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Archiving Orality: an interview with Zêdan Xelef and Emad Bashar

I first met Zêdan and Emad as poets. I ran a workshop in Duhok in 2016 and Zêdan attended. In 2018, at Kashkul, the center for arts and culture at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS), an organization I founded and direct, hosted a reading at which both Zêdan and Emad read. Both poets have lived through substantial upheaval. Zêdan and his family endured Saddam Hussein's policies of forced Arabization as itinerant farmers on the Iraq-Syria border. Emad and his family fled the same policies, living for over ten years as refugees in Syria. Both survived the most recent genocidal attempt against the Êzîdî community, perpetrated in 2014 by the Islamic State. Out of all this displacement, chaos, and hatred, Zêdan and Emad made art—not grandstanding and rhetorical, but intimate and clear-eyed.

Zêdan, who moves with equal fluency in Arabic, Kurmanji (Kurdish), and English, came to Kashkul as an artist in residence. His residency was such a success, we made plans to bring him onto the Kashkul staff full-time. Among other projects, he hoped to record and translate the epic sung poems and histories he had grown up with. As he worked, we spent time thinking together about the oral archive the Êzîdî community curates and how it compares to other regional, written archives: all of which were threatened by the Islamic State and by more subtle corrosive forces. We talked of impossibilities: an individual protects himself from trauma by forgetting; a community protects itself by remembering.

Over the next year, in collaboration with Professor Christine Robins, the Ibrahim Ahmed Professor of Kurdish Studies and Director of the Centre for Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter, we developed an idea. Beyond

recording, transcribing, and translating the songs, we would interview the singers and the listeners. We would create a picture, through lifetime interviews, of how an orally transmitted archive exists in memory, between people, in the air.

We immediately reached out to Emad who had, for the last several years, been working to document, through interviews, the genocidal attempt of 2014. His expertise as a poet and writer was uniquely matched by his familiarity with both Êzîdî and Western ideas of documentation and archive.

The interview below—conducted over several Zoom sessions and text exchanges and across three languages—is a glimpse of the on-going conversation Zêdan and Emad have as friends, poets, and researchers, a conversation of impossibilities.

Alana: How people build an archive depends entirely on what materials a culture is producing to preserve. Êzîdî culture relies on oral history, creating incredible epic sung stories. Both of you are familiar with this tradition, but also with written traditions and their archives. What do you see as the differences between them?

Zêdan: I'll let Emad go first as he is older and married!

Emad: Memory has voice; the archive has writing. Intangible and tangible. This is the difference between oral and written history. The intangible cannot be easily destroyed as it is stored in the minds of many. Perhaps this is why peoples who have been continually defeated give it preference as a mode of preservation. It is designed to be transmitted to all classes, to every element of society. We encounter that archive in grandma's stories, folk tales, proverbs, songs, games, festive traditions and religious rituals. All of these were means of preserving history directly or indirectly. And these

genres are not limited in appeal to those who have an interest in history, but reach every human being. These genres also do more than simply convey fact; they are able to contain feeling and emotion, the psychological, social and literary aspects of these events.

This is the beauty of the whole thing: our archive allows for memory and history to be passed down generation after generation with spontaneity, honesty, art, warmth, amusement, and delight even when we recount tragedy, disaster and pain. Even knowing the events, feeling those narratives and all the bruises those narratives received on their way to you, all that authenticity, you don't feel the burden of carrying it, passing it on or preserving it. Perhaps this is what our ancestors realized: that human memory, despite all its weaknesses, when woven together with art, literature, and joy can become the principal record against attempted destruction.

Cultures confident of their survival, peoples who enjoy power, authority, and a history full of victories, those are often the ones that document their history and assemble tangible archives. And they believe the act of writing determined their ability to transmit history to the future. They believe what they write will be the only material the future will see. But defeated societies find art, literature, human cognition, and social values can preserve their cultural and historical heritage. They find that someone can destroy your home, steal your property, and prevent you from writing your history, but they cannot easily kill the love of art and literature in human nature.

On the other hand, memory has many weaknesses. Dates and numbers can become less accurate, more easily forged. The present moment the story is told in can influence or outright change the story itself. Depending what a society or ethnicity does in the present, their image in the past can be embroidered or abhorred. In a physical archive, preservation requires upkeep, honesty, and diligence so that all files are available to all researchers or interested parties. With source material arranged and ready, new stories are easier to tell.

Zêdan: And a physical archive, once you put things in it, offers any interested user equal accessibility to the items. With memory, not everything is accessible; it's impossible to say everything is accessible even to its owner, even to the person themselves. But then, archives are unmovable subjects. They can't resist tyranny or the evil of a persecuting force. Physical archives can be easily targeted. People can survive.

Emad: But whatever the necessity of the tangible archive is, it is not without its drawbacks. Most of what has been written and documented is written by the victors, and serves the interest of the authorities at the expense of defeated or weaker peoples. Minorities—we are not able to educate ourselves in our mother tongue. A minority like Êzîdîs in the Middle East, in a Muslim-majority state, must always be leaving their lands, always migrating, from place to place with just our own bodies. So, we find forms other than books, like oral history and song, to express and preserve our history and traditions. This is literature. When empires and state powers burn our property, books, and documents, when we can't take anything with us but food and water, our memory becomes our last refuge. Our memory, our mind, and the minds of coming generations become the best place to archive our history. The archive and the way of transmitting the archive changes from person to person. Children have their own versions of the stories. We give the stories even to children. All ages must remember. Women have their own versions. Men, too.

Zêdan: Just yesterday, I talked with my aunt about this, how people would archive or store their memories. She stressed that among Êzîdîs, a woman's memory is more trusted than a man's. It was the work of women to preserve and pass down memories and songs and folktales to the next generations. There is a common proverb, "A man could forget his own son's death." There's another common saying, "When men's eyes are foggy, women's tongues are clear."

Alana: So, “the” archive is not singular at all.

Emad: No, and it’s not stagnant either. As people migrate from one place to another, each place they live in becomes a part of them, their history, their tradition. This can change the content of the archive: the memory of many societies may come to overlap in the intangible archive of memory, the historical events of one people versus another may mix, historical figures may be claimed by several distinct groups, it may not be possible to reach any one truth of the matter. The archive itself swells and shrinks with each persecution. When we hear death tolls, we hear the hundreds of thousands of stories and songs and events that have died. But each defeat becomes part of the faith, part of the preservation.

Alana: How does it change the concept of archive to define it as memory?

Emad: Archives exist to increase access to information, to decrease the time and work of researching or collecting information. Aristotle says recollection is research, remembering is researching. Any memory will be affected by emotions, interactions, ideologies or historical events or, or—all of which makes memory unreliable. People choose what they do and don’t want to remember. If we say memory is the first archive, then we should also say this archive needs a lot of work. And do we speak of collective or individual memory?

Zédan: Our memories are our first archive, the first storage, but as our memories are vulnerable, we move our memories into objects and those objects into physically safe places. Property or objects don’t have their own value, for us as people, as individuals. Memory, or perhaps ideology such as religion, gives place or object its value. And physical storage, like memory, is not safe in times of war. Our memory is affected by the trauma we take on from war, by the... by what we go through during war. Our human memory and our physical storage or repositories are exposed to the same dangers in war. How do we save our beliefs, our ideas, from those who disagree

with us enough to... Human history is built on our disagreements. We say, every link in a chain is connected. Maybe we borrowed this from English. Who knows who borrowed what? But these smaller cultures, ignored by the dominant ones, maybe they make up the missing links in the chain of humanity's history. We are all interconnected in ways we don't understand.

Alana: In speaking about memory as the first archive, Zêdan, you spoke about the damage that war and its traumas can do to memory. How have you two seen the archive of memory, both individual and collective, disrupted in this latest genocide? How has it proved robust?

Emad: If we look at the shape of our community after the last genocide—the daily behaviors of young people, the fatigue evident in the elderly, the large gap created by migration in the fabric of the Êzîdî family, and intellectual trends that create varying standards and foundations for presenting the community to the rest of the world—we see a great deal of contradiction. Yes, the memory of the Êzîdî community has been sharply affected by the last genocide. It is rare to find children or young people spending time with their parents and grandparents.

For years, I have been researching one Êzîdî folk song. The process has worried and saddened me. I imagine, as if in a dream, there is some far shore from where our stories try, from so far, to reach our ears. They scream, trying to reach our ears. The voices of our elders no longer tell us stories, but scream, trying to carry across such distance. But we are distracted, confused, mired in the pressures of modern life, and behind us our stories are being forgotten, fading away, lost to the void left by the last genocide.

Zêdan: I can start answering these questions, but I don't know where I can stop. I find my own short-term memory badly affected by what I went through. Somehow, my childhood memory has been revitalized since those events. I remember many things from my childhood that I wouldn't have remembered before. Maybe I'd have remembered, but I wouldn't care. They

were small details and I didn't know what was important or how important they were. Now even those tiny details of my childhood are important to me. They make something. They are not just observed. Even if on their own they are not completely meaningful, they help other things become completely meaningful. Or perhaps what gives them context now might be my practice of poetry.

For example, when we were farmers in Rabbi' a at the Syrian border, I would wave to the train every morning as it traveled from Mosul to Syria, from Rabbi' a to Syria. I didn't know why I was waving. Maybe I felt people leaving or had some suspicion that someone was leaving, even someone I didn't know, but I would wave to all that anonymous departure. How did I know to do that? I never visited a train station. But we would wake up very early because we were farmers and we would, I would look at the train leaving every morning at 4 in the morning, and I would wave. What did I know about departure at that time? I felt the importance of this memory only after my family's departure to Australia last year. I keep remembering those trains. Saying goodbye to my family in the airport was the first time I said goodbye in a place that was designed to say goodbye to people, to loved ones.

Emad: I am perhaps one of the few people in Shingal who has completely different foundational memories. I was born in Syria from Shingali Iraqi refugee parents, and I opened my eyes to a world in which I had no history, no civilization, no ideas, not even a sense of belonging. Until age nine, I did not know, except superficially, what it meant to have uncles, cousins, grandparents. Sometimes my parents would tell us about our extended family in Iraq; that we have an uncle whose name is so-and-so and an aunt whose name so-and-so. But I could not imagine them. Though I had a very vivid imagination, they were only names that appeared and disappeared. There were no phones or ways to communicate like there are now. People would send audio tapes of all their greetings, longings, and inquiries about each other's safety.

Once we got a tape from Iraq. It was the first time I knew cassettes existed. We all gathered around the cassette player and my father put the tape in. When he pressed the button, the tape started spinning and spinning, the voices of men and women, the elderly, and children came out of it. We listened to them over and over. They spoke to us by name and gave us nicknames and every time someone spoke, they would mention their name (“I am so-and-so...”). They wished us safety, they expressed their desire to visit us, they talked about the situation in Iraqi villages, they spoke of people I’d never heard of before. It made me laugh to hear everyone saying my name and sending me kisses. They also sent pictures, so many pictures, mostly in farms and orchards. I remember one of us asked my mother, “Is all of Iraq orchards and farms?” My mother said, “No, they just all work in agriculture in Rabia.” We would also send pictures and tapes back to Iraq, though we did not know them. My siblings and I raced to choose who would be our favorite aunt or uncle and we wrote dedications for them on the back of our pictures along with a letter my mother helped us write.

My childhood was utterly empty of the archives of Êzîdî history. I was in an Arab region, an Arab school, with Arab childhood friends, and only a few other Êzîdî families in the village. I did not hear children’s stories except those on television and in school. I did not know the traditions or customs or where they came from, even the holidays we used to celebrate so happily. I did not know the difference between our holidays and the village’s holidays. I knew neither the name “Shingal,” nor the name of our village. I remember I felt indescribable pride the day my mother taught me how to draw a flag that she said was the Êzîdî flag: white and red with the sun in the middle.

We only knew we were Êzîdîs and we stuck to that, which caused so many disputes between us and the other children of the village. In the last year of my life in Syria, we were only three Êzîdî students in school. I was 11 years old and getting harassed more than ever before. I felt lonely even when I tried to get along with others. I knew I was different from them and that in

one way or another I did not belong to them—that I could not, because I belonged to a different historical structure, as if we were born carrying our history within us. We cannot express it at first, but over time this history manifests itself in our lives. We know there some large part of our memory is full—of events, people and feelings, but we cannot reach them, as if, until some chosen moment, you’ve thought something full empty. In a moment, your memory is freed from that skin and reveals your history to you, a history that belongs to you though you have not lived a single moment of it, a history that you are the result of. Well, one morning, my mother woke us up and asked us to get ready. We would return to Iraq.

In Iraq, life was completely different. Dozens of people greeted me and were suddenly around all the time, talking like me and playing with me, uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins and relatives from all sides. In the evening my uncle would tell me stories, so many stories. On some retelling, on some nights he would change the narrative to make me laugh. I heard proverbs, sayings and aphorisms, some of which were odd, some of which were funny. There parties and weddings, crowds of people dancing and singing, songs that were strange to my ears. I had only heard Syrian, Lebanese, and Egyptian songs from TV and the radio. There were gangs of children, I had a gang for the first time, a gang and relatives and friends and new holidays and so many people to visit me. Life in Shingal was so strange.

Years passed and my memory filled with the Êzîdî archives, songs, characters, heroes of the past, the positions of tribes in times of war, myths and their morals, as well as new people, places, and experiences. I don’t think I remember many of all the people I have met and known. I feel that my memory is weak now, that I forget more quickly than I used to, that I have lost some of my passion for preservation, that I have become indifferent when it comes to remembering people I’ve known or events I was a part of. Displacement has damaged our memory, which is a synchronization, a coordination between place and image. It can endure so long as the spatial line connecting events to each other has not changed, but weakens when

life upends place, time, people and form all at once. After great tragedy, no memory is spared from harm. Recently, I realized: this is why I burn whenever I recite the beautiful phrase of Hussein Barghouti, “It is strange how at times a place looks like a trap, and how at times a trap looks like a labyrinth.”

Alana: What happens when the archive is in people? How does an oppressive state handle a guerrilla archive?

Zêdan: Êzîdîs would say we have witnessed or been through 74 genocidal campaigns, 74 genocides, 74 farmans. This is an Ottoman word meaning “decree,” but so many of the official Ottoman decrees started campaigns against Êzîdîs that we came to understand the word itself as absolute annihilation. Inevitable death. After the establishment of national states throughout the region—Iraq, Syria, Turkey—Ataturk, Saddam, and the Baathists followed or invented other methods of genocide: cultural genocide. Though they didn’t stop killing, they began to target people’s memory and language as well. We can number the genocidal campaigns of The Blind Prince or The One Eyed Prince who, according to some historical sources, killed almost all the Êzîdîs in the Mosul Vilayet, in Ninewa. And this was recent. The late nineteenth century. We don’t have numbers for how many people died in each of the 74 campaigns. And how can we begin to put numbers to the twentieth century’s cultural genocides?

Emad: When you create an archive inside individuals, you make that archive difficult to track or destroy. But that invites ideas of genocide. Extermination becomes the only way to destroy an archive that lives in individuals. And a victor’s power depends on the credibility of the story they tell. They write narratives of their heroism, the honorable and courageous stances they have taken. When a defeated people rises by speaking their own history, this calls into question the history of the victors. The victors’ power depends on destroying any evidence, any trace of their lack of credibility.

Zédan: And we must remember that how or why something is preserved has to do with its shared value among people. People agree on value. Just like a poet in a written language. There are poets in written languages on which you agree: they are important. So, they remain. But some of their contemporaries, people can't agree on the value of that work. With written traditions, those poems remain and if they seem more valuable to other generations, they gain their right to exist in the collective memory. But in orality, what people don't agree on gets lost, forgotten. Baudelaire and Whitman were not as important for their own generations as they are to us now. They had contemporaries who seemed more important given the era's immediate issues. But issues change with each generation. And with writing, those things are available in libraries and archives. You can revisit them. But what is lost to one generation of orality is lost forever.

Alana: I've seen now firsthand how little time it takes to destroy a physical archive. The process of destroying or dismantling an intangible archive—that takes a long time.

Zédan: It really does. Saddam and Ataturk got to people's memories and language. Alongside the bodies, memory became a target. This is how an oppressive state handles a guerrilla archive, by getting to their memories. Saddam knew the only place left for Êzîdîs was memory. Difference is the biggest reason we start wars. So, you put an end to your rival, you destroy your rival by massacring them, sure, but more importantly by destroying their intangible archives, the things that set them apart and make them different from the dominant culture. You end them not individually, but communally, but ending what makes them distinct. Êzîdîs don't exist if they are Arabized or Turkified. Arabization, Turkification: these were programs, policies, studied policies people knew would have long-term effect. They began with relocation, with demographic changes, with destroying Êzîdî villages and relocating entire populations into Arab or Turkish villages. Then, they would distribute televisions to everyone and confiscate the radios, radios that could receive broadcasts from Yerivan Radio, Aleppo Radio, and

other stations with Kurmanji content. And it was such an impressive thing for anyone to see a TV. And in Iraqi, there was only the state run official channels, all in arabic, targeting young people with poetry and football matches and a new generation of singers. TV interrupted our atmosphere of telling stories every night before sleep, of listening to a parent's or neighbor's stories in the front yard or someone's garden. Continual power cuts in Iraq created a small space to tell stories, but now, with the appearance or emergence of social media and telephones in Iraq, I doubt there are any parents telling stories to their kids.

This is another subtle legacy of Arabization: to make people think that what they have does not deserve to be kept. That the only things of value appear on TV and are performed by stars, big stars, or state-made stars, as I would call at this. Saddam was very good at this. Baathists in general were very good at making state-stars. We say, the Kurds are copying the same experience the national states of Turkey and Iraq showed them. This is what we fear here as Êzîdîs. We fear the same exclusion. It's the intention of the nation-state: to exclude the other.

Alana: Did you grow up hearing those stories?

Zêdan: I did. But we were farmers on the Syrian border. We didn't have TVs. I watched TV when I went to live with my uncle in our village, but most of my childhood was on the farms on the Syrian border. My dad knew lots of stories because his mother would tell him stories, my grandmother from my father's side was well educated in the oral traditions. She would sing, she would tell stories. My aunt learned from her. My grandmother lost her mother at a very young age, so she learned the mourning songs to mourn her mother. She was also so curious and, to some extent, open-minded. She would often sit with men in their councils. I would sleep in her room or on the rooftop where she would sleep and she would tell me stories. But I didn't spend much time with her. I was not so lucky to spend much time with her.

Alana: In Shingal Lives, we are planning on using young people's connection to social media to our advantage. Can you talk about that?

Zêdan: We don't have Kurdish or Êzîdî content except for badly recorded songs at weddings. We don't have YouTubers, we don't have content makers. So, much of our use of the internet is not in our language, but in Arabic, Arabic or English. Even German is more common than Kurmanji, which is available on Facebook, though many aren't aware.

The bootleg recordings from weddings are also truncated 2-3 minute versions of songs that originally took 3-5 hours to sing. So, at weddings, the singers are committed to singing for 3-4 hours. Everyone requests songs by writing a card they pass to the singer. The card requests a song and sends a message, to family in Germany or friends in military service. They pay the singer to read the card, those greetings, and sing the song. They won't let the singer finish any one song.

Alana: People request even songs about the genocides?

Zêdan: Yes, perhaps we are the only people who dance to our pain. I remember a story my father told me: people in the circus would put elephants on "hot stages" and play music. The elephants' feet would burn so they would "dance." Whenever that same music played again, the elephants would dance, without being on the hot stage. They received that piece of music every time as if it were the first time. Also when unmarried people die, Êzîdîs dance at their funerals, before the burial. They believe everyone deserves the happiness and joy of a wedding. But, in general, songs about the genocides are less lively. Perhaps the song was composed in hiding and the composer didn't want any pursuer to find him. But Êzîdî dances are often more like a sport, requiring a lot energy. I'm sure this can be said about more peoples than the Êzîdîs, but I remember following the fall of Saddam, oil products were expensive and many would dance to warm up in the cold. Perhaps we inherited this technique from our ancestors who

sought refuge in the cold mountains every time a genocidal campaign was launched against them.

Alana: The weddings sound joyful, but very different from the long stretches of time you had on the farm with your family.

Zédan: Yes, and the singer gets paid by the song, so they don't mind not finishing any one song. They are not singing to preserve the tradition, but as a profession. One of the cassettes I have, from 1977, two years before Saddam's rise, the singer starts the tape by saying, "I prefer to sing one complete story than pieces. One complete story is more important than telling excerpts from ten different stories." And the whole tape is just that one song.

Alana: So, these songs have evolved to be much more transactional, much more immediate, which is also globalization as well.

Zédan: Yes, these 3-4 minute versions of these songs that originally took hours to sing, this was also influenced by the songs Ézidîs saw on TV. In two hours, TV would show twenty or thirty songs. CDs and DVD players only mimicked TV—short songs and many of them. These items were so expensive, not everyone could get them, but some families had them. This commodification of song also corresponded to the use of the equation: if something costs a great deal, we assume it is worth a great deal. If something is free, we assume it is worth nothing. Many, to show they were educated or cultured, would listen to and repeat only those songs that appeared on TV. They were proud they understood songs in other languages.

Alana: Given the erosion of the oral tradition that modern technology is responsible for, why construct our archive relying so heavily on it? Why turn to social media and YouTube, such clear forces of globalization, to house and create access to the archive we're creating?

Zêdan: People are so attached to technology that building the archive with these tools will make the oral traditions easily available to them. We won't impose on anyone, forcing them to listen, like a government would do, but we will make them readily available. We will help those who want their grandmother's stories, their family's stories. Perhaps in this way, social media can repair that it took people from their families, from everyone. Making that content available will create choice. People will know they have a choice. They will know they are not limited by foreign content.

Alana: It will help them to see themselves online.

Zêdan: Because our memories that we have in Kurmanji, we can't remember them in Arabic. If we want to revive the memories that were hurt by the recent genocide, we need to speak in the language of our first memories.

Alana: Our project acknowledges that the song is not separate from the singer.

Zêdan: And neither the song nor the singer are separate from the community in which we sing. For these folk songs, the original stranvan, 'composers' are unknown. Instead, there are families of stranbêj, 'the performers.' These performers traveled through Êzîdî villages and performed songs for the people they visited mostly in nightly gatherings. The preservation of these songs was not only in their memorization, but in their constant narration. As I am saying this, I see perhaps the narrations were the archive. After the most recent genocide, the act of narration almost disappeared for a variety of reasons: performers' memories were hard hit, there was no space for us to gather as most of us had to live in camps for refugees or internally displaced people, and many of the older generation could not outrun the Islamic State or survive the hunger, thirst, or exhaustion of Shingal Mountain, the flight to Syria, or the return to Iraq and life in the camps. Just recently, another mass grave was found and excavated. People are calling it "Mothers'

Graveyard,” because all the bodies are middle-aged or older women. We don’t know how many songs are now completely forgotten.

Alana: Why was it so important to you to design the project this way? To focus on the singers and the community, not just the song?

Zédan: The life of every performer bears within it all the circumstances in which these songs and tales were remembered, preserved, and sung. Their own *serpéhatî*, ‘life (hi)stories,’ or, literally translated, “what fell upon their heads,” offer a chronology or record of events they lived through and how their lives affected, even changed, the songs they sang. When we understand the performers’ lives, we will also understand how the socioeconomic life of the Êzîdîs of Shingal impacted the songs themselves. For example we know that before this most recent genocide, performers were often not paid in cash, instead families would compensate them with dairy, wheat, other foods or clothes. Now, our singers live through weddings: a different economy and social environment that has fundamentally changed the songs and how they’re sung.

Alana: This project asks that you move between Êzîdî and Western concepts of archive. How does that movement feel?

Emad: In the Êzîdî community, the purpose of preserving history is not to be seen by others, but hope. All we possess is our past, our beliefs, our history, rife with defeat. For the West, documentation and its archives are important work; for us, our archive is all we have. We maintain our existence or don’t depending on whether we preserve or lose our archive.

The Êzîdî archive is undocumented. Its purpose is not to document history or set up a historical structure or derive truth. Its purpose is to provide meaning to the existence of this community, a means of survival, of narrating wars and annihilation in song such that these narrations touch the human

spirit and instill belonging and resistance: the transformation of myth into history, of history into a reality, a reality that can confirm the truth of myth.

Documentation and a physical archive for Êzîdîs is now necessary, but the history of Êzîdîs is scattered and complex. The writing of it will take years. And every Êzîdî person who leaves this life takes part of this history with them. We have lost so much history in these recent years. Those who remain in our communities are not the same. It is hard to look back, to remain committed to preservation. And for so long, our community has been both disinterested and afraid of documentation and tangible archives. We feared that all those documents, we would have to leave them behind or they would be destroyed by others. We worked to preserve our history ourselves, transmitting our own way. The Êzîdî community today has a different vision, a hybrid idea of archive. We realize that we are stronger than before, that we can survive, we can exist, and that the thing most likely to disappear now is our history.