figures are coded as representatives of the system, not the people.³⁶ Thus, the crisis of representation is presented as a structural problem, not an institutional one.

A recurring theme in the text is that the function of the "parliament" is not real legislation but legitimizing the Turkish bourgeoisie's rule over the colony. According to Rizgari, Parliament is "the showcase of bourgeois democracy" in Kurdistan; this showcase presents only a false image.³⁷ This criticism shows the historical underpinnings of the anti-electoral stance presented earlier in the article. The fact that elections are a legitimacy-generating mechanism is described here as a form of deception of the people, supported by historical examples.

35 "Osmanlı-Kürt, Türk-Kürt İlişkilerine Kısa Bir Bakış ve Parlamentonun Fonksiyonları," *Rizgari*, no. 3 (May 1977): 30 (İstanbul: Üçler Matbaası).

36 *Ibid.*, 41.

37 *Ibid.*, 42.

Again, in this section, references to the Sheikh Said Rebellion in the early years of the Republic and the Dersim Massacre that followed are intended to show that the system established a relationship of suppression, not dialogue, with the Kurdish people. These events are directly linked to the dysfunctionality of the parliaments, reinforcing the thesis that "legitimate representation" was never realized. At the same time, this narrative strategy also shows that *Rizgari* engages in a politics of memory for the present and history.³⁸

Through this politics of memory, the narrative of the continuity of the state is constructed while also referring to the reformist approaches of the Turkish left towards the CHP. The article positions the CHP not only as the current party of order but also as the founder of the history of denial and extermination. This provides the historical background for the indirect criticism of Özgürlük Yolu and similar lines discussed in previous analyses.

The third issue of *Rizgari* should be read as a comprehensive expose of the parliamentary system in Turkey in the context of the national democratic struggle of the Kurdish people and the theoretical-political construction of a revolutionary line. This issue deals with the phenomenon of colonialism in its historical, structural, and ideological aspects. It defines election participation as a tactical and structural mistake that directly means producing consent to the colonial order. While in-establishment and reformist actors such as the CHP and the Özgürlük Yolu are harshly condemned, anti-Kurdish politics from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic are analyzed in a continuum. This discourse, shaped by the Leninist perspective of national liberation, presents a powerful political program that calls on the people to break away from the pacifying framework of the parliament and become a revolutionary subject.

Another issue of *Rizgari* that should be emphasized is the sixth issue, dated June 1978, in which it entered into polemics with journals from the Turkish left, such as Devrimci Yol, Ürün, and Partinin Yolu. The title of this issue of the journal, published under the title "Kürt Halkının Anti - Sömürgeci Mücadelesine Sosyal-Şoven Taaruz Harekâtı (The Social-Chovenian Assault Operation against the Anti-Colonialist Struggle of the Kurdish People)", is the article "Türk Solunda Sömürge Kürdistan Tezi (The Colonial Kurdistan Thesis

38 Ibid., 37.

of the Turkish Left)" after the introduction in which social chauvinism is identified. Here, through polemics with various groups from the Turkish left, it is emphasized that the fundamental conflict between the Turkish left and the Kurdish left is "ideological, not theoretical". According to this article written by Orhan Kotan, since the Turkish left has not yet come to terms with Kemalism and its position as the sovereign nation, it deals with the Kurdish issue from a chauvinistic perspective. This, according to Rizgari, causes the criticism of Özgürlük Yolu by some segments of the Turkish left in those days to be "an ideological debate that is not an intra-Marxist theoretical debate, but an extra-Marxist one, characterized by chauvinism and the arrogance of the sovereign nation".³⁹ After this introduction, Rizgari entered into polemics with direct references to these sections of the Turkish sections.

§ 4.4 Reconstructing Theory and History: Rizgari's Two-Pronged Strategy in Issue Six

The articles in which *Rizgari* journal engages in polemics with various actors in the Turkish left are the 5th, 7th, 8th, and 9th articles of the first part, and these articles are texts that play a critical role in the self-definition process of the Kurdish socialist movement in terms of both content and style. These writings should be considered polemical texts and tools for the theoretical construction of the Kurdish national movement on a socialist ground. The primary strategy in these texts is to expose the various tendencies of the Turkish left ideologically and, through this exposure, position Rizgari as the true representative of the Kurdish people and the bearer of a genuine revolutionary line. In this way, Rizgari, on the one hand, exposes the "social-chauvinist" tendencies of the Turkish socialist movement and, on the other hand, creates a discursive ground to build the legitimacy of the Kurdish political movement.

The fifth article, "Özgürlük Yolu'nun Hedef Tahtası Seçilmesinin Bayağı Mantığı Üzerine (On the Banal Logic of Choosing the Özgürlük Yolu as a

39 "Türk Solunda Sömürge Kürdistan Tezi," *Rizgari*, no. 6 (June 1978): 7–9 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

Target)", criticizes the different ideological tendencies within the Kurdish movement. Here, Rizgari defines the "Özgürlük Yolu" line as an orientation that takes class contradictions in Kurdistan as its basis but relegates the national question to the background. In this criticism, it is argued that instead of recognizing the collective rights of the Kurdish people, the Özgürlük Yolu seeks to integrate into the general framework of the Turkish left. In this context, Rizgari characterizes this line as "revisionist" and accuses it of suppressing the revolutionary energy of the Kurdish people. This criticism of the Özgürlük Yolu is part of Rizgari's quest to establish a hegemony against the Turkish left but also against the reformist tendencies within the Kurdish movement. The language and argumentative structure of the article reflect Rizgari's attempt to redefine the Kurdish national question within the Marxist framework but from a specific position.⁴⁰

Similarly, the seventh text, "Devrimci Yol'un Sosyal-Şoven Sapkınlığı ve Lafazanlık (The Social-Chauvinist Deviation and Verbalism of Devrimci Yol)", harshly criticizes an essential faction of the Turkish socialist movement. Rizgari argues that the rhetoric used by Revolutionary Path, such as "unity", "brotherhood," and "common struggle", actually functioned to suppress the Kurdish people's demand for national subjectivation. According to Rizgari, the Devrimci Yol "does not recognize the colonial status of Kurdistan, and this is reproducing Turkish sovereignty with a revolutionary strategy built on denial". What is striking about this article is that it exposes Rizgari's critique of social chauvinism not only as an ethical position but also as a theoretical inconsistency. In this way, Rizgari equates the measure of fidelity to revolutionary principles with recognizing the right of the oppressed nation to self-determination. This equation removes Rizgari's discourse from a moral ground and grounds it in a claim to theoretical coherence and ideological integrity.⁴¹

The eighth article, "Partinin Yolu'nun Rizgari ile İlgili Görüşleri Üzerine (On the Partinin Yolu Views on Rizgari)", establishes a line of defense against the criticism of Rizgari as a "nationalist deviation". This defense is developed

40 "Özgürlük Yolu'nun Hedef Tahtası Seçilmesinin Bayağı Mantiğı Üzerine," *Rizgari*, no. 6 (June 1978): 14 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

41 "Devrimci Yol'un Sosyal-Şoven Sapkınlığı ve Lafazanlık," *Rizgari*, no. 6 (June 1978): 19 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

through a reinterpretation of the concept of internationalism. Rizgari argues that supporting the national struggle of the Kurdish people is a sine qua non of revolutionary internationalism and claims that socialist currents that do not show this support misunderstand "proletarian internationalism". Thus, Rizgari is the spokesperson for the Kurdish people's liberation struggle and a truly internationalist movement. This article opens a space in which Rizgari responds theoretically to criticisms from the Turkish left and continues its effort to link the Kurdish national question to the overall strategy of revolutionary struggles.⁴²

The ninth article, "Koronun Baş Solisti Ürün Üzerine (The Choir's Lead Soloist on the Ürün)", does not focus its criticism on the theoretical but on the media through which ideological language is produced. Rizgari positions Ürün journal as a vehicle representing the approach of the Turkish leftist intelligentsia to the Kurdish issue. In the article, Ürün's language is characterized by the arrogance of the "bourgeois intellectual" and indifference to the demands of the Kurdish people. Rizgari exposes Ürün as an ideological tool, arguing that it does not recognize the "colonial status" of the Kurdish people and condemns their struggle as "separatism" or "petty bourgeois nationalism". Thus, organizations and publications are included in the field of struggle, and the war of discourse is multi-layered.⁴³

When these four articles are taken together, it is seen that Rizgari is trying to produce a counter-hegemony against the hegemonic discourses of the Turkish socialist movement and an intellectual effort to reconstruct the Kurdish national struggle on a socialist basis. Underlying this effort is the strategy of labeling any leftist position that does not accept the colonial status of Kurdistan as "social-chauvinist" and establishing its legitimacy through this discourse. Rizgari's language is sharp, but this sharpness is based on theoretical and strategic clarity, not just agitational. In this way, Rizgari establishes itself as representing a movement and an epistemological rupture.

It is not until the end of the sixth issue that *Rizgari*, after its polemics with the Turkish left, turns back to theory and addresses the colonial question with

42 "Partinin Yolu'nun Rizgari ile İlgili Görüşleri Üzerine," *Rizgari*, no. 6 (June 1978): 27 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

43 "Koronun Baş Solisti Ürün Üzerine," *Rizgari*, no. 6 (June 1978): 36 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

references to Lenin and other Marxist actors. In this way, Rizgari reiterates its unwavering commitment to Marxist-Leninist theory and takes a clear stance on references. The articles titled "Kısa Bir Değerlendirme (A Short Evaluation)" and "Kısa Bir Ders (A Short Lesson)" aim to put the accusations of "social-chauvinism" leveled against various factions of the Turkish left in the first part of the journal on not only an ideological but also a historical and theoretical basis. In particular, these two texts discuss the issue of whether the Kurdish geography was colonized by referring to Marxist-Leninist classics and, through this discussion, reconstruct the legitimacy of the Kurdish national struggle. What is striking here is that Rizgari not only takes a political position but also makes a constitutive claim about how and under what conditions Marxist classics on the national question should be interpreted.

The text "Kısa Bir Değerlendirme" responds to the circles that claim that the "determination that Turkey annexed Kurdistan" does not correspond to the definition of colonialism in the socialist literature. It argues that this view is historically and theoretically unfounded, especially against the arguments of some tendencies of the Turkish left that "if it is annexed, it is not a colony". According to Rizgari, whatever the form of annexation - military occupation, administrative integration, assimilation through parliamentary representation - what is decisive is whether or not the oppressed nation's right to self-determination has been usurped. This is where a comparative method based on illustration comes into play: "Portugal's colonies in Africa and Turkey's domination relations in Kurdistan" are compared. Portugal constitutionally defined colonies such as Angola or Mozambique as its provinces, but this definition did not mean they were not colonies. Similarly, the fact that "Turkey considers Kurdistan to be constitutionally, administratively or politically part of the country" does not mean that the people there do not live in colonial status. Through this example, Rizgari tries to historically and logically refute the Turkish left's thesis that "there is no colonialism" based on a legal and institutional framework.⁴⁴

44 "Kısa Bir Değerlendirme," *Rizgari*, no. 6 (June 1978): 46 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

In this framework, Lenin's approach to the colonial question is one of the main reference points of the article. Referring to Lenin's principle of "the right of colonial peoples to self-determination", it is argued that this right encompasses a formal demand for "independence" and the struggle against internal forms of colonialism. Lenin's approach to oppressed peoples, especially within the Russian Empire, is re-functionalized in the case of "Kurdistan". This re-functionalization also aligns with Edward Said's traveling theory approach: The theory is reconstructed in a new historical and spatial context without detaching it from its context of origin. Rizgari does precisely this, reconstructing Lenin's theses in the Turkish context and transforming socialist literature into the ideological weapon of its national liberation strategy.

"Kısa Bir Ders" summarizes this theoretical framework in a more pedagogical and direct discourse, almost functioning as an ideological lecture note. This article clearly states the following argument: The thesis that all peoples within a country's borders should have the same national rights becomes a reactionary rather than a revolutionary thesis if one is forcibly included within these borders and deprived of the right to self-determination. Therefore, according to Rizgari, any socialist thesis that defends the "national unity" of Turkey and denies the Kurdish nation the right to secession objectively reproduces colonialism. The boundaries of internationalism are also redrawn here: For Rizgari, internationalism is not a centralized revolutionary strategy that does not recognize the rights of oppressed nations but a solidarity based on the free equality of different nations. The Turkish left's hierarchical approach to first-class struggle and national rights is condemned in this framework. Rizgari's emphasis on this point is based on the thesis of "the right of revolutionary leadership for oppressed nations" developed by Lenin and the Comintern in the 1920s.⁴⁵

These two texts form an integrated discursive structure with the polemical texts discussed in the previous analyses. While the first, "Kısa Bir Değerlendirme", theoretically refutes the Turkish left's reduction of the definition of colonialism to legal formalism, the second, "Kısa Bir Ders", frames the Kurdish people's struggle for national liberation as not only a right but a

45 Ibid., 48.

revolutionary imperative. Thus, Rizgari refuses to limit theory to a tactical level of discourse; on the contrary, the theory is the primary framework determining the revolutionary practice's direction. According to Rizgari, the ideologically denialist or postponing attitudes of some elements of the Turkish left towards the demands of the Kurdish people are invalidated based on historical materialism and revolutionary theory.

In this context, Rizgari not only develops a discourse that exposes the colonial reality but also argues that by denying this reality, the Turkish left undermines the historical legitimacy of the socialist movement. Thus, the Kurdish political movement's construction of an independent socialist line is defended as a practical and theoretical necessity. "Kısa Bir Değerlendirme" and "Kısa Bir Ders" are concrete indicators of Rizgari's construction of an ideological position that is not only reactionary but also constitutive.

The sixth issue of the *Rizgari* journal presents a unity in which the movement simultaneously conducts its ideological confrontation with various tendencies of the Turkish left and the theoretical legitimization of its national liberation thesis on a Marxist-Leninist basis. While the polemical writings in the first part harshly denounce the Turkish left's approach to the Kurdish question, especially around the concept of "social-chauvinism", the theoretical texts in the second part ground these criticisms in historical materialism, debates on colonialism, and the Leninist literature on the national question. The transition between these two planes shows that Rizgari does not merely take a defensive or reactive position but instead tries to construct its ideological line constitutively. Thus, the sixth issue provides a worthy example to analyze in this thesis as a discursively dense and coherent issue in which Rizgari reinforces its political subjectivity and theoretical specificity.

§ 4.5 From Theory to Organization: Rizgari's View on Mass Organizations and Strategic Hegemony

Apart from these issues, which reveal the intellectual and political adventure of Rizgari in general terms, it would be helpful to mention its fourth and seventh issues in the context of some articles. The article titled "Demokratik Kitle Örgütleri Siyaseti (The Politics of Democratic Mass Organizations)" in the

fourth issue of *Rizgari*, which was published in January 1978, gives an idea of how the movement views mass organizations and evaluates them for massification. The theme of a large section between pages 3 and 56, "Demokratik Kitle Örgütleri Siyaseti", and the articles under the title and its sub-titles are, so to speak, a guide to the experience of the Anti-Sömürgeci Demokratik Kültür Derneği (Anti-Colonialist Democratic Cultural Association), or ASDK-DER, which gradually became identified with *Rizgari* over a few years, and which, after the *Rizgari*-Ala *Rizgari* split, was embraced by both groups with the motivation of preserving the claim of massification.⁴⁶

Although this thesis deals with the theoretical activities of the *Rizgari* group rather than its activities in practical politics, it is essential to emphasize this relationship between the journal, which was one of the places where the theoretical work and discussion was most intense for the group, and the ASDK-DERs, which can be considered as the first political spaces of *Rizgari* in practical politics in the following years. This is because the article was written as a result of the effort to define the carrier apparatuses of mass mobilization in the anti-colonial national democratic struggle of the Kurdish people and to reestablish these apparatuses with a classist, revolutionary content. It directly aims to make determinations and give perspectives on practical politics. In the article, the democratic mass organizations are defined not only as apparatuses for claiming rights or reformist representation but with a direct anti-imperialist and revolutionary task, especially in areas such as trade unions, village cooperatives, and youth organizations, as well as the capacity of the masses for self-government and revolutionary consciousness of the bourgeoisie. It is emphasized that these organizations should be independent of the state, operate on the principle of democratic centralism, and not be dissolved in bourgeois law. While *Rizgari* proposes to make mass organizations functional within the class struggle based on the classical Leninist understanding of the party, it also tries to give the Kurdish political struggle a social dimension. The article considers the social resistance in Kurdish geography and the criticism of disorganization and argues that the associations should be guided

46 "Demokratik Kitle Örgütleri Siyaseti," *Rizgari*, no. 4 (January 1978): 3–56 (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası).

by revolutionary theoretical knowledge to carry this resistance to a systematic, widespread, and populist line. Thus, it is seen that Rizgari claims a hegemonic position for themselves in the Kurdish movement through national discourse and organizational strategy.⁴⁷

The seventh issue, the last issue published by the Rizgari group and the faction that took the name Ala Rizgari and split in 1978, was published in November 1978. Apart from being the last issue before the split, it was also the issue in which the group's most vigorous opposition to Özgürlük Yolu, which had gained prominence with its mass mobilization and the prestige it had gained in the social sphere through its legal, cultural associations, was made. The most open polemics were engaged in. The article in this issue, titled "Kürt Halkının Anti - Sömürgeci Ulusal Demokratik Mücadelesinde Sağ Oportünizm ve "Özgürlük Yolu" nun Eleştirisi (Criticism of Right-Wing Opportunism and 'Özgürlük Yolu' in the Anti-Colonialist National Democratic Struggle of the Kurdish People)", is a comprehensive and polemically charged text that aims at the ideological exposure of the reformist and compromising tendencies within the Kurdish national movement. In particular, the article condemns the line represented by the Özgürlük Yolu journal with the concept of right opportunism and criticizes its strategy, which is based on the legal sphere, excludes armed struggle, and suppresses the idea of revolutionary violence. Rizgari considers this approach a line that paralyzes revolutionary dynamism, pacifies the masses, and does not relate the colonial reality to the class struggle.⁴⁸

It argues that right opportunism uses Marxist theory formally but turns it into a tool for integration into the bourgeois order. The article evaluates Özgürlük Yolu's targeting of the Kurdish people's right to an independent organization under the pretext of criticizing the "nationalist deviation" as essentially "a kind of social-chauvinist extension of the Turkish left". At this point, while claiming to theoretically defend the independent line of the revolutionary struggle of the Kurdish people, Rizgari also exposes the past of the reformist Kurdish intellectuals and anatomizes an ideological deviation within

47 Ibid., 12.

48 "Kürt Halkının Anti - Sömürgeci Ulusal Demokratik Mücadelesinde Sağ Oportünizm ve "Özgürlük Yolu"nun Eleştirisi", *Rizgari*, no. 7 (November 1978): 17, (Kent Basımevi: İstanbul).

historical continuity. Thus, *Rizgari* functions not only as an external polemic but also as a clarification of its position in the ideological purification within the Kurdish movement.⁴⁹

The inventory below shows the diversity of Komal Publishing's publishing activities, not only in the political but also in the historical, legal, and cultural fields.

Rizgari journal is a multi-layered publication that should be read as a historical document and an attempt to construct a political subject. The analysis conducted in this chapter has shown that *Rizgari* functions not only as a publication but also as a theoretical apparatus that establishes, legitimizes, and defends the socialist orientation within the Kurdish national struggle. The discourse analysis of selected issues revealed that the journal waged a theoretical and ideological struggle against external enemies (the state, Kemalism, CHP) but also against the right-wing tendencies within the Kurdish movement and the social-chauvinist approaches of the Turkish left. In this sense, *Rizgari* constituted the intellectual front of a struggle for hegemony on both external and internal fronts.

The use of concepts such as sub-imperialism, annexation, internal colonialism, right opportunism, revolutionary violence, and democratic mass organizations in the journal pages shows that these concepts were not imported but rewritten and endowed with meanings specific to the Kurdistan context. In line with Edward Said's framework on the travel of theories, this proves that *Rizgari* is a subject that consumes Marxist-Leninist literature and reconstructs and localizes it. In particular, translations and interpretations of Lenin's texts on the national question determine the direction of this theoretical journey, while the reinterpretation of historical figures such as Sheikh Said shows how these theories are brought together with historical continuity.

In this framework, *Rizgari*'s publishing goes beyond political agitation or propaganda; it becomes central to ideological purification and intellectual positioning. By attempting to expose the theoretical inadequacy of the Turkish left and the reformist tendencies within the Kurdish movement, *Rizgari* has

49 Ibid., 17.

positioned itself as the mouthpiece of a "pure" revolutionary line. In this respect, the journal also establishes the discursive basis for constructing a collective subject.

The concluding chapter of the thesis will aim to evaluate the historical place of Rizgari's theoretical-political orientation within the Kurdish socialist movement in light of the conceptual framework and discourse analyses presented. Furthermore, the process of transformation of the concept of sub-imperialism and how the reappropriation of this concept in the local context has affected the strategic orientations of the Kurdish movement will be discussed; concerning the example of Rizgari, implications will be presented regarding the role of the processes of the travel and rewriting of theories in the ideological structuring of social movements.

Conclusion

This master's thesis aims to contribute to the literature on traveling theories through the concepts of sub-imperialism and colonialism in terms of its general aim and theoretical framework. In this context, while addressing the process of transferring traveling theories to different contexts, the study also aims to contribute to the re-evaluation of this history in the light of alternative documents and approaches by examining a cross-section of the recent history of the Kurdish left in the history of social movements in Turkey. The political position and conceptual intervention developed by the Rizgari group in the 1970s, which is central to the study, has been reopened to a discussion, primarily through the concepts of "sub-imperialism" and "colonialism". However, this discussion is not only a political evaluation that analyzes the practices in the Kurdish geography of Turkey but also within the framework of multi-layered relations with socialist and postcolonial thought.

This approach aims to analyze the importation of concepts and the process of their reproduction, operationalization, and transformation in the context of the Kurdish political struggle. To this end, the theoretical underpinning of the thesis is built around Edward Said's conceptualization of traveling theory, which he developed to explain the transformations that theories undergo when they are moved to different contexts. In addition to Said's approach, James Clifford's notions of positionality and cultural circulation, which emphasize the repositioning of theories in local historical, cultural, and political

contexts, and Homi K. Bhabha's notions of cultural translation and third space, which are developed to understand the processes of theoretical hybridization, are also considered as complementary analytical tools in this context.

Throughout the different chapters of the thesis, the theoretical journey of the concepts of imperialism and sub-imperialism and the concept of colonialism concerning these concepts, and the stages of this journey, which gained new functionality in the hands of Rizgari and served to create new grounds for discussion within the Turkish left and the Kurdish left, were analyzed. The most important point to emphasize here is that the theory of imperialism is also a traveling theory in terms of its emergence and spread to other countries. John Hobson defined imperialism as 'a parasitic process whereby the monetary interests that seize control of the reins of government within a state turn to imperialist expansion in order to support internal luxury, drain the wealth of other countries, and attach them to foreign entities.'¹ Rudolf Hilferding later proposed this definition as 'the policy of finance capital.'² Later, in 1916, this theory was further developed and given its final form by Vladimir I. Lenin, who named it 'the highest stage of capitalism.'

According to Lenin, throughout the 20th century, the "age of imperialism and proletarian revolutions,"³ imperialism theory and the approach to producing politics based on this theory inspired various national and social movements worldwide. As demonstrated in this thesis, imperialism theory reached Hobson in London to Hilferding in Vienna, then to Vladimir I. Lenin in St. Petersburg, and then to Ruy Mauro Marini in Brazil in 1965, and eventually in the early 1970s, the theory traveled to Turkey and from there to Orhan Kotan and the Rizgari group, that is, to the Kurdish left. The theory of imperialism, which has changed at every stage and distance along its journey, was initially intended to explain the late imperial era or the political vistas of the

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- 1 J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1902), 57, <https://archive.org/details/imperialismastuoogooog/page/n10/mode/2up> (accessed June 8, 2025).
 - 2 Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, trans. Morris Watnick and Sam Gordon (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 301.
 - 3 Vladimir I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/imperialism.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2025), 136.

early modern states that were the remnants of empires but gradually came to be used to analyze the new political balances of power and spheres of influence that emerged in different parts of the world. From the 1960s onwards, imperialism, an essential component of the Marxist-Leninist political reading of world-historical politics, turned into a tool of political comparison and agitation-propaganda, so to speak, in the struggle between different imperialist states. This new theory of imperialism, which was used mainly by the thinkers of the Dependency Theory to deal with the military coups organized against the developmentalist governments in Latin America and the states that the US considered to be in its sphere of influence, was used to examine the place of the Brazilian, Argentine or Uruguayan juntas in the international system, which, unlike its classical meaning, operated on behalf of the imperialists instead of the imperialists and enabled the imperialists - especially US imperialism - to maintain their domination.

Various segments of the Kurdish political movement, which can be argued to have had centrifugal tendencies since the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic, localized and re-appropriated the aforementioned concepts of new imperialism/sub-imperialism to strengthen their theoretical baggage as a result of their engagement with socialism since the 1960s. According to the Kurdish left and the position of Rizgari in particular, Kurds were called to stand together with Turks with the discourse of "not dividing the ummah" before the process leading up to the 1921 Constitution, while after 1923, they were again prevented from organizing separately by Turkish socialists at various times with the call of "not dividing the working class". However, according to communist theory, which was advocated by Rizgari, the right of the communists of the colonized nations to form separate organizations from the communists of the oppressor nation and the right of each nation to establish its state by liberating itself from colonialism are two very legitimate political situations, created the opportunity for Rizgari and the Kurdish left to easily engage with communist theory and its concepts for their political vision. This reading of history has made the theoretical ground on which Rizgari and its successors have endeavored to build their theoretical ground in the following years, which they have done by referring to socialist literature and on which they believe they are waging their political struggle.

This thesis, by focusing on the political and intellectual practice of the Rizgari group, has also examined the transformations of both the concepts of sub-imperialism and colonialism in the context of Turkey, focusing on the processes of rewriting these concepts as traveling theory. Drawing on Edward Said's framework of traveling theory, it is argued that these two theoretical constructs were not only imported but also reconstructed and transformed by Rizgari according to historical, class, and national struggle conditions. In this context, the thesis shows how both Latin American dependency theories and the classical critique of colonialism were incorporated into the discursive universe of the Kurdish political struggle and how they took on specific meanings. This analysis, through the example of Rizgari, not only examines a historical, ideological orientation but also questions the nature of the relations between traveling theories and local struggles and makes visible the constitutive role these relations play in the processes of political subjectivization. In this respect, the study offers a conceptual expansion for both postcolonial theory and the literature on socialist movements in Turkey. It makes a theoretical and methodological contribution to the social sciences by demonstrating that theory can be reproduced in centralized contexts and peripheral struggles.

The main findings of this thesis reveal that these concepts were not simply theoretical transfers but were radically transformed by Rizgari following the concrete conditions of the Kurdish political struggle and turned into constitutive tools of political subjectivation. The study makes significant contributions to the literature on postcolonial theory and the history of leftist movements in Turkey while at the same time providing a methodological perspective to the study of theory circulation in the social sciences.

The most important contribution of the thesis to the literature is the extension of Said's model of traveling theory to the Turkey's context to encompass not only West-centered but also periphery-periphery transmissions of theories. Rizgari's transformation of Marini's concept of sub-imperialism to analyze Turkey's practices in Kurdish geography can also be considered an example of "south-south theoretical circulation" rarely examined in postcolonial literature. In this context, Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space are synthesized with colonial theory in Rizgari's analysis of colonialism, indicating a process of hybridization that goes beyond the classical postcolonial

framework. Regarding the study of leftist movements in Turkey, the thesis reads Rizgari's break with the Turkish left as an organizational and theoretical one. It shows how its emphasis on colonialism against semi-colonial analyses constituted the epistemological basis of the Kurdish political movement's ideological independence in the 1970s.

The discourse analyses of Komal Publications and *Rizgari* journal fill a gap in this field by shedding light on Kurdish socialist publishing's practices of localizing internationalist theory. Methodologically, Clifford's concept of the-oretical travel emphasizes Rizgari's position as an "explorer", documenting an active process of reproduction as opposed to the passive reception of theory. This approach lends an activist perspective to studying theory-circulation in the social sciences. The thesis's importance in building a political-theoretical bridge is that it treats the theoretical production of the Kurdish left in the 1970s as a historical phenomenon and a living example of political epistemology. Rizgari's use of sub-imperialism to explain Turkey's relations with NATO and its military presence in Kurdish regions embodies the dialectic between theory and practice.

Regarding archival value, the rare issues of the *Rizgari* journal and the inventory of Komal Publications have been analyzed through the sources of the Kurdish socialist discourse of the period and brought into the academic literature. Regarding conceptual originality, the evolution of the concept of colonialism within the Kurdish movement in Turkey is traced through a three-stage model: DDKO's implicit use, TKDP's explicit expression in defenses, and Rizgari's theoretical grounding. This model systematically maps the politicization process of the concept.

Among the main challenges encountered during the research process, access to sources stands out. Missing issues of *Rizgari* and scattered archives limited the discourse analysis that requires continuity. For example, the unavailability of issue 5 led to the interruption of some arguments regarding the 1977-78 period. Another challenge requiring terminological sensitivity was using politically charged terms in the academic text. These terms were limited to the historical actors' statements, taking into account the standards of the Council of Higher Education and the ethics committee. The theoretical plurality also posed a significant challenge; combining the different emphases of Said,

Clifford, and Bhabha into a coherent framework required managing the tension between Bhabha's poststructuralist tendencies and Said's historicist approach.

Among the suggestions for future studies, comparative analyses stand out. The continuities and ruptures between Rizgari's interpretation of sub-imperialism and the colonialism discourse of the post-Rizgari Kurdish political movement can be analyzed through post-1980 texts. Comparative studies can be made with examples of theory travel, such as Fanon's theoretical work in Algeria, which traveled to Turkey. Oral history studies can also fill a critical gap; interviews with living Rizgari members will make the interaction of theoretical production with practical politics more visible. Digital archiving is another vital suggestion; digitizing the missing works of Komal Publications would facilitate access and provide resources for future research.

In the final assessment, this thesis contributes to three main fields by showing how theories are instrumentalized and transformed in political struggles through the example of Rizgari. Postcolonial studies offer a new perspective emphasizing concepts' "south-south" circulation. At the same time, Turkish political history provides comprehensive documentation of the theoretical autonomization of the Kurdish left in the 1970s. It contributes to social science methodology by combining the traveling theory approach with archival discourse analysis. Despite the study's limitations, its findings illuminate a historical period and serve as a methodological reference for contemporary research questioning the relationship between theory and politics. Rizgari's emphasis on the "unity of thought and action" reminds us of contextual theory's transformative power against the academy's abstract theorizing practices.

Appendix A Komal Publications Inventory

Book Title	Author	Series
Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Dava Dosyası		Belgesel Serisi-1
Irak Kürt Halk Hareketi ve Baas Irkçılığı		Araştırma Serisi-1
Bilimsel Yöntem, Üniversite Özerkliği ve Demokratik Toplum İlkeleri Açısından - İsmail Beşikçi Davası Cilt-1		Belgesel Serisi-2
Gururla Bakıyorum Dünyaya	Orhan Kotan	Şiir Serisi-1
Kürt Aşiretleri Üzerine Sosyolojik Tetkikler	Ziya Gökalp	
Koçgiri Halk Hareketi		Belgesel Serisi-3
19. Yüzyılda Kürdistan Üzerinde Mücadele	Halfin	Tarih Serisi-1
Belasına Sevdalandığım Bebek	Sinan Sabri	Şiir Serisi-2
Felsefe İncelemeleri		Araştırma Serisi-4
Bilim Yöntemi	İsmail Beşikçi	Araştırma Serisi-5
Kürtler	Minorski	Tarih Serisi-2
Onbinlerin Kürdistan'dan Geçişi	Xenophon	Tarih Serisi-3
Kürtlerin Mecburi İskanı	İsmail Beşikçi	Araştırma Serisi-6

Bir Kürt Devrimcisi, Edip Karahan'ın Anısına		Araştırma Serisi-7
Welat - İskancının Türküsü	Seyit Alp	Roman
Türk Tarih Tezi ve Kürt Sorunu	İsmail Beşikçi	Araştırma Serisi-8
Kürdistan Tarihi	Mehmet Emin Zeki	Tarih Serisi-4
Özeleştir: Hedef En- gel Üzerine		Broşür
Ürün'deki bir Yazı Üzerine		Broşür
Türkiye Reisi Cum- huru Gazi Mustafa Ke- mal Paşa Hazretlerine Açık Mektup	C. Ali Badr Xan	Belgesel Serisi-3
Cumhuriyet Halk Fıkrasının Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu	İsmail Beşikçi	Araştırma Serisi-9
Kurdistan (1918- 1946)	Lucien Rambout	Tarih Serisi-5

SOURCE Kısacık (2015)

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