



BRILL

Editorial

Almost exactly ten years ago, in October 2013, the first issue of the journal *Kurdish Studies* was published as a result of cooperation between the Kurdish Studies Network and the small publisher Transnational Press in London. Thanks to a dedicated and hard-working editorial team, which gradually expanded, the journal appeared punctually twice a year (every May and October), its content consisting of high-quality articles based on recent research in a wide range of academic disciplines. Together, the first ten volumes of *Kurdish Studies* provide, we believe, a good representation of the range of work done in this field of studies and demonstrate its flourishing despite the dearth of university departments specializing in the Kurds and Kurdistan compared to more institutionalized area studies. As a meeting place for scholars of many different disciplinary and regional backgrounds who shared an interest in the region and its peoples, the journal played an important part in the increasing academic respectability of Kurdish studies.

And then, in the journal's tenth year, things fell apart. For reasons that are still not entirely clear to us, the publisher, Transnational Press, entered into an agreement with a shady publisher who initially vowed to invest money and put the journal on a more secure financial basis but soon appeared to be interested in transforming *Kurdish Studies'* reputation and achievements into a money-making asset. The editorial team was never informed about the nature of this business deal and by early 2023 we discovered that the journal had in fact been sold behind our back. Volume 10 issue 2, published in October 2022, is the last issue prepared under the editors' responsibility. The entire editorial team resigned from the journal when we found out about the sale and discovered that the new publisher retrospectively added papers of low quality that had not been peer-reviewed to the issue on the journal's website.

The new owner, who operated under various names (changing from Intellectual Edge Research Publishing to Oxbridge Publishing and most recently Society of History and Cultural Studies) and took legal shelter in Hong Kong, is a typical predatory publisher, who takes money from authors to publish their papers, without any quality control. Unfortunately, we have been unable to regain control of the journal's original website, which still pretends to belong to a peer-reviewed journal but now features new content of very low quality and is obviously run by people devoid of relevant expertise.

Ever since resigning from the journal, as an editorial team we have sought ways of safeguarding the legacy of *Kurdish Studies*, even if we haven't been able to save its title and associated website. We are happy to have found a suitable, reliable, and welcoming new home for the journal with Brill Publishers and are proud to present herewith the first issue of the *Kurdish Studies Journal*, the genuine successor to vols. 1–10 of *Kurdish Studies*. We intend to build upon the accumulated experience of the past ten years and to continue serving as a prime venue for the development of Kurdish studies, through the publication of ground-breaking and exciting new research by leading figures in the field as well as junior scholars. We shall especially strive to build bridges and establish a dialogue between researchers in the West and those residing in all parts of Kurdistan and the Kurdish diaspora.

As we wrote ten years ago, “the journal invites contributions on Kurdistan and the Kurds, including the religious and ethnic minorities in Kurdistan, relations of the Kurds with neighbouring peoples and states, Kurdish enclaves elsewhere in the Middle East and the modern Kurdish diaspora. Contributions from all academic disciplines are welcome, provided they do not exclusively address narrow specialist issues but reach out to readers of other disciplinary backgrounds. A clear conceptual or theoretical framework is desirable, but the primary aim of the journal is to enable exchange between colleagues of different parts of the world and different academic specialisations who share a general interest in the Kurds and Kurdistan. It is our hope that the journal will be especially useful to the younger generation of scholars, who will be the ones to further raise the intellectual level of Kurdish studies.” We continue to nourish this hope as we embark on a new publishing journey together with Brill.

We also invite proposals for special issues on more narrowly defined subjects, with contributions that complement each other. Previous special issues focused on Kurdish linguistics, the Kurdish diaspora, Yezidism and Yezidi studies, history and culture of the Kurds of Iran, women and war, Alevi Kurds, and mass violence and the Kurds. The present volume contains a special issue on queer identities and the Kurds, curated by guest editor Hakan Sandal-Wilson. In future volumes we hope to pay attention to debates on colonialism, occupation, and decoloniality, environmental questions, and other topical subjects.

By outlining a distinct “Kurdish queer” perspective, the articles in this volume's special issue highlight the contributions that Kurdish studies have to offer to scholars of the Middle East and queer subjectivities more broadly. They position Kurdish studies at the forefront of conversations that seek to think through queer concepts beyond the Western canon, while demonstrating the usefulness of “queer” as a lens through which to approach Kurdish

geographies and communities. The authors employ queer analytical tools in ways that refuse theoretical dogmatism while foregrounding intersectional and decolonial approaches. As such, they make important methodological and conceptual contributions. The articles allow us to view Kurdish cinema through a queer lens (Kaan Akin), indicate what is at stake in queer-feminist knowledge production and researcher positionality within Kurdish studies (Tebessüm Yılmaz), highlight the complex translation processes that shape encounters between queer activists in Europe and the Kurdish women's movement (Eleonora Gea Piccardi), and show how dengbêjî in a queer vein allows forging new forms of belonging and desire (Emrah Karakuş). Committed to facilitating dialogue between academic scholarship and the people and places from which it emerges, the special issue also includes a commentary on queer activism in Turkey from the perspective of a Kurdish activist currently based in London (Rukan Atçeken) and an interview with the Diyarbakır/Amed-based Cultural Studies for Peace Association (bakad) on how Kurdish LGBTI+ experiences relate to the politics of peace and conflict. The special issue closes with an afterword by Dilar Dirik, which poignantly highlights the urgency that underlies both queer and Kurdish mobilization in contexts of capitalist extraction and ongoing dispossession. If queerness entails a concern with imagining alternative futures, then we hope this special section will contribute to broadening both our scholarly and socio-political horizons. Undoubtedly, this is all the more necessary at a moment when war has once more engulfed the Middle East, leading to unimaginable suffering and destruction.

The other articles in this issue illustrate the range of our interests. Yaşar Kaplan writes on a Garshuni Kurdish text (i.e., Kurdish written in Syriac script) and reflects on how the contact between Aramaic-speaking Christians and Kurds may have given rise to this type of literature. Metin Yüksel's contribution on the important cultural institution Zheen (Jîn) in Silêmanî is at once an exercise in auto-ethnography to explore the limits of monolingualism and a study of intellectual life and publishing in southern Kurdistan in the twentieth century. The contribution by Necla Acik, Berivan Kutlay-Sarıkaya, Farangis Ghaderi, and Gülay Kılıçaslan situates the story of the Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN) in the context of a fast-growing field of Kurdish gender studies. As such, their article confirms the growing significance of queer-feminist scholarship in our field. The interview of Essmat Sophie by Wendelmoet Hamelink picks up on these topics as Sophie speaks about her life between Sine (Sandandaj), Tehran, and Oslo and the place of gender issues, violence, sexuality, and feminism in her novel *Last Day of Autumn*. Finally, Joanna Bocheńska's obituary of Yevgeniya Vasilyeva is a tribute to one of the major scholars of the history of early modern Kurdistan, also demonstrating the lasting importance of the

Russian and Soviet schools of Kurdology. In addition, nine book reviews give insight into significant works recently published in our field.

While publishing in English, our journal has always accorded importance to making its scholarship accessible to Kurdish audiences by translating the abstracts of all articles into the three major Kurdish dialects. We continue this practice in the *Kurdish Studies Journal* published by Brill. Translation work is always also conceptual work, particularly in this issue, where our translators have done an excellent (if difficult) job rendering vocabularies of queer-ness and gender-bending into Kurdish. For their hard labour we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Kubra Sagir (Kurmanji); Mahîr Dogan and Ugur Sermiyan (Zazaki); and Shnyar Mohammed Hassan, Karzan Jalal, and Shenah Abdullah (Sorani).

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