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Editorial

We are pleased to announce to our readers the inaugural issue of the International Journal of Yezidi Studies (IJYS), which aims to bring together in one place the hitherto scattered results of research on Yezidis, their history, culture, and religion, thereby breaking down traditional disciplinary boundaries by providing a comparative and interdisciplinary forum.

While researchers have documented and analyzed the Yezidi experience in various specialized journals, these publications often reach a limited audience. Currently, there is no centralized platform for scholars focusing exclusively on Yezidis, to share their work and engage with others working on similar issues. This gap inspired us to create the IJYS and define our aim, namely to create a central academic space in which scholars who typically study Yezidis and Yezidism, or specific subfields, can engage in dialogue with each other through their shared focus on Yezidi affairs in different contexts, both historical and contemporary. We aim to provide a platform for innovative studies that cover a wide range of time periods, geographical regions, and disciplines. We believe this new journal, dedicated to the Yezidi minority, will offer a space for authors to disseminate their research and for readers to stay informed about significant developments in this field.

We are interested in attracting high-quality manuscripts from an international community of scholars seeking a broader audience for their research on Yezidism and Yezidi tradition. While we certainly encourage traditional research, we also hope the journal will inspire scholars to extend their reach, making their often quite specialized research accessible to peers working on similar questions in related fields.

Religious and ethnic as well as ethno-religious minorities have profoundly influenced the political, social and economic landscape of societies, nations, and states. Despite their significant contributions, many of these groups have experienced discrimination and marginalization by states and majority populations. The Yezidi religious minority is a notable example. Throughout its history, the Yezidi community has faced numerous challenges, including religious, social, and political persecution, military campaigns, and genocides perpetrated by local rulers, states, and central authorities. The first edition of the IJYS appears ten years after the latest genocide against the Yezidi people, which we would like to mourn and commemorate with this edition.

This volume of IJYS provides an overview of a collection of articles focused on Yezidi studies across various scientific fields of interest, including history, society, religion, and heritage, with particular emphasis on issues related to genocide. The collection features contributions from various authors who explore both general topics and specific aspects of Yezidi studies,

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with several scholars reflecting on these topics from diverse disciplines and key areas. The purpose of this is to provide researchers with new information and to foster a better and deeper understanding of the emerging field of Yezidi studies. Through the articles currently accepted for publication, we aim not only to establish a starting point but also to rekindle enthusiasm for further research in Yezidi studies.

This first issue brings together scholars and researchers from Austria, Georgia, Iraq, Poland, Russia, and the USA and comprises of six articles. The first two articles address the historical experiences of the Yezidi genocides, including the most recent mass murder and enslavement of Yezidis in Iraq and Syria under the terror of ISIS, the legal issues in coping with this genocide, and a snapshot of the new return program to Sinjar initiated by the Iraqi federal government. These are followed by a scholarly paper investigating the use of the term 'religion' and its concept (including its history), in the context of Yezidi culture and beliefs. It shows the views of an awakening Yezidi community in a changing social environment, which questions the Western and Russian domination in the studies dealing with them, their culture and religion. Then we provide a short study focusing on the history and significance of the Yezidi sanjaqs in general and the Tawûs Gêran in particular by retracing the tours these images of Tawûsî Melek took and one of them still takes. The fifth article, a historical study, provides a deeper insight into the history of the Yezidis in Eastern Anatolia, where the Yezidi principality of Ezdikhan existed from the 16th to the 18th century. In this context, the article also discusses new documents discovered in the National Archives of Georgia that refer to Khalil Aga, the early leader of the Yezidis who lived in the Erivan Governorate of the Russian Empire. The first issue of our journal concludes with a study that challenges the petrified dogma of the Mithraic origin of Yezidi bull sacrifice by highlighting the diverse cultures and religions from which the Yezidis may have borrowed.

As the editor-in-chief I would also like to extend my gratitude to the international team of editors and advisors as well as to all those involved in the preparation of the IJYS for their dedicated service. Their enthusiasm, creativity, and tireless work have made these issues possible. They are the backbone of the journal and the heart of our team. I would also like to express my appreciation to the IJYS reviewers who, despite their busy schedules and the tight deadlines for producing this journal, provided their expert and nuanced reviews in a timely manner. Their support is invaluable, and I hope they will continue this journey with IJYS in the future. I also thank our copyeditors, scholars, and colleagues from other journals and academic institutions who have discussed with us, and in particular, the Giorgi Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies at Ilia State University for their partnership and their ongoing technical guidance and support. Finally, I would like to thank our authors for their original contributions that will advance Yezidi research.

Majid Hassan Ali
Editor-in-Chief