

REVIEW ARTICLE

THE KURDISH QUEST FOR A DEMOCRATIC CIVILIZATION, THROUGH
DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM AND A SOCIOLOGY OF FREEDOM

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ABDULLAH ÖCALAN, *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, vol. II. Capitalism: The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings*, translated from Turkish into English by Havin Guneser, Porsgrunn (Norway) and Cologne: New Compass Press, 2017.

THOMAS JEFFREY MILEY AND FEDERICO VENTURINI (eds.), *Your Freedom and Mine: Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish Question in Erdoğan's Turkey* (Foreword by Dilar Dirik), Montreal, Chicago and London: Black Rose Books, 2018.

The two books reviewed here are exceptional in many ways. One is the latest volume of prison writings by Abdullah Öcalan – a work full of inspiration and profound insights, yet due to the circumstances it was written in, often repetitive and hard to grasp, let alone summarize. The other is a book about Öcalan and the fascinating, anguished complexities of the Kurdish situation in Turkey and beyond to which he has devoted his life.

The life history of Abdullah Öcalan reads like a fairy tale, transcending many norms to form a unique tapestry. Founding member and leader of the PKK (Partiya Karkara Kurdistan, or the Kurdish Workers' Party), which has been on the 'world terrorist list' since 1994 (although not considered as such by the UN and certain countries), he was based during most of the period from 1980 to 1998 in northern Syria, which is why the Rojava enclave there (also known as the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria) has such reverence for his ideas, orienting its political structure towards Öcalan's concepts, especially democratic confederalism and 'Jineology'.⁴ In 1998, under pressure from Turkey, the Syrian government asked him to leave, and he visited in turn Russia, Italy and Greece, each of which turned him away under Turkish or US pressure. Offered asylum in South Africa by Nelson Mandela (who was persuaded to do so by Judge Essa Moosa and Archbishop Desmond Tutu), the Greeks flew him to Kenya instead, where he was eventually

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⁴ This concept, from the Kurdish words for woman (*jin*) and life (*jiyan*), is elaborated in Öcalan's book *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, Cologne: International Initiative, 2013, available at <http://www.freeocalan.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/liberating-Lifefinal.pdf>

arrested, after leaving the Greek embassy under false assurances, and was flown to Turkey with Israeli help. Condemned to death there, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on İmralı Island in the Sea of Marmora, and during the last twenty years, from 1999-2019, he has been in solitary confinement there, guarded by over 1,000 Turkish soldiers. In jail, he has managed to write a number of extraordinary books, which have had a momentous impact on Kurds and many others, making numerous peace and ceasefire initiatives, such that *Time* magazine listed him among the world's hundred most influential people in 2013.⁵

The first volume of his prison writings was published in English in 2007 under the intriguing title *The Roots of Civilization*.⁶ After this, Öcalan started on a new work in several volumes with the overall title of *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization*. The first volume was subtitled *Civilization: The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings*, the idea behind it being that the manifestations of divinity revered from ancient polytheistic cultures to Reformation Christianity, and the kings and emperors who exercised power throughout ancient and medieval history up to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were somehow disguising or masking their power.⁷ The new volume, written in Turkish between 2008 and 2011, deals with the age of capitalism, conceived as *The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings*. The third volume – will it ever see light of day? – is conceived as a *Sociology of Freedom*.

All these prison writings are written in the loose form of a judicial defence, which often expands into defence in a much broader sense. The introduction to the new volume starts: 'As I pursue my defence against the capitalist system, I know that I have to start by breaking loose from its system of mental chains' (2017: 25). Throughout this volume, Öcalan argues that capitalism is not primarily an economic system and that Marx was mistaken in analysing it as such. It is better viewed as a power structure, and even as a religion, being characterized by deeply ingrained dogmas that control us and that need mental effort to break free from. Öcalan says that living and writing in jail paradoxically gave him the freedom for self-examination and searching for the truth that he would have found hard to attain outside. Among a long list of outstanding writings from inside (or about being inside) jail, some by Gandhi emphasize how transformative treating jail as a 'sacred space' can be for achieving mental clarity, despite the restrictions, humiliations and frequent violence.⁸ Öcalan's writings are evidently forged in a similar experience and consciousness: 'Prison exists on the outside as well as the inside.... I was able to grasp in a profound

⁵ <http://time100.time.com/2013/04/18/time-100/slide/abdullah-ocalan/>

⁶ London: Pluto Press, translated by Klaus Happel. Padel reviewed this and the next two volumes of his prison writings (*The PKK and the Kurdish Question in the 21st Century* and *The Roadmap to Negotiations*) in *Economic & Political Weekly* in October 2012 (available at <http://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/resources/abdullah-ocalan/road-map/the-kurdish-quest-of-countering-capitalism-to-build-a-democratic-civilisation/>).

⁷ Padel reviewed this volume on the Gandhi Foundation website in 2016 (available at <https://gandhifoundation.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/ocalan-review.pdf>).

⁸ Extensive writings by Gandhi from jail, published in *Young India*, January-May 1924, are available at <https://sites.google.com/site/excerptsfromgandhisworks/1924-02-my-jail-experiences>'s writings in jail

sense that I was in fact a dogmatic positivist'.⁹ The present volume rejects the positivist approach and the 'scientific method' because of the subject-object dualism and the divorce between rationality and emotional intelligence which he sees as intrinsic to the mental slavery induced by capitalism. As an erstwhile Marxist-Leninist leader who still accepts Marx as a major influence, he now castigates the Marxist framework for its positivism and its inability to analyse the concepts of 'power' and 'the state' (2017: 30).

It is surprising that neither Öcalan nor most of his commentators mention Gramsci much, even though the latter's *Prison Notebooks* bear significant comparison with Öcalan's prison writings, especially in Gramsci's concepts of 'cultural hegemony' and his critique of 'economism' and the 'economic determinism' in Marx's writings, but also in the need for a 'counter-hegemony' forged by 'organic intellectuals' – a description that fits Öcalan as surely as it does Gramsci himself. One difference is that Öcalan no longer defines himself as a Marxist – which is probably why his works are ignored by so many on the left.

The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings is divided into four sections. The first, 'Factors that gave rise to capitalism', emphasizes the rationalism or analytical intelligence that accompanied patriarchy as a key factor, other prominent factors being economism (market/money), industrialism, class hierarchy and urbanization, Protestantism (developing Weber's thesis on this) and the 'virtualization of life' that has expanded rapidly through computers and mobiles since Öcalan's incarceration.

As so often in his writings, Öcalan's method is to take us through a *longue durée* of human history from prehistoric times to the present. What is refreshing and provocative in this overview is the 'indigenous Middle Eastern' perspective, with its constant emphasis on the geography of the first civilizations. Specifically, what is now Kurdistan and/or the 'Fertile Crescent' (Mesopotamia/Iraq) is where most of the world's first urban centres evolved, as analysed by archaeologists: first the towns or large villages emblematic of the 'Neolithic revolution', where sedentary farming, the domestication of livestock and pottery evolved out of hunter-gatherer society; then the Ubaid and Halaf cultures, that began a move towards urban centres, culminating in 'the original city-state civilization called Uruk (4,000-3,000 BCE)',¹⁰ associated with Gilgamesh and the goddess Inanna (also Eanna or Ishtar).

Öcalan often emphasizes how emerging patriarchy and the 'housewifization' of women was accompanied by a shift in mythology in which Inanna was defeated by the male god Enki, whose cult displaced hers, which also became debased into temple prostitution – a symbol of women's subjugation and enslavement. The Sumerian ziggurat is seen as the first locus of 'masked gods and disguised kings', with gods on the top floor, priests in the middle and slaves creating surplus wealth at the bottom.

The Greeks and Romans, who are central to most European perceptions of our civilizational roots, are seen as derivative, which is indeed how Greeks saw

⁹ From 'Seek the Truth' (pp. 317-18), a text Öcalan wrote in 2011, read at a conference Padel attended at the University of Hamburg in 2012, and included in the volume under review here edited by Miley and Venturini, pp. 315-322.

¹⁰ 2017: 71.

themselves: as having learnt civilized ways and deep knowledge from the Babylonians and Egyptians through influential thinkers who had travelled to these areas, such as Solon, Herodotus and Pythagoras.

What is also particularly original in Öcalan's telling of ancient history is his emphasis on those tribal groups who formed confederations that resisted incorporation into the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian empires, and eventually, at certain moments, overthrew them. From Sargon to the Assyrians, the 'emergence of civilization' aspect accompanied an extremely bloodthirsty glorification of violence and conquest. Resisting incorporation into the Sumerian and Babylonian city states were the Gutians, a proto-Kurdish people who spoke an Indo-Aryan language, unlike the Semitic Akkadian-Amorite language family of the mainstream, whose conflict with the Akkadian empire before 2,000 BC brought about its downfall; also the Hurrians, similarly Indo-European and associated with the Kassite-Hittite alliance that ended the 'first Babylonian period' around 1,596 BC, and the Mitanni; and also the Medes, who formed a federation (mainly, it seems, from peoples of Hurrian origin) that destroyed the Assyrian empire in 612 BC.¹¹

The continuity between these Indo-Aryan tribes and the Kurds is attested archeologically and linguistically; and their refusal to be assimilated by the hierarchical, militaristic 'civilizations' neighbouring them provides a precedent for Kurdish resistance to the four main nation states that divided Kurdistan between them after the First World War.

The second section, 'Capitalism – the mortal enemy of economy', starts with Öcalan's own experience of schooling and his attraction to, and reaction against, the new gods of modernity. Emphasizing the original Greek meaning of *oikonomia* as 'household management', 'economy' emerges as women's domain and expertise, but was taken over from Neolithic society by priests and kings to create a surplus by waging war and enslavement through plunder. From the ancient Sumerians, boasting of their bloody wars, to thirteenth-century Renaissance Italians, who invented banking, and 16th-19th century English merchants, plundering the produce and surplus of other peoples is not 'economy' but power, while 'war waged for the sake of capitalism is but *the ritual of human sacrifice*' (2017: 139).

Section 3, 'The Modern Leviathan', takes on the nation state, tracing its crystallization through the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and citing Hegel's conception of it as 'the descent of God on earth' – initially in the form of the French model elaborated by Napoleon, which was followed in modern Turkey by Atatürk. German hegemony emerged through Bismarck forging Prussia into Germany and defeating the French republic, while England developed a third model. Each one brought attributes of 'God' into the state, and it is this God-like demand for worship by the modern nation state that he describes himself imbibing and reacting against as a child. This will have strong resonance for anyone growing up in a situation of direct or internal colonialism, where the school insists that every individual stands in line to worship the national symbols, and teachers become like priests of this nation-state

¹¹ Ibid.: 149-62.

religion. From the time of Descartes, God had become increasingly irrelevant in the image of ‘divine watch-maker’ promoted by science: ‘After God’s initial push, the universe is set into a continuous mechanical motion’ (2017: 204).

This chapter devotes a sub-section to Jewish victims of Nazi genocide, tracing their history as those who, under Abraham and Moses, destroyed the idols of their Babylonian captors to create monotheism to their role as merchants who lent to the Netherlands’ and America’s wars of independence from Spain and Britain. This recalls Spinoza, who, as a Jewish secularist, taught that to understand is to be free. Jews’ relationship with capitalism and Zionist nationalism, like Arab nationalism, can only be understood and solved by recognizing their common Middle Eastern origins.

The last section, ‘In the time of capitalist modernity’, looks at how even greater capital surpluses began to be created by large-scale international trade funded by speculation (following Fernand Braudel), as nation states crystallized out of ‘empires’ and money came to assume its present position of defining human relations, almost as an embodiment of the power of the nation state (2017: 266). Since the time of Britain’s hegemony, emerging out of the Industrial Revolution to defeat Napoleon, and then Germany in the twentieth century, industrialism is seen as a crucial aspect of capitalist modernity. Öcalan takes issue with the Marxist tradition that sees industrialization as necessary for the formation of a working class, given that the internal colonization of the countryside by producing shanty towns of slave-like workers to serve the factories represents a violence as cruel as external colonialism. ‘Industrialism attacks the living environment as a whole’ (p. 276), and our present age faces the monstrous reality that our economism and industrialism, presided over by the ‘priests’ of the system who meet annually at Davos, is destroying the fabric of life on earth.

Here we see the influence of Murray Bookchin, whose *Ecology of Freedom* (1982) added a crucial environmental and eco-socialist dimension to Öcalan’s thinking, and of the Kurdish political systems that have emerged to implement his thought. Other strands invoke a wide range of thinkers, including Immanuel Wallerstein and his world systems theory, emphasizing centre and periphery,¹² and Braudel’s *longue durée*, among many other thinkers. The book has a preface by Radha D’Souza, who places this book in a (South) Asian perspective and relates it to Marxian scholarship.

As a background to understanding Öcalan and his influence, and before considering the new book on this, it seems helpful to give an overview of Kurdish history during the last hundred years, drawing on two excellent recent scholarly works by David McDowall and Michael Gunter.¹³ The former starts from the reasons that this history is so little known: Kurdish identity was suppressed ruthlessly because it crossed the national borders that have divided up the Middle East since 1919-1923, and even Turkish intellectuals who have stood up for it in recent decades face long jail sentences for doing so. ‘Kurdistan’ was an entity recognised from the twelfth

¹² Wallerstein: *The Modern World System* (vols. 1-3, 1974, 1980, 1989), New York: Academic Press.

¹³ McDowall 2007, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B. Tauris; Gunter 2016, *The Kurds: A Modern History*, Princeton NJ: Marcus Wiener.

century up until the 1920s, when the term was banned by the new nation states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, created under the Treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne by Britain and France. Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) spoke freely of 'Kurdistan' during his early years in power, when the Kurds were vital allies in his project of dismantling the Ottoman power structure to create a new state; but he then banned the term as part of the vicious suppression of the Kurdish language and autonomy from 1923-5 onwards. Before 1923, Kemal had spoken of a unity of Turks and Kurds in the face of foreign interference, which at times backed the Greek and Armenian minorities. Kurds had participated in the Armenian Genocide of 1915 for complex reasons, but soon began to face their own cultural and linguistic genocide. To some extent this was also the case in Iraq, where the RAF, masterminded by 'Bomber' Harris, forced their submission to Arab rule, followed later by massive bloodshed and repression under Saddam Hussein; and in Iran, which, like the other new nations, suppressed any promise of autonomy with great cruelty. In Turkey, the use of Kurdish was banned in the law courts and other public spaces in 1924. Shaykh Said's rebellion and the Kurdish organization and movement known as Azadi were violently suppressed in 1925, as were other rebellions in other areas in 1926-37, with hundreds of executions and countless massacres, creating a pattern that has continued ever since of villages razed and populations deported whenever Kurds defied the 'implacable Kemalism' of the Turkish state.

The PKK, which Öcalan set up in 1978, began with attacks on traditional landlords, who were seen as highly exploitative, and the movement has always fought on two fronts: against feudalism and patriarchy on the one hand, and against Turkish state oppression on the other. Öcalan avoided the round-up of Kurdish and left-wing activists that immediately followed the coup in 1980 by escaping to northern Syria, while other PKK cadres based themselves in northern Iraq, which has suffered repeated Turkish incursions since 1983. Regular armed resistance by the PKK against Turkish forces started in 1984, and has gone through many phases.

Iraqi Kurdistan gained autonomy in October 1991, after a bloodily suppressed uprising and years of intense oppression, including chemical bombing in 1987-8, under Saddam Husein. The Kurdistan Regional Government there (KRG) depends on an uneasy alliance between the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), who have frequently clashed. The PKK generally considers these parties as feudal or tribal in structure, while they and the KRG veer between on-off contact with the PKK.

The autonomous Rojava government was set up in northern Syria in 2012 and has been in the frontline of fighting Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh); during the siege of Kobane by Daesh in 2014-15, this caught the world's attention. Without a formal alliance with the PKK, it is clear that ideologically they are close, which is why the Turkish forces have attacked Rojava, invading and overrunning the enclave of Afrin in January 2018. Presently they are also seen as threatening Rojava as a whole given the prospect of the withdrawal of air cover by the US, which allied itself with the Rojava government (PYD or Democratic Union Party) and military (YPG or Peoples'

Protection Units), especially in defeating IS in their ‘capital’ of Raqqa in October 2017.¹⁴

The other book reviewed here, *Your Freedom and Mine*, emerged out of an international peace delegation organized by the EU Turkic Civic Commission known as the İmralı peace delegations, which intended (but failed) to meet Öcalan in his İmralı Island prison. The first 120 pages of this book are an eminently readable and balanced historical summary of the Kurdish–Turkish conflict by the Cambridge political sociologist Thomas Jeffery Miley, with Cihad Hammy and Guney Yıldız. This concentrates on the Turkish situation and the PKK, its formation and use of violence, as well as ceasefires, and it touches on the NATO ‘Gladio’ or ‘Counter-Guerilla’¹⁵ organization’s involvement in state terror through paramilitary organizations such as the Grey Wolves.

The following chapters, by Adem Uzun and Havin Guneser (translator of Öcalan 2017 and other writings), summarize the PKK itinerary and Öcalan’s life, including the international campaign for his release and his participation in peace talks. There follow many short articles by a wide selection of participants in the four İmralı delegations that visited Turkey in 2016–17, from many countries and professions. These include British journalist Jonathan Steele, MP Julie Ward, trade unionist Simon Dubbins and Father Joe Ryan, with testimonies from similarly eminent personalities from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, the Basque country (two of these longstanding MEPs) and the United States, including Janet Biehl, close collaborator with Murray Bookchin, author¹⁶ and translator of a major recent book on Rojava.¹⁷

Several other contributors have also conducted research on Kurdish issues, including Michael Gunter,¹⁸ whose article on the advantages of taking the PKK off the terrorist list is one of the concluding pieces in this book; also by Reimar Heider,¹⁹

¹⁴ ‘Kurds in Syria: We Have Right to Respond to Turkish Attacks’, by Sirwan Kajjo in *Extremism Watch*, 31 October 2018, at <https://www.voanews.com/a/kurds-in-syria-we-have-right-to-respond-to-turkish-attacks-/4637931.html>; ‘Turkey sends reinforcements to Syrian border’, *Al Jazeera*, 23 December 2018, at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/turkey-increases-military-deployment-syrian-border-181223093326924.html>; ‘America’s Kurdish allies risk being wiped out – by NATO’, by David Graeber in *The Guardian*, 1st February 2019, at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/01/americas-kurdish-allies-syria-turkey-nato?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR1CCLCUCgAMB3TDvHtyxjNpAjo7VgMwe4GwCwDp6Q8aU6PJ3csGws5KgAU;

¹⁵ Wikipedia articles on Counter-Guerilla, Ergenekon (conspiracy) and Operation Gladio summarize evidence on these intensely controversial subjects, which have been topics of intense debate in Turkey, with several Turkish prime ministers speaking out publicly.

¹⁶ Her books include *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (as editor, London: Cassell, 1997); *The Politics of Social Ecology* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998); *Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray Bookchin* (New York: Oxford University Press).

¹⁷ *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women’s Liberation in the Syrian Kurdistan*, by Michael Knapp, Ercan Ayboga and Anja Flach, translated from German by Janet Biehl, London: Pluto Press, 2016.

¹⁸ Including *Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War*, London: C. Hurst, 2014, as well as his book on Kurdish history mentioned in note 13, above.

¹⁹ Translator from Turkish of several of Öcalan’s books and a spokesman for the Freedom for Öcalan Campaign.

Kariane Westrheim,²⁰ Radha D'Souza and Mohammed Elnaiem, a student of Miley's at Cambridge University from a background in the black libertarian movement who studied the Kurdish youth movement in Europe. Dilar Dirik, who wrote the Foreword for *Your Freedom and Mine*, is a leading spokeswoman for the Kurdish women's movement and a scholar at Cambridge University.²¹ Prefaces by the book's two editors are followed by a note from the publisher at Black Rose Books, Dimitrios Roussopoulos.

Both Öcalan's position as a thinker and writer, and the history and present situation of the Kurds, deserve a much wider understanding and influence in world affairs. For one thing, they raise the question – much needed in light of present-day despair and cynicism over a multitude of issues – of whether our human species can develop into a 'democratic civilization', to a point of living within our means environmentally and economically, and sharing the earth's resources without resorting to war.

For another thing, Öcalan's model of democratic confederalism has been put into practice in Rojava in a way that – whatever faults it may have in the current situation of defence against the powerful enemies that surround it – is radically multi-ethnic and ensures equal status for women: if Daesh represents the most misogynist political formation of recent times, Rojava, in the front line against it, has a claim to being the most emancipatory system for women that has ever existed.

On religion, spirituality and myth versus the atheist position customary among Marxist thinkers, Öcalan steers a refreshingly non-dogmatic position. This is of great significance in the Middle East, where religious controversy is so sensitive, but it also reflects great openness, taking us to the roots of philosophy, with a constant questioning of what we are here for, and grounded in an impressive range of history and literature. The conception of 'economy' emphasized in his 2017 book offers a return to the term's root meaning of the correct management of resources, satisfying basic needs and non-profit-making exchange, which could yet prove extremely fruitful.²²

For anthropologists and sociologists, as if this wasn't enough, Öcalan's vision of a 'sociology of freedom' offers a way forward out of sterile academic debates towards ways of implementing real change. His critique of civilization conjures up the famous answer attributed to Gandhi when he came to Britain for the last time in 1931 and was asked, "What do you think of modern [or Western] civilization?", to which he replied

²⁰ Professor of Educational Science at the University of Bergen, Westrheim did her doctoral dissertation on the PKK's system of education, and has done fieldwork in Kurdish areas of Turkey and Syria; cited in the BBC feature by Yesim Yaprak Yildiz, 'Turkey and the PKK: The Women Who Take Up Arms', 15 January 2013, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21026273>

²¹ See, e.g., 'The Kurdish Struggle: An Interview with Dilar Dirik', *Salvage*, 8 March 2017, at <http://salvage.zone/online-exclusive/the-kurdish-struggle-an-interview-with-dilar-dirik/>

²² My reading of Öcalan throughout this article has benefited greatly from Omar Sadik's MA thesis, *Philosophy and History in the Prison Writings of Abdullah Öcalan*, in Global Studies at the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University, Berlin, 2017.

‘I think it would be a very good idea’.²³ For social scientists, Öcalan’s writings resonate with engaged anthropology, as presented by Stuart Kirsch and others.²⁴

Issues such as freedom and genocide resonate far beyond the Kurdish situation. Kurdish populations in several countries have certainly faced attempts at linguistic and cultural genocide, and while they participated in the Armenian genocide, they themselves also faced exceptional levels of oppression involving the destruction of several thousand villages. They also have an indisputable claim to be one of the Middle East’s most ‘indigenous’ peoples, in a sea of conflicting such claims, and however one interprets their ancestry among Indo-Aryan speaking peoples who lived in the area in ancient times. This has created significant links with indigenous peoples throughout the continent of America, for example, with Spanish translations of Öcalan’s books circulating in Latin American countries. Öcalan’s ability to thread together world systems analysis with an indigenous perspective from the Middle East that one rarely hears, relating the present to a sense of continuity with the world’s oldest known civilizations, is unique.

The suppression of the ancient Kurdish language in schools and other public spaces has been particularly significant. Leyla Zana, one of the best loved Kurdish leaders, made history as the first Kurdish woman MP to take her seat in Turkey’s Parliament in 1991. She has since spent many years in jail, like thousands of other Kurdish and Turkish citizens of Turkey, many of whom have used this experience to exemplary effect, like Öcalan. One of her main ‘crimes’ was that she spoke in Kurdish on the occasion when she took her oath to the state on first entering Parliament, which was illegal at that time. In fact, she took the oath in Turkish, except for the last sentence, which she spoke in Kurdish: ‘I take this oath for the brotherhood between the Turkish people and the Kurdish people’.²⁵

²³ See Vinay Lal, ‘Gandhi’s West, the West’s Gandhi’, *New Literary History*, Vol. 40 no. 2. *India and The West*, spring 2009, p. 281. There seems to be no authentic record of the exchange, which may be apocryphal, though it captures the spirit of one of Gandhi’s key themes, set out, for example, in his *Hind Swaraj* (1909), a critique of modernity and of the uncritical acceptance of Western modernity.

²⁴ Kirsch 2018, *Engaged Anthropology: Politics Beyond the Text*, Oakland CA, University of California Press.

²⁵ ‘Leyla Zana’, Soyent Communications, 2014, at <http://www.nndb.com/people/691/000134289/>. See also her biography in the Peace in Kurdistan Project, at <https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/resources/leyla-zana/leyla-zana-biography/>