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Yezidi youth in the German diaspora: (Re)producing religion, culture, and ethnicity (2005-2020)

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Abstract

The ethno-religious Yezidi society mobilized in their diaspora of Germany is mainly riven by social tensions and political disagreements between generations[1] in the realm of the struggle between tradition and modernity. This research explores how the young members of the Yezidi community of Germany respond to the challenges of diasporic conditions and the tensions that occur with previous generations due to internal change and continuity. It provides an understanding of how young Yezidis or Yezidi youth of the German diaspora treat the traditional social and organizational structures within the new settings of the diaspora.

The Yezidi society in Germany consists of at least three layers of generations or the population. The young population who born and raised in Germany and who at least have more than a decade experience of life in Germany that are part of this study is presented in the study as the third layer of the Yezidi population who are in lack of social contact and interaction with previous generations due to language barriers and preferences of lifestyles. Members of the third generation are usually the offspring of the second generation or descendants of the first generation who migrated to Germany as labor workers and settled there from 1960 onwards.

For a long time - mainly in the 2000s and beyond - the Yezidi community has debated its internal dynamics and undergone some degree of change for various social and political reasons. The conditions of modern life have forced every component of the Yezidi community to change in different regions and geographies. In Germany, one of the countries with the largest Yezidi population in Europe, it has been essential to observe this change and understand its extent among young Yezidis. The study, therefore, explores how these young Yezidis perceive the ongoing process of internal debates or the formation of Yezidism to reinvent itself under the circumstances of migration and diaspora. For young Yezidis, the European understanding of religion based on coherence and doctrine will likely be a 'role model' for reproducing culture, religion, and identities in the German diaspora. In some cases, young informants call the transformation process 'reform,' which is not a welcomed concept by the previous generations since it refers to 'assimilation,' 'extinction,' and 'change.' The author considers this process as reproducing of new discourses of culture, religion, and

[1] Social theorists such as Auguste Comte and Karl Mannheim first introduced the concept of generation. Auguste Comte initially addressed the conflicts between older and younger generations in the context of social change. However, Karl Mannheim was the first social scientist to elaborate on the idea of generations systematically.

identities that lead to self-realization of the Yezidi society in diaspora circumstances since there is a serious attempt at self-representation of the Yezidi society among Yezidi intellectuals and heads of cultural centers in Germany.

So far, young Yezidis, who was born and raised in a pluralist environment in Germany, have paid little attention to the Yezidi religion, culture and social norms, and the social organization of their community. They were in less social contact with their society until the last decade, which resulted in a big wave of migration to Germany from 2014 onwards. As a result of gaining a transnational character, the Yezidi community became a prominent ethno-religious group in international society. The young Yezidis in Germany, with very little knowledge of their homeland, culture, and religion, have become seriously interested in their community over the last two decades. It is noteworthy to note here that this generation, which elders consider insufficient in terms of traditional knowledge, is struggling with the conservative and traditional behavior of the previous generations during the transformation of the community. In this struggle between the modernist and conservative sides, some existing molds and ideas have been 'changed' or 'transformed.'

Yezidis in Germany occurred at least in three phases of the Yezidi immigration since the 1960s. Every phase of immigration produced its population layers and its discourse on the transformation of the Yezidi society. The transformation process and related discourses constituted among young Yezidis in Germany are the main themes of this study. The memorized and orally transmitted religious tradition has already been transformed into written scripture in Germany, bringing new forms of transformations to the Yezidi society of Germany. As of the last two decades, the debates concerning the appearance of the new Yezidi theology based on coherence, doctrine, and canon in the context of European understanding of religion, the need for restructuring of the social organization of Yezidi society, notably after the Yezidi 'genocide' in 2014, the debates about the need for establishment of houses of worship etc. continue with the emergence of new identity makers and discussions on religious and cultural self-identification among young Yezidis in Germany. In this realm of transformations, young Yezidis` discourse is diversified with the topics of new forms of culture that were produced through the liberal values of Germany, with gender issues, honor-related violence, and the role of women in Yezidi society, with re-configuration of the 'caste system'[2] of the Yezidi society, with the new methods of the transmission of knowledge

[2] All three castes regularly interact with one another without restrictions. In Yezidi society, individuals' social and economic positions are not determined by caste.

to next generations and so on. The targeted young Yezidis in this study have a character of self-assurance and critically question the current functioning of the Yezidi society with its all aspects in Germany. Endogamy, for example, is at the top of the list of criticized topics among young Yezidis who were born and raised in Germany once there are examples of marrying out. Endogamy, honor, honor killing, bride price, and the social structure based on the 'caste system' are naturally criticized as it is assumed to be a primitive social organization' and is considered to lead to the 'diminishing and extinction' of Yezidi society in modern life by the third generation. The third Yezidi generation in Germany has become more secular, rationalistic, and pragmatic, posing questions concerning older traditions, rituals, political affiliations, cultural self-understanding, etc., because they are well-educated and have constituted connections with German society. The following respondent highlights his opinion concerning such topics as follows:

I8MB27: "In Germany, modern life is centered on individuality, requiring young individuals to be self-reliant. As a young Yezidi, I must work and establish my life independently. Unlike many of my German peers, whose parents often hold advanced degrees, my parents bring with them experiences shaped by hardship and adversity. Individuality is more prominent in daily life, distancing me from the communal traditions of my Yezidi upbringing. To focus on my studies and earn a living, I had to move out, which has made returning to my family difficult. Many young Yezidis I know also separate from their families to escape traditional norms and values that their parents continue to enforce. Many young Yezidis no longer adhere to traditional lifestyles. While I personally respect these cultural norms, I find some, such as those related to marriage, overly strict and in need of reform. For instance, traditional marriage customs could be revisited to better align with the realities of modern life in the diaspora."

Since young Yezidis in Germany intensively participate in German society with its pluralist settings through social connections constituted at schools, NGOs, etc., their ideas of modern re-formulation of Yezidi society cause cultural clashes between them and their parents and previous generations. A significant portion of the young Yezidis aspires to follow a European understanding of religion based on a consistent theology with sacred books and houses of worship, most probably due to the increasing demands of outsiders to access the Yezidi tradition in diaspora circumstances. A re-formulated Yezidi theology that is supported by a sacred book and houses of worship is, for example, a demand of young Yezidis interviewed in the study, even though houses of worship hardly exist in Yezidism. The need for a religious

representative figure or a priest who would be dressed in traditional Yezidi clothes is a discussed issue among a few young Yezidi intellectuals, too. Such discussions take place in three most important discourses: 1. Yezidism is in danger of dying out in Germany, 2. the conditions of Yezidis` German diaspora cause cultural clashes between generations, and 3. the social norms-related issues and the phases of traumatization of Yezidis in the last two decades route Yezidis to discover the new markers of an independent Yezidi ethnic identity in Germany.

The young population is in search of self-realization and ethnic affiliations, which constitutes good interactions with Yezidi Armenian and Georgian diasporas that may result in the discourse of belonging to Yezidism in the near future. Young Yezidis are in an attempt to position themselves in the fields of religious and cultural identification based on endogamy and ethnicity. Yezidi identity markers through religion, culture, language, and history are vehemently debated among young Yezidis who are individualized and liberated from the social control of their families in their German diaspora. Soon after the 2014 Yezidi 'genocide,' demands for "reform" and change in the Yezidi community have become a hot topic of discussion. I aim to analyze the perceptions, perspectives, and assessments of the Yezidi youth (age stage between 18 and 30) in the Yezidi German diaspora regarding the ongoing 'reform' debate via several key research questions. In particular, the research questions "Do Yezidi youth prefer a modern life or a traditional life in Germany?" and "Do young Yezidis want to have a formal Yezidi theology in the Western sense to explain Yezidism to outsiders?" will help us understand the ongoing tension and cultural conflicts between generations and help us test the hypothesis of the research. The hypothesis I test in this study is that the transformation of Yezidi religion, culture, and—to some extent—identity, though not an immediate concern prior to the 2010s, has emerged as a prominent issue due to the mobility of Yezidi diaspora communities and the advocacy efforts of educated Yezidi youth. This demographic has played a pivotal role in elevating Yezidi social challenges and crises into public discourse. The social and political ramifications of ISIL's 2014 attacks further underscored this transformation, positioning educated young Yezidis within the German diaspora at the forefront of debates concerning identity, cultural preservation, and religious evolution.

Thus, I, naturally, deal with the religious and social discourses of the young Yezidi population concerning current transformations happening in culture, religions, and ethnicity. I will discuss these discourses supported by gained scientific data in detail in the last two chapters

of the study after giving theoretical aspects and a summary of Yezidis, their diasporas, and Yezidism in the initial three chapters of the study. The findings of this study are mainly based on qualitative research supported by a few statistical data gained through secondary studies and a survey. The study benefited from both external secondary studies, i.e., reviewing these studies and learning from them notably about Yezidism, and content analysis of ten individual in-depth interviews and a survey of fifty-three research questions answered by over thirty male and female respondents.

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Glossary of Terms and transcription

'Adawiyya: A sufi order founded by Sheikh `Adi in the twelfth century that turned into Yezidism later.

Berat: A sort of sacred object that is known as little balls of earth or dust mixed by feqrayas (a woman in the service of the sanctuary of Sheikh `Adi) with holy spring water from the holy Valley of Lalish.

Baba Sheikh(Bavê Şêx): The father sheikh or the religious leader of the entire Yezidi community who has an executive spiritual power

Çîn (ç sounds as *ch (***ch**air*), î* sounds as e (k**ee**p) in English**):** It is a Kurdish word that connotes the concept of caste or class but does not have the specificity of these concepts. Instead, it refers to the forms of groups of people living in tribal structures.

Cejn (j sounds as s in the English version): A word that directly refers to a celebration or feast.

Feqîr: The word feqîr is used for persons who devote their lives to spiritual pursuits in religious texts. Feqîrs are considered the guardians of the holy place, Lalish.

Ferz: The religious duty(s) of a Yezidi individual

Meclîs: Assembly or gathering

Mirebbi: It means the master or teacher. A mirebbi is one of the members of a sub-group (for example, shaikh al-wezir, baba gawan, baba chawush, feqrayas, kabanes, feqîrs, qewwals, kocheks, mijêwirs, ferrashes, and hostas or ostas) within the religious caste.

Mîr: A secular leader of the Yezidi community who has a legislative spiritual power and is considered a defender of the faith. He is considered the earthly vicegerent of the Peacock Angel and Shaikh `Adi.

Murîd: A layman or disciple who is not from a priestly caste. Any follower or student of Sheikh or Pîr is called Murîd.

Pîr: A spiritual guide for his flock.They are participate in religious ceremonies and they are shown gerat respect by every Yezidis.

Qewl: A Yezidi holy text or religious hymn

Qub: The term "Qub" (also spelled Qûb or Qûba in Kurdish) refers to a sacred sanctuary or shrine dedicated to a holy figure. It may contain a tomb or relics.

Sheikh: A spiritual guide for his disciples. A Sheikh teaches moral precepts to his disciples.

Tawûsî Melek (û sounds like the m**oo**n): It is known as the Peacock Angel, which is the most important character in Yezidism. It is a mediator angel between God and the Yezidi people.

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Introduction

Today, many Yezidis live as refugees, struggling to preserve their cultural identity while rebuilding their communities in the aftermath of the ISIS atrocities that began in 2014. Yezidis have demonstrated resilience in their ancestral homelands and within diasporic communities despite their small population. As an ancient religious minority, Yezidis in the diaspora face significant challenges, including the threat of assimilation and the erosion of traditional social structures.

Under diasporic conditions, the social organization of ethno-religious groups like the Yezidis inevitably undergoes profound transformation. Their new environments are now reshaping their social relations, hierarchies, and communal structures—historically rooted in religious practices and endogamous traditions. Among such groups, the Yezidis are perhaps experiencing this transition most acutely. This is particularly evident in Germany's Yezidi diaspora, where debates over the future of their social structure have become central to communal discourse.

This study arises from the need to examine these ongoing changes systematically. Two key forces drive this transformation: (1) intellectuals, who advocate for progressive reforms, and (2) the younger generation, which not only supports these intellectual demands but also pushes for change at an accelerated pace. While both groups play crucial roles, the youth are particularly influential due to their increasing integration into German society. Their desire to redefine social relations—particularly regarding marriage, gender roles, and religious authority—has sparked intense generational conflict within the Yezidi community. These tensions underscore the necessity of this research, which seeks to document and analyze the evolving dynamics of Yezidi identity in the diaspora.

A considerable number of the Yezidi intellectuals in the German diaspora have been in seek of self-sufficiency via "public memory construction," separating themselves from "Kurdishness" and, of course, from the Kurdish political movements, from the influence of Islam and Muslim Kurds on a large scale over decades. Their attempts at self-representation became significant agents of German civil society. To advocate for the Yezidis society and to bring the 'genocide' of 2014 onto the agenda of German society, Yezidis, in their German diaspora, have made considerable self-realization efforts and attempts, notably since the last decade. These attempts have, naturally, an impact on the shaping ideas of the young generation living in Germany.

Yezidis' current socio-political mobilization in Germany goes beyond the scope of traditional

Kurdish political movements. In fact, Yezidis were the driving force of the Kurdish political movements and their institutional formations in Germany.[3]

The Kurdish political movement in Germany, which has been associated with terrorism by the State structure for years, has led members of the Yezidi community in large numbers to engage in a disconnected social mobilization. Yezidis, along with their diasporas, which exist and are in the process of existing in almost all parts of the world, have gained momentum by prioritizing themselves and acting independently of Kurdish political movements and Kurdishness.

Yezidis in different diasporas, mostly in their Caucasian diaspora– which occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and became prominent since the collapse of the Soviets– therefore, constitute a close dialogue and a good interaction in this process of self-realization. In a similar vein, the Yezidi diaspora in the United States, particularly in the state of

[3] Many Yezidis I met in Germany claim such an idea.

Nebraska, has undergone a process of cultural reconstitution through significant interaction with the broader societal context. Since the 1980s, and particularly following the 2003 Iraq War, a substantial Yezidi diaspora has established itself in the United States. Notably, the Yezidi community in the United States has engaged in meaningful interactions with other religious diasporic groups. The nature of the relationship between the Hindu diaspora and the Yezidis exemplifies this intercommunal engagement. The most prominent of the various active Yezidi diasporas is located in Germany. This diaspora, primarily composed of Yezidis from Anatolia, began to take shape following post-World War II labor agreements during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as subsequent political upheavals, including military coups in Iraq and Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s. The influx of Yezidis further increased in the wake of the Iraq War (2003-2011) and the Syrian Civil War (2010 onwards). The evolution of the German Yezidi diaspora into a highly active community became particularly evident after the 1990s. Following the 2014 genocide committed by ISIL, this diaspora assumed an international dimension, highlighting its role on the global stage. The Yezidi diasporas mentioned exhibit significant variation in their formation processes, population diversity, and the nature of their interactions with host societies. The Caucasian diaspora is primarily inward-focused, emphasizing its internal dynamics. In contrast, the Yezidi diaspora in the United States is largely composed of individuals who supported the U.S. military in Iraq. It engages in social relations and, to some extent, lobbying activities to address its internal priorities. The German Yezidi diaspora is the most heterogeneous, encompassing Yezidis who have migrated from various regions. This diaspora has played an influential role in shaping Kurdish political movements and, crucially, maintains active engagement with international institutions. Additionally, it has utilized diaspora capital or remittances to contribute to the reconstruction of a Yezidi homeland.

No doubt, they have been a minority within a Kurdish political movement for years in Germany. However, in recent years, Yezidis has become mobilized and gained a transnational minority character, canalizing itself even out of Kurdishness. Yezidis` mobilization in the German diaspora has increased significantly, especially soon after the Yezidi ‘genocide’ committed by Da’esh, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, as of 2014. They have become a truly transnational community in Germany. That is, they constructed networks to strengthen their solidarity beyond national borders. The Yezidi trans-nation in diasporas tries to bring the politically and split Yezidi people together. The need to respond to the Yezidi genocide in Sinjar (Shingal) made the trans-nation Yezidi society overcome internal issues of

the Yezidi society with its all aspects. The divided generations because of political issues related to the Kurdish question put young Yezidis into a discussion of unification of Yezidi society both in their homeland and in diasporas. The young generation of Yezidi that is part of this study tries to be part of the ongoing debates to make their voices audible and to share their ideas fearlessly in the Yezidi society of Germany.

It is important to note that diaspora-related issues concerning the Yezidis in Germany have received limited attention in academic research. Besides several works in the German language (Michael Stausberg,[4] Franz, 2004; Lademann-Priemer, 2005; Savucu, 2016), scholars rely on the social formation of their German diaspora. There is almost a complete lack of scientifically relevant studies on their religious and cultural environment, sociology of religion, traditions and religious attitudes, and identity issues in their German diaspora. Khanna Omarkhali's study (2021) undoubtedly examines the impact of the Diaspora on the Yezidi society in the most detail. Besides this, only a handful of prominent academic studies have analyzed the processes of change and transformation within the Yezidi community in Germany. Several scholars like Andreas Ackermann (2004, 2008), Ilhan Kizilhan (2008), Philip G. Kreyenbroek (2009), Maria Six-Hohenbalken (2011), Khanna Omarkhali (2017) rely on the dynamics of Yezidi community of Germany.

Despite the complexity of Yezidi diasporas, there are possibilities for more scientific research on their German diaspora. The young generation of Yezidi in the German diaspora is a generation with high education, social mobility, and professions. Until now, the young population of Yezidi society has not found an opportunity to make its voice audible in the traditional Yezidi society. The young population was seen as religiously naive, lacking knowledge, and moving away from tradition for years. However, diaspora conditions, new media tools such as homepages, online forums, videos, and printed periodicals, and new life practices have paved the way for the young population in the Yezidi community to be heard and be included in the ongoing debates on the future of the Yezidi community. The Yezidi German diaspora continues to emerge as a postmodern diaspora. Therefore, This study is neither a study of transnational religions in the diaspora nor classical diaspora(s). Instead, it is a study of the perceptions of the young population concerning the social transformations of the transnational ethnoreligious Yezidi community of the "postmodern diasporas." Yezidis are in synchronized pain, discourse construction, struggle, and resistance beyond the Kurdish movement. The research focuses on the views and suggestions of the young Yezidi population

[4] http://www.yeziden-colloquium.de/inhalt/religion/Stausberg_Yezidi.pdf Accessed: 17.03.2022

living in Germany on the ongoing "reforms," change, and transformation in the Yezidi community. The main scope of the study is to uncover the demands and aspirations of the young Yezidi population in Germany in the framework of the reinvention of Yezidism, which is called 'reforms,' reaffirmations, and changes.

Alongside their German diaspora, remaking and reproducing social and religious connections occurs in their other diasporas. Besides ongoing social changes, the new spatial settings of the diaspora in the contemporary world necessitate changes and transformations in the religious and cultural rituals, social structures of minority societies, and the social organizations of heterodox societies. It is noteworthy that academics have presented Yezidism as a religion of action and performance so far (Spät, 2016; Robins, in Omarkhali 2021). Religion in the Yezidi community is firmly based on an implicit theology, which turns into the process of being widely formulated in doctrinal terms or fixing a belief system.

The transformation consists of a three-stage process: a) the transition from a 'closed community' to an open community at large to outsiders with the sense of freedom of the host societies, b) the encounter with different identities and belongings during the transition of knowledge to outside, and finally c) the process of 'simplifying,' 'clarifying,' 're-arrangement,' 'reproducing' and even 'reforming' social organization of Yezidi community and Yezidism (Yezidi religion) in the environments of diasporas. In the first process, a critical view of the Yezidi traditions emerges. Newly arrived Yezidis, even young members in Germany and Yezidis in lands of origin, believe that the more Yezidi society opens to host societies, the more extinction, assimilation, and change will occur in the years to come. The first process is a process in which some traditions are considered patriarchal and are ignored, questioned, and even excluded to set new roots of religious identification with newly developed written sources and with constructed resources in the erected physical structures such as cultural centers, research centers, etc.

The second and third processes are intertwined. In these processes, an identity crisis is encountered in terms of religious, cultural, and ethnic belonging. These are the processes in which knowledge is constructed on religious and cultural grounds, and all aspects of Yezidism are introduced to the outside world. Yezidi society works for a more systematized understanding of the roots of ethnicity, religion, and cultural basin. A new form of 'Yezidi nationalism' appears in diasporas through modern terms of ethnicity. Yezidis in Armenia and in the United States of America, for instance, are seeking new historical terms of belonging.

Yezidis in Germany, for instance, are in an attempt to make a distinction between Sufism in Yezidi tradition and in Islam.

Since the aim of the study is to evaluate the contemporary transformations and reconfigurations in the German Yezidi society, based on the interpretations of the young Yezidi population, all aspects of religious life are not the central core of this study, more so since Yezidism does not have an ideology of universality like Christianity, the current study is not a study of transnational religion that takes the religions into consideration in one setting: transformation in rituals and practices. Instead, religious practices that are being reformulated and institutionalized in a needed contemporary canon, along with culture and ethnic identities in the settings of the host country (Germany), are taken into consideration simultaneously. In another saying, the studies of transnational religions focus on how religion is transformed in host country settings. The reaffirmations or reconfiguration of culture and ethnic identities are not core notions of such studies of transnational religions. Thus, the central notions of the study are as follows: patterns of change and transformation in Yezidis` ethnic identity and culture; the decline of the use of the Kurdish language (notably dialect of Kurmanji) that caused little knowledge of religion; and the declining strength of the Yezidi faith and practices of religion that occur in host country settings amongst young population in the Yezidi contemporary German diasporic place(s). That is, the transformations in the diasporic young Yezidis` perceptions of the Yezidi religion, Yezidi culture, and their ethnic identities in Germany are at the center of the research. The four theses that coexist among Yezidis about the transformation of the Yezidi community, notably in Germany, are evaluated through this study in light of the outcomes of the research. These theses are as follows: a) The thesis of diversity. According to this thesis, there is not one homogenous Yezidi community in Germany since members of it, who migrated from different states and times, forgather with different levels of integration because of the ideas of politics, ethnicity, the degree of religiosity and contemporary values of Western culture, b) the thesis of the institutionalization of the Yezidi religion. In the context of the current thesis, it is believed that Yezidis, in diasporas, transforms from orality to writing in a realm of "orthography." Yezidi cultural centers are seen as new places for producing knowledge about Yezidi religion and culture. The need for unification of old and new knowledge (created or updated with new textual materials) and the need for a canon that will regulate the religious life and daily life of Yezidis are the central notions of this thesis c) the thesis of new guarantors of Yezidi community. Religious dignitaries encounter new potential guarantors of the Yezidi religion and culture. As

a new social institution of knowledge production completing the works of the religious class, Yezidi centers of the German diaspora are likely to be seen as a mediator between the host community and the homeland community. They appear as the new guarantors of the Yezidi culture and religion d) the thesis of an autonomous Yezidi community. According to this thesis, the contemporary means of technology help Yezidis to overcome language and space barriers to transfer knowledge and constitute new virtual religious spaces, to interpret their religion, culture, and identity by themselves with an emancipatory act, and to overcome political differences.

Thus, the study is an attempt to study the postmodern diaspora and partly the transnational migration studies, which focus on Yezidis` mobility under transformation in the constituted 'transnational space/field' in their contemporary diaspora in Germany. Steven Vertovec stresses that migrants who reside in a land away from home practice their religion in a diasporic place. It makes the religion a diasporic religion. In time, these migrants who reside in these host lands develop and form their community in the conditions of the host land. Their socio-cultural dynamics evolve differently when they form diasporas and when they engage in transnational practices (Vertovec, 2009). From the viewpoint of Vertovec, patterns of change naturally occur. For instance, identity, ritual practices, and cultural activities go under changes. From this point of view, this study focuses on these patterns of change, taking the transnational practices of young Yezidis and the approaches of transnational migration into account. However, it is to be said that the term diaspora can be a confusing concept in terms of the Yezidi case in this study. Therefore, there is a need to discuss the concept of diaspora through this study to eliminate confusing elements of the concept.

In these spaces, Yezidi diasporans interact intensely and try to give room to a much more active cross-border Yezidism. However, it is necessary to stress that there are specific differences in the Yezidis' religious, cultural, and identity understanding in these transnational spaces of different locals and regions. More so, these spaces consist of people from every local and region with different backgrounds. It constitutes a special mosaic of people where every individual has the right to discuss potential 'social reforms' without language barriers and political differences.

Except in these spaces, Yezidis cannot escape the threat of discrimination and violence against their community. In these spaces, primarily within the modern environments of diasporas,

they adopt a contemporary understanding of their community that weakens traditional knowledge and increases literacy levels. The religious knowledge of Yezidism and its traditional aspects have been preserved by relatively specialized groups of people called religious authorities and families with limited literacy for decades. The credit for the scripturalization, writing, and publication of several religious hymns became widespread among Yezidis due to the rise of media culture and literacy. Writing and publication have naturally driven change within Yezidism. Alongside the high literacy rates among Yezidis settled in Armenia, particularly in the 1970s, some Yezidi intellectuals wrote and published several memorized hymns in Kurdish and Arabic newspapers. With the publication of the first book on Yezidism titled Ezîdiyatî (Yezidiness), the intellectual activity of Yezidis has, quite literally, begun.[5] This attempt can be considered, from the viewpoint of Adorno, as the starting point of the "enlightenment" of Yezidis, which led to the destruction of the barriers of fear of writing and led to the distribution of religious knowledge among ordinary Yezidis. Yezidis took the initiative to eliminate the earlier accounts of outsiders who have considered Yezidism a non-resolvable mystery. Before the 1970s, earlier accounts focused on the oral tradition of Yezidism and its origins. The lack of a corpus of known facts regarding Yezidism's history and heritage and the religion's oral character fascinated many Western scholars and travelers.[6] An intensive interest was widespread among scholars in the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. These Western scholars and travelers produced "arid theories" (consciously or unconsciously) about the roots of Yezidism that are "incompatible with modern Yezidism" (Kreyenbroek, 1995: viii). Moreover, they created a negative image of Yezidis under the classification of "irreligious group," "devil-worshipers," etc., among non-Yezidis. After destroying the barriers of deprivation in the 1970s, some Yezidi scholars who migrated to Europe took the initiative to strive for the aforementioned arid theories. The ambition of Yezidis to publish several hymns gave Yezidis room to speak about their religion and answer questions concerning the functioning of Yezidism in the contemporary world. It elicited intellectual activity among Yezidis in Iraq during the 1990s.

After setting up the Kurdish government against the Bath regime, Yezidis could open cultural and social centers in their lands of origin. Soon after, it caused the institutionalization of Yezidi society in Europe, particularly in Germany, from the 1990s onwards. The first cultural

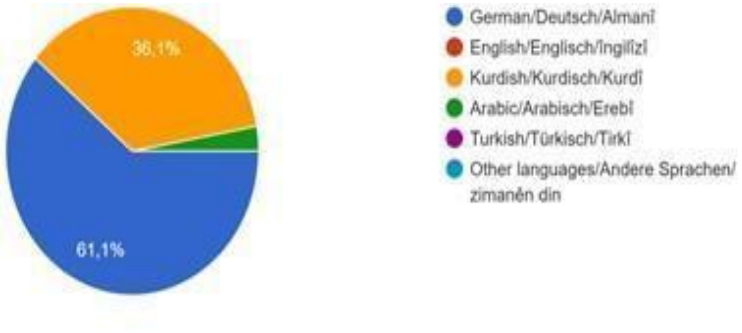
[5] World Congress of Kurdish Studies, https://www.institutkurde.org/en/conferences/kurdish_studies_irbil_2006/Khalil+Jindy+RASHOW.html by Khalil Jindy RASHOW. Accessed: 19.07.2021

[6] See Layard (1849), Badger (1852), Chwolson (1856), Ainsworth (1861), Lidzbarski (1897), Joseph (1909).

centers were founded in the cities of Leer and Oldenburg (Wettich, 2021). A few cultural centers were established in Germany in the 1990s, and literacy naturally became a norm among Yezidis in their German diaspora. In the Yezidi Transcaucasian diaspora, literacy took place in the community during the 1950s. The literate Yezidi population under Soviet rule was high. However, they were isolated from Yezidis in Iraq and Syria during almost the entire Soviet era. Thus, their production of knowledge remained at the local level, and it did not bring a remarkable change in the Yezidi communities of the Middle East until the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the ongoing production of knowledge in the Yezidi German diaspora seems to bring remarkable changes in Yezidi societies of both lands of origin and diasporas.

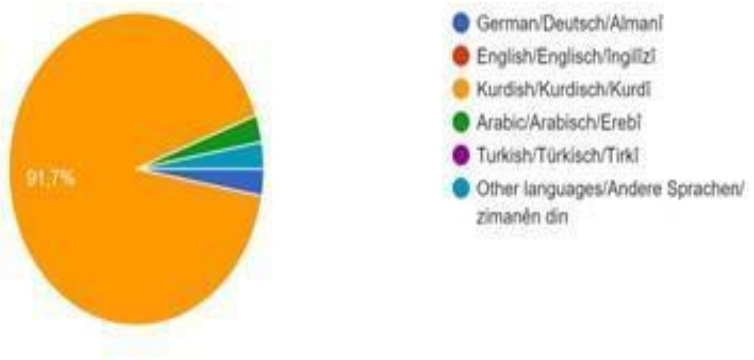
Today, the need for unifying the date of festivities, the need for eluding patriarchy and Islamic Sufism and attempt to distance Yezidis` history from shared spatial histories with Muslims, the need for the elimination of several religious norms and taboos which are perceived as do not fit in modern society, the need for clarifying the positions of "holy trinity" (God, Sheikh Adi and Tawûsî Melek, and sometimes Ezî) in Yezidism came to the agenda of literate Yezidis in their German diaspora.

Over time, Germany has become a place where three generations of Yezidis live together. The first generation of Yezidis came to Germany as labor migrants in the decade after 1960. The second Yezidi generation is mostly the offspring of these workers who settled in Germany. The firstcomers either brought their children with them or were born in Germany later. In the contemporary Yezidi German diaspora, the first generation speaks very little German and has a good command of their mother tongue, mainly the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish. The second generation speaks German, and their mother tongue, Kurdish, is fluent. The third generation is made up of young people (Yezidi youth in the research) who have experienced Germany for more than a decade or who were born and raised in Germany and have a good command of German culture and language, with little knowledge or lack of knowledge of the mother tongue. One of my questions (what language do you primarily speak in your daily life in Germany) in a survey that aims to evaluate the daily language preferences of the informants in the research supports my argument of a lack of knowledge of the mother tongue. The question concerning the usage of the language is answered by respondents in pie chart 1.



Pie chart 1. Daily language use among young Yezidis in Germany

As it is seen clearly, a large portion of the young Yezidis prefer German in their daily lives in pie chart 1. However, when I ask, "What *is your mother tongue?*" The third generation is aware of their mother tongue, but their preference is mostly for the German language as it can be seen in pie chart 2.



Pie chart 2

These three generations have different perspectives, different cultural memories and religious knowledge, and, in short, different ways of experiencing Yezidism about current issues. The social conditions that would bring these three different generations together into a monolithic Yezidi community in Germany do not yet exist. There is a noticeable communication and interaction gap between previous generations and the third generation, multilingual, prefers popular culture, is well-versed in and utilizes contemporary technology. In contrast, the

previous generations, notably the first one, are traditionalist and in fear of assimilation in Germany. In this respect, opinions, and activities exist among people from all three generations in the German Yezidi community, and few "reforms," changes, or adaptations are necessary. While the first generation's demands for "reforms" are more about preserving Yezidism and its culture, the second generation, with a significant portion of the intellectual population, is simplifying and reproducing knowledge about Yezidis and Yezidism in their cultural centers and institutions. The demands of the third generation, which are the scope of this study, are mostly based on a desire to be in harmony with a modern and secular society. This layer of the young population considers Germany as a permanent home. The significant eradication of Yezidi associations in recent years in Germany made them important actors in German civil society. For young Yezidis, new institutional diversity offers alternative ways of life and new perspectives on change and reform. In addition, new institutions were formed to serve Yezidism and improve the living conditions of the Yezidi community. Since they are based on social rather than political activities, they are more successful in communicating with and receiving support from German institutional structures. In this respect, with this new organizational structure, young Yezidis can establish closer communication with Yezidis in integrating into German society.

Moreover, their diversified centers, associations, and organizations in international society made Yezidi society one of the most visible religious minorities in the Middle East. A significant process of the (re)producing, re-affirmation, or 'reforming' of Yezidi identity, culture, and religion takes place notably in the Yezidi German diaspora. Thus, the Yezidi population in their German diaspora has an intensive potential to accelerate the transformation of the entire Yezidi community.

Literacy and the high demand of outsiders to get access to Yezidi tradition in diaspora circumstances led to a significant change in religion that took the shape of the religious system and helped Yezidi intellectuals to elude the speculative stories of outsiders concerning Yezidism by using technologies such as the homepages, videos, Tv broadcasting (Çira TV, for example), and video recording, and so on (Ackermann, 2008). Moreover, the need for reformulating and systematizing the Yezidi religion in a canon may be in the hands of Yezidi youth in the generation of 21 century because they have open and unbiased communication in confrontation with demands from their social environment in Germany. In a way, a 'reformist' movement is emerging amongst the young population, who constitute their perspective on the issues related to religion and social norms, culture, and Yezidi identities to overcome and

define themselves to outsiders. This population tries to clarify existing speculative issues in the community with the cultural values and political conditions of modern times in the German diaspora. German society, for instance, still does not consider Yezidism as a religion that is independent of Islam (Wettich, 2021). So, Young Yezidis mainly deals with the debates regarding the 'theologization of Yezidism' in Germany.

No doubt, the diaspora's circumstances pose challenges to the Yezidis who wish to find marriage partners. Marriage can happen within a narrow caste system, which makes it challenging for Yezidis to find partners. The idea of reformulating the caste system or adding one more caste layer to the current caste system to deal with marriage issues and the extinction of Yezidism is discussed among the young generation alongside new methods of transmitting religious knowledge or religious tradition to the next generation.

As it may be known, the religious tradition of Yezidism and its characteristic elements derive from memorized myths, folk legends, and hymns. The hymns, myths, and folk legends have become essential parts of Yezidism in transmitting knowledge to the next generations due to the co-exist meager corpus of Yezidi lore until the mid-20th century. Since then, religious tradition and knowledge of culture have been transmitted orally from generation to generation due to a lack of written tradition. The ability to write and read (except for Adani lineage) was a taboo amongst Yezidis, which was destroyed by some Yezidis who attended schools in the seventies of the last century in Iraq. The transmission of knowledge has developed with textual materials besides oral tradition.

The knowledge of the young population who has experienced life in Germany comes from the outcomes of the printed works of the population who attended schools and from their families who kept traditional knowledge based on narratives. However, the emergence of new methods of transmission of knowledge, such as online forums, videos, etc, makes the young population relate the knowledge gained from printed materials to the knowledge gained from their families orally. The mixture of the knowledge in the German diasporic environment naturally brought about the young population`s demands regarding potential 'reforms' to purify their knowledge of Yezidism. The potential demands and thoughts of the young Yezidi population on publishing a sacred book, building holy places in Germany, transforming the operational methods of the Yezidi cultural centers, reaffirming traditional religious knowledge and social norms, the reformulation of the co-exist meager corpus into a new needed canon to make a harmony with modern life, and on different perspectives on their identities will be evaluated in this study through several research questions as follow: what is the opinion of Yezidi youth

in the German diaspora regarding the idea Yezidism is facing extinction in the near future?, does the Yezidi youth still maintain contacts with religious groups in Germany? Will the gap between generations widen or decrease in the years to come? Are young Yezidis able to explain their religion to outsiders in Germany? How have young Yezidis started investigating or critically approaching their religion in Germany? What is the youth's discourse on questions of religious identification? How do young Yezidis approach the European values and contemporary way of life in Germany? Are young Yezidis able to preserve and maintain various parts of their rich culture in Germany? How does the young generation approach the elders' traditional understanding of Yezidi culture? what kind of approaches do young Yezidis have regarding Yezidi ethnic identity and the origins of Yezidis? How do young Yezidis identify themselves in the German diaspora, Kurd, Yezidi, or German? Do they adhere to multiple identifications? Do they have other ones? Why?

At this very point, this research explores the discourse of the Yezidi youth regarding the need for 'internal reforms' and concerning ongoing debates on change at a large scale in the Yezidi German society. The research aims to examine the perceptions and expectations of Yezidi youth based in Germany, who are mainly 'ignored' by religious members of the community. The Yezidi intellectuals ran the process of reproducing or re-formulating Yezidism and littered the young population. However, the Yezidi intellectuals gather in their cultural centers to discuss the internal changes in their society while young Yezidis discuss and reproduce Yezidism mainly in online platforms. However, for both sides, the reproducing process for the belief system, traditional culture, and ethnic identity has occurred from the need for the canonization of Yezidism by elimination of some Sufi remnants related to Islam, the need to 'salvage' Yezidism from the discourse of religious syncretism as the fusion of diverse religious beliefs, and the need for making some regulations for the current generation regarding contemporary worldly affairs. These efforts to reproduce Yezidism are not a new phenomenon. Members of the Yezidi society, notably in diasporas, have been seeking 'internal reforms' for decades. However, the level of the debates in Yezidi society and the social interaction between politically divided different Yezidi groups has increased in recent years. It is, therefore, aimed to analyze the interaction between the Yezidi centers of diaspora and Yezidi youth. The discourse and the mobility of the youth population in the Yezidi German diaspora regarding debates on the internal reform of traditional customs, religion, identity, and culture will be illustrated. It is believed that since 2005, accelerated after 2014, the youth population has had a desire to become a visible force, notably in cyberspace, to

canalize the aspects of all ongoing debates. It is known that some traditional pedestals of the Yezidi community were depolarized after the enslavement of Yezidi women taken by ISIL in 2014. The issue of reintegration of the Yezidi women, who were subjected to a systematic 'rape' by 'their owners' under the ISIL captivity, with their children into Yezidi society forced religious and secular Yezidi leaders and conservative Yezidis to make a decision about acceptance these women and children to the Yezidi community. Practically accepting Yezidis from the outside is not acceptable or tolerable for Yezidis, yet Yezidi supreme leaders amended these rules, which had existed for eight hundred years according to some Yezidis, and they made a decision not to obey that 'strict rule.' They decided to take the Yezidi women into the community without the children born as a result of 'rape.' It is believed that Yezidi youth and intellectuals and the heads of the Yezidi centers of the diaspora substantially impacted this rule-bending. Yet the decision of not taking the children born as a result of 'rape' to the community is debated vehemently. Some young Yezidis offer to have a new caste or social group besides Murids, Pirs, and Sheikhs to adopt these children and to overcome the issue of re-adopting excluded Yezidi individuals to the Yezidi community.

Yezidis: Geography and demography

Yezidis are one of the ethnic-religious groups belonging to the areas between the Euphrates and Tigris, which is considered one of the historically exciting areas of the Old World. With their religion, Yezidism, they engrave the rich cultural mosaic of the Middle East mainly in the framework of Sufism alongside other religions of minorities. They have a belief system of the territories of North Mesopotamia, where oriental and Western cultures influenced each other for centuries. "Like the Christian of various confessions, they are members of a small minority" (Dulz, 2016: pp.131-147), which originated in the Kurdish-inhabited areas called Kurdistan (The lands of Kurds). They are one of the heterodox communities of Kurdistan alongside Kaka`is (Yarsan) and Alevis (Qizilbash). They spread across several areas of this region. This historical area is currently dominated by two large sects of Islam, Sunni and Shia. The most well-known characteristic of the area -the area of the mixture of religions- has been destroyed over the last decades. The consensual social interaction between groups has turned into conflicts, and many religious groups, apart from the dominant religion, became part of the migration and dispersed around. In the course of intensified conflicts between sectarian groups and a lack of legal insecurity, a large part of the Yezidis left their homes.



Map 1. An overview of the geographical distribution of Yezidis in Kurdish-inhabited areas and Caucasia. Source: Tagay & Ortac, 2016.

Today, Yezidis practice their religion more widely in two main regions and notably preserve their culture within religious institutions: the Middle East (Turkey, Iraq, and Syria) and Caucasia (Georgia and Armenia). Both regions have historically been the most suitable for Yezidis to maintain their heritage and traditions and conduct religious practices more commonly. They developed their understanding of Yezidism within the conditions of the places they dispersed to in these regions over time. The conservative population remained in Caucasia and Iraq. In contrast, Yezidis in Syria, in a place known as Kurd Mountain, have specific differences in their religious doctrines compared to Yezidis in Iraq. In addition to the significant Yezidi heritage in Caucasia and the Russian Federation, Syria, and Iraq, the Yezidi population is currently distributed across European countries (mainly Germany and France), as well as the United States, Canada, and Australia.

According to community members and scholars, the Yezidi population is estimated to be between half a million and one million. However, accessing reliable primary data on the population of Yezidis, both in the diaspora and their homeland, remains a challenge. The numbers of Yezidis are based on estimated data derived from secondary sources rather than officially recognized population censuses (Dulz, 2016). The largest Yezidi communities are currently located in the Dihok, Mosul, and Sinjar areas of northern Iraq. Estimates of their numbers in Iraq range from one hundred thousand to two hundred fifty-thousand (Ackermann, 2004). In northern Syria, particularly around Aleppo, about five thousand Yezidis reside (Hosseini, 2017).

Below, an estimated population of Yezidis before the forced displacement of 2014 is illustrated by Yezidis in the diaspora in one of their publications, as shown in Table 1. Presumably, the persecution and genocidal attacks of 2014 reduced their population in their lands of origin. According to Omarkhali (2017), the worldwide population of Yezidis is slightly above six hundred thousand based on unofficial estimates. The Yezidi population in Germany also appears in reports and data from NGOs. According to the statistics of the NGO Religious Studies Media and Information Service (REMID), there are one hundred thousand Yezidis in Germany. However, some Yezidi associations claim that there are many more Yezidis in Germany.[7]

Countries	Number of Yezidis (before August 3, 2014)
Iraq	Approx. 600.000-700.000
Germany	Approx. 100.000
Russian Federation	Approx. 40.000
Armenia	Approx. 30.000
Georgia	Approx. 30.000
Syria	Approx. 10.000
Iran	Approx. 1.000-3.000
Turkey	Approx. 500
Rest of the world	Approx. 50.000-100.000
Total number of Yezidis[8]	Approx. 800.000-1.000.000

Table 1. A table of estimated Yezidi population before the genocide of 2014. Source: Tagay & Ortac, 2016

[7] Several Yezidi centers of diaspora provide different numbers of Yezidis in Germany. According to the latest data shared at a symposium of the center of Gesellschaft Ezidischer AkademikerInnen (https://www.gea-ev.net/%C3%BCber-die-gea/ Accessed: 20.06.2022) in Duisburg, Germany, in November 2022, the Yezidi population in Germany is reported to be 300,000, while the estimated population in other European countries is between 50,000 and 80,000. *Source: Symposium on Migration der Eziden aus der Türkei: Status Quo und Ausblick by Serhat Ortac.*

[8] In several works their total number all around world is between 800.000 to 1.000.000 by estimates. For instance, they are estimated like 782.100 in a project about Yezidis in Georgia. See https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/20455 Accessed: 18.10.2021

We do not have statistical data concerning the Yezidi population in Germany. Every Yezidi association, cultural center, and organization gives different figures for the total number of Yezidis in Germany. However, a considerable number of Yezidis are settled in around ten locations, as highlighted in Map 2 below. The map highlights the district's towns of Offenbach and Mühlheim am Main in the city of Frankfurt, the city of Giessen, Bielefeld, Hannover, Celle, the district town Bad Fallingbostel, the city of Oldenburg, Osterholz, Bremen, Berlin, Münster, and Düsseldorf. However, other sizeable Yezidi populations are distributed to Bremen, Cologne, Emmerich, Göttingen, and Hamburg. The scholar Thorsten Wettich highlights the total Yezidi population in Germany as 160,000 in one of his latest works (Wettich, In Omarkhali; 2021).

Three Yezidi people running Yezidi cultural centers, for example, from different cultural centers, gave me different numbers of Yezidis in the city of Bielefeld during several meetings based on the focused-group method. When I asked how many Yezidis are there in the city of Bielefeld, I received the following answers respectively:

The first person, who is male and 47 years old, says that " about twelve thousand Yezidis live in the city of Bielefeld." The second person, who is male and 36 years old, falsifies the first person and says, "No, it's more than that. There are 25,000 Yezidis in this city."

The following person, who is male and 46 years old, continues and says that "sixteen thousand Yezidis currently live in Bielefeld. The Yezidi population makes up 13 percent of the city."

In response to the question, 'Is there already an attempt to determine the Yezidi population in Germany?

The person, who is 46 years old, responds and explains the challenge behind getting real data for the census as follows:

"Germany is home to a significant Yezidi population, but many Yezidis hesitate to identify as such openly. Some prefer to identify as Iraqi, Russian, or Turkish, either out of fear or reluctance to admit their Yezidi heritage. This lack of openness complicates efforts to obtain an accurate count of the Yezidi population. Additionally, some individuals with German citizenship choose not to associate themselves with their Yezidi identity."



Map 2. The distribution of the main active centers of the Yezidi German diaspora based on the researcher's observations and information gathered during groundwork. The author prepared Map 2. More detailed information about these centers is provided in Table 2 below.

Relevance and scope of the research

This study provides modifications, changes, and potential 'reforms' in the Yezidi German community through the nexus of international migration. To take research beyond what has already been done in academia, i.e., their religious belief and traditions, I aim to focus on the process of the identification in religion, culture, and ethnicity that I consider reinvention of an autonomous Yezidis society in the circumstances of pluralistic German society. Thus, I consider the formation and practices of the Yezidi diaspora rather than focusing on the realm of their beliefs and traditions.

It is noteworthy to say that there is a high demand for change from the Yezidi youth about religion, culture, and ethnic identity as a result of international migration caused by currently forced displacement and the traumatization of the Yezidi community in the last ten decades. Once the young Yezidi population enjoyed democratic rights in secular Western societies, the stories about discrimination and exclusions of the community played less of a role in understanding the contemporary Yezidi culture and religion until the last decade.

The thesis, therefore, focuses on the current demands of the young Yezidi population regarding the ongoing contemporary re-building of the community in the Western sense. The conditions of the Western world forced the first and second Yezidi generations in the German diaspora to make several transformations and reaffirmations regarding some strict social norms, rituals of practices, and even institutional structures (such as building holy centers in

Germany, having sacred books, etc.) in order to be able to make Yezidi community more visible and to maintain it within the conditions of the contemporary life with its all aspects. With the pioneering of its intellectual population, the Yezidi community has become a transnational community due to international migration. Moving away from its traditional physical environment, the Yezidi community of Germany is to remake the religion, make its culture pure, and redefine or simplify its ethnic identity. Thus, the study provides a contemporary understanding of Yezidism and the Yezidi society settled in Germany, which has been reproduced in the secular Western sense. The thesis, thus, provides insights into the remaking of Yezidi culture, religion, and identity in the realm of the Yezidi German diaspora.

Hypothesis, research questions, method(s) and tools

For decades, there has been a big communication gap between young Yezidis and previous generations in Germany. Over the last decade, with the help of technological advances and easier transport access, all Yezidi community groups have been engaged in a high level of interaction. However, the ways the younger generation evaluates world developments and interprets their society have been ignored by their older family members and traditional spiritual figures in the Yezidi German diaspora. The core notion of the hypothesis of the study is, therefore, based on the 'fundamental demands' of the young generation for change. Such demands for change appeared due to previous generations' ignorance of the young population. The hypothesis of the research formulated for this reason in the research is as follows:

The transformation of Yezidi religion and culture, and partly identity, while not an immediate issue until the 2010s, has gained prominence due to the mobility of Yezidi communities in the diaspora and the activism of educated young Yezidis. This demographic has increasingly brought Yezidi social issues and crises into public discourse. The social and political repercussions of ISIL's attacks in 2014 have further highlighted the community's transformation, positioning educated young Yezidis in the German diaspora at the center of debates surrounding identity, culture, and religion. Having been raised in secular Western societies, these young individuals have adopted modern values, perspectives, and attitudes that contrast traditional norms. As they navigate interactions with secular groups, they must often explain their religious and cultural practices, including customs and rituals. This exposure has introduced previously taboo subjects—such as public discussions on sexual violence, intermarriage, and notions of purity, etc.—into broader public discourse.

This generation's perspectives are assumed to play a central role in shaping the internal reform of Yezidi society and influencing the future of Yezidi culture and religion. Their engagement with secularization efforts may catalyze broader cultural transformations. Young Yezidis in the diaspora, particularly in Western contexts, maintain extensive connections with the broader world, amplifying the Yezidi voice on international platforms. The community's experiences of violence and its quest for political recognition have become more visible through increased communication and participation in global Yezidi associations.

The Yezidi diasporization and internationalization process is primarily driven by young Yezidis in Western countries, which has implications for intra-community dynamics. This shift may challenge conservative Yezidi norms and establish a patronage network dominated by young diasporic Yezidis, shaping debates on the political future of the Yezidi community on an international scale. The perceived abandonment by Kurdish forces during ISIL's attacks and the associated violence have provided young Yezidis with opportunities to advocate for their community's needs and demands in national and international forums. In their efforts to secure mechanisms for protection and external support for Yezidis in Iraq and Syria, these young representatives have emerged as key actors within the diaspora. Their increasing prominence may encourage open discourse on a distinct Yezidi identity, challenging existing notions of Kurdishness within Yezidi society.

One of the two important factors that have brought together generations living far apart and experiencing a communication gap is the increasing opportunities in the field of communication, and the other factor is the genocide suffered by the Yezidi community in 2014. As a result of these two developments, the mobilization and visibility of the Yezidi community have come to the fore in Western societies. Naturally, cultural and social conflicts are expected to arise, and demands for change and reform will increase in platforms where young Yezidis who are educated and integrated into Western societies and Yezidis who have preserved their traditional settings come together. Young Yezidis, who grew up with the values of Western society in schools and public institutions, have consciously preferred a communication gap with the previous generation since the last decade. They adopted more or less an individualistic life to escape family pressure and control, which is common in every Yezidi family. However, as the Yezidi community has gained visibility in the Western media and society in the last decade(s), young Yezidis have started to feel the need to return to their community to make contributions to the debated scenarios among intellectual Yezidis for the future of the Yezidis. Young Yezidi individuals have adopted a return to their community as

an intellectual contribution to their people to meet the questions and demands of outsiders around them, those who want to get to know the Yezidi community and understand their community's suffering and genocides. Youn Yezidis are likely to feel the need to return to their community with new perspectives as a helpful hand. However, in reality, they play a key role in the transformation of the social structure of the community.

To test the research hypothesis, the researcher examines the ideas, demands, and expectations of these young Yezidis, whom elder Yezidis ignore regarding ongoing debates on the need for internal reaffirmations and 'reforms' in the Yezidi community. The reproducing process for the belief system, traditional culture, and ethnic identity has occurred from the need for the standardization of the Yezidi religion through the elimination of some Islamic Sufi traces in the framework of the religious identification, the need for a cultural basin for the heritage of Yezidism, and the need for making some regulations for the current generation regarding worldly affairs. According to observations and the data gained, young Yezidis believe they are not included in this process of change by Yezidi intellectuals since their ideas and demands are considered not easy to handle now.

The current integration process of Yezidis into Germany, along with the absence of consistent regulations for Yezidism, is perceived by Yezidi youth[9] as contributing factors to the 'assimilation' and 'extinction' of their traditional values within the German diaspora. This has led to demands from the younger generation for changes to traditional aspects. Therefore, the Yezidi youth's attitudes and approaches toward internal 'reforms' will be examined. Members of the Yezidi German community and other diasporas in the West have been advocating for internal 'reforms' for decades.

It is essential to highlight that the perceptions and scenarios of the Yezidi youth regarding potential changes are central to the study. The fourth and fifth chapters consist of these perceptions. This study aims to analyze the impact of Yezidi centers of diaspora on the discourse of Yezidi youth and the mobility of the youth population in the diaspora concerning debates on the internal reform of traditional customs, religion, identity, and culture.

It is believed that, notably since 2014, the youth population has become a visible force tool to canalize the aspects of all ongoing debates. Young people's ideas and demands for change are even considered 'extremist ideas' by some intellectual members of a few cultural centers. So, a significant transformation has appeared in Yezidi society with the consequences of the Iraqi

[9] Researcher observed such ambitions during groundwork

War and ISIL's attacks for the last two decades. In recent years, flaming Yezidi activism has appeared in the post-Iraqi war and developed through technology, and Yezidis have become prominent in the international arena since 2014. The need to communicate and dialogue with the outside world to protect the Yezidi community from ethnocide led to the emergence and mobilization of a literate young Yezidi generation, which demanded an internal reform to be much more mobilized within Western societies. Western values partly shape this progress in the reinvention of the Yezidi society. The demands regarding internal reform(s) have become a current issue with the help of technology. Yezidi youth became active both in cyberspace and the physical world. Moreover, Yezidis have become a significant actor in international society, with their centers, associations, and organizations among religious minorities of the Middle East. The global spread of the community led to the formation of Yezidi associations in Western countries. With the support of these latest founded associations like *Yazda*, *Nadia Initiative*, *Free Yezidi Foundation*, etc., young Yezidis living in Western diasporas have become pioneers in transforming the community. They play significant roles in contact with outsiders. Thus, they have an intensive potential to accelerate the community's transformation based on self-representation in the sense of independence from outsiders soon.

Research Questions: Religion, Culture, Ethnic Identity

Religion

What is the opinion of Yezidi youth in the German diaspora regarding the possibility of Yezidism facing extinction in Germany in the near future?

I must underline that the outcomes of this question and possibly other questions in the research are based on the opinions of Yezidi youth. Thus, the research results may not predict the whole future of Yezidism in Germany. Since the research will not take the whole Yezidi population into consideration, it will not be a representative sample for the future of Yezidism.

What does Yezidism mean to youth in Germany?

Are Yezidi youth still maintaining contacts with religious groups in Germany?

How is the interaction between youth and religious experts in Germany?

Do Yezidi associations in Germany promote religious education to young Yezidis in the German diaspora? If yes, from what level do Yezidi associations transmit spiritual knowledge to young Yezidis? (To analyze the outcomes of this question, I plan to conduct several least

restrictive interviews with the representatives of centers of diasporas, which can be called expert interviews)

Do young Yezidis practice a communal or an individual religious life in the German diaspora?

Are young Yezidis able to explain their religion to outsiders in Germany?

How do Yezidi youth understand the "Yezidi religion" concept in Germany?

How have young Yezidis started investigating or critically approaching their religion in Germany?

What is the youth's discourse on questions of religion?

Culture

How do young Yezidis consider the integration process in Germany?

Yezidis, notably Yezidis from Turkey, have been seen as labor migrants by German officials for years. However, Yezidis do not accept this classification; instead, they would like to be recognized as victims of forced migration and victims of political pressure and intolerance. Thus, one can face both the process of integration of the Yezidis in Germany and the integration of ethnic minorities and migrants.

How do young Yezidis approach the European values and contemporary way of life in Germany?

What does culture mean to Yezidi youth?

At what level do Yezidis have material and non-material culture in the German diaspora? What cultural practices are being performed in Germany?

Can young Yezidis preserve and maintain various parts of their rich culture in Germany?

What scenarios do Yezidis plan for preserving their culture in Germany? How are the strategies for preserving Yezidi culture in Germany? Do the young members of the Yezidi community take the initiative regarding preservation strategies?

Do Yezidi youth play any role in secularizing their community within the European values and ways of thinking?

How does the young generation approach the elders' traditional understanding of Yezidi culture?

Is there a cultural clash between the Yezidi generations in Germany? If so, at what intervals are there cultural clashes between Yezidi youth and conservative elders?

Ethnic identity

How do young Yezidis approach the concepts of ethnic identity? What do they understand by these concepts? How is there a division between the concepts of Kurd, Yezidi, and Ezdiyati among young Yezidis?

What kind of approaches do young Yezidis have regarding Yezidi's identity and the origins of Yezidis?

How do young Yezidis identify themselves in the German diaspora? Kurd? Yezidi? Do they adhere to multiple identifications, or do they have other ones? Why?

Is there a division between Kurdishness and being Yezidi among young Yezidis? What does Kurdishness mean to young Yezidis?

Are there anti-Kurdish sentiments among young Yezidis in Germany? If yes, what kind of anti-Kurdish sentiments appeared among young Yezidis?

To what extent do young Yezidis support a separate Yezidi identity? Moreover, what kind of sentiments do young Yezidis use to define the distinct Yezidi identity?

What features have marked the awakening of a sense of separate Yezidi identity in the German diaspora?

How and what do young Yezidis learn about Yezidi's identity? From cyberspace? From the centers of diaspora?

Why is it so crucial for young Yezidis to have a coherent Yezidi identity?

Operational definition of methods of ground research and sampling

This section covers the data collection process, the methods used to obtain it, and personal experiences of interaction with Yezidis during the fieldwork.

Focusing on the transnational Yezidi community, the study draws upon data collected in multiple methods between October 2019 and September 2023. The groundwork focused on the German Yezidi community in five cities (Frankfurt, Bielefeld, Hannover, Celle, Oldenburg) where the Yezidi population is high. The research involved several qualitative and

quantitative data collection methods, including face-to-face interviews, direct observation via participation, focus groups, and online surveys and questionnaires.

The units of analysis of the hypothesis are young Yezidi individuals, and their interaction is partly with members of the Yezidi institutions. The tools and techniques (like interviews, observations, and surveys) of systems analysis and methods of ethnography were used to focus on the dynamics of the social structure of the Yezidi community in Germany. By methods of systems analysis, it aims to understand the role of Yezidi institutions in the transformation process and to evaluate the political behaviors of young Yezidis and their relationship with the social structure of Yezidis in Germany. They, therefore, were observed via the method of direct observation and participation. The data gained from such methods was recorded. Hence, the methods that are used to collect data on the ground are primarily associated with the methods of ethnography that are based on face-to-face interaction. Besides, a systematic procedure like content analysis was followed to transform recorded data into partly quantitative data into pie charts and graphs.

George E. Marcus describes ethnography as 'an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups' (Marcus,1995). I believe that the best way of collecting scientific data from Yezidis, an ethnoreligious minority that is not open enough to outsiders, is to apply the methods that are frequently used in ethnography. The source of the scientific data to be used in the study is based on face-to-face interaction, recorded interviews, a structured survey, observation, and people's subjective experiences and interpretations.

Authors main method in this study is qualitative method. Hence, some of qualitative date is shown via quantitative date based on pie charts. The study benefited from both external secondary studies, i.e reviewing these studies and learning from them notably about Yezidism, and content analysing of ten individual in-depth interviews and a survey of fifty three research questions answered over thirty male and female respondents.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject of the dissertation, respondents are kept anonymous and referred to by code, e.g.: I1M/FH24 i.e. informant(I) 1, the first letter of the gender (Male, Female), the first letter of the city where the interview held (Hannover for example), and the age (24) of informant or respondent.

The empirical data gained comes from ethnographic methods in general. Doing ethnographic work means engaging with individuals' perspectives and making a close relation to them—some statistical data obtained from individuals through a relationship of trust and from

the survey done. However, the basic empirical data of the study was obtained through fifty-three open-ended questions with over ten young Yezidis in five different cities in Germany. The results of a survey with over thirty participants support the gained empirical data from interviews. Most of these interviews were conducted in face-to-face meetings. The rest of the interviews were conducted online. For statistical data, over thirty young people were reached by e-mail with questionnaires. In addition to this scientific data, five interviews were conducted with the managers or heads of the Yezidi cultural center or associations with focus group methods to reach out to the young population for the study's data. The ideas of some young individuals are taken into consideration by focused groups. The data gained in these five meetings is barely used. During the data collection period, the researcher also collected data through observation by attending training, seminar activities, and funeral ceremonies organized by Yezidi cultural associations. Some young Yezidis are interviewed by the author in the form of unstructured interviews while attending these activities.

Before continuing to describe the methods used, I would like to share a bit about my personal experiences and challenges during the conduction groundwork in Germany in 2023.

Considering the data collection process and the methods of data collection, it was no surprise that I would use an anthropological method of data collection. Good planning was essential to deal with the obstacles that I would encounter during the data collection process. Initially, I planned to collect data from young Yezidis with whom I interacted through social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). However, I realized that this was not a proper method to continue since I did not receive enough feedback. Every single individual I met on social media did not trust me enough. For instance, Êzîdentum, a Facebook group with 4,816 (in 2023) members, is a private group that mainly includes young Yezidis in the German diaspora. To be a member of this group, one is asked through a short questionnaire if he or she is a Yezidi to be accepted into the group. Since I speak the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish, I somehow managed to become a member of this group. In a short time, I stressed about the content of the research and asked the group members if they would like to participate in the research. Immediately after a brief explanation of the scope and purpose of the research, a user commented on my post publicly with the following words in the German language: "Stop researching our holy religion; go and do research on your own religion." Via a private dialogue that I made with the person who made this comment, I realized that this person was not from the young population. He blamed me as a researcher who tried to give false information about Yezidism. After a short conversation with this person, I somehow gained

his trust, and then he changed his mind. This person later expressed her regret for her comment. I have faced several issues like that. They expressed their lack of trust in foreign researchers. I started to encounter such objections more and more during face-to-face interviews, too. I came to the conclusion that I needed to provide more detailed information about myself and the content of the research in order to gain the trust of the interviewers. Therefore, I decided that collecting data through face-to-face interviews supported by surveys could be the most appropriate method of collecting data.

The interaction with Yezidis in Germany and data collection for the study, therefore, took place in a natural setting. In this respect, it was essential to adopt an anthropological methodology for accessing the data and the stages of data collection. For any research on Yezidis, it is not an easy task to secure the consent of every Yezidi individual to be included in the research. It was not easy to gain the consent of every targeted young Yezidi individual, notably the individuals who migrated to Germany in recent years, during the data collection process. I, though, adopted a two-step method to reach each of the individuals to persuade them and to gain their trust for face-to-face interviews. First, I contacted the individuals running the Yezidi cultural associations or centers via a research internship that lasted a month in Germany. It was necessary to inform them about the general framework of the research. To do so, several meetings were held via the focused group method to let Yezidi adults know about the necessity of the research. I organized short information meetings on the necessity and importance of research. I held a total of ten informative meetings in different locations and cities (Frankfurt, Bielefeld, Hannover, Celle, Oldenburg) with cultural center managers in at least six cultural centers. The aim of these meetings was to reach the young population. However, based on the observations in cultural centers and in funeral ceremonies and information gathered from older members of the cultural centers, I still was not able to interact with young people because I came across the fact that young people pay to visit cultural centers barely.

These meetings to be the first phase of the fieldwork and my goal was to establish contact and gain trust for potential snowball sampling. After spending a certain amount of time in cultural centers, I had the opportunity to meet and talk to many individuals. In the process, interest in research began to grow. I asked each individual I came into contact with through the cultural centers if they could help me with the research. I observed whether there were young Yezidis around each individual who was born and raised in Germany or had been living in Germany and had at least a long experience of living there. Through each potentially helpful individual,

I had the opportunity to meet young Yezidis outside the cultural centers, in social spaces such as cafes, restaurants, etc. After establishing relationships with the cultural centers and the individuals who manage them, I moved on to the second stage, where I started reaching out to more young people. With the help of every young Yezidi individual, I met those who wanted to take part in the research. In the second stage of collecting data, I conducted over ten interviews with young Yezidis. A recording device recorded each interview after gaining the informants` consent via a consent form informing the informant about the evaluation of data and his/her personal information. Some interviews were conducted through social media platforms (Instagram), apps (WhatsApp), and Google Meet and Zoom platforms. All interviews were recorded automatically by a recording device. Then, I submitted a survey to over thirty young Yezidis to be answered via e-mail.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter One presents an understanding of the Yezidi religion and its concepts of culture and ethnicity. Religious doctrine, forms of cults, and organizations are presented under the title of Yezidi religion in Chapter One. It illustrates a short introduction to the forms of organizations in Yezidi's social structure and communal life and to religious doctrine, culture, and ethnicity to give a basic understanding of the functioning of the Yezidi community.

Chapter two scrutinizes the reasons beyond the dispersion of Yezidis to different regions and locals and the migration waves that constituted Yezidi diasporas. The differences between Yezidis` diaspora(s) that function in different realms of the contemporary world are illustrated through Chapter Two. Then, Yezidis` German diaspora, with its centers of diaspora and its functioning forms, is highlighted, taking the Kurdish diaspora into consideration. A discussion about several differences in the functioning of the Kurdish diaspora and the transnational Yezidi community of Germany is held too to embody the Yezidi German diaspora with its boundaries and the mobilities happening. Moreover, Chapter Two explores possible ways of conceptualization of the Yezidi German diaspora by analyzing the usage of the concept of diaspora within classical diasporas such as Greek, Jewish, and Armenian, and contemporary diasporas such as "Muslim diaspora" and Kurdish diaspora in Europe. It is aimed to clarify the notions of the Yezidi German diaspora to bridge the research gap. With my attempt, I am supposed to contribute to the discussion about Yezidis in Europe in a twofold manner: to widen the scope of Yezidi studies in a trans-local, trans-regional, and trans-national sense and to discuss how Yezidi German diaspora exists and how Yezidis

consider themselves there. The question of whether they identify themselves by using the notion and ideas of transnationalism or not is answered at the end of this discussion.

Chapter three deals with the youth category in the research, providing classifications and definitions of the approaches to the young population in several scientific research. After examining the usage of the concept of youth in academic literature and international organizations, I theorize the concept of youth for Yezidi youth in research, and I explain how and for what purpose I use the concept of Yezidi youth in current research. The characteristics of the targeted Yezidi youth are described in this chapter as well.

Chapters four and five are designed in the research to highlight the main scope of the research and to provide discussions and research findings, focusing on the realm of re-producing religion, culture, and ethnicity in the Yezidi German diaspora. The core findings from the research are presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five to give an understanding of the perceptions of the young Yezidi population regarding "internal reforms" in the contemporary Yezidi German diaspora. The contemporary young Yezidi population's demands, perceptions, and advice are illustrated based on scientific data collected from the groundwork. Through Chapter Four, I provide details about the Yezidis` sacred environment and their religious practices in the diaspora. Then, by providing information on the material culture produced in the German diaspora conditions, details about the areas of cultural conflict between generations are presented. After presenting the data obtained about young Yezidis' perspectives on religion and their religious practices, the findings and interpretations regarding the Yezidi identity are discussed in Chapter Five. We are witnessing the traditional discourse of Yezidi identity changing, and new forms of identity are being defined. The young population is producing new identity concepts outside the existing traditional identity patterns. The influence of the European understanding of the concept of ethnic identity is visible in the discourse of the Yezidi youth. I should point out that the Kurdish identity has taken a back seat. At the same time, the idea of belonging to Yezidism and the idea of being German is used in new identity definitions. Then, chapter five provides information on traditional Yezidi identity, followed by a list of reasons for the existing new definitions of identity. It then discusses potential scenarios for the identity of young Yezidis in the near future.

Finally, in conclusion, I give a summary of my main findings and the potential scenarios for the Yezidi society in years to come. The conclusion will emphasize the contribution of this thesis to the Yezidi literature in the academic world. At the same time, new perspectives that

the thesis will provide to academic literature will be discussed. Then, I go on to identify several issues in Yezidi German society that were not developed in this thesis but are productive areas for future research.

Chapter 1 Yezidi religion, culture, and ethnicity

Introduction

Religions have arisen at particular historical moments, shaped by specific needs and purposes. At their core, they are driven by two principal concerns: humanity's desire to understand the world and the necessity of fostering societal order. While many definitions of religion have been formulated, none have conclusively captured its complex structure. The absence of a universally accepted definition is primarily due to the inherent diversity in the forms and functions of religions. Scholars from various subfields of religious studies have offered diverse definitions of religion shaped by their particular areas of expertise. For example, Émile Durkheim, defined religion as 'a system of rituals and beliefs that enable a community

to come into being,'[10] highlighting its social role. In contrast, Ludwig Feuerbach characterized religion as a desire expressed through prayer, sacrifice, and belief.'[11]

Many scholars of religious studies consider the word religion as a constructed concept. Several scholars (Smith, 1998; McCutcheon, 2001) suggest that the concept of religion, as we understand it today, was deliberately formulated by imperial colonial powers to rationalize their expansionary ambitions. Moreover, others believe religion is a modern invention (Lehrich, 2021). These differing perspectives arise from two primary sources: religion's intricate and multifaceted nature and the subjective biases inherent in individual approaches. Accessing the everyday meaning of the word ‘religion,' therefore, is not easy to pin down since few people have a formal definition of the word religion,' according to Harvey Whitehouse (2004). However, it is known that efforts to develop a universal definition of religion emerged in the context of early modern Europe, following the fragmentation of the unity and authority of the Roman Church. To Talal Asad, such efforts appeared as a response to the problems of Christian theology, and when Christian missionaries experienced culturally unfamiliar territories, the problem of definition of the word religion became a problem (Asad, 1993). The specificity of religion, the origins of religion, the functions of religion, and the structure of religion are four main questions for theories of religion that bring different definitions. However, at its core, the countless definitions of religion share common elements or beliefs central to its characterization. These elements generally include: a) belief in superempirical beings or transcendent powers, b) a system of ethical norms, c) ritual practices of worship, d) perceived benefits derived from participation, and e) a sense of belonging to a distinct community organized around these practices and beliefs. These elements or beliefs may vary to some extent across different communities. However, their functions are of significant importance to the Yezidi religion. Foremost, the Yezidi religion serves as a cornerstone of individual identity and a unifying force for social cohesion. Its influence is deeply embedded, permeating every phase of Yezidi's life. Yezidism is often called a sect, presumably because of its Sufi character. It can be well-understood from a long period of the transmitted orally priestly learning and narrations. "Kurdish language is the community's common language and religious observances" (Omarkhali & Kreyenbroek, 2016, pp. 122-130). It is not a single monolithic system of belief. "There is no written Sacred Book,[12]

[10] Durkheim, 1915
[11] Feuerbach, 1845
[12] The notion of “sacred books” derives from accounts of non-Yezidi authors, travelers and scholars of 19th century. Some Yezidis believe in the existence of sacred books while deny the existence of written texts. During

and the religion is based primarily on orthopraxy." (Omarkhali, 2017: 13). Being a Yezidi is, therefore, a matter of birth, and there is a high value to the orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. Therefore, "participation in festivals and formal obedience to traditional experts or religious authorities (the Prince, the Sheikh, and the Pîr) are essential in religious life" (Kreyenbroek, 2014: 25). Hence, both cultural values and religious values play an important role in Yezidism. The combination of these values constitutes the religious identification of every individual. I can say that the distinction between cultural values and practices of religion is not that explicit in Yezidi society. That is, the values mentioned above are interlocked. Hence, in Yezidism, social norms, taboos, and religious observances make sense. On the one hand, the limits of the social and cultural norms and religious observances are not clear; on the other hand, the traces of Sufism and ancient religions are considered norms and religious observances. The similarities between Yezidism and the religion of the Yaresan (Ahl-e Haqq), the remnants of Sufism, and the connections between the religions of the ancient Iranians and even the religious practices of Indian Hindus make it difficult for scholars to find a middle ground about the origins of the Yezidi faith. This issue is a main issue of debates concerning the current attempts to find out the roots of the religious identification of Yezidism.

Notably, Yezidis in the United States of America are seeking traces of the ancient roots of Yezidism and trying to keep it out of the Middle Eastern cultural basin. Cause "both ancient remnants and the elements of medieval Sufism have a distinct role in the religious tradition of Yezidism" (Kreyenbroeke, 2009, p. 18). The influence of the Sufi tradition and the existence of public memory or knowledge indicating that Sheikh' Adi comes from the Sufi tradition puts Yezidism into a form of Sufi culture rather than a religion based on a unified doctrine. This is also true for Alevism in Germnay and Anatolia, the lands of origin. Diaspora Yezidis rethinking and debating the forms of the Sufi tradition and reflecting on the sources of the Sufi traces that existed in pre-Sheikh Adi Yezidism is an effort to eliminate this uncertainty. Thus, the debates on reproducing religion, culture, and ethnicity make sense altogether. Discussions on religion, culture, and ethnic identity are naturally intertwined. As a matter of fact, each of them is intertwined, and together, they create a collective memory. The traditional old religious doctrine, forms of cult, and the organization of both the Yezidi religion and society are being rethought and reformulated recently to constitute a base for

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the fieldwork in Germany I encounter some Yezidi individuals work in their cultural centers who believe that the sacred book is kept by a museum in Britain. The Black Book (Mishefa Reş) and Cilwe (Kitêb-i Cilve) is considered as “Sacred Books” by many scholars and some of Yezidis.

potential reconstructed public memory of the Yezidi society for the years or decades to come. Therefore, first of all, looking at the old religious doctrine, forms of cult, the social organization of the Yezidi society, and the correlation between the concept of culture and ethnicity in the following paragraphs will be helpful to understand what is discussed under chapters four and five in this study.

1.1 Yezidi religion: religious doctrine

History and religious doctrine

The word doctrine is known as the body of principles and teachings (Fiorettis; Faletti; Sheingate, 2016) or all principles and rules of a group. It is commonly defined as a codified set of a belief (Waller, 2015). It is an abstract idea and "a more or less systematized body of intellectual truths expressed reasonably. And this conceptual expression does not explain the entire content of faith" (Raimon, 2015).

The corpus of the Yezidi religious doctrine consists of the combination of the God (creator of the universe), Seven Holy Beings headed by the Peacock Angel (Tawûsî Melek) mystic figure Sheikh' Adi, and sometimes a holy being known as Yezid/Êzîd.

Yezidis practice a "syncretic" religion whose origins are lost in antiquity. They are deeply rooted in the form of Sufism with local pagan cults and elements of other religions (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014: vii). Being a non-proselytizing religion makes Yezidi's religious doctrine different from the surrounding beliefs.

About a 'sacred book,' there are manuscripts called the Black Book (Kurdish: Mishefa Resh) and the Book of Revelation (Kurdish: Kitêba Cilwe) presented by Western visitors such as Layard and Badger in the mid-19th century. Western archaeologists and missioners were in search of Yezidi-written sacred books in the 1880s, and in time, many Western visitors to Yezidi lands came out with claims of finding original Yezidi sacred books or scriptures that resulted in at least over six versions of the Yezidi sacred texts. John S. Guest (1993) highlights the appearance of such versions of scriptures in his work (Kreyenbroek, 2005), and Khanna Omarkhali (2017) highlights the history of the finding, publication, and investigation of two 'sacred books.' Among Yezidis, they believe that they have 'sacred books,' an unknown place. Few Yezidis in Germany claimed that the United Kingdom holds their 'sacred books' in a special museum. The initial references to the Yezidis` 'sacred books' can be found in

many textual materials of travelers, missionaries of the 19th century, and scholars of the 20th century. From the middle of the 19th century onwards, copies of two Yezidi texts began appearing in Arabic. Later, copies appeared in the Kurdish language. In a published work 1882 by M.N. Siouffi, a vice-consul of the French Republic in Mosul[13], it is mentioned that Yezidis have two 'sacred books.' However, in time, many scholars, archaeologists, and missionaries (Layard, 1867; Guest, 1909; Joseph, 1919, etc.) came up with new claims of the new versions of Yezidi-written sacred texts.[14] So, there was a realm of the appearance of fake Yezidi manuscripts in the 20th and 21st centuries, and Yezidis are still attempting to find their own sacred books (Omarkhali, 2017).

There are two important interrelated features of the Yezidi religion: a) a belief in religious purity and b) a belief in metempsychosis. The first one is represented by a variety of taboos and traditional preferences for living in a caste system. The second is represented by the human form's periodical reincarnation of the Holy Seven Beings. The current members of dominant religious castes are believed as the descendants of recent manifestations of Holy Beings in Sheikh Adi and his companions.[15] Moreover, observances and rituals of a particular locality may play an essential role in religious doctrine. The personification of figures is another aspect of religious dogma, and it plays a vital role in orally transmitted tradition. For instance, a Georgian Yezidi illustrates in Rodziewicz's piece (2018) as follows:

"The Yezidi religion is characterized by personification. Everything is personified except one-evil is not personified" (Rodziewicz, 2018: p.74). Some Yezidis, therefore, call the Yezidism Sharfadin, which refers to several meanings such as to an angel, to Sheikh 'Adi, and to the first religion of the world. It would have caused arid scenarios regarding the origins of Yezidisim. Even though nothing is recorded about the time when Yezidis first emerged, some stories in several Arabic and Syriac sources refer to the first time that Yezidis occurred. It is to be said that the opinion on Yezidism as an offshoot of Islam is quite wide among these stories and among European scholars and students of Yezidism. Many of them agreed that Yezidism is a pre-Islamic Kurdish religious tradition that was shaped by the mystic figure[16] 'Adi ibn

[13] https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k93220q?rk=42918;4 Accessed: 13.02.2022

[14] for more details see Guest, 1993; p.146 and Omarkhali, 2017; pp. 39-75

[15] https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-iranica-online/*-COM_1252 Accessed: 04.04.2023

[16] He is, sometimes, regarded as the prophet of the Yezidi religion. See more details Guest, 2010: pp.15-28

Musafir (Sheihk Adi) in the early years of the 12th century CE (Kreyenbroek & Rashow, 2005: p. 3). This is because prior to Sheihk ‘Adi, there is no adequate historical evidence of Yezidism except their oral legends and stories. For instance, the holiest place in Yezidism, Lalish, became a holy place just after the settlement of Sheikh ‘Adi in the Sinjar mountains (Gökçen, 2012: p.10). Therefore, the history of Yezidism can be divided into two main periods: the period prior to Sheikh Adi and the period after Sheikh ‘Adi.

The religious doctrine of Yezidism is based on universal principles such as ethics and morals, right and wrong, justice, truth, loyalty, mercy, and love (Kizilhan, 2019, pp.7-77). It encompasses the concept of God, the creation of the cosmos and time, cyclical and periodical time, three storms (tofan in Kurdish), and a linear storyline that shapes its beliefs. According to Yezidism, there is a supreme power and truth in the universe, which is God (Omarkhali, 2012: pp.144-195). God is almighty, and no power exists outside of Him. Many Yezidis believe that God has many names. In Yezidi religious hymns, there are several references to His name(s). Yezidis use various words to refer to God, including the Iranian origin Xweda (God), the most commonly used form; Xudan (master or owner); Xudavend (the Lord); Padişa (the King); and Mîr (the Prince). Additionally, words of Arabic origin such as Rebî or Reb (Master); Ella(h) (the only God); and Malik (King) are found in religious literature, along with Êzîd (Omarkhali, 2009: pp.13-24). The concept of God represents the one eternal God among Yezidis. He does not actively engage on earth as the creator of the universe but is the source of every movement and sensation on it, embodying God’s omnipotence. Yezidis do not mention the name of Evil. According to Yezidi tradition, God has delegated His power to seven beings, known as angels/mysterious[17] entities, and is concerned only with heavenly affairs (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p.71). Therefore, God granted the Peacock Angel dominion over worldly matters.

In Yezidism, the holy trinity resembles God. Everything is done by the holy trinity instead. The Yezidi holy trinity comprises the following: Tawûsî Melek (the Peacock Angel), Sheikh ‘Adi (an older man, the founder of the proto-Yezidi community), and Sultan Yezid/Êzî (a young man who believed lived long before Sheikh Adi). According to Yezidis, God manifests

[17] The Heptad of seven holy beings (Heft Sur) is highly respected in Yezidi culture. They are described according to Yezidi oral tradition as follows: ‘Azazil (Tawûsî Melek), who is directed to worldly affairs; Darda’îl (Sheikh Hasan), Jibra’îl (Sheikh Abu Bekir), Israfîl (Sheikh Shams al-Dîn), Nura’îl (Sheikh Fakhr al-Dîn), ‘Ezra’îl (Sajadîn), and Shemna’îl (Sheikh Nasr al-Dîn). See more details (Açıkyıldız, 2010, Kreyenbroeke & Rashow, 2005).

himself in these three forms. Thus, "the Yezidi xwade resembles neither Zeus, the humanized father of the gods of Hellas nor Yahweh, the almighty and 'jealous' God of Judaism" (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014: p.3).

"The cosmogony in Yezidism goes back to the ancient Indo-Iranian religious substratum" (Omarkhali, 2017: p.24). In Indo-Iranian cosmogonies, the idea of unity is at the base of diversity. Both the six divine beings, Amesha Spentas in Zoroastrianism and the Seven Angels (Heft Sûr) in Yezidism, are not only creations but also parts of God. These supernatural beings in Hinduism, known as Seven Adityas; in Zoroastrianism, known as Amesha Spentas; and in Yezidism, known as Heft Sûr/Sir, keep divine order, and there is a hierarchy among them. The theme of unity underlies diversity and, therefore, coexists in Yezidi cosmogony (Kaczorowski, 2014, pp.106-121).

The Creation of the world, which took a week, is a progressive procedure, and "the creation ends with the myth of the creation of the first man, who in Yezidism is also called Adam" (Omarkhali, 2012: pp.144-195).

God created this world, and before the Creation, the spiritual entities God and Pearl were interlocked in the exoteric world. Once the God became Pearl (light of God, white) and the Pearl burst open, the material creation began, and the world became visible.[18] In the early stages of the Creation, Pearls, Colours, Waves, Angels, Elements (earth, water, wind, and fire), Heaven, and Hell differentiate respectively from a pristine world to a profane one. Just before the creation of this world, God created the seven angels under the leader of Melek Tawus, appointed figures who cared for worldly affairs. According to the Hymn of Earth and Sky, just before Creation, there was a state that for 90,000 years, God hid four sacred beings (*khirqes)*[19] in the lamp (*qendîl*), and then God made manifest the four friends on earth.[20] Presumably, this stage of Creation denotes a period in which only the spiritual creatures exist. Because the qendîl is said to have been hidden in Heaven in Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr.[21] In some

[18] See more details in Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World) and Qewlê Bê Elîf (The Hymn of B and A) in Kreyenbroek & Rashow ,2005, p. 66-71

[19] The concept of "Khirqe" denotes to the early leaders, the spiritual authority of Sheikh 'Adi, which is said to have existed besides God as "patched frock" and came to symbolize the spiritual authority on earth. See ibid, p.27

[20] ibid. Qewlê Qere Ferqan (QQF 9): Pedşa deng diket bizare, Dur mewicî behre, Ticara û wan çêbû xerqe kirine çare, Be'dî not hezar sala li qendîlê kir û veşare, Ji nû baş dahir kirin her çar yare

[21] ibid, Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One),(24)

Qewls,[22] the variety of unity and the Creation of Paradise comes from many colors springing from the light of God. After the Creation of the material world, water came out of the Pearl, and waves were created. Then, the Ocean developed from these waves. After this, night and days were created alongside the Creation of the sun and moon (the two eyes).[23] "They were created from an undifferentiated light. Then, he created the first man (Adam) and put him in paradise. Then, the first man left paradise and began to live on earth. After a period of 100 years, Eve, the first woman, was created from Adam" (Rezania & Omarkhali, 2009: pp.331-346).

The end of Creation is connected with the transition from mythological time to historical time (Omarkhali, 2012). According to a belief in Yezidism, some events repeat themselves from the time of Creation onwards. They believe in the rebirth of the soul (kirasgorîn) and a state of being before the creation of the universe and world. There are, therefore, different concepts of time, such as the esoteric time sphere (enzel), a cyclic course of time (bedîl), a linear course of time, which runs from the start of the Creation by God to the collective eschatological endpoint, and three storms (tofan), which divided the history of Yezidis into four stages (Omarkhali, 2017: p.25).

The concept of enzel denotes "the time of pre-eternity" or the statement of the events before the beginning of the world's creation. This concept of time is one of the most important concepts in Yezidi cosmogony, and there is God and also Pearl in this stage (Kianoosh Rezania & Omarkhali, 2009: pp.331-346). God, it seems here, was not distinct from the Pearl (Nûr) (Kreyenbroek, 2005: p. 25).

This time period consists of several concepts of time, such as bedîl, zeman, and dewr. Bedîl means epochs, periods, or eras that contain changes and revolutions in the new history of the world. In Qewlê Qendîla[24] the concept of bedîl was designated as the start of a renewed period of time. Every outstanding figure from different eras, such as Abraham and Noah, is described by the concept of bedîl. For instance, in Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr, the Noah era is called bedîla

[22] ibid, Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr, and Dû'a Bawiriyê (The Prayer of Belief)

[23] According to Qewlê Qere Ferqan (The Hymn of the Black Furqan) and Qewlê Babekê Omera (The Hymn of Babeke Omera) God made Shemsedin the Sun and made Fekhredin the Moon. Here we see the notion of personification of figures.

[24] See Kreyenbroek & Rashow, 2005, The Hymn of the Lights, p.90

Nûh.[25] This concept describes the renovation of the world or the beginning of the new era. In a way, there are, therefore, sequential epochs in God, and the seven mysteries can manifest themselves again and again in a positive manner to start a new era with a mystic figure or religious leader. For instance, it is believed that seventy-two nations sprang from Adam and Eve, and Yezidis believe they do not belong to this group (Rodziewicz, 2019). After the time of Adam, there followed the period of Noah, of Ibrahim the Friend, of the first monotheist Nimrud, and then of prophets.

The concepts of Zeman and dewr also denote period, rotation, or time, respectively. Both concepts are used similarly to bedîl from time to time. Yet, both concepts can be understood as a short period of time of an outstanding figure or important era in history.

Tofan means storm or flood, which plays a key role in renewing the world in a positive manner. According to Yezidis, tofans emerge when the number of sinners becomes excessive in the world, and these tofans are purifying events. According to orally transmitted stories, these storms take place through a fundamental element: the first, which is assumed to have occurred and connected with Noah's era, through water (tofanê avê), the second through fire (tofanê agirî), and the last connected with the wind (tofanê ba). (Some Reflection on the concept of time in Yezidism).

This concept of time starts from creation to the end of human life. In Yezidism, a beginning point for human life and an endpoint of human life (air Zeman) coexist, and Adam set this starting point of time on Earth.

The Peacock Angel (Tawûsî Melek)

[25] ibid, QZM 51, p. 64

The Peacock Angel[26] is the leader/the prince of the seven beings/ mysteries (*Khudan),*[27] *(*Tawûsî Melek, Shemsedin, Fekhredin, Sejadin, Nasirdin, Sheikh Hesen, and Seikh Adi) that God created at an early stage. The identity of Malak Tawus and his position are being discussed among Yezidis. Some Yezidis consider the Peacock Angel the first Khudan, while others believe Sheikh Adi is the first Khudan (Gökçen & Tee, 2010: pp. 405-427). Nevertheless, according to Yezidis' manuscripts of the sacred books or texts (which are believed not original texts),[28] the Black Book) and the Book of Revelation[29] the Peacock Angel is identified as the leader of angels and as the symbol of Yezidism, respectively. Moreover, in all mythological narratives, the position of Tawus Melek is clear: a representative of God.

As Guest pointed out, Tawus Melek existed before all creatures, and God created him as the chief of all on the first day, Sunday (Guest, 2010: p.210). The Peacock Angel mediates between God and the Yezidis. He is God's alter ego united with him. Yezidis pray to God through his banners in the form of a peacock (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p.73); thus, the Peacock Angel is highly respected in the belief system.

The peacock cult and the traces of peacock worship take place as well in the material culture of the peoples of India, the Near East, and Old Iran. This common notion of Peacock makes some contemporary Yezidis work on the roots' origins or the heritage of Yezidism. Due to such a notion, many Yezidis in their diaspora in the United States[30] affiliate Yezidis to Hindus. The cult of the Peacock in Yezidi culture contains traces of the material culture of the peoples of different traditions. For instance, a cock banner made of copper is an important cult called *sanjak*. It is carried by a special group of Yezidi priests (qawwals) who recite the sacred

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[26] The peacock is recognized as a symbol in the religions of its natural Asian habitats, where it is a vehicle for gods in the Hindu and Buddhist religions" see Jackson, 2006: p. 10. It is a symbol of the immortality of the soul and rebirth. It was known in Mesopotamia by the late eighth century BC and was associated with the Mesopotamian deity Tammuz (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p. 78). However, the representation of Satan or the Devil is generally associated with the peacock in the Middle East, particularly in Muslim tradition.

It can be said that the homeland of the peacock is India. The peacock symbolized immortality and rebirth, along with the tree of life or at the source of life in ancient India and Egypt (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014 p.22).

[27] These figures or angels are called as Khudan (Xudan) referring to holy beings.

[28] These texts were shown to be inauthentic. See in Kreyenbroek, 1995: pp.10-16

[29] See more details about the holy books Mishefa Resh and Kitêb-i Cîlwê in Guest, 2010, p.210

[30] See Sanders, 2019

hymns, play sacred music, travel, and gather religious tribute (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014: p.25). Traditionally, this event is called the touring of the Tawus (*tawus gêran in Kurdish*), and Yezidi priests give an opportunity to villagers or the Yezidis far away from holy lands to worship an image of Tawusî Melek instead. Many Yezidis in Germany seek to resurface touring of the Tawus in order to make Yezidism more visible for young Yezidis. In Kurdistan, the lands of origin, Qewwals visit all Yezidi communities once a year. However, political events made the practice impossible to continue in Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey (Kreyenbroek, 2009: p.22). The practice of the *tawus gêran* is about to disappear among Yezidis settled in the diaspora nowadays.

Sultan Êzi, Sheikh 'Adi

The most respected figure is Sultan Êzi in the Yezidi pantheon and the Peacock Angel. In many legends, Sultan Êzi is sometimes identified as God, the Peacock Angel, and one of the Yezidi Holy Trinity. The identification of this figure is based on the knowledge gained from legends. Therefore, several descriptions appear among Yezidis regarding his position in the Yezidi pantheon. For instance, Sultan Êzi, Sheikh Adi, and Melek Tawus are said to be one in Qewlê Keniya Mara.[31]

The figure of Sultan Êzi is a part of the legendary history of Yezidism. The knowledge about this figure and Yezidis' early history can be understood in the light of the oral character of traditions. Many Yezidis believe that Sultan Êzi is the founder of Yezidism, while others believe that Sheikh Adi is the first founder of the religion. Some Yezidis call Sultan Êzi as Zaroaster. In fact, the most known notion is that Sheikh Adi was a 'reformer' of the Yezidi community who changed the whole structure of the community. So, the personifications of figures and the blurred dividing line between figures are all about the oral character of Yezidism. Therefore, it seems impossible to clarify the figures' positions in the Yezidi pantheon. There are many contradictory versions of accounts about the early history of Yezidism and Sultan Êzi. So, it is well known that it is impossible to identify a true version of an account in oral literature (Kreyenbroek, 1995: p.36). So, there is a need to clarify the period before Sheihk 'Adi, which is highly complicated in the process of reproducing knowledge of Yezidism in contemporary times. So, the idea of two Yezidi leaders or founders of religion is common among Yezidis. Therefore, some Yezidis want to reform the idea of

[31] See in Kreyenbroek and Rashow, 2005, Qewlê Keniya Mara (4), p. 392

Yezidism's existence before Sheik Adi's period. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that Sheikh ‘Adi is the first Khudan (Gökçen & Tee, 2010).

Mystical Islam and Yezidism

The remnants of the mystical Islam into Yezidism dated back to the Sheikh Adi`s period. Sheikh ‘Adi is known as both a historical and mystical figure. He is the incarnation of Melek Tawus (Kizilhan, 2019) for the Yezidis. He is considered a ‘reformer’ at the same time, notably by Yezidi intellectuals. It is believed that Sheikh ‘Adi entered to the Yezidi community and changed its social structure with the rule of endogamy. Yezidis believes that he re-defined the relationships of the various groups to each other. It is believed that this reform is against the grain of the equality of men in the cosmos that is commonly stressed. This reform also led to a hierarchical system, which is criticized currently. However, Sheikh ‘Adi’s cult mostly appears in a Sufi tradition of Yezidism, and he is considered as a Sufi cult who had mystical power (*Barakat*).[32] He is described as a man of great spiritual charisma by Muslim historians (Kizilhan, 2019). As a mystical figure, there is a diversity of perceptions about him, and his mysticism is part of the stories of the oral tradition that illustrate him from a saint to an incarnation of an angel and the divine incarnation (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014: 40). As a historical figure, medieval historians well document him as a Sufi saint who was born around 1073-78 in Beit-Far in the province of Baalbek in Lebanon as Arab from the Quraysh tribe of Umayyad origins (Açıkyıldız, 2010; Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014; Guest, 2010; Kreyenbroek, 1995). Many literate Yezidis consider Sheikh ‘Adi to be a good reformer of Yezidism. He studied in Baghdad with Sufi masters such as Hammad al-Dabbas, the teacher of Abd al-Qadir Jilani, and became a disciple of Sufi philosopher Ahmad al-Ghazali (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014), and he may have been in contact with other eminent figures (Kreyenbroek, 1995). Adi bin Musafir’s arrival in Kurdistan in the early years of the 12th century (Kreyenbroek, 1995 and 2005) can be considered the beginning of the factual history of Yezidism. The beginning of the Sufi order in Yezidism is thought to be primarily related to Sheikh ‘Adi’s period. He may have continued his mystical pursuits among Kurds in Kurdistan in the Hakkâri mountains, where the activities of Sufisim were extreme among Kurdish tribes, and then settled in Lalish in Iraq and died there in 1162. His shrine became the center of pilgrimage for all the Yezidis. According to Yezidis, Sheikh Adi ascended to heaven and ruled over the world with the Peacock Angel (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014: p.38).

[32] It was believed that he had control over snakes and wild animals. He would become invisible, and so forth. See in Açıkyıldız, 2010: p.86

Today, accounts of the time of the mystic figure Sheikh Adi play a key role in the sacred sphere and may be called the main sources of the sacred history of Yezidism. It is crucial to state that the core knowledge of Yezidi's religious doctrine is mainly derived from the period prior to Sheihk Adi by many legends, hymns, and stories. One can call that period of time the dark age of Yezidism or esoteric time. In that period of time, the historical figure Yazid/Ezi, who is seen as a holy founder of the Yezidi faith alongside Sheikh Adi, played a key role in Yezidism as a figure before Sheikh Adi. Even this figure is considered as Zoroaster by some Yezidis who reproduce the knowledge of the roots of Yezidism in the German diaspora.[33] Nonetheless, a period of touchable textual information has been produced by both outsiders and some Yezidis from the 19th century onwards that helps us have an idea concerning the background of contemporary Yezidism. However, there is no 'historical evidence of the origins of Yezidis in these texts, so a linear time-oriented way can be constructed for the concept of the history of Yezidism (Kreyenbroek & Rashow, 2005: xv). Therefore, the background of contemporary Yezidism has been formed respectively by the Dark Age prior to Sheikh 'Adi, by the period of re-construction of Yezidism thanks to Sheik Adi and his successors, which is believed to have taken Yezidism from the Dark Ages to enlightenment and the post-Sheikh 'Adi period. These periods were interrelated, and Yezidism's spiritual, mythological, and cultural background was constructed during that time (Gökçen, 2012: p.10).

From Sheikh 'Adi onwards, we learn about the Adawiyya order from several passages of some medieval historians such as Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi.[34] Sheihk' Adi's followers are called Adawiyya order, which is seen as Sufi order by Yezidis too. According to the narratives of outsiders, Sheikh 'Adi's and Adawiyya orders' successors were Sakhr Abu'l Barakat (Sheikh Adi's nephew), 'Adi II (Barakat's son), al Hasan or Sheikh Hesen ('Adi II's son), Sharaf al-Din (Hasan's son), Fakhr al-Din (Hasan's brother), and Shams al-Din (Fakhr al_Din's brother) until the 1270s. As Kreyenbroek illustrates, "nothing is known of the subsequent leadership of the Adawi community of Kurdistan… Later, many Kurds [most probably Yezidis too] converted to Islam in the 16th and 17th centuries, and Yezidism lost much of its earlier influence and its power weaned" (Kreyenbroek & Rashow, 2005: p.4).

[33] I witnessed such ideas During several seminars and discussions in Germany in 2023.

[34] He states in his work (*al-Suluk li-ma'rifat duwal al-muluk*) that Sheikh Adi's sanctuary was demolished and some aggressors burned the Sheihk Adi's remains in 1415.

The issue of the caste system and the issue of endogamy is hotly debated and criticized by young Yezidi individuals in the German diaspora. These are considered two main reforms done by Sheikh `Adi to save Yezidi's cultural persistence. The era in which Sheikh `Adi lived is also known as the starting point of the separation of Yezidism from the cultural basin of mystical Islam by a big portion of Yezidis in diasporas. Yet, currently, a wide range of opinions on the origins of Yezidism and Yezidis' history appears among young Yezidis and outsiders. Many scholars have been associating Yezidism with several ancient cults and cultures, while some Yezidi religious figures and intellectuals try to associate Yezidism with Hindus to erase the presence of mystical Islam.[35] Several scenarios of the origins of Yezidism naturally associate the history of Yezidism with Gnosticism, ancient Iranian roots, ancient Mesopotamian culture, and Islam. It is perfectly understandable, having produced various scenarios about the origins of the Yezidis. Cause it is a genuine issue that the influence of the cultures mentioned above, and beliefs are common in the corpus of Yezidi religious hymns and their traditional way of life. The impact above is natural and comes into existence through history. Naturally, one can find many elements in Yezidism inherent to other religions.

Although there are references to Muslim or Sufi concepts in the textual tradition and religious practices today, most Yezidis regard their faith as entirely unrelated to Islam. However, some hymns contain several Muslim concepts. Even Islamic culture play a role in their early history. However, by its rich oral tradition, Yezidism can be considered independent of Islam. Principally, the efforts of the Yezidi intellectuals aim to reduce the influence of Islam on their faith. For instance, Yezidi expert Pir Xidir Sileman and the chairman of a Yezidi association Telim Tolan in Ackermann`s (2008) work try to clarification the influence of Sufism in Yezidism and to illustrate Yezidism a split off Islam as follows:

"It is correct that Sheikh Adi was a Sufi but not a Muslim Sufi. Sufi philosophy existed long before Islam and is of Iranian origins."[36]

I personally encountered such Yezidi intellectuals who had such ideas and organized seminars on Sufism in Yezidi cultural centers in Germany in 2023. A significant portion of Yezidi intellectuals claim that Sufism had its roots in Asia before Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

[35] See Sanders, 2019.
[36] See more discussions (Ackermann, 2008)

They claim that “the Sufi tradition originated in India, and through Judaism, it was carried to the Middle East and passed on to the Yezidis.”[37]

Although the roots of Yezidism are uncertain, after the Sheikh Adi period, scholars have produced several contradictory theories about their origins and the roots of their religion (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p.35). Especially in the 19th century, in the early publications of Layard (1849), Badger (1852), and Charmoy (1868), Yezidisim has often been described as a sort of "Manicheism" (Charmoy, 1868, pp. 69-70) and the followers of the religion described as "devil- worshippers" (Layard, 1849: I. 278). These speculative accounts about the origins of Yezidism became widespread over time and led to several arguments about the connections between Yezidism and other religions. For instance, both M. Guidi (1932) and Lescot (1938) associated Yezidism with Zoroastrianism and Islam in their works, respectively. Such knowledge produced by outsiders still remains a reference point for many Yezidis in contemporary times.

Overall, Yezidis, in diasporas with their literate population, deal with these arid stories and blurred accounts regarding their religious doctrine, religious, cultural, and ethnic identification to constitute a new public memory. A unified, well-shaped religious doctrine of Yezidism based on European understanding of religion, for example, is seen as a starting point to constitute an independent cultural and ethnic base for Yezidis of the near future. Young Yezidis are at the center of these developments with their new ideas and experiences of Western societies.

1.2 Yezidi religion: forms of cult: religious practices, festivities, and rituals, prayer, pilgrimage, taboos, and prohibitions

The cohesion of Yezidi social-religious life is composed of endogamous castes, local religious observances and rituals, and a set of norms and taboos. The essential religious duties of a Yezidi can be listed as follows: showing respect to religious leaders and elders, visiting local shrines (tiwaf), visiting the holiest place, the valley of Lalish located in Iraq (zîyaret), participating in festivals and other communal observances, giving alms and paying one's religious dues, observing certain taboos, and in some cases prayer (Kreyenbroek, 2005: p. 15).

[37] From observation and data gained in a seminar on *The roots of Sufism in Yezidism*, in Germany, Oldenburg, 2023.

The religious worship practice of Yezidis occurs as performing rituals at tombs and shrines and participating in festivals. The most important part of Yezidis' ritual life is holy places, such as a central shrine, a tomb of a saint, or places containing several shrines surrounded by a cemetery. Lalish is the holiest sacred place among these holy places. It is located in Iraq. Apart from Lalish, many tombs of holy persons are considered sacred places. These places are visited by Yezidis during festivals, on the New Year (Serêsal), during essential holidays such as the major holiday in December, "Cejna Êzîd," and on their wedding days to take brides from the cemetery to be accepted by the members of the community (Spät, 2016: pp.155-175). Several tombs of highly respected religious figures are imitated in diasporas. Known for its distinctive "dome," "cupola," or "spire" shape, the Qub and tomb or mausoleum (mezargeh) are defining the most sacred structure of Yezidi culture, seen in Lalish and nearly every Yezidi territory. Both Mezargeh and Qubs literally share similar functions. Each Qub is named in dedication to a particular saint or revered holy figure.[38]

The most common Qubs are the Qubs dedicated to Şêx Hesen (or Şexsin), Siltan Êzî. The Qub of Sutan Ezi is the first material part of the sacred structure of Yezidis in Germany. The yearly shrines' feasts, often held locally and called tiwafs, are visits to local shrines. They are another essential part of the religious practices that keep religion alive and strengthen social relations between members of the community. The reciter of sacred hymns, called qawwals, visits all Yezidi groups distributed to different regions. This performance of visiting Yezidis is called touring Tawûs, as mentioned before. It is carried only in Iraq nowadays. Reciters carry a banner of Melek Tawûs, which is called sancaq. Yezidis in villages worship the sancaq. This performance has not yet been performed in the German diaspora.

The visits to shrines are varied, and in some places, several rituals are being held, such as musical performances of reciters, ritual meals, a trip to sacred spots held in nature, and a huge communal dance (Spät, 2016). However, the center of devotional life is the valley of Lalish, a place for a crowd of pilgrims. Alongside visiting local shrines, visiting Lalish is regarded as highly meritorious, and ideally, every Yezidi is accepted to visit there once a year. People who can visit Lalish are believed to be in contact with the divine. Those who visit Lalish and perform "Jema'iyye" are called by the honorary title "Hajji."[39] (Kreyenbroek, 2009). However, it is to be noted that the places of pilgrimage vary. A house of a Sheikh or pîr, a shrine

[38] https://ezidi-heritage.com/articles/ezidi-holy-places/ Accessed: 24.06.2024

[39] Muslims use the same title for those who visit to Mecca

dedicated to a saint, could be a place of pilgrimage (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p. 104). However, the most sacred place is the valley of Lalish. The sanctuary of Sheikh' Adi, alongside several tombs and shrines of saints, is located in a valley, and the valley is considered one piece of heaven. The most important decisions for the following year are held here by the Spiritual Assembly (Meclîsa Ruhanî), and the Feast of the Assembly (annual pilgrimage), which is called Cejna Jema'iyye, is held from 23 to 30 September. During these seven days, several festivals are held. Yezidis believe that heavenly figures, Melek Tawûs, and other mysteries gather at Lalish and make decisions on behalf of God for the following year. Thus, religious dignitaries, the Mîr and Baba Sheikh, stand ready on occasion.

The crowd, who are dressed in festive clothes and ready to perform the duty of pilgrimage, arrives at the bridge of Silat and its stream symbolically to reach the sacred life dimension from the dimension of profane life by taking their shoes off, washing their hands in-stream and by crossing the bridge three times carrying torches (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p. 107). Then, they reach the sanctuary of Sheikh Adi. Religious dignitaries spend a few days in the mountain of Arafat in the valley of Lalish and then come to the sanctuary to wash their hands and face in Zemzem Spring (Kreyenbroek & Rashow, 2005: p. 17). During the pilgrimage, several ceremonies are held, non-baptized are baptized, and an animal (Qabax, the sacrifice of a bull on the fifth day at the Shrine of Sheikh Shems, literally called Lord Sun) is sacrificed.

Festivities and various rituals are another important part of religious life. Religious Yezidis observed feasts (rozhi, rojî). Fasting is the main part of religious observances, and Kreyenbroek (2005, 2009) classifies the feasts as moveable and immovable. Under the title of moveable feasts, the influence of Islamic culture is seen. For instance, the Silat Bridge, the Arafat Mountain, and the Zemzem Spring co-existed in Islamic observances. Yezidis follow the lunar calendar of the Islamic majority culture in moveable feasts. For instance, some celebrate Sheva Berat, corresponding to Muslim Laylat al Bara'a, in the month of Sha'ban. According to these Yezidis, God makes the decision for the following year in Sheva Berat. Religious leaders of the Adani lineage gather at Lalish in the sanctuary of Sheik Adi, reciting a modified form of Islamic prayer. Yet, religious dignitaries of the Shemsani lineage do not accept this Islamic observance (Kreyenbroek 2005: p. 17). Furthermore, those who have contact with Islamic culture celebrate the Yezidi feast of Ramadan just two days before the Muslim festival. These observances are unknown to the Yezidis in Caucasia (Kreyenbroek, 2009: p. 25). Because of the influence of Islamic culture, debates on the identity politics of both Muslims and Yezidis are going on.

There are two periods of fasting, which take place in Summer (June-July) and Winter (January-February) and are considered immovable feasts, which have links between observances of ancient Iran and Yezidism by Kreyenbroek (2005, 2009). In the forty days of Summer, which is called "Çileyê Havîn," some religious dignitaries such as Baba Sheikh, the kocheks, etc, come to Lalish from different regions in June and fast for three days there. Then they keep fasting at their homes, and in three days, just before the end of fasting, they present again in Lalish. Many Yezidis fasted in these last three days. The other period of fasting is in the forty days of Winter (Çileyê Zivistanê) and many Yezidis fast three days (fast of Êzîd) every year in December in commemoration of Ezî. In previous weeks, people feast for their holy being of lineage (Xudan) to which they belong. However, religious dignitaries fast for forty days, and feasting is observed less among the young population. At the end, they celebrate the festival of Eida Êzîd. There are some other standard feasts that are popular among Yezidis of Georgia and Armenia dedicated to Prophet Ilyas and Khdir. They feast three days early in February (Kreyenbroek, 2009: p. 25).

In terms of prayer, daily prayer is common among old members of the community, and there is no specific public place for verbal prayer. In any manner, a Yezidi can pray three times a day, turning their faces toward the sun. Verbal prayer is not common; kissing the hands of respected people, kissing the objects of sacred places, and giving gifts and alms to devote to God and Holy Beings are much more acceptable ways of prayer.

Besides feasting, several rites of passage such as baptism (more kirin and back pora), circumcision (sînet kirin), funerals, weddings, and several prohibitions play important roles in religious life. As pointed out above, each Yezidi must have five duties (pênc ferz), and having a brother or sister of hereafter is one of these duties. The ritual of biska pora is a ceremony of cutting the hair of a boy who is six months or one year old. The ceremony is performed only by his brother of hereafter (a Sheikh or Pîr). After the rite, Sheik or Pîr, who preserves the forelock, is given a donation or gift (Açıkyıldız, 2010: 97). Mor kirin is one of the other baptisms which has similarities to Christian baptism. It is performed in general in Lalish by a guardian (mijêwir) who sprinkles healing water of Kanîya Spî three times on the head of the child. The parents of the child should be present during the ceremony. After the ceremony, the child is believed to become a servant of Êzî. Nowadays, more kirin can be done by qawwals anywhere. They bring the healing water from Lalish with them and perform the ceremony, and one can be baptized at any stage of age. Such performances are taken in Germany, too. Circumcision is another ritual that is performed twenty days after baptism. A godfather who is

called kerîf is chosen by the family of male children, generally among Muslim Kurds. According to the tradition of the godfather, marriage is forbidden between the members of the family of circumcised children and godfathers for at least seven generations. Thus, Yezidis preferred to choose a Muslim Kurd, whose marriage was forbidden to keep religion 'clean,' as godfather.

As I said, marriage is debated hotly among Yezidis in contemporary times. There is a strict rule of endogamy and marriage outside. Marriage between different castes is forbidden. The price of a bride is another issue that has been criticized. Families agreed upon a price for a bride depending on her beauty or her family's position in their tribe. Yezidis in Germany tried to persuade the Mîr to declare the termination of the bride's price. However, the Mîr offers to discount the bride price instead.[40] In general, a Sheikh from the Adani lineage witnesses the agreement between families and performs a marriage ceremony, giving the bride the Berat, small balls formed from the dust of the earth from the Lalish mixed with healing water. Married couples keep these balls of the earth in order to be protected from the evil eye and to be kept on the body and in the mouth of their cadaver after death. Besides regular marriages, polygamous marriage can be observed by religious caste, yet the community does not welcome it.

Funerary ceremonies vary. However, the assistance of the brother or sister of the hereafter to the dead body is common practice in all funerals and is needed. Yezidis believe in reincarnation and the soul of the dead body rebirth in a different body if the deceased is not a sinner. Religious visionary kocheks are able to see the soul of the deceased after death. If the deceased is a sinner, the soul of his/her rebirth is in the body of a dog, a pig, or a donkey. Therefore, following the nightfall of the interment, a religious visionary consults the Heavens to inform the family of the deceased regarding the destiny of the deceased (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p. 101-103).

Certain prohibitions and taboos regulate the social and religious life of Yezidis. The first information about the religious practices and prohibitions in traditional Yezidi life came to light with a petition dated 1872[41] sent to Ottoman authorities to exempt Yezidis from military service. According to this petition, "a) every Yezidi must behold the image of Malek Tawûs

[40] A couple of Yezidi heads of the Yezidi cultural centers told me that they discussed the issue of bride price with the Mîr during several private meetings in Germany.

[41] See more details Heard, W.B., 1911, and Kreyenbroeke, 1995

and visit the shrine of Sheikh Adi once a year, b) it is a sin for a Yezidi to hear the prayers of the Muslims, c) when a Yezidi dies there should be present at his burial a Sheikh, Pir, Qawal who shall witness to this man dies in the Yezidi religion, d) when a Yezidi is absent from his wife for one year, his wife has the right to desert him, and no other woman will marry him, e) it is forbidden to the Yezidis to eat certain foods, such as are commonly consumed by the troops" (Heard, W.B, 1911: 212).

However, today, the prohibitions do not play a strong role among the young generation in Germany, and the most well-known prohibitions are related to marriage and have been criticized intensely after 2014, in the case of marriage with a non-Yezidi, a Yezidi convert to the religion of outsider. He or she is not considered Yezidi anymore and could be excommunicated by the members of their families. After the enslavement and captivity of Yezidi women by ISIL, a considerable debate outcropped among Yezidis regarding the acceptance of the newborn children of ISIL and their mothers as Yezidis. Members of different castes may not intermarry. Marriage between Sheikhs and Pîrs, Sheikhs and Murîds is forbidden. The taboos of purity of women and honor are debated as well. "Some other prohibitions are known, such as the ban on words related to "devil," the ban on wearing blue and eating lettuce,[42] the ban on sexual intercourse in April, which is the first month of the Yezidi year, and religious month, at the Festival of Assembly, on the eve of Wednesdays and Fridays that accepted holy days "(Kreyenboroek, 1995, p. 150).

1.3 Yezidi religion: forms of organization

In the social structure of the Yezidi society, a ‘caste system’ and the relations between several well-defined groups and other institutionalized groups, the social norms, taboos, and rules concerning endogamy and honor play critical roles. The rules of endogamy (hed û sed) and honor are considered unwritten socially accepted procedures that regulate or control the Yezidi society. The Yezidi society is mainly an honor-based society, like Muslim societies, in large numbers. Every Yezidi individual constitutes his personal identification according to the concept of honor to survive socially in the Yezidi community. Besides the importance of the role of the concept of honor, the main organization or the structure of the Yezidi society is based on tribal structures. However, religious narratives dominate the nature of social

[42] The list of forbidden foods includes lettuce, fish, cabbage, cauliflower, and gazelle meat. See more deatils Kreyenbroek, 1995: p.150

relations alongside local rituals. Even though social relations are complex in Yezidi society, the division of groups is clear and unifies the Yezidi community. “All Yezidis are divided into three groups: pîrs, sheikhs, and mirîds” (Omarkhali, 2021: p. 182). These groups are known as main components. Alongside these three main components, there are some laminations that play a role in the social structure of the Yezidi society, more commonly in spiritual centers of the lands of origin. Pîrs and Sheikhs are clergy and are considered a priesthood group, while mirîds are laymen. The social structure of Yezidi society consists of the following leading figures, groups, and institutions: "the Mîr (prince) and his family; the Baba Sheikhs; the Pismîrs; the Pêshîmam; the Baba Chawûsh; the Sheikhs; the Pîrs; the Qewwals; the Feqirs; the Kocheks; the Murîds/Mirîds; the Mijêwir; the Ferrash; the Kebane and the Fiqreyyat; the Brother or sister of the Hereafter; the Mirebbî and Hosta; and the Kerîf" (Kreyenbroek, 1995: p. 125). However, three castes, Sheikhs, Pîrs, and Murîds, are widely accepted as an essential community body. Therefore, the well-defined groups of Yezidis are divided into three major endogamous castes (hereditary groups hereafter)[43]: Sheikhs, Pîrs, and Mîrîds/Murîds (laymen). The hereditary groups in Yezidism must not be associated with the caste system in Hinduism. The clergy castes of Sheikhs and Pîrs are divided into several hereditary lineages/clans(qebîl or binemal in Kurmanji). Hereditary groups are called ocax or mal. The Sheiks, for instance, are divided into three lineages: the clans of Shemsanî, of Adanî, and of Qatanî. And each clan has its own sub-tribes and families. For instance, the hereditary lineage of Shemsanî has a lot of families, such as Sheikh Babik, Sheikh Tokil, Xatuna Fexira, etc., while Adanî lineage has six families, and Qatanî linage has four families. The group of Murîds, which most Yezidis belong to, is the group that consists of ‘ordinary’ Yezidis. Besides these endogamous castes, a top spiritual leader, Baba Sheikh, and a secular leader, Mîr (the prince), who is considered Sheikh Adi's vicegerent, govern Yezidi society with traditionally unlimited power. In earlier times, he was able to punish the Yezidis for doing certain tasks. The sovereignty of the princely family is legitimized (Kizilhan, 2019). The secular leader appoints the head of all spiritual leaders, Baba Sheikh. According to the textual tradition of Yezidism, the Sheikhs and Pîrs are spiritual guides, and the Murîds are followers of these two top spiritual figures. In these cases, individual choice plays a limited role in the selection of figures. That is, "membership of a Yezidi caste comes from both parents and cannot be changed." (Allison, 2001: p.30). The social structure of Yezidi society is based on a

[43] The concept of caste does not fit in the Yezidi case. I do not mean the caste as in Hinduism while using it in the study. In Yezidis` case, there is a spiritual and religious sibling relationship between hereditary groups.

caste-theocratic principle of division and five duties or precepts (pênc ferz in Kurmanji), which are believed to unite and link all the adherents of Yezidi religion. Every Yezidi is supposed to have no less than five persons around them to maintain their religious connection. According to the five precepts, which is believed cannot be functionated without a caste system, every Yezidi must have her/his Pîr, Shiekh, spiritual master (Hosta), spiritual preceptor (Merebî), and Brother or Sister of the hereafter (Birê or Xûşka Axîretê) (Omarkhali, 2008). It is known as spiritual tutorship, which is important for the self-awareness of a Yezidi individual. Basically, every single event in the life of a Yezidi individual must be accompanied by spiritual tutors. The spiritual tutors are supposed to take part in every Yezidi individual event to preserve the three basic principles of Yezidism that simultaneously determine a Yezidi individual's identity. These principles, such as a ban on caste mixing, a ban on mixed marriages, and strict observance of religious rules, link the personal identity of a Yezidi individual to Yezidism. The brother or sister of hereafter accompanies individuals through their lives, protecting, assisting, and performing ceremonies such as haircut rite, circumcision, baptism, death, and marriage. A man can choose his brother of hereafter only among male Sheikhs and Pîrs, while a woman has no restriction, after getting married, about choosing her brother of the hereafter. However, after getting married, women get their husband's brother or sister as brother or sister of the hereafter (Açıkyıldız, 2010: p. 100).

The Yezidi society: ‘êzîdxane’

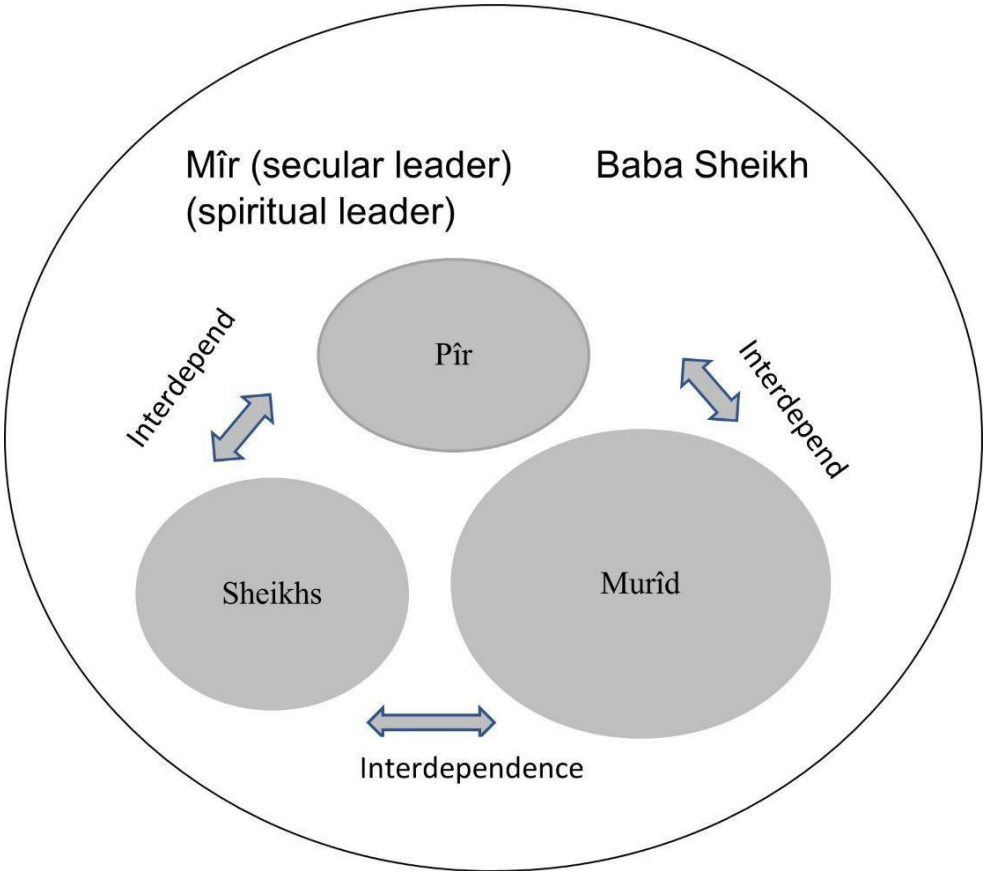


Diagram 1. The social organization of Yezidi society. A visual example of the social structure of the Yezidi society that made by the author.

Three castes come from hereditary lineages that shape the social and religious structure of the Yezidi society. The hereditary groups consist of Sheikhs, Pîrs, and Murîds/Mirîds. "Pîrs and Sheikhs are the priesthood group which comprises around 6-7% of all Yezidis, and the remaining 93-94% are Mirîds" (Omarkhali, 2017: p. 27). The Pîrs are divided into four groups (Afat, Jerwan, Haci Ali, and Hesen Meman) and forty lineages, while the Sheikhs caste is divided into three representative endogamous groups: the Adanî, the Shemsani/Şemsanî, and the Qatanî. The prince (Mîr), who descends from the Sheikh's lineage, is Yezidis's secular and religious leader. Baba Sheikh is the head of all Sheikhs and the supervisor of the Kocheks, who are very knowledgeable laymen, became Pêşimam.

"There is strict endogamy in Yezidism: marriages between castes are forbidden. Marriages in the Sheikhs caste are possible only between representatives of three lineages: Adanî, Şemsanî and Qatanî. Marriages in the Pîr group are possible between lineages, except for Pîrs of the Hesmeman lineage" (Omarkhali, 2017: p. 27). Many Yezidis criticize the rule of endogamy. It is believed that such rules regulating the marriage between priesthood groups will diminish Yezidi society. Many such groups can not find partners to get married because of established

kinship relationships that are considered obstacles by young Yezidis. The idea of a new caste group alongside the available ones is debated among young Yezidis. There is likely to be "a need of such group in the available social structure of Yezidi society to adopt new Yezidis from outside and to rearrange the rules of endogamy to overcome the difficulties of getting married."[44]

1.4 The concept of Yezidi culture and ethnicity

Culture is acquired and transmitted across generations, encompassing a society's beliefs and value systems. It is often characterized as the shared traits that unify individuals and foster a sense of community (Shah, 2004). The 'Yezidi culture' is dominantly based on a mixture of collective-patriarchal values. In Yezidi traditional culture, social control through the concepts of honor and shame is accepted without question for the sake of the collectivist Yezidi society. Religion, belonging, and culture are closely connected with each other via ethics and morals, loyalty, norms, and practices. Both religious, cultural, and ethnic identification are developed in conjunction with each other. Because, like every religious group, Yezidis have many layers of identity.

For sure, to speak of not being influenced by the unique Yezidi culture of surrounding cultures is not possible. Kreyenbroek notes that "we have almost no adequate description of traditional Yezidi culture at present" (Kreyenbroek, 2005: XIV). Since there is no strict division of cultural values, religious practices, and observances in the Yezidi community, it is hard to describe an adequately formulated Yezidi culture. Every Yezidi individual (secular, traditional, atheist, gnostic, etc.)[45] strictly connects the Yezidi culture to their belief practices. It is still not possible to describe a distinctive Yezidi culture at present. Yezidi people, notably those who maintain traditional lifestyles, naturally cannot provide a proper, distinctive definition of the concept of culture, religion, and even their ethnic identity. Unwritten social norms and rules and tribal identities are highly significant to individuals. Moreover, they, for example, are mixed up with ethnic identities. However, some Yezidis, notably young generations in diasporas who live in individualistic societies, somehow make divisions

[44] A young Yezidi in Germany highlighted his thoughts on the caste system.

[45] I have encountered a few young Yezidis who identify as atheists and agnostics, considering Yezidism a philosophical way of thinking rather than a religion.

between the concept of Yezidi culture, religion, and ethnicity. I must say that the Yezidi society, with its current 'cultural memory,' is organized into a religious, social structure (castes) with characters of collective societies where social control is high on the decisions of individuals. The unwritten social rules and mechanisms that control every Yezidi individual are sometimes considered to have charters of authoritarian societies. In Yezidi culture, tribal identities and connections help any Yezidi to know a Yezidi person when he or she shares knowledge of his or her family and tribe. Every Yezidi individual is exposed to these tribal identities and social rules in their families from their childhood onwards.

Social control, naturally, is high in their families. Such social rules concerning honor, shame, respect for elders, etc., are important in Yezidi culture and are considered unbreakable. Traditional Yezidi society and its culture can still be perceived as a 'collectivist society' where community interest comes first. Among traditional Yezidis in Kurdistan and partly in Transcaucasia, cultural and ethnic identity is based on loyalty to religious authority. In Kurdistan, the Yezidis, like the Alevis and the Kaka'is, are a heterodox community, and we see that these communities maintain themselves in relation to a lineage (ocak or a khanadan). This is called lineages of religious authority. These traditional Yezidis` sense of identity is based on religious authority (Sheikh Adi Bin Musafir) (Bruinesen, 2023, p.2).

Thus, it is not easy to define the Yezidi culture sharply since the cultural patterns of 'honor-shame cultures' play significant roles. In such collective societies, personal interests are not important, which is a big issue for young Yezidis living in secular societies of diasporas. What matters is the interest of the community in the preservation of families and the oppressive social control of social mechanisms. That is why cultural clashes appear between traditional generations and generations living in modernity in their German diaspora. The clashes and debates on the concept of culture take place regarding the issues of social control, community membership, community interest, authority, gender, personal freedom, individual interests, etc. Yezidis have common cultural patterns with Muslim Kurds and Arabs around. They are from the same cultural environment or cultural basin. Alongside the significant influence of Muslim culture, notably the Sufi tradition, Yezidis, at the same time, have common cultural patterns from different non-Muslim religious and cultural groups living in the same cultural environment. This environment is full of different cultural patterns, forming Yezidis's current culture for decades. Their practices of life and general attitudes are practiced as well by Muslim Kurds, Alevis, Christians, Zoroastrians, etc.,

We witness the conflict between a patriarchal understanding of the world and secular Enlightenment in the current Yezidi culture. Universal principles such as political understanding of human freedom take part in the Yezidi culture day by day in diasporas. Thus, there are some attempts to find the roots of the 'Yezidi culture.' I must say that the emergence of the concept of a separate 'Yezidi culture' is the result of the recent debates concerning the reproducing and rewriting of modern Yezidi lore in diasporas, which is discussed in the third section of chapter four of this study. Modernising Yezidi mythology, discarding the patterns of Islamic culture, and finding new roots in ancient Yezidi society are attempts to constitute a separate Yezidi culture. The origins of Yezidi culture are reconfigured notably in diasporas in recent years. The origin of cultural practices with Indian Hindus, for example, is a topic of Yezidis in their ongoing diaspora in the United States of America.

We are living in a period in which Yezidi culture is being rethought and reproduced. Consequently, a definition of Yezidi culture that can be mentioned in all its aspects has not yet been constıtuted. In this respect, it is natural that each Yezidi individual has a different definition of Yezidi culture. For instance, it is unclear what is meant by saying Yezidi culture and what is meant by referring to the concept of ethnicity. Being part of a transnational community makes this complexity deeper. I can clearly say that today, the Yezidis have not reached a consensus on their self-identification and culture. There are main reasons behind that. Whenever there is a discussion on any issue in contemporary Yezidi society, it will be noticed that the influence of three historical eras coexists. I categorize these three periods into three historical periods in terms of their social and political impact on the current Yezidi community:

a) the non-explicit period from prehistory to the 12th century. Discussions about the origins of Yezidism happen in the context of this period, with the knowledge gained from only oral stories.

b) the 'classical period' from the 12th century to the 19th century. Discussions have occurred on Sufism, Sheikh Adi's reforms, and his Adawiya sect or tariqa.

c) the third period from the 19th century to the present day. Attempts take place to reformulate the Yezidi society in the Western sense of the world. The effect of contemporary discourse of political science is visible in this period. It is a period of re-creating the Yezidi society with new knowledge models. The generation that uses traditional methods of transmitting information through oral tradition and the generation that receives education meets the social

models of Western societies and rethinks the Ezidi society based on written sources have entered an intensive production process on culture, religion, and ethnicity together for the first time. Especially in these last two historical periods, the Yezidi people have added new concepts and understandings to their culture.

The prehistoric accumulation of the Yezidi culture has developed with concepts and understandings that come from epics, stories, and narratives and are transmitted through oral tradition. This culture's traces consist of the intertwined religious and social commandments. In the realm of the domination of the Sufi tradition in the Middle East, the Sheikh Adi's era. The concepts and understandings from the Sufi tradition enter the Yezidi culture. In the third period, due to the intensity of interaction with the outside world, contemporary concepts and understandings create politicization, and the increasing demands to become non-Muslims under the governance of the Ottomans to avoid being conscriptions, Yezidi encounters the problematic of culture and ethnicity. The current debates between Kurdishness and Yezidiness[46] are rooted in the accumulated knowledge from the third period. They will potentially be the most important topic of the fourth period, which can be called a period of polarization and crystallization of the separate Yezidi nation.

However, with the influence of the Enlightenment, contemporary young Yezidis' understandings of culture and identity vary. When defining concepts related to Yezidi culture, religion, and ethnicity, the younger generation in this study is likely to make a distinction between these concepts. The consensus on both an independent ethnic community and a religious group is common among Yezidis. Their religious and ethnic identity is ethno-confessional. False assumptions were often written down about their belief and identity by outsiders. It brought an alienation regarding the concepts of identity, culture, and religion. The answers given when asked what Yezidi culture is are also given when asked what Yezidi religion and Yezidis` identity are. Culture, ethnicity, and religion are intertwined, and people embody them. Many researchers who deal with Yezidis` culture highlight such a situation in their works (see Kreyenbroek, 2005; Açikyildiz, 2010). For example, a young informant (I1MH29) in Hannover, Germany, gives an example of the Yezidi New Year festival (Cejna

[46] The concept of Yezidiness has emerged as a political identity, distinct from other ethnicities such as Kurdishness, Turkishness, and Arabness. Recently, Yezidi researchers adopted this term in their discourse to describe an independent Yezidi identity separate from its ethno-religious classification.

Serê salê) regarding intertwined concepts in his mind. He claims that one cannot make a clear distinction between the Cejn (festival) if it is related to religion and related to the tradition of Mesopotamia. In response to the question of 'what do you understand when one talks about Yezidi culture,' he responds as follows:

I1MH29: "In reality, it is difficult to separate Yezidi culture, religion, and ethnicity, as they are deeply intertwined. Yezidism transcends traditional religious boundaries; many practices cannot be solely classified as religious symbols or rituals. For example, Yezidi cultural centers in Germany often blend religious and cultural elements. While many Yezidis attempt to connect rituals, ceremonies, and religion, research reveals that these practices are not entirely rooted in religious doctrine."

Based on observations, Yezidis are not comfortable making a sharp distinction between their culture and religion. It must be said that the cultural memory of the Yezidis, and naturally their sense of identity, is made up of this intertwined body of knowledge. There is a pool of information that blends both ancient knowledge and current religious information about Yezidism. While the Yezidis of Iraq and Syria were influenced by Arab culture, the Yezidis of Turkey were influenced by Turkish culture. Armenian and Georgian cultures influenced Caucasian Yezidis. The secular culture of Western societies has been added to their culture. Except for Shingal and Lalish, Yezidis were always in a minority position in Anatolia, Iraq, and Syria. That is, they always lived in the Muslim Kurdish-dominated provinces. The position of the minority determines their relationship with their neighbors. Their relation with the Muslim Kurdish population is shaped in the context of a minority within a minority. The ties between Yezidis and the Kurdish (Muslim) population exist through tribal relations and forms of co-parenthood, which makes Yezidi culture complex.

The Yezidi community, though, experiences "paradoxes" on many issues, according to the young Yezidi informant in the research. He says that "Yezidi society and Yezidism are in need of major changes. The origin and history of Yezidism, religious texts, and so on must be clarified. There are many paradoxes in Yezidi society. For example, there is a paradox in the story of Adam and Eve. We are not of Adam's lineage and are not descended from Adam according to oral tradition and traditional Yezidis. However, when you analyze the religious

texts, our origin goes back to Adam. This needs to be clarified. There are also paradoxes in the caste system, marriage, etc."

When Yezidi individuals express their opinions about the concepts of culture and ethnicity, they may be in contradictory situations.

The concepts and discourses in the Yezidi religious tradition permeate the perspectives and interpretations of Yezidis in the contemporary world. Since both medieval Sufism and traces of antiquity are present in the Yezidi tradition, paradoxes are natural. Yezidi intellectuals are likely to see the coexistence of blurred ancient remnants and medieval Islamic Sufism in Yezidism as an issue to be dealt with. Even some Yezidi religious individuals try to eliminate or erase several cultural practices in Yezidi society. Yezidi mîr, for instance, even claims that eating meat is a Muslim cultural practice (Sanders, 2019). New motifs of belonging are being created in the cultural and identity sense. Yezidi intellectuals are currently trying to resolve this paradox through a synthesis. This creates a conflict between Yezidi intellectuals and traditional Yezidis. In order to harmonize this synthesis with the historical narrative, the idea that Zoroaster was a Yezidi prophet is discussed in seminars in some Yezidi cultural centers in Germany. Attempts to resolve such paradoxes are creating new debates about the concept of Yeizidi culture and identity. For instance, in a seminar about the Sufi remnants in Yezidism, which took place in the Yezidi cultural center in Oldenburg on February 19, 2023, a Yezidi researcher and lawyer, Aliya Bazid Ismail Beg, presented a detailed study on Sufism. There were about thirty participants in the seminar, and only two were young Yezidis. During the seminar, there was a question-and-answer discussion on mysticism, the Sufi tradition in Yezidism, and the possible ancient origins of Yezidism. There were several points of disagreement between the audience and the Yezidi researcher during the seminar, as follows:

"Mysticism and Sufism are originated in Asia. Sufism is identified with Islam, and this is very wrong. Sheikh Adi was, of course, a Sufi, but he was not a Muslim. Sheikh Adi was a friend of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Geylani and founded the mystic order (sect) of Adawiya. Sheikh Adi first came to Baghdad. Then he left there and went to Sinjar and Lalish. When Sheikh Adi came to the present territory of the Yezidis, there was no religion called Yezidism, there were ancient Iranian religions. Before Sheikh Adi, the Yezidis lived with the beliefs of the Magi. In time, they became his followers."

An audience objects to the researcher as follows: "No! There was Yezidism first. Zoroaster was a Yezidi too!"

A question to the Yezidi researcher: "Our ancestors and oral history say that Sheikh Adi came to Sinjar first! If he was not a Muslim, how come they let him go to Baghdad? How did the Muslims let him go?"

Therefore, contemporary Yezidis are members of a community that experiences paradoxes regarding the roots of their faith, culture, and identity. Contemporary Yezidi intellectuals struggle to eliminate or reduce these paradoxes. They are struggling to find a clarified Yezidi culture and identity that should end with a fixed cultural memory. Their desire to be part of global cultural discourses makes them define Yezidi culture and identity within the framework of modern ethnic terminology.

In addition to the divisions caused by political factions within the community, soon after the 2014 genocide, a group of Yezidis with an anti-Kurdish position quickly emerged. Usually, the idea of a separate Yezidi nation from the Kurdish community had existed among Yezidis in Armenia and Georgia. However, in recent years, the idea of a separate Yezidi nation has spread out among Yezidis of Shingal. It seems that the genocide of Yezidis in 2014 contributed to discussions regarding Yezidis' belonging and identity. Yezidis mentions that the Kurdish Peshmerga units betrayed Yezidis and withdrew from Sinjar and did not warn the civilian population (Six-Hohenbalken, 2019) when the ISIL came to their settlements for the mass killing of Yezidis. According to many young Yezidis, they were left to their fate in 2014.

Previously, there were three generalized approaches to an ethnic identity: Kurdish-only, Yezidi-Kurdish, and Arab-Yezidi. However, some members of the contemporary Yezidi diaspora in Germany seem to have added two more approaches: Yezidi-only and German-Yezidi. Representatives of the previous three discourses can be encountered frequently. However, for the majority of the Yezidis of Georgia and Armenia and some Yezidi groups, notably from Iraq and Sinjar after 2014, Yezidism is considered a separate ethnicity. Apart from that, some of the Iraqi Yezidis who speak Arabic can only identify themselves as Iraqi or Arab. Yezidis, who live in the Sinjar region of Iraq, are well-known supporters of a separate Yezidi ethnicity from Kurdish ethnicity.

The German-Ezidi discourse, on the other hand, has mushroomed only among the young generation of Yezidi youth, who are the subject of this study. There are various reasons for this. Since Yezidis have had to become part of an open society (because of forced displacement and globalization), they have had the chance to encounter different identities and belongings outside their lands of origin. This has created a current identity crisis. Contemporary Yezidis are experiencing an identity crisis. The young population has created a discourse of identity and a sense of culture shaped by modern concepts, stripped of its roots related to mythology and Sufism. Apart from the young population, in the Yezidi German diaspora, Yezidism is in the process of social and religious re-creation. It is not easy to define contemporary Yezidism in its fixed form. In this respect, we can best understand Yezidism by listening to Yezidis. As the Yezidi population is developing under the social influence of Western societies, new currents of thought are naturally trying to find their place. I need to say that the concepts of ethnic identity and culture are in the process of being reproduced. This process can be expressed as a period of Enlightenment and reproduction that creates a space of encounter with Western societies caused by globalization and the ongoing series of wars in the Middle East, creating contemporary mobile diaspora formations. Many areas other than identity and culture have entered a rapid change and re-creation process in the Yezidi community. As a new discourse in this era, Yezidi intellectuals are reviewing all the old discourses and even trying to get rid of some of them. There is a fourth period in which intense efforts are being made to attain a pure Yezidism. It is clear that this process has divided the Yazidi community along sharp lines into political factions. This is precisely why understanding identity and the definition of culture are so diverse. I mention the concept of paradox because of the conditions of this new period.

So far, Yezidi's identity and culture are a complexly intertwined intellectual tangle of discourses from three main historical periods.

In the period up to Sheikh Adi, discourses of identity and culture developed based on mythology. The period from Sheikh Adi until contemporary Muslim intellectuals consider the 19th century as a process of inwardness. This period is touted as a period of transition from the Sufi tradition to the tariqa model with its broad-based murid structure. The period from the 19th century to the end of the 20th century, during which nationalization and the claim to be non-Muslims continued, was a period in which identity and cultural origins were questioned. Starting from the existential process to the Sufi period (the sectarianization process during the reign of Sheikh Adi Bin Musafir), the period goes back to Adam through

mythological narratives and to Zoroastrianism through academic studies. This is another paradox that contemporary Yezidis are trying to eliminate with a synthesis that will be discussed later. However, in classical Islamic sources and academic studies, we can trace the earliest date back to the time of Sheikh Adi Bin Musafir—the period before legendary narratives and oral tradition characterized Sheikh Adi. Prof. Metin Bozan explains the period after Sheikh Adi as follows:[47] "The concept of Yezid enters the Yezidi culture. The concept of Melek Tawus is almost non-existent. After the mid-18th century, the concept of Melek Tawus began to reappear in the discourse. During the reign of Sheikh Hassan, as Westernization increased, a Mahdism discourse emerged through his son Sherfedin. Since the defense of Yezid continued to take place during the reign of Sheikh Hasan, the persecutions and massacres they faced began to increase in this period. In the following processes, they faced the Ottomans, and their status remained ambiguous. They were conscripted into the army and started to be recognized as Muslims so that they could not benefit from non-Muslim status and receive support from the West." Prof. Bozan continues as follows:

"In the classical understanding of Yezidi culture and identity, Melek Tawus is in the foreground, and Sheikh Adi is passively involved in the discourse on pilgrimage. The concept of Yezid is not a product of this period. Later on, the process of becoming a Western religion started with Sheikh Hasan." In addition to Bozan's discourse, the Concepts of identity and the discourse of culture have caused the concepts from three different periods to intertwine in Yezidism. Therefore, it has become tough to define and recognize Yezidis. Yezidis from different generations have different definitions of themselves. The new generation makes its evaluations different from the classical evaluations. So, today, "most Yezidis claim a Kurdish identity, while some Yezidi in the Caucasus and Shingal claim to belong to the separate Yezidi ethnicity and often call their religion Şerfedîn (Honor of the religion)" (Omarkhali, 2017: p.23).

[47] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WreKNoNXNQM Accessed: 27.06.2023

Chapter 2 Yezidi diaspora all over the world

Introduction

Yezidis face different challenges in their German diaspora. The loss of a compact lifestyle happened to Yezidis in Germany. The diaspora circumstances transformed the compact and collectivist lifestyle. The methods of preservation of the Yezidi tradition, which is sometimes called 'national character,' have changed. The social system that functioned in traditional pillars has changed. There are fewer tribal and religious structures left.

In this section,, I will analyze the formation of the Yezidi German diaspora,diaspora, providing the numbers of their diasporic centers in a list. I will compare the mobilization of the the Kurdish diaspora and the Yezidi diaspora to highlight the differences betweenbetween the ways of mobilization of two Kurdish groups in Germany.

In the case of Yezidis, the appearance of any diaspora is a result of the diminution of their territories and forced displacement. For Yezidis, diasporas are spaces where they no longer live Yezidism to the full. The separation from the cultural basin, from traditional social structure, from groups of priestly descent groups and clan networks in the homeland today

resulted in two active diasporas (Caucasian and European) and the emergence of at least two less studied potential diasporas (The United States of America and Australia, the USA) in the making. In the realm of diasporas, struggles, change, and transformation occur in the Yezidi society. The most visible changes take place in their European diasporas, notably in their German diaspora. In brief, the lives of every Yezidi individual who lives outside of their homeland have shapen by migration, diasporisation, and transnationalization, respectively.

The social conditions of new spaces away from the homeland and the lack of social obligations that regulate Yezidi society bring social tensions and political disagreements between the constituted Yezidi generations in diasporas. On the one hand, their German diaspora is one of the most known spaces the Yezidi community diversified among three main generations, i.e., the generation of the 1970s or the labor workers, the offspring of the generation of the labor workers, and the third generation that this study focuses, the generation of the 'post-memory'[48] which try to reproduce identities criticizing the constituted identities founded on persecutions and collective trauma.

Their Armenian and Georgian diasporas, on the other hand, partly continue the traditional characteristics of the Yezidi community in the face of the challenges of the change.

Fear for the survival of the Yezidi society is part of every Yezidi individual in such diasporas. Notably, the first generation of Yezidis in Germany highlights their thoughts on the issue of survival of Yezidism in every aspect of life. Creating coherent Yezidi identities among such generations in contemporary diasporas is a challenge for the Yezidi society. In the conditions of their diasporas, partly except for Armenian and Georgian ones, there is no longer a strict traditional social structure of the Yezidi society that has an influence on shaping the identity of Yezidi individuals and Yezidi society. Various factors, such as being away from the Yezidi descent system and the web of social relationships, from religious connections based on the collective memory and practice, and from the mechanism of traditional knowledge production, being separated from families, and the death of religious experts and so on, are against cultural survival of the Yezidi society in contemporary Yezidi active and mobilized diasporas. We are, therefore, witnessing the reproducing of alternative ways to survive in

[48] The Yezidi youth in Germany is a generation who grew up with the traumas of those who came before. Marianne Hirsich's (https://postmemory.net/) formulation of post-memory correspondences to the experience of the Yezidi youth in Germany. They can be called the generation after who remember their Yezidism by means of stories, images, and the transmitted 'poisonous knowledge' of massacres.

Yezidi society and the weaving of the social connections between generations in diasporas. Yezidis` religious connections based on large patriarchal families through 'five precepts' are no longer strict in diasporas. Topics like gender roles, marriage practices, cultural assimilation, preservation of culture, etc, are debated alongside traditional social connections. There is, for example, a lack of repertories of words and behaviors in exercising five precepts among young Yezidis in diasporas. Transformation is navigated by a young and intellectual population while elder Yezidis defend tradition in diasporas. For instance, there is a 'lack of appropriate behaviors' in religious castes among Yezidi youth, which is considered a 'lack of respect' by old generations, notably in Germany.

So, in the following chapter, I will highlight the formation of the Yezidi active and constituted diasporas, taking the theoretical aspects of the concepts of diaspora into account. After providing the theoretical framework of the study, I will present the reasons behind the diasporization of Yezidis and the ways of their mobilization in different settled countries. Then, their German diaspora and centers of diaspora will be presented in detail through this chapter.

Theoretical aspects of diaspora

The concept of the diaspora is not a fixed entity conceptual boundary for many dispersed ethnic minorities and other groups, according to scholars of the contemporary diaspora(s) (Pasura, 2014; Scheffer, 2003; Reis, 2004). Rather, dispersed religious groups (Hindu, Muslim, Catholic, and Sikh diasporas), linguistic communities or groups, and Indigenous people are part of studies of "dispersion" and "e, exile," and they are considered transnational entities in many scientific works. This is because today, "diasporas have received increasing attention both in theoretical debates concerning issues of nation-states, transnationalism, and globalization and as sites of ethnographic fieldwork." (Alfonso, in Kokot et al., 2004: p.73). Various social formations and concepts have been used to substitute for the idea of diaspora. The main point of many texts dealing with the concept of diaspora in social science can also substitute the "dispersion," "exile," "displacement," "migration," and "victimhood" for the concept of diaspora in contemporary diaspora studies. This perspective is occasionally common amongst the actors of the Kurdish diaspora, particularly recently amongst the Yezidis in the diaspora(s). Some Yezidis classify themselves as people living in exile, while

many other groups (Sunni Kurds, Alevi Kurds, etc.) in the Kurdish diaspora refer to the concept of dispersion.

As Khachig Tölölyan stresses, "a re-naming of these social formations occurred after the late 1960s and evolved to the concept of diaspora in the shade of a set of developments such as transnationalism, the transformation of nation-states, and globalization "(Tölölyan, 1996: p.2). Thus, "since the 1980s, the diaspora has proliferated to a remarkable extent, to the point where it is now applied to migrants of almost every kind" (Kenny, 2013: p.20).

Thus, the concept of diaspora may be a "misnomer term to non-ethnic transnational entities," according to Gabriel Sheffer 2003 (cited by Pasura, 2014: p.13), and may refer to different concepts with regard to the scholars of dispersion and migration. The British Pakistani community, for instance, may be defined as an established transnational community instead of a diasporic one, according to Pnina Werbner (Werbner, 1999). Likewise, Riva Kastoryano illustrates the concept of diaspora in her discussion on "Muslim diasporas in Western Europe" as a "unity in dispersion," referring to an "imagined transnational community" (Kastoryano, 1999). Obviously, the concept of diaspora has been commonly used within the framework of the dispersion of a group of people in studies of dispersion, especially after the 1990s.

The conceptualization of transnationalism for the study of international migration took place in the same period of time. Naturally, today, we witness variations of concepts used for diasporas. New settings of diasporas naturally appeared. However, as Kenny (2013) points out, the word diaspora refers to a "destructive situation" in its original roots from Greek discourse rather than a group of people dispersed. Khachig Tölölyan, for instance, is not comfortable with the tendency to use dispersion in the context of diaspora by scholars of dispersion. According to him, using the word diaspora as dispersion is problematic. In contemporary times, to him, "dispersion refers to the consequences of individual and chain migration motivated by economic reasons. Conversely, in this kind of community, commemoration and collective mourning are less prominent regarding the diaspora. Instead, diasporas appear from collective suffering trauma. This trauma creates a community that commemoration shaping it is a cultural production and political commitment" (Tölölyan, 2007: p.649).

Besides Tölölyan's discomfort with substitution dispersion for the diaspora, Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau, two French scholars of the ethno-national diasporas or nationalism, are not comfortable with using the term diaspora for such groups. They claim that it is not

precise usage for every ethnonational group and even for ethnic-minority groups (Safran, 1999), most probably like Yezidis. They point to the need to check out the concept of diaspora as well. According to Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau, a group of people or minorities should be regarded as diasporic within the Jewish prototype. However, I must say that, by that approach, each provides a restrictive method and considers other diasporic communities as "semi-diasporas (Chaliand, Jean-Pierre Rageau, 1997: xiii).

These arguments that associated the concept of diaspora with the "Jewish prototype" and with the dispersion are reasonably arguable. However, until recently, the idea of the diaspora had a limited definition that connotes the exile of Jews. However, one cannot underestimate the impact of the circumstances of the twentieth century and of the contemporary world regarding the Yezidi case. The mentioned "destructive situation" and "collective suffers traumas" in the studies of classical diasporas are notions of the constitution of Yezidi's contemporary and classical diasporas, notably of the Yezidi Transcaucasian diaspora(s).

In the contemporary world, the realm of the settled host countries and the concept of diaspora might not be used with Jewish prototype anymore. Cause communities' structures are under the change within rising global interactions. As Clifford (1994) has noted, traveling in new global conditions entails transnational movements. These transnational movements bring about new forms of diasporas and spaces in the contemporary diasporas.

Today, for instance, there are two main spaces where Yezidis feel safer and introduce themselves freely via transnational movements: diaspora(s) and the cyber world. "Cyberspace provides them an environment in which they can build their previously "ignored identity (Hosseini, 2017, pp.61-91). Being able to access these two spaces has given Yezidis a floor to speak of their religion, culture, and ethnicity to outsiders and to desire to make some affirmations and changes in their society more openly within the conditions of the contemporary world. They are even reproducing "virtual temples" on social media, where every individual constitutes spaces to spread knowledge of religion and culture. We, therefore, are witnessing a process of re-building, reproducing, reaffirmation, and reconfiguration of religion, culture, and ethnicity that has occurred amongst mostly young Yezidis living in diaspora(s) and amongst those who are active in cyberspaces.

Some scholars draw up various criteria for constitutive elements of any group's diaspora. Both Tölölyan (1996) and Safran (1999) illustrate such constitutive elements and standards of a diaspora. According to Tölöyan, (1) "diasporan communities actively maintain a collective

memory, and (2) diasporan communities care about maintaining communication with each other. Individuals living in several diasporized communities stay in touch, (3) the desire to return to the homeland is necessary for diasporan communities" (Tölölyan,1996, p. 13). Safran draws up some constitutive elements of a diaspora alike. According to him, only those minorities who fulfill the following criteria can be considered as diaspora:

(1) "a collective forced dispersion of a religious or ethnic group, (2) a role played by collective memory, which transmits both the historical causes of the dispersion and a specific cultural heritage, (3) the will to survive as a minority by transmitting a heritage, (4) the persistence of an external oriented collective identity after the lapse of several generations of residence in a host country" (Safran, 1999, p. 255)

The concept of "diaspora" appears in various research fields within social sciences (Klager & Stierstorfer, 2015; Braziel & Mannur, 2003; and Cohen, 2008). Any dispersed people or group embark on creating their own diasporas these days. Vertoc (2009) is quite right about his argument that the concept of "diaspora" has become "one of the buzzwords of the postmodern age" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 129). The word diaspora is being used simply by everyone, and it is everywhere in contemporary times. It is because classical diasporas have smattered us for ages, and we have difficulty creating the appropriate entity for the word diaspora within the complex conditions of the contemporary world. Beyond any doubt, the meaning of the word diaspora is extended to a range of different activities and conditions today. All we know is that, since now, there have been three classical diasporas intensely studied by social scientists: the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian diasporas. Moreover, the fourth most widely studied diaspora, alongside these diasporas, is the "African diaspora."[49] However, today, one may encounter various explanations of the concept of diasporas. In general, two categories of diaspora have commonly been referred to in the studies of classical diasporas. The first category derives from the Jewish model, which is called (re)territorial, initially introduced by William Safran (1991), and the second one is "(de)territorial, which comes from African experiences consisting displacement and exile" (Alinia, 2004: 98). Although both categories may correspond to the notion of the Yezidi diaspora and Kurdish diaspora in an extended sense, which Yezidis played an important role constituting its institutions in some cases, the

[49] see more discussions about the classifying of diasporas and the concept of" African diaspora": Gabriel Sheffer, 2003; Michele Reis, 2004

(re)-territorial one is much more suited one to designate all Kurdish people in host countries as diasporans.

According to classical diaspora scholars, there are several ways to designate a community as diaspora. It requires a set of attributes. Classical diaspora scholars Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997) illustrate three main attributes for deciding a community as diasporic, as mentioned at the beginning of this section.

"Firstly, dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, secondly having a strong(ethnic) group consciousness together with a collective memory and desire for an eventual return, finally, empathy for and solidarity with co-ethnic members" (in Kokot et al. 2004: p.162).

Today, any kind of group that is displaced or forced to move their homelands may create their own diaspora and call themselves a diasporic group. Thus, Kevin Kenny discusses the transformation of the word diaspora, taking into account the origin of the word diaspora. He illustrates that diaspora assumed its most familiar form in early Jewish history. This very earliest phase of Jewish history, driven by biblical narratives, involves the familiar cycle of migration, suffering, and return. Displacement and exile were the central features of these narratives, and these narratives shaped the definition of the concept of diaspora as "the dispersion of Jews." According to him, the word diaspora came into widespread currency in the translation of Hebrew scriptures (Septuagint). In the Septuagint, the word diaspora connotes a condition of spiritual anguish by an angry God and the dispersal of Jews who lived outside the biblical land of Israel (Kenny, 2013: p. 23).

So, in time, the concept of galut (exile or the Babylonian captivity of Jews) and diaspora substituted each other. The words galut and diaspora have been used interchangeably as the experience of migration to captivity for ages by Jews. Centuries later, many people displaced and scattered globally adopted the idea of migration to captivity in order to explain their suffering. In another saying, today, the Jewish model of diaspora may only become a source of motivation for any dispersed groups using diaspora with their politics of identity. However, as noted above, it is no longer a prototype. The concept of diaspora has become an equivalent word to "ethnic group" living abroad. It is evident that the concept of diaspora is exceptionally extended today, and it almost has lost coherence. Thus, today, the concept of diaspora cannot be considered as an entity concept. Rather, it has a flexible sense and can be

described as progress that enables people to explain their world abroad. In this sense, the word diaspora is generally being used as an explanatory device by scholars and migrants. Both voluntarily moved groups of people (Turks in Germany as labor diaspora, Chinese in the Western countries as trade diasporas, etc.), and involuntarily migrants (Assyrians, Armenians, Kurds, etc., moved to the Western countries) use diaspora as a device to give explanations on their diasporic activities abroad. Thus, Kenny points out that diaspora is both a category of analysis and practice when it is understood as an explanatory device. Nevertheless, many scholars give some stipulations or checklists for a proper way to classify a diaspora and then analyze diasporas. For instance, Cohen (2009) discomforts with the Jewish diaspora's domination and goes further to categorize ideal types of diasporas under some analytic subtypes;

(1) victim diasporas, (2) trade diasporas, (3) cultural diasporas, (4) "labor" and "imperial" diasporas (Cohen, 2009 p. 18). The categorization of Cohen of classical diasporas may allow one to consider the Yezidi European diaspora as both victim and labor types because Yezidis settled in European countries as labor workers to seek a secure place to avoid the social and political violence that took place in their lands of origin. However, it is to be said that this category of Cohen is not sufficient to evaluate the contemporary dynamics of the Yezidi diaspora in Germany since the formation of the diaspora came from outcomes of these different types. Kevin Kenny goes further and gives some stipulations to use diaspora as an explanatory device:

(1) diaspora tends to have greater explanatory power when applied to forms of involuntary migration rather than to migration in general,

(2) diaspora is most relevant when people migrate to several destinations, not just one,

(3) the resulting settlements must persist over time for the kinds of connectivity in question to develop and endure (Kenny, 2013: 31). Alongside Cohen and Kenny's approaches to analyze diasporas, William Safran draws up some requirements to classify a group as diasporic, which are may be the most relevant one to corresponds to the Yezidi community in Caucasia:

(1) "adequate diasporic institutions must be maintained or created, (2) a sufficient number of members of a minority group with a charismatic ethnic, cultural leader, and (3) there must be an event that triggers the diasporic identity of a minority" (Safran, 1999: 284) (event for

Armenians, the genocide of the early twentieth century, for Yezidis the circumstances imperial times, the Iraqi War and ISIL's attacks of 2014). So, from these arguments of scholars of classical diaspora studies, it seems it may still be a matter of debate to verify the requirements or standards for a group to be classified as diasporic. However, some criteria or elements are being shared in time, and these elements potentially classify several groups and minorities as diasporic communities. As Kenny mentions, the concept of diaspora is a flexible word, and it is a constructed idea that shapes and mobilizes dispersed groups in time. Hence, many criteria, typologies, and categorizations of diasporas discussed above correspond to the Yezidis` two actively mobilized diasporas in the contemporary world, both in Germany and Caucasia.

For Yezidis' case, the concept of diaspora directly refers to the "destructive situation." The concept of an active well-affiliated Yezidi diaspora around the world and its boundaries and theoretical tools are understudied and require further research. On the contrary, Kurdish diaspora, notably in Europe, which has combined with Yezidi people mobilities for a long time too, has been fairly studied.

Theoretical framework of the study

The socio-economic conditions of the Yezidis'lands of origin have been determined by mass migration over centuries. Migration, which has a character-like centrality to domestic and international politics in the contemporary world (Castles & Miller, 2003), still plays a significant role in both Yezidis' countries of origin and in host countries (Georgia, Armenia, Europe, The United States of America, and Australia). Due to mainly forced migration flows over time and space, a substantial portion of the Yezidis dispersed from their lands of origin, settling in different locals and regions that kept them far away from their mosaic of traditional life of homelands. In time, Yezidis became a diasporic group that created social networks and ties as well as cultural centers and associations. Naturally, they split into different political groups in different diaspora(s) in European countries, in Transcaucasia, and slightly in The United States of America(USA) and Australia diasporas in the formation stage. They have constituted different forms of life in Western countries as 'migrants,' 'immigrants,' political refugees, and asylum seekers. Due to this reality, Yezidi's German diaspora in this study is not an 'old-fashioned' approach to social science categories that directly aims to analyze the conditions of migrants and immigrants, which is a single setting to me. In a way, I do not adopt such an approach to work on the various reconfigurations or reaffirmations/changes and

'forms' in the ways of practicing religion and culture and in perceptions about identities happening amongst the young population in the Yezidi society of Germany. Because both settled Yezidis in Germany, the rest in the other diasporas and in the countries of origin are exposed to a set of social expectations that are shaped by the social and political structures of both countries of origin and settled countries. The social conditions of settled countries directly influence the realm of contemporary debates amongst the young population about the need for social affirmations. It causes a critical point of view towards the young population or Yezidi youth (Young Yezidis are called Cahil by previous generations, which refers to a clumsy, inexperienced, and uneducated person in the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish) amongst the older generation in the Yezidi community.

The current forms of mobilities of Yezidi people happening all around the world do influence the nature of communication among the Yezidi population. At first glance, there is transnational activism, which has two variations called "core transnationalism," which refers to regular, sustained, and patterned activities (Guarnizo, 2000) and "extends transnationalism" Levitt (2001) amongst Yezidis in Germany that impacts the worldview of young population. From Levitt's understanding point of view, I can say that Yezidis in the German diaspora periodically contribute to their community projects in lands of origin and provide economic remittances to family members (Levitt, 2001). This extended transnational activism of Yezidi society consists of more occasional transnational activities, and it goes beyond the old-fashioned approaches of migration studies and classical diaspora studies. Their extended activism and agents for developing their lands of origins and economic conditions in their Armenian and Georgian diasporas should be taken into consideration to understand the worldview of the young Yezidi population and their potential demands regarding reforms in their community in the Yezidi German diaspora. No doubt, we are witnessing a shaping "transnational diaspora" of Yezidis remittance flows, and lobbying in international organizations is at its center. For example, concerning religious identification, there is an effort to institutionalize the theologization of the Yezidi religion in the Western model. For this purpose, the Yezidi Georgian diaspora and the German diaspora, in particular in Oldenburg, are in intensive interaction.

Since the old approaches of migration studies adopted by scholars of social sciences until the 1990s are not preferable to studying the Yezidi case under the influence of transnational activism, I aim to adopt an analytic lens that focuses on the simultaneous involvement of Yezidis in the social and political life of more than one nation-state, regions, and locals.

Because there are Yezidis who travel regularly between different locals, regions, and countries, engaging in activities that span borders, constituting transnational ties and networks, and giving rise to a new sense of 'belonging' to the Yezidi population.

I do not adopt old-fashioned approaches to migration for some reason(s). First of all, it should be remembered that Yezidis are a stateless, or somehow an indigenous? group and heterogenous group in their German diaspora. Since the contemporary configurations of their identities and their worldview are shaped by 'hybridity' and 'fluidity,' they, more likely, can be part of the studies of international migration and postmodern theories of diaspora(s), which are focusing on "hybridity" and "fluidity" (Hall, 1999; Scheffer, 2003; Reis, 2004; Pasura, 2014). They cannot be approached as a 'homogenous' group in their different diaspora(s), which is also a critical notion of Pasura's (2014) criticism of classical theorists of diasporas (Safran, 1991; Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1995, 1997). Dominic Pasura, Gabriel Sheffer, and Michele Reis criticize classical diaspora theorists, mentioning dynamic circumstances like economic instability and political conflicts and offering new concepts such as 'fragmented identities,' 'creolization and syncretism, and 'fractured diasporas' for contemporary studies of diasporas.

From these critical points of view, if I continue the discussion about the concept of diaspora above, I can say that Yezidis experience different diasporas in different regions and locals. More so, they have several disorganized diasporas in their different settled places in the diaspora called diasporas with "fragmented character." Different social conditions led to different Yezidi diaspora(s). Their contemporary diasporas have not been shaped by the conditions that led to classical diasporas of people of a nation-state or ethnonational groups like Turkish and Chinese diasporas in Western countries. It is, though, a necessity to make sure about the boundaries of Yezidi diasporas too. For instance, they constituted a diaspora in Germany that had a transnational character. The Yezidi German diaspora was established with the conditions of the 'colonial policies,' with the circumstances that appeared at the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism that led to forced and voluntary migration flows from the Middle East and from Caucasia, respectively in the twentieth century. Sheffer's (2003) categorization of diasporas (cited by Pasura 2014, p.14) into three phases such as "the classical diasporas (those whose origins were in antiquity), the modern diasporas (those whose became diasporas since the seventeenth century and the incipient diasporas (those in the making)" may give a chance to determine the position or boundary of the Yezidi German diaspora in postmodern diaspora studies. The incipient diasporas, also called contemporary

diasporas by Michele Reis, were established mainly after World War II and were shaped by the effects of globalization (Reis, 2004). This kind of contemporary diaspora is experienced in a space where cross-border communication, interaction, exchange, and remittance flows happen easily and fast. Then, we witness the emergence or the usage of the concept of transnationalism, which explores diasporans' simultaneous activities in various societies, in the studies of contemporary diasporas. Vertovec (1999) and Tölölyan (1991) consider diasporas to be a subset of transnationalism, and I discuss what differentiates between diaspora and transnationalism for this study below.

Secondly, Yezidis did not constitute their various diasporas in the Western countries as a result of voluntary migration. The political developments in the countries of origin determined the formation of Yezidis` diasporas. The circumstances beyond the constitution of the different Yezidi diasporas, thus, are varied. For example, the circumstances that led to the Yezidi Georgian diaspora cannot be evaluated at the same time as the circumstances that led to Yezidi Western diasporas. The Caucasian one is caused by the circumstances of the imperial periods, while the Western ones are shaped by the exclusionist policies of the State structures in their lands of origin.

Third and last, Yezidi communities in several diasporas are still not well-affiliated diasporas due to political factions. This reality does not prevent the current mobilization of the Yezidis. That is, the established networks and ties between different locals and regions are not sufficiently in power. However, there has been a strong mobilization and solidarity among Yezidis since 2014. Currently, the strongest interaction takes place between the actors of the German Yezidi diaspora and the Georgian Yezidi diaspora. There is strong cooperation in the training of clergy and the formation and activation of "Yezidi institutions for theology" in a few universities in Germany. In Germany, it is possible that in a few years, departments or institutions for the theologization of Yezidism and unification of doctrines will be active in several universities. As a result of this cooperation, it will be possible to have trained intellectual, religious figures and scholars in these research departments.

Once Yezidis` population in diasporas varied by means of regional, ethnic, and slightly cultural differences, we witnessed a lack of well-organized collective activism. Particularly Yezidis` German diaspora that emerged from people flows of different countries (Georgia, Armenia, Russia, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria) is in lack of so-called collective activism and public memory. Then, how should we approach the social and political conditions of a stateless group in the Western diasporas who seek a secure place fleeing political pressure, social

discrimination, and religious intolerance in their homeland(s)? I discuss the question below and how did I end up adopting transnationalism as an analytic lens for the current study in the context of contemporary diasporas.

Yezidi people who reached Western countries, notably Germany, in the 1960s and 1970s were categorized incautiously as migrants and immigrants in nation-state settings. However, the current Yezidi communities, both in the other Western diasporas and in Germany, cannot be approached by adopting the concepts of migrants and immigrants. Today, the concepts of migrants and immigrants evoke different images compared to their mean(s) in the 1970s. For instance, the concept of immigrant evokes the images of "the abandonment of old patterns of life" and "the painful process of learning new cultures and languages" in a new home or adopted new country (Handlin, 1973), while the concept of migrant(s) evokes images of a person who come to a new country only to work and stay temporary. On the one hand, in terms of the image that the concept of immigrant evokes, one cannot assume that Yezidis are adopting the new countries in all aspects. On the other hand, especially in contemporary times, they do not come to a new country only to work and stay temporarily as called migrants. They seek secure places to maintain social cohesion and to keep themselves and their community safe.

Today, these two concepts, migrant and immigrant, have interchangeable dimensions due to the outcomes of transformations in the technology of communication and transportation. These days, migrants are known people who engage in both the politics of a settled country and homeland(s). They are called "transmigrants" who "live dual lives" (Sökefeld, 2008) carrying dual citizenships and multiple memberships of such institutions in both host country and homeland (Levitt, 2001b). Thus, a new kind of population of 'others,' who developed patterns of living that span borders, appeared during the 1990s as a result of a globalized community. The homogeneity of people, which was the core notion of classical diaspora studies, became almost meaningless in this new globalized world. "These outcomes led to scholars of migration to conceptualize the term 'transnational' in migration studies to analyze the new phenomenon' transnational migration' which was developed during the 1990s" (Mahler, in Smith, M.P., et al. 2017: 64). The concept "transnationality" in migration studies developed initially for analyzing migration process of the US-American frame, but later it became popular as well in migration studies of European countries (Föbker, 2016). From the 1990s onwards, "transnational migration is characterized by a simultaneous incorporation in both the sending and receiving contexts" (Glick & Levitt, 2004, pp. 1002-1039). I aim to

mention that. Incidentally, a small portion of Yezidis settled in the 1970s and developed such patterns in the 1990s in Germany that later led to the waves of Yezidis people from different countries to Germany. A transnational migration and activism of Yezidis has been happening since that time. The activation of the Yezidi society in Germany started in the 1990s and continued until the present day (Wettich, 2021).

The new people flow(s) of the 1990s caused scholars to think about new conceptions such as transnational community, transnational social space/field, transnational migrant circuit, socio-cultural system, global ethnoscape, and national society to approach this new population and their developed networks, activities, and ideologies. These conceptions, according to Sarah J. Mahler, "led to areas of confusion in the transmigration literature and led to an absence of an orthodox metaphor" (Smith, M.P., et al., 1998, p. 75). However, in this study, I adopt one of these metaphors, "the transnational social field," which was formulated by Glick Schiller (1992, 1994) to focus on a set of networks, ties, and relations established by Yezidis in the German diaspora that stretch between two or more locals, regions, and states. The ideas, worldviews, conceptions, and potential contemporary demands of the young Yezidi generation regarding reformulation and reconfiguration of the Yezidi society are being shaped in this constituted transnational social field. Yezidis are experiencing the networks and activities at the same time that non-Yezidi migrants developed in Western countries. They developed multiple relations, which are known as familial, organizational, political, economic, religious, etc., in Germany mostly from the 1990s onwards since they founded their cultural centers in 1992 and 1993. The diversification of their cultural centers and activities appeared in the 2000s. So, in this global era, we are witnessing an emergent Yezidi transnational movement in a transnational social field, which is shaping the worldview of the young population, increasingly involved in the countries of origin and in settled Western countries. That is why I adopt the concept of "transnationalism," which is "a dance partner of diaspora," according to Thomas Faist (et al. Bauböck & Faist, 2010: 33) as an analytic lens for this study. The young Yezidi population's current understanding of change and their perspectives are analyzed alongside the impact of Yezidis` transnational migration in the German Yezidi diaspora through the understanding of Glick Schiller et al. 1992 and Linda Basch et al. 1994.

Once the "Yezidi migrants," who were assorted as migrants by Western countries, evoked the mobility of the Yezidis in Western countries in the 1980s and 1990s, I additionally take into consideration the influence of the activities of these Yezidis–who are classified as the first

generation appeared in Germany in this study–on young population` perceptions` in the current study. The targeted young generation in the study is seen as a culture bearer of the Yezidis, who appeared in German society as "labor migrants" mostly from southeastern Anatolia during the 1960s and 1970s. Yezidi community then became much more visible and crowded in Germany as a result of the arrival of migrant families, family reunification, and the Yezidis who took exile to Germany due to the suppression and persecution in their homelands (notably from Iraq) just after the mid-1970s. For example, "as early as the mid-1970s, a Yezidi colony was settled in the Lower Saxony district of Celle. In the following years, some other groups settled in Saarland and in the two Lower Rhine districts of Moers and Kleve" (Heine, 1992, p. 273). In time, they developed a social field in Germany where they took action, made decisions, and developed identities within social networks during the 1990s. Yezidis, who constituted these social fields in host countries in the Western countries, became much more affiliated with the Yezidis in their homeland. The transnational interaction of Yezidis started slightly, in particular during the Iraqi War (2003-2011), and later, they became a much more visible group in international society after they were forcibly displaced from their homes by fundamental Islamic groups in the last decade. The last two decades, therefore, may be classified as a period in which Yezidis became significantly visible with their newly founded institutions in diasporas. The erected physical structures of Yezidis (Wettich, 2021) since 2014 have opened the Yezidi society to outsiders at large. The demand to seek a secure place came out as an urgent need, and it caused newly founded institutions. Notably, political instability in their lands of origin forced many Yezidis to leave their lands and form a new kind of home with diversified institutions in diasporas. The attacks of 2007 and the last attacks of 2014, which are considered genocidal attacks by a few international actors too, mobilized Yezidis in Western countries and led to the collaboration of Yezidi organizations in the diaspora(s) to help Yezidis in their homeland from the waves of violence. The social spaces and transnational social field that Yezidi migrants created during the 1990s in Western countries became such secure places for contemporary Yezidis suffering from the violence that erupted after the Iraqi War. Notably, Yezidis in Germany created cross-border ties to help Yezidi victims of the terrifying violence in the last decade. Many Yezidis, notably young Yezidis with their families from the Middle East, settled in Germany with the help of Yezidis` associations and cultural organizations just after 2014. The current demands for social, cultural, and religious reforms or reaffirmations occurred in their transnational fields, which are shaped by several long-running migration experiences that were ignored by many scholars in social sciences.

No doubt, today, Yezidis are one of the most displaced religious minorities in the Middle East. Beyond dispute, they have experienced every aspect of migration, both at local and international levels. Despite that, scholars who deal with Yezidis cases have paid little attention to Yezidis` migration experience in their works until the beginning of the twenty-first century. Instead, Yezidis were approached by various theoretical approaches that aimed to understand what Yezidism is, who the Yezidi community is, and what their origins are (Layard, 1849; Badger, 1852; Chwolsohn, 1856; Ainsworth, 1861; Charmoy, 1868; Lidzbarski, 1897; Joseph, 1909; Lescot, 1938; Guest 1987). So, most research on Yezidism and Yezidi society has been limited to a few specific concerns, such as religious beliefs and traditions. However, in the last two decades, a newer body of literature on Yezdi society and Yezidism developed. The ethnographic methods have been used (Kreyenbroek, 2009), and a distinct Yezidi belief set became part of the literature (Allison, 2011; Kreyenroek & Omarkhali, 2016).

This study aims to contribute to the extension of theoretical approaches to international migration and contemporary diaspora studies in social science while dealing with the Yezidi case. More so, it aims to put young Yezidis on the agenda of scholars of international migration to bring an end to the ignorance of Yezidis in this field. Even the second half of the twentieth century is considered the age of migration (Said, 2000; Miller & Castells, 2009). Yezidis were not considered as part of migration studies. Although, as has been noted before, the migration, mainly at the local level, had determined the living conditions of that religious minority, many scholars ignored some main aspects of migration in their theoretical approaches of the twentieth century, which are well known as a) factors causing migration, b) factors keep migration go on, c) the experiences of integration in host countries, and d) the changes in migrated communities (Portes & Bach, 1985; Sirkeci, 2003). The ignorance of these aspects, notably those that are the main target of this study, such as integration in host countries and the social change, reaffirmations, and reconfigurations in their communities in host countries, are more visible ones. However, this ignorance is understandable when the conditions of the twentieth century are taken into consideration. The international migration literature on the migrant population (often referred to as an ethnic group in some scientific works) has naturally been "dominated by studies of national cases such as Italians, Jews, Turks, Chinese, and so on" (Sirkeci, 2003). Hence, the stateless groups were ignored in many studies. The subjects of these studies after World War II were often a migrant population based on a national state that settled in a different local, region, or city, where it is today

considered a "container" that provides a space for migrants. The mobilities of migrants and ethnic groups at local levels were not part of these studies. That is, ethnic minorities and "local processes were not accordingly considered" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2009), and these studies mostly focused on the level of national state (Föbker, Imani, Nipper, Otto & Pfaffenbachö, 2016). Therefore, due to the emergence of spatial mobility and involuntary migration just after World War II, national cases naturally centered on the international migration literature.

The flows of Yezidi people, caused by discrimination, ethnic and religious exclusion, political suppression, and poor socio-economic conditions, took place in the countries of origin and went a further phase in the following years, turning into a transnational migration after World War II. With all its aspects, transnational migration became one of the most significant determinants that bring about transformations and change in the Yezidis community, notably since the 1960s onwards. Migration brought many changes at local and international levels, not only for the recent movements of people but also for new social and political processes. Diversification in terms of religious and cultural practices at different local levels, for instance, is one of the most visible changes. The traumatization of members of the community and the issues of their integration into host countries is another change that happened in the Yezidi society after migration. As Castles and Miller (1998) stress, "migration played a crucial role in creating a global market and various social processes in the twentieth century such as industrialism and globalization of capitalism" (cited by Kaczorowski, 2018: 92). In Yezidis` case, migration led to an accumulation of cultural capital and material capital via remittances that may result in reinvention of the Yezidi society off-Kurdish political movements and off-outsiders in diasporas. As a minority religious group, Yezidis also came across to the global community as so-called "labor migrants" in the 1960s. It is little known; however, Yezidis were also part of these processes of transnational migration as stateless people. Once soon after the Second World War, many Western industrialized countries were faced with the need for workers from abroad, and Yezidis became part of this flow of people. Notably, Yezidis from southeastern Anatolia became subject to the campaign of guest workers (Gastarbeiter in German) in some European countries. Germany was one of these countries where many Yezidis settled as "labor migrants." A number of Yezidis settled notably in the Northwest of Germany. They were carrying Turkish citizenship, and they, naturally, were assorted as migrants alongside Turkish migrants by German officials. But today, from my observations too, Yezidis regard the statement of German officials classifying Yezidis as labor

migrants or foreigners (Ausländer in German) as an insulting statement. A remarkable portion of Yezidis in Germany claims that they took advantage of the campaigns of the requirement of guest workers of Western countries to flee from social and political exclusion in their homeland. It is noteworthy that they claim that it is exceedingly rare for a Yezidi to abandon his lands because of economic issues (Heine, 1992). They aimed to migrate to Germany to seek secure places to be away from political pressure in Anatolia.

From the mid of the twentieth century, the expulsion of Yezidis from Iraq and Turkey to Germany happened in two ways. Firstly, the German-designed program aimed to bring 'guest workers' from Turkey via the German-Turkish Recruitment Agreement. It was likely to be an opportunity for many Yezidis to flee from Turkey to Europe. But they were not marked as Yezidis by Germans. They were marked as Turks instead since they accompanied them in reaching out to Germany. A large portion of the first arrivals did not identify themselves openly because they were afraid of discrimination. Eventually, it led to Yezidis carrying Turkish citizenship to sustain safety and became part of the global community. Among the estimated 867,000 workers who were enlisted, 2,000 Yezidis settled in Germany (Wettich, 2021). They are included in the social process of migration, as well as the global market and community, as Turks in official records. Secondly, the expulsion of Yezidis from their homes in Iraq and Turkey happened in the context of the Baathist policies, and the evolution of Kurdish nationalism ended conflicts between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers` Party (PKK) in the 1980s. From the 1970s onwards, Iraq became a typical example of the expulsion of Yezidis. The Baathist regime in Iraq took deadly operations against Yezidis between 1969 and 1987 (Dulz, 2001). Expelling people from their homes was a strategy of the campaign of "Arabization" of Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians to secure valuable economic resources (Fawcett & Tanner, 2002). At the end of this process, they, notably in the 1990s onwards, became part of different locals and regions in Germany. As of the 1990s, the number of Yezidis in Germnay increased as a result of people seeking protection as asylum-seekers and family reunifications. 'At the end of 1990s, some 30,000 Yezidis resided in Germany.' In the following years, after the 2000s, a big portion of Yezidis from Iraq and Syria migrated to Germany, and the community grew to about 80,000 in 2014. The last immigration of Yezidis to Germnay in a significant number happened between 2014 and 2019, resulting in a total Yezidi population in Germany of 160,000 (Wettich, 2021). Once the Yezidis migration brought a big portion of the Yezidi population to Germany, a few scholars eventually started

to pay attention to Yezidis` migration experiences and their mobility in settled Germany in their works (see Ackermann, 2004, 2008; Dulz, 2008, 2011; Wettich, 2020).

As has been highlighted above, in the light of depopulated Germany because of War and naturally rising demand for labor, Yezidis from the Middle East naturally moved to Germany under the label of labor migrant during the 1960s and 1970s. This reality cannot be underestimated by one who is involved in the global community as a stateless group. Thus, besides the unsuitability of adopting the old-fashioned migration approaches that I mentioned above, today, their constituted ties and mobility in Western countries cannot be explained and understood only by a few assumptions that consider a nation or society as a natural and political form of the modern world. Societies as natural nation forms, "guest workers," or "others" are essentialized as a problem due to their cultural differences from the majority or container population within this framework. In many academic works, it is assumed that foreigners threatened "the ethnopolitical orientation of German policy" (Steinert, 2014, pp. 9-27) in time. This is typical nationalist thinking. Such examples around the world influenced the postwar definition of international migration and migrant integration (Wimmer & Glick, 2002). The ongoing debates about the Yezidi case regarding the need for the classification of their population in Germany is one example of the results of these approaches putting all groups in a melting pot in migration studies. Yezidis often refuse to be considered as labor migrants. They would like to be recognized as victims of political pressure instead. Absolutely, their mobility and social networks in German society are beyond the migrant case. However, discussions regarding the classification of "others" naturally appear because of the existing "methodological nationalism" in migration studies. This approach is an orientation that approaches social processes concerning cultural norms within the borders of nation-states (Beck, 2000; Wimmer & Glick, 2002), aiming to melt the "others" into the common society. In another saying, migration scholars have formulated their theories regarding migrants` social connections in the context of social cohesion of national states. That is, migration scholars were studying transnational communities locally (social organizations that emerge from transnational practices in host countries) rather than studying their system of social relations, which is locally situated or extended transnationally later. However, in the contemporary world, the mobility of people and their flow from one place to another are beyond the context of national states. The stateless people are part of this flow of people, and the "public sphere, "which is formulated by Jürgen Habermas as "a network for communicating information and points of view" (Habermas, 1996, p. 360), has evolved into a

phase that migrants and marginal "others" became actors alongside the citizens of the national states. They are already part of the civil societies of the host societies. They tied up with the state institutions. The offspring of the second generation are especially well-integrated with the public sphere of the host societies. In Yezidis's case, the situation is like that. The entire young population is part of civil society. The realm of the public sphere, which is mostly known as a "civil society," in Habermasian thinking, has, naturally, gained a new feature: the global. The new public sphere is started to be described as a "global civil society" because of the process of global governance or "new mechanism of order in the world economy" (Hobsbawm, 1994) where cultural institutions, community groups, religious groups, labor unions, ideas, and project feed public interaction and debates (Castells, 2008). For example, labeling people as "marginal others" is an important part of the new public sphere, defending local interests in host countries using global and local communication means. As a result of mass migration and economic expansion across national spaces, transnational practices and interactions appeared, which were a subset of diaspora, according to Faist (2010), at the end of the twentieth century. Yezidis have been embedded in this transnational practice since 2014 and in global society, too, as a result of a long-term displacement from their lands of origin. Particularly, some dimensions of transnational socio-economic transformation, such as the universalization of human rights and technological revolution, led Yezidis to have a space for group activities and their transnational social relations. They have constituted transnational social relations through their hometown associations (HTAs) with technological means of transportation and communication that vary from visitation to sending remittances. In this new transnational space, they face varieties of social, economic, and political forms of migrants in Western societies, imitating them and constituting wider paths to re-formulate their identity, culture, and religion beyond national territories. They, by their own HTAs and by individuals' efforts, interact with structural and instrumental processes of the host countries, developing new transnational cultural and religious identities and becoming part of different local and national contexts at the same time. However, the ties constituted with the State structures and the 'differential growth, spread and success of these HTAs remains under-theorized in migration scholarship' (Çağlar, 2006: pp.1-22). For these reasons, adopting only old approaches to migration studies is not a sufficient tool to analyze young Yezidis` demands as members of the Yezidi HTAs in German society. They could no longer be understood by the classical sense of migration taking place between sending and receiving regions and countries. These approaches often consist of "ethnic lenses" and a national sense of approach, as Glick Schiller (2006) points out, which are against spatial differentiation

within the nation-state. What is more, as Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) stress, migrant scholars have failed to examine the dynamic relationship between the place of migrant departure and the settlement or settled region. The perspective of the host country has been on the agenda of numerous scholars who have been dealing with transnational activities. Although migrants are actors in the process of reconstituting global capital, migrant scholars show a tendency to ignore migrants` active "contribution to these processes of global restructuring" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2009, p. 178). Their constructed networks that are embedded in the networks of host countries are ignored. From this point forth, a potential question of those who wonder if Yezidis are a community to their social relations extended transnationally needs to be answered here. I, without hesitation, consider the Yezidi German community to be transnational.

To deal with this question properly, I shall scrutinize the field of transnational studies and the concept of transnationalism in the context of transnational migration and diaspora. The actors of the transnational fields, such as individuals, migrants, families, and HTAs, that enable them to remain active in many spaces simultaneously are part of this scrutinization. We can gain answers to the question by analyzing the scope of the activities of these actors, which are defined by Levitt (2001b) as the situation of 'keeping their feet in both worlds.' Then, the following question: Are Yezidis keeping their feet in both worlds? Shall be answered. A specific answer to this question is up to the potential answers of the previous one.

Before the 2000s, one who could analyze the Yezidi community in Germany by means of migration studies could only categorize Yezidis as labor migrants. As I mentioned above, from the 1970s onwards, a significant part of Yezidi migration to Europe was caused by discrimination and political pressure and ended with the label of labor migrant. However, today, they cannot be considered migrants. Rather, they could be considered victims of political pressure, most probably. Because their circulation between locations in Germany has transformed over time, they established centers of diaspora such as associations and cultural centers. The consequences of the Iraqi War and the blasted conflicts and waves of violence in both Iraq and Syria transformed Yezidis` local activities into transnational ones. Their initial activities took place in Germany as the activities of "transmigrants," who practice transnational political activities in the international political arena with members of their families. Yezidis` cultural associations and organizations were established in Germany mainly by the efforts of these people from the 1990s onwards. From Sheffer's (1986) perspective regarding the influence of trans-state political organizations and transnational political

practices of these people, the local circulation of Yezidis took place in German society transformed to the next level that extended to a transnational space from the Iraqi War onwards. In particular, from the 'genocide' of 2014 that was held by the ISIL, the circulation was escalated between locations, which is called "trans-local," both in the homeland and in the Yezidi diasporas into the circulation between borders, which is known as the "transnational" movement. Their activities varied and went beyond the perspective of the host countries. More than twelve active Yezidi cultural centers and associations, notably cultural centers in the states of Lower Saxony and Baden Württemberg, run partly collaborative projects with the local governments to be part of help to protect Yezidis from the attacks of extremist groups in the homeland. They were involved much more in the domestic politics of the Federal States of Germany to lobby about the Yezidis's situation in the homeland and call for transnational solidarity to support the Yezidis in the homeland socially and economically. Yezidis` cultural centers and associations gained a new transnational character that links Yezidis in the Western diasporas to offer new coming Yezidis basic protection and representation and to strengthen solidarity with their homeland. Yezidis` cross-border activities became much more organized and institutionalized. As Levitt (2001b) stresses, too, the organized networks in diasporas, 'which are stimulated by the institutionalization of transnational practices, encourage civic engagement and mobilization both in host countries and homeland' Levitt (2001b: p.11). A humanitarian admission program of the State Government of Baden-Württemberg in 2015, for example, was conducted with the collaboration of Yezidi individuals like psychologist Jan Ilhan Kizilhan and conducted with the cultural centers like Yezidishes Forum e.V. Oldenburg in internally displaced people (IDPs) camps, in Iraq for supporting psychological treatment of Yezidi women and children victims. The Yezidi victims of the Syria War, notably Yezidi women survivors of the ISIL such as Nadia Murad and Farida Khalaf, engaged in an effective transnational social mechanism with the help of Yezidi western diaspora(s) establishing such foundations and non-governmental organizations like Farida Global Foundation and Nadia Initiative to run several humanitarian projects. Thus, the answer to the first question and the following one is yes, Yezidis` are mobilized transnationally. Their social relations are transnationally extended from local to international, and they have become part of global society in particular in the last decade. That is, from Levitt's point of view, 'they keep their feet in both worlds.'

Therefore, the approach or framework adopted in the study to work on the activities of the young Yezidi individuals is transnationalism. The young population is part of a transnational

Yezidi community and is under the influence of the Yezidis` transnational activities that take place in HTAs and political and cultural organizations of the Yezidi German diaspora. Adopting the approach of transnationalism is sufficient as well to work partly on the influence of the rest members of Yezidi diasporic organizations that have political, economic, and social influence in both countries of origin and host countries. Through this approach, I aim to analyze the discourse of the young population within the new form of transnational Yezidi community regarding the needed social reforms in the Yezidi German diaspora. So, the framework of transnationalism is developed in the 1990s by a few scholars of transnational migration as an analytic framework for understanding the consequences of transnational migration (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Georges, 1990; Rouse 1991, 1992; Guarnizo, 1994; Portes, 1995; Appadurai 1991, etc.,). In a broader sense, transnationalism is defined as the development of multiple relations by transmigrants that span borders in migration studies. These relations can be "familial, economic, religious, political and organizational" (Basch et al. 1994: p.7). Anthropologists and ethnographically inclined sociologists in the United States are interested in the new form of migration and the political activity and loyalty of immigrants during the 1990s. "They entitled the new versions of people to flow as transnationalism" (Wimmer & Glick, 2003, p. 595). Glick Schiller (2003) and Mahler (et al. Michael Peter 2017) stress, respectively, that after the Cold War, meanings and metaphors of transnationalism have transformed. The scale of transnationalism has broadened over time. We experienced a paradigm shift in the world in which we are witnessing transnational migration, new versions of diasporic identities, long-distance nationalism, and a population that no longer accepts national states` assimilative policies of creating a container model of society (Wimmer & Glick, 2003). For instance, the first scientific works of transnational studies tended to the power of technology and globalization in terms of the demise of national states, the appeared complex and homogenous cultures in societies comparing the static past and fluid present. But recently, we have witnessed new metaphors of transnationalism mentioned in scientific works, such as the detailed information of studied groups like residential distribution, education, age, etc., social class, gender, generation, and mobility (Roger, 1992; Georges, 1992; Hagan, 1994; Robert C. Simith's, 1995). Typical activities in the transnational space are "bodily movement, remittances, construction of such facilities in the homeland, travel home for local festivals, cultural exchanges, host country association projects, and political movements" (Maher et al., 2017, p. 82). Mobility is especially a determinant activity in these developed relations. Since the expansion of social networks reproduced transnational migration as a variety of transnationalism today, we witness the

control of capital and the state over the mobility of marginal "others" such as "border-crossing, cultural hybridity, multi-political identities, and transnational business practices" (Michael Peter, 2017, pp. 4-5). As Mahler stresses, the identities of moving people between borders are defined with some regularity. Cause today, the conditions of the persons involving forms of forced and voluntary migration are evaluated in terms of the dynamics of the regularity of their cross-border activities (Mahler in Peter et al., 2017), which is seen as the most critical aspect of transnationalism by Pasura (2014).

People who became part of transnational activities and engagements led to the mobility of remittances, which is a way of creating global culture locally according to Levitt (2001), goods and ideas via engagement come out from the interaction of religious organizations and political institutions both in countries of origins and the settlement (Levitt, 2001b, p. 11). The flows of goods, remittances, and ideas from the receiving country to hometowns became determinant factors in the reconfiguration of social roles, new ideas, and political structures in the hometowns. In Yezidi's case, for example, when Yezidis lived in Russia, Feredation financially supported the efforts of cultural persistence, such as the establishment of the Yezidi tombs in Armenia. We strongly witness these kinds of activities in the Yezidi transnational community. Transferred ideas have become important determinants in changing minds amongst the young population. These new versions of mobile activities taking place by people moving transnationally are influencing hometown hierarchy and its patriarchy, too, as become visible in the Yezidi society of countries of origin. The power structure in society, gender roles, and social classes are being reaffirmed or reconfigured as a result of these mobilities, notably mobilities in the virtual world. The universalization of human rights and expansion of social networks especially accelerate this reconfiguration or reaffirmation in terms of the Yezidi case in Germany. Many schools, homes, and health centers have been built in the homeland since 2014 with the financial support of the centers of the Yezidi diasporas and international aid organizations.

Thus, the engagements of Yezidis, which happen transnationally, can be considered within the framework of transnationalism. These engagements are transnational with regard to the consequences of transnational migration, which is also described as a "multifaced, multi-local process that affects power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and more generally, social organization at the level of locality" (Smith, M.P., 2017: 6). As a result of analyzing social spaces created transnationally and the whole actors in harmony associated with it, we witness collective activities of any group of people and their reconfigured concepts

of identities of their religion, culture, ethics. The young population, in this sense, is the most active and productive layer of the Yezidi society. According to Levitt (2002), those activities can be described as extended transnationalism, which consists of such responses to political crises or natural disasters. We witness these kinds of activities in the Yezidi society of Germany. Especially witness an effort to make the values of two worlds fit with regard to religion, culture, and belonging in a realm of discussion among the actors of different localities. In particular, the young Yezidis in Germany, who, as mentioned above, are under the influence of this transnational movement of the community, shape their thoughts in terms of their understanding of religion, culture, and identity in the context of European understanding of religion, culture, and ethnicity. For instance, at first glance, the issue of gender is debated frequently in an environment where young Yezidi women have little power anymore. They became powerful, gained economic independence in time, and created regular contact with institutions of the settlement countries in this transnational space where they could strongly challenge existing gender relations. The debates about religion and belonging to and about some restrictive cultural norms are parts of this transnational space. For instance, perceptions about ethnic identity amongst young Yezidis in Germany differ from their formation in their lands of origin. The idea of belonging to only Yezidism instead of Kurdishness seems as if it is becoming a more adopted value amongst the young population. With regards to transnational religious ties, there are few formal structures and informal programs that systematically connect religious life in Germany, particularly the Yezidi Georgian diaspora, with the International Yezidi Theological Academy. The debates about the need for a Yezidi belief that was more organized with institutionalized settings came out from these transnational activities, which led to secular aspects and transformed the religious life amongst the young population in Germany.

Diasporization of the Yezidi community

In today's conditions, there are two main Yezidi diasporas that are mobilized and fulfill the conditions of the concept of diaspora, which are discussed in the theoretical part above. The active and transnationalized Yezidi diasporas are the Caucasian diaspora and the European diaspora respectively. The Caucasian diaspora was 'the center of gravity of the community' (Robins, 2021) until civil wars broke up in Syria from 2010 onward. The Caucasian diaspora, notably the Armenian one, is known as 'the old Yezidi diaspora,' 'the first Yezidi diaspora' (Six-Hohenbalken, 2021), or 'the longest Yezidi diaspora experience' (Robins, 2021) that

gained an institutional dimension based in Armenia and Georgia. The Yezidi Armenian diaspora is also considered a success story in terms of the community's survival (Robinson, 2021; Kreyenbroek, 2009) and regarding the preservation of its traditional patterns to form coherent identities. Maria Six-Hohenbalken highlights two main factors that helped the Yezidis to recreate their highly complex socio-religious system in Armenia within two decades. Firstly, their way of life continued, and they integrated into sovkhozy and kolkhozy. Secondly, they enjoyed relative security and safety in Armenia (Six-Hohelbaken, 2021).

After long periods of social and political oppression and transformation in their homeland, Yezidi people settled in Western societies as a result of international migration. As a result, the Yezidi people acquired a transnational character. The current conditions of international migration naturally bring new challenges, changes, and transformations for these people living in the contemporary Yezidi German diaspora. In recent years, flaming Yezidi activism has appeared in the post-Iraqi war (2003) and developed through the means of technology. And the issues that Yezidis deal with have come into prominence in the international arena. It opened a pathway for literate young Yezidis and Yezidi intellectuals living in the Yezidi German diaspora to accelerate "internal reforms" somehow aiming to stop the destruction of the cultural heritage of the community in lands of origin and to live in harmony with Western liberal values in the western societies.

However, several challenges appear in the nexus of continuity and change in the conditions of diasporas. In the case of Germany, three different Yezidi generations live in the same pot because of international migration. The labor migrant generation (migrants from the 1960s to 1970s), the second generation (the offspring of the first generation), and the third generation were born and raised, notably from the late 1990s onwards, in Germany. Besides these layers of the population, a big portion of Yezidis from Armenian and Georgian diasporas migrated to Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union, fuelling the debate concerning belonging and identity in their German diaspora.

These three generations have different perspectives on current issues, the issues of social norms, and the organization and functioning of the Yezidi community. The generations noted have different cultural memories, political backgrounds, and religious knowledge, and, in short, every generation experiences Yezidism differently in the same environment in Germany. A noticeable communication and interaction gap is visible between the previous generations and the third generation, that is the Yezidi youth. The current Yezidi youth in Germnay is multilingual, prefers 'popular culture,' is well versed in contemporary technology,

and utilizes it. This study, therefore, examines the perceptions of the Yezidi youth in their German diaspora regarding the views, opinions, and demands for potential 'reforms.'

Apart from active and mobilized Yezidi German and Caucasian diasporas, the states, regions, or places where Yezidis have a high potential to form new active diasporas in the near future are the USA and Australia. The Yezidi presence in Australia and the USA has been established in the last twenty years. This small Yezidi population, which has not yet become fully institutionalized, has very few diaspora institutions. It should be noted that a big portion of the Yezidi population in the USA are Yezidis from Iraq who migrated to the USA after the invasion of Iraq by the USA in 2003. The Yezidi migration to the United States of America took place in three periods of time. In the late 1990s, during and after the Iraqi war started in 2003, and after migration waves of Yezidis who escaped from the ISIL captivity.

In the late 1990s, a big portion of Yezidis escaped from the political pressure of the Baath regime of Iraq. The military occupation of the USA in Iraq escalated Yezidi's migration to the USA. Mija Sanders highlights that many Yezidis in Arizona settled there via granted special visas to Yezidis by the USA since they did service to the US army during the occupation in Iraq. Yezidis located in Phoenix, for example, 'are in a transnational dialogue with Indian diaspora about their common historical connections or narratives' according to Mija Sanders.

The presence of Yezidi in Australia has been going on for the last ten years. It should be noted that a large part of the Yezidis in Australia consists of Yezidis who migrated after the Syrian civil war that started in 2011

A large portion of them have been legally arriving in Australia since 2017 under the humanitarian visa process. Yezidi population in Australia is largely settled in Armidale, Toowoomba, Coffs Harbour, and Mount Gambia. Their population in Australia is estimated to be over seven hundred.[50] However, since the discussion throughout the chapter refers to the actively mobilized diasporas, in this chapter, I will briefly try to give information about the formation and functioning of the active diasporas, namely the Caucasian and European diasporas below.

[50] See more details in a report prepared by Yazda, https://www.yazda.org/publications/mapping-the-yazidi-diaspora-in-australia Accessed: 13.01.2022

I must mention that the diaspora conditions in Europe and the Caucasus have given the Yezidis two different ways of life and several social formations. While the European diaspora accelerated the level of change and transformation of the Yezidi society up, the Caucasian diaspora offered the Yezidis a closed life basin until the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. In the compact Caucasian diaspora, the functioning of traditional Yezidism and social life continued with less change. However, in both diasporas, a sense of Yezidi ethnic identity has been emphasized in opposition to historical affiliations that constituted in the context of Kurdish identity. Two clear components of a separate Yezidi identity have, first of all, developed in the Armenia diaspora. Then, the historical terms of belonging have been constituted in their German diaspora and in their Arizona diaspora, which is in the process of formation. These components are the attempt to eliminate Islam religiously and Kurds ethnically, which led to new concepts of spoken language(Ezdiki) and lands of origin(Ezidixan instead of Kurdistan). The Kurdish dialect Kurmanji is labeled as Êzdikî. Yezidis in Armenia presents the Êzdikî as a new maker of the new identity constructed.



Map 3. The map highlights Êzdîxan (Ezdixan) according to the Facebook account of the Yezidi Sanatana Dharma Society(YSDS) in the US.Source:https://www.facebook.com/ysdsociety/, https://www.cwis.org/2023/04/ezidikhan-nation-completes-draft-charter-for-internationaltribunal/?fbclid=IwAR2rT9TNhZ9q889vJFUx9A3uR_pt5wkEV7Mi0RZSlbApMxYfDA6Oi_23sXg. Accessed: 12.12.2023

These two components of Yezidi identities are also being developed among some young Yezidis in their German diaspora. The most valuable reason behind these components is likely

to be the collective memory of the Yezidi society that founded their identities on persecution and collective traumas. The violence against the Yezidi society at large forms new ideas of self-expression and reproducing culture, religion, and identities. For instance, it is remarkable that they shared a common experience of persecution with Armenians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians. However, because of several internal factors, such as high rates of illiteracy and the lack of scholars or historians (Six-Hohenbalken, 2019), Yezidis could not create a memory of persecution, a historical discourse, and public awareness until the last decade. Yezidis has taken steps to create a group memory in the last decade. The wider issue in this memory creation in Germany is Yezidi identity or belonging, which will be discussed in chapter five of this study.

Having a public discourse and memory contributes to Yezidi society's survival in diasporic environments. In their Caucasian and European diasporas, Yezidis, for example, could rebuild their environment from their memories. The construction of religious monuments, i.e., Quba Mêrê Dîwanê in Armenia, the Quba Siltan Êzîd in Georgia, the Qoba Ezi in Augsburg, Germany, and social system or structure come out from the reimagination of holy places in their lands of origin.

The earlier experience of the diaspora

Yezidis` first existence beyond the lands of origin happened after the collapse of Russian rule in what is today known as Eastern Turkey in the early 19th century. Thousands of Yezidis were displaced from their lands as a result of the policies of expulsion. They forced conversion of the 19th century, run by the Ottomans in the provinces of Eastern Anatolia, such as Kars, Van, and Igdir. The reasons behind the displacement of Yezidis and behind the political and economic instability of Yezidi settlements in eastern Turkey date back to the conflicts between the Ottoman and the Russian Empire for the border regions that go back to the late sixteen century (Six-Hohenbalken, 2019). By the beginning of the twentieth century, Yezidis in Eastern Anatolia was part of wars between the Ottomans and the Russians. In the early twentieth century, alongside Armenians, they were forced to locate to Transcaucasia. About 12,000 Yezidi escaped to Armenia during World War I from Eastern Anatolia (Six-Hohenbalken, 2019). Today, for instance, the most significant Ethno-religious minority in Armenia is the Yezidi community (Six-Hohenbalke, 2021; Schulze, 2016), and their population in Georgia is estimated to be over ten thousand by several scientific research

projects. The Yezidis diaspora in Caucasia is known as the 'old Yezidi diaspora' since the Soviet system has influenced it. So, they constituted their mobilized diaspora in Caucasia a century ago (Six-Hohenbalke, 2021). The social and economic conditions of the region have influenced their diaspora. It, therefore, was the first separation of homeland and from the holy cultural basin that ended up with a high literalization of Yezidi oral tradition via the modernization of the Soviet Union. The social mobilization of the Yazidis under the Soviet Union differed from their social mobilization on the European continent. Above all, the Transcaucasian diaspora of the Yezidi community developed in a totalitarian political environment, while the European diaspora developed in a relatively free environment.

Yezidis` life is determined by the social, political, and economic structures of the nations and States where they settled and lived. The development of the Yezidi society varies at different levels since Yezidis in Armenia, Georgia, Germany, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria have different opportunities to be part of the State structures. Yezidi society in Armenia became part of the State structure easily and then received a good education, resulting in high literacy (Six-Hohenbalke, 2019). Their integration into the Armenian and Georgian societies was not that difficult. Since Yezidis share a common fate with Christians concerning persecution, they have a positive relationship with Christians. Most probably, it made the Yezidis integrate easily into Armenia. Almost all of their cultural nuances could be recorded under the influence of the Soviet Union's modernization of the 1920s, which promoted the development of nations. The modernization process that had anti-feudalist characters brought some obstacles to tribal Yezidi figures at the same time. For example, the time of Stalin's regime was a danger to the social structure of clergymen. They would have been exiled easily at that time if they had not constructed their identification only based on the Kurdish language. Soon after the 1950s, they gained cultural rights, and literacy was gained through cultural vehicles such as theatre, radio, music, and literature. Somehow, Yezidis, as an economically battered society alongside other societies, could stand in Armenia and Georgia. However, the Yezidi community in Caucasia had been isolated from their cultural basin of homeland until the early 1990s. They were integrated into the Soviet system as Kurds until the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union brought tremendous transformations for the Yezidi society. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they gained official recognition as an ethnoreligious community in the post-Soviet Republic of Armenia (Langer, 2010; Six-Hohenbalken, 2021).

The post-Soviet period brought some transformations, such as bringing new forms of belonging to only Yeidism or Yezidi identity, bringing an end to a compact lifestyle where they could preserve their traditional way of life and their tribal and religious structures, letting them contacting homeland, bringing a mass emigration to Russian Federation, Ukraine, Germany, and France, and giving them a transnational charter. I agree with Omarkhali that the Yezidi community 'is still in possession of social structures and long collective memory to coherent Yezidi identities in Transcaucasia (Omarkhali, 2021, p. 167), which happened in poor economic conditions of the Soviet Union according to Robins (Robins, 2021). The hierarchical structure of patriarchy and practicing social norms almost remained unchanged in the conditions of Caucasia. However, I would like to point out that this is not the case in the European diaspora, notably in their German diaspora. An environment between secularism and religious practices in Germany brought religious and cultural endangerment and separation between Yezidi generations in terms of worldviews.

In contrast, the Caucasian one theoretically brought a unity of a group that helped Yezidis regarding cultural and religious survival. At this point, I would like to enrich the discussion on the concept of diaspora to explain the conditions that led to the formation of the active Yezidi diasporas and the process of forming the Yezidi diaspora in Germany. Moreover, the discussion about the potential boundaries and categories of the Yezidi diaspora(s) and mobilities given in the section of the theoretical part above can be contributed with a continuation of analyzing the concept of diaspora below to have an appropriate idea about the types and the difference mobilization of the Yezidi diasporas all over the world.

2.1 Yezidi diaspora: Migration waves

Yezidis` diasporic places worldwide have their own characters and categories and took place in different times and political conditions. And in these places, Yezidis have different motivations for mobilities. Yezidis` German diaspora and, of course, with a broader perspective, the European one is mostly a category of Reis's (2004) understating of contemporary diasporas, while the Caucasian one is a category of the classical diasporas. Another issue, alongside the lack of theoretical tools, is whether we should consider the Yezidi diaspora as part of the Kurdish diaspora or a separate one. Regarding the theoretical approaches of diasporas, we can consider both diasporas in one setting: the Kurdish diaspora, because the conditions that led to these diasporas are the same: political persecution, forced

displacement, etc. However, in terms of the mobilization of these diasporas, one may easily separate the Yezidi diaspora from the Kurdish one. On the agenda of Yezidi diasporas (mostly in Western countries), political claims and political status, for example, are less. Having an established independent political structure is not a top priority. Sunni Muslims and Muslim Kurds mostly persecuted them. Instead, Yezidis shows a tendency to the opportunities of the integration process in the host countries to constitute secure areas both at local and international levels to save their religion and tradition.

In comparison, the Kurdish diaspora mobilized itself, often aiming to fulfill a nationalistic project that led to establishing an independent state or autonomy in their homeland. However, both diasporas can collaborate from time to time as an affiliated Kurdish diaspora for common aims and demands in case of political and humanitarian crises. Thus, the separation of these diasporans is beside the point for now. However, I must say that both diasporas are mobilizing differently in contemporary times since the circumstances behind the diasporization of Yezidis and the Kurdish political movement are different and date back to different times.

The Yezidis` diasporic experience, for example, is backed by the 1800s, while the Kurdish political movement gained its diasporic character later on. The first diasporic place of Yezidis, "Jabal Sinjar," is stressed by Fuccaro (1999). However, since they experienced culturally and politically different regions that separated them from their lands of origin as a result of military conflicts and shifting borders between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire in Kurdish-inhabited areas of contemporary Turkey, Fuccaro's view can be understood as Yezidis in exile rather than Yezidis in the diaspora. Jabal Sinjar, in a way, was not a place where Yezidis lost their connection with their people and the lands of origin. Instead, it was the first known Yezidis who lived in exile in their lands of origin at the local level in Iraq as a result of the consequences of the colonialist policies of governments.

Thus, the Yezidi Caucasian diaspora, at the regional level, can be taken into consideration as the first diasporic place, which is a category of the classical diasporas caused by the Russian-Persian wars of 1804-13 and 1826-28, and Russo-Turkish wars of the 1800s. The Caucasian Yezidi community "comes from Yezidi sections of the Kurdish tribal confederations who were formerly resident in eastern Anatolia (Bakur in Kurdish), especially the regions of Kars, Van, and Doğubayazit (Serhad/Serxet region in Kurdish), they came to the geography of contemporary Armenia in waves, mainly during the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29 and during the massacres of 1915-18" (Allison, 2013, pp. 145-181). Many of the

Yezidi population migrated to the geography of contemporary Georgia, too. To relocate farther from the Persian and Ottoman Empire, not to be converted to Islam, Yezidis migrated to Caucasia by the end of the nineteenth century. Earlier settlers settled in the larger cities of Telavi and Tbilisi. The second massive migration of Yezidis to Caucasia took place in the earlier years of the twentieth century. Turks forced them during the genocide or massacre of Armenians, which began in 1915, to flee from their lands. Thousands of Yezidis moved to Armenia and Georgia. They settled in the old neighborhoods of Tbilisi, Telavi, Tsnori, Kvareli, Tianeti, and Batumi (Szakonyi, 2007). During the following years of the fall of the USSR, the Yezidi population in Armenia and Georgia dispersed to the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Europe because of civil wars, attacks on minority groups, and the lack of sufficient economic structures. A drastic loss of population, for instance, happened from the 1990s to the 2000s in Georgia.[51] Since the new state authorities declared the Georgian language as the new official state language, Yezidis who were literate during the Soviet Union sent young Yezidis to the Russian Federation to overcome the language barriers in public schools. It caused a loss of the young Yezidi population in Georgia. Today, Yezidis has many cultural centers in Georgia. Their temple, Quba Siltan Êzîd, which was considered the second Yezidi temple out of the lands of origin, was opened in 2015, with the initiative of the cultural center House of Yezidis of Georgia. Moreover, in Tbilisi, an International Yezidi Theological Academy[52] founded inyear 016 organizes training courses to educate Yezidi experts in English and Arabic on religious texts. This Theological Academy is financially supported by Yezidis in different diasporas through remittances, notably by individuals in the Yezidi German diaspora.

Besides Georgia, Armenia is one of the most homogenous former Soviet republics. Yezidis, who faced massacre alongside Armenians, refugeed in former Soviet Union territories with a few Sunni Kurds, notably from 1915 onwards, such as to Armavir, Talin, Yerevan, and Kumajri. In the political conditions of Caucasia, Yezidis` identity gained two main components: delimitation from Kurds ethnically and from Islamic influence. They found themselves in a secure environment where they could join education and develop their

[51] For instance, once one compares the Soviet census in 1989 and the Georgian census in 2002, one will see a drastic loss of the Kurdish population in Georgia, which was reduced from 33.331 to 18.329 in thirteen years. See the censuses respectively http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=6, Accessed: 12.08.2022, https://catalog.ihsn.org/catalog/4371/related-materials. Accessed: 12.08.2022

[52] https://yeziditheoac.com/?page_id=2287 Accessed: 07.08.2022

culture. According to Aziz Tamoyan, who was the chairman of the National Union of Yezidis of the Republic of Armenia, Yezidis who migrated to Armenia in 1918 under their chieftain Cihangir Aga demanded to be recognized as Yezidis rather than Kurds.[53]

They faced privileged treatment during the Soviet Union that engaged them in substantial cultural production, such as the foundation of Kurdish theater, broadcasting radio in the Kurdish language, publishing novels and stories, etc. A Kurdish intelligentsia and prestigious professions occurred among Yezidi Kurds in Caucasia during this period, which ended with the collapse of the USSR. Yet, the Muslim Kurdish community in Armenia faced challenges, as happened in Georgia too in the following years of the 1990s. They faced preventive measures from the new state authorities of Armenia as happened which caused Muslim Kurds to be deported from these territories to Kazakhstan during the Stalinist period of the 1930s and 1940s (Hassanpour, 1992; Conquest, 1970). Kurdish population who engaged in Armenian institutions encountered Armenian nationalist movements that escalated by Karabagh conflicts, putting Sunni Kurds into target with Azeri Turkish Muslims. The social realm of Armenia at that time accelerated the separation between Sunni Kurds and Yezidis, resulting in a drastic loss of the Muslim Kurdish population dispersed to several countries. Muslim Kurds were no longer welcome in Armenia because of conflicts over Karabakh between Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis. A drastic process of separation of Yezidis from Muslim Kurds happened in Caucasia. 'The question of belonging gained momentum after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since then, ethnicizing a religious community has been an ongoing process, with particular characteristics of Yezidi history and culture being differentiated from those of the Kurdish culture (Six-Hohenbalken, 2019, p.69). From the 2000s onwards, Yezidis were officially recognized as "Êzdîkî" / "Ezdiki,"[54] which led to discussions about ethnic identity and languages. Yezidis, who live in villages in the Aparan region of Armenia, are supporters of a separate Yezidi identity from Kurdishness. For instance, there is a discussion that the concept of Ezidiki was invented for political and ideological purposes by Armenian nationalists to divide the Kurdish population in Armenia

[53] https://www.zeynemarslan.com/ermenistanda-ulusal-ezidi-birligi1-baskani-aziz-tamoyan-ile-soeylesi/ Accessed: 07.08.2022

[54] Almost only Yezidis from the post-Soviet area use the glossonym Ezdiki / Êzdîkî and refer to their language. The designation for their language is a notion of discussion amongst Kurdish nationalistic groups and some Yezidis. See Von Yilmaz Aydin, https://www.academia.edu/37553011/%C3%8Azd%C3%AEk%C3%AE_-die_Sprache_der_%C3%8Az%C3%AEden, In English: https://www.ezidipress.com/en/ezdiki-the-language-of-the-ezidis/ Accessed: 20.11.2020

by ethnically separating. Today, "Yezidis are the most ethnoreligious minority of Armenia with a population of over 35,000 persons."[55] They mostly concentrated in agricultural areas of the northwest of Yerevan in Armenia.



Map 4. The Yezidi Settlements in Armenia (Source: Khanna Omarkhali, 2017)

They constructed organizations and cultural centers for Yezidis in Caucasia from the 1990s onwards. A big portion of Yezidis who emigrated from Armenia were economically successful and supported their family members and the institutionalization of Yezidi society. With regular remittances and the positive effect of migration, Yezidis supports the establishment of new community centers. For instance, the world's largest Yezidi temple, Quba Mêrê Diwanê / Quba Mêrê Diwanê, was built in Armenia, in 2019 with the financial help of local businessmen and remittances from Yezidis all around the world. The temple was opened just a year after the recognition of the 2014 Yezidi Genocide by the Armenian parliament.

The reasons beyond the Yezidis' motivation for their transnational diasporas in Caucasia and Europe resemble both the Septuagint discourse of diaspora and the "destructive situation" in

[55] A Report of 2019 to the United Nations Committee on the rights of children with a focus on Yezidi children in Armenia, https://www.academia.edu/41702094/Alternative_report_to_the_UN_committee_on_the_rights_of_the_child_with_a_focus_on_Yezidi_children_in_Armenia Accessed:20.11.2020

the Greek discourse discussed above. But there is a difference with the Septuagint discourse of diaspora. In Yezidi's case, the dispersion, exile, or displacement from the lands of origin is not because of spiritual anguish. Rather, Yezidis' collective suffers trauma; in exile, life erupts from earthly affairs. So, the contemporary reasons that caused Yezidi migration from their lands of origin are associated with earthly affairs such as political pressure, social discrimination, etc.

The reasons behind migration waves or people flows vary according to many contemporary theories. The negative (push) and positive (pull) factors that led to migration, for instance, are the main core of migration studies that consider the push-pull model. According to this model, the attractive conditions of developed countries attract people's attention to those who live in countries suffering from socioeconomic hardship. The poor socioeconomic conditions of sending countries are considered push factors that led to migration in contemporary times (Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes & Böröcz, 1989). Yet the migration story of Yezidis is combined with the conditions of both the contemporary times and the conditions of the past. Yezidis` migration is still taking place, and the factors behind it vary, dating back to old times. Since the political insecurity of Yezidis is due to their ethnoreligious identity, which is the main factor behind their migration to several states, regions, and locals, their migration waves cannot be evaluated in a linear time. Beyond doubt migration is the most well-known social reality that influenced Yezidi society, mostly in a negative sense, in both Kurdish-inhabited areas and in diasporas. Although some Yezidis consider migration a saving phenomenon in times of crisis, it has been a destructive process due to its consequences regarding keeping tradition and social relations safe. Yezidis` migration process, with its different "push factors," can be analyzed in at least three main phases of history. The first phase, as noted above, can be held as Yezidis experienced forced displacement under the rules of the Empires until the end of the nineteenth century. Only a few chronicles left of records of the quarrels between the Ottomans and Safavids over the lands of the Kurds help us to have an idea about Yezidis `migration experiences from the earliest years of this period. Since there is a lack of substantial textual materials on the social movements in the Yezidi community under the rule of the Empires, one cannot provide adequate data about their migration experiences of the early years of this period. A Yezidi intellectual claims that the Yezidi population decreased from six million to around two hundred thousand in Anatolia.[56] All we know about these early

[56] A Yezidi intellectual who introduced him as Xelîl Xaltî shared this data with me in Germany during our private conversation on the Yezidi community.

periods is that Yezidis` migration experiences came about as a result of "quarrels between Ismail Safawi, the first modern Shah of Persia, and Kurdish chieftains" (Guest, 2010: p. 44). It can be said that from this point of view, Yezidis` early encounters with the outside world occurred mostly at local levels. We have less contemporary scholarly developed data regarding Yezidis` earliest encounters with the outside and the spread of their religion.[57] For instance, "besides a few chronicles left records of the dark age of the Mongol Empire, there are no contemporary accounts of the early spread of Yezidism in the 14th century" (Guest, 2010, p. 44) and of course there is no sufficient data regarding social interaction with outside neither in the 14th century nor before. Thus, the well-known Yezidis` encounters with the outside, which is known as the "Ottoman Kurdistan period" among Kurdish intellectuals, caused a terrific displacement of Yezidis locally, dating to the 16th century. Although "Kurdish intellectuals have often described the Ottoman Kurdistan period (15th-19th centuries) as the "golden age" (James, 2021; p. 25, in et al. Bozarslan, Gunes and Yadirgi, 2021), the outcomes of this period were as some sort of disasters for Yezidis. The Yezidis` first forced displacement from the Kurdish-inhabited areas to a culturally different region took place during this so-called golden age. A large portion of the Yezidi population migrated to Transcaucasia and constituted the Yezidi Transcaucasian community due to imperial presence in their lands of origin. Their presence in the Soviet Union dates back to the conquest of Transcaucasia by the czars from the 1800s onwards (Guest, 1993). As a result, Yezidis` first vaporization happened in culturally different regions. Russian Empire's expansion in the 19th century vanished the previously constructed allies between the Kurdish dynasties and the Ottoman Empire. Since "both the Russians and the Ottomans mobilized Kurdish tribe to fight on their side," naturally, Kurds had become part of both Russians` and Ottomans` policies of mobilization of irregular Kurdish cavalry as participants of the wars (Bozarslan et al. Michael M. Gunter 2019: p. 49). As a result, many tribes faced forced policies that caused massive migration waves.

The second phase of the Yezidi migration waves can be analyzed within the conditions of the twentieth century, in which colonial policies and the policies of national states played crucial roles in causing massive migration. From the 1970s onwards, as noted above, the strategies of

[57] One of the earliest sources of Yezidi history and religion has been highlighted recently by Dimitri Pirbari, Nodar Mossaki, and Mirza Sileman Yezdin. A newly explored Yezidi manuscript is dated back to 1207 in their study. See 'A Yezidi Manuscript:—Mišūr of P'īr Sīnī Bahrī/P'īr Sīnī Dārānī, Its Study and Critical Analysis.' Iranian Studies. 2020;53(1-2):223-257. doi:10.1080/00210862.2019.1669118]

the campaigns of "Arabization" of Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians caused massive people waves. For instance, several de-villagization campaigns started in the 1970s against Kurds that expelled many Yezidis from their homes. Forced displacement was well-used as a tool by Saddam Hussein (president 1979-2003) for achieving political and economic ends. "Between 1980 and 1988, the Ba'ath regime destroyed some 4,000 villages, displacing up to a million people. Yezidis kept the spirit of the acts, and policies expelled Yezidis from their homes alive in their minds" (Schuman, 2014: p. 2)

Although Yezidis` migration waves took place in this period in many different ways, the most remarkable waves of Yezidis took place in European countries from the 1980s onwards. The Gulf War, military coups (especially in Turkey) Iraqi War, and then the Syrian Civil War resulted in a rise in the number of Yezidis in Germnay in time. Omarkhali (2017) notes four migration waves took place from the lands of origin to different European countries as follows:

"The first migration waves of Yezidis took place from Turkey to Germany in 1980s; the second one took place from Iraq to Europe in the late 1980s and 1990s; the third wave took place in 1990s from Armenia and Georgia to the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Europe; and the last waves took place in August 2014, practically all Yezidis from Shingal (around 320,000) were forced to leave their lands" (Omarkhali, 2017: p.24).

On the contrary, I evaluate the third phase of Yezidi migration within the consequences (notably erupted sectarianism after 2003) of the Iraqi war and onwards. The last two decades of the 21st century were a period of politically forced displacement for the Yezidis. Rather, Yezidis` economic concerns play less of a role in these migration waves. The reasons behind the displaced Yezidi population from their homeland to outside have been the outcomes of the nationalist policies of the regional states of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and partly of Iran since the 2000s that led to sectarianism. The Yezidi population has settled in diasporas in recent years as part of the purpose of forced migration/displacement. These waves of the population are defined as migratory movements involving force, compulsion, or coercion.[58] Thus, today it is known that violence, conflict, persecution, and natural hazards are the reasons beyond the forcibly displaced individuals and groups in contemporary migration studies. More so, international and non-international armed conflicts, internal disturbances, sectarianism,

[58] IOM Glossary on Migration 3rd Edition, 2018 p. 75, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf. Accessed: 13.06.2021

human rights violence, man-made disasters, and natural disasters are well-known causes behind forced migratory movements.

Over the past few years, violence has erupted with sectarianism in several regions like Iraq and Syria that forced millions of people from their homes.[59] In terms of Yezidis, natural disasters play less role as the cause of displacement. Until 2014, almost ninety percent of Yezidis lived in disputed internal boundaries (DIBs) of the Nineveh governorate of Iraq (Dulz, 2016, pp. 131-148). As a dominant group in the districts of Nineveh, Yezidis lived in Kirkuk, Salah ad-Din, and Diyala governorates, too. They became various groups of forced migration from these districts and governorates like internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in the last decade. In the early years of the 1970s just before the initiative of Ba'th Regime to displace Yezidis forcibly, a great portion of Yezidis lived in Mountain Sinjar, "137 villages", in Sinjar city, "5 neighborhoods", and in the districts of Nineveh, Sheikan region, "182 villages" (Savelsberg, Hajo, and Dulz, 2010: 101-116). However, today, a large part of the Yezidi population lives as IDPs. From 2014 onwards, they mainly refugeed in different countries worldwide to escape from the attacks of extremist groups aiming to eradicate the population of non-Muslim people. Thus, the current, which is the third migration wave, experiences the forced displacement of Yezidis cumulatively. They consider acts of violent displacement against their community as "Ferman" to refer to massacre or genocide, which means originally a letter order or command taken by the Ottoman sovereign. Yezidis uses the concept of Ferman to depict the historical suffering of their community. Many Yezidis consider the 2014 genocide of Yezidis as the Ferman (literally means state-sponsored violence committed by state actors and non-state actors at local and national levels. It is literally equal to the concept decree) 74th and the latest Ferman is a previous follow-up act of violence.[60] So,

[59] IOM Glossary on Migration 3rd Edition, 2018 p. 75, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf. Accessed: 13.06.2021

[60] 72 genocides, a symbolic number from mythology, is something that is talked about among the Yazidis. However, the discourse about these genocides is of mythological origin, and it is not possible to talk about such a number in reality since its documentation is scarce. See more details in Maria Six-Hohenbalken's work 'The 72nd Firman of the Yezidis: A Hidden Genocide during the World War I.' Some Yazidis, especially those from Sinjar, even put the total number of genocides against Yazidis at 74. They have counted the truck bombs in 2007 and the genocide of 2014 committed by ISIL. According to the speech of Prof. Şefik Tagay at the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide (April 25, 2015, Germany), Yezidis remember 74 incidents of persecution or genocide. Today, many Yezidis are striving for the recognition of the genocide. Several non-governmental organizations and human rights activists have taken the initiative to make the Yezidi genocide subject of an independent or international criminal court. According to the Report of the Office of the United Nations High

as a result of long periods of migration, since the 1960s, more than 240,000 Yezidis settled in Europe. With the beginning of the terror in Iraq in 2007 and then through the year 2014, more than 120,000 Yezidis have left Iraq and settled in Australia, Canada, the USA, and several European countries (Kizilhan, 2019, pp. 7-17).

2.2 Yezidi diaspora in Germany

The history of the Yezidi community in Germany dates back to the arrival of about 2,000 Yezidi workers[61] between the 1960s and 1970. The Yezidis emerged for the first time in Germany as labor workers in local industries located in Lower Saxony, particularly in the district of Celle. Some other groups settled in Saarland and Lower Rhine districts in the following years. So, their first arrival in Germany was due to the advantage of the German worker policies of the 1960s that aimed to bring 'guest workers' to Germany via the recruitment agreement between Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1961. Some Yezidi scholars consider this advantage for Yezidi as a 'legal escape.'[62]

Commissioner for Human Rights, there was a suspicion of genocide. Furthermore, the parliaments of Belgium and the Netherlands officially recognized the Yezidi genocide in 2021. The German lower house of parliament, Bundestag, recognized the massacre of Yezdis as genocide on 2023 January 19. See more details:

UN, General Assembly Report, A/HRC/28/18,

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Documents/A_HRC_28_18_ENG.docx&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1 Accessed: 03.03.2023

https://www.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIReport12Aug2016_en.pdf&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1 Accessed: 03.03.2023

https://www.bic-rhr.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/Why%20the%20Yezidi%20genocide%20should%20be%20recognized%20internationally%20_0.pdf Accessed: 07.03.2023

https://www.ohchr.org/FR/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=20113&LangID=F

Accessed: 07.03.2023

https://www.dw.com/en/german-parliament-recognizes-yazidi-genocide-in-iraq/a-64450334

Accessed: 09.03.2023

[61] Wettich, 2021
[62] Savucu, 2016

The arrival of Yezidis to Germany as guest workers was restricted after the 1970s. Especially after the oil crisis, the German government ended the labor migration agreement due to economic concerns. The Yezidis who came to Germany after these dates were able to come either through family reunification or by applying for political asylum. The only way to escape political and religious oppression was to apply for political asylum.[63] After the re-emerge of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey from the 1960s onwards.[64]

The third military coup in Turkey after the 1980s and the Kurdish question, which subsequently evolved into an armed conflict, further accelerated the migration of Yezidis from Turkey to Germany. The Yezidis became a group directly associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which started an armed conflict in Turkey. In addition to religious oppression, the Yezidis were increasingly subjected to political oppression. The local landlord system led to Sunni Kurds directly targeting the Yezidis. Later, the village guard system was introduced in the mid-1980s, and the early 1990s caused the Yezidis to sell their property and leave their lands. Similar situations were also experienced in Iraq. The political and religious oppression that resulted from the 1988 Halabja massacre led Yezidis to seek asylum as political refugees in Europe after the 1990s. Then the number of Yezidis in Germany increased to 10,000[65] in the 1990s. Since 2000, especially with the last wave of immigration in 2014, the number of Yezidis in Germany has reached 160,000.[66]

I consider the Yezidis who came to Germany from the 1960s until the early 1980s to be the first generation in this study. Then, I consider the Yezidis who came with family reunification and political asylum for political reasons after the 1980s, as the second generation. This second generation is a generation that can live both its own traditional memory and the way of life in Germany where they settled. In the years after the 2000s, the third generation of young Yezidis was born and raised in Germany and adopted a life disconnected from the Yezidi tradition.

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[63] ibid

[64] Gunes, 2012
[65] Wettich, 2021
[66] ibid

While the first generation considers Kurdish political identity as an indispensable part of Yezidism, members of the second generation, in general, focus more on problems related to Yezidism. Members of the second generation run the majority of current Yezidi cultural centers. Especially due to the German state's perception of the Kurdish political movement as extremist and radicalized, second-generation Yezidis try to address only issues related to Yezidism. On the other hand, the third generation brings a new dimension to the Yezidi diaspora, as they have grown up only with Germany's social and political realm. The third generation of Yezidis may be the only generation that can bridge the political and social divisions between generations in the German Yezidi diaspora. The third generation will differentiate the mobilization of the German Yezidi diaspora.

The first two generations of Yezidi were able to build their own diaspora institutions in their German diaspora. The cultural centers that were built turned into places where only funeral ceremonies and later condolence ceremonies are held. There are a few Yezidi cultural centers where religious education is extremely limited. After the 2010s, we can observe an increase in the institutionalization of the Yezidi German diaspora. Especially after the 2014 Yezidi genocide, the German Yezidi diaspora experienced new waves of immigration, and then the Yezidi population diversified with newcomers. We observe new organizations, personal initiatives, and increasing cooperation with the German state. There was a mobilization of Yezidis, which culminated in the official recognition of the Yezidi genocide by the German state in 2023.

However, all three generations are experiencing change and transformation in the German diaspora. For example, economic concerns cause religious figures like sheiks (teachers) to move away from their usual traditional behavior. People who have masters in religious teaching have to seek work in different professions in the conditions of the diaspora to be able to survive rather than teach Yezidism to the next generations. This issue is debated among Yezidis in Germany that Yezidi religious figures should be financially supported by the German local authorities and be categorized as teachers to keep teaching Yezidi tradition and religion like the way Sunni Turkish Imams adopt teaching Islam in Germany. Georgian Yezidis and Yezidis in Oldenburg cooperate have literate intellectual and religious figures to deal with this issue. Their cooperation has been going on since Georgian Yezidi institutions received students from different European countries, notably from Germany, for religious education. An institute of teaching Yezidi theology is about to be founded by Yezidis in

Oldenburg within German universities. The methods of teaching religion have gained a new form of teaching and brought the need for the unification of theology.

After this brief introduction, in this chapter, I will try to evaluate the Yezidi German diaspora, taking into account the diaspora activities of the Kurdish political movement. I will try to present the mobilisation of the Yezidi German diaspora by giving a table of the Yezidi diaspora institutions. In conclusion, I will highlight my opinions regarding the future of the Yezidi German diaspora.

Yezidis in Germany have found themselves as victims of several regional and national quarrels. Their contemporary situation in their homeland seems as if the situation of Muslim and non-Muslim indigenous peoples has no apparatus to influence international politics. Yezidis commonly emphasize the experience of loss or eradication like indigenous people. Furthermore, the idea of being lost in history is becoming a prominent feature of Indigenous people's lives (Samson, 2008). Yezidis are in the mood of being eradicated in their German diaspora, too. It is explicit that national interventions restrict indigenous people's freedom and bring some social and economic obstacles to these people. As Kunitz (2000) has highlighted, "both historically and in the contemporary world, the States dominate indigenous people, and they may be displaced and eliminated by "state apparatus (Kunitz, 2000, pp. 1531-1539). That is why it is troublesome for an indigenous group, notably a Muslim one, to be active to obtain political and economic support and gain influence in international politics.

Even though Yezidis` situation seems like indigenous people's, Yezidis gained international influence via transnational routes. They evolved into a diasporic group compared to other indigenous groups dispersed from the Middle East. It is probably because Yezidis, both ethnically and theologically, are a homogenous group in Western countries. Alongside Yezidis, many Muslim indigenous or other groups have suffered from political and religious oppression, social obstacles, etc., in their homeland. However, they could not succeed in constituting a homogenous diasporic community since many Muslim migrants have come to the West to make a better life economically and socially. These Muslim migrants living in the West are heterogeneous groups, and ethnic and theological differences prevent them from establishing a well-organized diaspora. Moreover, "the perception of Islam overshadowed by fundamentalism in the West and Muslim population's cultural preservation of values brings various obstacles to Muslim migrants even in host land(s)" (Syed & Pio, 2017: p. 5). Social

exclusion in the West makes Muslim youth turn to fundamental forms of Islam. That is, suffering discrimination even in the West ghettoizes many Muslim migrants. Over time, ghetto inhabitants reduce their contact with the value of the West (Lebl, 2013). But Yezidis, as victimized and dispersed by erupted sectarianism, have more opportunities to be adopted by inclusive (even exclusive) political systems of host lands. Their social organization in Western diasporas does not occur in forms of isolation like ghettos that many Muslims form in Western Europe, notably in France, partly in Germany. Thus, they become more eager to accept host countries' values,opt the integration processes of host countries, andtablish networks with Western societies.

Over time, Yezidis, who arrived in Europe as "labor workers," political refugees, and victimized people, succeeded in establishing their own transnational movement that transformed into a transnational diaspora and came into prominence in central Europe. Here, a potential discussion may occur about referring to the concept of the Kurdish diaspora and the Yezidi diaspora in a sense of independent diasporas from each other. As has been noted before, I do not provide a sharp contrast between these diasporas. Rather, I adopt the Yezidi German diaspora concept to emphasize its difference from the known Kurdish diaspora in terms of the varieties of its mobilization. When one compares the formation and mobilization of the Kurdish diaspora and the Yezidi German diaspora, several different factors form and mobilize these diasporas. For example, the Yezidis are more willing to accept the German federal and national integration policies. Until the early 2000s, however, the Yezidis in Germany organized themselves in the social networks established by the Kurdish political movement. Because a large part of the Yezidis in Germany were Yezidis from Turkish Kurdistan, they endeavored not for Yezidism but for Kurdishness and the political solution to the Kurdish question. However, after the 2010s, the Yezidi population in Germany diversified. As of the 2000s, new currents of opinion came from the Caucasus and the Middle East. New waves of immigration, the end of the Iraq war, the attempts to resolve the Kurdish question in Turkey without weapons (2013-2015 Turkey-PKK Peace process), the Syrian civil war, etc., have led the Yezidis in Germany to address their own issues.

Initially, organizations were founded by Kurdish refugees who had migrated early in Europe and were interested in human rights. These organizations regarded Getting support from Europeans as the most important step in evolving from activism into a Kurdish diaspora. Over time, the Kurdish diaspora in Europe took the shape of political refugees and asylum seekers from the 1980s to 1990s because of humanitarian disasters in the wake of the war in the

Middle East, notably from the 2000s to the present. Kurdish population grew from a small number to more than one million by 2001, and together with migrant workers, Kurdish refugees from Turkey generated the largest part of Kurds in Europe (Emanuelson, 2013). Kurds holding Turkish citizenship arrived in Europe at the beginning of the 1960s, and "the number of Kurdish asylum seekers from Turkey significantly increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Gunter, 2018: p. 415).

In particular, the labor migration from Turkey was a historical phase for Kurds to settle in modern society and to emphasize their political identity (Kurdishness). In the beginning, the majority of Kurds arrived as guest workers (Østergaard−Nielsen, 2002). Then, political refugees arrived right after. Many Yezidis living in southeastern Anatolia, who can be regarded as the first generation of the Yezidi German diaspora, migrated to Germany during that time. The military coup d'etat of 1980 and the armed conflicts between the government and the PKK forced refugees into diasporas (Hassanpour & Mojab, 2005). As I said above, these developments brought out the conditions of the diasporization of Yezidis in Germany.

Today, we witnessed a mobilized Yezidi diaspora in Germany, which is a category of contemporary diasporas. For now, Yezidis in Germany mobilize themselves to influence international politics to gain social, political, and financial support to help those who dispersed from their lands to be recognized as equal to other religious beliefs both in diasporas and homeland and to re-establish their destructed homeland by the ISIL. They adopt the word diaspora, which refers to the population living abroad. For instance, some Yezidis have settled in Germany since 1988 and 2001, respectively, and call themselves members of the Yezidi diaspora. One of the heads of a Yezidi center, who had settled in Germany in 1988 with his family, considers Yezidis in Germnay as a diasporic group. In response to the question, "Do you believe that there is a Yezidi diaspora in Germany?" he conveys his thoughts as follows:

"One hundred percent, Yezidis are a diasporic group in Germany. During the 1960s, sixty-five Yezidis, as the first-come group, had come to Germany as Turkish labor workers.[67] Since then, Yezidis' lobby activities have become widespread. The recognition of Yezidis is common in Germany. Because Yezidis gained seats in German administrative affairs as a doctor, teacher,

[67] He means Yezidi workers carrying Turkish citizenship

and so on, they became literate and made sufficient lobby in Germany for the recognition of Yezidis as a threatened group of the years 2007 and 2008."

Likewise, an informant of this study, I7FO27, who was settled in Oldenburg in 2001 with her family, believes that Yezidis in different districts of Germany have a great relationship. In response to the question, "Do you know any Yezidi apart from Oldenburg? Do you believe that they have contact with each other?" she worded the relationship between Yezidis' centers of diaspora as follows:

I7FO27: "There is a good relationship between Yezidi organizations, centers, and forums in Germany. For instance, as Yezidis from Oldenburg, we have great contact with Yezidis in Cloppenburg, Delmenhorst, and Osterholz-Scharmbeck. During the Ferman (genocide) of 2014, we worked together to help Yezidis suffered from ISIL in Iraq and Syria."

Besides the explanations of these informants, many Yezidis living in Germany call the Yezidi community a diasporic group. The idea of Yezidi diaspora in Europe became prominent among scholars, too. Andreas Ackermann (2004), for example, expresses the conditions of the emerging Yezidi diaspora in Germany, mentioning that "they have to reconstruct, practice and represent their religion according to the condition of a modern, culturally complex society" (in Kokot et al., 2004: 156-170). According to him, there was not a well-affiliated Yezidi diaspora, but there was an ongoing process of diasporisation of Yezidis in Germany until the 2000s. Ackermann mentions the reinvention of a religion or a culture in the circumstances of migration. However, he refers to the concept of Yezidi diaspora in his later work (2008), "Diaspora, Cyberspace, and Yezidism: The Use of Internet Among Yezidis in Germany." According to him, Yezidi society in the diaspora gains the positive aspects that come along with migration.

Concerning Yezidis' German case, many applicable criteria stated by scholars and informants above reveal the concept of diaspora for Yezidis. The scholar Thorsten Wettich considers Yezidis as a diasporic group and evaluates the ongoing transformations in the Yezidi diaspora society as a potential for civil society at large (Wettich, 2021, p. 229). Taking into account Ackermann's and Wettich's approaches, I consider the wide diasporas of Yezidi society as a

path to reinvent their society with all its aspects. Being away from the homeland brings a large scale of interaction and freedom for every young Yezidi individual, which will lead to constituting new discourses of self-realization. So, Yezidis in Germany, Armenia, and partly in Georgia have already acted together as a diasporic community of the 21st century.

Responding to the question of why Yezidis emerged as a diasporic instead of an ethnic group in exile in Germany will help us overcome several arguments and discussions about their diaspora in Germany.

Their constituted German diaspora may be about the orientation of Yezidis from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in time and space. The newly arrived Yezidis, materially (cultural and political material and running campaigns to raise remittances to support their homeland), make their diasporas much more active according to the latest developments in the Middle East. Yezidi organizations of diaspora mobilize to protest injustices and human rights abuses in the homeland, and mainly, against the pain that demands action.

Around ten thousand Yezidis gathered in Bielefeld, Germany for the first time. They organized a mass march against ISIS attacks.[68] Many of the Yezidis with different political views that I interviewed stated that this march and gathering was a milestone in mobilizing the Yezidi German diaspora to act together. Since 2014, there has been a rapidly growing cooperation and mobilization among the Yezidi diasporas that brought the recognition of the Yezidi genocide of 2014 by the German state in 2023.

There are many cases that show that the Yezidis are united when faced with crises and problems of contemporary times. For instance, on June 4, 2021, a fire broke out in Sharia Camp,[69] an IDP camp in Iraq, where Yezidis settled, and a campaign of donations for Yezidis was held by Yezidis' diasporic centers to raise money from Germany, and of course from the USA, Netherlands, France, and Australia too, to help Yezidi families those who without shelters, food, and necessities. This effort is a response to a crisis, and it is an orientation and solidarity that led Yezidis to create new transnational relations across boundaries and to mobilize support.

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[68] https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/jesiden-demonstrieren-in-bielefeld-gegen-verfolgung-im-irak-a-985322.html. Accessed: 27.12.2023

[69] https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/24663-Fire-destroys-over-400-tents-in-Sharya-camp-in-Kurdistan%27s-Duhok. Accessed: 26.12.2023

Ackerman's claim in 2004 about Yezidis in Germany, which is "it is too early to designate the Yezidi community as a diaspora yet" (in Kokot et al., 2004:156-169) is quite understandable within the conditions of the 2000s. But Yezidis unexpectedly became a transnational diasporic group, in particular with large lobby activities in Germany since the 2010s. The years 1990s are considered the 'activation' of Yezidi society, and the years 2010s onwards are considered periods of the diversification of Yezidis in Germany (Wettich, 2021, p. 226). They have become visible in public in the context of public celebrations and have established contacts with German authorities to integrate newcomers.

As of the 2000s, many developments occurred regarding Yezidis' conditions in the homeland and host land(s). In particular, the conditions of their life dramatically changed. The destructive effect of the Iraqi War and the intolerance of the fundamental movements re-shaped the Yezidis' solidarity and ethnic (group) consciousness. It brought the need for currently dispersed groups or individuals to lobby for the newly arrived dispersed Yezidis to run projects and agencies and mobilize the diasporic centers established in the 1990s. For instance, Yezidis' cultural center in Oldenburg, Germany (Mala Êzîdiyan a Oldenburgê), which was founded in the 1990s, did lobby in Germany to organize training courses for Yezidi women who came to Germany and to establish kindergartens for Yezidi children respectively, who were displaced and moved to the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRGI) after the genocide committed by the ISIL in 2014.

They helped Yezidis, who came to Germany via the Special Quoto Project for Vulnerable Women and Children in Northern Iraq, founded by the State Government of Baden-Württemberg. According to a Yezidi member of the cultural center in Oldenburg, who settled in Oldenburg in 1997, Yezidis` cultural center in Oldenburg did a sufficient lobby for Yezidis to settle the newly arrived thousand one hundred Yezidis in Germany:

"We made a sufficient effort to help newly arrived Yezidis and to integrate them in Oldenburg. We contacted the German government and some Catholic organizations regarding humanitarian issues, and they helped us a lot. The Yezidis Cultural Center of Oldenburg did the huge amount of work regarding a thousand hundred Yezidi women since this center is the most experienced Yezidi organization concerning humanitarian issues of Yezidis in Germany. For instance, many Yezidis throughout Germany became aware of the city of Oldenburg after our great work. Thus, since then, four thousand Yezidis have settled in Oldenburg. Many

villages in Yezidis, located in Iraq, have moved to Oldenburg. For instance, the village of Sreshka has entirely re-located in the district of Ahlhorn in Oldenburg."

Alongside the Yezidi cultural center, Yezidi individuals in the diaspora took the initiative to lobby in Germany to bring Yezidi women and children who escaped from ISIL to Germany. For instance, a Yezidi psychologist, Jan Ilhan Kizilhan, took an active role. He was the chief psychologist of the Special Quoto Project for Vulnerable Women and Children in Northern Iraq, founded by the State Government of Baden-Württemberg. He conducts humanitarian projects on the trauma treatment of Yezidis.

These efforts open up new spaces for Yezidis beyond the boundaries of their homeland, and they create a transnational connection to make Yezidis' homeland conditions better. The transnational Yezidi German diaspora and the activities of its members in host lands may not be called now a full-fledged diaspora like classical diasporas of Armenian and Jewish, but they have their own diasporic centers and agencies collaborate with each other in the context of the contemporary diasporas. They actively try to eliminate the social and economic issues regarding the destroyed homeland as a result of the Iraqi War and ISIL attacks, respectively.

It is noteworthy again to mention that Yezidis in Germany is likely to become an independent diaspora from the already full-fledged Kurdish diaspora in terms of mobility. One should distinguish the conditions constituted by both diasporas. Yezidis are able to formulate their own transnational active networks and run diasporic centers and organizations on their own. The impact of the transnational experiences of Kurdish animators of the diaspora regarding the formulation of the Yezidis' diaspora in Europe cannot be underestimated. Their German diaspora was initially formed by various modalities of early Kurdish activism, which was "formed by discourses of modernity and by a Eurocentric worldview" (Bozarslan et al., 2021: p. 831). The generation of Yezidi labor migrants came across and obtained a discourse of modernity and a Eurocentric worldview through Kurdish activism and its diasporic centers in Europe. However, the perception of Kurdish activism in Europe, in particular in Germany, has evolved into an extremist one in the eyes of the German authorities over time. For instance,

Germany banned the Kurdish PKK[70] as an extreme left wing in 1993 (Østergaard−Nielsen, 2002). It brought out a set of obstacles for Kurdish activism associated with left-wing movements to become active in the German exclusive political system. However, Yezidis, who arrived in Germany after the 2000s, became their networks with Germany's exclusive political system much more easily. It is because Yezidis may not have been considered part of Kurdish activism by German authorities, known as using violence and supporting armed struggle in their homeland. Or the German state officially prefers to use a discourse that does not link Yezidism with Kurdishness and the Kurdish political movement. In fact, young Yezidis displays an attitude similar to that of the German discourse. So, the notion of belonging to only Yezidism is widespread among young Yezidis. That is why, today, Yezidi cultural centers and non-profit organizations focus on the issues of human rights, integration of Yezidis, and obtaining international support for vulnerable Yezidi people, leaving aside the political rights demands of the Kurdish political movement. The solutions for the political issues of Kurdish issues are, therefore, barely on the agenda of the current mobilities of the Yezidi German diaspora.

Even though both the Kurdish diaspora and the Yezidi German diaspora have a similar fate of constitution, some distinctive constitutive elements of the Yezidi German diaspora differ from the former founder elements of the Kurdish diaspora throughout Europe. It is to be said that the most important issue was to focus on human rights principles for Kurdish diasporic organizations in the 1990s. Focusing on human rights principles was a foundation for the activities of such organizations to successfully build networks with local organizations in host lands. To gain international support, many organizations such as the International Association for Human Rights of the Kurds (IMK), the Kurdish Culture Center in London (KCC), the Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP),[71] the Federation of Kurdish Associations (KRF) in Sweden, the Union of Association from Kurdistan (KOMKAR), the Kurdish Institute of Paris (IKP) directed their attention to demonstrate global awareness of human rights principles and of common humanity concerning other minorities live in Kurdistan. Some of these organizations tried to establish a process of freedom of expression among the Kurds. Over

70 https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/auslaenderextremismus-ohne-islamismus/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen_artikel.html#doc714082bodyText1. Accessed: 20.12.2023

71 KHRP changed its name from the Kurdistan Human Rights Project to the Kurdish Human Rights Project in 1996

time, the manner of the discourse of some of these organizations underwent a change. Throughout the 1900s, the balance between individual and group rights and between group rights and territorial demands was crucial for these organizations. However, the discourse of common humanity of some of these organizations evolved into the need for the establishment of a democratic system in Kurdish-inhabited areas called Kurdistan. Both KHRP and IMK highlighted the territory of Kurdistan and the rights of Kurds to form an independent state (Emanuelson, 2013, pp. 143-158). Thus, "Kurdish organizations in exile are often connected to Kurdish political movements in Kurdistan" (Gunter, 2018, p. 420), and they are eager to construct a common Kurdish culture and identity. That is, the aim of having a Kurdish entity or state or having a nation-building process has remained amongst Kurdish activists for years. In this process of culture and identity formation, the Yezidis have been touted as the oldest religious community and as the pre-Islamic religious faith of the Kurdish community by the actors of the Kurdish political movement, notably by the PKK. This view is still accepted by the majority of the Yezidis today (Kizilhan, 2019). At present, however, when a Kurdish individual wants to return to Yezidism back, he or she is not accepted by the Yezidi community. The political demands for autonomy, recognition of the Kurds, their language and rights, social justice, and future scenarios about the gained autonomous regions (Bashur and Rojava) are now on the agenda of the Kurdish diaspora since the Kurdish diaspora mainly emerged in the context of conflicts over Kurdistan, which has been going on since the 1970s (Hassanpour & Mojab, 2005).

On the contrary, Yezidis' diasporic centers, organizations and voluntary groups, and cultural centers in Germany such as the Yezidi Forum (Yezidisches Forum Oldenburg) in Oldenburg, The Yezidi Centre Abroad (EZiA/Yezidi Academy, Ezidische Akademie) conduct events, seminars, and projects about the preservation of Yezidism. These cultural centers stimulate discussion about Yezidis' history, religion, and current issues regarding the integration of Yezidis in Germany. Besides these cultural centers, some other organizations, such as Yezidi Free Foundation and Yazda (A global organization of Yezidis registered in the USA, Germany, Iraq, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) that Yezidis founded in 2014 aim to focus on Yezidi case instead of the Kurdish issue. A Yezidi scholar highlights his thoughts on that issue as follows:

"Yezidis have been fighting for the Kurdish political movement in Germany all their lives. They need to stop neglecting their own community. Now the Yezidis are fighting for the Yezidi community."

Several newly founded institutions by Yezidis in their German diaspora are running campaigns as a direct response to ISIL's attacks on Yezidis. Their main aim is to seek to implement projects to support and protect vulnerable Yezidis. The mission of the organization is to provide various educational, integration, and cultural preservation programs.[72] They seek, therefore, international support to make the Yezidi genocide of 2014 recognized internationally, the international political and economic support to fight discrimination against Yezidis, to re-establish Yezidis' settlements in the homeland, and to obtain a mechanism to protect Yezidis from any threat into politically unstable conditions of the Middle East.

In January 2023, the German Bundestag recognized the massacre of Yezidis in Iraq and Syria as genocide.[73]

The Yezidi German diaspora, which was divided into political rivalries, came together for the first time with all its associations and organizations. The bill for the recognition of the Yezidi genocide includes twenty demands of the Yezidis. The four most important demands are as follows: The return of the three hundred thousand Yezidis, who have become refugees, to their homeland, the departure of illegal militias from Yezidi lands and the establishment of peace in Yezidi lands, the establishment of a Yezidi documentation center in Germany and the recording of crimes committed, and the establishment of a research unit at a German university to study the Yezidi language, social structure, and religion.[74]

Today, Yezidis mostly tries to gain influence via transnational routes to stop Middle Eastern states that subject Yezidis to political violence. A head of a Yezidi cultural center, for instance, says, "The biggest danger for the Yezidi community is that Yezidis can now easily travel to Kurdistan. This growing interaction is deepening political divisions in Germany. Those who go and come back change their minds, and political factions are growing." Moreover, some Yezidis in the German diaspora started up to emphasize the need for separation of Yezidi identity from Kurdishness in the light of the broadened networks and

[72] See details https://www.yazda.org/about-us, https://www.freeyezidi.org/wp-content/uploads/FYF2019AnnualReport_FINAL_25Aug.pdf. Accessed: 10.11.2023

[73] https://www.dw.com/en/german-parliament-recognizes-yazidi-genocide-in-iraq/a-64450334. Accessed: 02.01.2023

[74] https://www.dw.com/tr/ezidi-soyk%C4%B1r%C4%B1m%C4%B1-karar%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-sonu%C3%A7lar%C4%B1-ne-olacak/a-64471289. Accessed: 13.01.2023

contacts of Yezidi organizations with non-governmental organizations of the rest of Yezidi diasporas such as Yezidi Georgian diaspora. Within cultural centers' discussions about Yezidism, they seek to reconstruct their identity and reflect on their life and current issues in a complex society in the diaspora. That is, international politics may take the Yezidi diaspora more seriously than Kurdish activism and its diasporic organizations because Yezidis' case is able to mobilize the internal dynamics of international politics regarding humanitarian issues much more than Kurdish political activism at the moment.

Even though the sense of Yezidi German diaspora is barely visible among scholars for now, their German diaspora is about to become one of the most active visible diasporas in central Europe. Since Yezidis' German diaspora became an active diaspora swiftly by the developments of the 21st century, in particular, by the consequences of the Iraqi War (2003-2011) and a series of attacks of the ISIL, the political mobilization and action of the Yezidi German diaspora are shaping within a multicultural, tolerant, and racially mixed society compared to their other relatively active diaspora(s). The Yezidi German diaspora has become much more distinct as it is barely part of the Kurdish diaspora, which is 'the most active diaspora' (Baser, 2011) within the boundaries of Europe.

With the participation of young Yezidis in social media platforms, Yezidis actively represent themselves and gradually influence the political process of Europe and its homeland through its diasporic centers, organizations, and online networks via the new communication technologies. "The online experiences of these technologies provide new possibilities for the diaspora to discuss sensitive and taboo topics" (Baser et al., 2019, p. 35). Yezidis discusses the sensitive issues and taboos mainly within a multicultural, complex society where their diaspora mobilizes itself. It opens up a new space for discussions on Yezidis' culture, religion, and identity in complex German society. Therefore, contemporary discourses and perspectives occur in the Yezidi community to redefine and reconstruct their identities, culture, and even religious practices. Their transnational practices can cross borders with the help of new communication technologies and lead to a discussion on the way of thinking amongst Yezidis in the homeland. For instance, many activities of Yezidis' cultural centers have been broadcast simultaneously on social media platforms, mainly on Facebook.[75]

[75] Several Facebook pages and groups give a chance to the activities of the Yezidis' cultural centers abroad across borders, such as Yezidische Jugend Oldenburg, Lalish TV, International Yezidi Theological Academy, and so

The centers of the Yezidi German diaspora

Yezidis` active centers of the German diaspora are located predominantly in Lower Saxony in the cities of Hanover, Celle, Oldenburg, and Bremen and in the North Rhine-Westphalia. Yezidis settled in the cities of Bielefeld, Detmold, and Herford in the East Westphalia. In the Lower Rhine, they settle in the cities of Emmerich, Kleve, Goch, and Kalkar.[76]



Figure 1. A Yezidi clubhouse/cultural center in the city of Bielefeld

Since there is a lack of a collectivist model of society and the traditional village structures, the Yezidi cultural centers in Germany are places for religious festivals, ritual washing of the dead, discussion events and sometimes educational offers, publication of textual materials, and of course for cultural exchange events or programs that encounter traditional religious population from Transcaucasia and Kurdistan and the young Yezidis in Germany. Nearly every Yezidi cultural center has symbols of Yezidism, such as the peacock angel symbol, the

forth. For instance, several virtual panels regarding "the six-year commemoration of the Yezidi Genocide" were held on August 3, 2021, by Lalish TV in Germany and by the Yezidi Free Foundation in New York, United Kindom, Central Europe, and Iraq, respectively. See details https://pl-pl.facebook.com/tvlalish/videos/942703056276516/. ; https://www.freeyezidi.org/blog/fyf-virtual-commemoration-3-august-2020/. Accessed: 02.03.2023

[76] Data gained from a lecture on the effects of the migration of people of Turkish origin to Germany, using Yezidis as a case, held by Serhat Ortac who is a former chairman of a Yezidi center, Gesellschaft Ezidischer Akademiker (GEA) in Germany, Dusiburg, November 11, 2022.

imitations of conic domes of the mausoleums, etc. Mausoleums constitute the most surviving monuments of the Yezidi cultural heritage (Açıkyıldız, 2010), and thus, Yezidis put the imitations of such mausoleums on the entrance of their cultural centers in Germany.

The Yezidi centers of the German diaspora are varied, such as cultural centers, associations, umbrella organizations, and sub-regional organizations. I provide the list of such organizations below. The historical development of these centers dates back to the 1990s when German authorities considered the Yezidis from Anatolia, Turkey, collectively in need of asylum (Wettich, 2021). Then, cultural centers and local associations belonging to Yezidis appeared for the first time in Lower Saxony. These associations aim to support Yezidi families in social and religious matters, intervene in conflicts within the families, i.e., between parents and children, and mediate between hostile Yezidis. Then, these associations and cultural centers merged under the Zentralrat, the Central Council of Ezidis, in 2017 to represent Yezidi society in Germany independently from the Kurdish political movement. However, several Yezidi cultural centers departed from the umbrella organization Zentralrat mainly due to political and economic disagreements.

According to data I collected from Yezidi intellectuals in Germany during groundwork, there are around a hundred and five Yezidi centers in Germany. However, the number of active Yezidi cultural centers is less than twenty, according to a few heads of Yezidi centers. I must say that the efforts for the foundation of the Yezidi self-organizations peaked after the genocide against Yezidis committed by the ISIL in 2014. They have become a more and more organized society through newly found institutions and cultural centers. The list of these centers and institutions is given in the table below, and more than twenty new organizations were founded in and after the year 2014. However, I received an interesting response when I asked a Yezidi individual running an active Yezidi center about the data I gained. When I mentioned about a hundred and five centers of the Yezidi German diaspora, he responded as follows:

"The number of active associations and organizations of Yezidis in Germany does not exceed fifteen. Don't trust the information you are given. Most of the existing associations exist only by name. The statements that they are active are not true."

This was the situation I encountered as a researcher during my data collection. Many of the Yezidi cultural centers I had contacted and visited were closed. They are only open on certain days, for funerals, festivals, etc. Many of the Yezidi youth complain about a similar situation.

The cultural centers in Oldenburg, Bielefeld, and Hanover are always open. There are Yezidi cemeteries in the vicinity of these centers. There are two large Yezidi cemeteries in Hannover and Oldenburg.



Figure 2. The Yezidi cemetery in Oldenburg. Photo by the author, 2023.

Yezidis, with different political backgrounds, mainly come together during funerals in Germany. I must say that the Yezidi German community is split into different organizations and rival political groups. For instance, in the state of Berlin, the umbrella organizations Zentralrat and their rival one, Stelle Für Jesidische Angelegenheiten e.V, are politically different Yezidi organizations. These two organizations are located in Berlin and have contacts with Yezidis all over Germany. In the state of Lower Saxony, Yezidi centers are as follows: Yezidisches Forum e.V/Mala Ezidiyan in the city of Oldenburg, the Yezidische Gemeinde Osterholz e.V /Mala Ezidiyan Osterholz in the city of Osterholz-Scharmbeck, Yezidisches Jugend Nienburg/Hevgirtina Ezidiyan in the city of Nienburg, Ezidische Akademie in the city of Hanover, Ezidisches Kulturzentrum Celle und Umgebung in the city of Celle. In the state of Hamburg there is Yezidi organization Yezidischer Verein Hamburg-Bengeh Ezidiati, in the state of Saarland, Yezidischer Kulturverein Saarland, and in the state of HessenYezidische Gemeinde Offenbach (in Frankfurt), Ezidische Gemeinde Hessen (in Lollar), Yezidische Akademie GEA in Frankfurt.

Below is the list of centers of the Yezidi German diaspora, which was compiled by two Yezidi intellectuals from the Rojnas Foundation for Ezidi Solidarity during the groundwork in Germany in February 2023.

Num.	Located in	The name of the center	Foundation year
1	Neuss/Dormagen	Rojnas Institution für ezidische Solidaritat e.V	2021
2	Neunkirchen	Ezidische Jugend e.V in Saarland	2018
3	Düsseldorf	Ezidische Jugend Deutschland e.V	2011
4	Köln	Jezidische Kultur Köln e.V	2016
5	Köln	Jesiden Zentrum Köln e.V	2006
6	Köln	Ezdina Organization	2017
7	Emmerich	Yezidische Kultur Gemeinde Kreis Kleve e.V	not specified
8	Emmerich	Ezidische Gemeinde Emmerich	not specified
9	Kalkar	Verein der Eziden am unteren Niederrhein e.V	not specified
10	Essen	Ezidische Gemeinde Essen	not specified
11	Bochum	Gemeinde der Eziden Bochum e.V	2015
12	Dortmund	Gemeinde der Yeziden in Dortmund und Umgebund e.V	2015
13	Dortmund	Sportverein FC Ezidxan dortmund e.V	not specified
14	Dortmund	Ezidische Gemeinde Dortmund e.V	not specified
15	Hamm	Ezidische Kulturverein in Hamm und Umgebund e.V	2011
16	Münster	Ezidische Gemeinde West Münsterland e.V	not specified
17	Münster	Ezidische Gemeinde in Münster e.V	2014
18	Bielefeld	Lalish Zentrum Deutschland	2007
19	Bielefeld	Deutsch-Ezidische Freundschaft e.V	2016
20	Bielefeld	Yezidische Gemeinde OWL e.V	not specified
21	Bielefeld	Ezidische Kultur und Sozialverein e.V-Kaniya Spi	1995

22	Bielefeld	Ezidischer Kulturverein e.V, Bielefeld	2014
23	Bielefeld	Ezidisch Europische Sozialverein	not specified
24	Bielefeld	Ezidische Verband	not specified
25	Bielefeld	Gesselschaft Ezidischer AkademikerInnen (GEA) e.V	not specified
26	Bielefeld	Gesselschaft Ezidischer Unternehmerinnen (GEU)	not specified
27	Bielefeld	Yezidi-European Society (YES) e.V	2014
28	Bielefeld	Syrischer Ezidenrat	not specified
29	Bielefeld	Allianz der syrischer Eziden e.V	2013
30	Hiddenhausen	Yezidischer Kultur und Sozialverein e. V	not specified
31	Herford	Eziden Weltweit e.V, (Herford)	2014
32	Herford	Yezidische Gemeinde Herford (YGH)	not specified
33	Gütersloh	Yezidische Gemeinde e.V Gütersloh	2007
34	Wesel	Mala Ezdiya Wesel	not specified
35	Krefeld	Jesidischer Kulturverein e.V Krefeld	2019
36	Mönchengladbach	Jesidisch-Deutscher Freundeskreis	not specified
37	Gladbeck	Gemeinde der Eziden auf Gladbeck	2012
38	Bonn	Eziden Centrum Bonn	1992
39	Siegen	Vereinigung der Eziden in Siegen e.V	not specified
40	Oldenburg	Yezidische Forum e.V Oldenburg	1993
41	Oldenburg	Verband Ezidischer Juristinnen und Juristen	2015
42	Delmenhorst	Mala Ezidiyan Delmenhorst e.V	not specified

43	Osterholz	Yezidische Gemeinde Osterholz e.V	not specified
44	Wildeshausen	Yezidische Gemeinde in Wildeshausen und Umgebung e.V	not specified
45	Osterholz-Scharmbeck	Yezidische Gemeinde Osterholz-Scharmbeck e.V	not specified
46	Hannover	Deutsch-Yezidische Kulturverein e.V (Hannover)	2015
47	Hannover	Ezidi Zentrum im Ausland e.V- EZIA (Hannover)	not specified
48	Hannover	Yezidisches Kulturzentrum in Hannover und Umgebung	not specified
49	Hannover	Ezidische Akademie e.V, Hannover	2014
50	Lehrte	Gesellschaftszentrum Azadî Lehrte e.V	not specified
51	Peine	Ezidischer Kulturverein Peine e.V	not specified
52	Achim	Ezidische Gemeinde zu Verden e.V	not specified
53	Nienburg/Weser	Ezidische Gemeinde Nienburg e.V	not specified
54	Hameln	Ezidisches Kultur-Zentrum in Hameln e.V	not specified
55	Wolfsburg	Ezidischer Kulturverein Wolfsburg e.V	2016
56	Vechta	Yezidische Gemeinde Oldenburg –Land e.V	not specified
57	Diepholz	Ronahi Diepholz-Yezidische Kultur und Sozialverein e.V	not specified
58	Leer	Yezidische Kulturverein in Ostfriesland e.V (Leer)	not specified
59	Wilhelmshaven	Sportverein FC Ezidxan e.V	not specified
60	Sulingen	Ezidische Gemeinde Sulingen e.V	not specified

61	Sulingen	Föderation der Ezidischen Vereiene e.V	not specified
62	Meinersen	Yezidischer Verein Meinersen e.V	not specified
63	Celle	Ezidisches Kulturzentrum in Celle und Umgebung e.V	1993
64	Celle	Hevgirtina Ciwanen Ezdayi	not specified
65	Bergen	Gemeinde der Eziden Bergen e.V	2011
66	Hildesheim	Zentrum der Yeziden in Hildesheim e.V	2013
67	Hildesheim	Vereinigung ezidischer Geistliche und Würgentrager e.V	2020
68	Göttingen	Zentrum der Eziden in Göttingen e.V	not specified
69	Cloppenburg	Deutscher-Yezidische Kulturverein in Cloppenburg	not specified
70	Stadthagen	Yezidischer Kulturverein in Stadthagen e.V	not specified
71	Heidekreis	Ezidischer Kulturverein Heidekreis e.V	not specified
72	Bremen	Ezidisches Kulturzentrum in Bremen	not specified
73	Bremen	Yezidische Forum Bremen	not specified
74	Hamburg	Yezidisher Verein Hamburg-bengeh Ezidiyati e.V	not specified
75	Berlin	Ezidisches Kulturzentrum in Berlin e.V	2007
76	Berlin	Stelle für Jesidische Angelegenheiten e.V Berlin	not specified
77	Berlin	Ezidischer Frauenrat Berlin- “Binevs” e.V	not specified
78	Berlin	Union der syrischen Eziden e.V	2020
79	Stuttgart	Ezidische Zentrum in Stuttgart	2016

80	Stuttgart	Ezidische Sonne Stuttgart e.V	2018
81	Stuttgart	Siwana Ezidi Kadın Meclisi (SMJE)	not specified
82	Pforzheim	Yezidisch-Deutscher Verein Pforzheim e.V	not specified
83	Lahr	Ezidische Gemeinde Offenburg-Lahr	not specified
84	Baden-Württemberg	Ezidische Zentrum in Baden-Württemberg e.V	not specified
85	Freiburg	Ezidisches Zentrum Freiburg e.V	not specified
86	Freiburg	Ezidischer Kultur e.V	not specified
87	München	Ezidische Akademie in Bayern	not specified
88	Nürnberg	Ezidische Gemeinde Nürnberg e.V	not specified
89	Nürnberg	Ezidisch Gemeinschaft Deutschland	not specified
90	Nürnberg	Jeziden-Deutsche Freundschaftsgesellschaft in Nürnberg	not specified
91	Amberg	Ezidische Gemeinde in Amberg e.V	not specified
92	Augsburg	Ezidische Kulturverein e.V Augsburg	2010
93	Giessen	Ezidische Gemeinde Hessen e.V (Gießen)	not specified
94	Giessen	Chistlich-Ezidische Gesellschaft e.V	not specified
95	Offenbach	Yezidische Gemeinde Offenbach e.V	not specified
96	Koblenz	Ezidische Gemeinde Koblenz und Umgebung e.V	not specified
97	Koblenz	Solidaritatsverein der Yeziden in Deutschland e.V	2014

98	Andernach	Ezidische Gemeinde Andernach	not specified
99	Marnheim	Ezidische Gemeinde Marnheim e.V	not specified
100	Dierdorf	Ezidische Gemeinde Rheinland-Pfalz	not specified
101	Neunkirchen	Ezidische Jugend e.V	not specified
102	Saarwellingen	Rote Sonne–der Ezidischen Karitative e.V	not specified
103	Heusweiler	Yezidischer Kulturverein e.V	not specified
104		Zentralrat der Eziden in Deutschland [aims to be federation]	2017
105		Internationalen Unabhangiger Ezidischen Vereinigungen (aims to be federation)	2021

Table 2. The list of Yezidi organizations, centers, and cultural houses in their German Diaspora. Source: From Fermaz Xerîbo, who is a member of the NGO, Rojnas Foundation for Ezidi Solidarity

It is necessary to mention that there is a lack of sufficient cross-association cooperation between these centers in the list under an umbrella association when the issue of official recognition in Germany is discussed. There is no such unity in these centers. There is no such a Yezidi federation or umbrella organization that brings these Yezidi centers to work together. The Zentralrat is a result of an attempt to constitute a federation of Yezidis in Germany. However, it is not functioning well yet. Many Yezidi centers split from Zentralrat in time. A Yezidi individual who runs a Yezidi center mentions the reasons behind that separation in our private conversation as follows:

"The Yezidi houses (cultural centers) in different federal states of Germany are still very weak. They are not professional, and they are not competent to do big things. Of course, for 55 years, the Yezidis have been known in all aspects and have good relations with the local authorities. However, as a religion, they have not yet reached that level. In 2017, we gathered

all the representatives of the Yezidi culture centers in Niedersachsen. We had many big meetings. We said we would establish the central center (federation) in Niedersachsen. Zentralrat was established at the same time. The PKK-affiliated centers did not want to come together with Zentralrat. They also had their own center called Nav-Yek, so they did not accept the Zentralrat's request. They didn't want to join because they knew that they would lose their power politically. Many houses were transferred to Zenralrat, and for two years, the activity was carried out. However, political divisions prevented this unity. We separated from them, too. They dont know how to manage the remittances to be used in the homeland."

Yet, it is noteworthy to mention that there is an ongoing remarkable interaction between several Yezidi centers in their German diaspora with a potential of expandable cooperation in recent years. Yezidis in the German diaspora have become more and more organized and diversified by newly found institutions.

With more than its sixty-four-year-old history, the Yezidi German community has completed the diaspora process through its institutions and literate individuals. There has been a rapid increase in institutionalization in the last ten years. Yezidi individuals use this institutionalization to re-establish Yezidism in the liberal environment of German society. To the question posed above whether Yezidis are a diaspora in Germany, I would answer with a clear yes. The Yezidi community and its young members are focused on self-representation in German society. The Yezidis have shown that they are a mobilized diaspora community by coming together and taking a common stance for the official recognition of the genocide of the Yezidis in German society in 2023. The next stage is likely to gain the official recognition as a religious group. For this, we may encounter a Yezidi German diaspora in which Yezidi theology is recreated in the context of role models of European thinking, religious institutions are created, and religious figures can become visible with their special clothes in the near future.

Chapter 3 Youth category in scientific research

Introduction

In this chapter, I am discussing and highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of youth studies and the limits of the usage of the concept of youth. This study aims to examine the ideas, views, and perceptions of the young Yezidi individuals in Germany, who have consciously or unconsciously stayed away from the traditional social structure due to their lifestyle and future-oriented vision of revolution about the future of the Yezidi society. At this point, I will try to explain what the concept of the Yezidi youth means to me in this study and what its scope is, taking into account the youth studies and approaches in the current scientific literature. Such issues associated with the lifestyle of youth by older members, for example, the issue of secularization of the Yezidi society in Germany or the issue of assimilation etc., will be evaluated. Such research questions like 'Do Yezidi youth play any role in secularizing their community within the European values and ways of thinking?' 'Do Yezidi youth prefer a modern life or a traditional life in Germany?' Which culture do young Yezidis feel closer to in Germany?' Are young Yezidis comfortable sharing their ideas with the older generation?' 'Do young Yezidis want to have a formal Yezidi theology in the Western sense to explain Yezidism to outsiders?' etc., will be posed to young Yezidis ın the following subchapters of this chapter.

I must mention that a range of social science disciplines drawing on youth studies bring different theories and concepts, present challenges, and provide a new understanding of the young population. In the themes of these disciplines, such as sociology, social psychology, political science, cultural studies, and so on, the thesis of individualization and the thesis of social generation are mainly mentioned and included in understanding the lives of the young population, which indicates to the Yezidi youth too. And youth, in general, is viewed or framed in this understanding as a social process and a social generation. In both frames, there are implications of framing youth, such as the age, the place of young people in society, the transnational stage, autonomy, social roles and expectations, and so on. On the one hand, it is

to be said that the approaches frame youth as a social process that relies on the interaction between the biological and social bodies of young people, and the phases of life are a product of the interaction between conditions of environments and cultures. Social generation, on the other hand, relies on the impacts of social changes on young people's lives. It is a useful framework for understanding questions such as how much has changed in young people's lives, what kind of changes occurred in young people's lives, and of young people in the contemporary world (White, Wyn, & Robards, 2017).

More questions, such as what the concept of youth is, what disciplines are interested in youth studies, and where Yezidi youth take part in youth studies, are needed. These are likely to come to mind for those who begin to read this chapter.

I must say that the term youth does not refer to something solid in youth sociology and youth studies. Rather, the term youth is considered a social process depending on time and space by a huge number of scholars (Ariès, 1962; Wyy & White, 1997; Valentine, 2003; Wyn, White & Robards, 2017).

Philippe Ariès, a French historian known for his significant contribution to social history, claims that the idea of youth as a separate stage of life emerged among the upper classes in the seventeenth century. The idea that the young population would be educated did separate young people from adults, according to him (Ariès, 1962). In his work Centuries of Childhood, education is the way of distinguishing people in this stage of life. The historical specificity of these social stage groups, such as child, youth, and adult, begins with Ariès` work, which is a foundational work for many sociologists of youth studies of the 1960s.

However, the social and cultural position of young people was prominent in the earlier studies in the 1950s. These studies regarding youth were notably social and psychological studies exploring the struggles of adolescents (Gesell A. & Ames L., 1956; Blos, 1962). In the realm of the post-World War II era, academic works of sociologists and psychologists have focused more on the experiences of young people who were categorized as 'youth subcultures' and 'teenagers' as a distinct social category. Ideas about young people's social profile and demographic trends were the main themes of the youth studies of the mid-twentieth century. A surge in the birth rate soon after World War II brought significant changes in public institutions. It brought a major expansion of secondary education and a significant expansion of young people's services in the market. Researchers, though, paid attention to the specific

challenges and opportunities that young people face, drawing on a range of disciplines to explore the risks that young people bear.

In time, studies on youth developed between the 1960s and 1970s, from the issues of adolescents to the social and cultural changes that young people led to. Once the cultural consumption of young people and their stylistic choices had been considered as rebellious attitudes, the young population, therefore, was part of the studies of subcultures. Then, from the 1960s onwards, youth, as a new concept, became a distinct phase of life in many academic works. The themes regarding youth studies mushroomed, and the young population became part of the works in sociology, anthropology, education, public health, criminology, and so on. Some key aspects and dimensions such as age, biological and psychological development, social and cultural construction, transnational stage, social roles and expectations, and diversity and intersectionality became themes in the definition of the concept of youth across cultures and disciplines in youth studies. For state administrations and policymakers, for example, youth are the main element of transition in institutional structures such as school and work.

The economic, social, and political factors that shaped the lives of the young population were at the center of the works of scholars of the 1960s and 1970s. These scholars questioned the dominant societal norms via the emergence of critical perspectives in youth studies. The dimensions of the definitions of youth, such as the transnational stage between childhood and adulthood, are criticized in earlier works from the 1960s onwards. Instead, scholars started to mention diversity and the social construction of youth identities. At the end of the 1970s and onwards, policymakers perceived this population as a problem. Knowledge is generated, and strategies are developed to transition this population into adulthood. The youth population, though, is the main element of policymaking and, therefore, the target of statistical surveys. Youth researchers, on the other hand, study the methods and approaches that the state administration produces for the youth.

Today, much research on youth categorizes youth and young people within variable age groupings that come to the arrival point as adulthood, which is another blurred term. In youth studies, for instance, the concept of youth is, in general, described as a constructed intermediary phase between childhood and adulthood (Furlong, 2013), and the age ranges are varied in nearly every study on youth. "Youth is a lot of things: a concept, an image, a

lifestyle" (Threadgold, 2018: 9). In this point of view, I must mention that Yezidi youth in this study is more likely considered as a lifestyle.

Studies on the concept of youth vary. Like the invention of adolescence, youth is a social construction (Bourdieu, 1993; Kelly, 2000, 2006; Payne, 2010). However, in traditional youth studies, the definition of youth has a strong emphasis on the patterns of dependence. Thus, the concept of youth can be difficult to define properly in the realm of this study. However, from Threadgold's (2018) viewpoint, the most convenient category to approach the Yezidi youth is the category of lifestyle since cultural clashes appear in the contexts of adopted liberal values in Germany. The Yezidi young individuals are criticized by elders concerning the adoption of the German language instead of the mother tongue, low attendance at cultural centers, low attendance at funerals and ceremonies of giving alms, etc.

The definitions and classifications of the concept of youth are discussed below. For instance, an age limit for adolescence can be set in the light of certain physiological and emotional conditions and outcomes, economic independence, and educational attainment; however, setting a similar age limit for the concept of youth, except for legal definitions of the United Nations (UN) mentioned below, would be a very laborious task. Every society has its own dynamics and circumstances, which naturally diversify the views on the definition of youth. In the traditional Yezidi society, for example, youth is defined by the term cahilî. A cahil individual is considered a raw person in terms of social norms, religious knowledge, and social practices. In the Yezidi society, young individuals are usually defined in terms of ignorance and inexperience. In fact, the concept of youth is often used in conjunction with the concept of ignorance. In this respect, it is difficult for a young Yezidi person to get older people to accept his/her ideas and suggestions and even to mention his/her views. But, in the diaspora circumstances, notably in Germany, young Yezidis express their ideas and opinions in a more liberated way. So, in this case, the Yezidi society has its own dynamics and circumstances regarding conceptualizing the concept of youth.

To come back to the issue of the definition of the youth, the latest stage of modern society, with its institutional structure, has expanded the boundaries of life transitions. To deal with the complexity of the definition of youth as a stage in the life course, researchers offer new concepts for the potential new phase, such as "young adulthood," "post-adolescence," and "emerging adulthood" (EGRIS, 2001; Keniston, 1968; Arnett, 2004). Since young people

spend much of their lives in educational settings, scholars in youth studies focus on inventing new concepts in modern societies to explore the dynamics of social changes. The subject areas of sociology, politics, social policy, and criminology prominently deal with youth to understand the nature of social change. Policymakers are especially interested in youth studies in two areas: crime and youth cultures. Youth cultures ' perspectives show a tendency to the youth's consumption habits, their behaviors and actions, and their social integration and economic efficiency that challenge the cultural standpoints of older generations (Furlong, 2013).In this point, Yezidi youth is considered in the context of youth cultures since their social interaction, behaviors, and actions led to the change in Yezidi society.

I can say that the theme of perspective to the Yezidi youth in this study is mostly concerned with actions and lifestyles that bring transformations and change in culture. Since the examination of young consumption habits and economic efficiency is not part of the scope of this study, their perceptions regarding Yezidi traditions, social practices, and the functioning of the Yezidi society will be analyzed. Several research questions, like Does Yezidi youth share common characteristics with the general concept of youth in the scientific literature? What are the characteristics that distinguish Yezidi youth from the youth in German society? What are the factors that distinguish Yezidi youth in Germany from Yezidi youth in traditional Yezidi society? etc., will be answered to evaluate the Yezidi youth well.

Soon after giving a summary of definitions and classifications of the concept of youth below, I will highlight features and provide gained data that characterize Yezidi youth in Germany. So, the concept of Yezidi youth, which is addressed in the study, will be well-analyzed and presented in a theoretical framework for the potential scientific studies in the near future.

3.1 Definitions

It's better to say everything about the concept of youth at the beginning: Youth is an ill-defined term. In general, it is a stage between dependence and independence (Dan, 1997: 55) and is a social construction that has its origins in the capitalist division of labor (Lawrence, 1982, p. 55). Today, the notion of the label youth is often described in a positive manner that covers the periods of late childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, which is believed to be a group of people goes from 14 to 29 years of age that have the potential to recreate a space for future full development.[77] Many institutions, organizations,

[77] UNICEF

intergovernmental organizations that attach importance to the young population, such as the European Union(EU), the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), etc. have definitions of the youth concept with a close meaning. In Germany, the act Jugengerichtsgesetz (JGG)[78] gives comprehensive explanations about youth and their legal rights. It is known as Juvenile Law. The scope includes youth employment law, child protection law, juvenile criminal law, child and youth welfare law, school law, and regulations regarding the family status of children. According to the act JGG, a person aged 14 to 18 is in the category of adolescent, and a person aged 18 to 21 is in the category of young adult.

The institutions and organizations usually divide the young population into age groups for statistical data. The EU, for example, divides the young population into three main age groups, covering the age group 15 to 29. These age groups are presented in their reports[79] as follows: from 15 to 19, from 20 to 24, and from 25 to 29 age groups. According to the EU, the period in which a person is considered to be 'young' differs across Europe according to the national context, the socio-economic developments of society, and time.'[80] The EU youth strategy aims to foster youth participation in democratic life and to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to be part of social inclusion. In this case, the concept of youth in the definition of the EU is mostly associated with important life changes: 'from being in education to having a full-time job, from living in the parental home to setting up one's own household, and from being financially dependent to managing one's own money.'[81] So, there is no universally accepted definition of youth according to the EU. No official definition of youth is provided, only the classification of people. Thus, the official definitions of the youth of every member state are provided in its platform Youth Wiki instead.

The definition of the youth concept is blurred in the OECD discourse, too. Although the OECD does not provide a generally accepted official definition, in its books and reports,[82] the young population is more likely defined as people who are under the age of 30 and need to be included in the labor market in developing and emerging countries. The concept of youth is

[78] https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/jgg/ Accessed: 22.08.2021
[79] Doc. 9264/18 ADD 2 — SWD(2018) 169 final part 1-7. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9264-2018-ADD-2/en/pdf Accessed: 18.10.2021
[80] Official Journal of the European Union, 2018. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/oj/direct-access.html Accessed: 12.09.2021
[81] SWD(2018) 169 final part 1-7, p. 3 https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9264-2018-ADD-2/en/pdf Accessed: 20.01.2022
[82] https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/youth-aspirations-and-the-reality-of-jobs-in-developing-countries_9789264285668-en#page16. Accessed: 12.01.2022

treated as part of policy consideration under the economic and social policy issues. So, once again, the concept of youth is a notion of classification of people.

The UN drew international attention to the potential contribution of young people to development in the year 1985, which was accepted as the International Youth Year. Then, a decade later, an international strategy (The World Programme for Action for Youth) for the young population was adopted to provide a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action of the States Members of the UN to improve the situation of young people. Young people were also classified as a broad category with subgroups by the UN. There is no such definition of the youth concept made by the UN. However, participation in the decision-making process is considered a key notion for people who can be seen as youth.[83] Today, apart from the statistical classifications of the term youth, young people are considered as 'both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation by the UN.'[84] So, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations provide classifications rather than definitions concerning the concept of youth. We often encounter several definitions of the concept of youth, mostly in academic studies.

I must mention that, apart from the diversity of definitions of youth in academic studies, almost all institutions and organizations define youth based on the UN approach. In earlier studies done concerning youth, youth or young people have been analyzed negatively and rebelled as people who are against societal norms because of their defiant activities such as taking drugs, gang membership, and involving street criminals[85] (Hodkinson and Deicke, 2007: 3). With regards to them of earlier studies (Westergaard, 1992; Myrdal, 1962; Macnicol, 1994), youth in America, Britain, and in several Western countries have been considered as a social category which refers to a time of transition that can be dangerous for the social and moral order and threaten the wider society (MacDonald, 1997: 1). It should be noted that early youth studies made efforts to address the concern of conservative societies of Western societies. In the theme of earlier studies, youth have been identified as an economically excluded and marginalized group of people who are hopelessly set apart from the rest of society by the outcomes of capitalism, economic inequality, and the welfare dependency of liberal regimes. Their way of life has been seen as a kind of assimilation process within the

[83] https://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/youth-participation.pdf Accessed: 20.02.2022
[84] The United Nations, World Programme for Action for Youth, 2010. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf Accessed: 20.02.2022
[85] https://ukdataservice.ac.uk//app/uploads/thematicguideyouthculturestudies.pdf Accessed: 29.02.2022

way of life of Western societies. This process directed youth to the concept of 'the underclass' that believed threatened the social and moral norms of conservative people. Youth, therefore, have been analyzed as a social category below the core working class by the means and approaches of the youth transition studies for decades. However, Today, youth are becoming a central part of society in a positive manner by influencing mainstream culture through mass media. Therefore, the definition or meaning of youth remains a challengeable issue under the conditions of rapid social changes in the contemporary world. The ongoing migration, fundamental changes in consumption patterns, and its impact on the mobilities of the new youth lead to different definitions of youth in contemporary youth studies. From this point of view, the term youth, in time, has become a complex phenomenon despite a wealth of literature (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2009, p. 22), particularly in terms of transition studies. Moreover, Today, subjective experiences and the concerns of youth are much more at the center of youth studies. Yet, it is to be said that youth has been defined mainly in the context of statistical purposes as a chronological stage of life for decades. Therefore, the notion of youth is constructed and modified as a social category according to social expectations regarding age brackets for participation in education, parenthood, consumption, and social welfare (R. Heinz, 2009: p. 5). The transition between the age groups here is seen as a key factor that is shaped by the circumstances of our lives. This definition is related to 'transition youth studies,' and transition here has a close affiliation with economic development. The need to define youth from a statistical perspective requires various indicators such as age, participation in education, workplace, marriage, involvement in society, etc. Yet, the impact of some indicators in statistical definition became weak in time because earlier studies had not examined young people's concerns and subjectivity. Rather, young people had been examined as parts of prosperity and development. Age, for instance, has been an essential indicator of the statistical definition of youth for decades related to industrial societies, and it has become blurred in the conditions of the modern world. Although social age markers of industrial societies refer to the timing of transitions between generations, in 'postindustrial service societies,' social age markers seem to lose their force and are criticized. Here, both individuals and the state (s) structures, which define youth as a resource for economic development, play an important role in conceptualizing youth. It leads to a sociological perspective, which is believed to have appeared from the impact of social conditions on the experienced age of a group that can be considered as a youth (Woodman & Wyn, 2007, pp. 495-514). Here, one, statistically, might have a definition of youth. Yet, statistically, youth has been defined under the impact of the State structures as a resource for accelerating economy and prosperity. It is,

naturally, defined according to social conditions and age cohorts within the accounts of the concept of generation, which are most known as the Baby Boomer generation, the Generation X, the Generation Y, and the Generation Z, respectively. (Twenge J. M. 2017). Therefore, Today, one might clarify a group of people as youth only as an imaginary expression of the stage between childhood and stage of adulthood because it is a challenging issue to clarify the borders of the stage of childhood, 'young adulthood' and adulthood in current conditions of modern developed societies. Hence, it is to be noted that, alongside statistical purposes, many governments, organizations, political units, and agencies endeavor to understand the definition of youth and the concerns of young people and to fix its age span within their current conditions. Naturally, the emergence of extended transitions, the youth phase, and its new theoretical developments (Cieslik, Bennett, and Miles 2003: 2) lead to opportunities to explore Today's new youth social-cultural practices, pursuits, and conceptions of identities.

Then, when do we begin speaking of youth or young people? In what conditions do we accept a universal definition of the concept of youth?

It has become tough to find answers to these questions in Today's society. However, if needed, it may still be possible to reach a general concept of youth. However, for this aim, the existing definitions, conceptions, and classifications of youth studies in academic works should be taken into consideration. For instance, in terms of 'youth culture studies,' which has become an international discipline from the 1990s onwards (Johansson, 2017, pp. 510-524), 'youth is a social relationship rather than simply being a universal and essential category' (Wyn & White, 2015, p. 28). According to youth culture studies, the influence of new indicators such as gender identity, climate change, race, class, migration, etc., has been seen in the reshaping of the definition of youth. It seems quite difficult in a postindustrial service society to categorize a group of people as youth in terms of youth culture studies. Moreover, the definition of social groups according to age brackets has become a challenge in youth transition studies. The concept of transition study, which is one of the most common approaches, has undergone some revision in recent years (Craine, 1997); (Wyn & Dwyer, 1999). Because there are many school leavers, skilled college graduates are not involved in the so-called transition process between the school and the workplace. From a youth transition studies point of view, the concept defined as youth statistically by age brackets might have become meaningless. That is, the term youth became a fluid concept, and it is not easy to fix its age span and to have its fixed definition Today.

As mentioned above, nevertheless, many organizations, political unities, and societies still try to define youth according to age brackets. The UN, for example, treats youth as a specific object of development that needs to be well-integrated into society. Unemployment is seen as the most social and economic problem relating to youth, and the concept of the youth is dealt with in a broader developmental context by the UN. Thus, youth is defined for statistical purposes.[86] Thus, the field of youth studies experiences new conceptions and perspectives nowadays.

There are challenges to using methods in youth studies, too. Youth studies is a broad field in which scholars use a variety of methods (MacDonald, Shildrick, and Woodman, 2020). Although it is built within the sociological core, youth studies are interdisciplinary (Woodman and Bennett, 2015: 1), and historically it is mainly based on the studies of youth culture dating from the 1960s and the later studies focusing on youth transitions from school to workplace dating 1970s (MacDonald, Mason, and Shildrick, 2001).

3.2 Classifications

Today, the impact of societal change in industrial and postindustrial societies is the most prominent factor in the lives of young people. That not only led to the need for new approaches and methods to youth studies but also led to the need for a universally acceptable definition of the concept of youth. The label of youth or young people has often been seen as a stable seismograph of the future regarding development. This notion of a homogenous category called youth has been criticized and modified for years by different methodological and theoretical ways of both youth culture studies and youth transition studies (Johansson, 2007).

Thus, two main perspectives or poles, youth transition studies, and youth cultural studies, have been adapted as lenses in youth studies. These two approaches have methodological differences. Youth cultural studies appeared as one of the interests of cultural studies. There has been the influence of some theoretical developments such as Feminism, Post-Colonial Studies, Social Theory, and Critical Theory (Nayak and Kehily, 2013: 17). Moreover, youth cultural studies have introduced several key concepts such as subcultures, resistance, style, fashion, and the diaspora. The forms of youth culture, meaning of events, and fashion style to

[86] https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/21539 Report A/36/215 Accessed: 28.02.2022

young people are being analyzed by anthropological methods (Johansson, 2017; Woodmen & Bennett, 2015) with a tendency to process social change.

In contrast, the study of youth transition focuses on transition patterns to adulthood, education, workplace, career, and life patterns. These patterns are important in the transition pole and can be analyzed over a long period of time. Thus, the study of youth transition is based on large-scale quantitative research, while youth cultural studies draw on ethnographic and qualitative methodologies. However, nowadays, researchers on transition and cultural studies share some theoretical traditions in youth studies. The impact of different versions of the theory of modernity can be seen in both approaches in contemporary societies. Inevitably, the questions of identity are at the center of two approaches in the study of young peoples' lives and movements (Johansson, 2017).

The migration process, the expansion of travel, and the growing impact of youth on government policy have all contributed to reshaping youth studies (Bennett, 2003: 6) and the definition of youth and its age brackets. As noted above, youth research is mainly a field of sociology, and many sociologists have abandoned defining the concept of youth in terms of an aging period. However, over the last decades of the twentieth century, the social age markers that were classifying groups of people according to the age brackets have lost their force. The transitions in the classical periods of childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and old age became less age-dependent on the conditions of the modern world. Thus, in terms of the transition approach, from now onwards, youth is a component of the life course, and it is not possible to distinguish between adolescence and adulthood (Walter R. Heinz, 2009: 3). For instance, in one of the central approaches of youth studies, youth transition studies, the age brackets appear from the age of 12 to 30 (Bennett, 2003, p. 16), which covers the period of adolescence as well. Complex social conditions determine the membership of an age bracket of generation. Thus, except for legal definitions of maturity, the legal entities and organizations might get different answers to the definition of youth. Different fields, such as pedagogy, psychology, and sociology, as well as different organizations and political entities, have their own definitions regarding the actual need for research. For instance, according to the European Commission, young people are defined as being between 15 and 29 years old.[87] As noted above, a general concept of youth can be reached when existing conceptions are analyzed. For instance, the first definition of youth by the UN in 1981, in his report to the

[87] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth Accessed 15.10.2021

General Assembly on International Youth Year,[88] might illustrate an age group that might be accepted as a general concept of youth to approach the idea of youth. However, it is to be said that the UN has its own age bracket while its entities and regional organizations have their own different definitions and age stages.[89] The UN and its entities UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO consider young people and youth interchangeable to mean persons between the age of 15 and 24. Even the age brackets lose their force; today, the easiest way of understanding youth, according to the UN, is to have an age category or stage. Today, the youth population is, therefore, seen both as an opportunity and challenge in the life stages of adolescents and adults. On the one hand, the youth population is considered an opportunity because of its potential of sufficient contribution to economic growth, national well-being, democratic process, and having a strong voice in local and national institutions. In this category, as Wyn and Wooden (2007) pointed out, the concept of youth is seen as a linear process on the life course between childhood and adulthood, and here, the decision and the subjectivities of youth or young people are underestimated. Because the definition is too deterministic and developmental (Wyn & Woodmen, 2007), on the other hand, the youth population is sometimes considered a challenge because of its negative impact on the prosperity of a country when some countries are unable to provide for the needs of their youth population.

Cultural, historical, and political developments have shaped the idea of youth. There is, therefore, no universally agreed upon, unique, homogenous group that we can call youth. Because the meaning of youth varies in different socio-cultural and economic conditions in different societies. Thus, nearly every nation clarifies the age group according to its natural features. Thus, having a commonly defined age group of young people might not be easy. However, the age group most often used in reports from multi-nation surveys is 18-29 (Giordan, 2010, p. 89).

Regarding the Yezidi youth in Germany, I must highlight the features of the Yezidi youth. In general, the young Yezidi people in Germany grew up after the year 2000 under the influence of rapid social, cultural, and technological developments. Without taking into account the characteristics of the definitions and classifications of youth discussed above, a specific age

[88] https://undocs.org/en/A/36/215 Accessed 15.10.2021

[89] https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf Accessed 15.09.2021
UN-Habitat (Youth Fund) considers youth as persons living in developing countries between the ages 15-32, https://unhabitat.org/urban-youth-fund, yet in the context of Africa, The Africa Youth Charter considers the span of youth people as the age between 15-35, https://au.int/en/africa-youth-month-2019 Accessed 15.12.2021

range has been used in this study purely to indicate a generational difference. In a real sense, it would not be correct to limit the Yezidi youth in Germany to a period between the age of 18 and the age of adulthood (often after 30). However, in order to collect the most reliable data, this study was conducted with Yezidi youth who belong to this age group. In the following subsections, I would like to present the characteristics of the Yezidi youth in Germany in more detail.

3.3 Yezidi youth in the study

The group of people classified as youth in Western societies has reached a specific analog pattern as a result of industrial conditions. The production and consumption relations in postindustrial societies determine the features of the classified groups of people. In Western societies, for example, the idea of the rise of people called or classified as an 'underclass,' who were distinct from traditional patterns of mainstream culture, was experienced (MacDonald, 1997) mainly in the labor market circumstances. In contrast to the definitions and classifications of youth created by the social and economic circumstances in Western societies, the Yezidi youth in Germany is somewhere between two different ways of life (traditional and secular) and social and economic conditions. The group of people living in Germany, which I refer to in this study as the Yezidi youth, consists of individuals who experience different social and economic conditions. In addition to the Yezidi youth who have adopted European values and lifestyle as a way of life instead of traditional life, there is a layer of Yezidi youth who continue traditional life and, at the same time, partially accept Western values. In this study, the perceptions and ideas of Yezidi youth who are in favor of maintaining traditional life and Yezidi youth who are secularised and live with the conditions of the liberal world are included. The young Yezidi layer, born and raised in German society, adopts a secular lifestyle and takes a stand against the traditional patterns of mainstream Yezidi culture. In contrast, the young Yezidis who have immigrated to Germany in the last decade(s) are considering partially changing the traditional patterns of the mainstream culture. However, the common feature of both layers of young people is to transform and change the Yezidi society according to today's circumstances in Germany.

First of all, it is necessary to answer questions such as: What does the Yezidi youth mean in this study? What kind of features do they have? What distinguishes the Yezidi youth from

other youth groups in Germany? For what purpose does this research address and analyze the Yezidi youth?

This research analyses the Yezidi youth population living in Germany as a human resource for the realization of the ongoing ideas of change and transformation in the Yezidi community. This human resource experiences perfect educational conditions and social life practices. Unlike previous generations of Yezidis, they shape their life views outside of political currents and ideologies. They deal with the transformation and change of the Yazidi community from a pragmatic point of view. They would like to realize for the Yezidi community the rights, social functioning, and relations with German society that other religious groups in Germany have gained. This group of people could be an excellent opportunity to rationalize the debates and ambiguous aspects of religion, culture, and identity in the Yezidi community. Most of them are highly educated, fluent in many foreign languages, and able to communicate easily and well with the outside world. Thus, this generation's ideas and opinions about the Yezidi community are extremely valuable. However, apart from Kreyenbroke's work (2009), these young people have not yet been involved in academic studies.

It can be observed that the Yezidi diaspora has started to be the subject of academic studies for a little over a decade (Kreyenbroek, 2009; Savucu, 2016; Sanders, 2019). While the diaspora conditions of an ethnic and religious group have only recently begun to be studied, working on the perceptions of the young members of this group in the diaspora via academic study is a somewhat risky and challenging endeavor for me. However, despite this risk and difficulty, it is essential to make the Yezidi youth a special subject of academic research. This is because contemporary Yezidi society makes future concerns (such as assimilation in Europe) and plans (such as potential new methods of transmitting religious knowledge to new generations) through the Yezidi youth. Because a large part of the Yezidi community still does not know how to evaluate the younger generation. At this point, Yezidi youth are defined by elder Yezidis in different ways. The Yezidi youth are seen both as a lost generation (a group of people who hang out in shisha bars, for example) and as a potential source for the liberation of the Yezidi community and its return to its essence. The Yezidi youth, who are the subject of the research, are part of these two approaches. This group of people, seen as both a lost generation and a potential savior, is the subject of the research, and exciting results have been obtained. The young people in this group of people, who are the subject of the research, describe themselves as gnostic, atheist, individuals who have strict Yezidi beliefs, etc. However, whether they are atheists or agnostics, they all have one thing in common: they

choose Yezidism as a concept of belonging that needs to be reformulated according to the circumstances of the contemporary world.

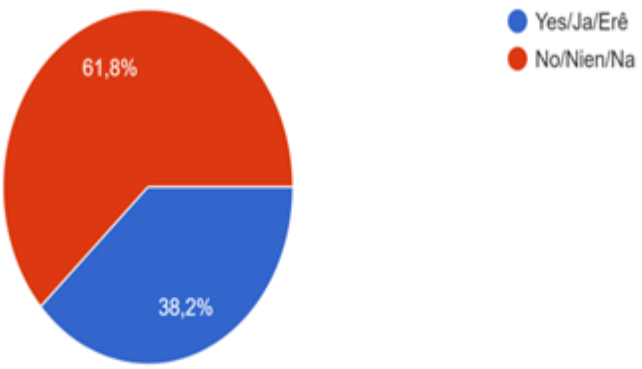
The following in light of the data I have obtained from my observations and face-to-face interviews: The current Yezidi youth in Germany is neither a lost generation that has been assimilated nor a generation that can have a say in the direction of the Yezidi community. Young Yezidis are afraid of strictly oppressive family members and the environment that interferes with social life instead. They consider the Yezidi cultural centers as becoming static, where little information is produced and where religious education is almost non-existent. On the one hand, they depict Yezidi cultural centers as places where members of previous generations who criticized the way of life of young Yezidis gathered and where nothing worthwhile was done for Yezidism. On the other hand, a small portion of young Yezidis, who migrated to Germany in the 2010s, work actively in these centers, being part of constituted cultural connections with Germans and producing knowledge. The Yezidi youth, who was born and raised in Germany, wants to return to the Yezidi community by transforming the internal dynamics and functioning of the community. However, this group of highly educated people is confronted with the conservatism and inflexible view of life of previous generations. Therefore, including the views of young people in this study will help us to see both the dimensions of the ongoing debates on change and transformation in the Yezidi community and the future scenarios regarding the social transformation of the Yezidi community. Young individuals' characteristics and features and perspectives on life will be the main factors shaping this transformation and change. For this, it is necessary to look at the features of young Yezidi individuals.

Of course, young people experience different conditions and lifestyles, can redefine their traditional cultural practices, and might fundamentally change the social structures of their communities. They are not a low stratum anymore; instead, they are a significant portion of the change in their societies. Young people are the mainstream actors of the virtual spaces that determine the flow of contemporary life.

Yezidi youth (Cahilî in Kurdish) who have a solid education in Germany and learn Yezidism from the published/ongoing publishing textual data without usual mediators and from the accumulation of knowledge of intellectuals of the first generation. As it might have been well known, a small number of young people of the first generation took the first steps in the attempt to transfer the methods of acquiring knowledge from the oral tradition to the written

tradition. They destroyed the barriers of deprivation and started to write and publish about Yezidism in the sixties and seventies of the last century in Armenia and Iraq.

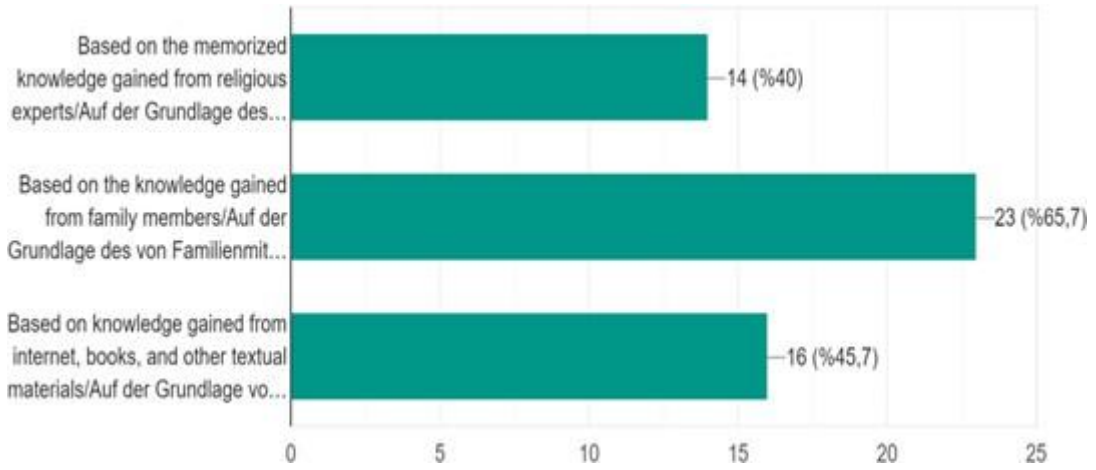
This generation broke the vicious circle of oral tradition as a method of acquiring knowledge and created the sources of access to information for the current generation of young Yezidis. Most of the young Yezidis in this study have adopted the oral tradition as well as the written and rational knowledge tradition. The belief that religious knowledge acquired from the family is insufficient is widespread among this young generation. The question "Do you think that the religious education you have received from your family is sufficient?" is, for example, responded to by over thirty young participants in a survey as follows:



Pie chart 3

From pie chart 3, we can claim that a large percentage of young people consider family religious education inadequate.

From my observations and face-to-face meetings, there is the idea that the religious knowledge received from family members and religious people is stressed as insufficient. In addition to traditional sources of information, young Yezidis are turning to writing, visual, and internet-based materials and sources. The survey results I have presented below also support this statement. When I asked the question, “Based on what sources do you explain your religion or mythology to a foreigner?” the percentages of the answers I received are as follows:



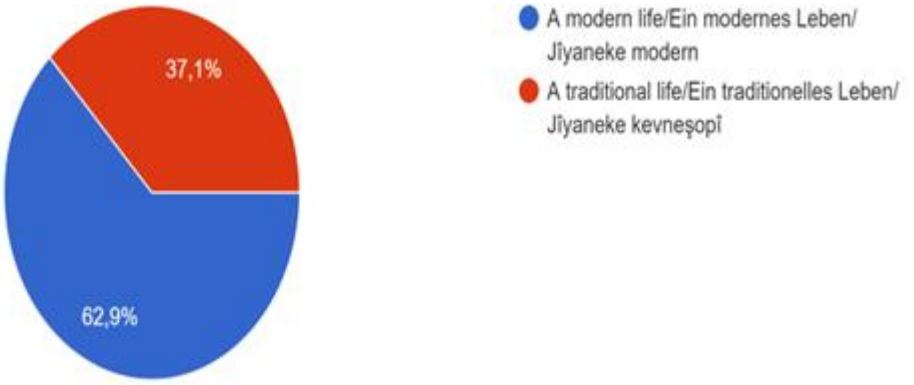
Graph 1. The graph highlights the young Yezidis` sources of information

In light of the data in the graph, there appears to be a decline among young Yezidis in their deference to religious experts who are competent in religious knowledge. The following chapters will discuss the reasons for this in more detail. However, it should not be forgotten that the main reason is the conditions of the diaspora. So, continuing with the question, what are the characteristics or features of the young Yezidis in Germany? I must say that young Yezidis have their own self-conception of Yezidism, which is not related to the world of narrations and oral history but instead to the world of reading and literalization. The youth Yezidi population in this study is a population that emphasizes their individual authority as opposed to traditional knowledge and its sources like spiritual authority. This population is users of social media platforms that have led to a virtual space for Yezidism and Yezidi society, with massive interaction between different groups of Yezidi societies. Unlike previous generations, it is a pragmatist generation that prefers to stay away from political movements and ideologies related to the Kurdish issue, finds the divisions and conflicts caused by political factions meaningless, and focuses solely on the future of the Yezidi community.

One of the most striking features is their support for individual and independent living and for a modern life. When asked if they prefer a modern life or a traditional life in Germany, the response is quite in favor of modern life.

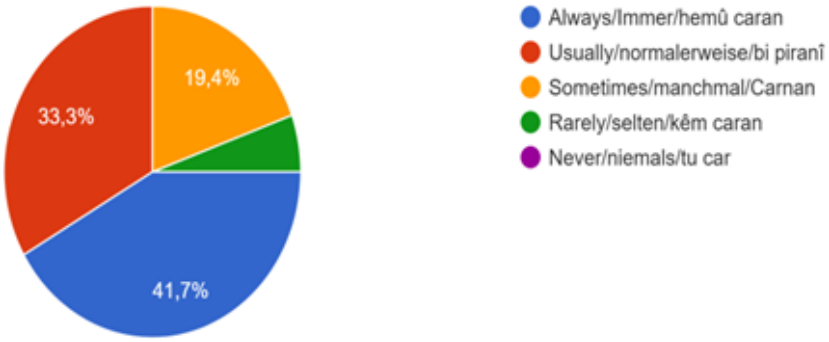
I8MB27: “Once you go to the German school and participate in their education system, you become far away from communal life. The circumstances want to make you a lonely person

while studying and working in Germany. For me, modern life is the opposite of communal life. But Germany is the best place I could have at the moment. It is not a nice place for our culture, but it is our best place. We have the possibility to live our religion as it is. As free! Modernity is not good for our communal life, but I prefer a modern place to live for now."



Pie chart 4

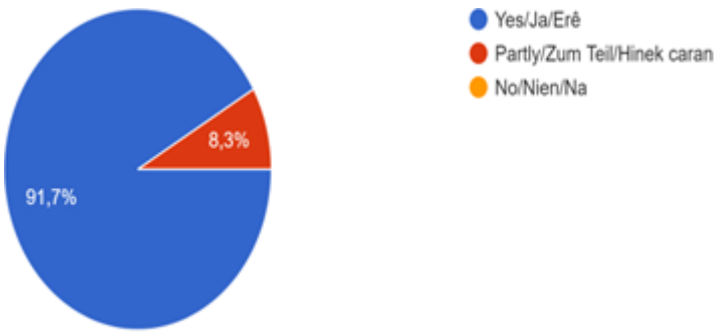
Despite this, however, very few young Yezidis live independently of their families and makemake decisions freely for their lives. When I ask, 'Do you feel free to make decisions about your life in Germany? I received the response as follows:



Pie chart 5

Thus, yes, Yezidi youth support an independent and individual-orientated life, but they do not feel free enough to make decisions for their own lives. In addition, a large proportion of the more than thirty respondents live with their families.

When it is asked, 'Do you live with your family in Germany?' over %90 percent of respondents in the pie chart below declare that they live with their families.



Pie chart 6

These two characteristics distinguish the Yezidi youth from other young people in Germany. While other people in German society are far from a collective way of life, the Yezidi youth are practically involved in one.

As mentioned above in Pie Chart 1, Yezidi youth declare that they mostly speak German daily. They state that their mother tongue is Kurdish and they speak it with their family.

To summarize, while the Yezidi youth have a revolutionary vision for the future, they have not yet been able to differentiate from the traditional collective Yezidi community regarding life practice. While modern life is desired, there has not been a complete distancing from the traditional mainstream Yezidi culture in Germany. At this very point, they are somehow distinct from traditional patterns of mainstream culture by having a successful integration process, attending schools, and adapting to modern society in Germany's secure and secular society. The younger generation of Yezidis wants to take an active role in Yezidi cultural centers, but they do not want to bear the burden of traditional methods of governance. For example, when there is a marital dispute between families, the Yezidi cultural centers act as an intermediary and try to resolve interpersonal conflicts without offending or breaking the hearts of both parties. However, young Yezidis want to run these cultural centers within the framework of the German legal system. They strive to resolve disputes between individuals and families within the legal system with the support of German institutions. This distinction is the main reason there is a lack of young Yezidis active in the cultural centers. Thus, one cannot evaluate Yezidi youth according to the labor market conditions. They grew up and were born in a postindustrial society, which gave room for an enlightenment movement. Moreover, the "underclass" concept mentioned by Myrdal (1962) itself does not correspond to Yezidi youth in Germany. Instead, they experience the conditions of the modern service

society as a literate class and do not come across economic inequality, unemployment, and social disadvantages. Moreover, they have become a leading force in developing and transforming traditional society. In that case, Yezidi youth in Germany can be considered as a social relation, as Johanna Wyn and Rob White pointed out (Wyn & White, 2015) in the context of the approaches of youth cultural studies because their attitudes and way of life are under the influence of secular German society with new factors such as gender identity, race, migration, the need for recognized separate Yezidi religious and political identities, etc.

The approaches of youth culture studies that focus on youth attitudes and social change, the way of relations, and the method of communication between generations are adopted in the research to illustrate different parameters of the demands of Yezidi youth from their older generation. Because the current parameters of the German society, where Yezidi youth spend their lives, are quite different from the parameters their parents spend their lives. A big portion of their parents' world comprises narrations, which are not valued anymore by youngsters, social norms and taboos, and the knowledge of natural forms of belonging such as tribal relations and kinship. In contrast, Yezidi young people spend a more significant portion of their lives in education or significantly attending schools by using the internet and being involved in reading. They are much more under the influence of the conditions of the host society. Their mobility in a secure and secular society leads to individual autonomy, and they are keen on the need for much more reforms in their society as the previous generation did slightly once. Of course, the generation that the parents of Yezidi youth of research took part in did accept reformist attempts to write and publish Yezidism in the hope of officially being recognized in Iraq in the 1970s. However, this reformist attempt caused an essential change in the transmission of religious knowledge. The transmission of knowledge of religion passed into the hands of literate Yezidis, and religious specialists started to fail their authority to keep Yezidism knowledge under the influence of literalization. The liberalization process leads to the distribution of religious knowledge among ordinary Yezidis. As Andreas Ackermann (2008) pointed out, Yezidis intensified their efforts to revive or reconstruct Yezidism. During that process, Yezidi society evolved into institutionalization, homogenization, and individualization from the 1990s onwards (Ackermann, 2008). So, the demands for more reforms from literate Yezidi youth may make the previous generation fear the diminishing traditional rituals. The way of transmission of the knowledge of religion has shifted to textual materials, compared to the oral transmission among the Yezidis in Germany before the 1990s. A kind of self-learning appeared online among young Yezidis, called reformist Yezidism.

However, in different regions where Yezidis live, the level of change is relative and not that strict. But in Germany, a much more mobilized generation on the internet who use technology sufficiently led to the following possible changes in Yezidi society. Young Yezidi, active in NGOs, is highly versed in modern communication technologies. They contact international Yezidi communities to overcome enormous challenges regarding culture, religion, and identity topics. According to Yezidi centers of the German diaspora, the diminishing of traditional rituals and language assimilation under the integration process is an ongoing change among Yezidi youth. These centers are in fear of the assimilation of Yezidi youth. For instance, Yezidis, who use websites to keep in contact regularly, predominantly use the German language, and 50 percent of the 27 websites set up by Yezidis are in the German language (Ackermann, 2008). Integrated Yezidi youth in German society gain knowledge of Yezidi culture by reading textual materials written in German. Although Yezidi cultural associations fear assimilation, they use the German language to contact Yezidi youth, keeping the level of change in balance. The Society of Yezidi Academics (Gesellschaft Ezidischer AkademikerInnen)[90] is one example of it. This center is strictly different from other Yezidi centers. It is an academic center rather than a cultural center. According to one of the center heads, Prof. Şefik Tagay (in 2013), the center aims to produce proper knowledge of Yezidi society, give a chance to graduate Yezidis to continue academically in Germany and create a single Yezidi community. He claims that Yezidis are about to vanish in a secure and modern society, and 98 percent of Yezidis do not have an idea about who Yezidis are, who Tawus Melek (The Angel Peacock) is, and what the division between God and Melek Tawus is.[91] These centers have produced knowledge of Yezidism alongside the knowledge and the perspectives of traditional conservative Yezidis. Yet, they became conservative in time versus the rapid change among Yezidi youth during the integration process. Yezidi youth take advantage of this reproduced and reformulated knowledge that is not strictly conservative. They desire to have the capability of explaining their religion to outsiders, to eliminate some social norms and rules such as the strict rules of endogamy, obedience to authority, the concept of shame, honor killing, purity of women, the position of women in the decision-making process and so on. Shortly, even criticism of the hierarchy of the religious class system, which has not been debated in public by 2014, may have been criticized much more alongside religious specialists' position in the transmission of religious knowledge. The

[90] https://www.gea-ev.net/%C3%BCber-die-gea/ Accessed 20.11.2021

[91] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_jQ0YjwrHk Accessed 22.10.2021

Yezidis Cultural Center of Oldenburg (Yezidisches Forum, e.V. Oldenburg)[92] is a good example of these cultural centers. It is to be said that every kind of Yezidi center relies on the need for change in society but simultaneously keeps a balance of the change. The generation running these centers is in fear and trembling of assimilation of Yezidi youth and has been criticized by conservative Yezidis living in different regions. It is necessary to stress the existence of at least three different Yezidi societies shaped by the different cultural, social, and economic conditions of the regions in which they live. There is no unique single Yezidi community. The Yezidis in the Caucasus, the Yezidis in the homeland (Iraq and Syria), and the Yezidis living in the diaspora have different perspectives on life. In these three regions, a kind of social diversity appeared among Yezidi youth based on the social and economic conditions of Yezidis' different regions. While the youth in the homeland remains more conservative and keeps traditional social norms and taboos, the youth in Caucasia and Western diasporas became much more open to being changed. An informant highlights her thoughts about the Yezidi youth in Germany as follows:

I7FO27: "Yezidi youth who were raised or born in Germany are integrated into German society, and there are no language barriers. Many of whom, mainly women, became part of formal government structures as teachers, lawyers, and doctors."

They are, in research, described as literate leading force streams or generations. Those who are not included in the youth category and mainly over the age of thirties onwards, whose parents migrated to Germany during the 1970s and 1980s, can be classified as intellectuals who take responsibility for the Yezidi cultural centers of diaspora and carry out the ongoing integration of the new arrivals under the fear of assimilation in modern secular society. While the leading force generation adopts and enjoys the lifestyle of secular society, intellectuals try to manage this process by preserving social and moral patterns. Yet, they created a kind of secular diasporic phase into the way of Western life and took an active interest in debates on Yezidism. The need for reformulation and systemizing Yezidism is in the hands of these intellectuals and Yezidi youth.

Thus, "youth" is going to be used in research to refer to various groups within the age range 18-30 to catch an appropriate analysis of the ideas of young Yezidis on religion, culture, and identity in the German diaspora.

[92] https://www.yeziden.de/ Accessed 20.11.2021

Chapter 4 Yezidi youth in the German diaspora: (re)producing religion and culture (2005-2020)

Introduction

This chapter examines the cultural and religious practices of the Yezidi community in the German diaspora, focusing on preserving and adapting sacred traditions. It highlights the dynamic interplay between diasporic material culture and traditional forms, uncovering tensions arising from these evolving expressions. Cultural clashes are analyzed within the framework of confrontation between constituted (newly formed) and traditional cultures. Additionally, the chapter explores the resilience of sacred practices and ongoing efforts to establish sacred spaces in the diaspora.

The analysis centers on two key themes: first, the extent of continuity and transformation in Yezidi religious and cultural rituals, and second, the material manifestations of these practices, along with the perspectives of younger generations. The study incorporates the views of Yezidi youth on contemporary religious issues, shedding light on intergenerational

tensions and sociocultural conflicts stemming from differing interpretations of tradition. Thus, the main realm of the following chapter is about growing tensions regarding bringing out the need for changes, affirmations, and even reforms in religion and culture or social norms per current circumstances in the German diaspora.

Yezidis in the German diaspora have often encountered the question "Who are the Yezidis?" justifying their culture, religion, and even their identity. The demands of modern, contemporary, and secular societies, emphasizing individual autonomy, have necessitated responses from the Yezidi community, leading to its emergence in various forms. Notably, a 'reformist' faction, predominantly led by youth and intellectuals, has gained prominence, while a 'traditional' faction, essentially comprising individuals displaced from their ancestral lands and resettled in Western diasporas over the past two decades, continues to uphold conventional practices.

The necessity for unifying and reforming diverse religious knowledge, along with the reaffirmation of cultural and ethnic symbols, is shaped by the ongoing discussions between the two emerging factions within the Yezidi community in the German diaspora. The younger generation increasingly views traditional knowledge, lifestyle, and syncretic religious understanding—rooted in often contradictory oral narratives—as partially incompatible with the knowledge acquired through contemporary, printed sources. A female informant encapsulated these concerns during our online conversation, stating as follows:

I3FC25: "Growing up in my family and hometown brought several social restrictions. I encountered numerous social restrictions that limited my choices and aspirations. My family discouraged me from studying outside our home city and emphasized the necessity of marrying a Yezidi man. I witnessed the intense societal pressure placed on my cousins, who were threatened with forming relationships with individuals from different religious backgrounds. Although I had Yezidi friends, I often felt out of place, as their lifestyles and ambitions did not resonate with mine. Moving away from my hometown was a pivotal moment in my life, granting me the freedom to pursue my dreams and discover a path that truly reflected my individuality."

From this quote and more quotes below, I can say that the young generation of the Yezidi community of Germany is seeking individual freedom, criticizing many aspects of the traditional lifestyle of the community. The younger generation within the Yezidi community in Germany—drawing from my observations, face-to-face interviews, and survey

data—demonstrates a pronounced desire to clarify and reformulate various aspects of their religious and cultural knowledge. This includes a critical evaluation of how Yezidi traditions are practiced in Germany and the societal roles occupied by the religious class in decision-making processes. Particular criticisms are directed at practices such as the exclusion of Yezidis who marry outside the community, the customs surrounding bride price and honor killings, and the hierarchical caste system.' These practices are widely regarded as incompatible with the values and expectations of contemporary, modern societies. These criticisms can be confirmed by the data I collected from young Yezidis and presented below.

Additionally, there is an increasing demand to reconsider and relax norms and taboos related to purity, shame, honor, divorce, and the strict enforcement of endogamy. This issue is discussed explicitly under the sub-section on cultural conflicts between generations. These issues, along with debates about the social position of women within the Yezidi community, are becoming central to generational discourse. The younger population, in particular, is rejecting the entrenched cultural constructs of honor and shame that have historically governed the lives of Yezidi women. This generational shift extends to a broader questioning of the traditional religious and cultural framework, much of which is rooted in memorized oral narrations. There is a notable demand among the youth for structural changes, including the establishment of formal houses of worship, the creation of a sacred text, and the unification of Yezidi doctrine. These efforts are often framed within the context of adapting Yezidi religious traditions to align with a European model of theologization and institutionalization. The efforts of religious simplifications appear alongside the expansion of institutionalization of religion and enhanced visibility. However, such developments lead to an implicit confrontation between Yezidi generations. The third generation, for example, is portrayed by the previous generations and notably by the newly arrived co-religionist young Yezidis in Germany after 2014 as the 'assimilated,' 'Germanized lost generation.' When it comes to attitudes toward social interaction, social norms, and ritual practices, different generations have different perceptions and ideas concerning attitudes. Young Yezidis, who was born and grew up in diasporas, adopted modern approaches to the issues of social norms such as marriage, religious observances, etc., because they did not grow up in a traditional basin like previous generations. Sharp divisions are much more visible between generations when it comes to the issue of honor-related violence and the issue of endogamy due to endogamy having a strong role in the religious identifications of individuals. Besides, many of these divisions stem from the political conflicts and political formations between the first

and second generations, as well as from everyday conflicts in which the first and second generations accuse each other of assimilation and the pursuit of wealth in the diaspora that cause the disappearance of the ability to be content with less (Sufi lifestyle). The entire third generation almost agrees that their community has' paradoxes'. Young Yezidis see the rules on marriage as a great 'paradox.' While the first generation is strongly opposed to getting married to outsiders, the second generation is more receptive. The third generation sees the strict rules on marriage as a hindrance to them and as a stumbling block for the Yezidi community. However, the first generation sees it as a path to 'extinction' and entire assimilation. Besides the old Yezidi generations in Germany, some German scholars fear the assimilation of the Yezidi society in the diaspora. For example, the scholar Gernot Wiessner/Wießner fears that Europe might bring extinction to the Yezidi religion too (Wießner, 1984).

Little was known about Yezidis in their German diaspora until the Iraqi war (2003-2011) and a committed 'genocide' by the ISIL against them during the Syrian civil war (from 2010 onwards) in 2014.[93] Yezidis are not yet an officially recognized community in Germany. However, there are important conditions they must fulfill to receive official recognition. Having their place of worship is one of the conditions put forward by state institutions. The Yezidis also demand that they be officially recognized separately from the Kurds and Muslim groups. Such conditions are slowly revealing the rise of a material Yezidi culture in Germany. Yezidis are trying to find ways to become more proud. It is possible to encounter practices that were not practiced before. Practices such as wearing traditional dress and organizing events and religious festivals have visibly increased in Germany.

Such developments influenced the Yezidi community's coming to the fore and entering the international community's agenda, which took place intensely between 2005 and 2020. German society and media used to consider Yezidism as a sect that was most probably connected to the mystical Islam or Sufism and where patriarchy was evident in family and social life until the end of the 2000s. There was a strong tendency to connect Yezidism with honor-related violence (Thorsten, in Omarkhali 2021). In fact, Yezidis mainly were featured in the German media with cases of domestic violence. However, it is not difficult to observe that this perspective has started to change in the last ten years. Over the past decade, as the

[93] Many Yezidi intellectuals I met mentioned such expression.

Yezidis engaged in cultural reproduction, they began to be recognized as a distinct religious group within German society. In fact, Yezidis have also rapidly gained visibility in German society, and their increasing mobilization has brought Yezidism out of restricted areas and into the social sphere. This process has undoubtedly accelerated the reproduction of their religion and culture.

To justify their culture and religion to people in receiving countries in diasporic spaces, a small portion of Yezidi intellectuals have made an effort to speak of Yezidism with all aspects within their clubhouses or cultural centers since the 1990s. However, such effort was not sufficient to make Yezidism visible in German society until the 2000s. However, the years (2005-2020) when Yezidis came into the agenda of the international community are so important to see the evaluation of the visibility of the Yezidi community in diasporas. The years I put into the title had dynamics of fundamental changes for the Yezidi community. Within these years, the circumstances of civil war(s) in Syria (since 2010) and in Iraq (mainly since the invasion of the US in 2003) moved Yezidis to a realm of discussions on social and religious elements destabilizing Yezidi culture and religion in the German diaspora.

Thus, this chapter contains the arguments that the Yezidi religious and cultural traditions and practices of religion and social norms have been subject to profound changes in Germany amid a young population and partly older generation. I support my arguments with my observations and analysis of data collected during my study of more than five years. Both in this chapter and in the following chapter, I will present the data gained from the interviews held with the members of the Yezidi community living in Germany. I will also present in part the statistical data collected from informants. By doing so, the dynamics of the Yezidi community in Germany, which is under intense change, can be seen easily. The evolution of a religion that is based on physical attendance of practice to institutionalized religion and culture can be seen clearly. For centuries, their coexistence with Muslims, Christians, and other religious and cultural communities in Mesopotamia has led to both distinct differences and shared practices with these groups. Such practices are in the process of reproduction and reaffirmation that Yezidis have taken the initiative to bring reforms into their community. Many researchers are already studying the dynamics of change in the German Yezidi community and its transformations (Omarkhali, 2021; Wettich[94] 2020, 2021). I rely upon the

[94] Thorsten Wettich in Hutter, M. (2021).

so-far changed dynamics of the Yezidi religion and culture, aiming to highlight such transformation below. In my opinion, such changes have taken place intensively in recent years. Such changes took place on a large scale as a result of migration, modernization, and globalization that created a transnationally active and mobilized Yezidi society. As a result, the realm of modern life made Yezidis bring changes in their way of life and practice traditional customs. Until the last decade, Yezidis were not an actively mobilized group in Germany. However, soon after the genocidal campaigns of radical Islamic movements that took place in the last decade, Yezidis` visibility in the international community was seen clearly. A mobilized Yezidi group took shape for international help against discrimination of Yezidis in the Middle East. After gaining a character of mobilized groups, the transformation accelerated rapidly. The need for lobbying in Germany and then the need to be officially recognized by Germany made Yezidis much more visible in the international community. I aim to demonstrate the results of the research from this chapter onwards in light of the reality that a considerable production is taking place in the German Yezidi community since there is sufficiently increased literacy in the Yezidi German society and since they make an effort to be integrated into modern life in Germany. The ideas and perceptions of the young Yezidi population regarding change and transformation are specifically analyzed since their perspectives bring new challenges for the previous generations and the future of the entire Yezidi society. So a process of re-invent or the re-production of religion takes place under three cases aiming to survive in diaspora circumstances and to make the community much more compact to prevent the members of the community from 'assimilation' and to mobilize the community more via re-established relationships with outsiders and with splitted Yezidi generations in German diaspora. So the cases are as follows:

a) Religious Simplification: This entails a transformation in the methods of transmitting religious knowledge and the sources of such knowledge. It involves the redefinition of Sufism, establishing a foundation for Sufism outside of mystical Islam, and situating the origins of the Yezidi faith beyond Islamic geographical boundaries, for example, India.

b) Expansion of Institutionalization in Religion: This refers to the growing formalization and structuring of religious practices, beliefs, and organizations within societal frameworks.

c) Enhanced Visibility: This involves the increased prominence of religious figures in a newly constituted culture within society, leading to the establishment of sacred texts and the development of religious institutions as central pillars in the community.

These cases are discussed in the subchapter of chapter four below. One of the most visible steps of the re-invention is the increasing diversified institutional visibility, which poses problems for transmitting cultural heritage. I must say that there has been an intensive attempt by Yezidi cultural centers in the Federal Republic of Germany to make Yezidi material culture visible via newly constituted institutions and research centers, for instance. In the last ten years, the increase in the number of Yezidi cultural houses has gradually led to the Yezidi community becoming more visible and active in social life. As a result of this process, new knowledge has been added to the existing tradition. Questions regarding the transformation of Yezidism in all its dimensions have increasingly been raised publicly by young, intellectual members of the Yezidi community. These inquiries, predominantly posed by the second and third-generation Yezidis with higher education in Germany, focus on various aspects, including religious teaching methods, doctrinal principles, and the role and function of religious authority in the modern German Yezidi community etc.

Consequently, the community has experienced a natural segregation process shaped by newly adopted socio-economic conditions. Political divisions have further complicated this situation, creating a communication gap between the older Yezidi members, who maintain traditional social structures, and the younger generations living in the German diaspora. Prior to 2014, young Yezidis living in Germany were often distanced from the first and second generations, who preserved the traditional and collective characteristics of the Yezidi social structure. Having been educated in the German system and exposed to the opportunities of secular, modern society, many young Yezidis gravitated toward individualistic values, moving away from collective traditions that bring into existing cultural clashes between generations.

However, following the 2014 genocide perpetrated by ISIL, a significant shift occurred. Many young Yezidis—who had previously been disconnected from their elders in terms of tradition and religious knowledge—began to re-establish ties with their community. Motivated by a desire for change, they advocated for reforms necessary to ensure the survival of Yezidism, both in the diaspora and in the homeland. This shift has led to the emergence of a trend emphasizing 'self-realization' and a renewed sense of 'belonging to Yezidism.

Many young Yezidis demonstrate limited familiarity with traditional religious doctrines and cultural customs, as evidenced by the testimonies presented below. While this knowledge gap

stems from multiple factors, the present discussion will focus on one primary contributing cause. The method of transmission of religious knowledge via story or tale (Çîrok), for example, is nowadays almost not witnessed among the Yezidi youth in Germany. There is still a considerable rate of young Yezidis who do not make connections with their society. A considerable portion of this Yezidi youth consider themselves as half German and half Yezidi.[95] several barriers and reasons are keeping young Yezidis away from their community and traditions, resulting in communication gaps and cultural clashes. These barriers and more reasons are discussed below. I start to present my discussion in this chapter with a question that anyone might have asked until now: Why are Yezidis in the German diaspora in efforts of reproduction of culture and religion?

From my observations and qualitative investigation of Yezidi youth, the fear of extinction lies behind the Yezidi community's efforts to establish itself institutionally and socially in the German diaspora. I present a Yezidi intellectual's[96] opinion directly as one of the similar perspectives to my argument to the question asked. He expresses his thoughts below related to the reason beyond the need for reproduction in the Yezidi religion and culture in Germany as follows:

"The Yezidi faith and way of life are deeply connected to nature [with the concept of Xweza in Kurdish, which refers to self-birthing]. In daily life and work, the Yezidi community lacks a formal discipline system. Unlike other communities, such as the Turks and Alevis, who migrated to Germany with the Yezidis and were able to maintain their societal structure, the Yezidis have not experienced a systematic, organized lifestyle in Kurdistan, for the Turks and Alevis, their religious, social, and work lives were already structured and organized through state institutions and religious systems in their homeland, allowing them to easily establish their institutional framework in Germany. In contrast, the Yezidis did not have such a structured life. Young Muslims, for example, would discipline themselves by attending mosque services every Friday, and religious leaders could intervene if someone failed to fulfill a task. There was a system of control in their community, with religious figures having the authority to preach or administer discipline. However, this system is absent in the Yezidi community. Yezidi youth do not clearly understand the discipline, and Sheikhs and

[95] A remarkable young Yezidis who prefer to keep their life away from the community consider themselves German. Alongside Kurdishness, Yezidi-ness and German identities are preferred by young Yezidis. Below, some charts show the results of chapter five of the study.
[96] A Yezidi scholar who prefers to be called and mentioned in the study as Xelil Xalti

Pîrs—religious leaders—lack formal control over their followers. They speak on religious matters when they choose, without a fixed schedule or institutional framework to guide their teachings.

In Germany, the Yezidi community lacks the institutionalization of religious teaching that exists in Muslim communities, where scholars preach in mosques and have mechanisms of punishment or reward to guide their followers. For the Yezidis, the Sheikhs and Pîrs cannot exercise control in the same way because there is no formal enforcement system within their religious tradition."[97]

What is meant by the institutional structure in this quote is a religious institutional structure. Otherwise, the Yezidi community has had associations and houses of culture since the early 1990s. Many other intellectuals are of a similar opinion and believe that a large part of the Yezidi community has assimilated into Germany. They cite the lack of religious institutionalization as the main reason for this assimilation. But I will not discuss assimilation here. Instead, I focus on the need for the re-invention process of religion with its sacred environment.

Regarding religion, Yezidi youth emphasize their views on change or continuity in four key areas:

a. Establishing system of education: The adaptation or transformation of religious education and practices in the diaspora, particularly in the German context, where Yezidi youth grapple with preserving or adjusting their religious traditions in a new cultural environment.

b. The need for a sacred text or canon: The growing desire for a formalized sacred text or religious canon that would provide a structured guide to regulate both daily and religious life, offering a clear and unified framework for spiritual practice.

c. The establishment of holy places: The importance of creating or maintaining sacred sites in the diaspora, providing a physical space for religious worship, community gatherings, and the preservation of cultural identity.

d. The roles of clergy and the functioning of the caste system in Germany: The evolving role of religious leaders, such as Sheikhs and Pîrs, in guiding the community in Germany, and how

[97] From a meeting with Xelil Xalti

the traditional caste system, which organizes social roles within the Yezidi community, functions in a new sociocultural setting.

The perspectives below outline young Yezidis' views on necessary changes, reforms, and their collective demands. It is important to clarify that their concept of 're-production' does not imply an exact replication of past traditions. Instead, it signifies an innovative reimagining – introducing new interpretations or revisiting practices to benefit contemporary Yezidi society. This stems from a younger generation seeking to reintegrate into the community while advocating for systemic change. Having come of age within German societal structures, these individuals emphasize internal social reform as vital for the Yezidi community's future sustainability. The need for sacred spaces is the most common demand. They want to make Yezidism visible via a generated sacred environment in Germany.

The process of change and transformation within the Yezidi community in Germany is perceived distinctly across three generations, resulting in cultural clashes and tensions as they navigate the reproduction of Yezidi's religious and social structures. Each generation advocates for reforms aligned with its own sociocultural expectations. Younger Yezidis, in particular, reject certain traditional practices—such as bride price, arranged and endogamous marriages, and honor-based violence—deeming them incompatible with modern life in Germany. The progressive critique of these norms by younger generations reflects not merely a generational divide but an epistemic shift toward reimagining Yazidi identity within diasporic modernity. This discursive rejection of perceived anachronisms is further accelerated by exogenous pressures of integration, particularly Germany's institutional requirements for recognition as a Glaubensgemeinschaft (religious community). Faced with these structural imperatives, Yezidi intellectuals and youth are engaged in a dual project of (re)construction: materially(spiritual spaces) through establishing sacred spaces to assert tangible presence and discursively through the generative reformulation of religious narratives. This process necessitates both the creative production of new cultural schemata and the selective repudiation of traditional praxis—a dialectic examined in depth in subsequent sections.

4.1 The sacred environment or spiritual space(s) in Germany: Religious simplification, expansion of institutionalization in religion, and enhanced visibility

It is necessary to clarify that in this study, the concept of "sacred environment" refers specifically to material spaces that serve as focal points or centers of gravity for Yezidi-German society, characterized by distinct material culture and sacred elements. These include cemeteries, mausoleums, and religious symbols that collectively constitute what may be termed a sacred site or environment where Yezidis perform practices partly in their diaspora in Germany.

It is obvious that the religious practices and rituals have historically been extremely limited in scope for Yezidis in Germany due to a lack of an organized community and the built spaces for performing practices and observances. However, these practices have gradually transitioned from the private to the public over the past two decades. Because Yezidis gained enhanced visibility in Germany. Until the mid-2000s, cultural houses represented the primary - and relatively limited - venues for any form of religious observance. While some members of the Yezidi community in Germany continue to regard these clubhouses/cultural centers as components of their sacred environment, it is important to note that many perceive these spaces primarily as social gathering places rather than sites of worship. Such places are not places of religious practice, and such a structure does not traditionally exist. Although funeral services and memorial events are commonly held in these centers, these should not be conflated with formal religious observances. This distinction became particularly evident when examining youth engagement patterns, as exemplified by the following response to my inquiry about the frequency of visits to cultural centers:

I10MH22: "Yezidis` cultural centers are the places of funerals and mourning. I don't want to visit such places only for mourning. [What else do you expect from cultural centers?]

There should be more practices and rituals beyond funeral ceremonies.

[Like what? Could you give me an example?]

Well, it does not come to my mind now. However, I think they can at least build a larger place for all Yezidis to come together.

[What kind of place do you mean? As I know, there are many cultural centers…]

I do not know, maybe some places like Churches or Mosques."

As evidenced by the interview excerpts presented, Yezidi cultural centers in Germany are perceived as institutionally inadequate for sustaining authentic religious practices and rituals. The data reveal a growing generational demand among young Yezidis for purpose-built religious architecture that would provide greater visibility and legitimacy to their faith tradition. Empirical survey findings substantiate this shift, demonstrating that most Yezidi youth view existing cultural centers as insufficient for preserving and transmitting Yezidi material culture in their German diaspora context.

This sentiment is particularly evident in responses to survey items assessing attitudes toward cultural infrastructure. The strong affirmative response to the statement [Yezidi material culture in Germany should be much more visible beyond cultural centers!] in Pie Chart 7 clearly indicates that younger community members envision alternative spatial manifestations of their religious heritage that transcend the current limitations of multipurpose cultural venues.



Pie chart 7

Therefore, in this study, like many Yezidis, I do not treat cultural centers as part of the sacred environment. Instead, my focus is on contemporary efforts and ideas related to creating physical institutions that are directly linked to a potentially constituted sacred environment.

In German Yezidi diaspora conditions, the establishment of physical sacred spaces and the creation of the materials intended for use within these spaces occur concurrently. The emergence of a sacred text is intrinsically linked to the existence of a sacred space. In this

context, it is crucial to pose the following question: To what extent are the Yezidi sacred spaces present and operational in Germany?

In Germany, establishing traditional sacred spaces appears unfeasible due to prevailing socio-cultural and environmental conditions. Because in the Yezidi tradition, sacred spaces are closely related to nature. It does not seem possible for the Yezidis to establish such a relationship of nature and faith in Germany. Because Yezidis do not have the conditions to live a communal life. The economic conditions of contemporary life have led the Yezidis to live far and separate from each other. That is, the contemporary lifestyle and social dynamics inhibit the formation of such places. The sacred sites most closely resembling traditional Yezidi sanctuaries in the diaspora have been found in the Caucasus, where social conditions and geographical proximity have facilitated the development of these spaces (Nikolaus, Yuce, 2019). However, such conditions are not replicated in Germany, making creating analogous sacred places unlikely. In this regard, it is important to note that establishing sacred spaces in the current context is highly limited and restricted.

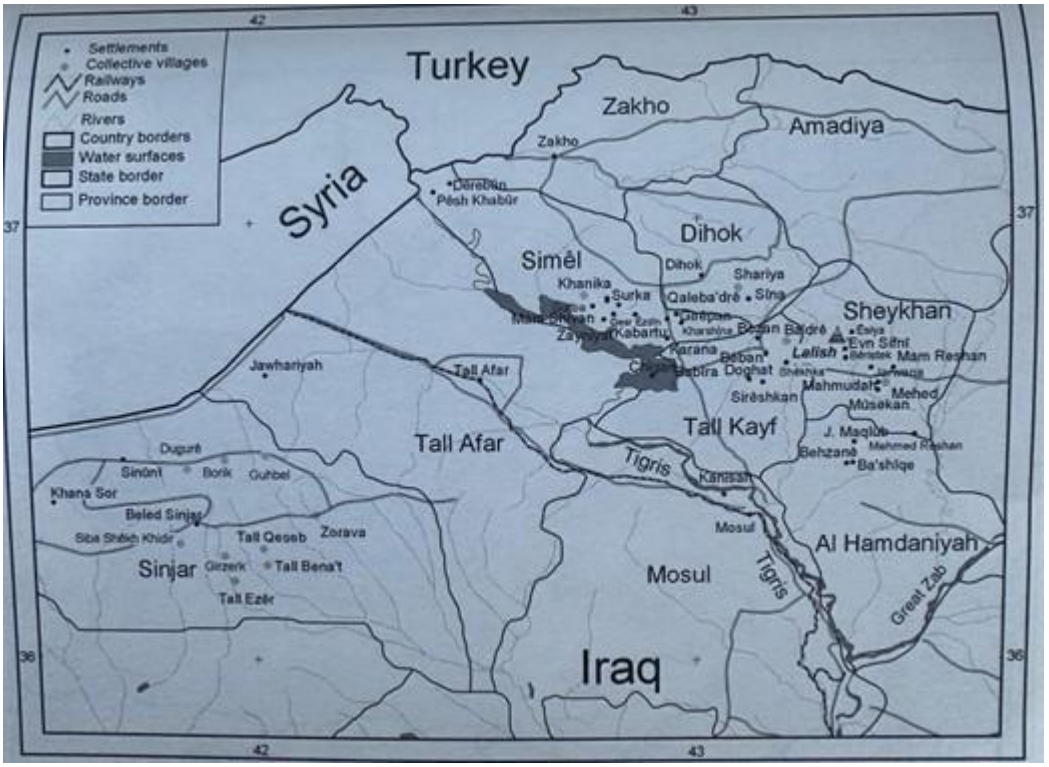
At this point, I need to point out the characteristics of traditional sacred space. By examining traditional sacred space, we can make sense of the sacred space being produced in Germany.

The traditional sacred environment of Yezidism in the lands of origin, mainly in Iraq, consists of both natural and man-made elements. Natural features, such as caves dedicated to Yezidi saints, springs with curative powers, and man-made structures like mausoleums, shrines, tombs, and cemeteries, define this sacred space (Acikyildiz, 2010). Notably, the tombstones in these cemeteries are often shaped like horses, rams, or lions, each carrying symbolic significance. However, these conditions for a proper sacred environment are largely absent in the German diaspora. However, creating the sacred site(s) is ongoing since there is already a built tomb alongside cemeteries. Besides, several practices and observances have been taken for years. The most common practices for Yezidis in Germany involve the bisk ceremony[98] (Omarkhali, 2017), the New Year festival (Carsema sere sale), burying their dead in established cemeteries, visiting day of cemeteries (roja mezela in Kurdish) and engaging in limited activities at cultural centers during festivities.

The sacred site, with its elements, refers to the material culture of the Yezidis. Since culture and religion are highly intertwined, the produced cultural materials mean the production of

[98] The cutting of a baby's first locks.

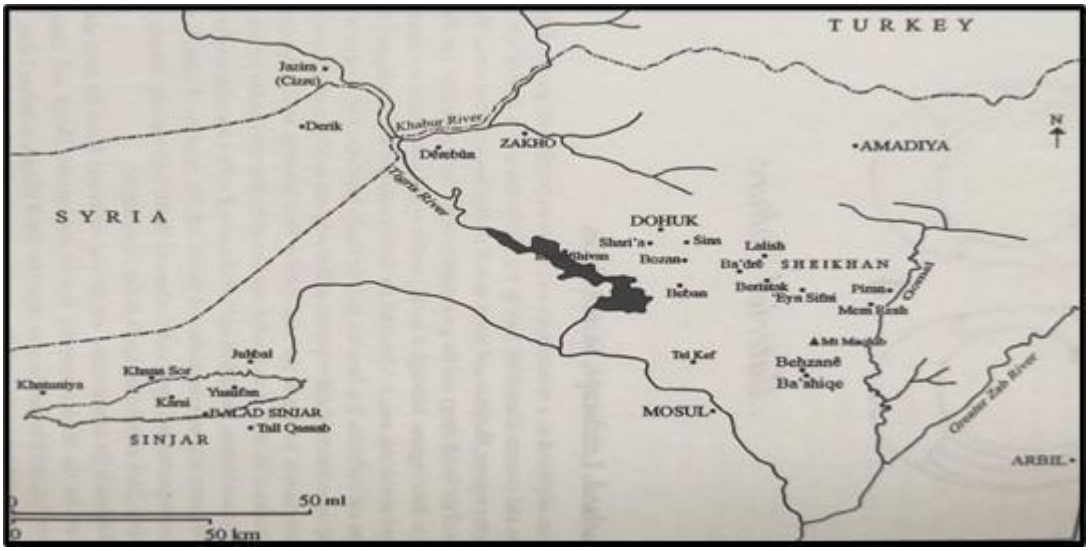
sacred sites simultaneously. In terms of material culture, Birgül Açıkyıldız offers valuable insights into the Yezidis' traditional cultural practices and sacred sites in their lands of origin, particularly in her work (Açıkyıldız 2010, Chapter 4). She highlights that the Sheikhan and Sinjar regions in northern Iraq are well-known centers where most Yezidis preserve their customs and traditions that are in harmony with the sacred place(s).



Map 5. The detailed Yezidi settlements in Iraq. Source: Omarkhali, 2017

These regions are considered the heart of the traditional Yezidi community. However, they are also politically divided: Kurdish political movements heavily influence the Sheikhan region, while the Sinjar region remains more self-centered and isolated. This political divergence has led to tensions between Yezidis from these regions, even among those living in Germany, where they sometimes insult each other.

These regional differences underpin the social and political divisions among Yezidis in Germany, often fueling debates over the material culture of the diaspora. The Sheikhan region, in particular, serves as a spiritual center, home to holy buildings, sanctuaries, mausoleums, and shrines. The Lalish Valley, a significant pilgrimage site, is located there, making Sheikhan the central hub for Yezidi practices, observances, and rituals.



Map 6. Another detailed Yezidi settlement in Iraq (Source: Açıkyıldız, The Yezidis…, 2010, p.116)

I provide the map from Acikyildiz's work directly here to highlight the concentrated material culture of the sacred environment in the lands of origin. In the map above, the areas where the material culture of the Yezidis is concentrated are identified in detail. This area also represents a traditionally sacred place where Yezidis pay visits to keep their social and religious relationships strong and to show their respects to their ancestors. Outside of this area, the existence and functioning of sacred space in the diaspora(s) is extremely limited for now.

In the Sinjar region, where many moseoulems take place, the sacred space with its material culture was mostly destroyed by ISIL as of 2014.[99] However, Yezidis` active diasporas rebuild its destroyed cultural material with remittances again.[100] The effect of the transnational diaspora of Yezidis can be seen from the rebuilt sacred space. However, for Yezidis scattered outside their homeland, the sacred space is limited by the presence of built tombs (Qub) in Armenia and Georgia, such as cemeteries and symbols of sacred material culture in cultural centers. Natural artifacts do not exist in such shaped sacred spaces in diaspora(s).

The contemporary idea of creating a Yezidi sacred environment in Germany came out in the last decade, during which intensive communication occurred between Yezidi associations and the German public. As interactions between Yezidi society and the broader community have increased, the Yezidis have entered a rapid process of institutionalization. In particular, there

[99] https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-destruction-of-yazidi-cultural-heritage Accessed: 28.03.2023
[100] https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-destruction-of-yazidi-cultural-heritage Accessed: 28.03.2023

is growing interest in the Yezidi community within German society. The most recent wave of migration has intensified the Yezidis' search for solutions to integration challenges, prompting both the Yezidis and the German population to establish closer relations. Therefore, outsiders`(mostly Germans) requests to access Yezidi tradition bring the risk of de-ritualizing Yezidism in a traditional sense. Instead of traditional practice, institutionalized institutions that provide theological education should be established. That is, institutionalized forms of teaching Yezidism are on their agenda. So, Yezidism, regarding the teaching techniques of religion, is taking a new form. The demand for creating the holy book and 'places of prayer' has increased tremendously. There are many attempts to bring out the issue of the lack of religious textual materials in the ongoing constituted sacred environment in Germany. There are several published versions of textual materials related to religious hymns. A Yezidi intellectual showed me a prepared pocketbook with linguistic and conceptual changes and purification of Islamic elements, claiming that such books are needed for Yezidi youth to show around and to learn their religion.

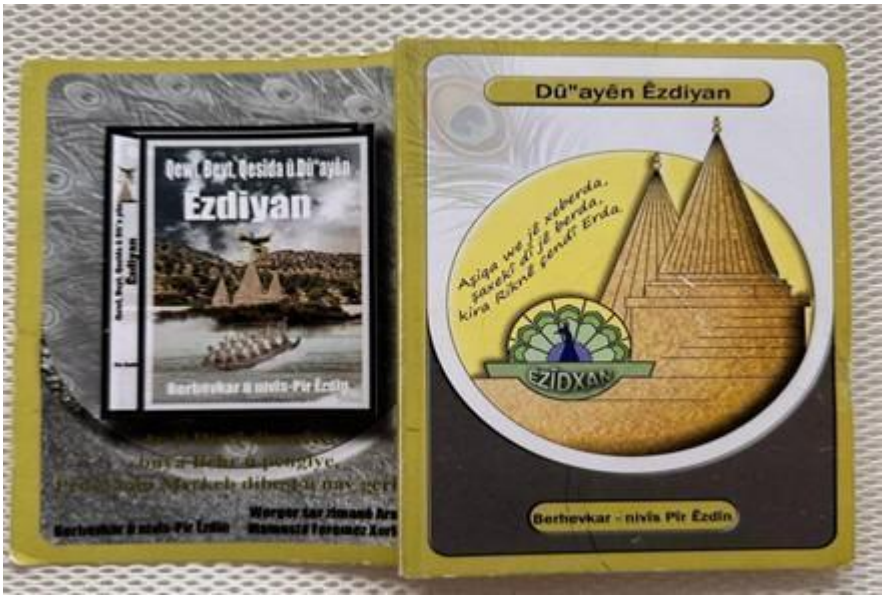


Figure 3. A Yezidi prayer book (handbook) written in Arabic and Kurdish.

However, when I showed this book to Yezidis, they criticized it, saying that many mistakes were made. Some Yezidis claimed that such a book is unacceptable since Yezidi religious experts do not prepare it. However, young Yezidis seems happy to see such a book around. When I showed it to the young Yezidis I interviewed, they expressed that they must have more books to show their German friend the material stuff of Yezidis. This book was given to me in a Yezidi cultural center (clubhouses of Yezidi associations). The Yezidis` activation in

German society started with clubhouses at the beginning of the 1990s. This is because the Federal Republic of Germany encourages migrant religious communities to have institutions to be well-integrated into German society.

Therefore, the Yezidis' cultural houses play a central role in producing the material stuff of Yezidism. The late displacement of Yezidis from their lands of origin caused a mobility of Yezidi clubhouses seeking humanitarian aid that resulted in a close relationship with German authorities recently. So naturally, the idea of having visible material culture and sacred spaces in Germany has come to life. As a result, Yezidi's interaction with other religious groups through cultural activities increased. Then Yezidis started to transfer the cultural and religious practices of the Yezidi faith from the closed home environment to the social sphere. This activation has increased intensively since the 2010s onwards and gained a character of self-realization in recent years. As I consider the main factor, this process gave rise to the contemporary ideas of creating sacred environment(s) in Germany. The growing threat of terrorism in their lands of origin, the traumatization of the Yezidi community since August 3rd, 2014, and then the threat of the death of tradition in settled lands in Germany seems to have popularized the idea of more institutionalizing Yezidism in terms of religious practices and cultural activities in their German diaspora. The idea of establishing religious institutions is why it is becoming a reality. Until now, in the case of the lack of Yezidi institutions, a significant portion of Yezidis, naturally, have treated the Yezidi cultural houses as sacred centers. But the latest production process due to transnational efforts has taken a few steps further in recent years, giving a chance to Yezidis to have theological centers and schools with religious experts in teaching (qewilzan or micêwir) in Germany. One can also observe the efforts to construct tombs dedicated to valued religious figures in some regions of Germany. For now, one constructed tomb (Qoba Ezi) will lead to the construction of new institutions soon.



Figure 4. The ritual of tawaf of Ezi. Image provided by the head of a Yezidi cultural center.

Apart from the shrines or tombs, there is an attempt to constitute a Yezidi theology institution to teach Yezidi theology to Pirs and Sheikhs since they are considered insufficient to transfer newly produced knowledge of religion. The Yezidi's tangible presence in Germany, consisting only of cemeteries and culture houses, will definitely be diversified with tombs, theological institutions, religious representatives, and a holy book or canon soon.

In many cities in Germany, it is possible to observe that the religious practices of Yezidis have moved out from the private sphere and gained visibility in the public sphere. Thorsten Wettich (2021) characterizes this process as 'activation,' especially starting from the 1990s onwards. According to him, this activation appeared due to the increasing number of Yezidi cultural centers. I agree with this approach and find it necessary to add that the social presence of Yezidis in Germany today is also visible through material objects. Indeed, the activities of the cultural centers have increased this visibility, but for young Yezidis, practices and ceremonies in such cultural centers are limited. Nearly all young Yezidis I have met do not consider cultural centers as part of a sufficient presence in Germany. I have to say that a valuable material presence with a religious institutional dimension has been developing. In the coming decades, there may be a material sacred environment or a center where religious visits and religious practices will take place in Germany. The idea of bringing some of Lalish's soul to

Germany is part of the discussion among young Yezidis. And these young Yezidis are likely to accelerate the constitution of sacred places in the near future. However, young Yezidis might encounter some obstacles. Nearly all informants in this study demand places of prayer; however, in Yezidism, there is no need for a specific place like a mosque or a church to fulfill religious practices as it is done in Islam and Christianity. The entire world itself is treated as a sacred space in traditional Yezidism. Then, for what reason is the need for a sacred environment being discussed among young Yezidis and by some intellectual Yezidis?

To answer this question, I have directed the question to many Yezidi intellectuals and young Yezidis during the groundwork of the study. When I asked one of the heads of a Yezidi clubhouse (Mala Ezidiyan) about having sacred spaces or environments in Germany, he responded with this quote:

"Every religion has its own characteristics. In our religion, we do not have God's house like Mosque in Islam. For us, Yezidi cultural centers are holy places.[101] When one has an enemy, this center can protect him or her [xwe awêtin ber bextê malekî, Asylum as one of the codes of honor in the Yezidi community]. The number of Yezidi centers in Germany with holy symbols like peacocks must be increased. These centers should have active interaction, education, and service(kismet). If a cultural center only has funeral ceremonies, does not provide any service to people, and does not run seminars on the Yezidi religion, then… the issue is not having a good-looking sacred place in Germany. First of all, we need religious guides who can run religious sites. We need theologians first of all. Our Pirs and Sheiks must receive education in theology like priests in churches. Our Pirs and Sheiks attend religious organizations wearing suits. However, representatives of other religious groups wear their traditional costumes. I went to the German center of the integration with a Yezidi who wore a traditional costume. The German officer asked who he was, and I said he was a religious representative of our community."[102] We need a religious representative. We go to Berlin every year to attend a catholic church's organization. Every group's representatives, Jews, Muslims, and Christians, were sitting in the front line, but we Yezidis were sitting in the third

[101] In reality, Yezidi houses function as places of gathering for mourning, funeral ceremonies, and gathering in memory of someone who has died. This is a new perspective, considering Yezidi houses as holy places.

[102] Discussions about having a religious representative figure of Yezidis in Germany are a new phenomenon. Since Yezidis have been highly interacting with the German public from the 2010s onwards, they seek more visibility. A religious representative with traditional clothes is a new practice, and it is part of attempts to increase visibility in German society.

line because we were wearing suits. Our religious people make mistakes in Germany. They are embarrassed when they wear their traditional clothes. They must wear traditional clothes. If we have religious representatives with clothes, then building religious places and sites will be very easy."

[so you mean Yezidis can constitute or construct buildings for religious purposes?]

"For sure, but we have a lot to do before building such places."

This quote reflects the general view of Yezidi intellectuals in Germany on the constitution of sacred space(s). The first step seems to be having knowledgeable religious representatives. Currently, the existence of holy sites is very much desired and demanded. This quote also reflects the common view of many young Yezidis.

Apart from cultural centers, the first step to being visible in public is to have Yezidi religious representatives who know German culture, language, etc., very well. The religious representation of the Yezidi community in Germany is being sought, and Yezidis are looking for ways to reinvent their social organization in Germany. In recent years, for example, there have been attempts to have a Yezidi religious representative, a reinvented figure visible with traditional costumes[103] take place in events related to religious groups in Germany.

[103] Most of the members of the first and second Yezidi generation in Germany came from Anatolia. This generation and the clergy from Anatolia long ago abandoned their religious attire and even everyday traditional dress. Attempts based on the disavowing traditional values of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to modernize Turkish society and to make it part of 'contemporary civilization' as of 1925 are important factors in the Yezidis abandoning their traditional dress. The dress revolution has caused the Yezidi community to abandon their traditional dress over time. Over time, they preferred to wear their traditional clothes only at home and in the villages where they lived, as the identity of the Yezidis who came to the city center in their traditional clothes was exposed. The Muslim community did not welcome them. They do not want to wear traditional clothing again in Germnay because it is now perceived as a symbol of backwardness in the Germany Yezidi community and can be ridiculed.



Figure 5. Religious ‘representative’ Sheikh Xudeda Adani in traditional attire.

However, the idea of having a religious representative is still discussed in a serious way by Yezidis from different generations. Many heads of Yezidi cultural centers I met in 2023 show Sheikh Xudeda Adani as chairman of the religious representative or the chairman of the Yezidi community in Germany. The perspective of the young population on the idea of having religious representatives is as follows:

In response to the question [Do you think it would be beneficial for the Yezidi community in Germany to have a religious figure akin to the role of priests in Christianity or imams in Islam?]

From the results of pie chart 9 below (over 60% of 36 responders), I can say that young Yezidis are keen on having such figure in public life. Young Yezidis I met in Germany stress that they encounter such figures in their Caucasian diaspora and they demands the same affirmation for their community in Germany.



Pie chart 8



Figure 6. A Yezidi religious delegation from Germany visited the Yezidi community in Georgia in 2024.



Figure 7. A ‘representative’ religious figure of the Yezidis (though some reject such figures as representing the entire community) actively engages in interfaith cooperation with churches and other religious groups in Germany.

Such religious figure(s) are the result of the ongoing efforts to create a sacred environment, which a large portion of Yezidis oppose. This phenomenon is a new attempt that many Yezidis believe will diminish the role of traditional religious figures in the Yezidi community of Germany.

Therefore, having holy sites and religious representatives in Germany is not very welcomed by many Yezidis in their homeland and by Yezidis who migrated to Germany in recent years since it is considered an attempt to "invent new things"[104] in Yezidism. During my conversation with several Yezidis in a Yezidi cultural center in 2023, I encountered the idea that many Yezidis who migrated to Germany in the last decade were indecisive about having

[104] Yezidis, who rejects such religious representatives, mentioned it during my conversations.

religious representatives with traditional clothes. I present here a short part of these conversations as an example:

"Our Pirs and Sheiks attend religious organizations wearing suits. This is unacceptable. Look! The representatives of other migrant religious communities wear their traditional costumes in Germany."

"Wait! The things you say seem difficult. We were wearing such clothes in our cultural basin in our homeland. We do not have such a cultural basin in Germany. It is fine in the homeland to wear such clothes. When they leave the village to go to the city center, they used to take their clothes off. They got used to it and do not want to wear it in modern cities. And such religious figures might act like imams [basically people who lead prayers in mosques], and this is not acceptable!"

"We must find a solution here. We live in Germnay, in a modern society, and every religious community has its own representatives. Yezidis is better to have one to be visible in German society. Our traditional figures stay at home mostly."

The Yezidi community is absolutely committed to the clash between modernity and tradition in every topic of discussion. The question of the survival of the values on which Yezidism is based is discussed under every topic. Even when there is an opinion on clothing, issues such as assimilation and the difficulties of modern life immediately come up.

The struggle between tradition and modernity is visible in the speech of every Yezidi in Germany. The idea of adapting the clergy to the conditions of modern life is also a very popular one. For instance, many young and intellectual Yezidis believe that Sheikhs and Pîrs should undergo a religious education to have centers of 'Yezidi theology.' It is demanded by a large portion of young Yezidis in Germany to have knowledgeable religious figures. The lack of Yezidi theologians is seen as the main reason for the lack of holy sites in Germany, mostly by Yezidi intellectuals. For now, the Tomb of Ezi (Qoba Ezi) in Augsburg is known as a visible site to bring all Yezidis together at least once a year to feast (Twafa/tuafa Ezi).[105]

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[105] Young Yezidis shares the events and visits that occur mostly on social media, especially on TikTok. Here are several videos from Feasts and visits:

https://www.tiktok.com/@samibibo1994/video/7255820569143299354?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7363193402252674593 Accessed: 13.10.2023

https://www.tiktok.com/@hale.198/video/7256114897094757658?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7363193402252674593 Accessed: 13.10.2023



Figure 8.Qoba Ezi was constructed in 2019 in Augsburg, Germany.
https://www.tiktok.com/@samibibo1994/video/7255820569143299354
https://www.google.com/search?q=tuafa+Ezi&oq=tuafa+Ezi&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigATIHCAMQIRigATIHCAQQIRigAdIBBzMyOWowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:4c88be4d,vid:MHuOkIno6KY,st:0 Accessed: 18.11.2023

https://www.tiktok.com/@sadik_ezidi074/video/7256370755670232347?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7363193402252674593 Accessed: 13.10.2023

https://www.google.com/search?q=tuafa+Ezi&oq=tuafa+Ezi&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigATIHCAMQIRigATIHCAQQIRigAdIBBzMyOWowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:4c88be4d,vid:MHuOkIno6KY,st:0 Accessed: 13.10.2023



Figure 9.The crescent symbol (Hîlal) during the Augsburg local religious festival (tiwaf).

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063790061214

Temples and tombs symbolize Yezidi settlements, with their power varying according to the individual or figure for whom they were created.

This tomb, along with the cemeteries, is the most important part of the Yezidi material culture in Germany. Every year on the 13th of July, Yezidis gather to perform *tiwaf*[106] of one of the holy figures in the Yezidi faith, Sultan Ezid, or Siltan Ezi. This is the most visible religious performance held in their German diaspora. In recent years, what is particularly striking is that more and more women and young people are present during tiwaf. The amount of young people or population has increased in such performance in recent years, which makes the older generations.

Such structures will undoubtedly increase since Yezidi split groups politically and started to attend such performances. I must say that it can be considered as the first step in eliminating

[106] Originating from the Arabic word "tawaf," the term means to walk around the Kaaba.

the lack of a sacred space because it is thanks to this sacred structure that the annual events have come to function as a way of bringing together the politically disparate Yezidi groups. Moreover, it seems that young Yezidis are increasingly interested in such sacred sites and are eager to share the events that take place there on social media. Every year, an increasing number of young Yezidis travel from different parts of Germany to attend this event. In this respect, we will likely see the construction of such structures in the coming period.

As I mentioned above, the lack of such sacred spaces is linked to the passivity of the religious experts and the lack of Yezidi theologians by many young Yezidis. The lack of Yezidi theologians might not be the only reason behind the lack of a Yezidi sacred space or environment in Germany. In my opinion, the political fragmentation of the Yezidi German community has been the main reason behind it for decades. Unlike other religious groups, from my observations, the Yezidi settlements in Germany are not close to each other. While Muslim Turks or other religious groups live in the same neighborhood or regions, Yezidis do not prefer such a lifestyle. This is very interesting because, in the homeland, Yezidis live as close to each other as possible because of security concerns or security anxiety.

Regarding performing religious ceremonies, there is no such center of gravity for the entire Yezidi community in Germany. For other religious groups, like Muslims, houses of worship provide a center of gravity and strengthen the communities, establishing communication between different generations. The Yezidi tombs in the Caucasian diaspora, for instance, provide a center of gravity for the Yezidi society (Fragile Yezidism, in Omarkhali, 2023). However, any attempts to bring Yezidis together cause debates on political issues. Political preferences and lifestyle choices often lead to tensions between Yezidi families.

From the knowledge I gained during face-to-face meetings with young Yezidis, I see that the Yezidi families and their children want to adopt a much more modern way of life and integrate into German society completely. However, they are criticized by traditional Yezidis and blamed for moving away from the Yezidi traditions. Every single Yezidi family and individual is torn between the choice of integrating and remaining loyal to tradition. Each community member can accuse the other of giving importance to material things, material gain, being rich, preferring modern life, preferring secular life, abandoning traditional norms, not visiting cultural centers, and not practicing religious practices. Such critics are part of the traditional patriarchal structure, which still plays an important role in the Yezidi community. The social relations and networks (tribal relations) that develop out of this tradition pave the way for each family and individual to be known by other Yezidis. In this respect, each family

tries to isolate itself from other Yezidi families as much as possible to not be labeled as assimilated families. However, the idea that the material culture of the Yezidis should be more widespread in Germany is on the agenda of nearly the entire second and third generations because such sacred environments and performances are considered a tool for overcoming political divisions within the community.

In general, until the first years of the 2000s, this seems to have prevented a compact Yezidi community in Germany, which would have created an environment for religious practices. In the last ten years, however, this situation has changed due to the intensity of immigration. Yezidis are much more eager to build holy sites and to bring much more material culture of Yezidism to Germany to create a center of gravity. For example, young Yezidis demand the practice of *tawus geran*. [Do you have a practice of Tawus geran in Germany?]

I5FO30: "It is done in villages in the homeland. But it would be nice to see this practice in Germany. Maybe the Yezidis might collect money to support religious Yezidis, bring them to Germany, and bring Tawus with them. In my opinion, it is needed."

Apart from such demands, there are current demands for change on many issues, such as the need for a holy book.

As it is known, the burial grounds of influential religious people, holy places in the natural environment, and the homes of Sheiks and Pirs have become centers of faith (Omarkhali, 2017; Six-Hohenbalken, 2021). But the centers of the faith are going to be transformed soon. The demands of those I present below from young Yezidis tell us a different scenario for the Yezidi centers of faith in Germany. When I ask how Yezidis practice their rituals in Germany to the young Yezidis, I encounter confusion among them. In a short way, the answer is they do not practice rituals but funeral ceremonies, which are limited to only the members of the first and partly second generations. In Germany, only funeral ceremonies are performed in the rituals that require physical practice, which does not attract the young population. Because there is not a sufficiently constituted material culture yet that belongs to the Yezidi community, with all its settings providing a gravity center. The Qoba Ezi is an attempt to have a center of gravity, but it is limited to a performance (feast). The reproduction of religion and its performances are now limited to Qoba Ezi and religious representation. The only well-known material visibility is cemeteries and cultural houses with symbols of Yezidism for now. Below are several images of symbols in cultural centers and images of cemeteries of Yezidis.



Figure 10. The Yezidi cemetery in Oldenburg. Photo by the author, Germany, 2023.



Figure 11. A signboard featuring the peacock symbol at the entrance of a Yezidi cultural center. Photo by the author.



Figure 12. An image of Lalish with two prominent Yezidi figures is displayed on the wall of a cultural center—photo by the author.



Figure 13. The symbol of Tawusî Melek and miniature shrines of Lalish are commonly seen in cemeteries.

Apart from cemeteries, the symbols on top of Yezidi cultural centers can be considered another aspect of material visibility.



Figure 14. Decorative elements inspired by Lalish, featuring sunbeams, adorn the top of a cultural center—photo by the author, Bielefeld.

It seems that Yezidis` sacred environment might be visible in a fast and organized manner in the near future. It is not difficult to imagine that the emerging sacred spaces will not resemble the classical sacred spaces. First of all, the German Yezidi community has already experienced institutionalized life. They have built close contacts and relationships with German society's different existing religious groups. It is a fact that almost all Yezidis say that the only way to exist in German society and to achieve purposes in the future is to gain an institutional identity. However, it is possible to predict that this production will also force religious practices into certain patterns.

In the near future, we may see more sacred Yezidi material culture in Germany besides cemeteries and the tomb of Ezi in Augsburg. There is increasing social interaction, which will create a more compact Yezidi society. Especially for the teaching of Yezidi teleology, there will be research departments on Yezidism in some of the educational institutions.[107] Once the

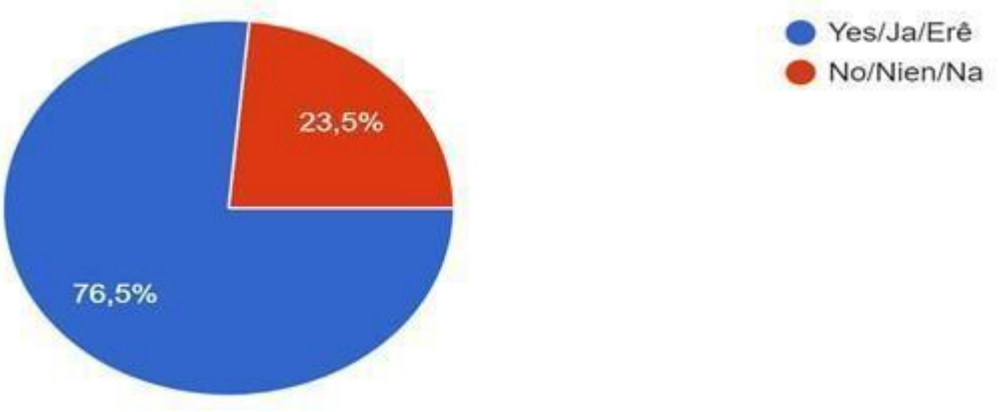
[107] Yezidis plan to run a research center or department of Yezidi theology at several universities in Germnay. For example, a head of the Yezidi center mentioned having a research center of Yezidi theology at the University of Oldenburg in the near future.

clergy are trained, they will need materials and institutional structures for traditional practices. For this, I see that the Yezidi community takes the sacred presence of Muslims and Christians as an example to constitute their own presence. Social interaction among Yezidis has increased tremendously in the last ten years, and separated generations have come into contact with each other. This process has also led to new developments in terms of constitutions of sacred spaces and organizing practices. First, I observe that young Yezidis are turning towards their own communities to learn more about their religion and its visibility. They are demanding that their communities have to have religious practices just like those of Muslims and Christians. I have asked a Yezidi man about this issue, who is one of the heads of one of the Yezidi houses or centers, and he shares his opinion about the issue and puts it as follows during our conversation:

"We have to have our own religious training institutions in Germany for our clerics, Pîrs and Sheikhs. Not every Pir and Sheikh should be considered a true cleric. They should be treated as Pîrs and Sheikhs after undergoing religious training and wearing religious clothes representing the Yezidis in Germany. Not every Pîr and Sheikh is a religious scholar. They are supposed to learn religious practices as well as theologians, like Christian clergy or Muslim imams. Otherwise, it is pointless to build holy places in Germany with clergymen who have limited religious knowledge."

As can be understood from the above quote and the previous quotes, institutions and their activities are prioritized when the clergy is criticized. This idea is also common among young Yezidis. It is a perspective that accelerates the institutional dimension of religion. From my observations, I can say that the Pîrs and Sheikhs are criticized in any case related to the discussion about sacred environments. The passivity of clerics is seen as the cause of the lack of material culture, the lack of communal life, and the compact Yezidi community by young Yezidis. Therefore, with the tomb built in 2019, the emergence of a religious figure who is well-versed in the practices of other religious groups and interacts openly with them highlights another instance of the re-production of material culture.

When I asked young Yezidis regarding such an expert religious figure, the question was, Do you want to be surrounded by intellectual Yezidi clerics who are experts in their field? They respond as follows:



Pie chart 9. The pie chart shows the percentage of desire to see religious experts and intellectual religious figures.

As pie chart 8 shows, the young people desire such a religious figure. Over thirty survey participants are keen on having such a figure talk about Yezidis openly and represent them in events with other religious groups in Germany.



Figure 15. Yezidi religious representative is with the Chancellor of Germany, Olaf Scholz. Source: a head of a cultural center in Oldenburg

Such religious figures as representative of the Yezidi community are part of mobilized Yezidis in the diaspora to gain visibility in the German public, making the young population desire to return to their community and express their Yezidiness openly. Young Yezidis in Germany have been away from their community and the foundational center of their faith for decades. As a result, the charismatic influence of traditional institutions and religious clergy has been diminished among the young population living in the diaspora. However, the emergence of such figures in public events of religious groups in Germany seems to make the young population interested in their community. Such affirmations, such as having a religious representative of the Yezidi community, are definitely going to bring new obstacles for traditional figures.

A young informant, for example, highlights her thoughts about the same issue as follows:

I7FO27: "The knowledge of our clergy living in Germany should not be only limited to the Yezidi faith. Our clergy should also educate themselves academically. If they live in Germany, they should also know other religions well. They should develop dialog with different religious groups in Germany and know their faith so that they can explain Yezidism to them."

These quotes summarize the attitude of many of the heads of the Yezidi centers in Germany toward the traditional clergy. Almost every Yezidi voiced the idea that the clergy is incapable of sustaining religious tradition, and there is an objection to the clergy's passivity that slows down and even prevents the formation of sacred space in Germany.

Another young Yezidi intellectual, Xelil Xalti**,** continues on the same issue as follows:

"The Yezidi faith and way of life is tied to the nature. There is no discipline in Yezidis' daily life. The Yezidi community has not experienced a systematic, organized life in Kurdistan. Turks and Alevis also came to Germany with us [Yezidis]. But they were able to continue their lives as they were. For them, religious, social, and work life were organized. Before they came to Germany, they had a disciplined and organized life thanks to religious institutions. Young Muslims disciplined themselves by going to the mosque every Friday. They could be disciplined if they failed to do a task. A religious official could preach in the mosque whenever he wanted. But this was not the case for the Yezidis. Yezidi youth do not know what discipline is. Sheikhs and Pîrs lacked discipline, too. They talk about religion to their followers whenever they feel like it. So, there is no discipline and order. There is no institutionalization of religious teaching in Germany. Whereas Muslim scholars preach in mosques, and there is a system of punishment or reward by which they can control those they

religiously educate. However, in Yezidis's case, the Sheikhs and Pîrs cannot control their followers because there is no system of coercion and punishment in Yezidism. I hope one day we can have such a system of teaching and visibility in public."

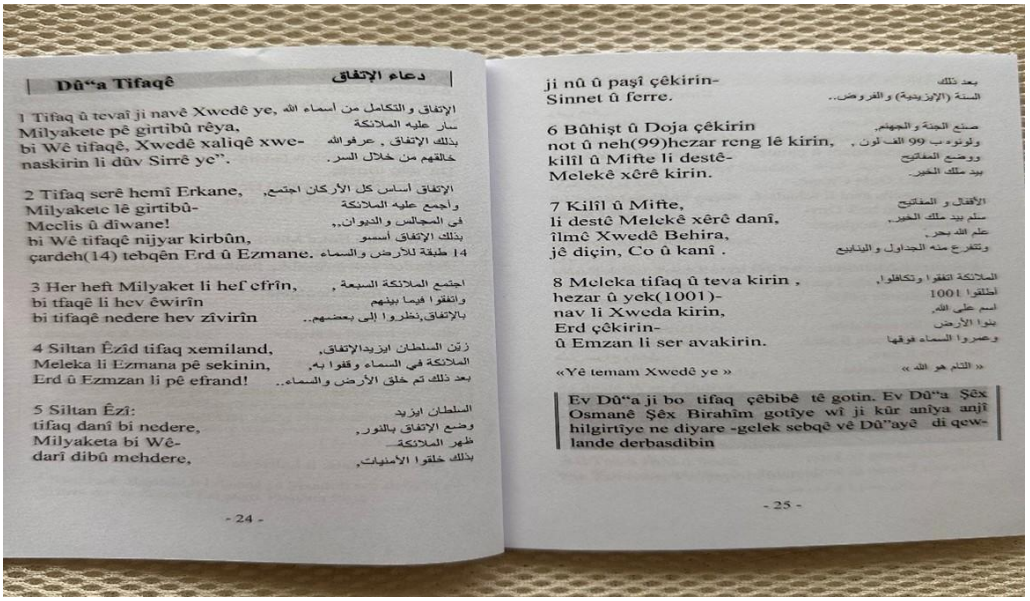
[What kind of visibility do you want to see?]

I7FO27: "Well! I would be happy to see our religious experts know many things and give more details of religion and belief. They are just telling stories. Look at Christians and their priests! Why not have such priests?"

[But you have it. What about Sheiks and Pîrs?]

"I need more. Okay, I respect Sheiks and Pîrs. But they are insufficient, giving us more knowledge about religion."

At this point, young Yezidis mentioned the lack of a systematized teaching and learning system in the Yezidi community of Germany. A systematized teaching of Yezidism requires textual religious materials like a holy book and theologians for orthodoxy checks. The issue of the absence of a visible holy book and theologians' ability to perform a sufficient method of teaching and learning is debated among young Yezidis. Therefore, the third material culture reproduced in the Yezidi German diaspora is a new system of learning and teaching methods with sacred textual materials. I can say that with the building of the tomb of Sultan Ezidi and the religious representative figure, the third reproduced phenomenon is an uncomplicated formal theology. The traditional theology of Yezidism is being reformulated to develop a formal theology in the Western sense. I have encountered several attempts during my ground research. I have seen tangible religious textual materials.



Dû"a Tifaqê دعاء الإتفاق

1 Tifaq û tevaî ji navê Xwedê ye, الإتفاق و التكامل من أسماء الله
Milyakete pê girtibû rêya, سار عليه الملائكة
bi Wê tifaqê, Xwedê xaliqê xwe- بذلك الإتفاق , عرفوالله
naskirin li dûv Sirrê ye". خالقهم من خلال السر .

2 Tifaq serê hemî Erkane, الإتفاق أساس كل الأركان اجتمع,
Milyakete lê girtibû- واجمع عليه الملائكة
Meclis û dîwane! في المجالس و الديوان,,
bi Wê tifaqê nijyar kirbûn, بذلك الإتفاق أسسو
çardeh(14) tebqên Erd û Ezmane. 14 طبقة للأرض والسماء

3 Her heft Milyaket li hefʿefrîn, اجتمع الملائكة السبعة ,
bi tfaqê li hev êwirîn واتفقوا فيما بينهم
bi tifaqê nedere hev zîvirîn بالاتفاق,نظروا إلى بعضهم..

4 Siltan Êzîd tifaq xemiland, زيّن السلطان ايزيدالإتفاق,
Meleka li Ezmana pê sekinin, الملائكة في السماء وقفوا به,
Erd û Ezmzan li pê efrand! بعد ذلك تم خلق الأرض والسماء..

5 Siltan Êzî: السلطان ايزيد
tifaq danî bi nedere, وضع الإتفاق بالنور ,
Milyaketa bi Wê- ظهر الملائكة
darî dibû mehdere, بذلك خلقوا الأمنيات,

- 24 -

ji nû û paşî çêkirin- بعد ذلك
Sinnet û ferre. السنة (الإيزيدية) و الفروض..

6 Bûhişt û Doja çêkirin صنع الجنة و الجهنم,
not û neh(99)hezar reng lê kirin, ولونوه ب 99 الف لون ,
kilîl û Mifte li destê- ووضع المفاتيح
Melekê xêrê kirin. بيد ملك الخير.

7 Kilîl û Mifte, الأقفال و المفاتيح
li destê Melekê xêrê danî, سلم بيد ملك الخير.
îlmê Xwedê Behira, علم الله بحر.
jê diçin, Co û kanî . وتتفرع منه الجداول و الينابيع

8 Meleka tifaq û teva kirin , الملائكة اتفقوا وتكافلوا,
hezar û yek(1001)- أطلقوا 1001
nav li Xweda kirin, اسم على الله.
Erd çêkirin- بنوا الأرض
û Emzan li ser avakirin. وعمروا السماء فوقها

«Yê temam Xwedê ye » « التام هو الله »

Ev Dû"a ji bo tifaq çêbibê tê gotin. Ev Dû"a Şêx Osmanê Şêx Birahîm gotîye wî ji kûr anîya anjî hilgirtîye ne diyare -gelek sebqê vê Dû"ayê di qewlande derbasdibin

- 25 -

Figure 16. The content of the book of prayer

This pocket book is an example of religious textual material that might lead to the preparation of a holy book, according to one of its authors. This is a new development for the Yezidi community, transforming its transmission method of religious knowledge to the next generations. With such textual materials, I must say that Yezidis` method of transmission of knowledge has been reproduced.

Kreyenbroek (2005) claims that the Yezidi oral religious tradition and the long period of oral religious transmission prevented a single codified formal theology of Yezidism. Omarkhali (2017) adds that Yezidi theology can be called "implicit," and the implications of Yezidi religious teaching are now becoming important for modern Yezidis.

The lack of a systematic study of Yezidi sacred texts and the need to examine doctrinal implications are on the steak of the contemporary Yezidi community, notably in diasporas. A systematic Yezidi theology and its understanding may not be increasingly important for Yezidis who live in their homeland. Yet, in the modern world, many Yezidis live in a multi-religious and modern environment, and they do not live in an isolated environment socially and geographically anymore. The need to explain the traditional theology of Yezidism to outsiders is much more urgent. Thus, Yezidis need one fixed belief and practice, which those living outside their lands of origin need. And therefore, naturally, the oral tradition with its ancient remnants, which is seen as old knowledge, is under the scriptural process. During this process, the grey areas of the religious issues (sufi remnants related to Middle Eastern communities, the cultural norms–methods of marriages, for example– that

considered religious practices, etc.) are being reproduced or reformulated reasonably in the centers of diaspora as the new places of the production of knowledge. According to Omarkhali (2017),[108] the teaching and learning practices of religious knowledge have never been studied transformed from a traditional environment based on oral transition to an age of reason environment in Germany.

Additionally, I can say that a rapid transformation in the Yezidi society in the years after 2014 brings the need to reconstruct new ways to popularize the religion to all young generations. This is a new narrative that has the capacity to talk about their religion to outsiders with an emancipatory act, showing their tangible cultural material in Germany. And, of course, the impact of Western theologies cannot be underestimated here. It is needful to have a onefold Yezidi view (Yezidis in Transcaucasia, Syria, Iraq, and in the Western diasporas are in need of a common way of understanding some religious observances) of the religion. Thus, this process brings the need to have experts with literacy in religious knowledge in the environments of diasporas. First-hand knowledge does not exist among the young population anymore.

[108] According to Omarkhali, "We have no reliable documents to show how teaching and learning practices functioned and which methods were used to transmit religious knowledge from the time texts were composed onward." See more details, Omarkhali, 2017: 137, Chapter IV

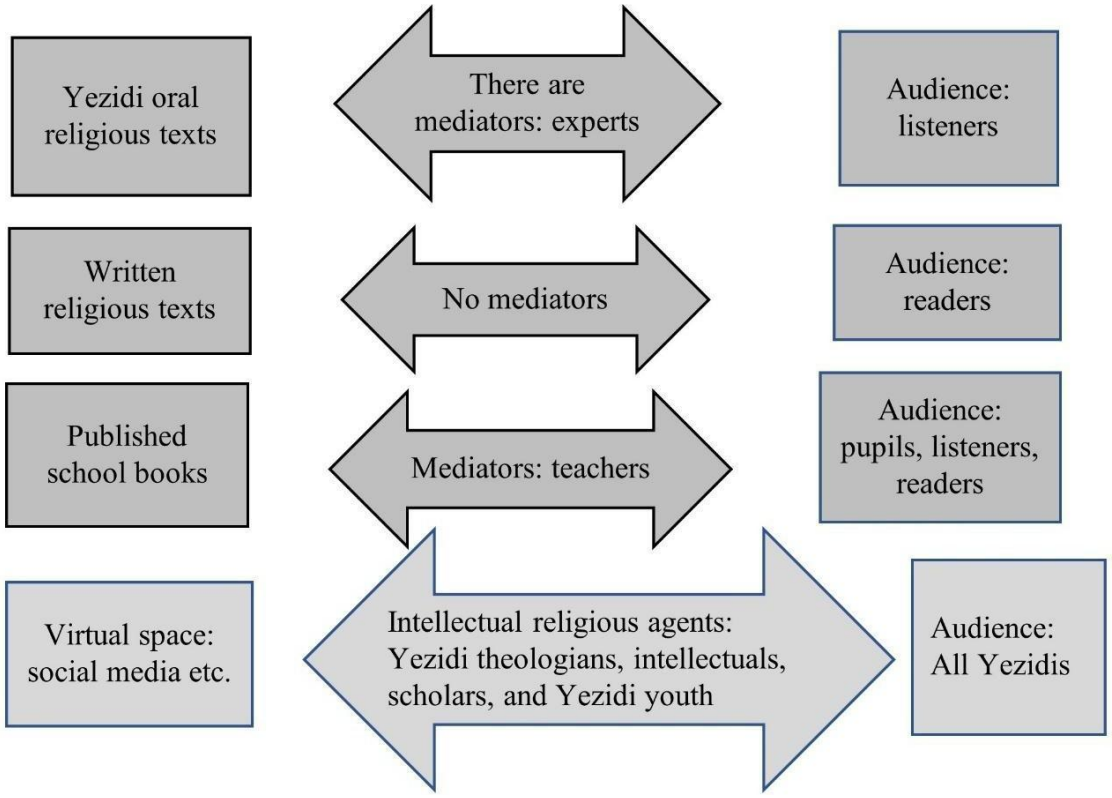


Table 3. Structure of transmission of religious knowledge

Table 3 above presents the structure of the transmission of religious knowledge. It is inspired by the work of Omarkhali (2017: p.270) and the doctrinal modes of religiosity in Whitehouse's work (Whitehouse, 2004, p.66). The current transmission of religious knowledge is being performed as structured in the last step of the structure (below) above. In such a transmission structure, intellectual and religious agents are key in transferring reproduced knowledge from virtual spiritual space (via TV channels, social media webs, videos of performances, etc.) to the entire Yezidi community. The traditional performance of the rituals is nearly not witnessed in Germany. To revitalize such performances in a new form (virtual), young Yezidi intellectuals are reproducing knowledge of Yezidism based on textual and virtual sources and on religious experts or theologians. As Whitehouse highlights, there is a correlation between memory and the performances of rituals. To him, religious leaders need to check orthodoxy after the transmission of religious teaching is routinized. In this case, young Yezidis need orthodoxy checks.

Today, every Yezidi individual who gets religious transmitted knowledge via printed periodicals, online forums and homepages, social media, and TV channels faces the need to

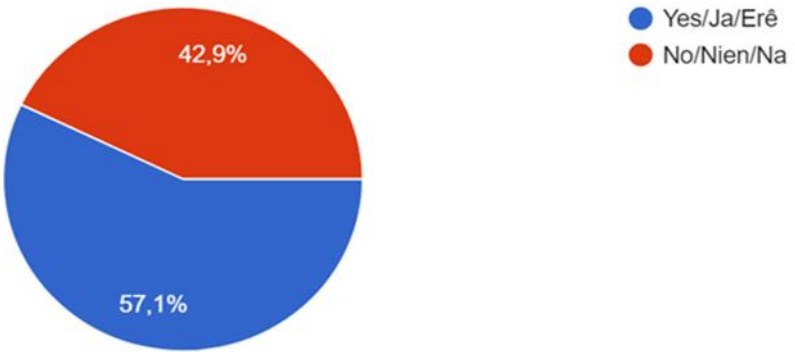
harmonize the new knowledge gained in the diaspora and the knowledge gained from family members. They are in need of a more systematic understanding of learning and teaching methods (Wettich, 2021). Since Yezidism has lived through action and performance (orthopraxy), all members are supposed to be part of these actions, and performances can then be seen as good Yezidi. Such practices need collective attendance. However, attending religious practices and festivals is not on the agenda of young Yezidis living in Germany.

Yezidi youth generation in the German diaspora appears in the second and third lines of transmission(as seen in Table 3 above). During the transmission of religious knowledge, they sometimes have no mediators and have few mediators from time to time. The centers of the Yezidi German diaspora provide written religious texts and published school books as a new authority for the transmission of knowledge to the young population. The teachers, as mediators, are persons with high literacy. A fourth line or section is added to Table 3 as a virtual space where both the process of knowledge generation and its audience are youth Yezidis. The corpus of religious knowledge is transmitted in words (orthodoxy). Learning this knowledge requires new techniques rather than ritual practices in cultural centers. So, this is a method of reproduction of knowledge by young Yezidis. Techniques used at research centers, universities, and schools are used commonly. Learners are being trained to be subjected to regular formal or informal tests. Criticism of traditional knowledge appears. Religious thinking, which had become routine, has been replaced by the literary sphere, which leads to active production. Long-term ritual repetition has become a habit over time and cannot go beyond repetition. Religious symbols and their meanings are forgotten in this habit. Whitehouse(2004) takes this even further. According to Whitehouse, the receptive audience of religious rituals and religious speeches also becomes habituated. However, verbal repetition is more than habituation; it creates a situation that reproduces religious knowledge.

We witness virtual space as an alternative learning and teaching method of Yezidism rather than traditional teaching via attendance to performances and memorizing knowledge of religion. The traditional way of learning Yezidism in the lands of origin requires knowledgeable persons around for the young people to know and manage their daily life and religious lives. Hosta or seyda are known as guides for young Yezidis to regulate their lives. However, such practice is not practiced in Germany. Because the virtual space with textual materials and the method of learning about their community, religion, and culture have transformed. I asked many young Yezidis if they needed religiously knowledgeable people around them to learn their religion. The responses show that young Yezidis are in need of

spiritual guidance less. In the natural realm of the Yezidi community in the lands of origin, spiritual guides are nearly the only source from which to gain complete knowledge of religious practices and observances. However, in Germany, such sources of religion and culture are needed less. I have asked the following question(s) to the young Yezidis in a survey during research:

Do you need a Sheikh and a Pîr to guide you in your life in Germany? or do you have/need a hosta/seyde (spiritual expert) to learn religion? and the results are as follow in the pie chart 9 below.

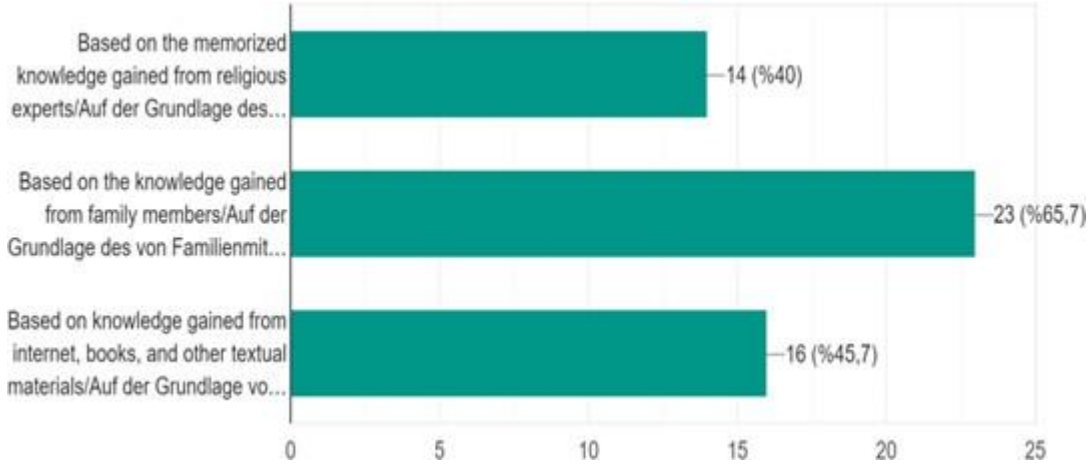


Pie chart 10

A virtual spiritual space through technology has appeared as an alternative to gaining knowledge of religion. It seems likely that a new powerful group, which can be called intellectual, religious agents, appears to be a new authority or to share the religious authority with traditional one under the impact of the means of social media and the writing process. The scriptural process, therefore, also brings new teaching and learning methods. This process, for sure, will polarize the traditional authorities in the Yezidi German diaspora. Because Yezidi youth need an explanation of their religion in the modern world, traditional religious figures are inefficient in providing enough knowledge. Therefore, the arguments of the traditional authorities, which are based on mere orality and have Islamic elements in their discourse, are being criticized by the new authorities in centers of diaspora, who have their textual materials purged sufi elements in religion contributed by reasonable methods and different means of technology. Thus, the new authorities(some cultural centers and research centers) offer the young population a much more reasonable explanation of religion. This process is already beyond Ackermann's (2008) description of "the state of liminality" in his work. Yezidis in the diaspora have already jumped the threshold. The knowledge of religion is

being objectified into a systematical theology in diaspora centers. In a way, knowledge is acquired, and the interpretation of religious knowledge becomes more valued than repeating memorized things. In this stage, the youth population seeks new knowledge via textual material instead of having traditional religious experts around.

Below, I provide graph 1 again to illustrate the results of the question **[**Based on what sources do you explain your religion or mythology to a foreigner?] and to see what sort of sources the Yezidi youth turn to to gain knowledge of religion.



The graph shows a departure from the classical learning method (memorizing). In contrast, there is a shift towards written materials and audiovisual resources, where intellectual Yezidis revitalize religious knowledge. Some aspects of the religion have been reproduced, and young Yezidis learn it from the written materials.

[What aspects of the Yezidi religion do you tell your German friends?]

I3FC25: "I tell people Yezidism is a calm religion, and we dont want someone to be converted to Yezidism. I tell only positive aspects."

[What kind of negative aspects don't you want to tell them?]

"You know, there are many negative aspects. Young Yezidis are forced to get married to a Yezidi. This oppression takes place in the family. What else! Yes, the caste system is a very negative aspect, and I do not tell about it to outsiders."

A young Yezidi from a family of Pîr responds to this question as follows:

I2MH26: "My knowledge about religion is based on Google. Nearly every member of my family says different things when I ask questions about religious issues. Then I say it best to Google it. However, there are fewer materials on the internet. I searched for knowledge of religion, but I encountered more about the history of Yezidism."

Traditionally, during the teaching and learning processes for an expert of the Yezidi religion, Yezidi religious texts are being recited before a big audience or in a small group. The size of the audience varies according to the level of the receiver's acknowledgment of religious texts and his family background. The teaching method takes place in a face-to-face way, and recitation is sometimes held with mistakes. Yet, this method is about to become the modern way of an academic framework with textual materials and technological means in Germany. For instance, a reciter can reach various audiences with some TV broadcasting (Çira TV, YouTube channels, TikTok videos, etc.). From my observation during the groundwork, I realized that there are few young receivers in Germany. Because the traditional teaching and learning method is insufficient for Yezidi youth to desire to memorize religious texts. Thus, naturally, there are changes in traditional methods of observance and practices. The changing living conditions in the German diaspora make Yezidis aware that traditional transmitting methods are not sufficient to keep attracting young Yezidis. The Yezidi youth is abandoning this method of traditional transmitting. However, in recent years, the migration phenomenon and the transportation opportunities have made different Yezidi communities interact in Germany, and the traditional ways of teaching and learning of the religion have changed. I must say that being a transnational community transformed the ways of gaining knowledge of religion among young Yezidis. Since the method of learning Yezidi religion is reformulated via written textual materials, the way of being a religious expert is becoming complicated for the young Yezidis who want to be religious experts.

They seek contemporary methods of being religious experts. Many young Yezidis who are trying to become religious experts in Germany look for Yezidi theological academies. For example, the International Yezidi Theological Academy in Georgia has been popular among young Yezidis in recent years. The International Yezidi Theological Academy accepts only Yezidi applicants who have a high school education, are from all around the world, and must be between 18 and 35 years old. Applicants are supposed to have a secondary education level or higher. Yezidi applicants are educated in this Academy for three years and graduate as religious experts with a new version of updated traditional teaching methods. They are receiving ritual service or education in practical theology, too. The applicants from Germany

are in number. This Academy is becoming an important educational center for the young Yezidis who settled in Germany since there is limited traditional teaching activity in their German diaspora. Thanks to such educational centers, young Yezidis who have almost no access to qualified religious education in Germany gain opportunities to conduct research on Yezidism for academic purposes. This Academy of Theology encourages heads of Yezidi cultural centers to take the initiative to constitute such educational centers in Germany, too. In this case, every Yezidi group develops and adopts new methods of teaching and learning Yezidism. In the state of Lower Saxony, several Yezidi centers of research and culture developed a close affinity to adopt the German language to teach children. Obviously, the knowledge of the Kurdish language (the dialect of Kurmanji) decreases among Yezidi youth, and it directly brings radical alteration in traditional teaching methods. Kurmanji, the northern dialect of the Kurdish language, is the mother tongue of many of the Yezidi population. Besides, some sub-dialects like Behdini and Arabic are spoken. The lack of knowledge of Kurmanji weakens the interaction between masters of religion and the new youth audience. The control mechanism in the traditional method, which is that audiences consist of knowledgeable persons and have good Kurmanji backgrounds, will be diminished soon. The rate of 42,9% in the pie chart below presents the diminishing need for traditional methods of gaining knowledge of religion. The centers of diaspora seem as if they will take the place of these knowledgeable persons as new producers of knowledge and, of course, as new authorities mediating between Yezidi communities. Thus, cultural centers, academic centers of Yezidis, and potential new academies of theology of Yezidi religion in the diaspora offer new teaching methods that writing plays a key role in Yezidi youth learning Yezidi theology and its religious texts. Naturally, new forms of lectures appear in centers of diasporas.

As a result of the newly constituted method of teaching and learning, traditional reciters of religious texts are under the control of listeners. The reciter must improve his/her skills to not be criticized by the young population. Yet the audience is supposed to be well educated in the Yezidi theology to check the reciter's knowledge at the same time. In Germany, the audience, notably young members of the Yezidi community, may become much more critical just because of the educated population. They have their textual materials to ask for missing points of recitation and to add new details to the knowledge of experts. So, the Sheikhs and Pirs, as experts of religion, are the target of the critical Yezidi youth in many cases. Their position as valuable figures is why they have diminished among the young Yezidis. Yezidi youth are keen on textual materials and virtual spaces instead.

Until now, a group of individual experts have been responsible for preserving religious texts. This group has conducted the transition of religious knowledge from one generation to the next for centuries. "They have no special method to learn religious texts. The training process is natural, and children learn religious texts in a Yezidi environment" (Omarkhali, 2017, p. 140). The Yezidi youth criticize the methods of the experts, and their knowledge of the religion is seen as limited. I also observed that despite making such criticisms, young people did not make an effort to become religious scholars at the same time. I aimed to understand how they evaluate such issues by asking the questions below:

[How does one become a master of the Yezidi religion in Germany?]

I2MH26: "Definitely, one must go to Lalish to be an expert. It is not possible to be an expert in Germnay. We need deep knowledge of religion, which we can gain from Lalish. I feel I must go to Lalish to have a deep knowledge of religion. Once, I tried to be an expert, but I failed. Maybe I didn't try so hard. The traditional way of being an expert is easy, and we dont need any other methods to be an expert. I dont want to have a formal theological system."

[Do you have a sister or brother of the hereafter? Do you have an expert to learn Yezidism? What are the 'five precepts' or obligations?]

I3FC25: "I know five rules. For now, the sister of the hereafter (Xuşka Exîretê) is not needed since everyone knows many things about religion. To me, it remains a symbol and does not function in Germany."

I11MB22: "I know five ferz. This is religion, not culture. We are supposed to have the brother of hereafter after getting married."

I6MO25: I'm engaged. When I marry, I'll have what we call a "brother of the hereafter" — someone who will greet me in the afterlife and bear witness to our spiritual bond.

[Did you learn about religion from him?]

"In the past, that's how it was. But now, I prefer using Google. You can find guidance for life and religious practices just by searching online."

I8MB27: "I have no idea about five ferz. But as far as I know, such rules were sufficient during Sheikh Adi's period. In the diaspora, people know about it. We have Sheikhs and Pirs, and they visit our homes a few times a year. All I know is that. I guess we have less knowledge of religion and our community. Young people like me who are growing up in

Germany have an identity crisis. When we get older, we try to overcome our crisis. Many young people have no idea about their identities. Modern life is the reason for losing our identities. I try to learn about my religion and community just by talking to members of my family, with people who migrated from Yezidis lands to Germany recently, and sometimes via materials on the internet."

So far, the majority of Yezidis learned about Yezidism from their grandparents, parents, and other relatives. There was an oral teaching method based on memorized knowledge. The relatives of the young generation played a key role in teaching the religion. Yet, today, the young generation in Germany has many options, which have become much more reliable, alongside oral teaching to learn about their religion. They are likely to have the option to check the reliability of religious knowledge transferred from their relatives. Their relatives still keep their strong position partly in transmitting religious knowledge from generation to generation, but the teaching method becomes fixed in the new environment. The textual materials that have been produced open new gates to the young generation. As Omarkhali notes, "learning process seems to have been a matter of absorbing the surrounding culture while teaching Yezidi religious texts is the prerogative of a small group of people" (Omarkhali, 2017, p. 141). But the environment is quite important both in teaching and learning progress. In Germany, there is no fully Yezidi environment for young Yezidis. They would learn basic knowledge through passive learning. For instance, young Yezidis who integrated into German society may not be experts on religion.

I10MH22: "No need to memorize false knowledge of religion. Elder Yezidis in Germany have no sufficient knowledge of Qewls, and those who have knowledge of it are limited to a few people. In Malen Ezidiyan, there are no sufficient methods to make people religious experts."

[So what is needed for that?]

"Well, I dont know. Maybe in schools. Or maybe we must have our schools of teaching of Yezidism."

I8MB27: "I ask my parents about religion. We need more places belonging to Yezidis in Germany. I dont mean only holy places. I mean the places where Yezidis meet and discuss and talk." [There are cultural centers!].

"But I can't see any experts in Yezidis cultural centers! They don't provide opportunities to learn religion or become a religious expert.[Do you want to be a religious expert?]. I would be! But how? "

This informant is confused about the method of being a religious expert in Germany. As I mentioned before, in a traditional way, observations and attendance are important practices and methods of being an expert in religious knowledge. Observations are significant for a young person who desires to be an expert on religion. It is not sufficient to learn what is said by the reciter of religious texts; it is crucial to observe the performance, too.

Young Yezidis in the German diaspora face a diminishing quantity of traditional religious knowledge. The lack of traditional societal structure and the model of collective society in Germany are the reasons behind this diminishing. Their practices in Germany are limited to the practices of culture, such as festivities and funeral ceremonies. That is why, to summarize here, in general, there have been three concepts on the agenda of the Yezidi German community in such discussions and debates of the need for reproducing religion and culture for two decades: Assimilation, preservation (tradition), and the hope of becoming a global group (a transnational open society to outsiders). Preserving tradition is on the agenda of the first generation, while main changes and formulations are on the second generation's agenda in reinvention of the Yezidi society. The agenda of the third generation is to take a step forward and be pioneers of newly constituted identity formations and practices in the framework of European settings, which I will highlight in the next subchapters. I must say that a need to distinguish the Yezidi society from others, even from Kurdish movements, came out among the members of the second generation that was dominated by Yezidi intellectuals in recent years. Growing Yezidi international activism since the US invasion of Iraq (in 2003), since the Syrian civil war (2011), and the genocide of 2014, and then refugee politics in the Western countries have contributed to attempts of self-identification that often met with hostility toward the influence of Islam to the Yezidi society in Germany. These facts accelerated the internal debates in the Yezidi society in Germany, and the young population tried to be part of these debates, providing their ideas and scenarios for the future of the Yezidi society. Because young Yezidis, in general, are keen on fundamental transformations, for example, creating a new societal caste or terminating the traditional caste system. They come with their scenarios about gender issues and marriage tradition, honor-related violence, the influence of patriarchy on the role of women in their society, the need for re-configuration of the caste system, etc. They ask for a Yezidi theology based on coherence, a doctrine, and

canon in the context of European thinking of religion, an initiative to re-structure the social organization of the Yezidi society that might result in the establishment of 'houses of worship' in Germany which is not possible for previous generations. Young Yezidis considers many social norms and sets of cultural practices as 'anti-modern practices.' Endogamy, for example, is at the center of everyday practices and conversations of young Yezidis. For young Yezidis who were born and raised in Germany, endogamy doesn't make sense, and the dowry (Qelen or next, or Maher), for example, is considered as a practice of 'primitive societies.' So, the Yezidi third-generation supports the efforts of the elimination of bride prices in their community.

This debate process, which I present below under the following subchapters, brought a process of reinvention of the Yezidi society for the last two decades. The process of reinvention of the Yezidi society leads to every Yezidi individual agreeing upon essential features of 'Yezidiness,' such as being highly critical of Islam and its followers with fear and anger. These agendas are a result of the attempts to reinvention the Yezidi society in diasporas since the previous generations recently encountered a 'cultural trauma' in the settings of Western societies. The lifestyles and forms of Western culture adopted by young people are considered cultural trauma by previous generations. This kind of life practice of the young population is considered far away from the practice of collective life and is expressed as a kind of extinction by older Yezidis.

To sum up this chapter, I can clearly stress here that reproducing religion and culture can be observed clearly through highlighted details discussed above in four main cases: the buildings (tombs), the newly appeared religious representative figure, the printed religious textual materials with corrections, a revitalized knowledge of religion, and the method of transferring traditional religious knowledge to become religious experts.

Yezidis in Germany are productive and make an effort to reformulate the existing traditions. Their visibility in the international media, especially in the last decade, has led to internal transformation and caused a reproduction adventure.

It would not be wrong to make the following argument about Yezidis` latest situation in their German diaspora. They needed to get in touch with the international community, and it caused the Yezidi community to be more visible to the public. For this sake, they needed some transformations and reforms. Then, they sought a more united Yezidi community, which is politically and economically divided into factions that have caused the young population to

drift away from the community. Thus, today, the concept of "(re)producing Yezidism" is on the agenda of all Yezidis in Germany. They realized that they live in a realm of a modern environment in which the traditional theology of Yezidism is being reformulated to develop a formal theology in the Western sense. The emergence of new methods of transmission of knowledge to the next generations in a new environment is natural because of the separation from traditional sacred places and the disappearance of local rituals. At present, many Yezidis, at the local level, continue to generate their own symbolic sacred places in Germany to represent their traditional cultural materials to new generations. In this case, examining the Youth discourse on the transformations related to religion is crucial. Their scenarios and ideas in the following subchapter will help us to understand how deep the ongoing transformation and reproduction of Yezidi society is going on in Germany.

4.2 Yezidi youth's discourse on questions of religion

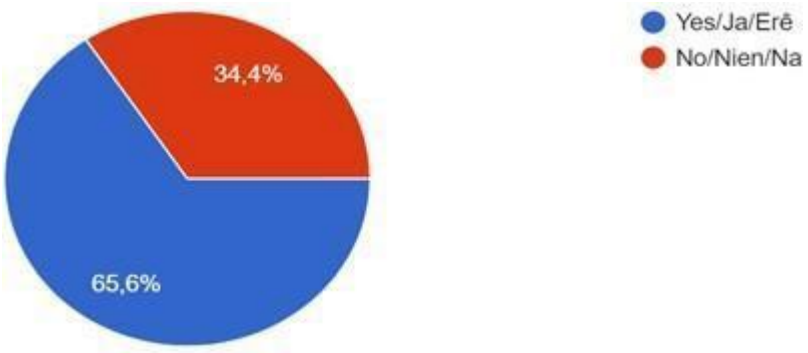
I11MB22: "Here (in Germany), nobody teaches me about Yezidism. I know what I brought with me to Germany a long time ago. There is so much false information here. We have an idiom about it. It is known as "Berxê şaş (The wrong lamb)." It means a Yezidi knows everything in his life and anything about life in Europe but has no idea about believing in religion. We call such a person "Berxê şaş." Such a person is confused and can't teach properly. Our religious figures here are like "Berxê şaş." Thus, I was taught by my grandmother before coming to Germany."

Labeling people is a common cultural practice among Yezidis in Germany. The quote I share at the beginning of this section highlights how young people consider or label religious figures who lack knowledge of Yezidi religion in Germany. The same attitude can be observed among elder Yezidis when they talk about young Yezidis living in Germany.

Previous generations often label young Yezidis living in Germany as a "lost or assimilated" generation that has made them stay away from their community for years. Previous generations are still using such labeling. I have heard during my ground research that elders call them the 'shisha or hookah generation.' This is because young Yezidi men are believed to spend their time in hookah bars instead of paying visits to the Yezidi cultural centers. However, in recent years, the so-called lost generation has returned to their community with newly constituted scenarios of the reforms, change, and transformations under the shade of a few waves of violence erupting against their community in the lands of origin.

They have just started to speak out publicly about changes in their religion. They seek reforms of traditional structures, including the caste system, the interpretation of the holy book, the role of the sacred temple, and methods of religious education. In general, young Yezidi individuals are seeking change and 'reform' under the title of religion across four main cases: a) religious education and practices, b) the need for a sacred book, text, or canon, c) the establishment of holy or sacred building/spaces, and d) the roles of clergy and the functioning of the caste system in their community in Germany. I share a question from the survey done to highlight, approximately, at what level young Yezidis desire to see newly produced materials have change and reforms:

[As a young Yezidi, do you wish to see change, transformation, or reform within the Yezidi community?]



Pie chart 11

The pie chart 10 shows the average percentage of the Yezidi community's desire for change and reform, notably in Germany.

Why is the percentage of those who desire change and transformation so high?

There are certain reasons for the acceleration of the reproduction, reform, or reaffirmation of the religion religion. First and foremost, we are talking about a Yezidi community (having traumas of extinction) trying to preserve the existing traditional culture in a culturally diverse society. This protective or conservative approach can easily be observed among the first and the second generations. However, protectionist and conservative behavior is rarely observed among the young Yezidis, whom I call third-generation Being open to changes and reforms

among young members of the Yezidi German community accelerates the 'anxiety of assimilation' among previous generations. In particular, the revitalist ideas from young Yezidis are thought to cause a 'cultural trauma'[109] for the previous generations. When the idea of reproducing gain ground, the relationship between 'cultural assimilation' and preservation (tradition) emerges in the context of a struggle between tradition and modernity. And the process of reproducing occurs as 'transformation' or 'cultural trauma' for social groups. Many scholars (Gilroy, 1997. 1999, and 2013; Kearney, 1995; Malkki, 1995) rely on the transformation process of social groups, evaluating it as a positive inflection of national desire and hope for identity re-making in diasporas. As Sharmani Patricia Gabriel (2011) mentions, resistance and assimilation are simultaneous processes in every community in diaspora conditions. Productivity and the effort to reformulate the existing one and the conservative effort to resist productivity occur in the same realm. However, I must say that in the case of the Yezidis in Germany, both resistance and assimilation took place. Almost the entire first Yezidi generation thinks that the younger generation in Germany is being assimilated regarding practices of the religion. The second generation–the first generation offspring–wants to be a bit more optimistic and believes that the more they reproduce Yezidism through newly produced knowledge of religion religion and culture with regard to the circumstances of the diaspora, the more younger generation is going to get close to the Yezidi community. The starting point of the reproduction process, therefore, occurs among educated Yezidi intellectuals, causing the existence of a new under the attempts to reinvention the Yezidi society or 'revitalize' the Yezidi religion. Then, it continues among the Yezidi youth with 'fundamental' scenarios of production.

Nearly all Yezidi intellectuals in diasporas are eager to reject the negativity of focusing on sadness about the lost past, which is common among the first generation. They are hopeful about possible transformations in a positive way for the Yezidi society. At this point, the first generation (labor workers) and second generation (mainly offspring of the first generation) of the Yezidi society of Germany come together in a realm of debates about keeping traditions in modern life, about the effect of the modernity on the future of the young members of Yezidi society who grew up in Germany. For the first time, all Yezidi generations came together to

[109] Cultural trauma refers to the volcano-like events, assimilation, acts of violence, etc., for example, that shook the foundation of societies. The relationship between the 'generation after' and 'generation before' is shaped by the circumstances of such events or by the transmitted knowledge of cultural trauma through oral stories or written materials about traumatic events. Cultural traumas or transformation, in general, lead to progress and change (Artur Neal, 2005), and the newly constructed identities occur as a result of the responses to cultural traumas. For example, the adaptation of German culture by young Yezidis is a cultural trauma for the previous generations.

highlight their ideas and scenarios for the sake of the future of the Yezidi society, notably for the Yezidis living in Germany. The young population, therefore, has a chance or room to highlight their opinions about Yezidism and its traditions for the first time.

Issues like the human rights violations suffered by the community and the displacement and dispersal of the Yezidi community after the wars in Syria and Iraq brought all generations of the community together. Such developments can be seen as the second main reason that the percentage of young Yezidis is high regarding reforms and transformations. They reorganize themselves through the constituted relations with Western societies. At this point, it seems inevitable that the Yezidi community will undergo transformation and change since there is a need to make outsiders understand Yezidism in the sense of Western thinking. Intellectual Yezidis and activists have already taken up the issue of re-evaluation and reproduction of Yezidism. Several issues like the Sufism in Yezidism, the social position of women in Yezidi society, the roots of patriarchy in Yezidi social structures, the practicability of the social norms and unwritten social rules, and the historical terms of belonging are being reformulated in the context of a new age of knowledge production. In this age of knowledge production, there are tensions between the Yezidi youth and the older generation in Germany. Overall, the individualistic life of the Yezidi youth has not been welcomed by previous generations. Young Yezidis are labeled as 'the betrayers'[110] by previous generations just because of young` preferences for the contemporary lifestyle. The way of life of the previous generations is determined by family traditions, tribal traditions, and collective interaction within the framework of Eastern societies. For young Yezidis, these traditions have already lost their meaning, and in this situation, previous generations believe that young Yezidis are experiencing cultural and religious erosion. However, when I listen to the Yezidi youth, it is clear that the cultural and religious erosion that previous generations claim is not as deep as they might think. On the contrary, I have to say that the ongoing family pressure and approaches of the traditional Yezidi individuals exclude Yezidi youth, which accelerates an individualistic life. Yezidi generations seem to be in a race of labeling younger individuals. When I asked a few adult Yezidis I interviewed how to reach out to young Yezidi individuals, they responded: "Are you looking for the hookah generation? Don't go to them; they know nothing about our religion religion. They spend their time in hookah bars?"

[110] During face-to-face meetings, members of the previous generation often mentioned such labels for the young generation.

In such a realm, young Yezidis have begun to express their opinions openly, which they did not dare to do before. Young Yezidis, who are well integrated into Western society, emphasize the need for religious change. Religion should be well integrated into German society. They do not see it possible for Yezidism to survive in Western society without transformation and change. The language they practice in daily life is, in general, German, which makes practicing religion impossible. So, the social platforms and social sphere they experience in Germany require changes and reforms in the Yezidi society.

In this case, the Yezidis are those who try to preserve their traditional settings, the Yezidis are those who try to reformulate their traditional settings (intellectuals) in accordance with host society settings, and Yezidi youth meet or come together in a realm of discussions and debates take place in clashes and conflict atmosphere. Yezidi intellectuals are in an effort to clarify, purify, and give clarity to traditional settings to prepare the Yezidi society of Germany to be integrated well. So, young Yezidis try to be part of this reproduction process, experiencing liberal values and keeping up with Western culture. The religious customs associated with endogamous marriages, for example, are not welcomed by the young population, while the previous generations consider such customs as the motif of compactness of the Yezidi community. This issue is the starting point of generational conflicts since many issues, even in some cases the religion itself, are associated with endogamy in the Yezidi community. Being away from traditional customs is seen as an erosion of Yezidi's religious identity by older members of the community.

The effort to reproduce and rearrange the performances of the religion has made young Yezidis reconsider their position in the Yezidi society in recent years. The existing knowledge is based on collective and cultural traumas of previous Yezidi generations and has been remembered only employing oral stories and behaviors in families for decades. Several traumatic catastrophes, such as genocide, war, political conflicts, etc., have shaped current memories of the first and second Yezidi generations in Germany. Such memories are transmitted to younger generations by family members. Such memories are kept alive among the second generation via images and stories. It is called 'post-memory'[111] by Marianne Hirsch (2019). However, the memories transmitted by catastrophes do not make sense to the younger generation, who grew up in German society and did not experience such traumas. I mean, for the second generation, the traumas of the previous generation make sense because the

[111] 'Postmemory' refers to a relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the traumas of the generation that came before (Hirsch, 2019).

memories that the previous generation holds are part of their individual and collective identifications. However, the Yezidi youth in this study rarely remember collective traumas. And traumas are not a big part of their identification. The post-memory of the second generation is constituted by an 'imaginative investment,' and the effect of traumas continues into the current lives of the second generation. For Yezidi youth, at least until 2014, the traumas and suffering mentioned by previous generations did not make sense. After the last trauma, Young Yezidis experienced a trauma beyond the stories and images transmitted by the elders. They witnessed what has happened since 2014 moment by moment via social media and virtual space. Then, a big interaction appeared as a result of increased technological opportunities and the last genocide. This development can be seen as the third main reason that makes the percentage of the desire for change and reform high. At this point, I think we get partly the answer to the question [why is the percentage of those who want change and transformation so high?] asked above in pie chart 10.

The activity of the young population in virtual spaces and on social media accelerated the percentage of young Yezidis who participated in such debates about reproducing Yezidism in all its settings.

These three factors or reasons led to Yezidis in the German diaspora being more mobilized and visible, and all generations started to interact with each other, which I call transnational Yezidi mobility. So, the reproduction of religion is going on under such circumstances. Fears for the survival of the Yezidi community in diasporas have led the Yezidi community to engage in a process of intense interaction. For the previous generations, the fear of the disappearance of Yezidism is the main reason for accelerating the reproduction process, while the need for better integration and better life with harmony with the German society in all settings is the reason for the Yezidi youth be part of reproducing religion religion.

Religious spaces are known as material, metaphorical, physical, and imagined (Knott, 2005) and are a new form of development for the Yezidi youth living in Germany. So abstracted teaching methods with formal descriptions of worship are debated by young Yezidis in cultural centers. An effort to standardize customs, social norms, and rituals related to religion can be observed among Yezidi youth. The settings of Yezidis` German diaspora put Yezidi religion, naturally, into a realm of shifting modes of religiosity from imagistic to doctrinal religion. During our off-record conversation, even a young Yezidi highlighted his opinion about the future of the Yezidi religion as follows: I10MH22: "Look! My parents tell us [young Yezidis], you have forgotten your religion in Germany. I think we can survive better. Look at

the Vatican City in Italy. They are able to keep their religious and cultural sites all together. [But this is a different thing." What do you mean by referring to the Vatican City?].

"Well, we have Ezdixana; we have the Yezidi flag. If we try more, we can have a place of Yezidism like Vatican City. Imagine that the Yezidi religion can survive very well with its sacred book and liberated lands." [Do you mean to have such space in Germany?].

"No! It must be in Ezdixana!" [In homeland?]

"Definitely!"

I would like to draw attention, shortly here, to the concepts that this young informant talks about in the context of religion religion. He references the Vatican City as a model for the Yezidi religion. In fact, Ezdixane refers to the Yezidi society (Omarkhali, 2021), where they keep their cultural dominance and survive in their homeland. This young individual somehow understands the concept of Ezdixane as the independent lands that belong to the Yezidis. He mentions a peculiar flag raised by Yezidi armed groups in Sinjar with three colors: red and white with a yellow sun in the Middle (Tezcür, 2021, p. 54). He considers such a flag as a symbol of independence. This topic is discussed in the context of the manifestations of the transformation of Yezidi identity under chapter five below.

Young Yezidis for sure experienced freedom in German society. The religious freedom they experienced in Germany led to discussions about the standardization of the Yezidi religion (Wettich, 2021). The efforts of standardized rituals performed via sacred scripts, the efforts to have a religious representative dressed in traditional clothes, and the efforts to teach Yezidism in public institutions are several examples of the reproduction of Yezidi religion and culture in Germany. Harvey Whitehouse's perspective serves an illuminating function in this regard. According to Whitehouse, for a particular religion or ritual to be continued or practiced as it is, two basic things are needed: a) people need to remember religious rituals and beliefs, and b) there needs to be motivation to pass on these beliefs and rituals to new generations. In this case, Young Yezidis are far from memorizing religious practices; they aim to record and standardize the knowledge in a canon instead. Suppose people do not remember what to believe and do not know how to perform a ritual (many young Yezidis do not remember it in Germany). In that case, they cannot pass on these beliefs and rituals to the next generation (Whitehouse, 2004, p. 64). In this case, the sacred space also must require visible objects (material culture) to perform religious practices and rituals. These objects (temples, tombs, shrines, symbols, etc.) give meaning to the rituals and religious and cultural practices.

Memory is also needed so that rituals and religious practices that have acquired meaning can be practiced again and not forgotten (Young Yezidis have barely experienced practices, rituals, and observances). At this point, if 'individual memory' and 'collective memory' (Asmann, 1995; Halbawch, 1992) are kept fresh, religious beliefs and practices can be fulfilled according to the original and passed on to future generations properly. However, in the current circumstances of German society, the memory of traditional religious rituals, practices, and cultural observances that form the way of Yezidi society is not vivid among young members of the society. Developments in the homeland have shaped the memory embedded in traditional knowledge. In contrast, the memory of younger generations has been inadequately formed under the pressures of modern society. These two forms of memory must be integrated. To achieve this, the renewal of religion can be facilitated by renewing memory. Therefore, it is not surprising that a younger generation is seeking theological approaches to this issue. Likewise, the presence of a sacred text and the demand for the construction of holy places are equally unsurprising.

Young Yezidis rely on secular thinking of religion and its practice as part of German society in full settings. They rely on and demand a fixed Yezidi theology, a sacred book, houses of worship, and well-educated religious persons as the representatives of the Yezidi society in Germany, envying the religious groups around them.

So, for the Yezidis, what I call the sacred space in the previous subchapter represents the space where the Yezidis can make connections to the past and the future with their material culture, keep the social memory fresh, and carry out religious and cultural practices transmitting them easily to the next generations. In such a sacred space, Yezidis might have a structure where they connect the themes of memory, identity, and cultural continuity. In this case, "memory (the past), identity (the political imagination), and cultural continuity (the formation of a tradition)" (Assmann, 1995) are part of a structure that is formulated' in time. This structure is mostly visible via material culture. However, there is not a sufficient visible material culture in Germany yet. However, the Yezidis, who run cultural centers, anall young Yezidise a desire to have such material culture in a European way. So, the reproduction of religion fundamentally starts at this point. The idea is that they need to build a kind of sacred space, but the first step is to open institutions of religious education where Yezidi theologians might have training. A young Yezidi pîr desires to see holy places in Germany in order to keep the memory of the past fresh, saying as follows:

I2MH26: "Having holy places in Germany is needed. In my opinion, it is not going to be like Lalish. But we can still bring some of this energy to Germany. I know here [Germany] is not Lalish."

There is a huge discussion on the issue of constituting a more visible sacred environment. First, the idea of creating a sacred environment starts with objections to religious clergy. The lack of religious knowledge is seen by Yezidi youth as the main obstacle that prevents the creation of the material culture of the Yezidi society in Germany. Of course, material elements are one of the most important sources of a community's life practices, religious rituals, and, in a broader sense, its cultural basin. I must say that the material culture associated with the sacred space of the Yezidi community in Germany, which has more than sixty years of history, is extremely limited. It would not be possible to speak of the form and functioning of sacred spaces without talking about material culture. So, traditionally, Yezidis's Sacred space or place directly relates to 'material culture.' In the daily life of the Yezidi community, the function of material culture, the so-called physical objects, is of utmost importance. In the context of cultural anthropology, memories, traditional ceremonies and practices, and folkloric elements, non-material culture's function is just as important. So, about Yezidis` cultural data, a sacred environment or sacred space refers to an environment in which material and non-material cultures interact. The material culture, in this case, refers to both man-made or man-modified artifacts and natural artifacts. In this environment, ritual and material culture are closely related and complemented each other. Life and death make sense in such spaces. So, non-material culture makes sense with the objects surrounding people. The stories told, knowledge transmitted, and ceremonies performed through oral tradition, and the identity founded based on the experience of persecution (Bruinessen, 2016; Kizilhan, 2013) and the constituted collective memory that has been built by gestures, images, objects, and places only make sense in the presence of a physical material culture. So, such physical material culture does not exist in Germany for Yezidis. There are no such areas as in the homeland where Yezidi society lives their Yezidism with its myths and reality to the full. All they have are cultural centers and cemeteries around cultural centers. For Young Yezidis, without physical material culture, the memories told, the religious knowledge transmitted, and the rituals and practices practiced can lose meaning without material culture. All they remember well and practice well are ceremonies of a dead Yezidi. At this point, young Yezidis highlights their scenarios, knowing less about traditional knowledge of Yezidism. The only source of knowledge was gained from families, and the cultural center was insufficient to keep the

young population in the traditional practices of Yezidism. That is why older generations consider their offers, scenarios, and ideas fundamental. For this reason, the young population is thought to be assimilated by elders. A young informant expresses his opinion on this issue as follows:

I2MH26: "…the only time I am in this institution (Yezidi house or cultural center) is when someone dies. It is very important to have holy places here. No Yezidi schools… you see Muslim people every Friday. They have a community feeling. When they have Ramadan, look at them. You would like to be them and these in a Yezidi way. I think the other guys my age would say similar things. You only see each other and a community when someone dies or there is a wedding. That's my experience, honestly. I want Yezidis to have more institutions that make us more of a community. Christian people see each other every Sunday. Events happen. I can not see Yezidi events; there are very few."

I8MB27: "We need to have holy places here (Germany). I would go there for sure. we already have Yezidi houses and graveyards. But I rarely visit such places. When someone dies, I visit such places. Yezidi graveyards are such a monument for us [Do you want to be more visible in Germany?] We are not a generation that wants to be visible. I am not sure about having more symbols of Yezidism in Germany. I know that the only holy place is Lalish. Not more! But I would like to have Qubs in Germany. As a young Yezidi, I would feel confident if we had such places beside Yezidi houses. I know that our religion Religion must be taught somehow at public schools or at some places belong to Yezidis in Germany."

Both of the above quotes directly present young Yezidis' ideas about institutional presence. The institutional presence of Yazidis is very much in demand because the mechanism of traditional knowledge production and loyalty to ancestors has lost its meaning. Both the authority of families in life decisions and the circumstances of modern life lead to young Yezidis being away from Yezidi society and its traditional functioning. Such things happen in a realm of the lack of holy places.

Joseph L. Scarpaci highlights that myth and material culture are intertwined, and sacred narratives are based on myths that validate beliefs, rituals, and institutions (Scarpaci, 2016). This fact is valid for Yezidis. Young Yezidis, more or less, have knowledge of myth and

cultural data, but there is no cultural material around to support their knowledge of cultural data. All they witness are the rituals and institutions of Christians, Muslims, and other religious groups in Germany. In a way, material culture helps people to understand themselves and to make sense of past experiences via replicating. Naturally, cultural performance is based on material culture since culture structures behaviors (Grassby, 2005). Cultural data that form the behavior of a community is based on several sources. The cultural data of a community is revealed through the study of material culture (man-made tools), generally done by archaeologists and anthropologists in social science. There are other sources of cultural data, such as unwritten or written sources (ideological) and observational kinship patterns (sociological), that help to make more precise distinctions in the examination of human behavior (Schlereth, 1985). So, if I try to describe Yezidis's current sacred space from this perspective, I can say that Yezidi cultural centers try to take position as sacred places.

Yezidi houses (Malên Êzîdiyan) functioned as important centers for previous generations in the absence of holy space, in the absence of relationships based on kinship organizations, and due to the lack of religious clergy. However, in the case of a conceptually thorny religious issue or problem, young Yezidis find fewer religious experts to overcome the complexities of religious knowledge, and many consider cultural centers insufficient to gain knowledge. However, a small portion of the young Yezidis I interviewed still consider cultural centers to be places of decision-making for Yezidis in Germany.

Young Yezidis rather prefer social media and websites as sources of knowledge of the Yezidi religion. Chat rooms and communities created on social media channels have turned into sources of information about Yezidism in the last decade. The lack of a physical sacred space naturally caused the appearance of 'virtual sacred spaces.' I can say that today, a kind of virtual spiritual space functions for young Yezidis to obtain knowledge of Yezidism. This virtual environment has become an environment where all kinds of discussions and ideas are shared, and therefore, it is an environment where criticism is directed at Yezidism and its functioning in the classical sense. The ideas of reform, therefore, are widely shared in virtual spaces.

I2MH26: "My knowledge about religion religion is based on Google. When I was young, a Sheikh came to our house, and we were asking some questions. My uncle falsified what Sheikh says, and my uncles said different things. When I ask my mother, she says I know some say this, some say this. Then I say okay, it's better to Google it."

In this case, intellectual Yezidis in Germany, in their cultural centers, try to take a position to grasp the 'problem' and to formulate solutions for young Yezidis. They are looking for ways to revitalize the existing knowledge transferred by families to the young population. Otherwise, the knowledge that the previous generation shares is going to be criticized more by the Yezidi youth. The knowledge of religion religion is reproduced. Without a holy site(s), Yezidi cultural centers try to function as religious authorities or institutions in producing knowledge of religion. Religious figures' spiritual charisma and power are at the center of this production of religion, both in terms of youth and Yezidi intellectuals in cultural centers.

As a result of the lack of sacred space, the spiritual charisma and power of religious figures like Sheiks and Pirs and secular representative figure Mir has diminished in the conditions of their German diaspora. Instead, Yezidi cultural centers show their own religious figures as the representative figures of the Yezidis in Germany. Some Yezidi cultural centers I visited during ground research–that were once built for gatherings, funerals, and mourning–have expanded their scope of activity to become institutions that guide the Yezidi community in religious matters and daily life. For instance, with regard to reforming social norms, cultural centers criticize the approaches of the Mir. I can say that Yezidis in cultural centers behave as specialists for the guidance of the young generation instead of listening to secular representatives of the Yezidi community. Normally, Yezidism lives on a chain of spiritual ties between hereditary groups and places of rituals. Sacred lineages are literally the heart of traditional Yezidism. Spiritual leadership is in the hands of these sacred lineages. However, some cultural centers have begun to take the lead of the Yezidi community in the absence of the clergy in the diaspora, and amid controversy, the secular-religious leader may have had contact with some Kurdish political streams. Few Yezidi cultural centers are eager to represent Yezidis and be accepted as religious places for teaching and learning Yezidism in all settings. So, the reproduction of knowledge of culture and religion starts at this point based on culturally dictated plans in secular society. Intellectual Yezidis in cultural centers seem to adopt a strategy of reproducing a substantial corpus of complex cosmology to overcome the lack of a repetitive regime of religious transmission and motivation to transmit the knowledge to the next generations. As I mentioned, Whitehouse's perspective on the modes of religiosity before being fully accepted as religious is based on remembering beliefs and rituals and having the motivation to pass them down to the next generations. In the Yezidis` sacred space

in Germany, some religious activities are performed very rarely, and young members of the Yezidis community do not remember how to perform these activities.

Many details of these religious activities have already been forgotten, and such activities are considered as not important enough to perform and transmit to the next generation. At this point, the White House offers a very repetitive regime of religious transmission as a potential solution. I must say that there is not a repetitive regime of religious transmission of Yezidism in Germany. What is more, performing religious activities and participating in ceremonies are almost non-existent among the young population. There were, for example, almost no young Yezidis at the condolence events I attended during fieldwork in Germany.

The young population's behavior is slowly evaluated from loyalty to religious authority to loyalty to newly constituted Yezidi institutions, especially to the academies of Yezidi theology. Yezidism has also been centralized in institutional centers. The practice, observances, and rituals take place in the framework of the institutions' guidance only explicit religious knowledge can be gained. It is precisely at this point that the practices of Yezidism are about to acquire an institutional dimension. Yezidism, which has a Sufi character, is acquiring an institutional character, and young Yezidis are seriously supporting this.

The debates and discussions on the controversial structure of Yezidism and the stories about the roots of Yezidisim come out after discussions about the institutional dimension. Many young Yezidi rethinks the roots of practices of the Yezidi religion. The most debated topics are related to the remnants of mystic Islam and Sufism. As it might known, Yezidism has no clear founder. But from the point of view of Yezidis, Sheikh Adi was a kind of Sufi, and he is considered the prime figurehead and innovator of the Yezidi religion (Kokaisl; Hejzlarova, 2022). The Sufi character of Yezidisim is discussed at this point. Nearly all Yezidi intellectuals' starting point for reproducing Yezidism comes from Sufism. The discussion of whether Yezidism is an ancient religion or whether it emerged by evolving from a Sufi order has been discussed in several cultural centers. The affiliation of Yezidism to Islam starts with a discussion of the concept of Sufism. As discussed before, 'Yezidism is a monotheistic religion with multiple elements taken from the pre-Islamic old Persian period with influences from sufi mysticism and contains features of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

I must say that a material constraint (cultural center) appears in Yezidi's cultural domain, mastering the complexities of the knowledge of religion, which has been done by traditional religious figures who are good at ritual practices and memorizing orally transferred

knowledge. One of the complex issues discussed in the cultural center of the German diaspora is the roots of Sufism that are affiliated with mystical Islam. Some of the Yezidi cultural centers run seminars inviting scholars to discuss complex issues in the Yezidi community. Many Yezidi experts ın Germany attribute the Sufi remnants of the Yezidi faith to the pre-Islamic period. Of course, the impact of the ideologies of the variegated region of Mesopotamia can not be underestimated. The emergence of Yezidism, naturally, took place in a region where many elements of various religious doctrines and ideologies transformed its character. Sufism, for instance, is one of these doctrines that became a common doctrine in Yezidisim. It is known that 'the Sufi leader Sheikh'Adi b. Musafir united his followers in the sect of `Adawiya' (Arakelova, 2001), which was later turned into the Yezidi community.

During my visit to Yezidi clubhouses, I witnessed Yezidi cultural centers seeking to reformulate the doctrine of Sufism in Yezidism via interactive seminars. Because Yezidi intellectuals try to distinguish between the Sufi character of Yezidism and the Sufi charter of mystical Islam, as it might be known, Sufism is mostly known by many people as Islamic mystical roots in Yezidism. This issue is very controversial. Of course, many pieces of Yezidi folklore are influenced by Sufi motifs, such as Qewls dedicated to an eminent Sufi character, Mansur al-Hallaj, and Beyt dedicated to Sufi Saint Rabiya Adawiya.

Yezidi centers in Germany try to employ specialists to quiescent inexperienced persons and formulate solutions for Sufism. They also send students to theological colleges (for now, students are encouraged to go to Yezidi Religious Academy in Gerogia). Soon, at Oldenburg University, a unit will be activated for the study of Yezidi theology, providing a religious representative figure to revitalize many issues aside from Sufism.

However, young Yezidis ask for clarification about Sufism and whether Yezidism shares practices of mystic Islam. During several seminars in Germany, I encountered debates regarding remnants of Islam in the Yezidi religion. Young Yezidis demanded clarification from some Yezidi intellectuals who were speaking of Sufism and Yezidism during a Seminar held in the city of Oldenburg.[112] When it is asked why Sheikh Adi paid visits to Islamic scholars and Sufi leaders? Was Sheikh Adi a Sufi leader influenced by mystic Islam? a Yezidi scholar responded as follows:

"What is a Sufi? A person who braces himself or has a self-purification, tazkiya. Yes, Sheikh Adi was a Sufi [practioner of orders] but not a Muslim Sufi. He was a practitioner of the

[112] The author participated in the seminar in January 2023.

orders of Adawiya order [known as tariqa]. Many are wrong in making a direct connection between Sufism and Islam. Mansur al-Hallaj,[113] Ibn-i Farug, Ibn-i Sina etc., all were Sufis. The roots of Sufism have a strong connection to Asia. The origins of the practices of Sufism are not from the Middle East. Sufism existed before Islam in India, and Jewish people gained it from there. Then it influenced the Yezidis."

Here, Yezidis mention the roots of Sufism out of mystic Islam, referring to Mansur al-Hallaj, a significant personage in the Yezidi tradition. The coexisting Qewls of Mansur al-Hallaj in the Yezidi religious context[114] bring out the discussions about whether Yezidism has a connection with mystic Islam. But Yezidi intellectuals try to make it clear that the significance of Sufi personages in the Yezidi tradition is about the Sufi tradition that has roots in India.

Such attempts to clarify Yezidism take place since Yezidi cultural centers try to represent their religion as a distinct one from mystic Islam and from the Middle Eastern context.

Yezidis and Yezidism were part of cultural representations in these centers located in Germany until the last decades. It prevented them from establishing independent local religious communities (Gemeinde in German) and the occurrence of sacred environments, which is very important for practicing Yezidism. Alongside the huge number of cultural centers, the lack of faith communities (Glaubensgemeinschaft in German) caused issues related to the priest's case, temples, and brutal sites. However, the idea that Yezidis are a religious group among Germans has become a matter of common sense in the last decade. Yezidis have been known as a sect of Sufi tradition by Germans and by the State apparatus. However, debates related to the relationship between Sufism and Yezidism also make some divisions among Germans. So, the latest discussion about the Yezidi religion with reproduced knowledge accelerated the interest of the Germans in Yezidism. The possibility of accepting Yezidism as a distinct religious group in Germany is on the agenda of every Yezidis. It might take time for Yezidis to gain such an opportunity. However, the basis of the German state's identity is not religion. It provides opportunities for the Yezidi community to be recognized as a religious group or to be recognized as an 'established religion.' Thus, a fixed canon or sacred book, places of active practice of Yezidism, are the issues that Yezidi intellectuals deal with alongside the Yezidi youth. Thus, Yezidis are in a situation of re-arrangement or reprising their religion and somehow their ideas on belonging. It is known that the Yezidis have been

[113] Mansur al-Hallaj was an eminent Sufi who recognized the fallen angel, known as Iblis (Satan), to be more monotheistic than God. See more details: Arakelova, 2001, pp. 183-192

[114] Qewlê Huseyin Hallaj.

able to resist assimilation since now due to the role of the Yezidi religion. However, in the case of the German diaspora, the role of religion might be weak in protecting traditional customs. "In Germany, Yezidis often have to defend themselves to the majority society by claiming they are not a sect" (Kokaisil, 2022). However, suppose Yezidism is recognized as an established religion religion in Germany. In that case, it will bring many rapid changes because the Yezidi diaspora in Germnay is centralized in cities while the other diasporas (Armenian and Georgian) are shaped in rural areas. In rural areas, assimilation and transformation happen less. But in Germany, the transformation will definitely happen rapidly. For instance, the priest case is one of these rapid changes in recent years. As it is known, Yezidis` relationship with the holiest Yezidi center changed with the emergence of diasporas. Then, the collectivist character of the community disappeared. The basic Yezidi customs and rules are not followed anymore by many young Yezidis. Sheiks and Pirs are not respected in many cases.

I11MB22: "I lived in Shingal until 2011. In my homeland, I visited my religious people and friends. We had cheerful relationships and great respect for religious figures. In Germany, I do not see such relationships, and I see many Yezidis losing their respect for elder people."

There is no socially collective character in the Yezidi community in Germany, where Sheiks and Pirs are treated as important figures of religion. The young generation falsifies the knowledge given by Sheiks and Pirs at the same time. Young Yezidis had so much freedom that it led to the constitution of the institutionalized form of religious knowledge transmission, which is relevant to contemporary conditions of the Yezidi German diaspora. The role of Sheiks and Pirs naturally is going to diminish since the formation and mobility of the Yezidi German diaspora is centralized with the dynamic of the cities.

It is visible to nearly every Yezidi authority that the traditional oral form of transmitting theological knowledge is no longer effective. Many Yezidis believe that migration saved Yezidi individuals, but it brought a disaster for the traditional culture at the same time. Faith and ritual are not being practiced since there is no sacred ground. In this case, the Yezidis are eager to open more Yezidi temples and tombs in their German diaspora. The Sultan Ezi tomb, or Qoba Ezi, is an example of Yezidis's first constituted holy buildings. In Augsburg, Yezidis constituted such a tomb next to brutal sites consisting of sacred elements such as Berat (sacred soil ball), Şerbıkê Avê (Jar of water), and Çira (lamp) during ceremonies.

I6MO25: "A Yezidi has three important moments in his or her life. When getting born, getting married, and passing away. During such moments, every Yezidi must have Berat. We bring it from Lalsih to Germany. Such built tombs can bring many sacred elements in Germany, making the young population feel more traditional Yezidism."

I10MH22: "I once participated in the ceremony of (tiwafa) Sultan Ezi in Augsburg. [What do you think of it?] That's a great feeling. I saw many Yezidis gathered from different parts of Germany. I met many young Yezidis there. I guess such places are very important to be more visible for us. I know it is limited to once a year to go there again. But we must have more ceremonies here like that. [Did you feel like you are in Lalish?] No! Lalish is unique for us. This is just a sacred (piroz) tomb that helps us to be more community in Germany."

Every ethnoreligious faith group, like Yezidis, seeks to reproduce practices, norms, and structures to be applied in the diasporic environment. However, it becomes impossible to replicate the traditional institutional and spatial structure that plays an important role in the daily life of ethnoreligious groups. Here, I aim to highlight the perceptions of some young individuals regarding what they understand from the Yezidi religion.

So, based on their experiences in German society, young Yezidis have developed a new discourse around the concept of the religion religion. Central to this discourse is the exploration of the intertwined social norms and religious practices that define Yezidi's identity. When asked, "What does the Yezidi religion mean to you?" the responses clearly indicate the emergence of this new perspective. Three young Yezidis evaluate the religious phenomenon and Yazidism by presenting their ideas as follows:

I4FF21: "For me, Yezidism is never a religion. I do not see practice as a religion in Yezidism. I do not feel that it is all about God. I feel Yezidism is much more about a societal issue. I know all the basic things that my family taught me, like in other religions, but I tried to learn more about Yezidism and its history when I was sixteen or eighteen years old, and I could not get Yezidism at all. Many young Yezidis are socially dead because they are threatened when they do not follow social norms and rules. We young Yezidis in Germnay have parallel lives. They hide their relationships. The former generation does not understand our perceptions.

They do not understand that we grew up in Germany… I dont understand why one is not allowed to be converted to Yezidi religion."

I8MB27: "Religion is more philosophy. We adopted a lot of elements from Muslim neighbors. These elements are considered cultural elements of Yezidism, and nowadays, we try to constitute a religion like everybody has."

I2MH26: "For me, it is a concept of having prayers and doing rituals. And there is, just believing. I think It is different if you are a religious guy or a guy who just believes. For me, I am a more believing guy. I believe in Melek Tawus, God, and the universe. But religion means to me that I really practice this stuff. I don't practice here. I only Google it and do some prayers. I have uncles who are very good at religion, but they are not guys who are teaching well."

From this point forward, I intend to present the perceptions, ideas, and perspectives of the younger population concerning religious education and practices, the demand for a sacred text or canon, the establishment of holy sites, the roles of the clergy, and the operation of the caste system. Each of these will be explored in turn until the subsequent subchapter.

We are witnessing the formation of explanations to explain concerns and discourses in a revitalised or revolutionary movement. The Yezidi youth expect more activities besides gathering in Yezidi cultural centers to debate what to do next. Such different activities take place in several Yezidi cultural centers, but they are very limited, according to young Yezidis. When I ask [Do you want to know new things about Yezidism?], they respond, "Yes."

The informant (I11MB22) responds as follows: Yes! [How and from where?] I know there are some knowledgeable people in Germany. But they have no desire to teach us. Maybe there should be lessons on religion religion. Many knowledgeable people are busy earning money in Germany. [Could you tell me more? What do you mean?] I think the social and economic conditions affected our religious teaching methods negatively. There are fewer people around who want to teach Yezidi pupils voluntarily. Everyone thinks of money here!"

I5FO30: I have a brother who wants to be a religious expert.

[Does he find religious experts around?]

"Not sufficiently. But still, there are some religious people here. My brother pays visits to every old Yezidi who knows Qewls. He tries to memorize everything related to religion religion." [Where the lessons of religion Religion shall be held?]

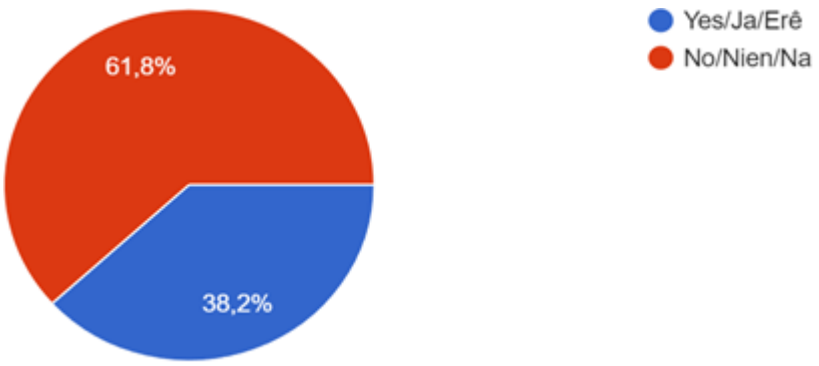
"It might be within cultural centers, but I do not believe they can effectively support it. Allow me to share an experience I had with cultural centers. I know a highly respected religious scholar who sought to teach and share his knowledge of religion at a cultural center. However, the center declined, citing a lack of budget to provide a salary for the religious expert. This is quite absurd. Consider the example of Muslims who actively seek solutions to teach their religion religion. In our homeland, Qawwals visit homes to teach, and in return, they are given alms. This, however, is not about money. Our cultural centers, in contrast, insist on paying salaries, which is not in line with our religious traditions. In Germany, many Qawwals exist, but they no longer visit homes as they once did because families no longer trust their knowledge. Therefore, I believe we must find a way to establish religious classes, as many parents are indifferent to culture and religion. They claim that since they are in Europe, they deserve the freedom to pursue other endeavors." [Do you have any idea of a solution for it?]

"Well, we somehow have to find a solution to teach our religion religion in schools. In German schools, maybe!" [It might be hard!] "Yes, it is."

Yezidi youth's discourse on teaching religion is mainly shaped by the school curriculums, based on the systematized teaching methods with books in public schools. A new state is likely to be adopted based on interpreting texts rather than following rituals of repetition in Germany. The challenge is that there are very few places and individuals available to teach them these practices. The traditional Yezidi approach to religious education—centered on memorization, practice, and repetition and reliant on religious experts to convey unwritten knowledge—is, therefore, undergoing significant change. There is now widespread support for traditional Yezidi scholars to receive formal theological training, drawing on the structured education models seen in developed societies. Increasingly, it is viewed as insufficient for Yezidi scholars to focus exclusively on Yezidi teachings. They are also expected to provide informed perspectives on other religions present in German society. Inspired by the educational practices of other religious communities in Germany, young Yezidis are advocating for a more modernized approach. Some even express a desire for Yezidi teachings to be communicated in German, as they feel limited by their fluency in the Kurdish language.

This shift reflects a new stage for the community to adapt their educational materials and resources to the German language to meet these evolving needs. The environment they live in is full of reproduced texts through the means of new media and print, and they come across a multireligious sphere. The issue of the need for regulations on worldly affairs and the need for detailed information on religion are at stake for Yezidi youth because they do not trust the knowledge that they gain from their parents. Because the initial religious and cultural knowledge is gained from the family in the traditional Yezidi community. However, in Germany, young Yezidis are unsatisfied with the knowledge they gain from their family members. I have asked the following questions to see the results.

[Do you believe the religious education you received from your family is adequate?]



Pie chart 12

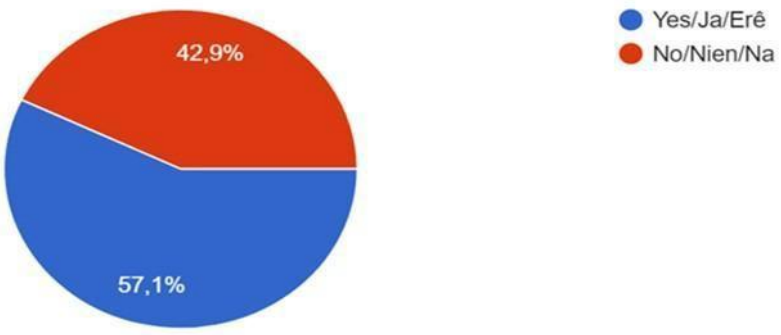
In pie chart 11, over 60% of young Yezidis find the knowledge that they gain from their family inadequate. What method do they offer or adopt to gain knowledge and to know Yezidism deeply?

We witness virtual space as an alternative learning and teaching method of Yezidism, which is called cyberspace by some scholars,[115] rather than the traditional way of teaching via attendance to performances and memorizing knowledge of religion. The traditional way of

[115] Ackermann (2008), for instance.

learning Yezidism in the lands of origin requires knowledgeable persons around for the young people to know and manage their daily life and religious lives. *Hosta* or *seyda* are known as guides for young Yezidis to regulate their lives. However, such practice is not practiced in Germany. Because such practices have transformed into a virtual space with textual materials and the method of learning about their community, religion, and culture. I asked many young Yezidis if they needed religiously knowledgeable people around them to understand their faith. The responses show that young Yezidis are in need of spiritual guidance less. In the natural realm of the Yezidi community in the lands of origin, spiritual guides are nearly the only source to gain complete knowledge of religious practices and observances. However, in Germany, such sources of religion and culture are needed less. I have asked the following question(s) to the young Yezidis in a survey during research:

[Do you need a Sheikh and a Pîr to guide you in your life in Germany? Or do you have/need a hosta/seyde (spiritual expert) to learn religion?] and the results are as follows in the pie chart 12 below.



Pie chart 13

There are issues like the impossibility of the traditional ways of being a religious expert in Germany, the lack of Yezidi experts around with proper knowledge, and the issue of being people of book dispatch young Yezidis to seek alternative ways or methods of learning and practicing Yezidism. They seek contemporary methods of being religious experts. Many young Yezidis trying to become religious experts in Germany look for Yezidi theological academies. This is the most fundamental method of being a religious expert. In recent years, for example, the International Yezidi Theological Academy in Georgia has been popular among young Yezidis living in Germany. The International Yezidi Theological Academy accepts only Yezidi applicants who have high school-educated Yezidis from around the world

and must be between 18 and 35.[116] Applicants should have a secondary education level or higher. Yezidi applicants are educated in this Academy for three years and graduate as religious experts with a new version of updated traditional teaching methods. They are receiving ritual service or education in practical theology, too. Most of the applicants are Yezidis from Germany. This Academy is becoming an important educational center for the young Yezidis who settled in Germany since there is limited traditional teaching activity in their German diaspora. Thanks to such educational centers, young Yezidis who have almost no access to qualified religious education in Germany gain opportunities to conduct research on Yezidism as part of academic purposes as a result of constituted transnational connections. This Academy of Theology encourages heads of Yezidi cultural centers to take the initiative to constitute such educational centers in Germany, too.

In today's Germany, to receive religious education in their cultural centers is extremely limited for young Yezidis. There are several reasons for this. The first primary reason is the insufficient number of trained Yezidi religious scholars. The religious scholars that do exist are not held accountable. Some even want to be paid for the education they provide in cultural centers. However, there are institutional deficiencies. In Germany, the Yezidis are not yet officially recognized as a religious community by the State. Thus, limited religious education is given in the Kurdish language in some local centers, but the young people who want to receive education have almost forgotten the Kurdish language. The language barrier is one of the reasons for this problem.

I2MH26: "It is not easy to educate yourself as a young Yezidi. When young Yezidis look for content about religion and community, we only have two things. Weddings and when someone dies. Then maybe 'sunnet' and meetings with family members. There is some stuff on the internet, but it is not done for young people**.** Nearly all stuff is associated with memories of the previous generations. And only some people around us can learn about Yezidi society. There are some Pirs and my uncles. Their way of communication is not good. They are very strict. When you ask some questions about religion, they become aggressive and find your questions stupid questions. And we, young Yezidis, know less about the Kurdish language. It makes them aggressive. Because of their aggressiveness, we young Yezidis do not communicate with these previous generations."

[116] https://yeziditheoac.com/?page_id=18 Accessed: 12.07.2023

The previous generation is not open-minded enough for the change and insufficient to teach young Yezidis. Being aggressive and finding the questions' stupid questions'[117] is a way to hide their incompetence in the Yezidi society. Young Yezidis are searching for alternative ways to learn and teach Yezidism.

I10MH22: "…we [as young people] must do something on social media to teach young Yezidis. When you look at Islam and young Muslims, they have much more to do about religion**.** My idea is to do something related to social media stuff. Making content about Yezidism and making it appear to Yezidi youth. There is always potential to improve knowledge about Yezidim. I do not know one Yezidi guy whoknown for teaching on social media. I do not know anyone. I think maybe we must do this stuff."

I must mention that the Yezidi community, with its institutions in Germany, has limited opportunities to provide adequate religious education to new generations for now. The Yezidi cultural centers are insufficient in providing religious education with limited educational materials (most of the educational materials are imported from Iraq while children already speak the German language). Except for a few cultural centers, they can provide religious education to Yezidi children. However, for the young Yezidis, the teaching options are limited since there are no fixed syllables. Some Yezidi cultural centers have decided to change the content of the educational materials. They claim that they prepare religious educational materials in German language. There are some initiatives to organize educational opportunities with some church-affiliated institutions to create alternative educational spaces for young Yezidis.[118] Alongside young Christians, Yezidis young individuals are expected to receive religious education via the facilities of the churches. For this purpose, they are developing models for teaching children Yezidism in Germanuage. Since public schools provide generalized religious education, Yezidis seek to develop alternatives for a deeper and more detailed religious education. The details provided by one of the informants exemplify these alternatives.

I7FO27: "The issue of educational materials for Yezidi children and us young Yezidis is a very complex. Each Ezidi cultural center is trying to educate the children with the materials

[117] A young Yezidi shared his experience with me when he asked about marriage outside. He expressed that then he got feedback from his elder family member, saying, 'Stop such stupid questions.'

[118] During our conversation, the head of a cultural center in Oldenburg mentioned alternative ways of teaching religion.

they have. However, most of these children between the ages of 8 and 18 do not speak Kurdish, their mother tongue, or know very little of it. In addition, the religious scholars who provide education do not want to take the time to come and give religious education. I find the change in educational materials positive, as many young Yezidis are no longer proficient in their mother tongue, Kurdish. Many of the children have also started speaking German in the family. Their parents speak German. Some Yezidi cultural houses, in which I am involved, prepare the content of educational materials in German and send them to some educational institutions where churches provide religious education to enrich their content. They are even developing projects to teach only the religion of Yezidism to Yazidi children with an intensive program in church-affiliated educational institutions. Public institutions are limited in religious education, and Yezidi children are not able to learn about their deeply philosophical religion. In this respect, I find alternative projects a very positive step."

From this quote, we understand that Yezidi children who participate in limited teaching classes of Yezidism in some cultural centers are weak in the Kurdish language. This trend is common among young people, too. From charts 1 and 2 above, we see that young Yezidis prefer speaking German in their daily lives, which is bringing fundamental changes in teaching and learning methods.

They are aware of such language barriers in real life in practice,, so they demand a new model of teaching and learning systematized by institutionalized forms of teaching. Such demand encourages young Yezidis to take one more step forward, seeking a sacred canon or sacred book that belongs to the Yezidi religion. Thus, the most important thing for the young Yezidis in cultural centers for now is to teach what Yezidism is rather than to teach religious knowledge.

In the traditional way of teaching,, knowing religious knowledge is considered sufficient, yet, in the newly produced discourse, learning the systematized content of the studying programs is the most important thing. Some Yezidi cultural centers do not merely teach youth religious knowledge; they are taught the origins of Yezidism, the origins of their culture, ethnicity, language, etc. There is a larger audience rather than a limited group to be experts in religious knowledge. Thus, the new audiences are from a literate culture. They read, write, and ask about the details of religion and its origins. There is a high motivation to scrutinize the knowledge that they gain when compared to the traditional method, which aims to give religious knowledge without objections. Thus**,** a cooperative Yezidi community appeared,

with the help of the virtual world, and became a model for Yezidi institutions to act in harmony and conduct organizations physically.

The virtual world appeared over the last twenty years through technology. The young population became involved in active religious interaction in cyberspace. It is a new mode of transmission of religious knowledge for the young generation and a new space to discuss issues related to religion. Discussion forums and chat rooms provide the young generation with a safe space to communicate freely.

Young Yezidis think that the language spoken at home by older Yezidis is limited to simple daily life things. Social media platforms are considered the best spaces to spread knowledge among young Yezidis. The Kurdish language spoken in family is considered insufficient for deeper conversations.

I2MH26: "In German languge, I can speak about deeper issues. The Kurdish language is prepared for simple conversations. When I ask some questions about religion my mother gives me limited knowledge because the vocabulary is limited to daily life in Kurdish language. I think this is because we talk about simple stuff at home. So we need to rearrange the teaching language for the new generations."

So, the main discourse of the young generation is being constituted through the virtual world. In this virtual space, the transmission of knowledge varies. The traditional way of transmission of religious knowledge, for instance, remains a back seat alongside the cyberspace that older religious experts are not part of. Religious knowledge became the subject of the new environment and conditions in which the influence of globalization and individualization are dominant. Thus, there is a possibility for new religious authorities, actors, and institutions to change knowledge of religion and culture according to their interpretations, seeking a sacred book for religion, for instance. The main resources, in different languages (German, French, etc.) rather than Kurdish, became media sources for the young generation to find answers to their questions regarding religion and Yezidi society. Traditional spiritual leaders provide merely religious knowledge, ignoring other areas and issues in the Yezidi society. The information provided by traditional authorities is seen as contradictory in the realm of lack of a sacred book or a fixed canon.

I11MB22: "We young Yezidis have classes of religion in German schools. They teach us about all religions. But it is limited to two or three hours a week. Such classes are optional, and teachers teach them in the German language. They do not speak Kurdish. How could they

teach Yezidism without knowing the Kurdish language? It would be great to have lessons on the Yezidi religion in public schools in Kurdish and in the German language. I wish we had lessons on the Yezidi religion in public schools. It would be great. [Don't they teach Yezidism?] No! We are known less by Germans. And I guess we are supposed to have such a book. [What book? A book for classes of religion?] No! You might know we have a book like the Bible or maybe the Quran. [You mean Mishefa Reş and Kitêba Cilwe?] Yes exactly! [But I didn't see such books around?] It is lost. We must collect it or rewrite it again!!! [Does what you say possible?] Why not? Many religious groups here have their own book of religion."

The need for a sacred text or canon is one of the most debated topics among young Yezidis. I have encountered such demands many times.The Yezidi faith does not have a fixed corpus of canon or sacred book, a belief system, or a teaching centre of religious education that is organized and agreed upon by everyone, which makes it open to every other culture and religious belief.

Today, young Yezidis seek to balance their traditions and modern values in the diaspora. Their discourse on religion is being shaped by liberal values and the values of societies they experience in their German diaspora. The young population's opinions about marriage, social choice, and gender roles are all related to the question of religion. They think , they would manage their life better in Germa if they had such canon or religious bookny. Because the concepts of religious identity, social norms, and ethnic identity are deeply intertwined, it is difficult to draw clear distinctions between them. This overlap encourages educated young people to rethink these ideas and reshape traditional knowledge. In my view, which is based on my observations during my study, the young generation of Yezidis is especially courageous in advocating for change and reform in areas they believe need transformation.

Two significant and interconnected challenges hinder the drive for change and reform within the Yezidi community of Germany about the need for a fixed canon of religion. First, younger Yezidis often struggle to gain credibility among older generations, who tend to dismiss their ideas as incomplete or misguided. Traditional elders view these young people—especially those exposed to modern, 'non-Yezidi lifestyles'—as disconnected from authentic Yezidi customs and values. Second, many young Yezidis raised in Germany lack a comprehensive understanding of traditional religious practices, which limits their ability to fully appreciate the significance of the customs they seek to reform. The youth often look to the organizational structures of Christianity and Islam as models for their proposed changes. Below, the quotes I

provide from young members of the community contain many references to the structural character of Islam and Christianity. However, Yezidism has its own distinct beliefs and practices based on orders, separate from those of Abrahamic religions. Young Yezidis in Germany is slightly aware of this characteristic of Yezidism. As such, implementing these reforms could fundamentally alter the traditional structure and practices of Yezidi religious life.

In detailed face-to-face interviews, most young individuals express a particular need for a newly constituted sacred book. However, they struggle to convey their desire for change and reform to older generations. Communication between young Yezidis and their elders is minimal, leading to significant barriers to understanding. There is still fear of speaking out in public even though many young Yezidis share their opinions publicly. A respondent highlights her opinion regarding this issue as follows:

I3FC25: 'No one desires to speak publicly to make changes. I do not have confidence, for example. If one does it, they might be threatened by people around.

Many factors contribute to losing traditions and weakening social connections with previous generations. As mentioned earlier, one of the primary reasons is the lack of physical and spiritual spaces that provide a sacred environment for Yezidi generations to interact meaningfully. But they are advocating for the establishment of prayer spaces similar to mosques or churches, the creation of a sacred text akin to the Quran or Bible,

Within this framework, the construction of a sacred environment plays a crucial role. The community has access to well-educated clergy trained in religious institutions in Georgia, and there is a strong desire to establish additional tombs and maybe temples in Germany, even though houses of worship such as mosques and churches are not traditionally central to Yezidi religious practice. Of course, strategies for integration into German society require the Yezidis to meet several expectations. They are encouraged to present themselves as "non-problematic immigrants" and demonstrate their compatibility with German society, particularly concerning secularism. To be legally recognized as a religious community by Federal Germany, Yezidis are supposed to have their own places of gathering for religious purposes and a fixed canon, too. Religious institutions and holy books are required elements to be well-integrated. For the young population, that is why integration is the main purpose, and then having a fixed sacred book is a fundamental step toward reaching this purpose.

Within diasporic Yezidi societies, notably in Germany, there are efforts to have a textual canon as a counterpart to the Bible or the Qur'an amongst the young generation. Access to information has accelerated. In this way, the younger generation has the chance to access more profound and more comprehensive information about their community, the functioning of other religious groups, and the role of sacred books in the lives of non-Yezidi religious groups. The discussions about having a collection of religious texts or a sacred book of Yezidis between the conservative generation and the younger one bring different perspectives. Conservative religious individuals are likely to be afraid of being assimilated and of destroying their sacred tradition as a result of having textual canon, while the younger population demands the need for regulation of their life in the diaspora.

[Do you think that young Yezidis in the diaspora are in need of a sacred book?]

I3FC25: "I do not see any holy books and holy places around us in Germany. I dont know. It could be nice to have such a book and to have education about it. Otherwise, we will not be able to show our identity here."

I5FO30*:* I encounter sources of the Yezidi religion on the internet. But to me, such materials are not sufficient. We need more things. Elder Yezidis tells us about religion, but they do not provide a hundred percent actual knowledge. For instance, some Yezidis say we are not allowed to eat lettuce. But some other says different things. I think all Yezidis from Shingal, Iraq, and other places must gather and constitute an actual canon of rules. [What kind of canon? A canon regulates daily life?] Well, we definitely need to regulate our lives here. [Don't you want to regulate your religious life here?]

For sure, yes! But we need time. There are many things to do. [Like what?] Ehm.. maybe we must have more religious materials around. Well, we must do something to be like other religious groups around. [What do they do differently from you?] They have everything! The mosque, the book, and…I don't know… they live very well, knowing many things about their religion. Every religious person claims a different story of our origins, cultural practices, and religion. If we had a fixed book, then one idea and proper knowledge could be possible. You see, Muslims have the Quran, and when one asks a question about marriage, family, etc., he or she gets knowledge from one book, the Quran. I wish to have such a book for Yezidis to get better knowledge.

I4FF21: For me, getting knowledge about the origin of our religion is very important. Today, in Germany, we need a book to continue our religious life properly. Well, I think a book like

the Bible is fine. I see many similarities between our religious rules and the rules in the Bible. Some rules are the same. Our books and practices are more like the practices of Christians.

[Could you give me an example of similarities?]

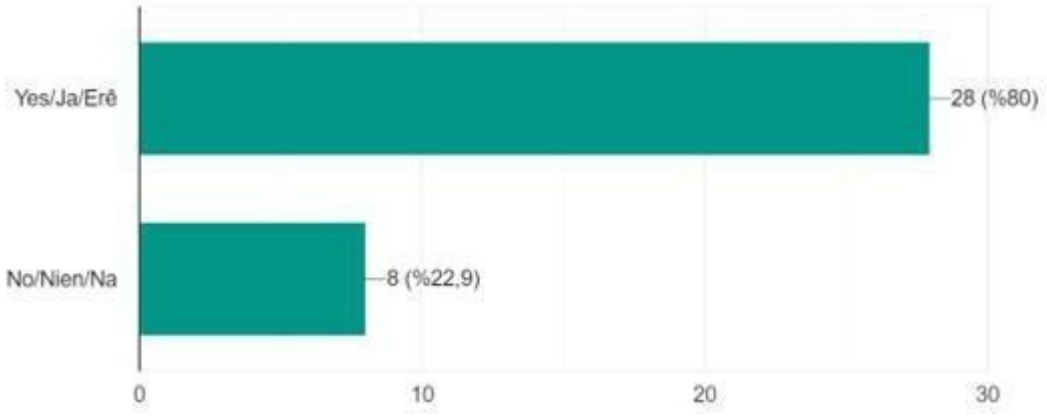
Well, to be honest, I can't give an example now. But I know our practices are not similar to Muslim'sMuslim practices. Instead, we have things in common with Christians. Wait! I remember they have an Eid [feast] like our Çarçema sor (The 'Red Wednesday).[119]

It is obvious that in the sense of lack of a sacred book, young Yezidis from different environments have their own reasons for having a sacred book. For instance, Omarkhali says, "Yezidi in Iraq demands textual canon to feel safe like other people of the book." Yezidis in Iraq demands to be recognized like people of books. She also adds that "Yezidis in Europe demands the textual canon for the regulation of life, a unification of religious dogma in harmony with the canon" (Omarkhali, 2017, p. 281). The themes of the quotes above show a perspective similar to Omarkhali's.

The discussion on the issue comes not only from the demands of the young generation but also from conservative groups. However, in Omarkhali's work, for instance, a religious individual demands a sacred book and considers it as the "law (desûr) of the functioning of Yezidi society to be able to classify what is forbidden and what is allowed in religion" (Omarkhali, 2017, p. 282), a large part of religious conservatives is concerned about the having of a sacred book. Yet, the the young population in Germany strongly desires to have a sacred book on the worldly issues of life in modern society, to properly explain their religious dogma based on a book to non-Yezidis. The graph below shows young Yezidis' desire to have a formal Yezidi theology in the Western sense.

[Do you want to have a formal Yezidi theology in the Western sense to explain Yezidism to outsiders?]

[119] The day Wednesday is accepted as a holy day by Yezidis. Since the New Year Festival is celebrated on Wednesday, it is known as the Festival of the Red Wednesday. See more details: Rodziewicz, 2022; Eros and the Pearl…



Graph 2. The graph illustrates young Yezidis' views on adopting a formalized Yezidi theology in the Western sense.

I11MB22: Today, I want to see a Yezidi holy book or an official book containing all religious knowledge. It would be great to have such a holy book.

I6MO25: We dont have a system of teaching Yezidi religion and a sacred book. Honestly, Yezidis had better stay with their families since we don't have sacred books. I wish we could have such a book. Every Yezidi intellectual and religious expert shall come together and prepare such a book. We need such a book because life in Germany keeps you on a working schedule. If you want to pay a visit to your family members to learn about religion, it is not easy. Sometimes, I encounter issues regarding religion that I have no idea about. I would appreciate it if we could have an official canon to learn Yezidism properly.

Not all young Yezidis have the desire to have a sacred book. Here, a young Yezidi Pir, who opposed such ideas of having a sacred book, highlights his opinion as follows:

I2MH26*:* It is not fit for Yezidism. For Yezidis, your mind is much more important. But still, there should be more books and materials. This would not be the Yezidi way if we hadbooks like the Bible and the Quran, And we would say you have to do this, and these are like the Quran in Islam. It is not Yezidism. But we must have some books for learning and teaching. One can read them supporting their knowledge of Yezidism. On the Internet, I find fewer Qewls. Muslims and Christians find a lot of them for themselves. I have a Yezidi friend, and he is listening to Islamic Qewls because it sounds good. There would be a Yezidis one on YouTube. I wonder why nobody is doing and recording such stuff. Maybe we should do that. We should go there and record them.

Another young Yezidi, who did not want to have an interview but shared his idea, is not optimistic regarding having the sacred book and says*:*

Anonymous young Yezidi: "I think we don't need a holy book. Our community is based on its own philosophy. We are not like other religions and dont want strict rules in a book. We don't convince people about our religion. If we do have a book like Muslims, then we will teach our religion like them, and we will end up like them, saying our religion is the true religion, and everyone must believe in it. I think a fixed holy book will not be sufficient for Yezidis. But we should have holy places here. I would visit holy places if we could have them here."

[When one mentions Yezidis` sacred book, what does it mean to you? Does that book seem to you like the sacred books of other religions or just a canon of rules of the Yezidi religion?]

I11MB22: For me, it means a system of teaching religion. We need such a thing since the next generation will most probably disappear. I was always told that Yezidis had a holy book. But after a genocide committed by British soldiers[120] in the past, our holy books were destroyed. Many Yezidi religious experts believe that British soldiers committed genocide against Yezidis and burned our holy books. At that time, it was believed that some Yezidis started to teach their religion via oral teaching to the next generation, and then the transferring of religious knowledge continued that way.

The canon (qanun) is known as the rules of Yezidi religion by many young Yezidis

[Some believe that a sacred book can protect a group of people from violence. What do you think of it?]

I2MH26: The quality of Yezidism becomes less. Even the younger people around me and I know much less about the language, culture, and so on. There are many problems. It is not easy to educate itself here. We only have two things when they look for content about religion and community. Weddings and when someone dies. Then maybe meetings with family members. There is some stuff on tthe Internet, but It is not done for young pethink. The generation before us had memories to share, and maybe we must do something…When you look at Islam and young Muslims, they have much more to do about their religion**.**

[120] I encountered a few Yezidis claiming their sacred book(s) (Mishefa Reş and Kitêba Cilwe in Kurdish) were taken by Britain's mandate in Iraq and have been kept in a special museum in London since then.

I11MB22: The next generation could learn their religion in more detail. A sacred book could help motivate young Yezidis to learn about their culture and religion. They have no motivation to learn since there is no such book.

[But many Yezidis I have encountered believe that if a sacred book or canon is prepared, then changes will happen in religious knowledge and rituals. And what is more, who is responsible for preparing this book?]

A hundred percent of the book should be prepared by Yezidis living in Lalish. Because their knowledge of religion and traditional life is better and deeper than that of Yezidis living in the diaspora, they know much about Qewls. Meclisa Ruhani should prepare it.[121]

This question brings out an obstacle. Who should make the decision for it? A person's authority seems needed. There is no single power that all members of the Yezidi community recognize. For instance, the Clerical Council (Meclîsa Ruhanî) in Lalish considers itself the only authority, and they created a Committee of Advisers for the purpose of creating a canon. Yet, this council consistsconsists of ten people, and does not cover other members or representatives from different lands of Yezidis. For instance, there are no representatives from the Yezidis lands of south Anatolia.

The ongoing process of creating one fixed sacred book presumably will discuss a single powerful authority. This authority could be created from secular intellectuals (rewşenbîrên êzidiyan) or from a traditional religious group. It is known that many conservative groups in Armenia and Shingal are against the creation of a sacred book. However, after ISIL's attacks the idea of having a sacred book has presumably been hotly discussed among the conservative groups too.

The answers to the following question will let us know the perspectives of the young generation about the position of the influential religious figures and Yezidi intelligentsia about having a sacred book in the diaspora. According to Omarkhali, the issue of authority prevents canonization. (Omarkhali, 2017)

[Do you believe that some changes will appear after canonization?]

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[121] The gathering of the spiritual made-up Yezidi dignities takes place in Lalish. The Clerical Council is known as Civata Ruhanî (Council of the Wise) in Kurdish. The Council of the Wise makes decisions on religious and secular issues. See more details https://www.ezipedia.de/civata-ruhani-der-religionsrat/ Accessed: 03.07.2023

I11MB22: The book will not bring transformation. If there is no book, then a transformation will appear.

I8MB27: The cultural things and social norms are changing. That is natural. When I was a child, I was told you can not eat pork. But it is a Muslim norm. Why do we have such a rule? This has been changed for me. The gender issue is another example of change. I remember my parents had patriarchal thinking of gender issues. But they changed in time. Because the community in Germany discusses and recognizes itself. Then, we adopted the true philosophy of Yezidism about gender. We accept men and women as equals, which is not the case in Sharia (the body of religious law in Islam).

[For what purposes is a sacred book needed? To be read or to save traditional knowledge from change?]

I6MO25: We transfer our knowledge of religion orally. This knowledge is changing over time. We better stop doing so. Such a method is insufficient when you try to teach pupils and children. We must have a book about teaching our religion. Less people visit Yezidi cultural centers because people dont trust cultural centers. Families do not guide their children; parents coming from work eat and sleep. So, the traditional way of teaching Yezidism is no longer sufficient. I believe the holy book should first contain information about Yezidism starting from the roots of Yezidis. Now, we are googling it, and the knowledge we receive is insufficient. When Germans ask me about Yezidism, I just speak of it. It is insufficient. I feel I must provide them with more convenient textual materials of Yezidism. A holy book or sacred book would be great to show people who want to know more about us.

I11MB22: The book provides a well-organized and well-prepared teaching system for future generations. Look at Christians and Muslims around you. Their entire generation knows the details of their religion.

In the following quotes, we encounter the demands regarding more physical sacred spaces from the Yezidi youth. It's important to stress here that creating a sacred space is a phenomenon that has emerged recently in the diaspora conditions of Germany. Typically, such places develop naturally within the homeland and then in Yezidis` Caucasian diaspora. However, in their German diaspora, there is a pressing need to establish sacred spaces from scratch, and this raises complex questions about who will be responsible for building and maintaining them. This needand tits associated challenges havebecome a topic of frequent and significant discussion. I aim to catch the young Yezidis` perceptions regarding such demand,

asking the following question first. [Except for the Yezidi cultural center, what else do you want to see in Germany?]

I5FO30 I guess we need something more besides cultural centers. I have many young Yezidi friends around me, and they speak German and English very well. I see that nearly none of them pay visits to cultural centers. Then we better have something to attract their attention. When I ask why they pay visits to cultural centers, they respond as follows: Yezidi cultural centers do not meet our expectations and are useless to us! [What do they expect?] Well, they are not interested in Yezidism. They say seminars and meetings held in cultural centers are useless. [So what kind of places, buildings, or centers do you think Yezidis should have beyond cultural centers?]

Well, many young Yezidis have already forgotten their traditions and religion, and they speak the German language. Thank God I, still speak my language and trylearningearn more about our religion. I speak the German language too! But I came to Germany seven years ago. I still keep my knowledge of religion safe. But my young Yezidi friends who were born and raised here are strange. They even claim that they are German! This is insane. Maybe if we would have pirozgeh *(*holy site, or place of blessing*)* here *(*in Germany*), they* might be interested in Yezidism again.

I9FF30: Arabs and Germans learn their religion well and have places for practicing religion and teaching it to the next generations. I see clearly that our next generation *(*the fourth one*)* is now 10 or 12 years old. They have no ideas about religion. We will definitely lose this generation if we dont establish our teaching places for religion. If we had a place to bring punite togeth, ourion and beliefldbelief not have disappeared in Germany.

[Do you wish to see holy places of Yezidism in Germany?]

Yes, definitely. Christians have churches, so why not have such a place for Yezidis?

[Don't religious figures like Sheikhs and Pîrs meet your expectations?]

I9FF30: All cassettes in our society must be eliminated except Pir Caste!

[Could you give me more details? Why do you think so?]

"You know they keep patriarchy and the system of tribalism in Germany. I know it is common among Arabs and Turks. Our Pîrs and Sheiks keep social pressure on us. But here in

Germany, no need to remain as it is in the homeland. They expect young Yezidis to bow down and kiss their hands when they visit!"

From this question onwards, I encountered ideas criticising the roles of clergy and the functioning of the caste system in the Yezidi community of Germany. Above, I discussed several reasons causing such debates on the role of Sheiks and Pîrspirs. Here, I am going to highlight young Yezidis` ideas regarding the Yezidi socio-religious structure, which is known as the caste system.

[Could you tell me what you think of Meclîsa Ruhani?]

I5FO30 "Well, this is a complex issue. There is no Meclisa Ruhani in Germany."

[Yes, I know. I guess it is located in the homeland? Right?]

"Yes. It is linked to the Iraqi government." [I didn't know that!] "Yes, it is not trusted assembly by many Yezidis. I dont trust them too. Some say Meclîsa Ruhani should make the decision for Yezidis in Germany. But they are not here. They can't make decisions about us. Maybe cultural centers can make decisions in Germany. If a sheik gets married to a Pir, it is haram. If a Yezidi gets married to a non-Yezidi, it is haram. I know some people in the caste system can't get married since there are no proper people left." [So, what do we do to overcome this issue?]

"Meclîsa Ruhani should find a solution for that." [But you said Meclîsa Ruhani should not make decisions?] "I said yes, but for the ussies related to Germany. In the case of the caste system, maybe they must make some marriages halal. I have some Yezidi friends who got married to Germans. Since it is haram, they are not accepted back into the Yezidi community." [Do you consider such marriages haram, too?] "Yes. I think it is haram. If we get married to Muslims and Christians, our religion will disappear soon. So it is haram." [But you told me that Meclîsa Ruhani should find a solution? And maybe you remember that women who were captivated by ISIL were accepted back into Yezidi society by the decision taken in Meclîsa Ruhani. What do you think of that?]

"Well, Mir made their turn halal. But they must not bring their husband back to our community. Their children also should go back to Yezidi society." [I see. So what if Meclîsa Ruhani makes a decision and says that getting married outside is not haram.]

"I definitely can not accept such a decision!"

I4FF21: "Meclîsa Ruhani is the only place to decide to protect Yezidis's interestidis. Women who were captured by force were accepted back into our community, aMeclisa Ruhani does this decisionhani. But the children of these women are the offspring of Daesh (ISIL). They will be like Daesh when they grow up. They will become enemy of Yezidi society and religion. It was a true decision not to accept them back to Yezidi society." [What if they decide to accept them back to the Yezidi community?]

"Well, this could not be welcomed by many young like me. If this happens, many things will change in our community. I would definitely be shocked if I heard of such a decision!"

I6MO25: "The caste system that we have has no clear borders. The divisions between castes are blurred. I am suffering from it. For instance, in my workplace, I work with a girl named Yezidi. She is the sister of my friend. I guess I am not allowed to get married with her. Or she can not get married to me. Then, if I try to get married to girls outside, there is a risk of being ignored by people around me. I think there must be a fourth caste for those who got married outside. We must keep our people in the community!"

[Who shall eliminate castes?]

“Maybe Meclisa Ruhani! I do not trust them, too."

[Could you tell me more about Meclîsa Ruhani?]

"Look! There are only six or seven people in meclîsa Ruhani. This is not fair! It has no democratic system of electing people. For instance, regular people are not allowed to attend Meclîsa Ruhani. As I know, Yezidis in Germnay have a plan to constitute an assembly to gather all Yezidis around the world. Yezidi experts and intellectuals can gather and make decisions. It might be a very nice place to make decisions about the Yezidi community. Now, Mir makes decisions by himself. He visits Yezidis in Germnay and talks about the issues in the homeland. But there should be intellectual Yezidis in the Meclîsa ruhani who know the world and other religions. I think intellectual Yezidis, who speaks many languages and has many contacts with the representatives of the States (German State), should be next to Mir in Meclîsa Ruhani to make decisions for Yezidis." [You mean there should be a companion?]

In the past, the caste system was sufficient for our community and helped it function. But in Germnay, I can't say the same thing. It even prevents the functioning of our community in Germnay. In the case of marriages, it doesn't work. The caste system must be eliminated, or we must have one more caste!

The younger generation has taken this objection to a slightly higher level when it comes to social norms regulating their social life, which I discuss below. I must say that these ideas are kind of refusing some codes of honour supported by religious prohibitions, like the prohibition to offend religious authorities (sê herf), and are not welcomed by many older Yezidis since there is no need to have holy places like churches or mosques to practice Yezidism.

Such objections, spread by young Yezidis and intellectuals, bring the need for an orthodoxy check of the knowledge of religious authorities, which is not accepted by older Yezidis. However, young Yezidis desire to check the Pîrs' and Sheikhs' knowledge of religion.

I8MB27: "Yezidi Mir once visited us in Germany. He expresses his thoughts according to religious clergy and according to the way of thinking of Yezidis in the homeland. He does not know our circumstances in the diaspora. He comes to Germany and tries to give a discount on the bride's price (next, Helen) instead of terminating it. It is not his task!"

It encourages religious centralization, which brings about ranked professional priesthood. So, the presence of such ranked professional priesthood might help Yezidis constitute a new material culture to conduct religious and cultural practices and rituals in the near future in Germany.

One of the heads of Yezidi house said, "Every Sheikh and Pir must not claim that they are Sheikhs and Pîrs. A person who claims to be a Sheikh and also a Pir must graduate from an institution [This is a new perspective for gaining titles of religiosity]. They must have a good knowledge of religion. A regular Pir and Sheikh must not claim himself as a religious expert without getting a degree from an institution."

His friend's reaction: "What you say seems odd, A Pir and Sheik become a Pir and a Sheikh from their families. They deserve it since they were born with religious dignity."

I10MH22: Many Yezidis spend their time with Germans and Muslims around, and they see that Arabs and Germans know their religion very well. Maybe it is because they have places to pray and places to learn and teach their religion and culture. But we Yezidis dont have such places as Mosques and Churches in Germnay. I dont know how we will teach the next generations in the near future. If we could have places to teach religion, it would be great. Yezidis do not collaborate,; every group and individual cares about their priorities. That is why we are not able to constitute holy places.

I11MB22: We grew up within a caste system that limits many things for young Yezidis. The issue of marriage, for example, is in their hands. As far as I know,historically, there was no caste system before Sheikh Adi. I believe it is essential to reformulate the caste system, not necessarily for our generation but certainly for the next one. This system hinders the growth of Yezidism by restricting marriage opportunities, and addressing it is crucial for the community's future.

Analysis of young Yezidis' statements reveals a clear trend: many explicitly advocate for a canonical sacred text specific to their faith and a reformed socio-religious framework adapted to their diasporic context in Germany. This emerging vision—encompassing sacred scriptures, dedicated worship spaces, and institutional restructuring—appears driven by perceived inadequacies in addressing contemporary religious questions. Notably, they regard the establishment of physical sacred spaces as an essential step in reconstituting the Yezidi community with all its cultural dimensions.

What makes these demands particularly remarkable is their emergence among a generation demonstrating limited engagement with traditional religious practice. In the diaspora, opportunities to observe cultural and religious traditions have diminished significantly, with many rituals becoming less frequent and more adaptable. Facing exclusion and marginalization, young Yezidis are actively reconstructing their identity through cultural translation and selective adoption of practices from surrounding religious groups.

This transformation reflects broader socio-historical developments. Since the 1990s, Europe's increasing pluralism has enabled religious groups to repurpose secular spaces (homes, schools) for worship while gaining public visibility through new religious architecture—a pattern evident among Muslim and Alevi communities in Germany. Yezidis have navigated these dynamics with varying success across German regions. Their post-1990 institutional establishment has allowed ideological engagement in Germany's public sphere, though not without internal tensions.

The materialization of religious spaces has unfolded alongside competing visions for Yezidi identity in Germany's secular context. Repeated migration waves since the 2000s have reinforced the community's conviction that their presence requires ideological and institutional expression beyond Kurdish-dominated cultural centers. Today'sToday, the Yezidi community increasingly seeks to develop distinct religious infrastructure, moving beyond cultural associations toward formalized worship spaces that facilitate public religious

expression. While some traditional rituals now occur in these venues, they remain relatively limited and insular implementations.

4.2.1 Traditional material culture versus generated culture in the German diaspora?

The traumatization of Yezidis, mainly by the ISIL and Muslim Kurds, put young Yezidis into a situation of dealing with their traumatized and devastated society. The impact of globalization (young Yezidis lose their traditional belonging ties as a result of increased migration and being included in global youth consumer culture) and multiculturalism shape young Yezidis` minds. Collective traumatic events play crucial roles for previous generations in their diasporic identifications, while settings of secular Western liberal values play significant roles for Yezidi youth in the configuration of their identifications. The circumstances of the pluralistic German society have shaped their understanding of religious, ethnic and cultural identitiesy. Young people born and raised in Germany have less or no public memory of the traumas and pains of the past. But, in recent years, they have been confronted by the images and documentaries of the recent persecution of the Yezidis in Syria and Iraq through mass media. In this way, a big portion of young Yezidis have been impelled to imagine their ancestor's traumas in the past and started to be part of the ongoing debates concerning the future of the Yezidi society. Young Yezidis live their daily lives considering the conditions of the modern society in which they were born and raised. The impact of social norms that bind the previous generation and bring them together has less impact on the young generation. For their parents, the pain and traumas of the past affect every aspect of their lives. Adherence to tradition and preserving it has become their first priority. Even among co-religionist young Yezidis who migrated to Germany from their homeland after 2014, strict adherence to tradition is more dominant. Almost all of the young employees of Yezidi cultural associations are from the young population that has immigrated in the last ten years. In this way, the cultural clash happens between the young Yezidis, born and raised in Germany, and their parents, partly between them and the younger generation who have recently arrived in Germany. Thus, in contemporary German society, the Yezidi youth are experiencing cultural conflicts with the previous generation. The third generation, the young population, makes demands and requests difficult for previous generations to accept. The issue of endogamy is one of the most debated topics. There is a serious generational conflict about marriage and other social norms. Moreover, the functioning of Yezidi cultural centers is discussed. Yezidi youth almost never visit Yezidi cultural centers. They explain the main reason for not visiting cultural centers in the theme of the informant I2MH26 stresses below as follows:

"We only see condolences in the cultural centers. There are no activities for the Yezidi religion to attract us there. The Yezidi intellectuals do not take our ideas and suggestions into consideration. They have no communication with us. That is why we have no communication with them."

Yezidi intellectuals, partly first-generation and mostly second-generation, are engaged in activities to bring about change and transformation in Yezidi society within Yezidi cultural centers. However, they do not involve the younger generation in these activities, or the younger generation does not want to be involved. Since the suggestions and demands of the younger generation have not been taken into account during this period of change, this research also aims to be a bridge between generations, highlighting what the young generation expects from internal change.

In Yezidi traditional culture, a mixture of patriarchal values and social norms plays a key role as part of the lives of Yezidi individuals. However, such a mixture of patriarchal values and social norms does not make sense in the lives of young Yezidis living in Germany.

A young informant, I1MH29[122], says, "I don't understand why children are not accepted. They are sinless and did not come into this world by their own choice. They are completely innocent and should be accepted and recognized as Yezidi."

I6MO25: "These children are seen as not pure and clean according to the social system of our community. To me, they are clean and pure Yezidis. They have no sin, and they are children."

Besides that, the traditional pedestrians, communal prejudices about the position of women in the Yezidi society, and some social norms such as honor-killing, the bride price, etc., are part of the discussed topics amongst young Yezidis in the Yezidi German diaspora. The same informant highlights his thoughts and adds as follows:

"Women are sacred in Yezidism. A woman is not a commodity to be sold. A woman is not a plate or a glass to be sold. That is why there should be absolutely no bride price. The current social status and oppression of women are not related to our culture. The roots of this attitude towards women are contrary to our tradition. It probably originates from other religions. Killing a woman for honor is an inhuman act. The Yezidi community has gradually integrated into Islamic society. In this respect, Islam's discourses, actions, and attitudes have influenced our society. I have been studying and reading Yezidi religious texts (Qewls) for twelve years,

[122] Informant 1(I1), Male (M), the first letter of the city (Hannover, H), and the age of the informant: I1MH29

and there is no such trace of the isolation, punishment, and killing of women in any Yezidi religious texts. On the contrary, some religious texts mention that the inheritance should be divided equally between men and women."

The scale of demands, therefore, has extended. For instance, many young Yezidis in the diaspora see the rule of marrying out as a 'strict' or an 'absurd' rule. What is more, available traditional aspects of the origins of Yezidism and Sufi traces in religious practices, the method of teaching and learning of Yezidism is being discussed and reformulated in the centers of the diaspora. The fear of assimilation is common among these Yezidis at the same time. The integration process of Yezidis in Germany and the lack of fixed regulations for Yezidism are seen as reasons behind the assimilation and the extinction of traditional values by a big portion of the Yezidi intellectuals in their German diaspora. Such demands appeared among the young generation regarding the need to alter traditional aspects.

Like every culture, Yezidis culture develops according to the circumstances of the new environments experienced as a result of migration. The process of maintaining or reshaping cultural identity while engaging with the host country's social structures is what makes the cultural elements "generated."

Thus, "generated culture" represents a dynamic, evolving form of cultural expression that responds to external factors like migration, secularism, and new social norms while still rooted in the community's traditional beliefs and values.

Walter Ong illustrates the development of cultures as follows: from "primary orality" to writing, from writing to printing, and at the end, to "secondary orality". "Primary orality" is described as "an orality of a culture that is totally untouched by any knowledge of writing and printing," while "secondary orality" is a realm of present days that is sustained through high-technology culture. (Ong, 2002: 10). From the viewpoint of Ong, I can say that Yezidis` generated culture in Germany most probably takes place between the process of printing and secondary orality. The printing part is in the hands of intellectuals, while the secondary orality is sharpened by young Yezidis integrated into the host country. Thus, Yezidis` culture is transforming in the conditions of secondary orality by means of the current mass culture in Germany. The division between culture and religion, which was not visible before, will be more visible soon. For now, the most visible generated culture can be observed related to the teaching method of Yezidism, shifting the role of religious priests to the Yezidi theologians since the religious priest lost their role as primary teachers (Kizilhan, 2019). The teachers of

the religion are, for now, heads of cultural centers holding classes to teach children in a limited space with limited practice of action or without practice of actions.

Moreover, the most visible aspect of the generated culture among Yezidis in Germany is evident in social norms, particularly in the practices surrounding marriage and the process of accepting individuals into the Yezidi community. When an individual asserts their identity as a Yezidi, cultural centers provide a formal application to the individuals who claim they are Yezidis. The individuals are supposed to fill out the form to be accepted into the community. This process is contingent upon an investigation to verify their adherence to the Yezidi faith and its cultural practices. For such a situation, the traditional way of accepting one as Yezidis, which was based on tribal structures and relationships, transformed into a formal format. Such generated culture is a result of the circumstances of the host country.

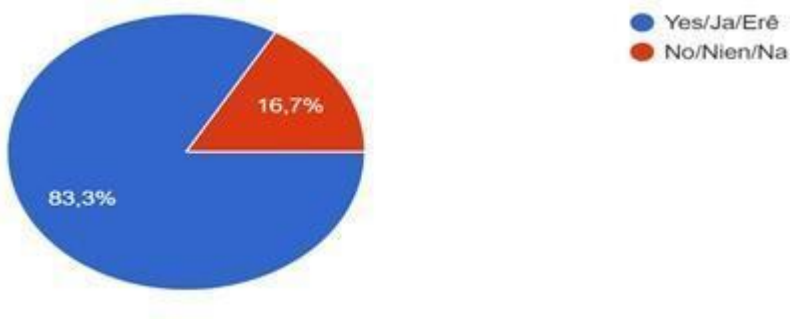
It is known that displaced local communities who moved to diasporas develop their own local traditions according to local conditions. Schlereth, T. J. (1985), in this case, approaches the concept of material culture, stressing that material culture is a "segment of humankind's biosocial environment which people have purposely shaped according to culturally dictated plans." I must say that young Yezidis in Germany are in the process of rearranging their culture according to the environment in which they live. They aim to reach out their 'culturally dedicated plans'[123] to overcome the discourse of socially marginal and culturally others that are common among Germans. Nearly all of the Yezidis in Germany, notably the young population, are in a situation where they justify themselves to host society to overcome the exclusive discourse (political security risk, social marginality, and cultural other). This is the point that Yezidis tries to generate a new culture to deal with such exclusive discourses. There was a strong tendency in parts of German media to connect the Yezidi community with honor-related violence in the 2000s (Wettich, 2021, p. 230). Traditional material culture with strict social norms like arranged marriages making young Yezidis rearrange their traditional culture.[124]

[Is Germany a good place for Yezidi culture?]

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[123] To be accepted or recognized as a religious group by German authorities, to show their desire to make contact with other religious groups, etc.

[124] There are many reports prepared by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs that draw attention to forced marriages and arranged marriages in Yezidi society in Germany.
See https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/familienreport-2011-75082 Accessed: 02.05.2021



Pie chart 14

Over 80% of the informants who responded to the survey accepted that Germany is a safe and good place for their culture.

In their new environment, which they consider a safe and good place, Yezidis' compact settlements turned into individualistic settlements, which is the most visible thing that caused a newly generated culture. The new environment that Yezidis experiences doesn't require working together physically in a compact space. They grow up in the German school system from kindergarten onwards. One of the informants explained such issues as follows:

I1MH29: "There is an obligation to join the German school system from a very young age. Children are compulsorily taken to kindergartens. All the people around me feel obliged to send their children to kindergarten. Maybe it's not a legal obligation, but the practice of life dictates it. So Yezidis learn the German society and its values from the first school day!"

As I discussed before, Yezidis settled in Germany prefer non-compact spaces. I can say that only Yezidis in Lower Saxony are likely to have much more compact space. Thus, we cannot speak of a physical Yezidi society with its performing culture in Germany. For example, Yezidis in Lower Saxony differ from Yezidis in Bavaria in terms of preserving traditions. Yezidi society in Lower Saxony lives in a much closer affinity that gives them a chance to conduct some rituals much easier. However, such practices are limited to regions. The new form of lifestyle (individualistic), which is not based on a collective life, seems a new version of life where the elements of the traditional material culture, like endogamy, honor-based violence, and patriarchy, play less of a role. Such elements are seen as the main notions that cause tyoung population's exclusive discourse against Yezidis in Germulation. Especially

endogamy and forced marriage are seen as the reasons beyond the discourse of othering.[125] Thanks to the deeply entrenched endogamous principles within their religious framework, which are prescribed by birth, the Yezidis have been able to maintain social cohesion and preserve their community for centuries, surviving numerous attempts at annihilation in the lands of origin. However, this notion of material culture is almost erased in the conditions of diaspora. Recently mobilized transnational community members find such rules and collective lifestyle useless, even 'archaic.'

Yezidism, which is based on natural nature and on a kind of philosophy and rituals that enable people to live in the most harmonious way with nature (Xezai), is not being performed in Germany. The spaces they constituted and lived in were entirely created spaces in the diaspora where cultural combinations and the transformation of cultural elements and practices were in interaction with German culture. So naturally, the diaspora conditions have challenged Yezidis as it adjusts to re-formation and re-production of Yezidism with its all settings in Germany. Therefore, the attempts to reproduce Yezidism itself are part of the generated culture. In the Yezidis society,, criticism and debates regarding the community's social structure are newly experienceddevelopment. The realm of criticism itself is a notion of generated culture that puts the traditional culture at the target. During such a re-production process, the Yezidi community has been discussing this transformation in the context of its internal dynamics. The previous generations have been targeting young Yezidis, claiming the Yezidi youth is accelerating assimilation in Germany, while young Yezidis accuse the previous generations of reasons for undevelopment. At this point, the starting point of cultural clashes discussed below appears. It is believed that the features that held the Yezidi community together and sustained it in a communal form of life in the homeland, such as tribal relations, the socio-religious structure that is known *as sed û hed,* and patriarchal concerns of honor and shame (*namûs),* etc., can't be held in Germany anymore. Many of the young Yezidis consider such elements of communal life to be the cause of 'othering' (In German, Ausländer).

Young Yezidis's efforts seem to help eliminate the practices of exclusion and discrimination against others to change Germany's societal discourse on immigrants. Even in diasporas, in Germany as well, which is believed to be a safe place for Yezidis, 'Yezidis are not separated

[125] During a conversation with an old Yezidi lady, she mentioned such an issue as follows: 'One of my family members tried to kill his girlfriend since she had a German male friend. The German man was stabbed while trying to protect the girl. My nephew is in prison now. He almost killed a German.'

from discrimination and anti-Yezidi racism.'[126] Their social norms, values, and religious elements are labeled as 'inbreeding sect' or 'strange.'

I10MH22: "Arranged marriages are such a shameful practice for us in German society. We must change many things here. Such practices are the notion of insulting Yezidi boys and girls in the public schools."

Many practices and social norms that shape Yezidis' traditional culture are seen as elements that Yezidis should not perform in Germany**.** The way of organising weddings is one such practice that has transformed over time.

I1MH29: **"**Many Yezidis organize their weddings like Germans. A few people gather in a modern way, and that's how the weddings are organized in Germany."

This process put Yezidis into a set of re-arrangement of social norms and re-affirmation of their culture, religion, and identity to keep harmony in diaspora circumstances. At this point, traditional culture and reproduced cultural forms are in conflict with each other.

In contrast to honor-based culture, where one's worth, and respect are more dependent on social status, reputation, or familial ties, 'dignity culture' is on the agenda of many young Yezidis. The Yezidi youth who integrated into German society strongly emphasis on individual rights and personal autonomy. They express their personal identities by their actions and choices, standing against social hierarchies in their families and against community honor. Both social commandments like 'marriage are only permitted within the Yezidi religious community' and 'marriage is only permitted within one's caste' and religious commandments like 'one can only be Yezidi by birth,' 'recognizing the Sheikhs as teachers,' etc, are not seen as bending commandments by young Yezidis in Germany. Because the Young population lives in a realm of 'dignity culture', taking modernity and its conditions seriously and having experienced the notion of human rights that guarantee the interests of individuals. Social and religious relations, therefore, are being generated within the framework of human rights in Germany. Many social developments, that is why, are not under the control of the social structure of the Yezidi society in Germany. In this realm of generated culture, young individuals do not perform many practices performed by previous generations in Germany. For instance, Yezidis pay visits to their villages of the origin land to attend the day of graveyards (roja mezelan) to maintain their traditional relationships, remembering and honoring their family member in their origin lands, however after the establishment of new

[126] https://s-j-a.org/blog/die-endogamie-gebote/ Accessed: 13.11.2023

graveyards in Germnay, less young Yezidis feel obligated to pay visits to their lands of origin and to travel back home to show respect to their ancestors. The same practice is performed less in graveyards located in Germnay, too. Few young Yezidis attend the day of graveyards. This is one of the fundamental transformations that take place in traditional culture. Another traditional practice that young individuals do not perform is giving alms. For instance, traditionally, members of hereditary and endogamous castes, particularly Sheikhs and Pirs, are shown great reverence and are supposed to attend religious ceremonies during rites of passage such as birth, marriage, and death. In return, they receive gifts or sums of money from followers (Kreyenbroek, 2005: p.6). This tradition or relationship has been strictly changed in the German diaspora since young Yezidis refuse to pay alms or money to Sheikhs and Pirs in return.

I10MH22: Our cultural practices should be held by Sheikhs and Pirs for free. In the past, they were given alms. Now, they ask for money in return when they conduct ceremonies! This is insane. They accuse us of assimilation but look at them. They ask for money!

The Yezidi cultural centers in the German diaspora are looking for ways to overcome this 'crisis' by offering salaries to their clergy. Regulating the payments for religious figures is another notion of the generated culture in Germany. For this, they need financial support from the local government. In this case, Yezidi theologists from institutions and enlightened religious representatives become visible as part of the generated culture in Germany.

The possibility of marrying outside is another notion of the generated culture that young Yezidis are still debating. In the context of marriage, the concept of honor and namûs has changed in terms of the young population. Young Yezidis make endogamy an object of criticism since they think endogamy restricts their self-realization. In this case, the young population aimsn aims to terminate several practices related to marriage, like the bride price and the requirements of marriages thare at are regulated via social groups or castes. It is seen as the practice of patriarchal Islam by the young population.[127]

I5FO30: "I am deeply troubled by the tragic instances in our homeland where girls have been killed by their own families simply for attempting to marry outside the Yezidi faith. I strongly condemn such practices. Additionally, I firmly oppose the traditional bride price (Qelen). My family does not accept this practice, though I know many others still do. The idea of 'selling' one's daughter is utterly unacceptable, and it is a practice that must be eradicated. This

[127] Many young Yezidis mentioned such notions during our conversations.

practice does not belong to us. While I understand that some families may face financial hardship, this should never be seen as a legitimate means of securing money. There are more ethical and dignified ways to address such needs without resorting to practices that dehumanize women."

I11MB22 "I think Qelen should be abolished because many Yezidi families demand a high price for their daughters. I don't understand how they try to sell their daughters. Woman is blessed in our religion, and how they dare to sell a woman!"

I6MO25: "Qelen is totally a wrong practice. It devalues women. You know, I was demanded Helen, and I have paid for it. [Why? Aren't you against it?] I had to respect the older people. To me, it is a wrong practice, but I did it since it is considered an important practice by older members of our community."

I8MB27: "Women and men are equal in Germany. I dont think it is a good thing to demand bride price. It used to be an important practice in the Middle East, but in Germany, life is not like in the Middle East. Fewer families demand the bride price. It is a practice of parthiracal communities. We discussed this issue in a conference with Yezidi Mir. The Mir must consider men and women equal. Even the bride price practice should be terminated; it is not mir's task must be replaced by every family and individual in our community."

[The custom of bride price in marriages among Yezidis should be abolished!]



Pie chart 15

From the perspective of generated culture, I aim to jump up to the issue of the cultural clashes taking place between generations. Many customs and social norms will likely be changed and abolished by the young generation in Germany soon. The most hotly debated issues are generally related to marriage and the position of women in Yezidi society. Such issues are seen as key barriers to keeping the Yezidi society into a patriarchal code and preventing its development in Germany.

4.2.2 Cultural clashes between generations: the status of women in the Yezidi German community, marrying out in the diaspora, the bride price, honor killing, obedience to elders, and social castes.

"The living space of the third generation of the German Ezidi community is completely modern. People of this generation have grown up with European values and believe that every person is free in their decisions. Their own children can be Ezidi or German. They don't interfere with their choices. If this process continues, the Ezidis will soon disappear from German society. We have our faults. I am from the second generation, and when young Ezidis ask questions about their community and religion, we cannot give satisfactory answers. They say that young people live like Germans and Christians can give us more sensible answers."[128]

The head of a cultural center articulates his views on the cultural clashes occurring between Yezidi generations in Germany. This quote encapsulates the primary reason behind these clashes: an ongoing communication gap regarding social norms and practices. Tensions arise between the Yezidi community and the liberal values of the host society. The rapid adoption of a modern and liberal lifestyle by younger Yezidis is often perceived by the older generation as a threat to their cultural heritage, eroding their nostalgic connection to their homeland, which is idealized as a symbolic site of belonging. The older generation fears that the gradual assimilation of younger Yezidis into the host society—viewed as integration by the youth—could eventually dissolve their community. In contrast, the younger generation is increasingly cultivating a fluid, transcultural identity. This formation of multiple, overlapping identities creates generational divides regarding lifestyles, a phenomenon commonly observed in diasporic communities. Although the relationship between Yezidi generations has become closer recently, a communication gap generates cultural clashes.

As evidenced in the following quotes, the central cause of these cultural clashes appears to be the influence of the patriarchal lifestyle adhered to by the older generations. To mitigate social segregation and prevent further cultural clashes, the previous generations of the Yezidi community have attempted to assert themselves while considering the ideas and perceptions of younger Yezidis.

[128] A Yezidi intellectual summarized the conditions of the young generation in Germany to me during an informal discussion

I have previously outlined the potential reasons for these attempts at assertion. To briefly revisit these factors, I will mention them again: prolonged migration, the 2014 genocide, and the integration process into German society. These factors play crucial roles in redefining social norms and sparking cultural clashes simultaneously. The first factor, migration, brought about significant changes to the social structure of the Yezidi community in Germany. The traditional values of young Yezidis, who encountered liberal values in their new environments, began to erode. Following the influx of migrants into the Yezidi community in Germany, a distinction between social classes emerged in the 1990s.

In Germany, where three different generations of Yezidis live in close proximity, there are few occasions (except for funeral ceremonies) that bring all community members together. As a result, generational differences have led to various issues within the community. The Yezidi community, primarily led by intellectuals in Germany, is burdened by the demands arising from class differences. In a country that has fostered an educated and enlightened Yezidi community due to migration, it is inevitable that traditional values, practices, and social norms will be re-evaluated, rearranged, and reinterpreted. This transformation is being demanded by the younger generations, including the third generation and, in the near future, the fourth generation. The perspectives of young Yezidis on social norms and practices have already diversified. In the chart below, I receive differing responses when discussing social norms such as bride price, honor, and honor killings.

[Social norms, such as bride price, honor, and honor-killing should remain in Yezidi society]



Pie chart 16

I contend that the prevailing social norms and practices are neither acceptable nor sustainable for the younger generation. The data presented in the chart suggests that these norms are poised for substantial transformation shortly. A pivotal event, the Genocide of 2014, which I

regard as a significant catalyst for the reinvigoration of Yezidism, has expedited the return of the second and third generations to their cultural and religious roots. This development has led to cultural tensions and facilitated the convergence of generations with newly shaped ideologies. The resurgence of Yezidism among the younger generations has exacerbated existing cultural divides, as those seeking to reconnect with their community face intense opposition. The third generation, largely distanced from traditional values due to the influence of liberal ideals in German society, has experienced a profound shift in identity, returning to the Yezidi community despite a lack of traditional knowledge, striving to reinterpret Yezidism. Two key factors underlie this resurgence: a) the educated young Yezidis have had to confront the exclusionary attitudes of the German society toward them, offering rational justifications for their self-identification as Yezidis; and b) the undeniable trauma of the Genocide, recounted for decades by family members, has now been realized in its whole, tragic extent, prompting the younger Yezidi generation to explore the reasons behind the community's persecution and assert a stronger sense of identity.

In this context, the second generation is eager to disentangle Yezidism from its perceived Sunni Sufi affiliations, particularly to help younger Yezidis navigate their understanding of the faith and to draw clear distinctions between the Sufi practices of Yezidis and those of Muslims. This redefinition seeks to diminish the patriarchal remnants within Yezidism, which are seen as barriers by the younger population. The primary objective is to present Yezidism as distinct from Islam. As Ackermann (2008) underscores, one of the primary reasons for the entanglement of Yezidi religious identity with Islam—particularly regarding the debates surrounding Sufism—is the role of Sheikh Adi, who is regarded as the founder of the Adawiya order. In this regard, a clarification of Yezidism's historical and doctrinal roots is essential to prevent further social conflict.

Moreover, the younger generation has come to terms with the reality of the Genocide they had only previously heard about. In light of this, they have increasingly questioned the motivations behind the Genocide and have adopted a stronger sense of belonging to Yezidism. However, this return to their community is met with conservative opposition, which impedes efforts to bring about change within Yezidi society. For instance, when young Yezidis self-identify as such in social spaces such as schoolyards or public organizations, they are often confronted with derogatory stereotypes, including accusations of honor killings, forced marriages, and arranged unions. Many young Yezidis, particularly those who have lived in

Germany for over fifteen years, have sought alternative identities to protect themselves from these insults, distancing themselves from the traditional Yezidi community in the process.

The cultural clashes within the Yezidi diaspora in Germany are primarily a result of the simultaneous existence of modern and traditional practices. The increasing demand for personal freedom conflicts with the entrenched patriarchal structures of Yezidi society. In the 1990s, a notable rise in the self-assurance of young Yezidis marked the beginning of a new phase of identity formation. At that time, young Yezidis began to critically question the custom of endogamy, viewing it as a constraint on individual self-realization (Thorsten, in Omarkhali, 2023, 226). However, contemporary young Yezidis in Germany have moved beyond mere questioning; they now actively seek the abolition of such customs. Let me now turn to the specific customs and social norms that young Yezidis wish to dismantle.

Marriage, in particular, remains at the heart of cultural debates within Yezidi society. Marriage is the focal point of many cultural clashes within the German diaspora, particularly as different generations navigate both traditional and modern ways of life. As the Yezidi community in Germany evolves, new layers of migration have contributed to the intensification of cultural conflicts. Having distanced itself somewhat from traditional practices, the first generation encountered the arrival of more traditional Soviet Yezidis in the 1990s. Later, the arrival of Iraqi Yezidis in the 2000s added yet another layer, further accentuating these tensions. By the 2010s, the influx of the most traditional Yezidis significantly heightened the intensity of cultural conflicts. For instance, intellectuals within the first generation now describe this latter wave of migrants as "radical Yezidis." While the initial cultural clash centered around the tension between tradition and modernity, more complex issues have emerged, particularly regarding patriarchy and the evolving social organization of the Yezidi community. The notions of honor, the status of women, marriage customs, and the community's social structure are deeply interconnected, and they remain central to ongoing cultural debates and clashes.

The Yezidi society is organized into tribal structures, called lineages and clans. Cultural conflicts are an inherent consequence in such a social framework, as tribalism plays a central role in the community's social organization. In these societies, issues such as women's social roles and positions, gender relationships, expectations surrounding gender, and the limits on individual freedoms are inextricably linked to the concept of honor. In traditional patriarchal societies, honor is a pervasive concept that influences nearly every aspect of social and

economic life. Within the Yezidi community, the concept of honor similarly serves as a fundamental force in shaping the social fabric and guiding interactions within the society.

"The main elements of the code of honor in the Yezidi society known as a) showing hospitality to visitors without any expectations, b) protecting any person against his enemies, and c) defense of all that belongs to one at all costs. Tribal land, properties, etc. It is called names and known as family or the womenfolk; d)Vengeance as a reaction to the assault or loss of honor; e) protection of tribal lands; f) owing loyalty to his family, clan, and tribe members; g) and marriage rules" (Omarkhali, 2023, p. 185).

These elements are at the heart of cultural conflicts between generations. Among these elements, the rules and values related to marriage are the most debated topic. As I mentioned in previous chapters, the system of rules and prohibitions in Yezidism is known as "Hed û Sed." This framework encompasses both moral and political dimensions, including the social structure, matrimonial regulations, and the ethical principles that govern the community. "Hed û Sed," namely marriage rules, is known as the system of commandments and prohibitions in the Yezidi community. Moral and ethical values, marriage rules, and, of course, the community's social structure are part of the "Hed û Sed." The faith followers in the original lands of Yezidis are pretty strict in following the "Hed û Sed" in a hostile environment. Those in the original lands of Yezidis were under feudal and religious absolutism, adopting some moral and ethical rules from different cultures. The debates on the position of Yezidi women in the community are, for example, totally related to feudal and patriarchal thinking of culture that is to be associated with Islam by many Yezidis. Omarkhali explains this issue in the context of the character of traditional patriarchal societies, mentioning the notion of honor in her work (2021, p.181). The marriage rules are believed to have been made by the mystic figure Sheikh Adi to keep Yezidis safe in a hostile environment.[129] A social structuring happened, and a ban on marriage outside and a strictly interconnected community might be established during growing religious and political tensions between Muslims and Yezidis. Endogamous rules were at the center of the new social structure that saved religion, the organization of community, and culture.[130]

Cultural clashes appear in many different aspects. Ancestral traditional values are still very important for the elderly generation. The young population, as having a transnational and

[129] A Yezidi intellectual highlights his opinion regarding the reforms made by Sheik Adi.

[130] https://s-j-a.org/blog/die-endogamie-gebote/ Accessed: 10.11.2023

transcultural character, highly adopts a modern and liberal lifestyle. Endomaous institutions of hereditary groups are not in harmony with liberal values and urban living conditions of Europe and the transcultural characters of the young population.

A Yezidi intellectual I discussed the issue responded as follows: "The third generation of Yezidis does not recognize themselves, neither politically, nor religiously, nor in terms of integration. They are aware that they are Kurds and Yezidis, but they have no practical knowledge." Previous generations accuse the young Yezidis of ignorance. This is because there is still a traditional patriarchal understanding of roles among previous generations.

The unwritten rules of endogamy and honor are socially accepted procedures that regulate the entire Yezidi society. The endogamous institutions of the Sheikhs, Pirs, and Mirids cannot simply be abolished because the Yezidi society is based on 'an honor-based society' like Muslim societies. The hierarchical structures of patriarchy regulate life decisions like studying, marriage, and work. Every Yezidi individual constitutes his personal identification according to the concept of honoring his/her family to survive socially in the Yezidi community. The family authority that comes from the patriarchal character of the Yezidi society has a significant effect on the decisions of individuals. Still, in many Yezidi families in Germany, fathers claim authority to regulate their children's lives and to maintain patriarchal power structures in the life of the young generation with religious classes. The most common structure of patriarchal power is marriage or arranged marriages. Families are still active in arranging marriages. In the case of refusing such marriages by young Yezidis, they are accused of making family honor priceless. It is necessary to mention that arranged marriages were historically the standard practice, but this tradition has evolved within the conditions of the Yezidi German diaspora. This practice of marriage is still happening in the lands of origin. However, the urban environments in Europe have played a significant role in transforming these marriage practices. Many young Yezidis in Germany are in the feeling of 'socially dead persons and have parallel lives'[131] because of such social procedures of honor based on patriarchal thinking. Here is a young Yezidi born and raised in Germany, sharing her thoughts regarding the issue:

I3FC25: "I suffer from Yezidi people around me. I do have a good career, but still, their expectation is different from mine. If a person is in love with a non-Yezidi, then he or she is treated as a socially dead person. If a person becomes more open-minded, he or she is not

[131] Many young Yezidis I met believe they are socially dead.

considered a person who fits into Yezidi society. I dont understand such things. Why is one forced to get married to only a Yezidi? It makes people socially dead."

I4FF21: There are many young Yezidis who can not get married since the amount of the bride price is high. [What do you think of bride price practice?]

Qelen is something bad since this practice is not related to our society. It shouldn't be accepted.

[So when a Yezidi try get married to a non-Yezidi, does the family ask for Qelen?]

I dont know about it. And getting married to an outsider is fine for me. We live in Germnay, and getting married to a German is possible. But I feel a social pressure to get married to a Yezidi boy. According to my family, this is very important for our honor!

[Could you tell me more about the correlation between honor and marriage?]

Well, when someone does bad things, they are not welcomed. [So is getting married with a non–Yezidi a bad thing?] I think it is an honor to do good things. Getting married with a Yezidi boy will be better for me to continue my life without any problems with my family members.

In addition to such social procedures of honor, the main social structure of Yezidi society is based on tribal relationships, and religious narratives dominate the nature of social relations. However, both the unwritten social rules and the tribal structures do not make sense for young Yezidis in Germany. There is no space where the unwritten social rules, social relations based on patriarchy, and tribal ties make sense in German society.

I3FC25: "I grew up in a small city located in Germnay, where populated by Yezidis. I had many Yezidi friends until my high school. After high school, I realized that Yezidis's friend in my life did not match my lifestyle and ambitions. I would say moving away from my hometown was the best experience I have had. Because I was very much thinking like Yezidi people around me, saying we are victims, we have to protect ourselves, etc. I did not have many international friends, and Yezidi people around me judged me on my lifestyle, what I do, and what I think. When I moved out from my hometown, I realized that all people are the same, and I am quite happy that I moved away from people judging me and monitoring my life and decisions in daily life. I was one of the girls who could go to parties, travel alone, etc. My family is different from Yezidis, and I grew up more modern than others. My parents supported me, and it is uncommon in Yezidi society to support a girl that much. However, I

felt restricted in Yezidi Kurdish society, and I decided to move out and live my life. Since I moved out, I never moved back. In the beginning, I visited a lot. I am connected to my close family, but I am not connected with my broader society." [Is it a good way to be far from your society?]

"Yes, indeed. It is. From my side, I feel better. You know I was always feeling happy while visiting my grandfather and grandma and attending weddings. But for my own life and even my mental health, it is much better to be away. No one is even talking about my life and my decisions because I am not part of Yezidi society anymore."

Cultural clashes among Yezidis occur mainly because they practice traditions, language, and adopted lifestyles in their German diaspora. Cultural clashes happen because the Yezidi community's rules have changed in the conditions of the diaspora. The specific character of the Yezidis community has changed into an individualistic from a collectivist character.

We can draw a very clear conclusion from this ongoing debate in the Yezidi community: There is a serious communication and interaction gap between generations. Since the attempted Genocide of the Yezidis in 2014, the younger generation has been trying to bring the Yezidi culture and identity to the forefront, and they want to re-think the Yezidi community with new ideas and reforms. However, it is a fact that they face intense criticism from previous generations. The communication channels between previous and younger generations have almost disappeared. The two quotes I present below summarize the communication gap between the generations. The first quote is from a Yezidi individual from the second generation. The following quote is from a young Yezidi:

I3FC25: "We are not interested in young Yezidis, and they are not interested in us. Our language has changed, our way of thinking is different, and our view of the world is different. I can say that communication between us has been cut off. Being away from Yezidis makes me feel much better about my life. I am a young Yezidi, and when I live in places populated by Yezidi people, they try to navigate my life."

Previous generations have witnessed emerging objections among young Yezidis to the role of religious authorities and their decisions about the entire Yezidi society, to the social pressure coming from families, etc.

I10MH22: "The perspectives of older generations are understandable; they believe that we, as young Yezidis, have a duty to protect our religion and uphold our social norms. However,

some of their practices push people away from the community. For example, when a young Yezidi falls in love with someone outside the faith, they are often excluded by their families. I struggle to understand why Yezidis are so intent on distancing their people. If we continue enforcing such strict rules, Yezidism risks fading away. In Germany especially, if Yezidism remains closed to outsiders, it may disappear shortly. To me, these rigid rules have turned Yezidism into a self-destructive system."

I2MH26: There are other topics nowadays. I know a Yezidi guy who committed suicide because he was in love with a girl who was not a Yezidi. It wasn't a match with religion and the expectations of his family. And this Yezidi guy was unhappy about that. These are topics that could be more talked about and debated. I think social media is a good way to do videos or put texts. My uncle, for instance, is very strict. He is almost aggressive when you say something wrong. When I asked some questions, for example, why marriages are different or not allowed, he relayed that one day, if someone brought a non-Yezidi girl to my house, he deserved to be beheaded! You see, they think of like fundamental Islamist guys!

The concept of honor, shame (names), and the practice of honor killing are the most debated norms that should be eradicated in Yezidi society, according to young Yezidis. Such concepts are highly related to marriage practice. The concept of honor is generally known as men's control of females' social and sexual behavior. However, it is a multi-layered concept (Omarkhali, 2021, p. 182). In Germany, the social interest in the notion of honor and honor killing has increased in recent years.[132] Such practices are generally seen among traditional patriarchal societies, resulting in conflicts over assaulted honor.

I have asked the two young Yezidi informants below to identify their perceptions of the concept of honor. I must say that these two informants came to Germany after 2014. They keep the traditional way of life very firmly and even criticize young Yezidis, those born and raised in Germnay not following some traditional norms. Young Yezidis who migrated to Germany in the last decade share nostalgic feelings with the older generations. The way of approaching young Yezidis, who was born and raised in Germnay, is similar to the others. Cultural clashes have had another dimension since 2014 in Germany. Before, it was taking place between different generations. However, cultural clashes have gained a new dimension in recent years. The clashes were taking place between elder Yezidis and the young population, but now the cultural clashes are taking place even among the young population.

[132] For documented honor killing records in Germany, see: https://www.ehrenmord.de/ Accessed: 09.07.2022

In response to the question [when someone is talking about names, what does it remind you?]

I4FF21: Giving up his religion and not showing respect to elders. Well, when a woman gets married and has a relationship with someone who is not Yezidis, she loses her name and the honor of her family. She loses her name when she has a relationship with a German boy. It is not welcome to have a relationship with a German boy!

I5FO30*:* I think German girls do not want to get married to Yezidi boys. If they dont want then why do Yezidi boys try to get married to German girls? Many Yezidi boys are in love with German girls. But in the end, German girls do not get married to them. I don't accept such a thing. They must get married to Yezidi girls to protect their family's honor. It is, somehow, losing its name.

I8MB27: "I think the concept of namus means honor of my family. This is also a notion of a patriarchal system, and we must stop keeping it. It is an unofficial rule. We have to fight back to our true philosophy. We must purify the patriarchal way of life in our community."

Namus is often linked to womenfolk and has a collective character. However, many young Yezidis recently mentioned individual honor instead of mentioning the collective honor of family, clan, and tribes.

I11MB22: "For me, the name is a person's mind. If a person is good and respectful to elders, then this person has namus. Many say Namus is related to women. But for me, Namus is much more important for a man. Being a nice person means having a good name. During the Genocide, many Yezidi men were accused of not protecting their families and losing their names. It's not fair. They were not able to protect women and children."

The code of honor is seen as a boundary (Omarkhali, 2021) in young Yezidis' lives. When a young Yezidi, in general female Yezidis, crosses a certain boundary, they face the practice of honor killing. For previous generations, young Yezidis must not cross such borders to avoid causing 'social ostracism' in the whole family.

Except for the concept of honor, shame, and honor killing practice, one of the key concepts that brings an exclusive approach is the way of being Yezidi. In the classical sense, being Yezidi is only possible by birth. However, young Yezidis asked for another solution since many Kurds in Germany were trying to turn back to Yezidism. But elder Yezidis considered

such Kurdish youngs as Sunni Muslims even though Kuursih young individuals claimed they once were Yezidis before the conquest of Islam in the territories of Kurds.

I8MB27: It seems impossible to expect an outsider like Yezidi at the moment. But maybe one day, it will change. I know many Kurdish friends in Germnay who want to be accepted as Yezidis. For me, this issue is not a priority at this time. The priority is to let the community survive, find a safe place to live, and keep the community as it is to return to the old Yezidiness.

I11MB22: "Baba Sheikh should decide to accept one outsider into the Yezidi community. Many generations did not accept outsiders."

I6MO25: "This is a complicated issue. Some say if a person speaks the Kurdish language, then she or he is most probably Yezidi. In Germany, many people speak German, but they are not German. As an outsider, I would be happy if one was accepted and welcomed into the Yezidi community. We need a solution for this case. We must formulate a way of accepting Yezidis as Yezidis who have gotten married outside and accepting people who want to be Yezidi. I always think that if we had one more caste besides three castes, that would be easier. All castes should be abolished, or a fourth caste should be recognized."

In this case, the discussions evolve to the position of social structure that is known as the caste system. When I ask young Yezidis what to do to prevent such cultural clashes, they point at the role of the religious council, criticizing its current function. The religious assembly is seen as insufficient in many issues that cause cultural clashes among Yezidis. For instance, the following informant points a strange reality about the religious assembly as follow:

I10MH22: "There is a religious assembly we call Melisa Ruhani. When I look at the members of this assembly, I can not find anybody who represents Yezidis in Anatolia, Caucasia, and Syria. All members are from Iraqi Yezidis. How can Iraqi Yezidis make decisions about others without knowing their problems? Why is there no representative of the Yezidis in Europe in Meclisa Ruhani?"

I7FO27: "Many leading Yezidi religious figures and their decision-making centers [meclisa ruhani] are not aware of the conditions of Yezidis in Europe. We need an authority to make sense of this place and make decisions for the community here [Germany]. I think it is necessary to establish an assembly for the European Yezidis to regulate social norms according to the conditions of our diaspora."

I8MB27: "For me, it is an important system. One time in the future, I am sure that this system will be changed. But for now, we need a structure to go ahead and prevent our community from being genocidal. We need Pirs and Sheiks at the moment because they are experts. Maybe there are fewer experts in Germnay, but we must find a way to make people experts, too. Some of us must be experts here. We didn't constitute ways in the diaspora to make old structures work here. There had to be more discussions about ways of keeping old structures here. Today, we must think about the caste system again, and it should be transformed somehow!"

I3FC25: "The Sheikhs, Pirs, and murids are always poor. There are fewer people in the caste system. I know that this caste is holy for many people, but maybe we might ask ourselves if we need this or not. I am not an expert on this topic. I do not think it will change something if people keep the same mindset."

I8MB27: "Before our Mir died, we wanted to establish a voting system for the next Mir. Then Genocide came, and he died. The Mir on the task now was able to continue as Mir. In my opinion, we must change the system for choosing Mir. There might be a system of election of the Mir. They must be elected. We need a structure of participants and then change the Mir. I guess we have been on this way, and I demand a kind of reform in changing the system of electing the Mir."

The issue of the position of female individuals in Yezidis society is another approach criticized by young Yezidis. We are witnessing the attempts to redefine the position of Yezidi women in Germany. Especially after the Genocide of 2014, there is a growing opposition among young people to traditional masculine roles. Particularly in the German diaspora, women are increasingly involved in social life and Yezidi organizations. A few young Yezidi women expressed their approval of the situation. One of them mentioned, "The Zentralrat[133] will elect a new director this month (February 2023).[134] The previous director was a man. They will choose a female director, and Zemfira Dlovani will be selected because she is their daughter-in-law. There is no woman running as an independent candidate. In my opinion, this decision is still being made by men. However, if she is elected, I will support it—at least the number of women directors will increase."

[133] https://zentralrat-eziden.com/mitgliedsvereine Accessed: 23.12.2023
[134] Zemfira Dlovani was nominated for Deputy Chairwoman and was elected as Chairwomen in 2023.

I should note that other cultural centers have adopted a similar attitude. Young women are more involved in social activities, and some are preparing for managerial positions. Until recent years, women's social status and communicative practices have been deeply shaped by the concept of honor and shame (names). As it might be remembered, a big portion of the Yezidi women were freed from the sexual slavery of ISIL despite resistance from the conservative Yezidis (Černý, K. (2020). The traditional culture that excommunicated women until now is being redefined to give more room or space to women in the public sphere. Because the code of honor is, in many traditional families in Germany, still controlling the gender roles and the ways of sexuality of women. However, in recent years, women have entered traditionally male spheres as 'self-confident and independent breadwinners of families'[135]

The woman's social position varies depending on whether her actions are right or wrong (wrong actions, disgrace, etc, are considered shame). A woman is still supposed to bear the responsibility of safeguarding both their own honor and that of their family and paternal lineage. However, in the case of the social position of women in the Yezidi community of Germany, personal interest and freedom come first in contrast to highly collectivist individuals.

I9FF30: "A self-confident Yezidi woman must stand against oppression from family. A woman who does not allow the members of the family to make choices and decisions on behalf of her is honorable."

I2MH26: "Look! Many Yezidi men talk about women's purity in terms of honor. Many Yezidi men can't do the things that Yezidi women do. Look at Yezidi women in Syria; they are fighters and saving our people. Look! Nadia Murad[136] is brave; now she is trying to rebuild our houses and religious places in our homeland. She made our voice audible!"

Like informant I2MH26, many other people I have talked to about women's positions in the Yezidi community mention that 'Yezidi women can physically protect their community and their families.'

[135] See more details about changing gender roles in Černý, K. (2020)

[136] A human rights activist and recipient of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. She took the initiative to speak about the persecution of Yezidis on international platforms and organizations like the United Nations Security Council. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoT0_fnm6g0 Accessed: 12.12.2022

Nearly all young Yezidis accept the kidnapped Yezidi women by ISIL back to their community without any excommunication, while many traditional Yezidis are still against accepting such women back into the Yezidi community. All respondents to the survey responded to the expression below as follows:

[I agree with women kidnapped by ISIS/ISIL returning to the Yezidi community as Yezidis]



Pie chart 17

I3FC25: "Nadia Murad represents us in international institutions and raises public awareness. Her efforts are incredible. For many Yezidi women, Nadia Murad should serve as a role model. She courageously stood up against the patriarchal system. Many women whom ISIL raped remained silent due to social pressure. However, Nadia Murad was not ashamed. She rejected the code of names. Instead of staying quiet, she spoke openly about her experiences, challenging the societal pressure on women. As a Yazidi woman, I truly admire her stance."

The social status of women is largely being redefined, with patriarchy at the core of the issue. Patriarchy is often cited as the primary reason for the very low number of Yezidi women religious scholars.

I8MB27: "Women have been excluded from transmitting religious knowledge by our patriarchal society. However, A Yezidi girl born into a priesthood family is automatically granted the status of a priest. Looking carefully, you will see that male figures preserve all religious texts. Recitation of religious knowledge is somehow a male tradition, and there is a hierarchy among the reciters."

I11MB22: "In our religion, the position of women in society is much more blessed. The women come first in our religion. Her social status is above men's. However, in traditional life and culture, the position of women is down.

[Why is it like that?]

"I have no idea about the reason behind it. Maybe it might be related to Arabic culture [means patriarchy]. Because we live under the rules of Arabs, and their cultural influence is higher."

I8MB27: "If you check it out, men seem visible in the community, but the most speeches are done by Yezidi women. Women are visible here" [in Germany].

[When you look around, how many women religious experts do you see?]

"All right, I know what you mean. The population of women religious experts is smaller. You are right. They are not visible. I do not know!"

I6MO25: "There is an idiom among us. It says if your neighbors are deaf, then your parents are deaf. So, we have been under the impact of our neighbors (Muslims) for years, and then we forgot the blessed position of women in our community. We adopted patriarchal perspectives about the position of women in our society. My grandmother was a great religious expert, telling about religion and tradition. She was quite a knowledgeable person. But now I look and dont see women experts in Germany. This is very sad."

The Yezidi organizations, cultural centers, and NGOs in which many Yezidi women take active roles currently mobilize all Yezidis worldwide to deal with local political, economic, and humanitarian crises. They have made Yezidi society much more transnational. These organizations are considered such gates to reach out to the global community and international humanitarian aid to make the Yezidi community visible.

From the quotes above in the current subsection, it is clear that the codes of honor and shame within the Yezidi community in Germany are facing criticism, and most probably, such codes of patriarchal societies are going to be eliminated. This could potentially lead to replacing these social norms and codes, particularly among the younger generation exposed to Western

ideals of dignity. The Yezidi youth interviewed in Germany show a blend of cultural influences, reflecting a clash between the traditions of their homeland and the culture they encounter in their new environment.

Ultimately, the profound changes and transformations occurring within society inevitably give rise to cultural clashes. This situation underscores the pressing need for a regeneration process, as the community must adapt to new dynamics while preserving and reshaping its identity and values.

Chapter 5 Yezidi youth in the German diaspora: (re)producing ethnicity (2005-2020)

Introduction

This chapter analyzes how Yezidis in Germany navigate identity reproduction, structured through two primary sections with their respective subsections. To fully comprehend contemporary identity dynamics, we must first examine traditional Yezidi conceptions of ethnicity (Millet) before contrasting them with emerging, Western-influenced perspectives among younger generations. Debates surrounding Yezidi ethnicity typically emerge from discussions about their origins, Sufism's historical influence, and contemporary efforts to reintegrate marginalized Yezidis into the community.

The past decade's forced displacement and persecution of Yezidis have brought global attention to internal community dynamics. The political and economic crises that nearly devastated the Yezidi population have simultaneously revived historical debates about their roots, particularly regarding connections to Sufism and mystical Islam. This has prompted many Yezidis to seek reconnection with their heritage, sparking a broader reexamination of identity. I discuss such topics in this chapter.

The section begins by outlining traditional Yezidi ethnic discourse before analyzing the contested relationship between Yezidism and Sufism. Subsequent discussion explores multiple identity formations, particularly among Yezidi youth, as they reinterpret religious and cultural belonging. My analysis focuses on how young Yezidis negotiate competing identities—German, Kurdish, and Yezidi—and how these perceptions evolve. I also examine

growing anti-Kurdish sentiment within the community, partially fueled by Muslim Kurdish involvement in the 2014 genocide. Drawing on fieldwork observations and empirical data, I investigate how these conditions have both motivated a search for origins and shaped dominant narratives, particularly the discourse of Yezidism as a distinct ethno-religious identity.

The criteria that constitute ethnicity vary, and "an ethnic group simply can not be marked by only shared culture, religion, language, and customs "(Eriksen, 2010; p.41). The origins of Yezidi identity constitute a subject of considerable scholarly and communal debate, reflecting a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and political factors. Initial inquiries into this matter emerged intermittently during the 1930s and 1960s, gaining momentum under Soviet governance, which afforded Yezidis in Armenia unprecedented opportunities to critically engage with and articulate their cultural and historical narratives. This period engendered a discourse centered on a distinctive Yezidi identity, wherein ethnic belonging was closely aligned with cultural markers, such as language. At the same time, religious affiliation was deliberately marginalized as a determinant of ethnic ideology under Soviet ideological constraints. A parallel intellectual awakening occurred in Iraq during the 1960s, catalyzed by the ascendancy of Arab nationalism, which compelled Iraqi Yezidis to formulate their own conceptual frameworks of identity. From the 1980s onward, the Yezidi diaspora, shaped by the socio-political conditions of Europe and the broader diaspora experience, introduced novel dimensions to these deliberations, fostering increasingly pluralistic perspectives on identity. By the early 2000s, scholarly and communal debates surrounding the notion of a distinct Yezidi ethnicity or ethnic identity gained significant traction, reflecting a growing consensus within certain segments of the community. The post-2010 period, marked by systemic violence against Yezidis and perceived betrayal by Kurdish factions during the civil conflicts in Iraq and Syria (particularly between 2007 and 2015), precipitated a profound reevaluation of Yezidi's identity. This era witnessed the emergence of robust discourses on Yezidi's religious, political, and ethno-religious identity, often accompanied by an anti-Kurdish narrative and a renewed emphasis on belonging to Yezidism as a singular and cohesive identity framework.

Contemporary scholarship, alongside voices within the Yezidi community, posits that the traditional conceptualization of Yezidi identity and its attendant social structures underwent significant redefinition or reformation during the 12th century. This transformative era, closely associated with the influential figure of Sheikh Adi, is widely regarded as a seminal

juncture in the crystallization of Yezidi identity, transcending earlier mythical narratives of ethnic origin. Scholars argue that the ethnic dimension of Yezidi identity began to coalesce from this period onward. For instance, Viktoria Arakelova, a prominent scholar in the field, contends that the emergence of a distinct ethno-religious identity was inextricably linked to the establishment of a qualitatively novel religious system under Sheikh Adi's influence. Over time, the initially inclusive Sufi order, which admitted members through initiation, gradually transformed into a closed, insular community defined by an esoteric doctrinal framework. Membership became hereditary, restricted exclusively to those born within the community. During this critical phase, the ethnic dimension of Yezidi identity began to crystallize, marking a decisive shift in the community's self-conception and social organization. (Arakelova 2010, p. 11). It is widely accepted that the 'Adawiyya' "sect" or community formulated by Sheikh Adi actually was probably originally multi-ethnic, comprising Arabs, Kurds, and likely members of Aramaic tribes who participated in the Sufi order.

Similarly, a Yezidi intellectual I interviewed claims that "Sheikh Adi introduced a system of endogamy to structure Yezidi society, particularly in the context of marriage, as a means of societal regulation. He is believed to have acquired his knowledge from Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani, a prominent figure in Islamic thought and a Kurdish-Yezidi figure.' Sheikh Adi played a critical role during a period when Yezidis faced existential threats, including genocidal campaigns, due to their resistance to religious conversion to Islam. Through his reforms, Sheikh Adi established a societal framework that safeguarded the Yezidi community and preserved the distinctiveness of Yezidi identity."

A discourse centered on an independent Yezidi identity, deeply intertwined with questions of collective memory and the historical underpinnings of their persecution in their homeland, is increasingly evident across various Yezidi groups in Germany. Since the early 2000s, a series of pivotal developments—most notably the genocide of 2014—have propelled Yezidis into the forefront of discussions concerning the origins and redefinition of their ethnic identity. These conversations have been marked by efforts to disentangle Yezidi's religious identity from mystical Islamic and Sufi traditions, instead emphasizing the articulation of their beliefs through concrete religious texts and institutions. This shift reflects a broader adoption of contemporary approaches to ethnicity and identity formation ideologies.

By their intrinsic nature, religious communities frequently embody multifaceted and occasionally contradictory identities, reflecting the complex interplay of tradition, belief, and sociohistorical context. Among the Yezidi community, particularly within the diasporic setting

of Germany, intellectuals and younger generations are actively interrogating and reconciling these inherent contradictions. The question of identity and ethnicity emerges as a central locus of debate as Yezidis grapple with the dual imperatives of preserving their cultural and religious heritage while simultaneously adapting to the sociocultural exigencies of their diasporic existence. This dynamic process of negotiation and redefinition highlights the fluid and evolving nature of Yezidi identity in the contemporary era, underscoring its responsiveness to internal communal discourses and external socio-political pressures. First of all, it's better to rely on the concept of ethnicity in a short attempt here. Derived from the ancient Greek word 'ethnos' (which originally meant pagan), the term "ethnicity" is commonly understood to refer to a group of people or a nation. It embodies the sense of shared identity, often linked to common heritage, culture, and social bonds.[137]

Ethnicity, "as constituted ideologically," can be formed internally, through a group's assertion of its distinctiveness and unique origins (for contemporary Yezidis, it is endogamy), or externally, through the continuous labeling and often prejudicial treatment imposed by more dominant groups (Eriksen T.H., 1992). Religious factors are "the critical elements in the formation and preservation of ethnic identity" (Smith, 1988, p. 124) and play a crucial role in conceptualizing Yezidi ethnic identity.

As the core of ethnicity, identity encompasses the entirety of one's self-perception, reflecting how we see ourselves as distinct and unique individuals. Racial, cultural, and ethnic identities are key components of an individual's overall identity, which undergoes changes over time through personal growth and social influences. Ethnic groups consist of individuals who may differ in race but share common cultural traits, such as history, beliefs, values, culinary and entertainment traditions, religion, and language (the example of Yugoslavia, for instance). Ethnicity, therefore, often encompasses elements of both race and culture (Bhugra, 2004). Ethnicity is an integral component of identity, influencing both emotional ties and structural forms of social belonging. It can be understood through two main frameworks. First, on a personal level, ethnicity is often subjectively used to define an individual's sense of self, creating a link to a larger group through shared heritage, ancestry, and cultural practices. This understanding underscores the personal connection to collective origins and traditions, where individuals draw from these common elements to identify with a broader community.

[137] https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ethnicity Accessed: 24.06.2024

The second definition of ethnicity is analytical, framing it as a social and political structure. This relational system emerges from the interactions between groups within various contexts such as local, national, or transnational frameworks. Both interpretations of ethnicity emphasize the creation of identity as a complex, intertwined process of meaning-making that integrates both personal and collective dimensions of belonging.[138] There are various perspectives on ethnicity within academic discourse. Until the twentieth century, ethnicity was largely perceived as a fixed and intrinsic characteristic defined by the immutable qualities of people, such as ancestry, race, and cultural heritage. This view was prevalent in early anthropological frameworks, which often treated ethnic groups as distinct, enduring entities based on their essential traits

However, from the early twenty-first century onward, significant cultural and social changes began to reshape how ethnicity is understood. Influenced by globalization, migration, and technological progress, the increasing fluidity of individual identities has led to a rethinking of ethnic identity as dynamic and evolving. The exact process happened to Yezidis, too. The growing recognition of more flexible and adaptable forms of identity naturally brought about shifts in how ethnicity is conceptualized. This has led to more contemporary definitions of ethnicity that emphasize its relational nature, acknowledging that social, political, and cultural contexts continuously reshape ethnic identities. These new frameworks highlight ethnicity as a process rather than a fixed attribute, reflecting modern societies' complex and interconnected realities (Fisher, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Wimmer, 2013).

From this perspective, it is evident that approaches to the concept of ethnicity among Yezidis, particularly among the younger generation, are characterized by significant diversity. For a substantial portion of Yezidis, notions such as identity, ethnicity, and race are interpreted through a religious lens, with direct connections drawn to Yezidi religious beliefs and practices. However, many young Yezidis exhibit limited familiarity with these conceptual frameworks, often adopting understandings of ethnic identity influenced by the perspectives of neighboring communities.

In Germany, debates surrounding ethnic identity are most pronounced among Yezidis actively engaged in the process of integration into German society. Conversely, those who resist integration tend to maintain a more static view of their ethnic roots, predominantly identifying as either Kurdish or Yezidi without significant introspection. The most active participants in

[138] https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ethnicity Accessed: 24.06.2024

these discussions are recent migrants from Iraq, the Caucasus, and Syria, particularly those who have arrived within the past few decades. In contrast, Yezidis born and raised in Germany frequently adopt a multifaceted identity, identifying as German alongside their Yezidi and Kurdish heritage. For this group, individualism plays a central role in self-definition, marking a departure from the communal and collective frameworks that traditionally shaped ethnic identity among older generations. As illustrated by the informants cited below, "Yezidiness" often takes precedence in responses to questions of ethnicity, underscoring the enduring centrality of religious identity in shaping ethnic self-perception. In response to the question of how a Yezidi describes himself regarding ethnic identity, the following informant continued as follows:

I7FO27: "I am a Yezidi living in Germany. I speak German, and I am a free person here."

[Then, how do you explain your ethnic identity?]

I7FO27: "I said I am Yezidi. Technically, I can say I am a German-Yezidi. Because I was born here, and here is my homeland."

[And what about your mother and Father?]

I7FO27: "They say they are Kurdish-Yezidis. My father always says a tribe is the mother of men! Look around! Do you see any tribes here? Life is different here, and I belong here [Germany]."

Such perspectives of treating Germany as a homeland among young Yezidis who were born and raised in Germany are criticized by other young Yezidis who have moved to Germany in the last decades. For instance, a young Yezidi who moved to Germany in 2012 explains her opinion as follows:

I5FO30: "Many young Yezidis around me tell me they are German. They speak Kurdish and say we are German! That's strange!"

The factors driving these identity discussions are deeply interconnected. The integration process into German society has led many Yezidis to distance themselves from Kurdish identity and political movements. For Yezidi intellectuals, a primary objective is to secure formal recognition as a distinct religious community by the German state. Consequently, the Yezidi community has sought to establish independence from Kurdish political influences. Within this context, contemporary efforts to reconstruct Yezidi's identity in the German diaspora can be analyzed through three central themes.

First, there is a concerted effort to eliminate Islamic elements from Yezidi religious practices and discourse to be treated as a separate religious group rather than a sect in Germany or to reinterpret them in alignment with Yezidism's foundational principles. This process involves simplifying and recontextualizing these elements, often regarding the 12th-century reforms associated with Sheikh Adi, which are seen as a pivotal moment in the formation of Yezidi identity.

Second, the concept of Kurdish identity is increasingly reframed in relation to Islam or Islamism, with the term "Kurd" or "Kurds" being directly associated with Sunni Islam. This redefinition has prompted a shift away from "Kurdishness" and toward a stronger identification with Yezidism as a distinct ethno-religious identity.

Third, linked to this shift is a growing sense of belonging to Yezidism, accompanied by a discourse emphasizing a unique Yezidi identity. This discourse aims to address the challenges faced in the diaspora and to achieve recognition as a distinct religious group within the host country's societal and institutional frameworks.

The question of Yezidi ethnicity remains a subject of ongoing debate, with no clear consensus among Yezidis themselves as to whether they belong to the ethnic groups historically rooted in Kurdish territories or to communities originating from Iran and India. This unresolved issue reflects broader uncertainties surrounding both their ethnic and religious identity. In response, Yezidis have adopted a range of political stances on their identity, particularly over the past decade. For reasons that will be elaborated upon, Yezidis have actively constructed narratives and theories about their origins and self-conception, a process most visible within the diaspora. In diasporic contexts, Yezidis benefit from more significant political and economic freedoms and the ability to reach out to transnational connections with several religious groups, enabling them to engage more openly in these discussions and to develop a more defined concept of political and ethnic identity.

The issue of political and ethnic identity has gained significant traction among Yezidis since the fall of the Ba'ath regime in the early 2000s and the subsequent reconfiguration of the Iraqi state following the 2003 war. In Iraq, for instance, Yezidis have sought to assert their political identity while navigating the competing forces of Arab and Kurdish nationalism (Ali, 2019; Ayhan, 2022 in Tezcur). The Ba'ath regime attempted to classify Yezidis as Arabs, while Kurdish leaders have often framed Yezidism as the ancient precursor to Kurdish identity. Beyond their ancestral homelands, diverse regional and diasporic contexts have shaped Yezidi

identity formation. In the Caucasus, Yezidis have developed identities influenced by Armenian and Georgian nationalist discourses, leading to a dominant tendency to self-identify as Yezidis while adopting a "formulated" language as a marker of distinction. Yezidi identity construction is often shaped by interactions with other religious groups experiencing similar diasporic conditions in the United States diaspora, further complicating their self-conception. From the 2000s onwards, Yezidis encounter several diasporic religious groups and their way of organization in diasporic spaces. It helped Yezidis to organize themselves, imitating the way of organizing surrounding religious groups in diasporas. Yezidis in the USA, for example, have a tight relationship with the Hindu diaspora[139] that encourages Yezidis to rethink the origins and roots of their community and to seek a sense of solidarity and new alternative stories of ethnic belonging in the context of "shared myths, histories, and cultures" (Smith, 1988). Such an awakening of self-perception appeared as a result of being partly a transnational group since the 2000s.

However, in Germany, which I aim to highlight throughout the entire current chapter, the situation is more complex. The reasons behind the complexity are somehow mentioned already, but I need to mention here that the Yezidi community in Germany is not a homogeneous group. The Yezidi population developed over more than fifty years through various waves of migration, both sporadic and mass movements. Initially, the community in Germany was more uniform, as the first migrants primarily came from the same pot, southern Anatolia. Over time, however, the community expanded to include Yezidis from diverse social backgrounds and political ideologies. The Yezidi population in Germany emerged through multiple waves of migration, each driven by distinct historical and socio-political circumstances. Early migrations originated from Iraq, primarily due to the oppressive policies of the Ba'athist regime. Subsequent movements included arrivals from Turkey following the military coups of the 1980s and the escalation of Kurdish armed resistance, as well as from the Caucasus after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and ensuing economic instability. Later, further displacement occurred from Iraq in the wake of the 2003 war and the rise of Islamist extremism, and more recently, from Syria due to the civil war and the persecution by ISIL.

Due to these diverse migration trajectories, Yezidi communities in Germany are dispersed across various regions, each maintaining distinct cultural centers and asserting unique perceptions of ethnic identity.

[139] See more details Sanders (2019), Yezidis in ancient India…

Beyond the dynamics of migration, contemporary debates surrounding a distinct Yezidi ethnic identity—extending beyond ethnoreligious categorizations—are significantly influenced by the evolving Yezidi-Kurdish relations in Germany. Historical and geopolitical dynamics originate in their homelands shape these social and political interactions.

A notable segment of young Yezidis associates Kurdishness with the mobilization of Yezidi women fighters and guerrillas within PKK-affiliated armed units that resisted ISIL. When articulating their ethnic identities, many young Yezidis in Germany reference Kurdishness primarily within the framework of political mobilization linked to the PKK. However, while Kurdishness features prominently in their discourse, their cultural and ethnic affiliation with Kurds remains ambivalent. This caution stems from historical grievances, particularly the genocidal violence perpetrated by Sunni Muslim Kurds against Yezidis in 2014 during the Syrian civil war (and in subsequent years).

Through Chapter 5, I contend that the notion of a largely almost fixed self-interpretation of the Yezidi identity is still based on a sense of historically victimized and marginalized minority groups. Nearly all young Yezidis mention this reality. So, the theme of victimhood, which is rooted in the traditional understanding of Yezidi ethnicity, still plays a significant role in the recent (re)construction of Yezidi identity among young Yezidis.

Three key factors are rooted in the emergence of newly constituted notions of a distinctive Yezidi identity within the German diaspora.

First, the genocidal campaigns against Yezidis—particularly those perpetrated by ISIL—have significantly alienated younger generations from identifying with Kurdishness. There is a growing tendency among Yezidi youth to assert Êzdîyatî (Yezidiness) as a distinct identity, often recalling Kurds as collaborators or perpetrators during these atrocities. A central driver of anti-Kurdish sentiment within the Yezidi community stems from the historical role of Sunni Kurds in persecutions and genocidal violence against Yezidis. This discourse is especially prevalent among younger Yezidis, underscoring how collective trauma continues to shape contemporary identity formation and interethnic relations.

Second, a distinct Yezidi core identity has crystallized in response to competing nationalist ideologies, particularly Kurdish and Arab nationalism. In regions such as the Caucasus and Iraq, Yezidis developed a political identity discourse in opposition to these nationalist movements, consolidating Êzdîyatî as an autonomous ethno-religious framework.

Third, the socio-economic realities of modern life—particularly in Germany—have enabled greater independence from Kurdish political movements. Official recognition of Yezidis in Germany has facilitated direct dialogue between the Yezidi youth and German institutions. This engagement, along with the financial benefits of diaspora remittances, presents an opportunity to reconstruct their homeland and identity. Such developments promote integration into German society while distancing the community from Kurdish factions—such as PKK-affiliated groups—that face marginalization by German authorities.

These factors contribute to the ongoing redefinition and reinforcement of a distinct Yezidi core identity in the diaspora.

5.1 An overview of Yezidis' traditional concept of ethnicity

In terms of ethnic groups, ethnicity is based on a shared myth, an ideology of endogamy (Eriksen T.H., 1992), or practices of tradition and religion. In the case of the Yezidis, many scholars[140] share the view that the Yezidis are Kurds ethnically. This view is common among many Yezidis, too. However, a valuable portion of Yezidis considers themselves different from the Kurds.

"All Kurds were originally Yezidi before the arrival of Islam to the lands of Kurds, which subsequently led to the conversion of the Yezidis. We for sure share common ethnic and linguistic origins with Sunni Kurds. However, we must remain separate from each other in terms of religion. Some Kurds are supporting radical Islam strongly."[141]

The political developments of the past decade appear to have significantly intensified discussions surrounding ethnicity. The discourse advocating for ethnic division frequently manifests through the conflation of terms such as "radical Islam" and "Kurd" within the same context. There are diverse interpretations of ethnicity and identity. While some align themselves with Kurdish heritage and refer to themselves as "Yezidi-Kurds," others identify with Arab communities. Younger Yezidis in Germany often describe themselves as "German-Yezidis" or simply as "Germans," reflecting the influence of their sociocultural environments.

For traditional Yezidis, ethnicity is fundamentally defined by two interconnected elements: a shared cosmogonic myth and the principle of endogamy. According to their belief, the Yezidi

[140] Bruinessen (1994) for example

[141] A Yezidi scholar who was randomly involved in our conversation with a Yezidi intellectual has highlighted his opinion.

people constitute a distinct nation divinely created before the emergence of 72 other nations. This myth of unique origin, coupled with strict endogamous practices—socially codified rules governing marriage and kinship—serves as the primary marker of ethnic identity, with no other criteria holding comparable significance. Thus, traditional Yezidi ethnicity is constructed primarily from within through an emphasis on their purported exceptional origins, which they frame as an ethnoreligious community distinct from surrounding nations and peoples. Analogies are frequently drawn to Jewish identity, underscoring a parallel narrative of divinely ordained separateness. In this context, ethnicity is closely tied to social and cultural isolation, perceived as essential to preserving the community's uniqueness and safeguarding it from external influences. Such a perspective is only seen among older generations.

This conceptualization of ethnicity is historically rooted in the religious reforms attributed to the 12th-century Sufi figure Sheikh Adi. The synthesis of his teachings—particularly the establishment of the Adawiyya order—with pre-existing Yezidi beliefs gave rise to a distinct religious identity characterized by Sufi influences. For traditional Yezidis, this reformulated tradition, with its emphasis on spiritual and communal boundaries, remains the cornerstone of their ethnic and religious self-definition. There are perspectives that highlight the traditional foundations of Yezidi ethnicity, which diverge from modern interpretations due to their distinctive attributes and historical continuity. Understanding the concept of traditional ethnicity is essential for examining its significance within the contemporary Yezidi community. The hypothesis that Sheikh Adi reformulated Yezidi society and every member of the community in Germany is rethinking its identity. Today, nearly all Yezidis have concluded that the ethnogenesis of Yezidis can not be understood clearly only from the outcomes of the reforms done by Sheikh Adi and from the social developments of the 12th century. According to the latest debates on the origins of the Yezidis, many outsiders converted to Yezidism during Sheik Adi's reforms (Pirpari and Rzgoyan, 2014), and it is a need to focus on the ethnogenesis of Yezidis before Sheikh Adi comes to Lalish. Unlike contemporary approaches to ethnicity, the traditional Yezidi perspective draws upon unwritten sources, mystical interpretations, orally transmitted religious hymns, and mythological narratives. This deeply rooted framework, according to Artur Rodziewicz, shapes the unique identity of Yezidis that

is known as 'miletê min Ezîd, dinê min Şerfedin"[142] (Rodziewicz, 2018). This perspective represents an effort to articulate Yezidi's national, linguistic, and religious identity that has a connection with the mythological stories of the emergence of the Yezidis. The term milet[143] is not entirely synonymous with concepts of nationality or nation, highlighting the distinct sociocultural and historical nuances within Yezidi self-perception. Yezidis distinguish themselves from the broader narrative of humanity as descendants of Adam and Eve, which traditionally includes the formation of 72 millets (communities, groups, or somehow nations). Instead, Yezidis assert their lineage solely through Adam, specifically via his son Shahid bin Jarr, underscoring a unique aspect of Yezidi cosmology and identity (Spät, 2002: Rodziewicz, 2018).

Sheikh Adi's reforms are considered a phase in that the continuity of Yezidis` traditional ethnicity was cut and transformed into a mystical lifestyle. Such discussions are being held in ongoing seminars and symposiums in Germany. In one of the seminars, I encountered a critical perspective from an audience as follows:

—We Yezidis must stop practicing Muslim culture! Em serê xwe didin em serra xwe nadin (we accept being beheaded rather than giving our secret). Ezidi [Yezidis], En-el Hak [Anā al-Ḥaqq] and Alevisim comes from Yazdanism or Yarsanism. Some claim that Yezidis comes from Islam and Zoroastrianism. This is not true. Zoroastrians left Yezidis. They were Yezidis. Our true origin comes from Yazdanism.[144]

The twelfth century is widely regarded as a pivotal period in the transformation of Yezidi identity, giving rise to the hypothesis that certain Islamic remnants became embedded within Yezidi religious culture. Consequently, contemporary efforts among Yezidis in Germany to purify their faith practices from the mystical Sufi influences of Islam reflect an ongoing negotiation of religious authenticity.

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[142] 'My people/nation is Ezid, my belief/religion is Sherfedin.' The word millet is a word of Arabic origin that refers to the people, the religious group, or, in some cases, the nation (see Chyet, 2003; Braude, 2014; Ursinus, 1993).

[143] A significant portion of the young Yezidis I interviewed to understand the term millet/Millet as a national-religious concept to distinguish themselves from others. It is used for self-identifying.

[144] During the seminar, several audiences came up with such ideas of their origins without providing any sources for their claims.

Contrary to the arguments presented by Rodziewicz (2018) and Spät (2017), the consolidation of a distinct Yezidi ethnoreligious consciousness can be traced to the twelfth century, particularly through the reforms attributed to Sheikh Adi and the institutionalization of the Adawiyya order. This period—rather than later historical developments—established the foundational framework for Yezidi's self-definition as a community distinct from both Islamic and regional identities.

While Sufi influences historically shaped Yezidi religious practice, contemporary Yezidi intellectuals and community members increasingly seek to disentangle these elements to articulate a uniquely Yezidi identity. Scholars such as Arakelova (2010) argue that the Yezidi community, though emerging within the milieu of Sufi orders, integrated doctrines from the al-Adawiya tradition alongside Islamic motifs, with Adawiya forming the core of their early communal identity. The mythological narratives surrounding Sheikh Adi's reforms—often framed as protective measures for Yezidi survival—remain central to traditional conceptions of Yezidi ethnicity.

However, younger generations engage with this history selectively. When articulating their identity, they predominantly reference the era of Sheikh Adi, particularly emphasizing the endogamous practices attributed to him, which they correlate with Êzdîyatî (Yezidiness). This selective historiography reflects a broader intellectual movement among Yezidi scholars to dissociate Yezidism from Islamic Sufism by reclaiming pre-Islamic motifs and reframing Sufi influences as rooted in marginalized, non-Islamic figures like al-Hallaj—a Sufi mystic persecuted by orthodox Islam. Such efforts underscore an ideological purification project aimed at decoupling Yezidi identity from its historical Islamic intersections.

These developments coincide with a shift from traditional, mytho-religious conceptions of ethnicity toward a politicized ethno-religious identity. In dialogue with modern nationalist paradigms—particularly in reaction to Kurdish and Arab nationalism—Yezidis are redefining identity markers to assert distinction. This has led to a dual dynamic: the adoption of contemporary nationalist discourse to solidify a unique Yezidi identity alongside the negotiation of hybrid identifications among youth. The result is an emergent political Yezidi identity that simultaneously draws on historical narratives and reinterprets them through the lens of modern ethnopolitical mobilization. Moreover, the integration process of the Yezidi community in Germany encourages Yezidis to have their own distinctive understanding of identity. In this dimension, the ideas related to Yezidi ethnicity are supported fully by the

contemporary political discourses that lead to a discourse belonging to Yezidism. Below is a Yezidi intellectual highlighting his opinion:

"Some young Yezidis appear to oppose endogamy, questioning why they should not marry outside their community. However, such practices may threaten the preservation of Yezidi's identity. Historically, in Êzdîxan, there was no endogamy system among Yezidis during Sheik Adi's time. Abdulkadir Geylani, a Kurdish-Yezidi Sufi who later became a prominent figure in Islam, once asked Sheikh Adi: 'How will you protect Yezidis from the genocidal campaigns of the Turks, Arabs, and Persians?' In response, Sheikh Adi stated, 'I will establish a system that safeguards the entire Kurdish-Yezidi society.' He subsequently created a tribal system, often referred to as the caste system, which differs significantly from the caste system found in India. This system forms the foundation of Yezidi ethnicity and identity. Interestingly, a similar system is still practiced today in the United Kingdom, where the Royal Family maintains its traditions in a manner akin to the Yezidis. Just as the Royal Family protects its heritage, Yezidis must also uphold their system to ensure their survival. Jews, for instance, have maintained their identity through similar practices. Endogamy has played a crucial role in preserving Yezidism throughout history. While many Kurds remember Saladin [Salahuddin Ayyubi], who assimilated Kurds into Islam, few recall Sheikh Adi and his contributions to safeguarding Yezidi identity."

Here, we encounter a clear attempt at a reconstructive approach to the Yezidi identity. Examples from the royal family in the United Kingdom support Yezidis` system of social organization.

The intellectual presenting this interpretation introduces a new perception or conceptualization of Yezidi's identity. By connecting narratives traditionally known among the Yezidi people as sources of their knowledge with certain contemporary structures, they frame these ideas within a specific logical framework. For many young Yezidis, this perspective appears both logical and plausible. However, it is important to note that no concrete historical evidence exists to substantiate this information. The purported conversation between Sheikh Adi and Abdulkadir Geylani is more likely speculative, as no primary sources from the time of Sheikh Adi exist to verify such an exchange. In order to understand his perspective deeply, I provide the following question:

[What if Sunni Kurds want to go back to the Yezidi community?]

"Remember! Mir made mistakes after the ISIL attacks on our people. Accepting one into Yezidi society should not be linked to religion. Many women who escaped from ISIL tried to return to our community. I remember many Sunni Kurdish chief tribes went to Mir to be accepted as Yezidis after the genocide of 2014. But the Mir denied their request. We must accept Kurds who want to return to Yezidism. We need to create a new caste for them. They were Yezidis before Islam!"

I have encountered ideas concerning creating new castes among young Yezidis as well.

The notion of integrating Sunni Muslim Kurds into the Yezidi community as a new class stratum represents an entirely novel perspective, one that many Yezidis may perceive as a radical opinion. However, such approaches are likely to become increasingly common in the near future, as the Yezidi community is undergoing rapid and profound transformation.

Contrary to the narratives promoted by some Yezidi intellectuals, contemporary developments indicate a growing ethno-religious distinction between Yezidis and Kurds. The notion of a unified Kurdish-Yezidi identity increasingly appears as an ideological construct rather than a reflection of current sociohistorical realities. In recent decades, political ethno-religious identity has gained prominence among Yezidi communities across different regions, particularly following the 2003 Iraq War, which significantly altered Yezidi-Kurdish relations.

Regional differences further illustrate this divergence. For example, Yezidis in Sheikhan—under Kurdish political control since 1992—have demonstrated a stronger tendency to identify with Kurdishness. In contrast, those in Sinjar (previously under Ba'athist governance until 2003) have historically maintained a more distinct Yezidi identity, resisting Kurdish assimilation (Ayhan, 2022).

However, the most dramatic rupture occurred after the 2014 Islamic State (IS) genocide, in which Sunni Kurdish militias were frequently implicated as collaborators. This trauma has intensified anti-Kurdish sentiment among Yezidis, accelerating the politicization of Yezidi's identity as a means of asserting autonomy. Consequently, the once-porous boundaries between Yezidi and Kurdish identities have hardened, with Yezidis increasingly framing their ethnicity in opposition to Kurdishness—both as a survival strategy and as part of a broader ethnonationalist discourse. There is no doubt that the genocidal attacks of 2014 significantly amplified discourses surrounding a distinct Yezidi identity on the international stage (Tezcur, 2022, p. 91). Today, we are observing the active (re)construction of a unified ethnoreligious

Yezidi identity, as Yezidis from diverse regional backgrounds increasingly self-identify as a distinct ethnic group separate from Kurdish affiliations.

Crucially, among many Yezidis—both in Iraq and across the diaspora—the term "Kurd" has become synonymous with "Muslim" (Ayhan, 2022, as cited in Tezcur). This association has been reinforced by the involvement of Sunni Kurds in fundamentalist Islamist groups, further entrenching perceptions of Kurdishness as inseparable from Sunni Islam. Consequently, Yezidis remain deeply distrustful of Kurdish political structures, viewing them as potential extensions of the same systemic threats that have historically targeted their community.

The contemporary Yezidi conceptualization of ethnicity diverges significantly from conventional models observed in nationalized or semi-nationalized societies. While such societies typically construct nationhood around shared cultural heritage, collective destiny, and kinship ties—where the erosion of these bonds weakens national cohesion—Yezidi discourses on ethnicity are not predicated on blood relations or historical teleology. Instead, Yezidi identity formation emphasizes shared persecution, linguistic distinctiveness, and regulated religious praxis as its foundational pillars. Within this framework, ethnicity operates beyond purely political categorizations, prioritizing instead the cultivation of a collective sense of belonging.

This reconfiguration inevitably raises questions about the markers of Yezidi's ethno-religious identity. Language, for instance, is frequently invoked as a defining feature of "Yezidi identity," though its classification remains contested. While many Yezidis assert that their spoken language is Ezdîkî (or Yezdikî), purportedly distinct from Kurmanji Kurdish, linguistic analyses confirm that the vast majority speak a dialect of Kurmanji (Ali, 2019). This discrepancy underscores the symbolic function of language as a marker of ethnic identity despite its empirical classification within broader linguistic taxonomies. While many Yezidis assert the distinctiveness of Êzdîkî (or Yezdikî), comparative linguistic studies indicate that any variations between the Kurmanji spoken by Yezidis in Armenia, Georgia, Russia, and Syria and other Kurmanji dialects are regional phonological or lexical differences rather than evidence of a separate language (Godfrey, 2006)

This phenomenon reflects a broader pattern in which language is politicized to reinforce ethno-religious boundaries, even when linguistic divergence remains minimal. For Yezidis, the insistence on Êzdîkî as a unique language—rather than a dialect—serves to legitimize

their claims to a distinct identity, particularly in contexts where linguistic differentiation is leveraged to resist assimilation into Kurdish or other dominant ethnic categories.

In the contemporary world, we can't speak of a unity of Yezidis with regards to ethnic unity (the consensus is likely accepted that Yezidis are Kurds ethnically).[145] However, there is such a religious unity that does not in any sense create ethnic unity according to Kokaisl, Hejzlarova, and Kreisslova (2022).[146]

Today, the development of the Yezidis as a cohesive religious community with a clear sense of identity is believed[147] to have its roots in the twelfth-century Sufi order, al-Adawiya, which had a significant influence on the Islamization of the Kurdish mountains east of Mosul (Spät, 2017). In contemporary times, nearly all Yezidis agreed upon the hypothesis that Sheikh Adi, as a reformer of the Yezidi community, was the figure behind the current understanding of the Yezidi ethnicity and identity. Before the twelfth century, there was no consensus among Yezidis about their roots of ethnicity, which made them curious about the true knowledge beyond myths and orally transmitted stories of the Yezidi community. Some believe that Yezidis, in terms of religious identity, comes from the Sabean-Mandeas (Ali, 2019), while some believe that Yezidis are of Christian origins (Layard, 1867).

The attempts to rethink the roots of their traditional ethnicity start at this point. In many religious hymns, young Yezidis encounter the uniqueness of the Yezidi society during God's creation of the world. This issue brings the reimagining of ancient Yezidi roots among Yezidis in Germany. As I highlighted under the subchapter of the study, 1.2 Yezidi religion: forms of cult, above, Yezidis` perceptions of the traditional concept of identity are based on the myths of the creation of the world and then the creation of the Yezidi community separately from the other nations.

In the traditional framework of Yezidi identity—understood as an ethnoreligious construct—the religion itself and its foundational reformers have played a central role in shaping communal self-perception until the modern era. Historically, signifiers such as language, origin narratives, or externally imposed categorizations held little significance in defining Yezidi's identity. Instead, identity was articulated through a religious discourse that positioned Yezidis as a distinct faith community, setting them apart from the predominantly

[145] See Fucarro, 1999; van Bruinessen 1994
[146] https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/11/1071 Accessed: 18.10.2024
[147] There is currently a scholarly consensus that Sheikh Adi founded the Sufi Adawiya order in the twelfth century.

Sunni Muslim Kurds. This distinction was universally acknowledged, simplifying the expression of Yezidi's identity for both the community and external observers.

Within this traditional paradigm, the core markers of Yezidi ethnicity were narrowly defined and derived from mythological memory: a) the Yezidis as the people of Malak-Tawus (the Peacock Angel, the central divine figure in Yezidi cosmogony); b) the Yezidis as the followers of Sultan Êzî (a syncretic figure embodying divine authority); c) the Yezidis as members of Êzdîxan (the sacred Yezidi societal order).

These tripartite identity pillars left no need for additional markers; they were sufficient to delineate the boundaries of Yezidi belonging. The mythological narrative underpinning this identity traces a divine lineage—mediated through Adam—from God to the Angels and ultimately to Shahid bin Jarr, the mythic progenitor of the Yezidi people. This sacred genealogy reinforced the community's separateness and sanctified its ethnoreligious exclusivity. Then, after the creation of the Yezidi community by Shaid bin Jarr, Adam and Eve gave birth to the 72 nations.[148]

However, the traditional Yezidi conception of ethnicity—understood as an ethnoreligious identity rooted in sacred lineage—underwent a significant transformation under the influence of Sufi orders, particularly the Adawiyya tradition (Gökçen, 2010). This historical shift has led scholars such as Pirbari and Rzgoyan (2014) to argue that Yezidis constitute a distinct nation, a perspective increasingly embraced by "Yezidi ultra-nationalists." This “nationalist” discourse is epitomized in the slogan: "My nationality is Yezidi, my language is Êzdîkî, my religion is Şerfedîn."

Here, identity is explicitly framed in tripartite terms—national, linguistic, and religious—to assert autonomy from Kurdish identity, particularly in opposition to Muslim Kurds.

In Germany, "ultra-nationalist Yezidis" or “radical Yezidis,” according to a head of Yezidi center, further reinforce this distinction through newly constituted symbols, such as the flag of Êzdîxan and the insistence on Êzdîkî as a language independent of Kurdish. These markers function as deliberate political tools to counter assimilationist narratives promoted by Kurdish nationalist groups and solidify a diasporic Yezidi identity that aligns with modern notions of nationhood.

[148] See more details in the diagram provided by Artur (2018)

This phenomenon aligns with broader patterns observed among marginalized groups confronting existential threats—such as genocide or cultural erasure—who strategically reconfigure traditional identity markers into explicit political claims for recognition (Brubaker, 2004). For Yezidis, the mobilization of linguistic distinctiveness (Êzdîkî), symbolic representations (e.g., the Êzdîxan flag), and nationalist slogans reflect an adaptive response to diaspora pressures and the intensifying politicization of ethnoreligious boundaries.

Since the 2014 genocide, Yezidi intellectual circles have engaged in heated debates over the cultural origins of their ethnicity, questioning whether their roots lie within the religious milieu of the Middle East or alternative geographies such as Iran or India. Yezidi mythology is Central to these discussions, which is anchored in pre-Zoroastrian Western Iranian religious traditions while incorporating thematic influences from Judaism, Christianity, and dualistic systems like Gnosticism and Manichaeism. These mythological narratives, however, remain contested.

During a seminar on the historical ties between Sufism and Yezidism, I observed firsthand the lack of consensus among Yezidi intellectuals regarding their community's origins. While some emphasize autochthonous Mesopotamian roots, others—drawing on fragmentary oral traditions or symbolic gestures like the visit of a Yezidi Baba Sheikh to a Hindu community in the U.S.—speculate about Indian connections. Such divergent narratives reveal an ongoing process of identity re-articulation, wherein origin stories are actively reconstructed to serve contemporary needs for distinction and legitimacy.

Critically, these debates are not merely academic; they reflect a post-traumatic identity negotiation, wherein the trauma of 2014 has necessitated a reassertion of Yezidi's uniqueness in the face of historical erasure. The absence of a unified origin story, far from undermining Yezidi identity, paradoxically sustains its fluidity, allowing for adaptive reinvention in response to shifting geopolitical and diasporic realities.

—We have much more similarities with Indian people compared to Arabs. Look, there are many common practices we perform, like Hinduism, in India. Once, I watched a video of Bab Sheikh visiting Murugan in the U.S.; we must do such activities more. I think we share similarities with the Hindu community.[149]

Such debates have gained considerable significance among Yezidi intellectuals to eradicate paradoxes about ethnicity, identity, and belonging ideologies. There is a need for alternative

[149] A young Yezidi shared his opinion about the origins of Yezidis during a focused group interview.

sources of belonging beyond myths of creation. In this case, the contradictions of Sheikh Adi's area[150] are being cleared by many Yezidi intellectuals in seminars that take place in the Yezidi cultural houses in Germany. During a Seminar in Oldenburg, I observed that Yezidi intellectuals (coded A, B, and C, respectively) are engaged in a debate to clarify the roots of the contemporary Yezidi identity.

A—"When Sheikh Adi arrived in the region of Dasni [a well-known Yezidi tribe], its inhabitants were not yet Muslim. Instead, they adhered to a variety of religious traditions, including Zoroastrianism, Magis, and other indigenous beliefs. These diverse communities coexisted in the mountainous terrain, seeking sanctuary from the oppressive forces of Islam. Over time, Sheikh Adi, a significant Sufi figure, exerted a profound influence on them, introducing the path of spiritual purity known as mystic or Mutasavvıf.[151] Although recognized as a Mutassavif, Sheikh Adi did not conform to conventional Islamic practices. This distinction is noted in various Qewls. A number of contradictions marks the relationship between Sufism and its pre-Islamic antecedents. Some historical sources assert that Sheikh Shemseddin originated from Tabriz, while others propose that he was of Tatar descent. In certain Qewls, he is even referred to as 'Sheikh Tatari,' further highlighting the ambiguities surrounding his identity and legacy."

B— “We are sons of Sassanids. Our roots and origins are from Iran. And Sheikh Shemseddin was a Tatar."

C—Look! In our religion literature, we have many steps to take to reach true knowledge. Many say Sheikh Shims [Sheikh Shemseddin] is not Ezidi [Yezidi]. But in our current religion literature, he is an Ezidi Sheikh.

A—Our identity is shaped by Sufism, and our beliefs are sufi-based. But be careful; it is not Sufism inspired by mystical Islam. In our many Qewls, it is mentioned that Sheikh Adi is a God. That's not true. He can't be God. This is all about the philosophy of Sufism since al-Hallaj.

Such discussions and attempts to purify the roots of Yezidism are taking place among Yezidi intellectuals. Many Yezidi intellectuals, like the Yezidi youth, seek to eliminate the

[150] A period referred to as the "Era of the Saints" (Kurdish: "Zemanê Xasa"); see more details https://ezidi-heritage.com/articles/ezidi-caste-system-shex-pir-mirid/ Accessed: 03.05.2024

[151] Mutasavvif is a person deeply involved in Sufi's mystical practices, which focus on spiritual purification and personal experience of God. Basically, a mutassavif is known as a practitioner of Sufism (Tasawwuf). See more details: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism/History Accessed: 12.10.2024

contradictions in Yezidism. Some informants I had conversations with mentioned paradoxes in Yezidism. According to them, any topic that is discussed deeply brings contradictions.

The cultural similarities between them and the surrounding cultures bring a need to reapproach their origins and the traditional understanding of their ethnicity. Such attempts can even be categorized as attempts to revitalize Yezidism.

Such efforts to reproduce their origins are visible now among young Yezidis, too, and newly constituted ethnic claims are on the agenda of the Yezidi youth living in Germany. The newly established contacts with outside communities, groups, and the state apparatus of the federal states of Germany provide a new room for the young Yezidis to rethink their way of understanding ethnicity and overcome the challenges of complex and rich identities in their society.

The questions "Why are Yezidis in Germany seeking to reproduce ethnicity? and to what extent are young Yezidis in Germany embracing and defining their Yezidi identity?" are the main questions for understanding the attempts behind reproducing ethnicity.

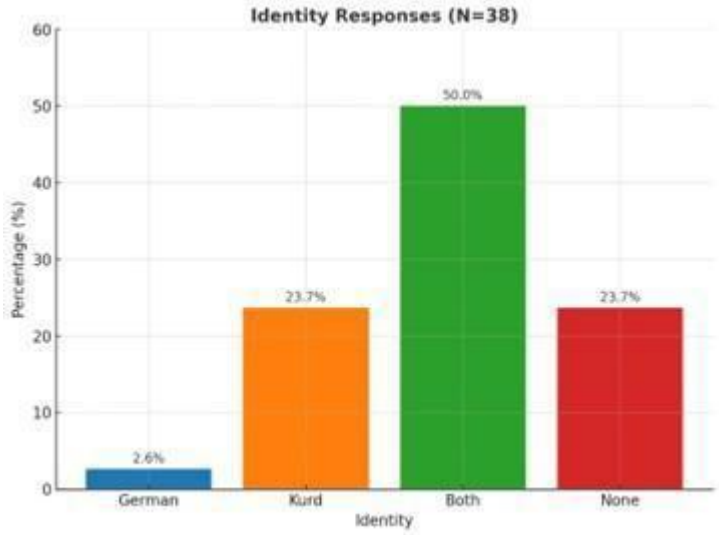
To be honest, I do not have a definitive answer to these questions. However, we could partially reach the answers by outlining the factors in the following subchapters that led the Yezidis into this process. I must say here briefly that the main attributes of ethnicity have to be redefined in the circumstances of their diaspora in Germany. The persecutions they experienced were all about their motifs of religion and their practices of religion and culture. Young Yezidis today grapple with pressing questions that often lack clear answers from their elders. Key among these are debates over whether Yezidism constitutes a confessional group or a distinct ethnicity, whether its origins lie in Sufism, and why persecution persists—even in diaspora contexts like Germany, where issues such as forced marriages and endogamy (Aldonani & Agojan, 2021) continue to marginalize the community. These unresolved inquiries reflect deeper tensions between tradition and modernity as younger generations seek coherent narratives about their identity amid evolving sociopolitical realities.

In summary, Yezidis have long faced competing pressures from Arab nationalists, who claim them as Arabs, and Kurdish movements, which assert their identity as Kurds. Even in Germany, they encounter discrimination and racism due to traditional practices like endogamy. Yet, Germany also represents a space of relative freedom—one where Yezidis no longer live under the immediate threat of persecution they endured in their homeland. Within this context, the community has embarked on a profound reexamination of its origins, actively

redefining traditional notions of ethnicity and reinforcing cultural distinctiveness to assert a unique Yezidi identity. The following sections highlight these efforts, particularly through the perspectives of young Yezidis as they navigate the ongoing reproduction of ethnicity within Germany's Yezidi community.

5.1.1 The current debates on Yezidis' identities among Yezidi youth and the multiple identifications produced

The attempts at self-discovery are based on the vigorous debates that persist regarding whether the Yezidis should be classified as Kurds or as a separate nation. Presently, there is no agreed statement among scholars and Yezidis on their collective self-identification. Some align Yezidis with the Kurds, adopting the label "Yezidi-Kurds," –which is also common among the second generation of the Yezidis in Germany– while others affiliate with identities such as "Arabs," "Iraqis," etc. A significant portion identifies as a distinct Yezidi nation (Pirbari & Rzgojan, 2014; Rodziewicz, 2017, 2018b), especially in Armenia, where Yezidis are officially recognized as a separate, non-Kurdish ethnos (Rodziewicz, 2018, pp. 67- 78). I must mention that an identity founded on persecution and collective trauma is being produced with the new narratives in their German diaspora. A significant portion of young Yezidis classify themselves as "Yezidi-Germans," while few young Yezidis I interviewed support Kurdishness, strongly referring to the battle of the Kurdish female 'guerillas' against ISIL or IS. I asked young Yezidis the following question in a survey: What do you define your own identity as? The results were interesting.



Graph 3. The graph reflects the diversity of identities among young Yezidis.

I encountered such expressions from young Yezidis during face-to-face interviews done before I provided German, Kurd, Both, and None options in the survey. Those who choose None most probably consider their identity only as Yezidi, Iraqis, Russians, etc. The percentage of Kurdishness is diminishing among young Yezidis, which is not surprising. The most interesting thing is that a big portion of the respondents (38 people) consider themselves both German and Kurd. Here, we encounter a shift in the definition of their identification.

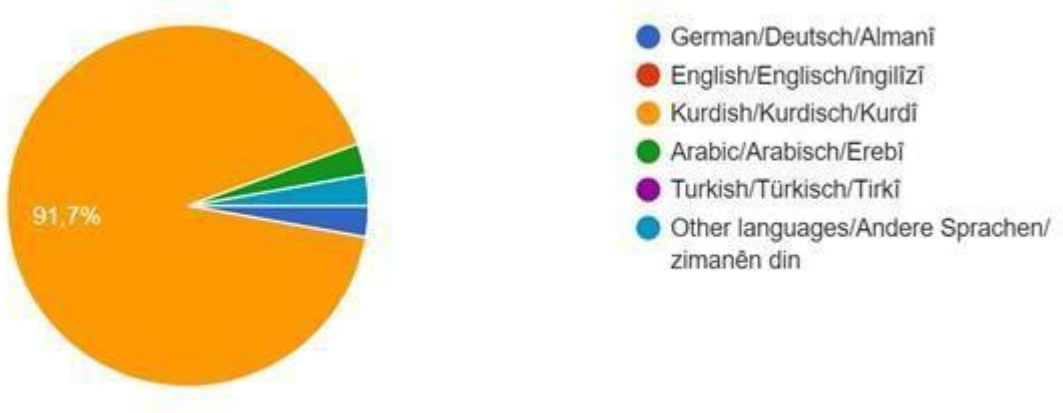
Besides the graph, there is a valuable amount of young Yezidis supporting a distinctive Yezidi identity. Especially young members of the Sinjari community displaced after the ISIL attacks in 2014 support ideas of a separate Yezidi ethnicity in Germany. However, these young individuals from Shingal are strongly against young Yezidis, who claim they are German-Yezidis.

[How do you explain yourself to outsiders in Germany?]

I3FC25: “I say I am German, and my origins are Kurdish. We already are a minority of Kurdish people. I don’t see that the Yezidi people will have their own separate nationality soon. It might make them more separated. For instance, I have been German since I was born and raised in Germany.”

I2MH26: “Honestly, when I am abroad, I call myself German. They call me German guy instead of calling me Kurdish guy.”

It can be argued that there are at least three distinct expressions of identity among young Yezidis. The most prevalent remains an association with Kurdish identity, as evidenced by their linguistic affiliation. When asked, “What is your mother tongue?” in surveys, over 90% of young Yezidis identified Kurdish as their primary language, though a small percentage also acknowledged German as their mother tongue. This suggests that the Kurdish language continues to serve as a central cultural marker for Yezidi's identity. At the same time, the emergence of German as an additional linguistic identifier reflects a new dimension in their discourse of self-identification, highlighting the evolving nature of identity within the Yezidi diaspora.



Pie chart 18

They often state, "We are Kurdish and follow Yezidism." The second version positions Yezidism as a nationality, with some asserting their language as "Ezdiki," thereby distinguishing themselves ethnolinguistically. The third version reflects a more transnational or assimilated identity, where individuals identify primarily with their national or civic affiliation—such as Iraqi or German—and then describe Yezidism as their religious belief. This third expression of identity fosters a sense of belonging to Yezidism as a distinct religious community, representing a newer and evolving form of self-identification.

I11MB22: "In my life, I have mostly been impacted by Yezidism. I am a Yezidi migrant in Germany. Germans call us outsiders. They are right. We are outsiders. I have a 15-year-old sister, and she calls herself German. Once, she told me that she was German. How can she say this? The German says you are not German at every moment of everyday life. I dont understand how my sister calls herself German. I think the younger Yezidis have a desire to integrate into German society. I myself have no such desire. Germans say that you are an

outsider, and how come I can say that I want to integrate into German society? I remember my 24-year-old brother telling me that he was German. But then his ideas changed when he grew up. When he was 15, he got a kind of crisis of identity."

The emergence of a discourse of a distinct "Yezidi identity" among Yezidi youth is gaining many more supporters daily. At the same time, German-Yezidis' ideas are common among young Yezidis, too. The current perceptions of the distinctive Yezidi identity are supported by the process of self-discovery and the formation of ethnic identity that began in the Caucasus during the 1930s and in Iraq in the 1960s, contributing to developing a shared collective memory within the Yezidi community. However, it was in the 2000s—particularly from 2005 and 2007 onwards, when Yezidis faced genocidal violence from neighboring groups—that the discourse of a distinct Yezidi identity began to crystallize. This discourse intensified in the wake of the traumatic events of 2014 and the subsequent years. From this time onwards, the terminology of modern political science and contemporary political discourse has been part of debates related to the distinct ethnic identity of the Yezidi that might lead to a distinct united Yezidi community. Bruineseen highlights, in general, four Yezidi communities in his work published in 1999 as follows: 'There are currently four Yezidi communities: in the Kurdish Mountains north of Aleppo, in the Sinjar Mountains on the Syrian-Iraqi border, in the Syehan region north of Mosul, and in the Southwestern Caucasus' (Bruinessen, 1999, Kürtlük Türklük Alevilik). It is necessary to mention another Yezidi community(s) settled in so-called 'Western countries' in Europe, in the United States, and partly in Australia, where the Yezidi community reproduces itself with a newly shaped character, which I call a mobilized transnational community in this study. The fifth Yezidi community is active in the formation of modern Yezidi identity. The fifth Yezidi community settled in Western countries is a mixture of the initial four Yezidi communities of Bruinessen's classification in his work. It is necessary to indicate that the fifth Yezidi community is characterized by its complex and multi-dimensional structure, bringing together individuals from diverse regions and varied political and economic backgrounds. This society exhibits a higher degree of interaction and engagement with the broader world than other Yezidi communities, enabling it to function as the most organized segment during periods of social crisis. Its distinguishing feature lies in its ideological pluralism, encompassing a wide array of social, political, and economic perspectives, fostering innovative currents of thought. Because a large portion of intellectually educated young Yezidis is part of this community, discussions surrounding ethnicity and ethnic identity are most pronounced within this community as its members navigate the

interplay between inherited traditional codes and the sociocultural frameworks of the countries they seek to integrate into. The Yezidi German society represents the most dynamic and active component among these. Naturally, the initial four Yezidi communities present many layers of identity, sharing many linguistic and ethnic characteristics with their neighboring peoples. The Sinjari Yezidi community, for instance, was historically surrounded by Arabs and Turkmen.

(Spät, 2017) and numerous social and cultural ties that Yezidis developed in Sinjar were based on their relationships with their neighboring peoples, which affected the discourses of Yezidis about their identity. Similarly, the Yezidis of the South Caucasus have been significantly shaped by the perspectives of their neighboring communities, particularly the Georgians and Armenians, in the construction of their ethnic identity. In fact, it was in the Caucasus that the assertion of Yezidism as a distinct ethnic group, separate from the Kurds, was first articulated by the Yezidis themselves. Among these communities, there is less willingness to stress Kurdishness. So such Yezidi communities encounter each other in their German diaspora, where political clashes occur. A Yezidi head of a Yezidi cultural center classified young Yezidis who moved from Sinjar to Germany as '*radical Yezidis*' since they insist on saying Yezidiness. The development of a distinct Yezidi ethnoreligious identity has been progressing rapidly in the Yezidi diaspora in Germany since 2014. The genocidal attacks of fundamental surrounding people with ISIL in the Yezidi community can be seen as a turning point in reproducing their own identity. A search for a safe home (Germany for now) and belonging are common behaviors among Yezidi youth that have caused a discourse of self-realization. The idea of endogamy, which has been a core of Yezidi identity since the 12th century, and the mythology of Yezidis as chosen people, which is a core of the traditional understanding of Yezidi ethnicity, are called into question by young Yezidis. This transformation is fueled by the creation of social media platforms, the influence of activists, and the growing involvement of young, educated Yezidis. The question *are Yezidis an independent nation?* Young Yezidis ask it about the contemporary concept of political science. Young Yezidis generally apply to the concept of "nation" with its Western usage, which is, according to Artur (2018), threatening the understanding of mystical Yezidi millet.

Yezidi self-identifications among young Yezidis in Germnay were rare until the last decade. Some seek the Yezidis' origins in Assyrian or Sumerian civilizations.

—We Yezidis are different from Kurds both in terms of beliefs and practices in life. I would rather choose Jews and Christian people to live together in Yezidi lands of origin

The idea that considers Yezidis as origin Kurds with a modern incarnation of Zoroastriansim[152] was developed by the Bedirxan brothers[153] (Ayhan, 2022, p. 169) which is still common among many Yezidis. However, the newly constituted ideas of Yezidiness appear among the Yezidi youth in Germany, criticizing such ideas of Yezidis as original Kurds. The emergence of Kurdish nationalism led to the need to assert Yezidi's political identity, which is complex and rich since it contains a range of identities within it (Ali, 2022:46 in Tezcur). The question, *why are Yezidis in Germany seeking to reproduce ethnicity?, i*s answered by Yezidis from many different perspectives. Below, two young Yezidis[154] in a focused group interview shared their opinion about the diversity of identifications in the Yezidi German diaspora as follows:

—The biggest challenge we Yezidis face is the infiltration of political issues within our community. We need to overcome such political issues to keep the Yezidi community safe. Muslims, for instance, have multiple identities – there are Arab Muslims, Kurdish Muslims, and others. But this is not the case for us, Yezidis. A Yezidi is simply a Yezidi with no variation. However, the problem that leads to different factions within Yezidism attempting to divide us is rooted in politics. In Germany, Yezidis from various political groups compete to establish separate cultural centers, further deepening these divisions. We had better stop deepening such divisions and rely on our issues.

—Yezidis need to engage in politics independently to represent their community better in Germany. There are two leading Yezidi umbrella organizations in Germany: Zentralrat and NavYek. Zentralrat accuses NavYek of being affiliated with the PKK, while NavYek links Zentralrat to the Barzanis. Unfortunately, neither organization effectively supports Yezidism or addresses its core issues. Both groups must shift their focus and prioritize the interests and well-being of the Yezidi community above political affiliations

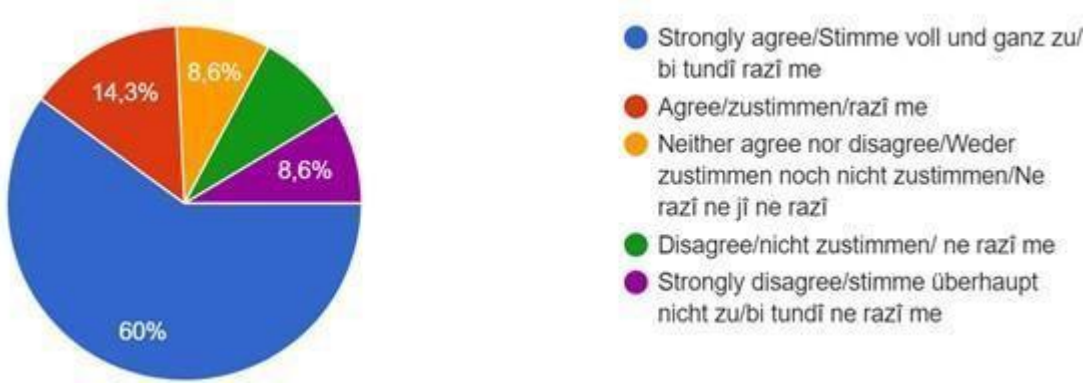
Two key events have shaped the young Yezidis' current perceptions. First, over the last two decades, Yezidis from various regions with distinct cultural practices have migrated to German society, leading to a multi-layered Yezidi community within Germany. In earlier periods, Yezidis were integrated into Kurdish movements, with their identities and social

[152] It is believed to be the ancestral religion of the Kurds.
[153] The known family constructed the basis of the modern Kurdish national identity in the 1930s.
[154] These young Yezidis did not accept my offer to be part of the research. Instead, they agreed to share their opinions on the research.

existence broadly defined by Kurdish political structures, resulting in a more homogenous group. However, this dynamic has shifted in recent years, as the Yezidi community in Germany has undergone significant transformation, sparking ideological debates. The second factor is the ongoing integration of Yezidis into German society. The integration process has prompted the young Yezidis to seek concrete evidence to support both their religious and political identity. In Germany, official recognition as a religious group requires the presence of religious temples, a holy book, and active religious practices. These criteria have triggered a process of reinterpretation and reconstruction of Yezidi beliefs and ethnic origins. The re-examination of these fundamental aspects has led to the development of new perspectives on Yezidism. Consequently, the evolving discourse on ethnicity significantly influences the integration process, acting as a key factor in how the Yezidi community is recognized and understood. The institutionalization of the multi-layered Yezidi community has accelerated, with different Yezidi groups establishing their own associations. These associations have brought Yezidis with differing political views into direct contact, contributing to the fragmentation of the community. Political differences have made the multi-layered society even more complex, with each group offering varying perspectives on Yezidi culture, identity, and ethnicity.

One can easily encounter a process of transformation from ethno-religiousness to ethnic identity. The markers of ethnic identity, along with the discourse of contemporary political science, are on the agenda of the Yezidis living in their German diaspora. Newly constituted markers are being added to the traditional markers. They are eager to constitute new identity markers to give alternatives to the traditional perspective based only on religion. Yezidism is only understood as a religion by elder Yezidis, while the young population adds the notion of ethnicity to the concept of Yezidism. Many of the young Yezidis who responded to the survey online still consider the Yezidi religion to be both a belief and an ethnic identity.

The statement [*Yezidism is both an ethnic identity and a religion*] in the survey is responded to as follows:



Pie chart 19

The identity formation of Yezidis among youth in Germany is shaped according to the terminology of modern Western political discourse(s). The emergence of the Yezidi intellectual leaders, transnational figures, and newly established NGOs assert the reproduction of Yezidi ethnicity among young Yezidis and partly intellectual Yezidis, aiming to consider Yezidis as a distinct community. Elements of the traditional Yezidi identity known as faith, endogamous marriage, language, and celebration of festivals (Kokaisl; Hejzlarova; Kreisslova, 2022)[155] are less part of perceptions of young Yezidis. New elements of the identity have been added to such traditional elements as the discourse of belonging to Yezidism, which is beyond belonging to the traditional social system of the Yezidi community via tribes. Being born into Yezidi society is not considered the only criterion for accepting one as a Yezidi.

—Many Kurdish friends came to me and asked if they could be accepted as Yezidis. I encountered a document registering newly arrived people as Yezidis in one of our cultural centers. Such a document will be enough to accept one as Yezidi into our society. I dont care about tribal connections.

[Do you mean anybody who desires to be Yezidi can be accepted as Yezidi?]

—to me, it should be possible. Look! We lost many people. We must widen our society here.

I gained the document from a Yezidi cultural center. The document is prepared under the title of Determination of membership in the Yezidi religious community. I have shared a part of

[155] https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/11/1071 Accessed: 10.11.2022

the document below. The document is a new version of accepting Yezidis into the Yezidi religious community in Germany. Before, people were accepted into the Yezidi community via tribal connections. In such documentation, I can say that Yezidis are classified as Yezidis, and the notion of Kurdishness is not visible in such documentation. This is a newly constituted marker of identity that performed in their German diaspora.



Feststellung der Zugehörigkeit zur yezidischen Religionsgemeinschaft

Von dem Vorstand des Yezidischen Forum e.V. beantragte:

Herr [redacted], geb. 29.01.1967 in Tiflis (Georgien),
Zurzeit wohnhaft in [redacted], 59192 Bergkamen,
ausgewiesen durch seine Aufenthaltsgestattung mit der Nr [redacted] ausgestellt
am 27.09.2019 durch den Kreis Unna

eine Bescheinigung über die Zugehörigkeit zur yezidischen Religionsgemeinschaft.

Nach eingehender Prüfung ergibt sich für den Unterzeichnenden, dass es sich bei dem Antragsteller um einen Angehörigen der yezidischen Religionsgemeinschaft handelt.

Figure 17. A part of the document of the determination of membership in the Yezidi religious community

Research with young Yezidis in Germany shows that young members of Yezidi society in Germany are reforming Yezidi identity through a counter-identification with, first of all, Islam, then with Muslim Kurds. Despite the existence of common cultural practices with Muslims and others in their lands of origin, new historical narratives of belonging and interaction between Yezidis and other groups (for example, Indian Hindus) are reconfiguring.

The role of Muslim Kurds during the Genocide is pushing Yezidis to rethink their ethnic identity. Belonging to only Yezidism is the most common idea that I encountered. Their identity came into question. In addition to Kurdishness and Yazidism, the younger generation also declares that they are German. The individual identification among young Yezidis in Germany is as follows: German, Yezidi, and Kurd, respectively.

Then, the question of what made young Yezidis feel less Kurdish will be answered in the following subchapter.

5.2 Anti-Kurdishness sentiments after the "genocide" of 2014

The anti-Kurdish sentiments within the Yezidi community stem from historical experiences of Genocide and displacement orchestrated by Kurdish tribal leaders, who, with the active backing of central governments, perpetrated massacres and acts of Genocide against the Yezidi population. Consequently, Yezidis characterize their relationship with the Kurds (notably Sunni Muslim Kurds) through the lens of recurring instances of Genocide. Most probably, due to such relationships, they describe their history as an endless succession of persecution (Collot, 2021). The recent Genocide has compelled the German Yezidi community to reevaluate their relationship with the Kurds and Kurdishness. However, it is worthy of note here that there is a significant interest and support amongst young Yezidis for Kurdish armed groups. Many young individuals express pride in the PKK's instrumental role in protecting the Yezidis during the war against ISIS in Sinjar, highlighting its contribution to their survival during the Genocide. The following informant, for instance, highlights his opinion as follows:

I2MH26: I, in general, describe myself as German-Yezidi. I am proud to say I am a member of the community fighting against the Islamic State in Syria. [In what situation do you talk about it?] When German friends ask who they are Yezidis, I simply give an example of Yezidi women fighters defeating ISIL. Then they get it! I know there are many Yezidi women fighting in such armed groups to protect Yezidis` rights.

Then one might ask, in what cases the anti-Kurdishness discourse appears among Yezidis in Germany?

Such discourse of anti-Kurdishnes has roots in the history of massacres held against Yezidis. Particularly in the year 2014, ISIL labeled the Yezidis as infidels (kuffār), polytheists (mushrīkin), and Satan worshippers, thus justifying their persecution as legitimate targets for mass murder, forced conversion, and enslavement under their extremist ideology (Spät, 2017). Prior to the ISIL attacks, many Yezidis in Germany could be characterized as possessing a Kurdish identity. However, this identity was often "exclusive."; while Yezidis identified as Kurds (mostly by PKK), their willingness to engage in social interactions with Muslim Kurds was frequently constrained.

In Europe, notably in Germnay, Kurdish society was intensively represented by several social and religious segments that were under PKK's (Kurdistan's Worker Party) ethical, moral, and political leadership from the 1980s onwards. Yezidi community was part of such a society. Several main sub-organizations were established under ERNK (Eniya Rizgariya Netewa

Kurdistan, The National Liberation Front of Kurdistan) organization, which was a creation of an extensive organizational network of PKK in 1985 to include all social and religious groups into the mass mobilization of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Europe, to "destroy all forms of tribal and sectarian fragmentations of Kurdish society to achieve national unity."[156] ERNK established several cultural organizations in 1993 to represent religious groups in Kurdish society and to include them in the nationalist mobilization of the society in Europe. The HÎK (Herekata Îslamîya Kurdistanê, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan), the KAB (Kurdistan Aleviler Birliği, the Union of Alevis of Kurdistan), the YÊK (Yekîtiya Êzîdîyan Kurdistan, the Union of Yezidis of Kurdistan) were such organizations established to transcend religious divisions in the nationalist movement (Gunes, 2012, pp. 101-123). So, a significant portion of Yezidis adopted the ideology of PKK in Germany due to its aim to destroy sectarian and tribal fragmentations in Kurdish society, which were the reasons behind the insulting of the Yezidis. However, from the latest persecutions onwards, many Yezidis started to keep their efforts for the sake of the Yezidi community instead of working in Kurdish political organizations. A Yezidi intellectual described the newly constituted relationship between Yezidis and PKK in Germany as follows:

—Nearly all Kurdish political organizations have been constituted by Yezidis for the sake of Kurdishness so far. Kurdish political streams in Germany became visible with the efforts of Yezidis. In my opinion, Yezidis made many mistakes focusing only on the political issues of Kurds. They did not take steps for the sake of their religion and community. However, today, they stop asking Kurdish questions and work for their own issues.

[What made them work for only Yezidis?]

—It is a long story. We, Yezidis, have recently become well-known in Germany. There are efforts to persuade Germans to recognize Yezidis officially in Germany. Then, it would be better for Yezidis to make contact with the international community to ask for humanitarian aid to rebuild the homeland.

[Could you please make it more straightforward? Why Yezidis are in need of acting away from Kurdish organizations? What happens when they work together?]

[156] Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê., & Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluş Cephesi. (1982). Kürdistan ulusal kurtuluş problemi ve çözüm yolu (1. baskı). Serxwebûn. https://id.oclc.org/worldcat/entity/E39QH7JmtjhbktRWbYCPWygrY6 Accessed: 23.05.2024

Kurdish political organizations are manipulating every event we organize. It is somehow linked to the PKK. What is more, we are not welcomed by Germans when we act with the members of Kurdish political parties.

[Why?]

Because members of such organizations are considered marginal and radical Kurdish activists by the German States, we want to act independently because the concept of Kurd has a reputation for political fanaticism.

From this quote, I can highlight the reasons behind the sentiments of the discourse of anti-Kurdishness, which come out from two reasons: the ongoing integration process of Yezidis and the role of Muslim Kurds in the genocidal attacks of ISIL. These two factors seem to cause the discourse of anti-Kurdishness. A similar approach has increasingly gained traction among young Yezidis. After that, Kurdishness no longer existed, and many young Yezidis shifted their identification to Yezidisness. Here are three examples of it:

I7FO27: In every event, Yezidis talks about politics. Even during ceremonies of death, during weddings, etc. Wherever Yezidis gather, their agenda is about political issues rather than the issues of our society. When we organized the marches to ask for humanitarian support from the international society for Yezidis suffering in their lands of origin, some Yezidis from Bakur[157] asked us to carry files of some Kurdish political parties. They make our efforts of seeking humanitarian aid into a political situation. I am against such things. We Yezidis must do things only for Yezidis for now. It is enough; we have done many things for Kurds in Germany so far. It is time to make efforts for only the sake of Yezidis.

I4FF21: Some Yezidi cultural centers ask us to join marches against Turkey. This is a political issue. How are they involved in such politics? When we do not attend such marches, we are accused of being incorrect Yezidis. We make efforts only for our traditions, not for political demands.

[157] The east and southeast of Turkey are called Bakur (the North part of Kurdish lands).

I3FC25: Some Yezidis are in fear of saying we are Yezidis. They say we are Iraqis, we are Russians, etc. I guess this is about political issues. I know many Yezidis call themselves Kurds. I myself say that I am Yezidi, nothing else. Everyone saw what Kurds did us in 2014.

Like these young informants, many Yezidis from Shingal I met in Germany reject the idea of being Kurds. This perspective is common, and it might be because of the realm of Shingal, as Spät mentions that the people of Sinjar, in general, have been less inclined to embrace a Kurdish identity. Historically, Sinjar was predominantly Yezidi, and the few Muslim Kurdish tribes in the region were reportedly not on amicable terms with the Yezidis (Spät, 2017).

Like young Yezidis share their opinion above, many Yezidi intellectuals have been in the process of breaking away from the Kurdish political mainstreams in Germany for the last two decades. A distinct Yezidi identity, for instance, separated from Kurdish streams, has already been done among Yezidis who moved to Germnay from their Caucasian diaspora. Yezidis in Armenia draw a strict line between themselves and the Muslim Kurds, insisting they have nothing in common (Nikolaus, Yuce,2019)[158] and claiming the language they speak is Ezdiki rather than Kurmanji, a dialect of Kurdish.

The German government supports us here. We Yezidis are on our path to being recognized as a distinct religious group in Germany. Here, we do not need the protection of Kurdish groups. The world knows us; our organizations are spread everywhere. As the head of the Yezidi center in Bielefed, I aim to keep our language and culture pure from politics. We do not want to be part of the complexities of Kurdish politics.

[What kind of complexities do you mean?]

"Look, our Mir is acting with KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq) while many act with PKK. These are Kurdish organizations, and we Yezidis better look forward to working for our community here in Germany."

According to Arakelova (2010), the separation of Yezidis from Kurdishness in terms of language had already happened as Yezidis transformed into a closed ethnoreligious group. This separation was completed centuries ago, and the Kurdish issue is not a point in the case of Yezidi self-identification, according to her. In the case of Caucasians, I agree with Arakelova's approach; however, separation from Kurdishness has happened in their German

[158] P. Nicolaus; S. Yuce (2019)

diaspora in the last decade. For the Yezidis in Germnay, language is frequently presented as the central argument supporting their alleged Kurdish affiliation. Nonetheless, language alone does not appear to constitute a decisive determinant of identity, a typical pattern among ethno-religious communities.

The majority of Yezidis in Germany, particularly those from the first and second generations, have not yet sought to completely dissociate themselves from Kurdish movements and ideologies. Instead, they strive to establish their independence while still navigating the influence of Kurdish movements. This approach is primarily shaped by the demands of the integration process that might bring the recognition of Yezidis as a religious group. I partly agree with such a quotation from Nicolous and Yuce that "...the push for independence from ethnic Kurds is hampered by the highly ambivalent but otherwise harmonious relationship that exists between Yezidis and Kurds. Because both groups are overwhelmingly from Turkey and, more importantly, both see themselves as victims of Turkish oppression, they have found some common ground to work together."[159] I have encountered ideas that classify the Yezidis as a distinct community from Kurdishness. However, a significant portion of young Yezidis raised in Germany and a significant amount of people who migrated to Germany lately still stress their Yezidisness with a strong connection with Kurdishness based on the activities of Kurdish armed groups. The key issue here is that the Yezidi community has become as politically mobilized as the Kurdish movements in Germany and now possesses self-governance capacity. That is, the anti-Kurdishness is not that strong yet, but the desire to be part of only the Yezidi community can be observed. The drive for self-sustainability, coupled with efforts to sustain and benefit from the dialogue established with German authorities, has prompted the Yezidis to pursue their own interests independently of the Kurdish movement. It is crucial to emphasize that the prioritization of the Yezidi community gained momentum following the 2014 genocide. In particular, from 2014 onwards, Yezidis have made an effort to purify some cultural features to overcome the question of Yezidi origins and ethnicity that may lead them to establish clear borders between themselves and Sunni Kurds in the near future.

In the post-genocidal period, contemporary manifestations of Yezidi identity are marked by two salient characteristics by Tezcur (2022) as follows: First, Yezidis have garnered unprecedented recognition and attention on the international stage. As victims of religious intolerance and persecution, the community emerged in the global spotlight following 2014.

[159] ibid

In particular, the plight of captive Yezidi women, subjected to severe forms of sexual violence, has significantly heightened the visibility of the Yezidi community in international areas. Second, the extensive displacement endured by the Yezidi community has contributed to the fragmented nature of Yezidi politics. The failure of Kurdish military forces of Iraqi Kurdistan to protect the Sinjar region from the Islamic State's assault in early August 2014 fostered widespread disillusionment and resentment within large segments of the Yezidi community. This event deepened the rift between Yezidis and Sunni Kurds, despite their shared linguistic ties (Tezcur, 2022, p. 78), which caused an anti-Kurdishness.

I1MH29: If we act together, Yezidis can make our voices audible. Kurds in Iraq try to speak instead of us in every situation. Even our Mir acts with politicians. That is unacceptable! We Yezidis are strong now. Remember, during the independence referendum, we Yezidis did not support Kurds. They betrayed us in 2014, and we took our revenge in 2017.

Here, the informant refers to the 2017 independence referendum of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.[160] During that period, a significant portion of Yezidis were reluctant to support the Kurdish independence referendum in Iraq, largely due to the perception that the Kurdish Peshmerga had betrayed them.

The most anti-Kurdishness discourse can be observed among the Yezidis of Shengal living in Germany. The emergence of the modern Kurdish with its leaders set out to constitute a national mythology linking Kurdishnnes to Zoroastrianism and the Yezidis as its modern survival. Such a perspective was aimed at the historical legitimacy of Kurdish identity. The idea of Yezidism as the original religion of Kurds prior to Islam brought debates among Yezidis, Arabs, and Sunni Kurds regarding their roots of origin. The Iraqi government, for instance, registered Yezidis as Arabs, descended from Umayyad, in official documents, while Kurdish leaders claim that Yezidis are the most original Kurds (Spät, 2018; Ali, 2019). But Yezidis from Shingal regularly call themselves miletê Ezidi (literally Yezidi nation), referring to a distinct ethno-religious group. For sure, prior to the ISIL attacks, a Kurdish identity could be attributed to many Yezidis in Germany, but Yezidis from Shengal have generally been less inclined to adopt a Kurdish identity, and this perspective is common among young Shinjari Yezidis in Germany. According to my observations and the data I gained, young Yezidis think

[160] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608752/EPRS_BRI(2017)608752_EN.pdf Accessed: 03.05.2024

about belonging to a national identity and emphasize their separate identities. In this case, Yezidi's loyalty to their tribes or religious leaders has turned into loyalty to Yezidiness.

I must say that the first hypothesis on the distinct Yezidi identity came out in Yezidis` Caucasian basin, which influences the Yezidis in Germany nowadays. The four Yezidi communities —stressed by Bruinessen above—in different regions and diasporas re-created their traditional social structures according to the conditions of settled lands. These Yezidi communities have influenced the ideas of young Yezidis in Germany. About Yezidis in Armenia and Georgia, there was an opportunity to continue their way of life because Yezidis settled in rural areas and villages. There were about 40 villages solely inhabited by Yezidis in Armenia (Maria Six-Hohenbaken, in Omarkhali 2021, 208). So, Yezidis in Caucasians re-constructed their identity according to Soviet concepts of ethnopolitics in order to keep the community safe in Caucasia from the oppressive politics of the Soviet Union during Stalin's rule. The Yezidis kept their traditional social structure as it was, with little change in the Caucasian diaspora. ,The change did not happen deeply since the social conditions providedprovided Yezidi with a cultural basin on which to live. They kept their national character (the language and religion) with fewer changes in the system of sovkhozy and kolkhozy (Yezidis lived more compactly). After getting cultural rights, Yezidis produced a rich archive of Yezidi culture in the Caucasian diaspora, which is now a rich basin for the other diasporas to get more knowledge of Yezidism that brought newly created aspirations for the young Yezidis living in Germany, leading to self-identification.

The upcoming Yezidi generations have no problem with the communication and integration policies of the countries they settled in the last decade, and this generation of Yezidi community is socialized well, attending to the system of the settled country like Germany. This phenomenon, naturally, brings newly created aspirations of the Yezidi identity. The Yezidi youth is copying the way of people who are non-Yezidi to gain a status close to such people. There is no knowledge of nostalgic feelings regarding Yezidi identity among this Yezidi youth. Life in the homeland and the characteristics of traditional Yezidi identities no longer make sense to these people. Kurdishness also doesn't make sense in the case of supporting only political streams. The young generation is now eager to actively engage in the reproducing ethnicity of the Yezidis and discourses of belonging in Germany. That is why the last aspirations of the Yezidi ethnonationalist identity appeared in their German diaspora since they were eager to be integrated into German society from the 2000s onwards.

Due to the Kurdish movement being highly politicized, and since German authorities consider Kurdish political movements as linked to terrorist activities, Yezidis try to reproduce new forms of belonging beyond Kurdishness. It seems that there is a need to eliminate hegemonic identifiers (Kurds, Arabs) in the new process of reproducing Yezidi's identity as an ethnic identity. Besides the opportunity for the Kurdish political movements to organize the Yezidi community, the Yezidis are able to have their own organizations and spaces. From 2014 onwards, German authorities accepted a portion of the Yezidi population as victims of the ISIL, and social contact between Yezidis and Germans gained momentum since that time. The diaspora circumstances allow Yezidis to find a voice for Yezidi activism and advocacy, too. The discourse of negative experiences with Muslims and Islam is everyday in the activities of these Yezidis who try to bring ethnic nationalism to the Yezidi society. Constitution, an identity in opposition to Islam, is used as a unifying factor by Yezidi activists, while elder Yezidis keep cultural preservation as a unifying factor of the Yezidi society in the diaspora. In this case, Kurdishness is no longer a notion that unifies young Yezidis. The way that young Yezidis navigate their ethnic affiliation is totally different from the way of the previous generation. Multiculturalism greatly influences Yezidi youth in terms of fostering a sense of belonging.

ISIL's Genocide against the Yezidis had a profound effect on their process of identity reformation and the discourse of anti-Kurdishness. This led to significant changes within Iraq and profoundly impacted the Yezidi diaspora in Germany. In her research (2017), Spät examined how this genocide attempt influenced identity. According to her, the attacks led to a transformation in Yezidi's identity, moving away from its Kurdish roots toward recognition as a separate ethno-nationalist group. She highlights that "memory of repeated persecutions by their Muslim neighbors resulted in a shifting Yezidi identity, ranging from identifying as Kurdish to considering themselves a distinct ethnic-nationalist group" (Spät 2017).

There appeared to be an increasing awareness that, within contemporary nationalist discourse, linguistic commonality served as a pivotal criterion for attributing a shared ethnic or even national identity. As a result, some individuals—particularly those opposed to Kurdish political factions—emphasized that they did not speak Kurdish but rather "Ezdiki." This term, used in Armenia to designate the "language of the Yezidis," aligns with the state's official stance, which asserts that Yezidis are not Kurds but rather a distinct ethnic group with their own language. The transformation of ethnic identity in the Yezidi community of Germany is,

therefore, political. Yezidis moved to Germany from Shanghai in 2014 and insisted on an exclusive Yezidi identity. They come with the idea that the Kurds are Muslims, and therefore, it is absurd to refer to Yezidis as Kurds. Religion, as a main notion, is still the basis of their communal identity.

I10MH22: I know some Yezidis mix identities. There are many versions of identities in our community. Some Yezidis, for instance, try to call Yezidism nationality. There is an identity crisis in our community. To be honest, I am not sure what to call myself. I was told we are Kurds by family members before. Now, many Yezidi friends call themselves Yezidis. I have Yezidi friends from Iraq, for instance. They call themselves Iraqi and Yezidis. They say we are Iraqi.

I10MH22: Kurdish neighbors helped ISIL commit Genocide against Yezidis in 2014, and even it is not the first time. Kurds did many genocides against Yezidis. We have been betrayed. No need to express Kurdishness. Since Sheikh Adi, we have endogamy, and it is clear evidence to say we are not Kurdish. We are only Yezidis.

I4FF21: Barzani[161] betrayed us. Kurds betrayed us. So, I understand people who call themselves only Yezidi. I call myself only Yezidi, too.

[Then what language does only Yezidis speak?]

I speak Kurmanji, but you know, there is a language called Ezdiki. I know Kurds were Ezidi before, so I respect Yezidis who call their language Ezdiki.

[Why did Yezidis become the subject of violence in 2014 when compared to other religious minorities? What are the reasons behind this violence?]

I6MO25: "To me, the primary reason is that we, the Yezidis, do not act as a unit. There is also racism among us. If you pay a visit to Duhok [A Kurdish city populated with Sunnni Kurds], you are not welcomed by people around."

[161] She refers to Masoud Barzani, the president of the Autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq from 2005 to 2017. Yezidis accuse the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of abandoning them to the mercy of ISIS in 2014. See more details: https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-55139789 Accessed: 8.12.2020

[Could you tell me more? What happens when you visit such cities?]

“I feel in fear; people are marking you saying something to each other. I tell my friends to call us Kurds instead of mentioning Yezidi.”

I8MB27: I think, at the moment, the reason behind the violence against Yezidis is Islam and its crisis. Racism is the most visible reason.

I2MH26: "I do not have a real reason to provide. Maybe it is because we are the right and the good religion on earth, like Buddhism. Our philosophy is great, telling us that everyone can be a good person. It is good to be Yezidi. Yezidis do not harm anyone, and our religion is quite peaceful. Maybe since we are a good part of the universe, we suffer from violence. They tried so often to kill us, but we are still here."

Being Kurdish is often connected to Islam among Yezidis. 'Yezidis recognize the term Kurd and Kurdish as referring to, and only to, the Muslim Kurds. The Yezidi in Sinjar still refers to the Kurdish as Muslim Kurds to define them as non-Yezidi' (Ali, 2019, pp. 1-15). In the present-day memories of the persecution, which is recognized as Genocide, some Kurdish tribal units and political streams are often remembered as perpetrators and allies of radical Islamic movements such as ISIL. This phenomenon brings newly constituted sentiments and discourses for the ongoing construction of the Yezidi ethnic identity in Germany. Such discourses arose about belonging, ethnicity, and identity among the Yezidis living in Armenia. Both the Armenia state and some Federal states of Germnay are eager to recognize the distinction between Kurdish and Yezidi identity. The Armenian state supports the ideas and discourses related to an autonomous Yezidi community and a separate ethno-religious Yezidi identity. Such discourses are closely connected with persecutions held by Kurds, naturally Muslim, in history, which is influenced by Yezidis` recent persecutions in Syria (in 2014) and Iraq (in 2007).

I6MO25: The ideas regarding the Ezdiki language appeared in 2014. Since Peshmerga left Yezidis in the hands of ISIL, Yezidis felt betrayed by the Kurdish troops. Of course, we are Kurds, and we speak the same language. But Muslim Kurds even dont accept us. This is racism.

I1MH29: Yezidis are constantly subjected to violence by Muslim Kurds. The main reason for this is their faith. For example, my uncle told us a story. One Day, he was on his way home with his ox when two Muslim Kurds intercepted him. The Muslim Kurds said we will kill you and take the ox for ourselves. As you can see, the Kurds do not leave us any living space.

I7FO27: "Here (Germany), we young people don't want to be part of racist discourses anymore. Many Yezidis still suffer from discrimination discourses. Many Germans say to them Auslander; it is a racist discourse. We young people feel we are part of German society. We must be much more Yezidi here beyond any political streams to be away from discourses of discrimination. To support our identity and to make it clear to Germans, we must do something new."

Despite the undeniable linguistic and cultural links between Yezidis and Kurds, the Yezidis have steadfastly resisted these external categorizations. Their resilience in maintaining their identity, even in the face of such pressures, has allowed them to develop a unique cultural distinctiveness, solidifying their claim to an independent ethno-religious identity.

The Yezidis perceive their religious, cultural, and historical identity as fundamentally distinct from the ethnonationalist groups and nations surrounding them.

Recently, the Yezidi community's desire to preserve and develop gained visibility and constituted cultural ties over the last two decades with Western societies (outsiders, according to them) and Kurdish political streams and movements. For example, most Yezidi activists who work for the Yezidi community in the US recently sought to establish strong relationships with the US, like the constituted cultural and political contacts with the US during the Iraqi war (2003-2011). And it might have been known that many Yezidis worked for the US army as interpreters during the US military occupation of Iraq (Sanders, 2019). Similarly, Yezidi activists in Germany aim to preserve and strengthen the cultural and political ties that were established with German society after the Yezidi genocide in 2014. However, in this situation, a crisis of identity appears.

and culture in diaspora settings led to a sense of Yezidi identity that was emphasized in Germany in opposition to historical affiliations claimed by Kurdish political movements, that is, Kurdish identity. An attempt at ethnic and racial claims appears among Yezidis in diasporas.

5.2.1 New potential Yezidi identity makers: belonging to Yezidism?

I have observed a trend of believing in belonging rather than religion amongst the Yezidi youth in Germany. What they believe are the roots of Yezidism and Yezidi culture. In contemporary times, apparently, there is a generational decline in religiosity, which is natural for successive generations of Euro-American countries, too, according to Day (2011). Day discusses in her study how young people locate their belief in belonging. In her exploration of belief and social identity, she investigates "what people really believe in" and suggests that many individuals prioritize "believing in belonging" (Day, 2011: 191). Such a trend can be observed among young Yezidis in Germany as well. Believing in belonging to the Yezidi community is a new trend rather than believing in Yezidism and its practices.

In recent years, Yezidi interactions within the diaspora have entered a new phase, leading to the revitalization of their economic, political, and social connections across borders. Young Yezidis who describe themselves as non-religious persons in such transnational lives prioritize their Yezidiness, believing in belonging to a particular culture like institutional Yezidism. Young Yezidis align themselves with institutional Yezidism in Germany, and their Yezidiness appears as a public and social act. That is Young Yezidis pass by active participation and attendance in traditional practices of both social structure and religion, keeping their Yezidiness in the context of constituted institutions and social spaces in German society. Many young Yezidis describe their identity as "culturally Yezidi," emphasizing the importance of Yezidism as a guiding philosophy or life attitude rather than a strictly religious framework. Naturally, there is a decrease in participation in collective rituals.

I9FF30: “I am a Yezidi. Before, I was told I was a Kurdish Yezidi, but after the things that happened to us in the homeland and after the IS attacks, I said I am a Yezidi. Nothing else.”

[How did you call you before?]

“In the past, Germans said you are Kurdish when I was talking about Yezidis. Now everyone knows us here. We have our temples and houses of Yezidis, and why not call myself Yezidi? So I only prefer saying I am Yezidi.”

[Do you visit such temples and houses of Yezidis? and what made you change your mind?]

“Even the Kurdish people separated us. The attacks of IS with Kurds made me change my mind.”

[What about visiting Yezidi facilities?] I saw some videos and pictures of temples on social media. Many Yezidis make videos and share their stories with the temple. [Do you remember the name of the temple? What does it look like?]

“Honestly, I only show such videos of Yezidis to my friends to let them know about Yezidis.”

In the case of the Yezidi identity, the Yezidis people's sense of tribal belonging has played key roles so far, and such a sense has been based on their social relations built in collective interactions that are shaped by transnational lives. New potential Yezidi identity makers appear among the young population in the context of belonging to Yezidi social identity instead of performing theological aspects. Newly appeared Yezidis` identity markers like a) the Yezidis are not Kurds, b) the Yezidis are the members of Ezdixan polarizes as part of diasporic transformation that brings secular and pluralistic character to the way young Yezidis treat their religious identity and individual identities. Though the Yezidi community in Germany has experienced a rise in religious visibility and practice among the younger population, this increase does not necessarily reflect a corresponding growth in piety or devotion. In practice, they demand tangible expressions of faith and identity; however, I have not observed these being actively integrated into their daily lives. Newly constituted identity markers are shaped by young without believing deeply in religion.

Then how do young non-religious Yezidi people bring themselves into Yezidi's identity? Is being a non-religious person possible in the Yezidi community? I am asking such questions since the performance of Yezidism as a diasporic religion has relocated to social belonging. Young Yezidis believe in belonging to Yezidism culturally rather than believing in the Yezidi religion and its social structure practices as theology. In this case, a newly formulated social identity might be constituted soon in a realm of anti-Kurdishnes, bringing out ideas of Yezidi identity.

A Yezidi in their cultural center continues as follows: “I am glad that the Yezidi houses exist. Our culture survived, thanks to them. Otherwise, it would have been wiped out."

So far, Yezidi has only been inherited by birth and, of course, by performing belief belongings. However, Young Yezidis have different perspectives on belonging to Yezidism. Belonging to Ezidixana is as follows: The Yezidi community adheres to three primary prescriptions: the prohibition of interfaith marriage, safeguarding the purity of the religion;

the prohibition of inter-caste marriages, ensuring the preservation of caste integrity; and strict adherence to the core precepts of the faith, which serve to uphold traditional practices. Violations of these rules are regarded as grave transgressions; any Yezidi who disregards even one of these principles is deemed an apostate and faces expulsion from the community (Arakelova, 2010). However, the young population describes Ezdixana as territories of Yezidis or lands of origin rather than referring to the social structure. Ezdixana as an identity marker (Arakelova,2010) turns into a part of the discourse of Yezidiness.

Belonging to Ezdixan, the esoteric community of the Yezidis, meaning the adobe of the Yezidi (Arakelova,2010), or Ezdixane, the Yezidi society organized into tribal structures(Omarkhali, 2021) particularly among the younger generation, there has been a marked sense of estrangement from their cultural identity. However, the traumatic shock resulting from the Yazidi genocide in Sinjar triggered a revitalization of their cultural vitality. This led to an unforeseen and remarkable resurgence in reasserting their cultural roots, with a renewed and intensified engagement with Yazidi religious teachings and identity — especially among the younger demographic.

I4FF21: I" am a Yezidi; this is my identity. Here in Germany, people are Christian, and I call myself Yezidi."

[Some are German, but they are Christian, too. How do you consider yourself?]

"My identity is Yezidi, nothing more!"

I1MH29: "Many Sunni Kurds have no idea about their origins. They claim that Mecca is much more holy than the lands they live on. For Yezidis, our lands are much more holy. We Yezidis better support or land Ezdixan and our language Ezdiki. They have their own version of Islam, which is strange for me."

I4FF21: "My identity is written as Yezidi, like Germans. They are Christians and Germans. I am myself a Yezidi. Nobody cares about us and our religion. Everyone around us betrayed us. It is time to stand as Yezidi and to take our rights back from Muslim Kurds, too."

Yezidis in Germany are about to be able to determine their own identity and belonging. Various sources are nurturing this approach.

First of all, the sociopolitical opportunity structure of the federal states of Germany allows Yezidis to rethinkrethink their position in society. The issue of Yezidis' recognition in Germany depends on their relationship with Kurdish political structures.

Secondly, Yezidi's young generation is well integrated into German society, and a kind of assimilation is visible. To prevent such assimilation, alternatives to belonging or rethinking one's sense of belonging are needed.

Thirdly, Kurdish political movements and their institutions connected to the PKK have not been welcomed by German authorities since the 1990s due to blasted demonstrations that caused the killing of Germans. A large portion of the heads of the Yezidi cultural houses are against the demands of members of such political movements. Members of such political movements condemn Yezidis for not participating in demonstrations for the freedom of political figures and leaders of PKK.

"We are called to be part of a demonstration against Turkey and Erdogan. We don't see anything helpful for Yezidis in such demonstrations. Why should we criticize Turkey while we are living in Germany? Many Yezidis who get involved in such demonstrations are in fear of visiting Turkey and their hometowns."

Yezidis were, and are still, part of such institutions of political movements, and currently, they fear being treated as members of such political movements by German authorities.

I3FC25: “The genocide stuff that happened in the homeland made me rethink why we suffer that much. It is terrible to sit and watch what is happening on social media.”

I8MB27: “I was telling myself I was first Yezidi and then Kurdish. Now I think saying I am Yezidi is much better. Yezidism is my priority when I speak of identity.”

[why?]

“We are known by everyone here. When I say Yezidi, they think about Yezidism and try to learn more. When I say Kurdish with Yezidiness, they know things about Kurds rather than Yezidis.”

[How can one outside of the community be Yezidi?]

“That is not possible for now.”

[Do you want to change it?]

“I do not know; that is not the point for me. Our priority is helping the community survive and find a safe place to live. If people convert to Yezidism, it might destroy our community.

Many Kurds try to be accepted back to Yezidism. I guess we must find a solution to this issue."

Belonging to a particular tribe (tribal confederation or tribe was serving safety for every individual) does not play a significant role in an individual's sense of identity anymore. So, in this case, erosion is the primary basis for the social structure of the Yezidi society. The history of clan, tribe, or tribal confederation doesn't make sense, while the history of the Yezidi religion and its connection with ancient times is much more important.

I2MH26: "I got married to a German girl. I am Yezidi, but many Yezidis no longer accept me as Yezidi. This is very sad; they still adopt the way of thinking of a tribe. We live in a modern life, and getting married to a German should not be treated as such strictly."

Yezidis in their German diaspora are in a situation of religious, cultural, and ethnic self-identification. Any innocent question, "Is Yezidism part of Sunni Sufism?" for example, might pose a major issue of self-identification. The young Yezidis of a modern turn of mind find some legends and stories of their roots odd. Due to the lack of a proper public memory culture among the young generation, new sentiments for belonging to Yezidism are constituted easily and quickly. Young Yezidis and partly Yezidi intellectuals in Germany are far away from the influence of political developments in their origin countries. The realm of German political development is much more important for young Yezidis.

The participation of young Yezidis appears primarily as a performance of religious identity and belonging rather than as an act of worship in the traditional sense. As a result, belief in Yezidism has shifted towards a belief in belonging to the Yezidi community. Rituals have transformed into social acts of identification, fostering a sense of collective identity and serving as performances of belonging rather than expressions of theological faith. In this case, young Yezidis are searching for stories of their origin. Notably, Yezidi intellectuals' efforts to contact Hindus in diasporas provide young Yezidis an alternative way of searching for their origins.

Yezidis and Hindus are making efforts to have closer relationships. Such efforts were raised as a result of oppression coming from surrounding peoples such as Muslim Kurds and Arabs. Today, Yezidis, notably Yezidis settled in the USA diaspora in Phoenix, Arizona, reproduce the story of their origins. As a result of being a transnational community, Yezidis in Germany too rearrange their relations with Arabs and Muslim Kurds. Contrary to popular perceptions, the Yezidi culture exhibits profound affinities with Hinduism, more so than with any other

religious traditions in its geographic vicinity. It is fascinating to consider how two distinct cultures, separated by vast geographic distances, share remarkable commonalities in their religious doctrines and practices. Their culture shares remarkable similarities with Hindu culture, making them rethink the story of their origins.

The cultural parallels between the Yezidi and Hindu traditions are both intriguing and profound.

One of the most discernible cultural resemblances is manifest in the architecture of the Yezidi temple shrines, particularly the Lalish shrine, regarded as one of the most sacred sites in Yezidi religious practice. The architectural and artistic elements of the Lalish shrine exhibit distinct influences from Hindu iconography, including wall murals and depictions reminiscent of Hindu religious art. In terms of divine symbolism, the Hindu peacock deity Kartikeya, son of Shiva, parallels the Yezidi principal deity Tawsi Melek, often depicted as the peacock angel or king. Both deities are associated with peace and humanity and share traits of mischief and benevolence. Their shared association with the peacock as a symbol of divinity strengthens the connection between the two religious traditions. Historically, significant correspondences between the central deities in both traditions can be observed. In Hinduism, the god Shiva creates his son Kartikeya through his divine energy. Similarly, the Yezidi deity Tawsi Melek is said to be born from the supreme god, created from a source of divine light. Both legends exhibit striking parallels, with the peacock serving as a unifying symbol of divine creation in both religious narratives. Moreover, both the Hindu and Yezidi faiths adhere to the concept of life after death, including beliefs in reincarnation and the transmigration of souls. While Hindus subscribe to the notion of lunar jam (rebirth), the Yezidis hold similar beliefs in the transmigration of souls, further reinforcing the shared metaphysical framework between the two cultures.[162]

162 https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/desires-of-a-modern-indian/the-similarities-between-hindus-and-yezidi-culture/ Accessed: 23.10.2021



Figure 18. Spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar visited Baba Sheikh in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (in white on the right side) with Baba Sheikh (in white on the left), the spiritual leader of the Yezidis at Lalish. (Manjula Narayan/HT Photo). https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/yezidis-wait-for-help-in-fight-against-is-ravi-shankar-to-the-rescue/story-wZmQhpvoU4I661GvLiAByK.html Accessed: 10.06.2023



Figure 19. Yezidi Baba Sheikh at Washington DC Murugan Temple in 2014. Photo by Patrick Harrigan.
https://www.worldhindunews.com/yezidis-and-hindus-make-common-cause-under-peacock-angel-yezidi-baba-sheikh-at-washington-dc-murugan-temple%E2%80%8B/ Accessed: 16.05.2023

No doubt, YezidisYezidis'religion, both in terms of practice and content, has encountered many challenges and changes in diaspora settings. The Yezidi community in the lands of origin is bonded to its special environment, and every individual lives Yezidism in full. Let's say a reasonable Yezidi" is supposed to be born into an actively performed religion and into its special environment to be able to be actively involved in religious practice and action. However, in the generated culture in Germany by the young population, the way of being accepted as Yezidis coming from elsewhere: belonging to a generated social space where there is nearly no religious practice, actively practiced social norms, folk genres, and narratives with the theme of pain and loss. In this social space, Yezidism turns into a "cultural phenomenon" that must remain a notion of making contact with each other and as part of an individualistic identity. The belief, in terms of the young population, is not in the center of their life anymore. From my observations, even agnostics or atheist young members of the community still call themselves Yezidis. Yezidism is more often touted as a manifestation of belonging by many Young Yezidis. They cannot be part of cultural persistence or safeguard their traditional customs and traditions in the conditions of the diaspora in Germany. The spiritual space is an imagined space alive in the minds and hearts of the Yezidis who live in diasporas. For now, they are to have their own religious buildings, which are dedicated to the early religious chief of their community and are the main places of religious practices and ceremonies.

To summarize Chapter 5, I highlight here that the concept of Yezidi identity is undergoing reinterpretation that moves beyond traditional frameworks, increasingly incorporating elements of Western civilization as a reference point. There is a growing need to establish new foundations for identity that extend beyond the myths and oral traditions that have historically formed the basis of classical Yezidi identity. While Yezidis continue to embrace their Kurdish heritage, there is also a visible effort to assert their distinct Yezidi identity more prominently. My observations within the German Yezidi diaspora reveal frequent attempts to present empirical evidence of their identity while maintaining a position outside political discourse.

Conclusion

This study examines the evolving social construction of religion, culture, and ethnicity within the Yezidi community in Germany, focusing on the younger generation's perspectives regarding modernity's influence on traditional lifestyles. In all its aspects, the Yezidi community in Germany benefits from democratic entitlements, notably religious freedom, while simultaneously developing transnational organizational networks. To ensure socio-cultural continuity within German society and maintain relationships with the international community to secure homeland stability, the community must rearticulate its traditional social structures—reinventing kinship and communal ties—while adapting ritualized religious practices to diasporic conditions.

Traditional Yazidism has had to undergo various changes to adapt and survive in the diaspora. It seems essential that traditional practices, such as social relations and religious practices, acquire an institutional dimension. The younger generation of Yazidis is growing up in institutional structures. In their diaspora conditions, they want to institutionalize religious traditions and practices, social norms, and even social relations.

This transformation unfolds within the diaspora's intersecting social, political, and spatial dimensions, where secular modernity and globalized discourses increasingly shape everyday existence. Thus, this thesis explores the reorientation of Yezidism in the German diaspora, analyzing how young Yezidis live, ritualize, and practice their faith within diasporic spaces. By doing so, it seeks to understand the broader processes of transformation shaping a religion in flux. The study reveals that the context of religious freedom has significantly altered ritualized Yezidi culture, challenging historically established social structures. In response to these challenges, Yezidi traditions have been adapted, reinterpreted, and reoriented in diaspora settings. Consequently, Yezidi religious practices and ritual culture increasingly take on institutionalized forms.

The primary objective is to analyze young Yezidis'Yezidis' perspectives and lived experiences growing up in the diaspora, assessing socio-cultural transformations over the past two decades. Employing ethnographic methods—including direct observation, community

engagement, and interdisciplinary synthesis of research findings—the study identifies two key developments central to discourses on change, reform, and the reproduction of Yezidi cultural and social structures.

The first significant development is mass displacement resulting from protracted political and economic instability in Yezidi's homelands (primarily Iraq and Syria) since the early 2000s. In 2014, for instance, 200.000 Yezidis were displaced from their lands.[163]

The rise of sectarian violence and fundamentalist Islamic groups culminated in the 2014 Yezidi genocide—a pivotal event that not only caused mass dispersion but also accelerated social and cultural transformation. Consequently, young and educated Yezidis, many already adapted to diaspora conditions, mobilized transnational networks to seek international assistance against existential threats to their community. This global engagement has facilitated shifts in identity formation, community organization, and cultural adaptation among displaced Yezidis. The intensified mobilization of Yezidi associational networks in Germany, alongside sustained linkages with homeland counterparts, demonstrates the community's-community's embeddedness in transnational social fields. The trend of the newly established cultural houses, institutions, and NGOs is related to this mobilization. These organizations mobilize financial and logistical resources for multilayered political advocacy, exemplified by the German Bundestag's official recognition of the Yezidi genocide in 2023—a direct result of Yezidi association lobbying. Such transnational activism, fueled by affective homeland attachments and diasporic political subjectivities, manifests as collective identity (re)construction, public visibility, and institutional recognition, reinforcing cross-border solidarity.

The second significant development is the emergence of a mobilization of Yezidi intellectuals of the Yezidi community in diaspora spaces. The post-displacement transformation led to a movement of advocacy of the Yezidi community through interactions with international institutions, integration policies, and migration governance structures. In Germany, these dynamics have prompted profound socio-cultural negotiations within the diaspora. As a result, the traditionally closed Yezidi community has become more open to German society.

These two main developments cause internal debates concerning social norms, traditional Yezidi social structures, and the future of the young Yezidi population in Germany. The

[163] https://www.yazda.org/yazidi-genocide Accessed: 13.08.2024

debates occur between generations. While newly arrived Yezidis often maintain traditional structures and values, longer-established diaspora members exhibit varying degrees of cultural adaptation and modernization. This divergence generates friction between different diaspora cohorts regarding socio-cultural expectations. However, such clashes do not prevent Yezidis's social and political mobilization. The interplay between internal political divisions and external integration pressures has necessitated structural reforms and cultural negotiations, highlighting complex dynamics between displacement, transnationalism, and identity reformation.

These developments have also spurred diversification and institutional expansion of Germany's Yezidi diaspora beyond traditional cultural center frameworks. Research findings confirm that these changes have significantly reshaped the community's-community's organizational and cultural landscape in Germany. Moreover, the study explores four critical dimensions: (a) factors enabling the establishment of an organized Yezidi diaspora in Germany; (b) diasporic visibility through spatial construction, material culture, and societal networks as identity markers; (c) intergenerational negotiations of religion, culture, and identity in secular modernity; and (d) future sociopolitical scenarios for young Yezidis regarding community dynamics in Germany. However, the research focuses on young Yezidis to illuminate the scope of social and political transformations within the diaspora as they demonstrate greater engagement with German society. As key agents of change from the perspective of "communicative action" (Habermas, 1981), the younger generation actively shapes ongoing cultural transformations, significantly influencing emerging social structures and identity formations. Their perspectives and aspirations prove essential for understanding the community's-community's future trajectory, making their demands crucial for assessing socio-cultural change and reform. From this aspect, the study addresses several fundamental questions: Why does cultural and religious reproduction remain central to Germany's Yezidi diaspora? How do young Yezidis perceive potential changes to their religion, culture, and ethnic identity? What drives young Yezidis'Yezidis' critical reassessment of current societal structures?

As the first comprehensive examination of contemporary Yezidi diaspora experiences in Germany, this study additionally employs a robust analytical framework to elucidate complex adaptation dynamics for future research. The concluding section synthesizes key findings, outlines implications for Yezidi society's future in Germany, and highlights contributions to

the broader academic literature on Yezidi communities. Furthermore, it identifies underexplored aspects of Germany's Yezidi diaspora (for example, the scale of institutions for teaching Yezidism under academic structures of universities in Germany), suggesting promising avenues for future research while acknowledging potential limitations in Yezidi diaspora studies.

The key research findings

The research findings focus on how the younger generation of the Yezidi diaspora in Germany engages with their faith's religious and social practices. Specifically, the study examines the extent to which social norms shape their lives and the traditions and practices that pose challenges in a contemporary context. I investigated how traditional social structures are maintained or reinterpreted, which norms are rejected or adopted, and how intergenerational social relationships evolve.

This exploration was conducted within the diaspora space to examine reaffirmation, transformation, and reproduction processes concerning religion, culture, and ethnicity.

One of the most significant findings is that while the intergenerational communication gap among Yezidis has widened considerably, the community has become acutely aware of this divide following the political upheavals of 2014. This realization has heightened the visibility and recognition of Yezidis in Germany—a crucial development for securing legal protections, humanitarian aid, and international support.

Unlike other religious groups in diaspora settings—where secular modernity often accelerates decline (Asad, 2003; Roy, 2010) due to the absence of clergy, diminished sacred spaces, and the erosion of ritual languages—the Yezidi experience has instead triggered political self-realization and revitalization of religious texts. Two key factors have driven this accelerated transformation: a) the near-total communal destruction narrowly avoided in 2014; b) complete displacement from their homeland (beginning with the Iraq War and culminating in 2014), which abruptly severed ties to their roots.

Though these events were profoundly traumatic, they yielded unexpected positive consequences, most notably the international recognition of the Yezidi community and the 2014 genocide. As visibility grew, so did the pace of change, fostering dynamic intergroup interactions within the transnational Yezidi diaspora. New discourses and ideas emerged directly from these conditions, distinguishing the Yezidi diaspora from the Kurdish diaspora—particularly in terms of motivations for institutionalization and organizational development.

Discussions on Yezidi ethnic identity further reveal tensions between Kurdish identity and Sunni Islamic affiliation, presenting an apparent contradiction. Thus, the research findings can be structured into two main sections: The first three chapters present key insights, the most notable being identifying diaspora institutions within an ethno-religious community. Table 2 demonstrates that at least 23 Yezidi institutions and organizations have emerged since 2014, underscoring a structured and evolving diaspora network. This institutionalization marks one of the study's most significant contributions, revealing how Yezidis in Germany has undergone rapid organizational development in the past decade.

Another key finding of this study is the growing distinction between the Yezidi diaspora and the broader Kurdish diaspora, which has led to the emergence of unique scenarios of "Yezidiness." The research reveals that Yezidis are increasingly forging an independent diaspora trajectory, distinct from assimilation into Kurdish political movements. This shift is partly driven by their integration into German society, which has motivated the Yezidi community to develop its own institutional and cultural frameworks independent of Kurdish diaspora political structures.

This distinction has also fueled debates around ethnic identity and historical origins, now central to Yezidi diaspora discourse. These discussions reflect a broader renegotiation of collective identity in transnational contexts. As noted earlier, ethnicity operates as a dynamic process shaped by the interconnected realities of modern societies (Fisher, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Wimmer, 2013)—a framework that aligns closely with the Yezidi experience, as evidenced by this study's findings.

Unlike Kreyenbroek's (2009) work, this study pioneers an examination of Yezidi youth in the German diaspora, offering the first systematic analysis of this demographic's perceptions. It

delineates the group's defining characteristics while evaluating their potential role as change agents within the community.

The study employs visual data representations, including pie charts, to illuminate key findings regarding young Yezidis'Yezidis' sources of religious knowledge, language preferences, and tendencies toward communal versus individualistic lifestyles. These visual aids address core research questions: What constitutes Yezidi youth identity? How do they distinguish themselves from other youth groups in Germany? Moreover, what broader insights emerge from analyzing this population?

In seeking answers, the study uncovers critical paradoxes shaping the Yezidi community in Germany. Notably, I observed contradictions among the highly educated, reformist youth cohort: while they exhibit growing individualism and resistance to traditional social pressures, they simultaneously prioritize family cohesion, often opting to reside with relatives—pie Charts 1 and 2 further reveal linguistic paradoxes, underscoring tensions between heritage preservation and adaptation.

These findings reflect the complex interplay of modernization, cultural retention, and intergenerational negotiation within the Yezidi diaspora—a dynamic that challenges linear assimilation narratives and highlights the community's unique trajectory.

Another significant finding is that younger generations exhibit higher levels of education and tend to adopt a more rational, less politically polarized approach. Framed within Johanna Wyn and Rob White's (2015) conceptualization of youth as a social relation, Yezidi youth possess the potential to bridge political divisions and reduce factionalism within their community.

Furthermore, this educated and specialized segment strengthens the transnational nature of the Yezidi diaspora by actively engaging with global Yezidi communities. However, older generations perceive this group as a potential risk to cultural continuity. Their weaker ties to traditional values—including religious knowledge and social systems—raise concerns about

preserving Yezidi's heritage. This tension between modernization and tradition highlights the challenge of maintaining cultural cohesion in diaspora contexts.
Notably, the younger generation rejects many norms foundational to traditional Yezidi society, such as arranged marriage, religiously mandated practices, dowry systems, blood feuds, and honor killings. They argue for the abolition of such customs. Additionally, tribal ties and class-based social boundaries hold little significance for them. Instead, they prioritize individual rights and legal frameworks as the basis for organizing their lives.

The diaspora experience has significantly contributed to Yezidism's institutionalization, organization, and spatialization in Germany as the community strives for continuity. Among younger generations, Yezidism has transformed from a purely religious practice into a performance of cultural identity—a reinvention of Yezidi heritage as a cultural community.

Research findings reveal a decline in traditional religious observance among Yezidi youth, who increasingly adopt Yezidism as a cultural marker rather than a faith-based practice. Consequently, conventional methods of religious learning and practice have been largely abandoned. While this shift has spurred efforts to reproduce and reinterpret Yezidi's knowledge for younger generations, it has also fueled intergenerational tensions within the community.

In response, Yezidi intellectuals position themselves as mediators between tradition and modernity. Recognizing the younger generation's changing attitudes, they seek to lead reform initiatives, mitigate conflict, and bridge the gap between older and younger Yezidis. Their efforts reflect an attempt to balance cultural preservation with the evolving realities of diaspora life.

This research demonstrates that the diaspora context, combined with the challenges of modern life, necessitates an updated interpretation of Yezidism and its social structures to retain younger generations within the community. Notably, the influence of traditional religious figures—once central to Yezidi social organization—has significantly declined among the youth. Instead, young Yezidis show greater interest in newly established institutions and

research centers, which promote structural changes, including the ritual modification and standardization of Yezidism.

As a result, Yezidi cultural centers and their leaders have gained prominence in regulating religious and social life, accelerating Yezidism's evolution into a standardized diasporic religion. For younger generations, Yezidism has shifted from a faith-based practice to a cultural performance—an identity marker rather than a strictly religious one. Yezidism now serves as a reference point for cultural belonging in the diaspora, shaping individual identities beyond traditional religious observance. In this case, there is the decline of traditional social structures. The research reveals that young Yezidis largely disregard traditional social hierarchies, leading to a profound reconfiguration of community relations. Tribal and clan-based ties have been replaced by individual-centered interactions, weakening the authority of both religious and secular leaders. This shift has intensified intergenerational cultural conflicts, while institutional developments and political engagement have expanded transnational activism among Yezidi youth. So young Yezidis prioritize visibility and official recognition of Yezidism in Germany, where they increasingly perceive themselves as rooted. However, traditional norms—such as endogamy—hinder their integration into modern life. The findings indicate that Yezidism is undergoing a rejection of traditional social norms, with younger generations advocating for reforms to facilitate their inclusion in German society.

As diaspora conditions compel Yezidis to reformulate social structures, the community will likely witness new efforts to redefine Yezidi's identity and practice. These transformations naturally place ethnic discourse and demands for change at the forefront of the Yezidi agenda, signaling an ongoing evolution in the diaspora.

Contributions to the field

Existing scholarship on transnational communities has predominantly focused on two paradigmatic models: Werbner's(1999) conceptualization of established transnational communities (e.g., the British Pakistani diaspora) and Kastoryano's(1999) framework of "unity in dispersion" communities (e.g., Muslim populations in Europe). While prior studies of Yezidis in Germany (Robin, 1984; Alford, 1989) have situated this community within conventional migration studies, more recent work by Kreyenbroek (2009) and Omarkhali

(2021) has productively shifted the analytical lens toward the transformative effects of diasporic conditions on Yezidi social and religious structures.

This study makes three significant advances beyond existing scholarship: First, it provides the first systematic examination of intra-community debates within Germany's Yezidi population, with particular attention to generational dynamics. Second, it documents the community's transition from a migrant group to a self-conscious diaspora engaged in transnational identity formation. Third, it analyzes the emerging institutionalization of Yezidi religious practice under diasporic conditions—a process that has not been adequately theorized in current literature.

Scholarly contributions of the study, therefore, can be formulated as follows: The study makes four substantive contributions to academic knowledge:

As the first systematic investigation of Yezidi youth perspectives, it addresses a critical gap in the literature. It establishes a new research trajectory for studies of diaspora youth in ethno-religious minority communities. That is, the study provides a generational focus in Yezidi studies. Then the diaspora formation of the Yezidi community of Germnay is examined for the first time: It provides empirical evidence of the Yezidi community's-community's transformation into a self-aware transnational diaspora, offering new insights into the institutional mechanisms facilitating this process. Moreover, the study highlights the process of the religious institutionalization of Yezidism. In this case, the study advances a novel theoretical claim regarding the progressive institutionalization of Yezidism as a diasporic religion, contributing to broader debates about religion and modernization. For this, a methodological innovation is provided for Yezidi's studies. Through its nuanced examination of lived diaspora experiences, the study develops an empirically grounded framework for analyzing generational change in migrant communities.

This research addresses the historical neglect of Yezidi studies in migration scholarship by situating the case within contemporary diaspora theory. It proposes new analytical categories for understanding the complex interplay between religious identity, generational change, and diaspora formation in the 21st century.

Limitations of the study

The epistemological foundations of Yezidi studies have been fundamentally shaped by researchers' positionality, with early scholarship reflecting distinct Kurdish nationalist, Western orientalist, and Islamic theological frameworks. Our field observations confirm that Western researchers generally experience greater research access—a phenomenon attributable to historical power asymmetries and the politicized nature of knowledge production about minority communities in the Middle East. This access disparity manifests most acutely in older Yezidi generations ' guarded approach to sharing esoteric religious knowledge, a protective mechanism developed through centuries of persecution.

The methodological implications of this context are profound. Establishing sufficient rapport for meaningful ethnographic engagement requires extended temporal investment—often spanning years rather than months—particularly when working with younger Yezidi diaspora members who exhibit heightened skepticism toward academic researchers. This challenge mirrors documented difficulties in studying Kurdish political diaspora communities (cf. Wahlbeck 1998), suggesting a broader pattern of methodological constraints when researching traumatized populations.

Three principal limitations that emerged during this study are as follows: archival scarcity: The absence of comprehensive textual sources on Yezidi religious traditions necessitates heavy reliance on oral histories. This methodological complication problematizes source verification. Unlike Abrahamic traditions with established textual canons, Yezidi cosmogonic narratives and historical accounts exist primarily in Kurmanji-language oral transmission, creating significant barriers for non-Kurdish-speaking researchers. Another limitation is linguistic barriers: While this research prioritized English-language interviews with younger community members, meaningful engagement with religious authorities and elders required Kurdish language proficiency. This linguistic divide created an unavoidable generational skew in data collection, potentially overlooking critical intergenerational transmission dynamics.

The last and most important limitation is participant hesitancy: Nearly all Yezidis hesitate to speak of their community. A valuable number of recruited young Yezidi respondents withdrew from the study due to confidentiality concerns despite institutional review board protocols. This attrition rate reflects the community's collective trauma history and internal social control mechanisms—factors that demand particular ethical consideration in diaspora research.

These constraints highlight the need for innovative methodological approaches when studying orally-based religious traditions undergoing diasporic transformation. Future research would benefit from longitudinal team-based designs incorporating Kurdish-speaking scholars while maintaining rigorous protocols for protecting vulnerable participant populations.

Recommendation for future research

The Yezidi community in Germany has emerged as a politically significant collective actor, with its sociopolitical influence projected to grow substantially in the coming decade. A critical juncture occurred in 2023 when the German Bundestag formally recognized the Yezidi genocide—a landmark decision that both validated historical persecution and mobilized community efforts toward official religious recognition. Empirical findings from this study highlight the pivotal role of Yezidi youth as cultural intermediaries whose bilingual competencies and civic engagement have markedly accelerated societal integration. These concurrent developments suggest an imminent institutionalization of Yezidi religious practice in Germany, potentially resulting in (1) the standardization of ritual observances and (2) the formalization of organizational structures comparable to established religious institutions.

The German Yezidi diaspora has increasingly assumed a vanguard role as the de facto transnational representative body for global Yezidi communities. This development suggests the probable emergence of formal institutional structures that serve as interlocutors between Yezidi populations and Western political systems. Such institutionalization would position Germany-based Yezidi organizations as primary architects of contemporary Yezidi identity politics and transnational advocacy networks. Concurrently, this institutionalization process is precipitating a notable political realignment. The German Yezidi community shows signs of

deliberate disengagement from pan-Kurdish political movements, redirecting its focus toward intra-community consolidation and the systematization of religious-cultural preservation mechanisms. This evolving dynamic creates a critical research nexus examining a) the dialectic between religious identity formation and diaspora institutionalization, b) the tension between cultural preservation and hostland integration, and 3) the reconfiguration of transnational political allegiances.

These intersecting processes may ultimately produce a transformed Yezidi social ontology that privileges endogenous religious and communal structures over previous frameworks of external political solidarity.

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I1: The informant was 29 years old at the time of the interview, which was conducted in the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish and took place in Hanover, Germany, where he has lived since 2015.

I2: The informant, a member of a prominent Yezidi Pir family, was 26 years old during the interview. Born and raised in Germany, he requested that the interview be conducted in English.

I3: The informant was 25 years old during the interview. Born and raised in Germany, she currently lives in Berlin and requested that the interview be conducted in English.

I4: Following the Syrian civil war, the 21-year-old informant settled in Düsseldorf, Germany, with her family. Due to her initial reluctance to have a face-to-face interview, she preferred online communication via social media platforms. The interview was conducted in Kurdish.

I5: Now residing in Oldenburg, Germany, where she has lived since 2015, the 30-year-old informant works on integration projects for the Yezidi community. The interview was conducted entirely in Kurdish.

I6: The 25-year-old informant has lived in Oldenburg, Germany, since 2013. The interview was conducted in Kurdish.

I7: Now living in Germany since 2002, the informant was 26 years old when interviewed in Kurdish.

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Tentative list of open-ended questions

Consent Form



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The ongoing task is a research task in social science entitled *"Yezidi youth in the German diaspora: (re)producing religion, culture, and ethnicity (2005-2020)."* It is aimed to conduct more or less 120 interviews with young Yezidis aged between 18-29 who live in Germany.

The interviews will be conducted in Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish and in English if needed. The interviews are going to be conducted by researcher Oral Orpak.

Before carrying out the interviews, the permission of each respondent or informant will be asked. Their names and surnames are not part of public information in the Ph.D. dissertation, and the informants will be encoded by the first letter of their name, surname, and age instead. The contact information, such as their home address, and contact numbers, will be kept confidential by the researcher. The aim of having the contact information is to reach respondents later in case of verifying various upcoming details of missing data. The informants have the right to stop the interviews at any time they wish and not to answer questions that make them uncomfortable.

Respondent:

Name and Surname……

Age and Gender……

Home adress……

Cell phone……..

E-mail adress……

Respondent's signiture

……

Tentative list of open-ended questions for conducting interviews with young Yezidis in Germany

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Introduction: The main aim(s), question(s), and hypotheses of the research

The research examines the expectations of Yezidi youth, who are mainly ignored by religious members of the community living in Germany, regarding ongoing debates on the need for internal reform in the Yezidi community. There is a process of reproducing or reformulating Yezidism run by Yezidi intellectuals, notably in the Western diasporas. The reproducing process for the belief system, traditional culture, and ethnic identity has occurred from the

need for the canonization of Yezidism by elimination of some Sufi remnants, the need to "salvage" Yezidism from the discourse of religious syncretism as the fusion of diverse religious beliefs, and the need for making some regulations for the current generation regarding worldly affairs. The integration process of Yezidis into Western societies, notably in Germany, and the lack of fixed regulations for Yezidism are seen as reasons behind the assimilation and the extinction of traditional values into the Western diasporas. Such demands appeared among the young generation regarding the need to alter traditional aspects. Thus, the Yezidi youth's attitudes and approaches, which are under the impact of the centers of the diasporas, will be evaluated concerning reforms. Members of the Yezidi society, notably in diasporas, have been seeking internal reform for decades. It aims to analyze the role of the Yezidi centers of diaspora on Yezidi youth discourse and the mobility of the youth population in the diaspora regarding debates on the internal reform of traditional customs, religion, identity, and culture. It is believed that since 2005, notably since 2014, the youth population has become a visible force tool, notably in cyberspace, to canalize the aspects of all ongoing debates. It is known that some traditional pedestals of the Yezidi community were depolarized after the enslavement of Yezidi women taken by ISIL in 2014. The issue of reintegration of raped Yezidi women with their children into Yezidi society forced religious caste and conservative Yezidis to make a decision about adopting captured Yezidis. Practically adopting Yezidis from the outside is not acceptable or tolerable for Yezidis. Yet, Yezidi supreme leaders amended these rules, which had existed for 800 years[1], and they made a decision not to obey that "strict rule." They decided to take the Yezidi women into the community without the children born as a result of rape. [2]

It is believed that Yezidi intellectuals and Yezidi centers of the diaspora substantially impacted this rule-bending. Yet the decision of not taking the children born as a result of rape to the community is debated vehemently.

Besides that, the traditional pedestrians, communal prejudices about the position of women in the Yezidi society, and some social norms such as honor, honor-killing, the bride price, etc., are part of discussed topics amongst young Yezidis in the diaspora, notably in the Yezidi German diaspora. The scale of demands, therefore, has extended. For instance, many young Yezidis in the diaspora see the rule of marrying out as a strict or absurd rule. What is more, available traditional aspects of the origins of Yezidism and Sufi remnants in religious practices and the method of teaching and learning of Yezidism are being discussed and reformulated in the centers of the diaspora.

Thus, a radical transformation may have appeared in Yezidi society for the first time since the 12th century (Sheikh Adi's reforms) with the consequences of the Iraqi War and ISIL's attacks (reforms demanded by the centers of diasporas and young Yezidis) In recent years, flaming Yezidi activism has appeared in the post-Iraqi war and developed through technology. Barely Yezidis has come into prominence in the international arena since 2014. The need to communicate and dialogue with the outside world to protect the Yezidi community from ethnocide led to the emergence and mobilization of a literate young Yezidi generation that demanded internal reform to be mobilized within Western societies. This progress is partly shaped by Western values. The demands regarding internal reform(s) have become a current issue with the help of technology. Yezidi youth became active both in cyberspace and the physical world. Moreover, Yezidis have become a significant actor in international society, with their centers, associations, and organizations among religious minorities of the Middle East. The global spread of the community led to the formation of Yezidi associations in Western countries. With the support of these associations (Yazda, Free Yezidi Foundation, etc.), young Yezidis living in Western diasporas have become pioneers in transforming the community. They play significant roles in the process of the current (re)producing of Yezidi identity, culture, and religion. Thus, they have an intensive potential to accelerate the transformation of the community soon.

Research Questions of the research proposal based on three main sections

Religion

Is Yezidism facing extinction in Germany?

What does Yezidism mean to youth in Germany?

Do Yezidi youth lose contact with their religious groups in Germany?

How is the interaction between youth and religious experts in Germany?

Do Yezidi associations in Germany promote religious education to young Yezidis in the German diaspora? If yes, from what level do Yezidi associations transmit spiritual knowledge to young Yezidis?

Have young Yezidis got a communal or an individual religious life in the German diaspora?

Were young Yezidis able to explain their religion to outsiders in Germany?

How do Yezidi youth understand the concept of the "Yezidi religion" in Germany?

How have young Yezidis started investigating/critically approaching their religion in Germany?

What is the youth's discourse on questions of religion?

Culture

How do young Yezidis consider the integration process in Germany?

How do young Yezidis approach the European values and contemporary way of life in Germany?

What does culture mean to Yezidi youth?

At what level do Yezidis have a Yezidi material culture in the German diaspora? What cultural practices are being performed in Germany?

Are young Yezidis able to preserve and maintain their rich culture in Germany?

What kind of scenarios do Yezidis have about preserving their culture in Germany?

Do Yezidi youth play any role in secularizing their community within the European values and ways of thinking?

How does the young generation approach the elders' traditional understanding of Yezidi culture?

Is there a cultural clash between the Yezidi generations in Germany? If so, at what intervals are there cultural clashes between Yezidi youth and conservative elders?

Ethnic identity

How do young Yezidis approach the concepts of ethnic identity? What do they understand about these concepts?

What kind of approaches are young Yezidis regarding Yezidi identity and the origins of Yezidis?

How do young Yezidis identify themselves in the German diaspora? Kurd? Yezidi? Other? Why?

Is there a division between Kurdishness and being Yezidi among young Yezidis? What does Kurdishness mean to young Yezidis?

Are there anti-Kurdishness sentiments among young Yezidis in Germany? If yes, what kind of anti-Kurdishness sentiments appeared among literate young Yezidis?

To what extent do young Yezidis support a separate Yezidi identity? And what kind of sentiments do young Yezidis use to define the distinct Yezidi identity?

What features have marked the awakening of a sense of separate Yezidi identity in the German diaspora?

How and what do young Yezidis learn about Yezidi's identity? From cyberspace? From the centers of diaspora?

Why is it so crucial for young Yezidis to have a solid Yezidi identity?

Once a year, the Yezidi should fast in honor of Melek Tawus

Every Yezidi should visit Lalish once in his life (pilgrimage)

The Yezidi's obligations

Religious Commandments:

Inviolability of the authority of God and Malak Tawus

Recognising Sheikh Adi

Implementing his rules in the daily life of each Yezidi

Recognizing the Sheikhs (teachers) who communicate the teachings of Sheikh Adi

Each Yezidi must have a Sheikh and a Pîr

Each Yezidi must specify a sister/brother of the hereafter

Conversion via missionary is not acceptable. One can only be Yezidi by birth.

Social Commandments:

Marriage is only permitted within the Yezidi religious community and within one's own caste.

Obligations: (These obligations are not adhered to everywhere in the community)

Yezidis are not allowed to mention the name of evil

Shaving a moustache is not allowed

Pork should not be eaten

Such types of vegetables are not eaten

Tentative list of open-ended questions

A. Background and experience of informants

1. Could you tell me about you? Like, who are you? Were you born in Germany? Or have you been raised in Germany?

1. What do you study/What is your occupation?

Note: These initial questions are designed to make the informants feel comfortable at the beginning of the interview before other detailed questions regarding daily life in Germany.

B. Daily life in the German diaspora

1. Can you describe everyday life in Germany? How is life for a young Yezidi in Germany? How do you feel in Germany compared to your elder relatives?
2. Do you feel free when you would like to make decisions about your life?
3. In your opinion, what is freedom?
4. What about your family? How do they explain freedom?
5. By the way, do you live with your family? Or do you prefer to live alone?
6. Do you think it is important to live with family members? Why?
7. What do you do outside of school, and who are your friends? Who do you spend a lot of time with?
8. Do you prefer to make friends out of the group you are in or with the same people in the same group?
9. What group of your friends do you like to spend time with? Why? What activities do you do with your friends?
10. How do you find living in a modern society? Is it advantageous or disadvantageous?

Note: Potential answers to questions (7,8, 9, and 10) will be part of the help of understanding the respondent's relationship with members of the Yezidi community and, of course, with their family. Being in touch with community members with five duties (pênc ferz) is considered crucial by the older generation to keep the Yezidi religion alive and maintain cultural heritage

to survive in Germany and not be assimilated. Informants' ways of spending time outside could let us know the tightness of their social relationships in this section of questions.

Note the following questions:

The following questions aim to catch any narratives about the correlation between practicing the mother tongue (the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish) and the integration process or so-called assimilation by the older generation in Germany. The culture and religion are interlocked in the Yezidi community, and its divisions are not clear enough. Knowledge of the mother tongue is considered the main way to survive Yezidism. Because all traditional practices are performed in Kurmanji. Yet, the knowledge of Kurmanji is apparently decreasing among youth. It may bring radical alteration in the teaching and learning practices of Yezidism. The weakness of the mother tongue among youth means less interaction between youth and the masters of religion and implicitly of culture. It brings a fundamental diminishing of knowledgeable persons among youth.

1. What language do you speak in your daily life? What is your mother tongue?
2. In your opinion, is the mother tongue important? Do you believe that one should maintain to speak their mother tongue? Why?
3. In your opinion, what can happen if one gives up speaking their mother tongue in Germany?
4. How and in what way do you represent your culture?

C. Cultural Knowledge

1. Could you tell me what culture means to you?
2. How do you explain Yezidi culture? What is Yezidi culture?

Yezidi culture is complex, and the division between religious practices, rituals, and cultural practices is blurred. Even there is no adequate description of traditional Yezidi culture. I wonder if Yezidi youth have a fixed, clear definition of Yezidi culture. Displaced Yezidis from the Middle East have been settled in Germany for decades, often individually. There is no Yezidis compact settlement in Germany, but in Lower Saxony, young Yezidis are likely to learn all narratives of their traditional culture. To a certain extent, the Lower Saxony is the more compact place for preserving Yezidi culture. Yet, we can not speak of a united Yezidi society in a compact space in Germany. For instance, Yezidis in Lower Saxony differ from

Yezidis in Bavaria in terms of preserving traditions. Yezidis in Lower Saxony live in a close affinity, and conducting rituals is much easier over there. Thus, by (re)producing culture in research, we mean the vanishing of some cultural rituals and the emergence of new practices in a new environment. Separation from sacred places and the lack of a compact space cause the disappearance of local rituals. The potential for the appearance of new holy sites (like in Georgia) may lead to the creation of new cultural aspects. Being recognized by German authorities like Alevists may bring a new social organization of the community under the leadership of young Yezidis. It may bring a secular understanding of Yezidi culture in the near future.

With questions 17-23, it is aimed to check out the level of the process of enculturation and acculturation of young Yezidis in Germany. The answers to these questions would let us know based on what values young Yezidis describe the culture and how they maintain/reformulate Yezidi traditional culture and rituals.

1. In your opinion, is Germany a nice place for your culture? Why?
2. How often do you visit Yezidi centers in Germany? To what extent do you have a relationship with these centers?
3. What kind of rituals do Yezidis have in Germany? Do you attend to rituals?
4. Do you know what material culture is? How can a Yezidi preserve his/her culture? Is it important to preserve your culture in Germany? Why?
5. Do you see any differences in thinking of culture compared to your elders?

D. Religious knowledge and future scenarios

Questions about the youth's understanding of religion (discourse)

1. Could you tell me something about religion? What does religion mean to you?
2. How do you explain Yezidism? What is Yezidism? What kind of religion is Yezidism?
3. How do you gain a better understanding of your religion? How and where do you learn about your religion?

Questions (24, 25, and 26), it is aimed at understanding how young Yezidis describe their religion and to clarify the source of learning about their religion. I wonder how they learn about Yezidism. (Do they get knowledge about religion from the virtual world where a

religious interaction happens between the young generation in cyberspace or from other sources like family, written materials by intellectuals, religious courses from centers, etc.?)

1. What do you learn most? What is the religious knowledge or the origins of Yezidism?
2. Do you believe that you can regulate your worldly affairs? For instance, do you know what haram is and what halal is in your daily life? Do you care about it?
3. Do you believe that Yezidis has systematic learning and teaching practices?
4. Do you think that to call the religious obligations and the system of order into question is an attack on religion?
5. Do you believe that there is a need for fixed regulations on worldly affairs? For instance, do you want to have a fixed belief and practice like Christianity and Islam? Why?
6. Do you feel in need of an explanation of your religion to others?
1. What method do you adopt to tell others about your religious knowledge? (Repeating the memorized things or knowledge from textual materials) For instance, based on what sources do you explain your religion or mythology to a foreigner? Do you feel confident and sufficient when you explain it to others? (A potential question to evaluate this division)

Note: The above questions(27-32) aim to understand what is being taught to the young generation by the new teaching method, which composes the writing process and textual materials in the centers of diaspora. It is important to capture any narratives of youth discourse on religion, which is shaped by school programs based on the interpretation of textual materials rather than following the classical learning method of rituals of repetition.

b) Questions about youth scenarios on fixed theology/canonization, traditional norms and practices, social norms, and the functioning of the religious caste system

Yezidis, notably the older generation, have been discussing the need for a sacred book or a written canon (qanûn) for the better functioning of Yezidism for years. Within diasporic Yezidi societies, notably in Europe, there are efforts to have a textual canon/principle as a counterpart to the Bible or the Qur'an. A law (desûr) of Yezidi society's functioning is needed to classify what is forbidden and what is allowed in religion. This demand is much more discussed among the conservative population in order to find a solution to maintain traditional

aspects of Yezidism among the young generation. Yet the conservative members of the community are suspicious about preparing textual materials of a canon. The need for a more profound knowledge of spiritual hymns among the young generation makes them suspicious regarding the preparation of a canon.

In the diaspora among the young generation, access to information has accelerated. In this way, the younger generation has a chance to access deeper and more comprehensive information about their community and the functioning of it. They have learned about the functioning of other religious groups and the role of their sacred books, too. The discussions about having a collection of religious texts or a sacred book of Yezidis among the conservative generation and the younger one bring different perspectives. Conservative religious individuals are likely to be afraid of being assimilated and of destroying their sacred tradition as a result of having textual canon, while the younger population demands the need for regulations for their worldly and religious life in the diaspora.

Moreover, there is a discussion related to the need for canonization among the young generation in cyberspace. The young generation focuses on the actual reason behind the persecution of their community. The reason is, in general, explained by the absence of a holy book by the younger generation. Even though there are different sociological reasons behind the persecution, the new generation focuses on a need for written canon or sacred books to explain their religion to feel confident. Yet it is to be said that Yezidis from the different environments have their own reasons for having a sacred book. For instance, according to Omarkhali (2017), Yezidi in Iraq demands textual canon to feel safe like other people in the book. Cause compared to Yezidis, such religious minorities who had sacred books before Islam in the Middle East remained less persecuted. Cause those minorities are classified as people of the book (Ahl al-Kitab) in Islam. Thus, they became less part of discrimination. She adds that Yezidis in Iraq demand to be recognized as people of the book. She adds too that Yezidis in Europe demand the textual canon for the regulation of life or for the unification of religious dogma in harmony with the canon (Omarkhali, 2017). The Yezidis hope that their religion will be accepted and they will be able to prevent their community from being the targets of brutal wars of annihilation. Therefore, they are seeking canonization.

1. Do Yezidis have a sacred book? What do you understand about the sacred book of Yezidis? Is it a sacred book like other sacred books in other religions or a set of regulations?

2. Do you believe that traditional theology is sufficient to learn and teach Yezidism to youth in Germany?

3. Do you believe that Yezidis requires a formal theology in the Western sense? Why? Some people believe that if they have a holy book, the Ezidis will be saved from defeat. Some others claim that if a book is prepared, some changes will occur, and our knowledge, customs, habitat, etc., will be changed. What do you think about having a holy book under your hand? If so, what effect will it have?

4. Who should make a decision to prepare the holy book?

Note: The question 36th is related to another obstacle for the young generation besides the preparation of a canon or holy book. A power should decide the issue of preparing a holy book in the Yezidi community. Yet, there is no single authority recognized by all Yezidis. With this question, I aim to capture the youth's opinions and narratives regarding the clerical council's authority over the whole of Yezidi society, which is located in Lalish, Iraq. This authority is criticized. A new authority could be created by secular intellectuals (rewşenbîrên êzidiyan) or from a traditional religious group. According to Omarkhali (2017), many conservative groups in Armenia and Shingal (Iraq) are against the creation of a sacred book. However, after ISIL's attacks, the idea of having a holy book may have been hotly discussed among conservative groups.

The answers to this question will give us the perspectives of the young generation about influential religious figures and Yezidi intelligentsia in the diaspora. According to Omarkhali, the lack of a single authority is preventing the canonization process. Omarkhali, 2017). Thus, Yezidis in the diaspora, notably the German diasporic groups, are potentially the most powerful groups that can be a single authority to all Yezidis in the future. The narratives from the answers to this question may give us a clear idea about the single authority. Young Yezidis' scenarios are important here.

1. Do you believe that Yezidism is facing extinction in Germany? Why?

2. Do you have/need a hosta/seyde (spiritual expert) to learn religion? (The questions 38th and 39th are for young people who want to be reciter of religious texts and spiritual experts in diaspora).

3. What do you learn from your spiritual expert? (In the virtual world, the young population discusses other issues aside from patriarchal/religious issues, such as the

issue of gender, the issue of the position of women in religious life, etc. Yet, it is to be said that the religion does not contain any elements of the position of women in society. The disadvantages of women appear because of the patriarchal system. Spiritual experts transmit religious knowledge to the young, keeping a patriarchal understanding of roles. They ignore sociological issues and the origins of Yezidism.

4. Do you have a brother or sister of the hereafter (Birayê û xwişka axretê)? Is it important to have him/her? Why? (Having a brother or sister of the hereafter is one of the duties of 5 duties/5 for. It is important to have them maintain a religious person and to learn and keep traditional knowledge of the Yezidi community.

5. Some social norms, like strict rules, are adopted by some Yezidis. For instance, not to marry out, bride price, honor, honor-killing. I wonder what you think about "honor." What does it mean to you?

1. Some Yezidis think that Yezidi men failed to protect their women's honor in 2014. Is a man responsible for the honor? Why? What do you think?

1. How do you approach the clerical class (meclîsa ruhanî) to the caste system of Yezidis? Is it an important thing? What do they do for young Yezidis in Germany?

1. Some people think that this system isolates Yezidis from the world. Some others believe that the system and its values protect Yezidi's heritage. What do you think?

2. You may know there are patriarchal values in the system of the Yezidi community. For instance, marrying out is not allowed. Is it good or bad for you?

3. Do you think that a Yezidi man and woman are equal? (Yezidi faith sees man equal. Equality among people is repeatedly mentioned. There is no a dress code for social contact of men and women. From religious point of view women and men are equal yet in social life there is no equality. Disciriminating against women and violation of honor is motivated by patriarchal ideas. It is crucial to evaluate this ideas amongst young generetion in Germany).

4. Do you know any Yezidi female hosta/seyde (expert) in religion? In your opinion, why are there no female experts?

5. What do you think about reintegrating the raped Yezidi women into the Yezidi community? Is it acceptable to adopt them? What about their children? Are they Yezidis? Do you think that Yezidis must adopt them? Who must make this decision?

e) Ethnic Identity

Note: The Yezidi communities of Germany are split into different associations and rival political groups. Every association operates independently with its political perspectives. Thus, every respondent may have their approaches to defining ethnic identity under the impact of the umbrella associations of Yezidis. The aim here is to evaluate the youth's perspectives to see if there is a trend of self-consciousness amongst them to have a solid Yezidi identity.

1. Do you think that people are different from each other? Do you feel any differences? Why? (It aims to catch any sentiments regarding their definition of identity. The nuances they have in their own definition are going to be part of helping to understand their de facto approaches to ethnic identity).
2. For instance, what makes you different from others in Germany?
3. Do you know what identity is? Could you tell me something about your identity? How do you explain yourself to people?

1. Could you tell me in a straightforward way how one can be Yezidi? Are there any obligations to be Yezidi? (It is aimed to clarify if young Yezidis think like the conservative population about being Yezidi. This question may be a confirmation question of the questions above regarding marrying outside.)

1. Why do Yezidis become the subject of violence compared to other religious minorities in the Middle East? In your opinion, what are the reasons behind this violence?

[1] Jan Ilhan Kizilhan, Changes in the Yazidi Society and Religion after the Genocide, 2019

[2] Announcement of the High Spiritual Councillor of the Yezidi on 27th April 2019.