

# Revolutionary Education

Notes from the first term of  
the Andrea Wolf Institute of  
Jineolojî in Rojava



*“Heqiqat eŝq e. Eŝq jî jiyana azad e.”*  
*“Truth is love and love is life in freedom.”*

*Abdullah Öcalan*



**In memory of Şehid Malda Kosa**

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# Glossary

*Some of the terms used in this brochure are kept in Kurmanji because a literal translation was not found. This is due to cultural and political associations, and to their etymological and historical roots.*

**Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria** – Political and administrative revolutionary entity divided into seven regions of North and East Syria: Jazeera, Euphrates, Afrin, Manbij, Tabqa, Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor. It is based on a confederal system, from the local commune to the inter-regional level. It aims to organize life in a way that fulfils the needs of society, defends the land and the lives and interests of the people, as well as representing them politically.

**Heval/friend/comrade** – Heval means ‘friend’. In the Kurdistan Liberation Movement people call each other “Heval”. It is a respectful and loving way to address others in the same struggle. It could be accurately described as “comrade”, and *hevalti* as “comradeship”. Though, the history and perception of the word “comrade” in English does not have all the same associations as “heval” due to differences in its historical and political use. For this reason we have used a mix of the two translations in this text.

**Hevjîyana azad** – Kurmanji for *hev* – together, *jiyan* – life and *azad* – free. It is a concept from the philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan. It means “living together in freedom”. According to Abdullah Öcalan this can be only achieved by collective liberation and a communal form of living together, not only among humans, but with the planet, the nature, and all living beings.

**Jineoloji** – From the Kurmanji word *jin* – woman (which has a common root with the word *jiyan* – life) and the Greek *logos* – knowledge or science. It means the science of woman and life. Abdullah Öcalan has suggested Jineoloji as an alternative science and methodology of women which can provide knowledge and analyses for the liberation of women and society.

**Kurdistan** – It is the original homeland of the Kurds. Also other ethnic groups and people like Syriac-Assyrians and Armenians have long historical roots in the same geographical territory. Currently the land is occupied by the states of Turkey (Bakur - North, meaning the Northern part of Kurdistan), Syria (Rojava - West), Iraq (Bashur - South) and Iran (Rojhilat - East). The division and colonialisation of Kurdistan was implemented by the British and French colonial empires after World War One. Dozens of rebellions for independency and autonomy of Kurdistan and the self-determination of the Kurdish people have been carried out throughout its history.

**Rêber** – Kurmanji for *rê* – the way and *ber* – towards/in front of. *Rêber* means guide, or more literally “the one who finds and shows the way.” To take over responsibility, leading by example and by illuminating the path, is an important approach in the Kurdistan Liberation Movement. *Rêber Apo* is a commonly used name for Abdullah Öcalan, who opened up the way for the Kurdistan Liberation Movement. He was imprisoned by the Turkish state in 1999 and is kept in isolation. His defence writings serve us as a basis for the liberation of Kurdistan and the whole world, with his proposal of worldwide democratic confederalism based on ecology and the liberation of women.

**Rojava** – Kurmanji for west, is used to describe the Western part of Kurdistan within territory of the Syrian nation state. It is a term that is often used to refer to the revolution and the system of democratic autonomy which has been established since 2012.

**Şehîd** – Kurmanji for martyr. The Kurdistan Liberation Movement honours those who gave their life in struggle for freedom, constantly renewing the promise of continuing their fight.

**Special warfare** – a form of war which includes psychological, emotional and ideological attacks. States and secret services have been developing various methods of manipulation. For example through mass media the state can create public opinion. It can, for instance, blame migrants for an economic crisis, dissolving social and political structures and dividing society. Another example is advertising, creating artificial needs in the people to increase consumerism.

**Welatparezî** – Kurmanji for *welat* – land/country and *parezî* – defence. It means “protection of the land”. To be *welatparez* means to love and to struggle for the protection of the land and the people against colonisation and exploitation. It means to be connected to your history and the communal culture of the place and community that you are from. It is defined interrelated to internationalism- not in detriment of any other place, or excluding any other peoples.

**Xwebûn** – Kurmanji for *xwe* - self and *bûn* - to be and to become. The word means “becoming yourself”. It is the process of reaching our true selves as individuals who are part of a collective whole. It is a way of struggling against the oppressive systems within us and worldwide to find truth and beauty.



1. The Andrea Wolf  
Institute



The Andrea Wolf Institute is a part of the **Jineoloji** Academy of **Rojava**. In it women and female-socialised people are working on topics related to Jineoloji. We have a physical centre here in the region of North and East Syria, and work as a network wherever we are in the world. With its first education term the Andrea Wolf Institute was officially opened on the 18th May 2019.

The Jineoloji Academy has established its works in Rojava **Kurdistan**, in North and East Syria, inside the people's revolution. Jineoloji is a science and method for understanding the world and finding truth. It draws on the first women's revolution, which was the Neolithic revolution that came to pass in the cradle of civilisation, Mesopotamia. Its basis is the resistance of the Kurdish women's liberation struggle, and the heritage of women's and feminist struggles all over the world.

A goal of Jineoloji is to be a source of knowledge and learning to solve the problems of women and society, and for the women's revolution to achieve victory. In order to work towards this goal, research centres have been built up in Afrin, Derik, Manbij, Kobane and Heseke since 2017. The Jineoloji Faculty at the University of Rojava has also been established.

**Şehîd** Malda was one of the young women who advanced and inspired the works and education of Jineoloji among all the different communities in North and East Syria. On the 5th of May 2019 she was the target of an attack from the Islamic State. In contrast to the IS hate filled ideology, **Heval** Malda lived with love and principles, opening new doors for people to build a free and communal life. Because of this, the first education at the Andrea Wolf Institute was held in memory of Şehîd Malda Kosa.

For nearly 30 years, thousands of women from all over the world have headed to the Kurdistan revolution in search for freedom, seeing the necessity of self defence and collective life. They have gained strength from the perspectives of **Rêber** Apo, who analyses women's liberation as the foundation of democratic confederalism. Women who advanced the development of the women's freedom army in the mountains of Kurdistan, such as Şehîd Sara, Şehîd Bêrîtan, Şehîd Zîlan, Şehîd Nûda, Şehîd Çîçek,

Şehîd Nalîn and Şehîd Delal, have opened the way to freedom. Women revolutionaries from many different nations have become their comrades. Women like Şehîd Mizgin Türkmen, Şehîd Ronahî Arnavut, Şehîd Hêlîn Çerkez, Şehîd Canda Türkmen, Şehîd Ronahî from Germany, Şehîd Rojbîn - an Arab woman, Şehîd Gülnaz and Şehîd Amara from the area of Ege, Şehîd Uta from Germany and Şehîd Elefterya from Greece found their perspectives for the freedom of their societies in this struggle.

Şehîd Ronahî - Andrea Wolf, from Germany, was one of these revolutionary women who became part of the Kurdistan revolution. Until she fell şehîd in the area of Botan in October 1998, she made a huge effort to explore a new way of building a revolutionary organisation in Germany. With this aim, she entered into very deep conversation and research with her comrades. Her dialogues with Rêber Apo became a source of strength and confidence for her. She became convinced that to be meaningful and successful, autonomous women's organising was essential; forming a crucial part of and giving direction to the general movement.

Heval Ronahî went to the mountains of Kurdistan to understand the struggle for freedom and the reality there. Twenty years later hundreds of internationalist women from all corners of the world have come to Kurdistan in her footsteps and joined the revolution. Many of them have also fallen in struggle:

Ivana Hoffmann with a father from Togo and a German mother;

Anna Campbell from Britain;

Alina Sanchez from Argentina;

Sibel Bulut, Ayşe Deniz Karacagil, Toprak Çerkez, Özge Aydın, and Aynur Ada from Turkey;

Arabic, Kurdish, Syriac-Assyrian and Armenian women from all over Syria have joined.

African American feminist Audre Lorde said:

“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even if her shackles are very different from my own!”

The Andrea Wolf Institute has been built with this understanding of freedom. In our work, education and research we explore and implement women’s knowledge, alternative methods of science and education, natural health, self defence, revolutionary art, and different ways to reproduce life and create community.



## 2. Introduction and perspective

## Why education?

The history of ideological education has deep roots. For thousands of years, various religious, spiritual or social movements have included similar practices. People physically remove themselves from society for periods, in order to reflect, learn and develop whichever ideology or philosophy their members have been living and spreading. To change society, a change of mentality is needed. The starting point is with members of a revolutionary movement who carry the task of educating themselves in order to be an example and open the way for others, regardless of previous experience or inclination.

Education is a central pillar of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement and the Kurdistan Women's Liberation Movement. Education does not stop during war, occupation or attacks of the enemy. Sometimes this includes people who have not long had the opportunity to learn to read and write, or people with severe injuries. This commitment is because the revolution of the mind is considered the first and most important revolution, and without it the movement itself would not exist in the form it does. Abdullah Öcalan has analysed education as the basis of developing militant personality, and the militant as the basis of social change.

Education is always part of a program and a paradigm that is part of and based in society. An essential part of education is also the development of personality that takes place during it. We are changed and made in the process, we do not merely consume. Militant organisations should act as microcosms of the society we are struggling for. As such educations are always an opportunity to develop communal, free, and equal life, and the revolution in human relationships known in the Kurdistan Freedom Movement as *hevalti*.

For the first education term, women working across Rojava came together at the academy. Most came from Northern Europe. Some also came from oppressed nations within ruling nation states in Europe. There were some from Southern Europe and others had direct roots in Eastern Europe and the South Asian continent. Other **comrades** came from the Middle East.

Women and other revolutionaries are brought to Rojava by the huge search, passion and beautiful energy that our histories have created, by those communities that we love. But also by not finding answers in that search, by a sense that something is missing. Often it seems that what's missing, what we are trying to understand, learn from and connect with in the movement here, is a sense of hope and future. Also a sense of duty and commitment, a well of strength and crucially more solid, concrete forms of organisation. A need for broader analyses to better fight what we are against and build the alternatives we need.

We believe that now is a global moment of energy for change. We came here in the hope that we can find ways to use this moment to its fullest. Here we are developing revolutionary love and radical struggle.

Many of us came to Kurdistan and the Kurdish struggle as internationalists. The Kurdish movement has always been an internationalist one. Internationalism means understanding that there can be no true revolution if it is not global, and if we don't see freedom struggles all over the world as our own.

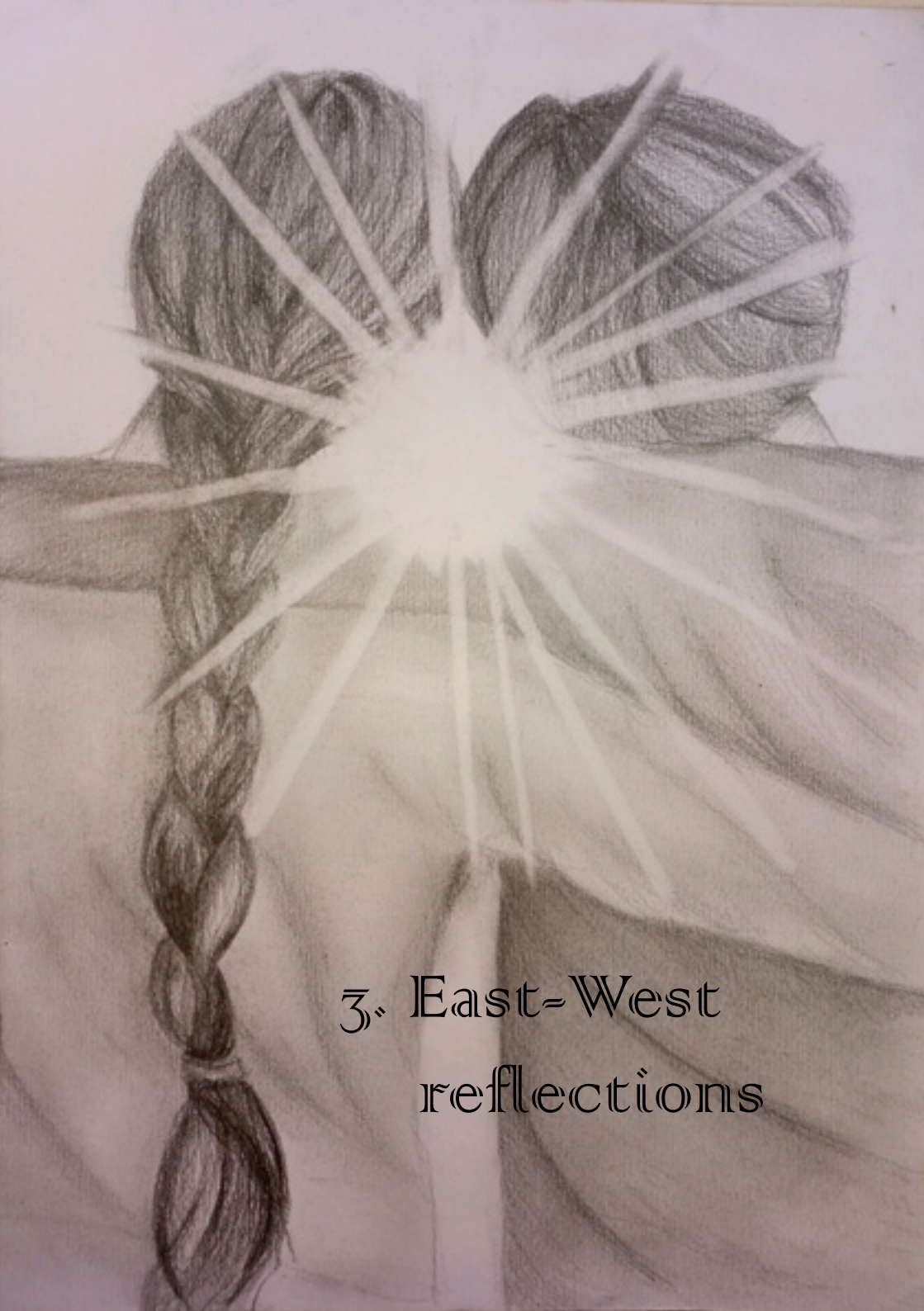
In our discussions we identified problems we have in Europe which are different to those in Rojava: for example strong nation states and the sense of loyalty to and reliance on the state. Also the lack of strong communities, and heavy repression of those that exist. Political movements themselves are being spread out and lacking connection, continuity and organisation - often just fire-fighting on different fronts. Epidemics of poor mental health and loneliness are spreading and becoming increasingly individualised. The history of the 20th century, including colonialism, two world wars, fascism and imperialism were developed in Europe; but also "real" socialism and other attempts at revolution and diverse social struggles. We face the dominance of capitalism and capitalist ideology. In the face of all of these things, the only alternative for us and our movements is to organise, create confederalist structures and build our collective self defence.

The most important part of the education was comrades with years of experience in the Kurdistan Liberation Movement coming to give educations, and also participate in our daily life. Our shared time together was an education in itself. Women of the movement are an example of what we want to build, an example of revolution.

We were close to finishing this brochure when on the 9th October 2019 the Turkish State invaded parts of North and East Syria, seeking to extend the occupation it started in Afrin in 2018.

Through these attacks it becomes clear that the war is a war of ideology, a war against freedom, a war which began thousands of years ago. These attacks are being met with the most effective self defence: the construction of a strong society and an organised movement. Also the love for life and freedom in the Kurdistan Liberation Movement and the society in this part of the world, is so strong that people are willing to give their life for it.

We are always in a war. Wherever people are trying to create change, or fight patriarchy, or make revolutions, or figure out what it means to be free, there is always oppression. The system we live under is an attack, it is a war on our existence and freedom. It wants to destroy our self defence, which is part of life, part of our organising. Every existence, from a rock to a plant to a human being, is in constant struggle for life, as part of nature. We aim to win the war for life, which is a communal energy which needs to be organised to sustain itself.



3. East-West  
reflections



*One of the Middle Eastern comrades, with years of experience in the Kurdish Women's Movement, shared her feelings and reflections about the education in this way.*

### **Reinforcing our womanhood with Jineoloji and communal life:**

The composition of our education term really corresponded to the spirit and meaning of the history of May 18th. This date has a special meaning for revolutionary struggle in Turkey and Kurdistan: On May 18th 1973, Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, one of the leaders of the revolutionary struggle in Turkey, was tortured to death in a Turkish prison. On May 18th 1977 the internationalist revolutionary Haki Karer, who played a leading role in the PKK foundation process, was assassinated by counter-guerrilla forces of the Turkish state. One year later, on May 18th 1979, one of the first PKK cadres, Halil Çavgun, lost his life in armed combat. And again on May 18th 1982, the four comrades Ferhat Kurtay, Eşref Anyık, Mahmut Zengin and Necmi Öner took each other by the hands and set themselves on fire. Saying 'Berxwedan jiyan e!' [Resistance is Life] they became martyrs and leaders of the prison resistances against torture and surrender. Against this historical background, the date May 18th expresses international solidarity and living together. It is also a reference point for the comradeship and unity in the peoples' revolutionary struggle in the Middle East and Kurdistan, which means to give your life to struggle, and risk it for one another when necessary.

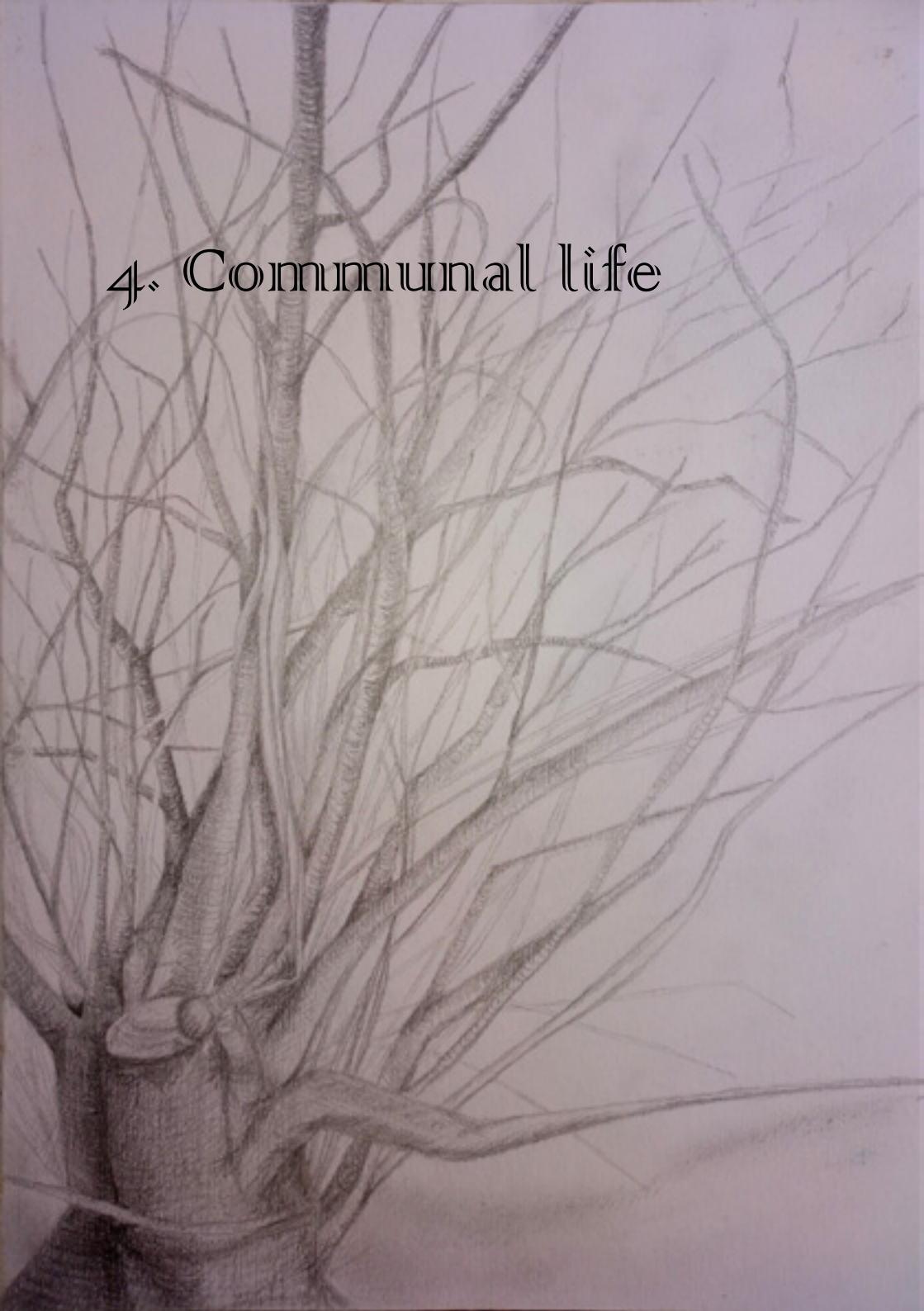
This education was very instructive in terms of both Middle Eastern women understanding Western women and Western women understanding Middle Eastern women. In the face of violence in various forms, the searches of women have developed and this quest has revealed a tendency towards non-system movements. However, the need for a more radical way of life, relationship, and struggle requires stepping out of the system. Unless a more radical stance and continuity can be developed in our ways of life, relationship and struggle, the vicious cycle cannot be overcome. A striking reality that became obvious in the experiences of many comrades participating in the education was the lack of continuity of non-system movements and activism in the West.

For example, if there is an action, everyone participates in that action or for a certain time in a campaign, but after that everyone returns to their own 'private' lives. There is no continuity of revolutionary life that is reflected in every moment of life. With respect to this, an important awareness arose during our discussions about the problem of militant struggles in Western countries, that they are not reflected in every moment and every aspect of life. For this reason, the urgency and importance of the quest for a revolutionary personality, relationships and ways of life, and the understanding of struggle, was seen more clearly. These characteristics and ways of struggle can transcend all forms of mentality and relations of power and hierarchies that have been produced by the patriarchal liberal system.

The main dimension of our education was life itself. Education was not limited to the lessons we saw. Beyond the times of lectures, seminars and discussions every field of life and communication became important areas of collective reflections. We questioned and evaluated our own relationships, our way of doing practical work, our behaviour and that of our comrades. In every aspect of life we asked: 'Who are we? How are we? What do we do? How much do we do?' and so on, which revealed vital life dynamics and energy, both for ourselves and our comrades. This was also part of the process of education for us.

By the end of the educational term, all the friends had shown their determination to strengthen their resolution and determination to fight, and everyone promised to struggle on this basis.

# 4. Communal life



We were organized in communes with a 'spokes system' in which a delegate from each commune organised meetings and passed information between the communes and the team coordinating the education. The communes made 'teknil', a short reflection and feedback meeting both for technical aspects of daily life and for criticism and self criticism. This concerned interactions and participation in the education and life and was made with the focus of developing our personalities.

The garden was a main focus for time outside of classes. When we plant trees, we need to appreciate what a commitment that is and the work we have to put in to take care of a tree we plant in subsequent years... and that this can be a metaphor for how we treat projects, or life in general. One friend gave an evening seminar on permaculture. Permaculture means *permanent agriculture*, as it is a system which is designed to last, grow and sustain itself. It is based on diversity and care and its self defence is its sole ability to work as a whole. We started to talk about our revolutionary practices in the same terms as growing a garden in harmony with the earth. Instead of seeing tree planting, or political organising, as a one-off action, a holistic revolution should be what we aspire to.

Communal life is the basis of building society. Organisation of life at every level should be understood as building a small society. Roles are assigned to cover all needs, and the group balances time for lessons, sports, discussions, culture and reflection. This is organised in a clear way to help during the learning process. For example having clear times for breaks, activities and who is responsible for what.

This frame allows us to concentrate and find communal solutions. It also widens the understanding of who you are, by conceiving yourself as more than just you, as a communal being. There are no private spaces, but also no private feelings and situations because all of them are part of everyone else. Love is shown by not hiding yourself, but sharing and growing together, by making sure communal spaces are clean and harmonious because they are everybody's.

Our time at the education was framed by openings and closings, rituals to lay a boundary around the experience, and promises with which to step forward into the future. It was important to mark these moments together with intention, to give meaning to the work we were doing – the ideological work, the personality development, and the building of a community.

Rituals like the opening and closing ceremonies strengthen our ability to place our work in a historical and political context by bringing to mind our history and the meaning of our actions in a wider frame. For many of us that strengthens our ability to make, or renew, our commitment to the political struggles we are engaged in. Rituals challenge us to take ourselves and what we are doing seriously. As part of the education, we were invited to give a promise of our intentions for the future. The promises were made using different words, but they all had big emotional impact. Somehow, bearing witness to each other's promises strengthened the bonds between us, so although it was a promise we each gave individually, it felt like a group responsibility to keep it strong.



## 5. Seminars

## 5.1 Regime of Truth

This is why the education started with the subject of the ‘revolution of the mindset.’ We cannot just make revolution happen by changing the system and then expecting that the system will change the people within it. We see from history that this is not enough; that people shape their reality based on their understanding of truth. This also has to do with hope, and how deeply we believe in the possibility of change.

Truth is something found and also shaped by society, not something fixed and unchangeable. We create truth as a society, not as individuals. It is important that we see truth as a real path that we try to achieve, and not just something relativistic that ‘belongs’ to each individual. A liberal approach to truth – that each individual is entitled to their own interpretation of truth, and that they are all equally valid – destroys all meaning. We must push the collective search for truth that is based on our values, and the kind of reality we want to build.

We examined four regimes of truth that have shaped human history as laid out by Rêber Apo: mythology, religion, philosophy and science:

### **Mythology**

Mythology, which characterised early human society including the Neolithic period, understood nature as something alive, and something that society was part of. Totems and animism (the belief that everything has a soul) created a reality in which society itself was part of the divine, and the history of society was expressed through mythological narratives. Today in some cultures, the animistic understanding of the world and its myths are still alive.

The earliest mythology we have a record of is Sumerian mythology, in which we can still find traces of the values of matriarchal society through a focus on mother-goddess figures. In matriarchal societies - which we call

natural society - the center of life was the mother and around and within her was her clan or a tribe, going beyond the blood bonds. However, as the social system began to shift towards more patriarchal structures, mythology generated narratives to reflect this shift. The story of the Goddess Innana and the God Enki - in which Innana represents matriarchal cultures and Enki the rising paradigm of patriarchy - details this transition through Enki's theft of agriculture, music, tools, songs and other 'inventions' from Innana which represent the values of natural society. This mythological narrative presents a great struggle to protect the mother-goddess culture, and the gradual dominance of men over women. This pattern is present in the mythologies of many ancient societies, with an early focus on mother-goddesses transitioning to narratives of domination of male gods over goddesses.

## **Religion**

In the shift to a regime of truth based on religion, the divine became separate from society. God was above all beings. With the rise of monotheism came absolutism, based on a universal law of right and wrong, good and evil, that is determined by a single divine power. Through the method of religion, we see the re-framing of women as forces of evil. Although there is continuity and overlap between the mythological and religious method, the religious method, combined with patriarchal mentality, took the critical step of making dogmatic, fixed narratives of spirituality. It further cemented patriarchal values through religious stories.

Even though the rise of the religious method had many negative impacts, there are also positive elements. Many religions emerged through social movements that sought to give answers to the questions of the time. For example, the story of Jesus (the prophet of Christianity) describes a movement of poor people, led by teachings based on love and mutual respect, rising up against the oppression of the Roman empire. Similarly, the teachings of Mohamed (the prophet of Islam) also contain a lot of socially progressive and liberatory elements. He was for the abolition of slavery and against interest on capital, what complicates the development of capitalism. However, the



method of religion also represented a shift away from a more holistic understanding of the world to a way of seeing reality in which humans are judged and punished by a divine force separate from them. It also shows the continuation of attacks against the figure of the Goddess, represented in many cultures by the tripple Goddess (youth, motherhood and wisdom) which becomes replaced by a single male God.

## **Philosophy**

Philosophy breaks from mythology and religion by basing belief not on faith or intuition, but on logic and proof. This is the basic of rationalism. Philosophy has a long tradition in the Middle East and many other places of the world, being an expression of the search for truth and the meaning of life. During the so-called Enlightenment in Europe, after the Middle Ages, beginning in the 16th century, the method of philosophy was introduced as rebellion against religious dogmatism, empowering the individual to think and to question reality with the power of their own minds. Many philosophers argue that reality can be defined and understood only through rational thinking. They supported that the division between subject and object is required to find truth. This created a strong binarism where there was an active subject and its opposite, a passive object. For example a man was seen as active subject which creates knowledge in society and the woman was the passive object which had no role in the public sphere. With this becoming a dogma in itself, some branches of philosophy created an ideological foundation for the development of liberalism and capitalism, as manifestations of hierarchies, domination and exploitation. When not connected to a liberatory aim and a framework of values, philosophy has been used to reinforce patriarchy and other forms of domination.

## **Science**

Through introducing subject/object division, philosophy laid the foundation for the method of science. Science further deepens the divide between subject and object, as well as embracing rationalism and positivism. Through positivism, only things which are empirically

provable and measurable exist. Reality is defined through experiments, and realities that cannot be confirmed through the scientific method are rejected. Science is the dominant method in 'Western' societies today, and is perceived not only as a fundamental truth, but as only having a positive impact.

As with philosophy, although it has many positive aspects, when disconnected from social values and liberatory aims, science can be used to justify systems of oppression and extreme violence. From the witch hunts – which occurred during the time of the so-called 'Enlightenment', to the genocide of Jews of Europe, scientific method has been used to justify and carry out inhumane actions, feminicides and genocides. The exploitation of nature and extraction of natural resources also became systematic through the method and mentality of science.

These regimes of truth have continuity and overlap between them: mythology lays the foundation for religion, which then leads to philosophy as a reaction against it. Science then builds on philosophy as a method for testing and investigation. It's important not to see these methods as either good or evil. Rather, we need to acknowledge that each of these carry the good and bad aspects of culture and nothing is wholly one or the other.

We can use some aspects of quantum physics to deepen our understanding of reality and the complexity of truth. Quantum physics studies particles at an atomic and subatomic level, where we can see that we cannot measure everything as the universe behaves in different ways depending on how we interact with it. Therefore, there are many possibilities inside a same reality. Different factors, like our mere observation, can change reality, and therefore the course of history. We see that the reality of something is based on its relationships to other things: nothing exists in isolation. Traditional science defines reality as something that doesn't change and can't be influenced, but even the tiniest particles can have a big affect on reality. Our understanding of reality sometimes goes beyond that which we can prove or test: you can be two things at once or in two places at the same time. It also questions the whole premise of the subject/object

divide. At the quantum level there is no passive or neutral subject who observes objects without influencing them. Things exist in a positive dialectic, in other words, in conversation, rather than a fight, between worlds, opinions, truths and experiences which are different. This is a pattern that can be seen at many levels of life.

Through Jineoloji we seek to develop more ways of understanding regimes of truth in order to understand why capitalism, patriarchy, and the state are so deeply embedded in our reality and in our minds. Therefore, we need to retain the values and aims of a free, ecological, gender liberated society in whatever methods we use or develop. Our search must be rooted in the understanding that individual, society and nature compose a whole, and are shaped through their interactions with each other. Through Jineoloji, we recognise that being yourself and knowing yourself as part of your environment, society and history is the source of all knowledge, and so we seek **'xwebûn'**, the process of becoming yourself, on our path to understanding truth. As Rêber Apo says: "Truth is love, and love is life in freedom"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Abdullah Öcalan (2015): Manifesto for a Democratic Civilisation. Section 1: On Method and the Regime of Truth.

## 5.2 History of the Middle East and Orientalism

We can't understand the present without looking at history. We all, wherever we live, come from the same roots. Africa - the cradle of humanity - is our grandmother, and the Middle East - the cradle of civilisation - our mother.

Before humans came to the Middle East, they were living in our grandmother Africa. Human life began there, and for about seven million years it was the home of human life. In the last million years, humans started moving around. One migration line went to the Middle East, and the plains and foothills of the Tauros-Zagros mountains in Kurdistan were a resting point on the way. There were good living conditions in terms of climate, shelter and food. So people stayed longer and settled down. One of the first areas that was settled during Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic times (ending around 4,000 years ago) was Kurdistan. These periods of human life make up around 98% of human history and we describe them today as the times of the 'natural society'.

Natural society is central for every analysis in the Kurdistan Liberation Movement and in Jineolojî. The natural society was a matriarchal society, in which the basis for human life and society was founded. Because history was written down by the men in power, the reality of the natural society and matriarchy was unwritten. Inventions vital for human society were made in matriarchal societies. Many of these inventions are revolutions in human life, such as the full development of language, of village settlement, agriculture and tools for cooking and building, arts like songs and music, the gift economy, mother-goddess culture, justice, diplomacy, healthcare, morals and politics.

Only 5,000 years ago civilisation began to evolve. Civilisation began with the Sumerian state that developed between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. A key point of this new system, which continues to shape the states we are living in, was a patriarchal system based on dynasty and male-heritage, on power and oppression. To be able to establish this system, women - who were the centre of natural society - were enslaved. Natural society was based on a gift economy and only technological development, slavery, and the possibility to produce a surplus made it possible to create the Sumerian state system. This was the beginning of the suppression of society and civilisation under the state.

It was not pre-determined that the state and power develop out of the Neolithic natural society. We can also imagine cities without oppression and domination. But what is clear is that without the Neolithic period and the inventions and achievements of matriarchal culture, the state would not have been possible. It is a simple but important idea: the state needs society, but society doesn't need the state. To understand this history and its impact until today, it is important to see that violence is not sufficient to establish a system like the state system and impose it on a matriarchal society. Convincing people to submit to a system that acts against life never happens without a strong resistance from women and society. This resistance can not only go against a system of state institutions, it needs to break with the state mentality.

There is a truth of the Middle East. But when we look at the situation that women, men and nature are in today, we can see how this truth has been altered. The powers of Europe claim that they built up everything, that everything started in Europe. This idea, implemented outside, but also within the societies of the Middle East, is the root of Europe's colonisation of the Middle East. Orientalism is the understanding of the Middle East - our mother - as backwards, wild and underdeveloped. Orientalism is an ideological war of occupation through nation state, industrialism and capitalism. This is being done also in other parts of the world, but orientalism refers to the focus of this war on the Middle East. The aim is to divide and conquer. But in the never ending war in the Middle East it's obvious that it is impossible to fully establish this order:

the roots of society and resistance are too strong. The big clashes stem from the continuous resistance and protection mechanisms of society. Capitalism has never been completely accepted.

The Kurdistan Liberation Movement proposes an alternative. Rêber Apo is searching for positive values in the Middle East as well as in Western culture to form a synthesis. He uses the regimes of truth – mythology, religion, philosophy and science – and the theory of liberatory social science “Sociology of Freedom”. With these tools, he searches for the social truth in the Middle East. States feel threatened by this. The war in Kurdistan and the conspiracy against Rêber Apo which led to his imprisonment, are directed against the fact that he challenges orientalism and the idea that democracy came from Europe.

It is important to separate society from the state, to develop a love for society and to centre life not around the individual, but around shared life with others. To overcome generalization and racism, like orientalism, it is essential to treat every person with respect and concern, while acknowledging the different historical, national, cultural and social conditions of our socialisations. The first step to overcome orientalism within our movements is to honestly discuss and then honestly give and receive critique.

## 5.3 Impact of the nation, the state, religion and family in Europe

The state mentality affects peoples emotions, behaviours, mentality and relations, even if living in a community which is resisting the state. Everyone is part of society which is under the influence of the state, religion, patriarchy and capitalism. These influences are carried inside as part of the society that we grew up in. Likewise, religion has created a culture and values which are part of every individual despite not having had a religious upbringing. We need to go deep into history to understand how we got to where we are, what positive and negative heritage we carry, and the possibilities for moving forward.

The nuclear family based around the father (including in his absence), is a recent invention relative to society. Tribes, clans, and different communities throughout history have had many different ways of organising family structures, and therefore also how people live and who they live with. The nuclear family as it is today, has developed over time and been influenced by a lot of factors. As patriarchy grew stronger and stronger, families and wealth became patrilineal: it was the male line that continued the family heritage imposing male control over families as they became a man's property. At different times in history, the church and the state have taken a more active role in prescribing how families should be. It's a crucial site in which the occupation of women's bodies takes place, and of dominant systems dictating when and how women reproduce. The modern family has been described by Rêber Apo and others as a micro model of the state: the dominant male with total control reproducing the state with its sovereignty, which embodies patriarchal control in wider society. In order to challenge and deconstruct the state, and build an alternative society, we must analyse the family. For as long as it remains in its current form, patriarchal power structures will continue to reproduce.

Families also act as the main place where culture, ethics and value systems are passed on and reproduced. Our mothers and grandmothers carry a lot of the same values which militants aim to develop. Society itself is passed on and maintained in kitchens and on doorsteps, within and between families. But also the family carries the state model within itself, reproduces nationalism, and transmits religious moralism.

Christian morality, for example, has shaped European culture; from the family, life and work, to nationalism, colonialism and capitalism itself. Religion emerged from the human need of understanding and interacting with nature and the world as part of its own existence. This was then manipulated and transformed inside institutions of power and control. It was an attempt to kill the Mother Goddess and replace her by God, as the highest representation of patriarchy. This Christian morality changed human understanding, belief, culture and ethics to serve the interest of capitalism and the state. Religion is not an optional or irrelevant practice, but how the vast majority of humanity names and lives its values today.

Christian and specifically Catholic moralism developed based on guilt and punishment, in ways that first and foremost affect women. Women's personalities have been hugely shaped by these narratives of guilt, fear, sin, punishment and redemption. Their bodies, minds and behaviours have been controlled and after hundreds of years the effects are deeply embedded. At the macro level as society judges and punishes women's bodies, and also in the smallest day to day actions women wrestle with guilt. The legacy of the witch hunts on communities and also on women's personalities is insecurity and lack of trust in other women, and seeking the approval of male authorities.

While Catholicism says that we can repent our guilt and be forgiven, Protestantism does not offer the same salvation: putting one foot out of line has permanent consequences. Life may be miserable and involve a lot of suffering, but that's just how it is: you have to prove yourself to God, via suffering. The understanding of life as something joyless and full of work was one of the major building blocks of the mindset that allowed capitalism to develop. It's no coincidence that it was in the



Protestant homelands of England, Scotland, the Netherlands and Prussia that capitalism first flourished. Protestantism broke from the dominating structure of Catholicism, claiming each person's individual relationship with God. It was a much needed step away from conservative values and dogmatism, but with no ethics to hold society together instead of these values, capitalism was able to turn this into individualism and liberalism. Protestantism also saw further constriction of the immediate nuclear family, to better reproduce workers. All this created the basis for industrial exploitation of people and nature, and the state as we know it today.

Abdullah Öcalan understands nation as a shared mindset, a group or groups that come together due to a common understanding and perception. Nations are plural and a person can belong to more than one. They relate closely to identity. It is always harder to find positive associations with either nation or with national identities, coming from nation states with histories of shared mindsets of imperialism and domination. But in indigenous communities all over, or parts of Europe like the Basque Country, nations, shared culture and language as an important part of understanding and organising resistance.

The history of nation states is based on nationalism, which takes the place of religion by worshipping the state itself. The nation state is capitalism's most powerful expression. To recover a true understanding of nation, and national identities outside of and in opposition to the nation state, we have to reclaim our histories from the dominating and oppressive aspects of religion and reimagine the family.

It is crucial how this lives inside of our personalities. In the dialogues between Rêber Apo and German comrades in 1995 he speaks about the method of personality development and the process of learning about yourself through the mirror of a different reality:

“Day by day, the need to question the European personality is clearly revealed. The European personality is very self-confident and has a mentality that means to evaluate, judge and guide all peoples at the highest level. It can be dangerous to see us like this. In that sense I say, it

is very difficult to be a comrade. In order to be a comrade, it is necessary to compromise on Europeanism. Can they make concessions? They have characteristics of a dominant nation. Will they also make concessions on these?

My suggestion for them is that they should be a bit patient. They must be stubborn and understanding. They should try to understand us and to be comrades if they have the strength for that... The Kurdistan Revolution gives the possibility to once again find humanity inside of it... In this respect, I think that taking steps together is getting more and more meaningful. And in this sense, they are not strangers. They are becoming real revolutionaries... Comradeship is still the strongest emotion, the most necessary feeling, the most beautiful feeling.”

## 5.4 Liberalism

Liberalism started as a philosophy of “freedom”. But what is freedom? Philosophers such as John Locke and John S Mill sought freedom through rights granted by law and in this they tied freedom to the institution of the state. They developed the concept of ‘citizenship’, which in turn tied human identity to the state. They wrestled with a competitive view of freedom where every individual wants and needs as much as possible but will always risk oppressing others with that freedom.

The concept of the individual is central to liberalism. The individual is seen as the centre of the world, and the main subject of action. The individual alone creates his (and it almost always is his) own future. Liberal thinkers reacted against the idea of the all powerful god by constructing the idea of the all-powerful subject, relating to the rest of the world as objects. So liberalism moves this concept onto the individual, usually represented by the Western dominant male.

As humans are social beings and rely on communities to develop and survive, a whole myth has had to be created to support the idea of the individual as separate from the collective, and in fact in danger from it. Ethics as something that holds a collective together and makes our values a lived reality is not possible when each individual’s total autonomy in the moment is so sacred.

This means the “freedom” liberalism promotes is flawed. This “freedom” robs us of real freedom. Because individuals can’t survive without a collective, when people break with collective and community, they will always have to rely on the state, which is a mechanism of power and oppression. For meeting their needs alone, individuals are exposed to capitalism. This “freedom” means personal advantage in the moment, devoid of history and communal values. It destroys society, memory, and our responsibility to others. It destroys our responsibility to speak

up when we see something is wrong, for fear of standing on individual freedoms. In this competitive, patriarchal model of freedom it is also seen as inevitable that too much freedom would oppress others. So the question of liberal philosophers is – how far should “free individuals” be allowed to go? There’s no thought to developing a model of collective freedom, where values, ethics and the collective are also valued and freedom relies on the freedom of others.

The emergence of liberalism is located in a specific context of place and time. It’s important to remember this, as liberalism likes to position itself as objective and without context. It flourished in the same places and times as capitalism and industrialism, and consolidated the cultural, economic, military and political hegemony of Western Europe and the USA over other regions of the world.

As cities and towns, rather than villages, became the centre of human life, liberalism spread more and more. As a bourgeoisie class was created, liberalism was the philosophy of that class. As time passed, it usually promoted a strong state, and so no matter what liberalism says about freedom and human rights, it must always be understood as intrinsically connected to the history of the state.

One of liberalism’s great successes has been to claim objectivity. This is the same tactic as its scientific cousin, rationalism. Liberalism has a positivist and rationalist understanding of the world - it builds morality on this measurable, mathematical basis. For example, people are valued as good workers according to how much money they earn. Along with this, morals within a liberal model are seen as objective principles we can quantify. They don’t come from people, emotions, social connections or collective practice. The fewer innate values we believe in and rely on, the more laws we need.

Liberalism is a mindset that spreads into all spheres of life. For this, women have to analyse their own struggles. A whole branch of feminism for example pursues individual freedoms, asks for rights to be granted, and looks to the state for liberation.

It is on this basis that Rêber Apo has described liberalism as “capitalism’s greatest weapon”. Without the success of liberalism, capitalism would have to take a very different shape to maintain its power. Liberalism is central to the **special warfare** tactics of the patriarchal, capitalist nation state. It has successfully painted itself as neutral, whilst promoting such violences as rape culture, consumerism, mental health crises (and the individualised response to these, blaming the person suffering instead of the system), drugs and the commodification of everything from nature to peoples bodies to revolutionary movements. Liberalism has taught us there is no alternative to the systems of dominance we have, that if we are unhappy, amorality or nihilism are the only responses, that our private lives are sacred and untouchable.

But because liberalism is an attack, when we properly understand it and its role in special warfare, we can organise against it. Our self-defence is based around the protection of our free communal life with our heart, mind, body and soul.

## 5.5 Jineoloji

Jineoloji, as the science of women, is the science of revolution. Because it is through achieving woman's freedom that all society can be freed. Jineoloji develops this by giving all life meaning, by understanding freedom in the balance and co-existence of all beings, from the highest mountains to the smallest cells. It redefines the role and identity of women and combats the denial of women and femicide. It also reconnects society with nature, by understanding the human as part of her. Jineoloji evaluates women's wisdom and experiences of the struggle for freedom, understanding that history is something alive which needs to be redefined and radicalised, understanding women as the biggest movement of resistance.

Jineoloji started with the idea of gathering women's knowledge and the need for a women's science. The name Jineoloji was first expressed by Abdullah Öcalan in 2008 in the book "Sociology of Freedom", the third volume of the "Manifesto for a Democratic Civilisation". The basis of revolution is understood at achieving the freedom of women in order to free society. Discussions started to build on this basis, as well as through conferences. From the beginning onwards, the work of Jineoloji became a collective process. Many comrades have put a lot of love and struggle into the work and development of Jineoloji, including comrades who were organising in the prisons. Through that process it grew more and more into its form as a science of women, society and women's revolution, a knowledge of life and communal living.

It is clear that a revolution in science is necessary. We have to analyse women as a pillar of society and freedom, not as an oppressed identity. Society and its history cannot be understood without the history of women. Woman as a broad identity, as a revolution in itself, is hidden inside this history.

Jineolojî is also the the search for this identity through *hebûn - zanebûn - xwebûn*, which mean existence - knowledge - becoming yourself. Rêber Apo says the identity of a free woman doesn't have a final definition. We have to be the archaeologists of our own identities because they have been kept hidden for thousands of years. To do this it is necessary to deeply understand history but also the most recent one, from birth to childhood and into adulthood.

Jineolojî works in 8 different areas: **history, economy, demography, ethics and aesthetics, health, politics, education and ecology.**

Jineolojî understands **history** as fluid, as a source of seeking the truth of women, which was lost inside patriarchal reinterpretation. It sees it as non-linear, but rather as round, like a spiral, where we can see that processes evolve and influence each other without ending or beginning according to changes in power, but rather looking into the evolution of culture, values, resistance, ethics or cults and how they influence and live today.

The aim of **economy** is to establish a collective economic culture based on self-sufficiency. The focus is in the philosophy of economy used in natural society where women were at the centre, promoting mutual cooperation and involving the whole society.

As for **demography**, it has been used by capitalism to control women's reproduction and decision taking, to reshape the family according to its needs. The state also uses it as a way of ethnic control to destroy indigenous populations and national liberation struggles. Women, as creators and defenders of the land, should retake the role of demographic management, aware of the needs of their own communities as they were in matriarchal societies.

In terms of **health**, mothers are understood as the first carers and doctors. Women in natural society were also in charge of collecting herbs and had a role of healers, which is still present in villages all over the world. The understanding of health is linked to spirituality, emotion, and thought,

and combined with the developments of medicine to cure any disease. The aim of health is to preserve a life with meaning and use knowledge in a way that is ethical, sustainable and accessible for all.

**Politics** need to organise society promoting freedom, which starts with the analysis of the reality of women. This is a task that begins in the mind and that is carried out through practice and diverse methods. Democratic modernity is a framework where society can develop and organise, making every change possible in a communal way.

In the field of **ecology**, the aim is to overcome the existing conflict between nature and society. The environment, seen as the first nature, and the society, seen as the second nature, need to unite for a liberated society, a third nature, or way to connect everything together holistically. Economy, culture, socialisation and every field of human existence needs to fit inside the balance of nature.

Regarding **ethics**, women are the expression of social values that ensure common life and justice in society, a compass of values which helps us to find a way and the heart and the mind of society. Ethics are the self defence of society and the defence of life. In order to protect itself, society needs common values and basic shared principles. So the question of ethics is a question of society.

**Aesthetics** are the expression of ethics. As the knowledge of beauty, it was also used as a method of control in order to create new values. Over history, aesthetics was cut from ethics and used as a tool to implement oppression in our own thoughts and to take power over women's minds and bodies. Aesthetics are the unity of feelings, thoughts and actions.

In the women's liberation movement in Kurdistan the principles of ethics and aesthetics, described as free will, free thought and conscience, are a fundamental concept. In this sense conscience is how we approach reality in an ethical way. It means to put yourself in the place of the other, to have empathy.



## 5.6 Hevjîyana azad

How do we imagine life in freedom? How do patriarchy, state and capitalism influence the way we relate to each other? As friends, as comrades, among women, as women, men and people with other gender identities - as society? How do people all over the world build relations to struggle for alternatives? And how do we want to live and fight together?

*Hev* means together, *jiyan* life, and *azad* free. Living together in freedom. **Hevjîyana azad** is an answer to the current crisis of capitalist modernity, which is as well a crisis of relationships in a deeper sense. Individualism, making each other property, consumerism, egoism, competitiveness, envy and violence are shaping relations in capitalist modernity. Free relations and free life cannot be lived in an oppressive system. The relations between two, three, twenty or more people, are always a part and outcome of their environment, representing and reflecting the system they live in.

Hevjîyana azad does not refer to a narrow understanding of relationships, in the sense of the relationship or marriage between one woman and one man, but to the wide range of relationships we are living in. Free life means unity of society and nature, women, men, children; free relations between all living beings and their environment, based on mutuality. This includes all of us, our relationships to our surrounding, plants, animals, other women, society, family, belief systems, religions, the organization of work and economy, political organization, the architecture of cities, villages, houses, rooms and public spaces, the whole way of living together.

Both in the present and history, there are examples of different societies around the world with traces of hevjîyana azad, rooted in matriarchal traditions and reaching back until Neolithic times. The Achés [an indigenous community in Paraguay] connect the birth of a child with a certain plant or animal, which would then be part of the child for the rest of her life. There have been heretic movements and what has been

condemned as ‘paganism’ in Europe, such as Gnostics, Catars and Free Spirits. They were defending alternative models of society and different religious beliefs at a time when empires and monotheistic religions were imposing themselves on the world. Another example are the witch hunts and how women’s power and knowledge has been weakened over the course of the developments of the 14th to 17th centuries in Europe, the increasing development of private property, ownership of land, state control, liberalism and patriarchy. Meanwhile, in the Middle East there have been many movements opposing the monopolization of Islam. One important example is Zoroastrianism, the religion of Zarathustra. Other examples are the Tibetan community marriage practices, the Maori community in New Zealand and their views on family, and Yoruba society and how a patriarchal understanding of gender was imposed by colonialism.

With the first state-like structures, the split between society and nature, the split between the genders and the subjugation of women developed. Humans have a first nature [biological nature] and second nature [social nature]. When these natures were in harmony, it allowed a free society where relationships were based on freedom, justice and equality.

One important example is the development of the women’s movement in Kurdistan. The establishment of the women’s army and the women’s party aimed to develop the autonomy of women in all fields of society, challenging patriarchy, as a liberatory force for radical change. The five principles of the women’s liberation ideology – **welatparezî**, free thought and free will, organizing, struggle, ethics and aesthetics – are tools to move towards hevjiyana azad.

Regarding sexuality, in many matricentric societies it has a spiritual meaning, and plays an important role in connecting people and uniting communities. Throughout the history of patriarchy, sexuality became a major tool of control and oppression. Everything has been sexualised, and sexuality itself tabooed or commodified. Thus, on the way towards hevjiyana azad it is important to develop a different understanding of love, sexuality and intimacy and a new sensuality as part of a holistic

way of living and fighting. We have to see each other as comrades rather than sexual objects or potential partners, to deepen our comradeship and widen our love for each other as women and our love for who we are.

It is our task to continue to research the history and reality of common life and relations in our regions, to research society, movements and revolutions and how they experiment with different forms of relations, like the ones between women and society, life and nature or collectivity and common space. What are the gains of different liberation movements such as feminism, socialism, anarchism and the ecologist movement? How much did they succeed in developing something closer to hevjiyana azad? How much change happened in society?

## 5.7 Democratic nation and democratic confederalism

'Democratic modernity' is the alternative to capitalist modernity. Democratic modernity carries the positive values of freedom, community, justice and equality which were present before the onset of capitalism and remain alive today, a 'river of clean water' running through history. But at the same time, patriarchy and other systems of oppression have developed to suppress society for the profit of a few, and this 'dirty river' is also running through history, mixing with and contaminating the clean water. This clean water, the history of social values, the resistance to oppression, is the political and social basis of democratic modernity. Democratic confederalism carries the task of organising and defending these values.

When patriarchy first got a grip on society there was a period of chaos, of accelerated change, where the potential for changing history was high. At the end of this period, patriarchy emerged as the dominant system. The same happened in the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe, with a period of chaos and instability that saw capitalism emerge. Neither of these results was inevitable, and these moments of instability are also opportunities for the positive forces of history. Rêber Apo considers us to be in a similar period of instability, or 'deep structural crisis' right now, which means that we are in a period of opportunity. For our survival and our freedom we need to use this opportunity. This change is based on working towards democratic confederalism.

Democratic confederalism is the structure and social model for democratic modernity. It is founded on the concept of democratic nation. Just as democratic modernity stands in opposition to capitalist modernity, democratic nation stands in opposition to the nation state. Nation is a mentality. Democratic nation is the mentality of freedom. Freedom means fighting. Just as mindsets need a body to exist, national and social

mindsets need a structure to materialise. The body that materialises the spirit of democratic nation is democratic confederalism.

Democratic confederalism should not be understood as ready made structures that can be copied. What's more important is that when building structures certain principles are followed: that power flows from the bottom up and not from the top down, to keep decision making and conflict resolution at the most local level possible, to develop social values and equality, with gender equality always being the base. Even region to region, the best ways to organise can vary and certainly in different global contexts significant details may need to change to follow the same principles. But there are some basic structural points that are very important.

The commune system, and attempting to build up the mentality needed to maintain it, must in some form be part of a confederalist system. Communes – which are the smallest unit of democratic confederalism - can vary in size depending on needs, demography or geography. But to develop the practice of democratic confederalism, engaging in discussions and becoming politicised at the commune level is essential. In North and East Syria, communes send representatives to councils, which manage things that cannot be managed at the smaller level. This continues up to the level of the **Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria**. An examples of something that cannot be managed at the grassroots is coordination and distribution of logistics like crops, fuel, and water across wider areas. But an effort is always made to keep the decision making power at the grassroots levels and driven from below.

In this early stage, democratic confederalism can, as long as certain levels of political and economic autonomy exist, co-exist with nation states. The system is not to attack the state, but instead to build alternatives and counter-power, to regain control over our lives and eventually make the state obsolete. The system of confederating with other communes and councils will become a global confederal system.

An example of developing democratic confederalism outside of North and East Syria are the Zapatista 'caracoles'. They are governing centres which manage an autonomous commune-based organisation as part of the Zapatista revolutionary movement in Chiapas, Mexico. Another example can be found in the city of El Alto in Bolivia, where neighbourhood councils developed to a high level and made a federal structure between them, successfully building a counter power to the central government. They focused on mutual aid through neighbourhood organising and communal resources, on conflict resolution, and on organising protests, with a huge impact.

## 6. Platforms



## Why platforms? Background, idea and aim

Methods of criticism and self-criticism are tools used regularly within the structures of the revolutionary movement in North and East Syria. To understand what this tool is based on and how it can grow to its full potential we must look at the development of the foundational principles of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement. In the movement's ideology and practice, it is clear that we have to see every single individual as part of society and history. If we understand ourselves and everybody else in this context, we see that there are thousands of years of struggle between oppression and the search for freedom written in our own personalities. Everybody embodies parts of this dialectic.

How can we support the parts within ourselves that seek freedom? How can we learn to build a personality with which we can support ourselves and others? Who do we want to be? Xwebûn is the aim that we are communally working towards. Not to become consumed by individualistic personal development, but by seeing how big structures function at the level of human interaction we can see how all the pieces fit together. One tool for this is the model of criticism/self-criticism, which works on the assumption that we are all mirrors of our history and society. Criticism is given to a behaviour or approach, not to a person.

Platforms encourage individuals to reflect upon parts of their character that need improvement and to find ways to progress. At the core of any criticism given to another comrade is the belief that the comrade can and wants to change. In this way, giving a critique to a comrade should indicate care. Criticism is based on building community and struggle together, and on the responsibility to fully support each other.

During any process of criticism/self-criticism it is important that comrades do not immediately respond to criticisms and try to find meaning in all critiques that are given to them. If someone feels that a critique is really not justified it is permitted to speak up. However, this should wait until after all other comrades have had a chance to express opinions. This is to avoid defensive reactions and give time to reflect.



Sharing the power of individual development as part of a collective creates an environment of closeness that cannot be damaged by past mistakes and failures. Instead, it establishes the foundation of a collective force fighting for a free life.

Platforms are based on sharing reports on each personal life story. Topics included in the report are childhood and upbringing, family, politicisation, relationship to womanhood, relationship to men and women, working and social life back home and in Rojava, including the education. Afterwards, the rest of the friends give criticism and perspectives.

Every criticism creates a new horizon, leading to the development and broadening of the mind and inner strength. The real solution and struggle against the reality of the capitalist system that isolates, suffocates and drives people into depression is the love of community and comradeship. Personality analysis is a basis of this communality.

## 7. On hope



*Writing from one member of the Şehid Malda Education Term, shortly after the invasion of North and East Syria by the Turkish state in October 2019.*

We wanted to plant a garden.

I still have the seeds in my cupboard: lettuce, carrots, beetroot, cabbage. We had so many dreams and plans for this piece of ground. We had tilled the soil and composted our kitchen waste for months, hacked back purple thistles that grew above our heads and scraped our fingers raw, raked armloads of dry golden grass, itchy in the heavy heat of summer.

When the brown hen decided to roost on her eggs even though we had no rooster, we walked around the village and traded her eggs with neighbours who had fertilised eggs. We snuck them into her nest and they hatched a few weeks later, a brood of chicks from a dozen different mothers and fathers. We watched her care for them as they grew.

When the attacks came the shells ripped through our neighbourhoods and tore open the earth. We had to abandon the garden. We gave the chickens away. We started putting coffins into the ground, instead of seeds.

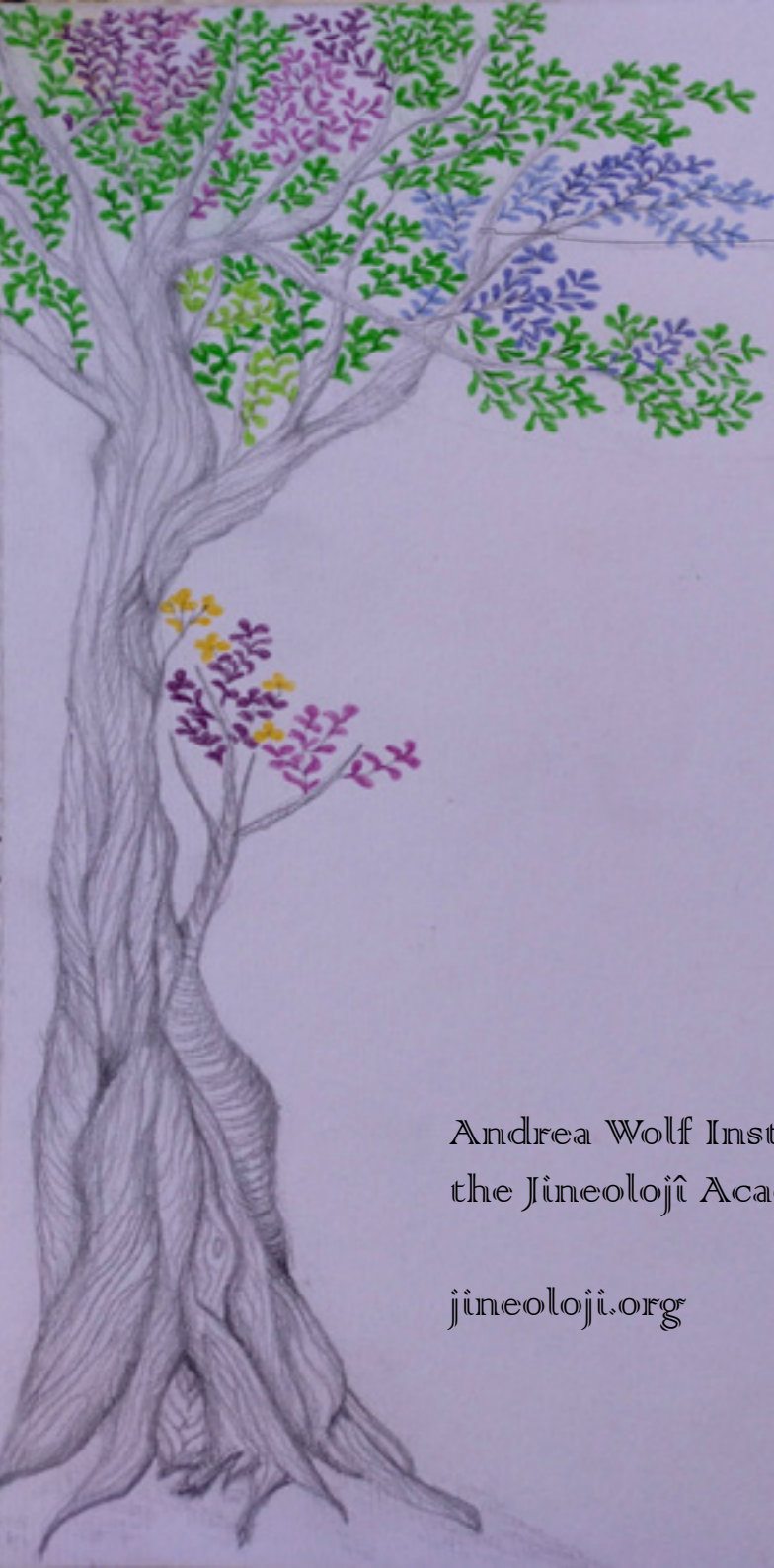
This week it rained for the first time in months- the parched earth drank it in, we inhaled the smell of a new world. But we rejoiced not because the downpour would give our seedlings life, but because mud makes it harder for tanks to attack our villages and towns, because clouds provide cover from drones raining down missiles on our homes.

Now we watch the vultures of the world descend, ready to pick through rubble and shallow graves in their insatiable hunger. Ready to gorge themselves, even while the footsteps of our fallen friends still echo in the streets of Sere Kaniye. I'm scared that the only thing that will be left to us when we're old is to look each other in the eye and say "remember when we were free?"

Hope has always been the hardest seed to grow. It feels too tender and fragile to exist in this world. Sometimes we smother it with fleece and netting, protecting it from the harshness of our surroundings. But in order for it to grow, it needs to be buffeted by wind so it can cross pollinate, it needs to learn how to defend itself against birds and grow strong roots so it can hold onto the earth. It will grow weathered and tough, it will lose leaves and branches.

But, my friends, when the summer comes, its fruit will be the sweetest of all.





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