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Editorial

It is my pleasure, as Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Yezidi Studies (IJYS), to present to our esteemed readers the second issue of our peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal. Our aim is to provide a rigorous academic platform dedicated to the study of Yezidi religion, including its structure, history, culture, and spiritual and social heritage from all perspectives, seeking to move beyond the distortions, simplifications, and non-scholarly approaches that have long characterised this field.

This issue represents another step toward strengthening the traditions of specialised academic research on Yezidi affairs in general and Yezidi studies in particular. It features original contributions from scholars around the world, covering themes in history, religion, anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and related fields, thereby enriching knowledge about one of the region's small religious minorities.

The Editorial Board has ensured the highest standards of academic review and double-blind peer evaluation to guarantee the quality, objectivity, and originality of the published studies. We also reaffirm our commitment to encouraging interdisciplinary approaches, supporting early-career researchers, and providing a rigorous scholarly platform befitting the importance of this field of study.

This issue includes five peer-reviewed articles and a book review, beginning with the joint contribution by Majid Hassan Ali and Diar Al Omar, titled *The Pioneer of Change at the Crossroads from Sinjar to the Caucasus: Prince (Mîr) Ismail Chol-beg and the Struggle for Modern Yezidi Identity.* In this article, they examine the role of the Yezidi prince Ismail Chol-beg (d. 1933), one of the most intriguing and controversial Yezidi figures of the twentieth century. They present the first systematic attempt to understand his perspectives on Yezidi identity, an aspect largely overlooked in earlier research, reconstructing his views through his letters, dictated texts, autobiography, published works, European travel accounts, and multilingual archival material. By assembling these scattered sources, the study offers a comprehensive account of his ideas, activities, networks, and influence.

The second article, by Victoria Arakelova, titled *How Close is ʿAli to God? On the Status of ʿAli in the Yezidi Tradition*, investigates the place of Imam ʿAli within Yezidi religious heritage. Although the deification of ʿAli is characteristic of certain extremist Shiʿi groups, his role in the Yezidi religious minority has not previously been examined in depth. Owing to notable parallels between Yezidis and some non-mainstream Shiʿi milieus, the study analyses Yezidi religious texts in which ʿAli appears repeatedly and sometimes prominently. While the Yezidi religious minority does not attribute divine status to him, the article shows that

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his functional qualities and unique contextual role suggest that he once held a special, perhaps significant, position in Yezidi tradition.

The third article, by Isabel Broian, titled *Soviet Propaganda and the Integration of the Yezidis into the Communist Society during the Korenizatsiya Policy (1923–1934)*, examines the arrival of Yezidis in the South Caucasus following their migration from the Ottoman Empire. Living a semi-nomadic life and relying on oral tradition, they encountered a new Soviet system that, through the korenizatsiya (indigenisation) policy, granted minority groups broad cultural rights as part of a larger effort to integrate them into the communist project. Through archival sources and printed materials, the article shows how Bolshevik propaganda sought to transform Yezidi traditional life, promote Yezidi-language education, and instil Marxist-Leninist values, while simultaneously undermining the influence of religious and tribal leaders. Consequently, elements of Yezidi identity, such as religion and customary practices, were labelled as "backward remnants" of the past.

The fourth article, by Janelle Carlson, titled *The Slow Slog of Genocide: New Understandings of Yezidi Approaches to Survival and Justice*, argues that genocide does not end with the cessation of direct killing. As defined in Article 6(c) of the Rome Statute, genocide also includes the deliberate imposition of conditions of life intended to bring about a group's destruction. The article contends that understanding this slow, grinding dimension of genocide requires attending both to how affected communities describe the violence and to how states, international organisations, and humanitarian actors respond to it. Drawing on interviews and the work of local scholars and activists, the study shows how genocide against the Yezidis persists through three gaps in the international response: inadequate living conditions, the radicalisation of populations in Al-Hol Camp, and failure to support Yezidi strategies of survival. It concludes that justice requires not only prosecuting perpetrators but also restoring the conditions necessary for survivors to live.

The final research article, by Rustam Rzgoyan, titled *Repression of the Yezidis in the Armenian and Georgian SSRs in 1930–1940*, analyses state policies targeting Yezidis during Stalin's era. Like other peoples of the Soviet Union, Yezidis experienced repression and internal displacement, albeit to a lesser degree than in central Russia. While the campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s weakened the Yezidis and reduced the authority of tribal elites, they did not dismantle their social structure, which remains cohesive to this day. The article argues that these measures ultimately broke the historical isolation of Yezidi communities and accelerated their integration into Soviet society.

This issue also includes a book review by Peter Nicolaus of Benjamin Raßbach's *Landscapes of Resistance: Narratives around Sacred Places in Sinjar (Iraq) and the Islamic State's Genocide against Yezidis* (2024). Nicolaus highlights the scholarly value of the work and its

contribution to Sinjar and Yezidi studies. He commends Raßbach's innovative "narrative mapping" of sacred places and his careful integration of oral tradition, legends, and stories surrounding Yezidi shrines. Nicolaus emphasises the dual role of these sites as both sources of internal political tension and symbols of a unified Yezidi religious identity. He also notes the recent trend toward more standardised religious interpretations, shaped by ongoing political upheavals and conflict, observing that all Yezidi political actors utilise religious symbols to advance their agendas while claiming to represent the broader community.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all the contributors to this issue, to the reviewers for their rigorous scholarly efforts, and to the technical and administrative teams for their work in producing this volume. I am also grateful for the ongoing support of our partners in research centres, universities, and academic institutions that continue to follow and encourage the journal's mission.

We hope this issue will serve as a valuable contribution to Yezidi scholarship as well as Middle Eastern studies, and open new avenues for scholarly dialogue on topics still in need of deeper investigation.

Majid Hassan Ali
Editor-in-Chief

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