

Rezan Shivan Aysif
The Role of Nature in Yezidism
Poetic Texts and Living Tradition



Universitätsdrucke Göttingen

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Abstract

This detailed study investigates the considerable role of nature and its elements in the Yezidi tradition, both as beliefs and practices. The focus is on the four elements of nature— fire, water, earth and air/wind – which are regarded as sacred in Yezidism. Several earlier publications on Yezidism mention the holiness of these elements without drawing attention to the considerable importance of beliefs and observances connected with them in Yezidi religious life. In other words, these elements have not yet been the subject of detailed systematic in-depth research. This study therefore constitutes an initial attempt to fill that gap.

The study draws primarily on the religious textual tradition in the form of religious poetic texts and living religious tradition, as well as other helpful sources such as religious sayings, religious material culture, observational method, qualitative interviews and secondary data. The study has mainly made use of the analytical and descriptive methods. Moreover, the *emic* point of view plays a role in interpreting oral religious tradition, documents and material culture, etc. The fieldwork of the dissertation was carried out in Yezidi areas in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in Northern Iraq.

This study consists of two parts including nine chapters in all. The first part explains the role of the natural elements in Yezidi religious beliefs and includes four chapters: Chapter One demonstrates the role of the light and other elements of nature in Yezidi implicit theology. Chapter Two explains the role of the sacred natural elements in the Yezidi cosmogonical and cosmological myths. In Chapter Three the focus shifts to the role of the sacred natural elements in the anthropogenic myth, the creation and the death of human beings. Chapter Four is dedicated to the role of the natural elements and their phenomena in Yezidi eschatology.

The second part deals with the role of the natural elements in religious practices and observances in five chapters: Chapter One discusses the role of nature and its four elements in Yezidi acts of worship and devotion, such as in prayers, in the rites of pilgrimage and in fasting. Chapter Two looks at the role of the natural elements in connection with religious places. Chapter Three explores the role of the natural elements

in religious feasts and festivals during the four seasons of the year. Chapter Four studies the role of the natural elements in religious customs as in rites of passage and religious customs of Yezidi daily life. It also deals with the prohibitions, taboos and religious healing practices concerned with the natural elements. Chapter Five is the last chapter of the thesis; it covers a number of religious symbols, objects and concepts directly connected to the sacred natural elements, such as *Berat* (Sacred soil ball), *Şerbikê Avê* (Jar of water), *Çira* (Lamp), etc.

The study concludes that the four elements of nature are venerated and holy in Yezidism based on the concept that they are the original source for the creation of all creatures. Moreover, natural elements and their manifestations play a central role in various aspects of Yezidi religious beliefs, practices and observances.

Zusammenfassung

Diese detaillierte Studie untersucht die bedeutende Rolle der Natur und ihrer Elemente innerhalb der yezidischen Tradition, sowohl in Bezug auf den Glauben als auch auf die Gebräuche. Der Schwerpunkt liegt hierbei auf den vier Naturelementen: Feuer, Wasser, Erde und Luft/Wind, die im Yezidentum als heilige Elemente gelten. Einige frühere Veröffentlichungen zum Yezidentum erwähnen zwar die Heiligkeit dieser Elemente, weisen jedoch nicht auf die fundamentale Bedeutung der damit verbundenen Überzeugung und Beobachtungen im religiösen Leben der Yeziden hin. Diese Elemente waren noch nicht Gegenstand einer detaillierten, systematischen und tiefgehenden Forschung - daher stellt die vorliegende Arbeit einen ersten Versuch dar, diese Lücke zu schließen.

Die Studie stützt sich in erster Linie auf die religiöse Texttradition in Form von religiösen poetischen Texten und religiösen Alltags-Traditionen. Auch andere Quellen wie religiöse Sprichwörter, religiöse materielle Kultur, Beobachtungsmethoden, qualitative Interviews und Sekundärdaten wurden hinzugezogen. In der Studie wurden hauptsächlich analytische und deskriptive Methoden angewandt. Darüber hinaus spielt der emische Standpunkt eine Rolle bei der Interpretation mündlich religiöser Überlieferung, der Dokumente und der religiösen materiellen Kultur. Die Feldforschung für diese Dissertation wurde in yezidischen Gebieten in der Region Kurdistan im Irak und im Nordirak durchgeführt.

Diese Forschungsarbeit besteht aus zwei Teilen mit insgesamt neun Kapiteln: Der erste Teil erklärt die Rolle der Naturelemente innerhalb des Glaubens der Yeziden und umfasst vier Kapitel. Kapitel eins behandelt die Rolle des Lichts und anderer Naturelemente in der impliziten Theologie der Yeziden. Das zweite Kapitel erklärt die Rolle der heiligen Naturelemente in den yezidischen kosmogonischen und kosmologischen Mythen. In Kapitel drei liegt der Schwerpunkt auf der Rolle der heiligen Naturelemente im anthropogenen Mythos, in der Schöpfung und im Tod des Menschen. Das vierte Kapitel widmet sich der Rolle der Naturelemente und ihrer Phänomene in der yezidischen Eschatologie.

Der zweite Teil befasst sich in fünf Kapiteln mit der Rolle der Naturelemente in religiösen Praktiken und Ritualen. In Kapitel eins wird die Rolle der Natur und ihrer vier Elemente in yezidischen Kulthandlungen und Andachtsübungen, wie z. B. in Gebeten, Pilgerritten und beim Fasten, erörtert. Kapitel zwei befasst sich mit der Rolle der

Naturelemente im Zusammenhang mit den religiösen Stätten. Kapitel drei untersucht die Rolle der Naturelemente in religiösen Festen und Feiern während der vier Jahreszeiten. Das vierte Kapitel untersucht die Rolle der Naturelemente bei religiösen Bräuchen wie Übergangsriten und religiösen Bräuchen des yezidischen Alltagslebens. Es befasst sich auch mit den Verboten, Tabus und religiösen Heilpraktiken im Zusammenhang mit den Naturelementen. Kapitel fünf ist das letzte Kapitel der Arbeit; es behandelt eine Reihe von religiösen Symbolen, Objekten und Konzepten, die direkt mit den heiligen Naturelementen verbunden sind, wie Berat (heiliger Erdball), Şerbikê Avê (Wasserkrug), Çira (Lampe) usw.

Die Dissertation kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die vier Elemente der Natur im Yezidentum verehrt werden und heilig sind, da sie die ursprüngliche Quelle für die Erschaffung aller Geschöpfe sind. Darüber hinaus spielen die Naturelemente und ihre Erscheinungsformen eine zentrale Rolle in verschiedenen Aspekten des yezidischen Glaubens, der Praktiken und der Rituale.

Kurtîya Vekolînê

Ev Vekolîneke bi awayekî têrûtesel rola giring a xweza û elemêntên wê di ola Êzdiyatîyê de li ser asta bawer û praktîzê vedikole. Cexitê dikete ser her çar elemêntên xwezayê; agir, av, ax û ba, ku bi pîroz dihêne naskirin di Êzdiyatîyê de. Piraniya vekolînên li ser Êzdiyatîyê hatîne encamdan, tenê amaje bi pîroziya van elemênta dane, lê vekolîneke taybet, tevkir û pispor derbarê rola xweza di bawer û praktîzên jiyana Olî de ne hatiye kirin. Lewra, ev vekolîne dibe bizaveke destpêkî bo pirkirina vî biyavî.

Vekolîn bi pile yek piştbestinê dike ser têkistên hozankî yên olî û teradişnên jiyana olî. Herwsa, çendîn jêderên din jî sûdbexiş bûn, mînak: gotinên olî, keltûra metriyalî ya olî, rêbazên çavdêrîkirinê, hevpeyvînên hemecor û jêderên lawekî. Serbarî hindê, vekolînê bi awayekî serekî rêbazên saloxdan û şirovekarî bi karîname. Li gel vê yekê jî, dîtina Îmîkî (*emîc*) rola xwe di ravekirina teradişinên serzarî yên olî, belgenome û keltûra metriyalî, htd de digêre. Biyava karê vekolînê, deverên Êzdiya li hirêma Kurdistanê Iraqê û bakorê Iraqê vedgire.

Vekolîn jî dû pişka, ku dibine neh çapter, pêk dihê: Pişka yekê, taybet e bi şirovekirina rola elemêntên xweza di bawerên olî yên Êzdiya de, di çarçova çar çaptera de: Ya yekê vekolînê li *Nûr* (Ronahî) û elemêntên xweza di Xudênasiya Êzdiya de encam dide. Çaptera duyê, rola elemêntên xweza yên pîroz di Afirandina Kinyatê de diyar dike. Çaptera siyê, bal dikişîne ser rola van elemênta di entropognî, afirandin û mirna mirovî de li gorî mitolojiya Êzdiya. Çaptera çarê, rola elemêntên xweza û diyardeyên wan di *Talî Dinya* yan *Talî Zeman* de aşkira dike.

Pişka duyê ya terxankiriye jî bo rola elemêntên xweza di piraktîz û helkeftên olî yên Êzdiya de, li jêr pênc çaptara de: Çaptera yekê, rola xweza û her çar elementa di rêkên perestînê de, wêkî di perwestebûnê, rê û risimên seredana Lalişê û rojîkirtinê de, xuya dike. Çaptera duyê, jî bo destnîşankirina rola elemêntên xweza li cihên olî de, hatiye danan. Di çaptera siyê de, rola elemêntên xweza di cejin û fîstevalên olî de di maweya her çar werzên salê de, zelal dike. Çaptera çarê, vekolînê li rola elemêntên xweza yên pîroz di nerêt (kestem) ên olî de dike, jî wan jî yên girêdayî rê û risimên derbasbûnê û jiyana rojane ya olî. Herwesa, wan kestemên têkeldarî qedexekirin, bedkarî, tabo, û çareseriyên praktîzî yên olî. Çaptera pêncê, ku dibe çaptera dawiyê jî vekolînê, pêk dihê

ji jimareka sîmbol, metiriyal û têgehên olî, ku peywendiyê rastexwe bi elemêntên xweza yên pîroz ve hene, wekî Beratê, *Şerbikê Avê, Çira*, htd.

Vekolînê çendîn encamên giring bi destvexistine, ji wan jî; xuya dibe, pîrozkirin û berzragirtina her çar elemêntên xweza li ser bingeha wê têgehê bûye, ku ev elemêntine bûyîne jêderên resen ji bo afrandina tev afrandiya. Zêdebarî hindê, elemêntên xweza û diyarên wan roleke navendî di pir biyavên hemecor bawer, praktîz û helkeftên olî yên Êzidiya de.

الخلاصة

هذه الاطروحة مخصصة لدراسة أهمية دور الطبيعة وعناصرها الأساسية في المعتقدات وممارسة الطقوس الدينية الإيزيدية، وذلك بالتركيز على العناصر المقدسة الأربعة، النار، الماء، التراب، الهواء. وعلى الرغم من تناول بعض الدراسات وبشكل جانبي وغير منهجي في التطرق إلى قداسة العناصر الأربعة في الديانة الإيزيدية ولكن دون الخوض في التفاصيل حول أهمية المعتقدات والطقوس المرتبطة بها في الممارسات الدينية وترك فجوات أساسية، لذلك تحاول هذه الاطروحة وبشكل منهجي وأكاديمي مليء تلك الفجوات بالاعتماد في المقام الأول على النصوص الأدبية الدينية المقدسة وتقاليد الحياة الدينية، ومن ثم على الارث المدون والتراث الديني الشفوي، وجمع المواد والمعلومات المطلوبة من خلال البحث الميداني وإجراء المقابلات النوعية وكذلك تدوين الملاحظات من خلال المشاهدات الشخصية في العمل الميداني في مناطق الإيزيديين في إقليم كردستان وشمال العراق، بالإضافة إلى الاستفادة من عدد من المصادر الثانوية. واعتمد منهجية البحث بشكل رئيسي على المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي في تناول موضوعات الاطروحة، حيث نستكشف من خلال ذلك أهمية وجهة النظر الداخلية في تفسير النصوص الدينية الشفوية وممارسة الطقوس والتراث المادي والعادات والتقاليد الدينية.

تتكون الاطروحة من قسمين رئيسيين منقسمين على تسعة فصول، يتناول القسم الأول دور وتفسير العناصر الطبيعية في المعتقدات الدينية الإيزيدية، ويتألف من من أربعة فصول، الفصل الأول يتطرق لدراسة مفهوم النور والعناصر الطبيعية في اللاهوت الديني الإيزيدي، الفصل الثاني مخصص لتوضيح والقاء الضوء على دور العناصر الطبيعية المقدسة في اسطورة خلق الكون عند الديانة الأيزيدية. أما الفصل الثالث فهو يبحث دور وتفسير تلك العناصر في اسطورة خلق الانسان ودوره حياته وما بعد مماته، في حين فقد خصص الفصل الرابع لتناول دور وأهمية العناصر الطبيعية الأربعة وظواهرها في اسطورة نهاية العالم.

اما القسم الثاني للاطروحة فهو يتناول دور العناصر الطبيعية في الطقوس والاحتفالات الدينية وينقسم على خمسة فصول: حيث يتطرق الفصل الأول على دور الطبيعة وعناصرها الأربعة في العبادات، كالصلوات ومناسك الحج والصيام. والفصل الثاني يبحث دور العناصر الطبيعية في الأماكن الدينية المقدسة. أما الفصل الثالث فهو يتعامل في دراسة عن دور العناصر الطبيعية في الأعياد والاحتفالات الدينية خلال فصول السنة الأربعة. بينما الفصل الرابع هو لدراسة دور الطبيعة وعناصرها الأربعة المقدسة في العادات والتقاليد الدينية كما هو الحال في العادات التي ترتبط بطقوس العبور والعادات المرتبطة بالحياة اليومية للإيزيديين بالإضافة

إلى العادات التي ترتبط بالمحرمات والمحظورات الدينية وأيضاً ممارسات العلاج الديني المعتمدة على العناصر الطبيعية. والفصل الخامس والأخير يتركز في البحث وتناول الرموز والمفاهيم الدينية ذات الصلة المباشرة بالعناصر الطبيعية المقدسة، مثل البرات (كرة مصنوعة من تربة معبد لالش المقدسة)، شريبيكي نافي (جرة الماء)، جر / (الشعلة المقدسة)، وغيرها من العناصر.

يختتم الأطروحة في تقديم استنتاجات تستكشف فيها أن تقديس وتبجيل العناصر الطبيعية الأربعة في الديانة الإيزيدية تستند على الاعتقاد بأنها المصدر الأصلي لخلق كافة المخلوقات وأن لتلك العناصر الطبيعية ومظاهرها دوراً رئيسياً في مختلف المعتقدات والطقوس والاحتفالات الدينية الإيزيدية.

Dedication

To

– The memory of the Yezidis who fell victims to terrorism during the genocide from the 3rd of August 2014 onwards.

– My wife Aishan and our son Yezdan.

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Rezan Shivan Aysif
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Abbreviations

Religious Texts

BH	<i>Beyta Hêvarî</i> (The <i>Beyt</i> of the Evening)
BKS	<i>Beyta Kanya Spî</i> (The <i>Beyt</i> of the White Spring)
BN	<i>Beyta Nisra</i> (The <i>Beyt</i> of Nisra)
DB	<i>Dû'a Bawiriyê</i> (The Prayer of Belief)
DÇ	<i>Du'aya Çirayê</i> (The Prayer of the Lamp)
DE	<i>Du'a Êzîdiyatîyê</i> (The Prayer of Yezidism)
DÎ	<i>Du'a Îmanê</i> (The Prayer of the Faith)
DM	<i>Du'a Me'rîfetê</i> (The Prayer of Knowledge)
DMI	<i>Dû'a Mirazê</i> (The Prayer of Wishes)
DMO	<i>Du'aya Morkirinê</i> (The Prayer of Baptism)
DN	<i>Du'a Nêvro</i> (The Noon Prayer)
DQŞ	<i>Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims</i> (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims)
DSS	<i>Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2</i> (The Morning Prayer, Version 2)
DT	<i>Du'a Tokê</i> (The Prayer of <i>Tokê</i>)
DZ	<i>Dû'a Ziyaretbûnê</i> (The Prayer of Pilgrimage)
PD	<i>Paş Du'a</i> (After Prayer)
QAD	<i>Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê</i> (The Hymn of the Creation of the World)
QAM	<i>Qewlê Aşê Mihbetê</i> (The Hymn of the Mill of Love)
QBBO	<i>Qewlê Bav Bekirê Omera</i> (The Hymn of Bav Bekir Omer)
QBE	<i>Qewlê Bê û Elîf</i> (The Hymn of B and A)
QBO	<i>Qewlê Babekê Omera</i> (The Hymn of Babekê Omera)
QÇ	<i>Qewlê Çarşembûyê</i> (The Hymn of Wednesday)
QD	<i>Qewlê Distrême</i> (The Hymn of I am Singing)

QDU	<i>Qewlê Dura</i> (The Hymn of the Pearls)
QEB	<i>Qewlê 'Ereb Begiya</i> (The Hymn of 'Ereb Begiya)
QEE	<i>Qewlê 'Erd û 'Ezman</i> (The hymn of Earth and Sky)
QERS	<i>Qewlê Ez Rojekê Sefer Bûm</i> (The Hymn of One Day I Made a Journey)
QH	<i>Qewlê Hevsarê</i> (The Hymn of Control)
QHB	<i>Qewlê Hemedê Babê</i> (The Hymn of Hemedê Babê)
QHBKB	<i>Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu?</i> (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning?)
QÎ	<i>Qewlê Îmanê</i> (The Hymn of the Faith)
QKM	<i>Qewlê Keniya Mara</i> (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes)
QLP	<i>Qewlê Lawê Pîran</i> (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran)
QM	<i>Qewlê Meha</i> (The Hymn of the Months)
QMC	<i>Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre</i> (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones)
QMI	<i>Qewlê Mirîdiyê</i> (The Hymn of Mirîdiyê)
QMJ	<i>Qewlê Miskîno Jaro</i> (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One)
QMM	<i>Qewlê Mewlê Me (=Qewlê Kasa)</i> , 'The Hymn of our Master (=The Hymn of the Cups)'
QMPXZ	<i>Qewlê Mûsa Pêxember û Xidrê Zênde</i> (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidrê Zênde)
QN	<i>Qewlê Nadir</i> (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge])
QNP	<i>Qewlê Nuh Pêxember</i> (The Hymn of the Prophet Noah)
QOXHC	<i>Qewlê Omer Xala û Hesên Çinarî</i> (The Hymn of Omer Xala and Hesên Çinarî)
QP	<i>Qewlê Pedşay</i> (The Hymn of the King)
QPHB	<i>Qewlê Pîr Hemedê Boz</i> (The Hymn of Pîr Hemed the Grey)
QQ	<i>Qewlê Qendîla</i> (The Hymn of [the Source of] the Lights)
QQF	<i>Qewlê Qere Ferqan</i> (The Hymn of the Black Furqan)
QQI	<i>Qewlê Qiyametê</i> (The Hymn of the End of the World)
QS	<i>Qewlê Seremergê</i> (The Hymn of the Moment of Death)
QŞB	<i>Qewlê Şêxûbekir</i> (The Hymn of Sheikh Êbekir)
QSÊ	<i>Qewlê Stiya Ês</i> (The Hymn of Stiya Ês)
QSMK	<i>Qewlê Silava Melikê Kerîm</i> (The Hymn of the Greeting of the Generous Angel)
QSU	<i>Qewlê Sura</i> (The Hymn of the Mysteries)
QT	<i>Qewlê Tercal</i> (The Hymn of the False Saviour)
QTM	<i>Qewlê Tawusî Melek</i> (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek)
QZM	<i>Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr</i> (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One)
seb.	<i>sebeqe</i> (Stanza of the Yezidi Religious Poetic Text)

Journals

AMIT	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan</i>
FKBKS	Fritillaria Kurdica. Bulletin of Kurdish Studies
FO	Folia Orientalia
IC	Iran and the Caucasus
JKS	The Journal of Kurdish Studies
JPCHEH	Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography, and Ecclesiastical History
MO	Manuscripta Orientalia

Other

CE	Common Era
cf.	<i>confer, compare</i> it is an indication for the reader to make a comparison between the topic being discussed and other material.
d.	died
DAIEA	<i>Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Eurasien-Abteilung</i>
DKAWW	<i>Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien</i>
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
ed.	Edition
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> , and so forth
EZIA	<i>Yezidi Zentrum im Ausland (Yezidian Centre outside Homeland)</i>
GOF	<i>Göttinger Orient Forschungen</i>
GSGG	<i>Graduiertenschule für Geisteswissenschaften Göttingen</i> (the Graduate School of Humanities in Göttingen)
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
ibid.	<i>Ibidem</i> that refers to the same author and source in the preceding reference.
IS	Iranian Studies
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or Islamic State)
ISZ	<i>Internationales Schreibzentrum</i> (International Writing Centre)
KhR	Khalil Jindy Rashow
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
LCSC	Lalish Cultural and Social Centre
lit.	literally
M.	Magazine
Mt	Mount
MZS	<i>Methodenzentrum Sozialwissenschaften</i> (Centre of Methods in Social Sciences)
n.	Note and Footnote
n.d.	Used where no date of publication is given
NAIP	New Age International Publishers
No.	Number

p.	page
pp.	pages
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PX	Pîr Xidir Silêman
RASGBI	The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland
s.l.	<i>sino loco</i> , is used when no place of publication is given
s.n.	<i>sine nomine</i> , is used when no publisher is given
sic	<i>sic erat scriptum</i> , thus was it written
Trans.	Translation and Translated by
v	Version
vol.	Volume
vols.	Volumes

Transcriptions

This study deals with three different alphabets, including Arabic, Arabic-Persian and Kurdish Bedirxan's Roman (Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet), but in quotations, they all have been orthographically adapted to the Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet and DMG script to suit the nature of the study.

1. Kurmanji Kurdish Alphabet

This alphabet is based on the Roman script introduced and developed by Celadet Bedirxan as presented in the periodical *Hawar* in 1932. It is regarded as the standard transcript used for Kurmanji Kurdish and is known as the Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet and locally called Kurdish-Latin alphabet.

This alphabet is used for all sources in the Kurdish language, such as religious poetic texts which are written in the Kurdish language and Arabic-Persian script. It is worth mentioning that many religious texts have already been published using this alphabet, such as in Kreyenbroek 1995: *Yezidism: its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition*; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect: Sacred Hymns and Religious Narratives of the Yezidi Tradition*, etc. I have written some of those religious texts with unwitting correction of mistranscription of separating or joining words and other components of the sentence. Furthermore, this system is applied to all the names of authors and their articles and book titles which are written in the Kurdish language and Arabic-Persian script, terms, names of the places, tribes, objects and persons in the Kurdish language. Geographical names and the names of villages that have no established form in English or are not familiar and known in the English language literature, such as *Kaniya Şivana* (the Spring of Shepherds) *Neb Darê* (Nine Trees), etc.,

has been used as such. Accordingly, the names of major locations (cities and towns) that have established forms in English are written in that form, such as Duhok, Khanke, Ba'adra, Khatara, etc.

- Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet is used for all sources in Kurdish language in this work:

	International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbol selection	Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet ¹	Notes and pronunciation examples
Short Vowels	a	e	Say
	ɪ	i	*schwa sound like in driver.
	u	u	June
Long Vowels	a:	a	Father
	e:	ê	Help
	i:	î	keep
	o:	o	Go
	u:	û	Moon
Consonants	b	b	Boy
	dʒ	c	Jump
	tʃ	ç	Choice
	d	d	Day
	f	f	Fire
	g	g	Good
	h	h	Hat
	ʒ	j	Version
	k	k	Book
	l	l	Lord
	m	m	Man
	n	n	Nice
	p	p	People
	q	q	[q], *the equivalent of the Arabic q sound.
	r	r	Very
	s	s	Sun
	ʃ	ş	Shine
	t	t	Time
	v	v	Voice
	w	w	West
x	x	The sound of the Scottish pronunciation of the 'ch' in Loch.	
j	y	yellow	
z	z	Zap	

¹ For the Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet on the basis of the Bedirxan's Roman script see Bedirxan, C. A. (2002), *Elfabêya Kurdî û Bîngêhên Gramera Kurdmançî* (Kurdish Alphabet and Kurmanji Grammar basis), Stockholm: Nefel, pp. 11-13.

According to Bedirxan, these two sounds below are not originally Kurdish, but some Kurds pronounce them.² Yezidi in Iraq also pronounce them, and they also exist in Yezidi religious literature.

ħ	ħ/h	The equivalent of the Arabic voiceless /ħ/, such as <i>ħayāt</i> (life) in Arabic and <i>beẓķirin</i> (love) in Kurdish.
Ẓ	ẓ/x	* The equivalent of Arabic sound <i>ġayn</i> . As in <i>axa</i> (aẓa) in Kurdish and <i>ġazāl</i> (gazelle, dear) in Arabic.
ʕ	[ʕ]	* Bedirxan's alphabet does not refer to the sound ʕ, which represents the Arabic 'ayn sound. This sound is pronounced in Kurmanji in some regions and it is used in many religious texts that are in this study. Such as <i>ādil</i> (fair) in Arabic and <i>ezman</i> (sky) in Kurdish.

2. DMG Script

This is used only for the names of authors and their articles and book titles which are written in the Arabic language and Arabic script.³

Notes on spelling

Generally Kurdish words will be transcribed exactly as they are pronounced by Yezidis in the Kurdistan region of Iraq: for example, *Sinceq* not *Senceq*, *Tok* not *Toq*, *Timaf* not *Tewaf*, *Evdê Reş* not *Ebdê Reş*, etc.

² Bedirxan 2002: 12.

³ Hildebrandt, T. (2007), "Die wissenschaftliche Umschrift der arabischen Sprache: Ein Leitfaden für die orientalistischen Fächer der Universität Bamberg", retrieved on 15 March 2018 from http://www.uni-bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/split_faecher/orientalistik/Dateien/Translit.pdf.

Introduction

*Av û ax û bayî û agir e
Dura sor ye bi xerx e ji bakir e
Çendî muxliq pê bi xatir e.⁴*

Water, earth, air and fire
The red *Dur* (Pearl) contains the original
seeds
It created all creatures.

The Yezidis are a minority religious group living in the Near East as the native land⁵ mostly in the Kurdistan region of Iraq as the centre of their religion and in Northern Syria and Southeast Turkey. Since the first half of the 20th century, Yezidis have established communities in Transcaucasia, having escaped religious oppression by the Ottoman Empire.⁶ A number of Yezidis from Transcaucasia moved to Russia and Ukraine, mainly as a result of economic hardship.⁷ In the second half of the 20th century and onwards, many Yezidis from their homelands fled the violence migrated to

⁴ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63. On the importance of the role of nature in religion, the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), in his book writes: “Nature is the first original object of religion.” Feuerbach, L. (1873), *The Essence of Religion*, Trans. by Alexander, New York: A. Asa and K. Butts, p. 2.

⁵ Most Yezidis say that their native land is *Kurdistana Mezîn* (great Kurdistan) which means in all parts of Kurdistan in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. Likewise, some Yezidis name these areas altogether *Êzîdîxan* (Yezidi’s land).

⁶ See Guest, J. S. (1987), *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival*, London & New York: KPI, pp. 187-196.

⁷ See Kreyenbrock, Ph. G. (2009), *Yezidism in Europe: Different Generations Speak about their Religion*, GOF, III, Reihe, Iranica, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, p. 42; Omarkhali, Kh. (2011-2012), “Yezidi Religious Oral Poetic Literature: Status, Formal Characteristics, and Genre Analysis. With Some Examples of Yezidi Religious Texts”, *Scrinium*, 7-8: *Ars Christiana, Scrinium*. JPCHEH, in *Memoriam Michail F. Murianov* (21.XI.1928- 6.VI.1995). R. Krivko, B. Louricé, A. Orlov (eds.), part II, p. 144.

European countries and particularly to Germany, as well as to the United States of America and Australia.⁸ Almost all Yezidis shared language is Kurmanji-Kurdish dialect.

The Yezidism is a monotheistic pre-Islamic Kurdish religious tradition that contains elements originating in ancient Iranian religions⁹ and ancient Mesopotamian culture.¹⁰ However, in the early 12th century CE, it was profoundly influenced by contact with the 'Adawiyya Sufi order.¹¹ Yezidism is not a scriptural religion and it does not have a sacred book such as the Bible or the Qur'an. Regarding this, several sources refer to *Mishefa Reş* (The Black Book) which consists of only fourteen pages and *Celwa* (The Book of Revelation) which is only eight pages,¹² however, their authors and sources are not clear and Yezidis do not believe in them and do not recognize them as their holy books.¹³ In that respect, I. B. Ğül (1933 d.) who is from the Yezidi princedom family says: "they [the Yezidis] say that our hearts are our books."¹⁴ Some religious men furthermore emphasize this belief when they say that God's light exists in the hearts and minds of Yezidis; therefore, Yezidis have a direct connection with their God and they do not need a mediator, a prophet, or a holy book to guide them in their lives.¹⁵

⁸ Regarding the Yezidi population, although there is no exact formal census data of the Yezidi population in the world, it is estimated to be around one million. Most Yezidis live in the Kurdistan region (perhaps 500,000 people). They are followed by those in the Diaspora, estimated to be approximately 200,000 Yezidis living in Germany and about 75,000 in the rest of European countries. Their numbers in those countries increased highly after ISIS attacked Yezidis in Iraq in August 2014.

⁹ Wahby, T. (1962), *The Remnants of Mithraism in Hatra and Iraqi Kurdistan and its traces in Yazidism The Yazidis are not Devil-Worshippers*, London: T. Wahby, pp. 2-10; Kreyenbroek, Ph. G. (1992), "Mithra and Ahreman, Binyamin and Malak Tawus: traces of an ancient myth in the cosmogonies of two modern sects", in Ph. Gignoux (ed.), *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religions; from Mazdaism to Sufism*, Paris, pp. 57-77; Kreyenbroek, Ph. G. and Rashow, Kh. J. (2005), *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect: Sacred Hymns and Religious Narratives of the Yezidi Tradition*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, p. 3; Rashow, Kh. J. (2005), "An Introduction into Yezidi Religion History", *Lalish*, No. 22, p. 10-29; Kaczorowski, K. (2014), "Yezidism and Proto-Indo-Iranian Religion", *FKBKS*, No. 3-4, pp. 113-118.

¹⁰ See Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 3; Rashow 2005: 21-23.

¹¹ Kreyenbroek, Ph. G. (1995), *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition*, New York: Lewiston, pp. 45-67; Allison, C. (2004) "Yazidi i. General", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, retrieved 20 March 2018 from <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/yazidis-i-general-1>; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 3-6. On Sheikh 'Adi ibn Musāfir (1070s-1160 or 1162 CE) the founder of 'Adawiyya, see Lescot, R. (1938), *Enquête sur les Yezidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjar*, Beyroth, pp. 22-33; Guest 1987: 15-18; kreyenbroek 1995: 28-31.

¹² On both books see Bittner, M. (1913), *Die Heiligen Bücher der Jeziden oder Teufelsanbeter: Kurdisch und Arabisch*, Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Vienna: DKAWW; Allison, C. (2001), *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, London: Curzon Press, pp. 47-49; Omarkhali, Kh. (2017), *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 39-55.

¹³ Empson, R. H. W. (1928), *The Cult of The Peacock Angel: A Short Account of The Yezidi Tribes of Kurdistan*, with a commentary by Sir R. C. Temple, London: Northumberland Press, pp. 146-153; Edmonds, C. J. (1967), *A Pilgrimage to Lalish*, London: RASGBI, pp. 49-50; Guest 1987: 141-158; Kreyenbroek 1995: 10-16.

¹⁴ Ğül, I. B. (1934), *al-Yazīdiyya Qadīman wa Hadītan* (The Yezidis: Past and Present), edited by Qustantīn, Z., Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, p. 85.

¹⁵ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xidir Berekat Keso, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

Yezidism is an oral religious tradition and its sacred knowledge, including the religious sacred hymns and narratives, was traditionally memorised and transmitted orally by the representatives of the priesthood and other knowledgeable people as a result of a long period of lack of a written tradition. The religious oral literature is represented mostly by religious poetry that has a set of categories that do not fully correspond to the Western concept of 'genre'.¹⁶ It includes such categories as *Qewl*, *Beyt*, *Du'a*, *Qesîde* and three types of songs: *Xizêmok*; *Payîzok* and *Robarîn*. It is generally believed that the authors of the Yezidi religious poetic texts were religious historical figures. These figures had a *keremat* (divine power) and possessed '*ulmê batin* (the hidden 'esoteric' religious knowledge).¹⁷ The majority of them lived between 12th-13th centuries.¹⁸ Sometimes their names and pseudonyms are mentioned at the end of the text or suggested by its title such as Sheikh Fexrê Adiyân, Pîr Reşê Heyran, Lawikê Pîran and some others. Unfortunately, little is known about most of these figures.¹⁹ The language of the majority of Yezidi religious poetic texts is the Kurmanji dialect of the Kurdish language. It is slightly different from the language of non-religious Kurdish literature and spoken Kurdish.²⁰ It is complicated and has a rich terminology of mystical, mythological and historical terms. There are also many Arabic and Old Persian terms in the texts. It is thus not easy for an ordinary Yezidi to understand the content of these texts. A better understanding of religious texts requires an excellent knowledge of the Kurdish language and enough information about the religious literature and tradition. There is not a known fixed number of poetic texts.²¹

Nevertheless, Yezidi religious oral poetic texts were published separately in writing form, and the following are some prominent examples in a roughly chronological order. In 1933, C. Bedirxan published the booklet *Nivêjên Êzîdîyan* (Yezidis' prayers), consisting of some religious poetic texts known as *Du'a*.²² In 1978, O. Celîl and C. Celîl published *Zargotîna Kurda* (Kurdish folklore) that consist of about 60 Yezidi religious texts (including variants).²³ Following that, in 1979, X. Silêman and X. Cindî published the

¹⁶ Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 23, 48; Omarkhali 2011-2012: 195.

¹⁷ From the interview with Qewlbêj (reciter of Qewl) Merwan Xelîl, conducted by Omarkhali on 02.03.2008, Nienhagen, Germany, cited in Omarkhali 2017: 98.

¹⁸ Şivan, Rêzan (2010), "Derwazeyek bo Çonenav Jiyan û Berhemê Qewlbêj Pîr Reşê Heyran" (An Introduction to Life and Qewls of Pîr Reşê Heyran), *Mehfel*, No. 1, p. 32; Omarkhali 2011-2012: 161-162.

¹⁹ See Hecî, B. F. (2002), *Bawerî û Mîtolojiya Êzîdîyan* (Belief and Mythology of Yezidis), Duhok: Hawar, p. 6; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 53; Omarkhali 2017: 91.

²⁰ For different examples about the language of the modern Kurdish poetry see Şivan, Rêzan (2012a), *Humanîzîm di Hozana Nû ya Kurdî da* (Humanism in the Modern Kurdish Poetry), Duhok: Hawar, pp. 235-369.

²¹ Omarkhali in her research states that she collected around one thousand of the available published and unpublished Yezidis oral poetic texts in private archives, including different versions. See Omarkhali 2017: 85.

²² Bedirxan, C. (1933), *Nivêjên Êzîdîyan* (Yezidis' prayers), Damascus: al-Taraqî.

²³ Celîl, O. and Celîl, C. (1978a), *Zargotîna Kurda* (Kurdish Folklore), Yerevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. Religious texts, pp. 302-464; Celîl, O. and Celîl, C. (1978b), *Zargotîna Kurda* (Kurdish Folklore), Vol. II, Moscow: Nauka. Religious texts, pp. 5-53.

book *Êzîdiyâtî* (Yezidism), a collection of about 20 religious texts.²⁴ In 1982, the Russian scholar M. B. Rudenko published a book on Kurdish ritual poetry, which included some Yezidi religious oral texts.²⁵ In 1985, X. Silêman published his book *Gundiyaî* (Village Lore) that included some religious hymns.²⁶ In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the Lalish centre published the cultural periodical *Lalish* (1993- until the present day) in 44 issues. It plays an important role in the textualisation of many Yezidi religious oral poetic texts. In 1996, X. Cindî published the book *Hindek Dûea û Dîrozên Êzîdîyan* (Some Yezidi Prayers).²⁷ In 2001, K. Anqosi published some religious texts in his book.²⁸ In 2004, the biggest collections of Yezidi religious texts were published by X. C. Reşo in his book in two volumes.²⁹ Ş. Q. Dinanî published the first volume of his book in 2012 and the second one in 2013.³⁰ The last important book on religious texts is Kh. Omarkhali's *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written* in 2017, which is a detailed study of almost all of the published and unpublished Yezidi religious texts.³¹

The existence of a large and historically continuous corpus of various types of Yezidi religious poems transmitted without the use of writing was unknown in the West until the 1990s.³² In 1995, Ph. G. Kreyenbroek published his book *Yezidism: its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition*³³ which included English translations of many Yezidi religious poetic texts; it is a pioneering work in this field and it was an initial work for this genre to be introduced to the Western scholarship.

As no written theological tradition exists in Yezidism and too little is known about the religious knowledge that is, or used to be, transmitted in each of the priestly lineages (*ocax*) to allow it be assumed that this knowledge can be regarded as a counterpart of what the West knows as 'theology', i.e. a discipline which systematically studies religious beliefs and theory, references to Yezidi beliefs in academic works generally assume an 'implicit theology' of the Yezidi religion, which can be deduced from references in the sacred hymns (*Qewl*) and a study of Yezidi rituals and observance. This 'implicit theology' will here be referred to by the Kurdish term *Xudênasî*. This work is based on the same assumption, which informs its methodological approach.

The present work aims to illustrate the considerable role that natural elements and symbols deriving from nature play in the Yezidi religious tradition by means of a

²⁴ Silêman, X. and Cindî, X. (1979), *Êzîdiyâtî: Li ber Roşnaya Hindek Têkêstêd Ayîne Êzîdîyan* (Yezidism: in the Light of some Religious Texts of the Yezidis), Baghdad: *Korî Zanyarî Kurdî*, pp. 17-114, 138-139.

²⁵ Rudenko, M. B. (1982), *Kurdsckaja Obrjadovaja Poezija* (Poxoronyy Prichitanija) [Kurdish Ritual Poetry (Funerary Lamentations)], Moscow: Hayka.

²⁶ Silêman, X. (1985), *Gundiyaî* (Village Lore), Baghdad: al-Hawadît, pp. 93-126.

²⁷ Cindî, X. (1996), *Hindek Dûea û Dîrozên Êzîdîyan* (Some Yezidi Prayers), s.l., publisher: Xelîl Cindî.

²⁸ Anqosi, K. (2001), *Ayîn û Qîrarê Dîne Êzîdîyê* (Religion and Law of the Yezidism), Tbilisi.

²⁹ Reşo, X. C. (2004), *Perin ji Edebê Dîne Êzîdîyan* (Pages of the Yezidi Religious Literature), 1st ed., in two volumes, Duhok: Spîrêz.

³⁰ Dinanî, Ş. Q. (2012), *Çend Têkêstên Pîrozên Ola Êzîdîyan* (Some Sacred Texts of the Yezidi Religion), vol. I, Duhok: Hawar; Dinanî, Ş. Q. (2013), *Çend Têkêstên Pîrozên Ola Êzîdîyan* (Some Sacred Texts of the Yezidi Religion), vol. II, Duhok: Hawar.

³¹ Omarkhali 2017.

³² See Kreyenbroek 2009: 23.

³³ Kreyenbroek 1995: 170-326.

description and analysis of relevant passages in the traditional religious texts in Yezidism, an examination of the results of a number of qualitative interviews with Yezidis, and a study of the role of these elements in rituals and observances. The focus is on the four sacred elements of nature: fire, water, earth and air/wind. As a descriptive analytical study, it will describe and analyze that role in religious beliefs and practices based on Yezidi religious poetic texts and living religious tradition.

The first part of the thesis deals with nature in the Yezidi beliefs and includes a study of light in Yezidi implicit theology, the Yezidi cosmogonical and cosmological myths, the anthropogonical myth, Yezidi eschatology and the end of the world. The second part deals with religious practices and includes festivals, observances, rituals and customs.

Nature in the Earlier Studies on Yezidism

It is worth mentioning here that is very rare to find studies specifically related to my research, therefore, I have referred to general sources that give indications about nature in Yezidism.

In 1852, G. P. Badger, in his work *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, gave some indications to the role of fire and light, as being elements symbolizing the sun, are also regarded as symbols of the good Deity by the Yezidis.³⁴ In this context, H. Ch. Luke, in his book *Mosul and Its Minorities* (1925), refers to the holiness of fire in Yezidism during the ritual of lighting lamps in Lalish. He regards Yezidis as nature-worshippers and describes the natural elements such as the water of springs and streams, and many types of trees in Lalish valley as holy. He gives an indication that some prohibitions are based on keeping nature clean.³⁵ R. H. W. Empson in *The Cult of The Peacock Angel: A Short Account of The Yezidi Tribes of Kurdistan* (1928), describes Yezidis as worshippers of nature. He also remarks on the holiness of water, springs, trees, the ritual of lighting lamps, baptism, and the use of trees in healing practices in Yezidism.³⁶ In some parts of her work *Peacock Angel: Being Some Account of Votaries of a Secret Cult and their Sanctuaries* (1941), E. S. Drower focuses on the holiness of trees, springs, stones and caves in religious places and shrines. She describes the *Sersal* feast and refers to the natural elements in its rituals.³⁷ T. Wahby, in his book *The Remnants of Mithraism in Hatra and Iraqi Kurdistan and its traces in Yazidism* (1962), gives some explanations about the holy caves and springs, and refers to the holiness of the four elements of nature in Yezidism. He also talks about the origin of *Berat* (as a holy soil) and baptism with holy water.³⁸ S. S. Ahmed, in his book *The Yazidis: Their Life and Beliefs* (1975), stresses the holiness of natural elements in religious places and sites of pilgrimage, e.g. trees and springs. Moreover, he gives information about the religiousness of baptism, *Berat* and indicates the importance of

³⁴ Badger, G. p. (1852 I), *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. I, London: Joseph Masters, p. 117.

³⁵ Luke, H. Ch. (1925), *Mosul and Its Minorities*, London: Martin Maclhose.

³⁶ Empson 1928.

³⁷ Drower, E. S. (1941), *Peacock Angel: Being Some Account of Votaries of a Secret Cult and their Sanctuaries*, 1st ed., London: Butler & Tanner Ltd.

³⁸ Wahby 1962.

the role of natural elements through the description of some religious feasts and festivals.³⁹

In 1995, Kreyenbroek published *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition*. His book is unique and exceptional in comparison with the earlier studies on Yezidism; as is clear from its title, its contents are specific and detailed about Yezidi beliefs, observances and textual tradition. The author presents valuable information on the veneration of natural elements by explaining the acts of worship and devotion during pilgrimage to Lalish. He explains the veneration of the four elements of nature in general and also trees, the water of springs, stones and caves in religious places and praying towards the sun.⁴⁰ In 1997, H. Hürmî in an article entitled “al-Tūfān” (Flood), pointed out the history of the flood myth in Yezidism and the role of water in it.⁴¹ In the same year, H. Ğindî [Rashow] in his two articles ‘al-Dalālāt al-Ramzīyat fī al-Adab al-Dīnī al-Ayzīdī, al-Ḥalaqat al-Ula wa al-Tānīyat’ (Symbolic Indications in Yezidi Religious Literature, Part I-II), referred to the origin of some religious symbols and objects such as *Şerbikê Avê* (Jar of water) and *Zergûz* (Walnut tree); he analyzes their meaning and symbolic indications based on Yezidi religious literature.⁴² Also, in 1998, in his book *Naḥwa Ma’rifat Haqīqat al-Diyānat al-Ayzīdīyat* (Towards a Knowledge of the Truth of Yezidi Religion), he writes about the history and origin of some religious rituals that have links with nature and gives explanations and interpretations about them, such as lighting lamps, performing baptism, and praying towards the sun. He gives references in general about the holiness of the four elements of nature and fire as the symbol of the sun on the earth. Furthermore, he refers to some natural elements in the rituals of feasts and festivals.⁴³

In 1999-2000, V. Voskanian in his article “Dewrêşê Erdê: The Yezidi Lord of the Earth”, shows the role of that figure in Yezidi religious beliefs and life.⁴⁴ In 2005, Kreyenbroek in collaboration with Kh. J. Rashow in the book *God and Sheikh Adî are Perfect: Sacred Hymns and Religious Narratives of the Yezidi Tradition*, gives clear explanations of some Yezidi observances that have a link with nature such as the water of holy springs, caves and caverns, some taboos and prohibitions based on the natural elements, *Berat* as holy soil and the water in baptism. Moreover, he refers to the respective roles of water, earth, *Dur* (pearl), Eternal Tree [*Dara Herberê*], *Qendîl* (Lamp), the four elements of which the world consists (Earth, Water, Wind, and Fire), their role in cosmogony and cosmology and how they are used to form the body of Adam in Yezidi myths.⁴⁵ In 2009,

³⁹ Ahmed, S. S. (1975), *The Yazidis: Their Life and Beliefs*, Miami: Field Research Projects.

⁴⁰ Kreyenbroek 1995.

⁴¹ Hürmî, H. (1997), “al-Tūfān” (Flood), *Roj*, No. 3, pp. 92-107.

⁴² Ğindî, H. (1997a), “al-Dalālāt al-Ramzīyat fī al-Adab al-Dīnī al-Ayzīdī, al-Ḥalaqat al-Ula” (Symbolic Indications in Yezidi Religious Literature, part I), *Roj*, No. 2, Hanover: EZIA, pp.7-39; Ğindî, H. (1997b), “al-Dalālāt al-Ramzīyat fī al-Adab al-Dīnī al-Ayzīdī, al-Ḥalaqat al-Tānīyat” (Symbolic Indications in Yezidi Religious Literature, part II), *Roj*, No. 3, pp. 7-31.

⁴³ Ğindî, H. (1998), *Naḥwa Ma’rifat Haqīqat al-Diyānat al-Ayzīdīyat* (Towards a Knowledge of the Truth of Yezidi Religion), Uppsala: Rabun.

⁴⁴ Voskanian, V (1999-2000), “Dewrêşê Erdê: The Yezidi Lord of the Earth”, *IC*, Vols. III-IV, IS, pp. 159-166.

⁴⁵ Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005.

Kh. Omarkhali in collaboration with K. Rezania in “Some Reflections on the Concepts of Time in Yezidism”, refers to the fact that there are three big mythological events in history named *tofana* (lit. ‘storm’, ‘flood’) through water (*tofana avê*), fire (*tofana agirî*) and wind (air) (*tofana ba*).⁴⁶

In 2010, B. Açıkyıldız in her book *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion*, explains baptism with water and holy caves; she also describes holy trees, springs and stones in religious places, the myth of flood, and the holiness of some natural elements during festivals and ceremonies.⁴⁷ In 2013, Omarkhali in her article “Rê û Rismên Cejna Xidir Nebî û Xidir Eylas li Cem Êzidiyên Kafasiyayê” (The Ceremonies of Xidir Nebî and Xidir Eylas Feast Among the Yezidis of the Caucasus), which is about the feast of *Xidir Lîyas*, refers to *Ava Heyatê/Ava Hêwanê* (the water of life or eternal water) and its role in the Yezidi mythology.⁴⁸ In 2013, Kh. Salih in an article under title of “The Yazidian Religion as a Religion of Canonizing the Elements of Nature”, which draws on secondary sources, explains nature in Yezidism in general and briefly, from page 17 to page 24, he discusses the veneration of the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, water and the earth, and also about some Yezidi religious objects, such as *Berat* as holy soil and *Girvân/Tok* (Sacred Shirt) as the symbol of the circle of the life.⁴⁹ In 2013, X. A. Ce’fo and Z. ‘E. Silo in their book *Jî Pîrozîyên Êzîdiyan* (Of the Yezidi Holy Objects), based on the religious oral tradition and some *sebeqes* of religious texts, give general information about some religious objects and symbols in Yezidism, such as the sun, the moon, *Çira* (lamp), *Berat*, *Zergûz* (walnut tree), the *Kaniya Sipî* (White Spring) and *Zimzim* spring.⁵⁰ In 2017, Omarkhali in her book *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written*, provides general information about *Dara Herberê* (the endless tree), water, sea and earth in the Yezidi myths of Cosmogony and Cosmology.⁵¹

The above sources have highlighted the following:

Several earlier studies mention the holiness of nature and focus particularly on some aspects of the natural elements through the description of the Yezidi religious places, observances, feasts and festivals, for example they refer to the water in baptism, fire in lighting lamps and when a tree, a spring etc., becomes a holy site or shrine of pilgrimage. They also give the historical references, general information on some holy objects such as *Berat* as holy soil. As a result, most of these publications elaborate on the holiness of the elements of nature without giving value to the role these elements play in beliefs and observances connected with Yezidi religious life. More clearly, a specific detailed or

⁴⁶ Omarkhali, Kh. and Rezania, K. (2009), “Some Reflections on the Concepts of Time in Yezidism, From Daēnā to Dîn. Religion”, in Ch. Allison, A. Joisten-Pruschke and A. Wendtland (eds.), *Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 336-352.

⁴⁷ Açıkyıldız, B. (2010), *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion*, London & New York: Replika and Tauris.

⁴⁸ Omerxali, X. (2013), “Rê û Rismên Cejna Xidir Nebî û Xidir Eylas li Cem Êzidiyên Kafasiyayê” (The Ceremonies of Xidir Nebî and Xidir Eylas Feast Among the Yezidis of the Caucasus), in E. Boyik (ed.), *Cejnên Êzîdiyan* (Yezidian Feasts), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, pp. 43-58.

⁴⁹ Salih, Kh. (2013), “The Yazidian Religion as a Religion of Canonizing the Elements of Nature”, *Lalish*, No. 38, pp. 8-29.

⁵⁰ Ce’fo, X. A. and Silo, Z. ‘E. (2013), *Jî Pîrozîyên Êzîdiyan* (Of the Yezidi Holy Objects), 1st ed., Duhok: Hawar.

⁵¹ Omarkhali 2017: 114-132.

near-comprehensive academic study dedicated to the role of the four elements of nature in Yezidi religious beliefs and observances is not found. Therefore, this academic and detailed study is an initial attempt to fill that gap.

Methodological Considerations

There are different definitions of the term “nature”.⁵² For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on the four elements of nature mentioned earlier, which are regarded as sacred and the origin of all other elements of nature in Yezidism.

As this research deals with a range of different religious topics, it requires various methodological approaches. I have mainly made use of the following methods.

Data collection Methods⁵³

It is worth mentioning, the fieldwork of this dissertation was carried out in Yezidi areas in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in Northern Iraq as their native lands and the centre of their religion.

The study is primarily based on the religious textual tradition in the form of religious poetic texts. Most of them were taken from Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect: Sacred Hymns and Religious Narratives of the Yezidi Tradition*, many others were taken from O. Celil and C. Celil 1978 II: *Zargotina Kurda* (Kurdish Folklore); Silêman and Cindî 1979: *Êzîdiyâtî: Li ber Roşnaya Hindek Têkêstêd Ayînê Êzîdîyan* (Yezidism: in the Light of some Religious Texts of the Yezidis); Silêman 1985: *Gundiyatî: Aliyekê Entirropolocî* (Village Lore). Reşo 2004: *Perin ji Edebê Dîne Êzîdîyan* (Pages of the Yezidi Religious Literature) in two volumes; Hecî 2002: *Bawerî û Mîtolojiya Êzîdîyan* (Belief and Mythology of Yezidis); Dinanî 2012 and 2013: *Çend Têkêstên Pîrozên Ola Êzîdîyan* (Some Sacred Texts of the Yezidi Religion) in two volumes. However, many of those religious poetic texts are taken from magazines – *Lalish*, *Roj* and *Mehfel* (on which see the list of the references).

In addition, religious sayings were collected and are used in the study whenever appropriate.

I also worked with religious material culture, objects and artifacts, such as the *Şerbîkê Arê* (The jar of water), the *Berat* (Sacred balls made from Lalish soil), etc.

Regarding participant observation and observations of performances, I participated in various religious practices, events, ceremonies and rituals in different villages and

⁵² See Oelschlaeger, M. (2005), “Nature”, in M. C. Horowitz and J. Berkey (eds.), *New Dictionary of The History of Ideas*, in 6 volumes, vol. IV, New York: Thomson Gale, pp. 1615-1620; Long, p. O. (2004) “Nature”, in J. Dewald and George C. Bauer (eds.), *Europe 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, vol. IV, New York: Thomson Gale, pp. 253-258. About relationship between nature and religion see Taylor, B. R. and Kaplan, J. (2005), “Introduction: Introducing Religion and Nature”, in B. R. Taylor and J. Kaplan (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, in 2 Volumes, London & New York: Thoemmes Continuum, pp. vii-xxi.

⁵³ For data collection methods in this research, these sources were beneficial: Flick, U. (2009), *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., London: SAGE; Baha, H. (2016), *An Introduction of Descriptive Analysis, Its Advantages and Disadvantages* (Master’s thesis), Lüneburg: Leuphana University; Kothari, C. R. (2004), *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, New Delhi: NAIP.

towns in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. He also observed various religious events, especially those exclusively performed by religious men in religious places. All of these helped him to collect important new and hitherto unpublished information.

One of the key sources for this study is extensive qualitative interviews with many Yezidi experts in religious knowledge. In total, I interviewed twenty-nine people in the homeland (Kurdistan region of Iraq) and in Germany (see the List of Interviewees). Amongst these were individuals such as Babê Şêx and Babê Çawîş as members of the Yezidi Spiritual Council, and most of the *Micênîrs* (custodians) of religious places in Lalish and other holy places. The method adopted is that of qualitative group and individual interviews, as well as non-directive (unstructured and semi-structured) interviews.

I took photos of holy natural elements, objects and features, religious material cultural, as well as religious practices, observances, rituals and customs that are based on the role and veneration of nature and its elements when it was necessary. There are fifty-seven images (see the List of Images in Appendices). The fact is that I as a member of the Yezidi community naturally facilitated connections with Yezidi community and its living religious tradition. As is well known, holy objects would not be readily available to non-Yezidis. However, I was able to conduct interviews with religious and learned men and to take photos of religious places and holy objects.

Secondary data (sources) such as documentaries, books, newspapers, journals, articles and the internet, in Kurdish, Arabic and English, have been consulted for this study.

Data analysis methods

Descriptive analytical. This method describes what exists, and tries to pave the ground for finding new facts: “The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present.”⁵⁴ Also, “The main characteristic of this method is that the researcher [...] can only report what has happened or what is happening. [...] The methods of research utilized in descriptive research are survey methods of all kinds, including comparative and correlational methods. In analytical research, on the other hand, the researcher has to use facts or information already available and analyze these to make a critical evaluation of the material.”⁵⁵

Interpretation. For the purpose of interpretation of oral religious traditions, documents, religious material culture, etc. the *emic* point of view will strongly be considered.

Notes on terminology and translation

In the English language literature, there are different translations of original Yezidi terms. However, I here use the original Kurdish terms with their translation in brackets, like *Dur* (pearl), *Nûr* (light), etc. This is done to avoid misrepresentations, mistranslations and overgeneralizations.

In religious Yezidi literature, there are synonyms for certain objects and concepts, for example, *Fîtîle/Çîra* (Lamps), *Tok/Kiras/Girîwan* (Sacred undershirt), and *Kîçîk*

⁵⁴ Kothari 2004: 2-3.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Lalish/Mehdera Boz̤a/Civata Boz̤a (the assembly of *Boz̤a*). Here the ones most often and most used in religious texts and in Yezidi communities will be used.

In general, a literal translation will be used for religious texts if no appropriate equivalent can be found in English. Even so, I use the name God for translating different names of God in Yezidism, such as *Ped̤sa*, *Xuda*, *Reb*, *Êzî*, etc., for a better understanding and a clear interpretation.

Almost all Kurdish texts and all religious textual and oral religious traditions are presented with English translations. When the cited source of Yezidi religious poetic texts is not in English, this means the English translation is entirely my own; if these religious texts are taken from Kreyenbroek 1995, *Yezidism: its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition*, and Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005 *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect: Sacred Hymns and Religious Narratives of the Yezidi Tradition*, then I have depended on their translations, though not always completely. For translating religious texts and religious terms in general, Omarkhali's (2017) book, *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written*, proved very helpful.

In some religious texts, there are different religious and mystical terms and metaphorical expressions, which are not always easy to translate precisely into English. Therefore, I have provided explanatory footnotes on those terms for a better understanding. I frequently consulted Yezidi experts in the religious tradition for translating the religious texts. English translations of the titles of articles and books in Kurdish and Arabic are given in brackets.

Notes on religious poetic texts

- Not all religious poetic texts have been published and most of them have more than one variant, so that there are differences (e.g. in the number of *sebeqes* or stanzas, their wording and grammar) between the various versions. Here several variants have been considered. I have taken them from different sources and most of them from the first publication.
- Owing to various prosodic factors, there are many unusual forms in the *sebeqes*; I refer to the 'correct' forms in footnotes.
- In most cases, *sebeqes* have been transcribed without punctuation, whilst punctuation is used in the translation.
- Some *sebeqes* have rarely been used more than once because their content touches on more than one theme; here the focus is each time on one theme, as in the *sebeqe* below: each line has a link with a different theme, the first line for baptism, the second line for fasting, and the third one for prayer:

Mor li Kaniya Sipî ye
Rojî bi navê Êzî ye
*Duba fer e û heqî ye.*⁵⁶

Baptism is by the water of the White Spring
 The fast is in the name of Êzî
 The prayer is obligatory and truthful.

⁵⁶ *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 8, in Sileyman, Ş. (2013), "Beyta Kaniya Sipî" (Beyt of the White Spring), *Lalish*, No. 38, p. 41.

Structure of the thesis

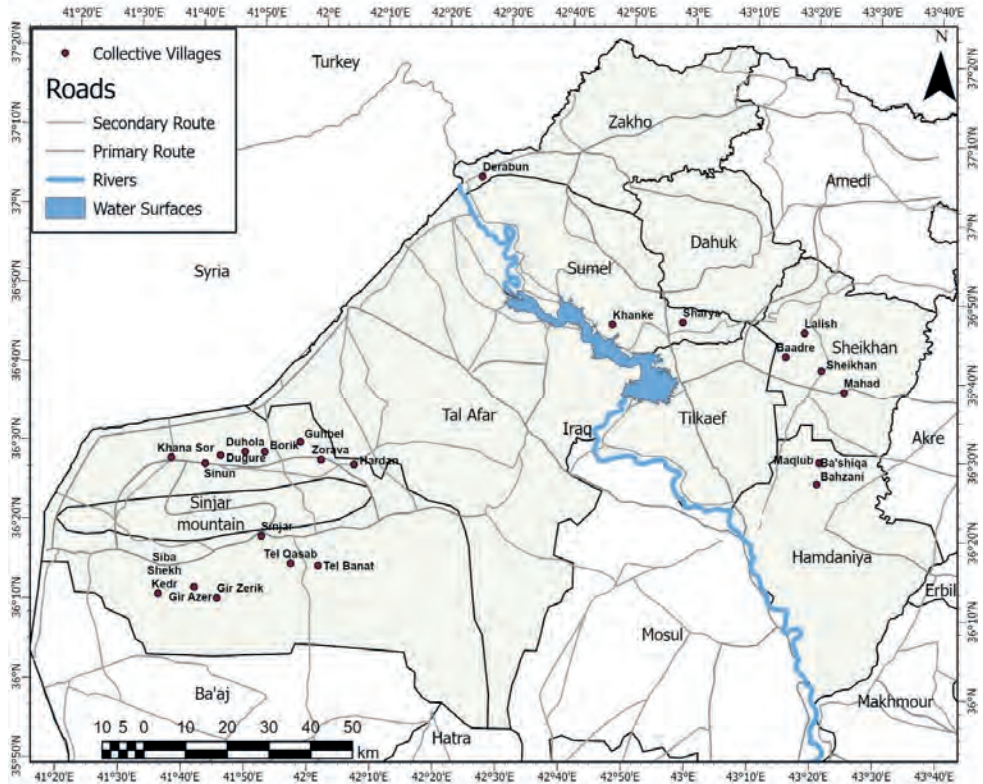
The study consists of an abstract, acknowledgements, a list of abbreviations, notes on transcriptions, an introduction, two parts that include nine chapters in all:

Part One focuses on the role of the natural elements in Yezidi belief through textual traditions and comprises the following four chapters.

Chapter I is concerned with light and other elements of nature in Yezidi implicit theology; it focuses on *Xudê* (God), *Tawusî Melek*, *Şêşims* and *Heft Sur* (the seven mysteries) and their links with light. Chapter II is about the sacred natural elements in the Yezidi cosmogonical and cosmological myths). It focuses on the role of nature in the creation myth, in particular on *Dur* (the Pearl), and its four natural elements: water, fire, earth and air as the fundamental elements in the creation of the world and in the emergence of life on earth; it also deals with the *Xudan* (Lord) of the four elements. Chapter III is dedicated to the role of the sacred natural elements in the creation of human beings and in the life and death of humans. Chapter IV is concerned with the role of nature and the four elements of nature in Yezidi eschatology.

Part Two is about the role of natural elements in Yezidi religious observances and it consists of five chapters. Chapter I discusses the role and veneration of nature and its four sacred elements in Yezidi acts of worship and devotion. It studies the role of the natural elements in prayers in the rites of pilgrimage, and in fasting. Furthermore, the role of natural elements in other acts of worship is described, such as swearing oaths by the natural elements. Chapter II explores the role of the natural elements in connection with religious places, notably Lalış, *Civata Boza* (the assembly of *Boza*), *Zêw* (Courtyard), *Mezar/Zehman* (Cemetery), *Qub û Avahîyê Xasa* (cupola and Mausoleum), *Nîşangeh* (Shrine), and *Silangeh* (the place of greeting). Chapter III is dedicated to the role and veneration of the sacred natural elements in religious feasts and festivals during the four seasons of the year. Chapter IV looks at the role of nature and its four elements in religious customs. It discusses Yezidi rites of passage, such as childbirth, marriage and funeral customs. Furthermore, it describes religious customs that form part of the daily lives of the Yezidis and that have a strong relation to nature, such as customs regarding washing, eating, sleeping and clothing. It also deals with the prohibitions and taboos concerned with the four elements of nature. The last section of this chapter is about healing practices. It consists of four subsections, each one of which describes one of the 'elements' in healing practices. Chapter V, as the last chapter of the study, is dedicated to the number of religious objects and concepts directly connected with nature, such as: *Berat* (Sacred soil ball), *Şerbikê Avê* (Jar of water), *Çira* (Lamp), *Dara*

Zeytûnê (Olive tree), *Zergûz* (Walnut tree), etc. Finally, there is a conclusion, a list of interviewees, a glossary of Yezidi terms, a list of images and a bibliography.



Map: The Yezidi Settlements in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in Northern Iraq.

Part I
Nature and Religious Beliefs:
The Role of Natural Elements in the Yezidi
Religious Beliefs

Chapter I

Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

Regarding the terminology used here, this ‘implicit theology’ will be referred to by the Kurdish term *Xudênasî*, which literally means ‘Knowing God’ and which could be translated as the knowledge of God. As a term in religious literature it is referred to as ‘theology’ but because it is based on religious oral tradition and is implicit in both traditional hymns and modern narratives, it could be called ‘implicit theology’.⁵⁷

This chapter seeks to describe and analyse how light and other elements play a role in implicit Yezidi theology through the figures of God, *Tavusî Melek*, *Şêşims* and *Heft Sur*. Additionally, it will discuss some beliefs about light in Yezidi theology that will be regarded as an initial study.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first deals with God as *Nûr* and God’s characteristics related to nature. The second section examines *Tavusî Melek* as *Nûr* and his characteristics related to nature. The third part further explores *Şêşims*, the lord of the sun, as *Nûr*, and his features connected to nature. The final section is concerned with *Heft Sur* (Seven mysteries) as *Nûr* and their relation to nature. Finally, there will be an evaluation of the findings.

⁵⁷ In this regard Kreyenbroek states “The Yezidi tradition can only be understood as the product of a long period of oral transmission. The lack of a written tradition has, as we saw, prevented the development of a formal theology.” (Kreyenbroek 1995: 19). Likewise, Omarkhali writes “[a]s Yezidism is based on an oral tradition, one can hardly speak of Yezidi ‘theology’ or assume the existence of a single codified system of belief; they may differ from region to region and the Yezidi ‘theology’ up to now can be called ‘implicit’” (Omarkhali 2017: 25).

However, before the first part of the chapter, it is worth mentioning, in Yezidism, there are several names for God and various forms of address for God that are usually used in the religious literature.⁵⁸ The names are of Iranian origin in the Kurdish language, such as *Xudê/Xweda* (God), *Ezda/Yezdan* (God), *Êzî* (God), *Xudawend/Xudavend* (Lord), *Xudan* (Lord), *Padişa* (King), *Şah* (King), *Mîr* (Prince), but also from Arabic: *Xaliq* (Creator), *Allah* (God), *Elahiyo* (My God), *Melik* (King), *Reb/Rebî* (Lord, My Lord). There is a hymn called *Qewlê Hezâr û Yek Nav* (the Hymn of the Thousand and One Names), which focuses on these names. It must be understood that in this work, the single name “God” has been used for all these names because they all, ultimately, mean God.

The following religious texts refer to God as having a thousand and one names:

<i>Pedşayê min î hezâr û yek nav e</i>	My King (i.e., God) has a thousand and
<i>Li ba wî ev dinya se‘at û gav e, ...⁵⁹</i>	one names
	For him, this world is a matter of an hour,
	an instant, ...

Also, in:

<i>Pedşayî hezâr û yek nav li xo dana ye</i>	My King has a thousand and one names
<i>Navê mezin her Xuda ye.⁶⁰</i>	The greatest name is <i>Xuda</i> (God).

Ezda, *Xuda Şah* and Pedşa:

<i>Ezdayê min Xuda ye</i>	My creator is <i>Xuda</i> (God)
<i>Şa ye, Pedşa ye</i>	[He] is the Lord, [and] the King ⁶²
<i>Hezâr nav pê daye.⁶¹</i>	[He] is called by one thousand names.

As regards the terms *Nûr* as light, *Dur* as pearl and *Sur* as mystery, these are literal translations, but according to Yezidi tradition as explained in this chapter, their meanings are much deeper. For this reason, I have here used the original terms. Moreover, the term *Heft Sur* is often translated as Seven Mysteries, Seven Holy Beings, Seven Divine Beings and/or Seven Angels. There are several meanings for one term but the original term, which is *Heft Sur*, is used here.

⁵⁸ On the names of God in detail see Kreyenbroek 1995: 91-99; Omarkhalî, Kh. (2009), “Names of God and Forms of Address to God in Yezidism with the Religious Hymn of the Lord”, *MO*, 15, 2, pp. 13-24.

⁵⁹ *Qewlê Hezâr û Yek Nav* (The Hymn of the Thousand and One Names), seb. 1, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 74.

⁶⁰ Text details are unknown, in Reşo, X. C. (2004), *Perin ji Edebê Dîmê Êzdiyan* (Pages of the Yezidi Religious Literature), 1st ed., vol. I, Duhok: Spirêz, p. 107.

⁶¹ *Qewlê Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî* (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 I: 556.

⁶² They are the two names of God in Yezidism.

1 God as *Nûr* and His Characteristics Related to Nature

The term *Nûr* can be translated literally as light, but according to Yezidi tradition, it has a wider meaning and it extends much further. This section will describe and explain God as *Nûr* and His characteristics related to nature through two main themes.

1.1 God as *Nûr*

God as an eternal Nûr. In the Yezidi tradition and according to the religious literature, God is an eternal *Nûr* and always gives light and is the source of light:

*Êrifa we go ye
Pedşê min her hebû ye
Nûr bû, nûr lê çû ye.⁶³*

Wise men have said
My King (i.e., God) is eternal⁶⁴
[He] was light and the light has come from
Him.

God existed as light before the creation of the world. God was light when He was in *Dur* (a pearl), that is, before *Dur* exploded and created the world:

*Pedşa li nav durê dûlxwazê e
Nûra wî bi sê bezar û sê libas e
Navek ji yê Xudê mirazê e.⁶⁵*

[Our] longing is for King (i.e., God) in the
pearl
His light has three thousand and three
forms⁶⁶
One of God's names is the object of [our]
wishes.

Also, in:

*Berî 'erda, berî 'ezmana
Xudê hebû, nûrî nûran e
Ji qudretê kewn kêr beyan e, ...⁶⁷*

Before earth, before sky
God existed, the light of lights
From whose Might was created the
universe, ...

God as *Nûr* is the designer of all designs, i.e., the creator of all creatures:

*Ewl Pedşayê min nûr bû
Neqaşê neqşê hur bû
Ji berî xet û kîtêb û defter û mişur bû.⁶⁸*

In the beginning, my King (i.e., God) was
Nûr
[He] was the designer of detailed
designs⁶⁹
Before writing, [holy] book, copybook
and scripture.

⁶³ *Qewlê Pîr Hemedê Boz* (The Hymn of Pîr Hemed the Grey), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 I: 552.

⁶⁴ Literally, 'always exist.'

⁶⁵ *Dû'a Mirazê* (The Prayer of Wishes), seb. 1, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 279.

⁶⁶ This is an Arabic word that literally means 'garments.'

⁶⁷ Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 I: 107.

⁶⁸ *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu?* (The Hymn of Where was [God] at the beginning?), seb. 5, in Reşo 2004 I: 259.

⁶⁹ Literally, 'He was an engraver of small things.'

Furthermore, God as *Nûr* lighted the sun, the moon and the entire universe, i.e., God created them:

Ew qesira cehwer binyat
Roj û heyv ji nav hilat
*Bi wê nûrê rubn dibin çendî kinyat.*⁷⁰

That palace whose basis is jewellery
 Sun and Moon rose from it
 From that light, all the universes are
 lightened.

Moreover, *Nûr* in *xerza nûranî* (luminous seed) solidified the earth and established life on it in the time of creation:

Wekî 'erd û 'ezman nedisekinî
Lalişek pêş miqabil dinijimî
Mihbeta xerza nûranî di nav da
*disekinî.*⁷¹

When the earth and the sky were not yet
 stable
 [He] created a form of Lalish opposite
 them⁷²
 The love of the luminous seed, acting as
 leaven,⁷³ came to dwell in it.

Be'dî çil salî bi hijmar e
'Erdî bi xo ra negirtibû heşar e
Heta mihbeta xerza nûranî bi nav da
nedihinare.

Afterwards, count forty years:
 The earth did not become solid⁷⁵
 Until the luminous seed of Love, acting as
 rennet,⁷⁶ was sent into it.

Kû Laliş dibate
Li 'erdê şîn dibû nebat e
*Pê zeyinandibû çiqas kinyat e.*⁷⁴

When Lalish came
 Plants began to grow on earth
 All creations were embellished by them.⁷⁷

On this belief, the Yezidi author X. C. Reşo says, “*Xerzê nûrî* (luminous seed) is leaven; any leaven that creates human beings, animals, plants, etc., that light is the cell of life.”⁷⁸

God is *Nûr* as the holy light for worshipping. Also, this *Nûr* is the symbol of humans’ love and passion for God:

⁷⁰ *Qewlê Nadir* (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 20, in Hekarî 2005: 175.

⁷¹ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 58-60.

⁷² “I.e., when earth and heaven had not yet come to rest, a celestial counterpart of Lalish was created outside these”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 59, n. 14.

⁷³ “I.e., causing the world to grow solid and become as it is”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60, n. 15.

⁷⁴ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 32, 34 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61-62.

⁷⁵ “Lit. took solidity unto itself”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n. 21.

⁷⁶ “Lit. ‘leaven, yeast’; since the substance in question causes liquids to coagulate, the translation ‘rennet’ seems preferable here”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n. 23.

⁷⁷ “Lit. existing things”, Kreyenbroek 1995: 180, n. 39.

⁷⁸ Reşo 2004 I: 154, n. 1.

Ev bi xo dîperiste
Mihbet her yek û best e
Ev nûr bû bi xo dîperiste.

He worshipped himself
 Love was always one, and conscious
 He was *Nûr*, worshipping himself.

Pedşê min nûr bû, nûr bate bal e
'Aşiq celîl e, me'şûq celal e
Mêr dîpîrsî ew bal e.⁷⁹

My King (i.e., God) was *Nûr*, and *Nûr*
 came from him
 The Lover is splendid, and the beloved is
 splendor⁸⁰
 A Man asked about these things.

The *Nûr* is the source of the Yezidis' veneration of light in general. Consequently, Yezidis believe that the path of their religion is the path of light and brightness:

Rêka me nûr e zerbav e
Ev ronah ye, ew tav e
Ji tarî, tav dave.⁸¹

Our way is light and pious being⁸²
 It is light and sunshine
 From darkness, it returned light.

God as light in other Yezidi traditions. Religious texts refer to the light of the sun as a manifestation of the light of God. Therefore Yezidis pray with their faces towards the light of the sun as the light of God: in *Du'a Şîfaqê* (the Dawn Prayer), light and the sun are regarded as the symbols of the supreme God:

Ya mêrê (mîrê) li ber erkanê
Ya siba roj û ronkayê
Ya Xudayê bilînd, Xudanê sozdayê.⁸³

O holy being of obligation
 O morning of sun and light
 O supreme God, the Lord of promise.

In a version of *Du'a Sîpêdebê* (the Morning Prayer) which is performed in the direction of the sun, all its *sebeqe*s start with the phrase *Ya Rebî* (O Lord) and the first *sebeqe* starts with *Xwêdeyo* (O God):

Xwêdeyo! ji bona şanê te, şuna te
Ji bona Padşahiya te.⁸⁴

O God! For the sake of your abilities and
 your doctrine
 For the sake of your Kingship.

Also, another version of the Morning Prayer refers to how, from *Nûr* (i.e., God), light brightened (i.e., the light of the sun). At the end of the *sebeqe* this light is addressed as "Creator":

⁷⁹ *Qewlê Bê û Elîf* (The Hymn of B and A), seb. 3, 4, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 72.

⁸⁰ "In the Yezidi tradition, the word 'beloved' is thought to refer to God; 'lover' to Tawusi Melek (KhR)", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 72, n. 60.

⁸¹ *Qewlê Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî* (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.

⁸² "Lit. 'a good man,' the term *zerbab* is often used for pious mystics", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 211, n. 89.

⁸³ *Du'a Şîfaqê* (The Dawn Prayer), seb. 4, in Reşo, X. C. (2004), *Perin ji Edebê Dîne Êzîdîyan* (Pages of the Yezidi Religious Literature), 1st ed., vol. II, Duhok: Spîrêz, pp. 970.

⁸⁴ *Du'a Sîpêdebê* (The Morning Prayer), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 978.

<i>Sibeye roj zeriqî</i>	The sun shone in the morning
<i>Nûr ji nûrê şefiqî</i>	From light brightened the light
<i>Melek Emeredîn li ber tîfîqî</i>	Angel Emeredin was created from it
<i>Sibhane ji navê te Xaliqî.⁸⁵</i>	O Creator, praise to your name.

In *Du'a Rojhilatî* (the sunrise prayer), while facing the sun Yezidis say the phrase *Ya Rebî* (O my Lord):

<i>Ya rebî! tu Xudayî, tu Pedşayî</i>	O my Lord! You are God, you are King
<i>Tu 'elîmê'ilmayî</i>	You are the Omniscient
<i>Tu xundkarê ser çend Pedşayî.⁸⁶</i>	You are the ruler over all kings. ⁸⁷

All the *sebeqes* of *Du'a Nîvro* (the noon prayer, DNÎ) also start with the phrase *Ya Rebî* (O my Lord), recited while facing the sun:

<i>Ya Rebî! tu me û sunetê bixune dîwana</i>	O my Lord! You invite us and our
<i>xas û momînet jor e</i>	traditions to the assembly of holy beings
<i>Ya Rebî! her tu yî, her tu yî, her tu yî.⁸⁸</i>	and good believers
	O my Lord! You are the only one who is
	eternal.

Regarding the connection between God and the light of *Çira* (lamp), in religious texts candles are symbols of God's light on earth, as in *Du'aya Çirayê* (the prayer of the lamp, DÇ):

<i>Çira çira</i>	The lamp, the lamp
<i>Ji mêra ra danî</i>	Lit for holy men
<i>Ji nûra rehmanî</i>	From the light of the Merciful One's
<i>Ji teqbîra rehmanî.⁸⁹</i>	(God)
	From the greatness of the Merciful One.

Further, *Çira* is the symbol of worshipping God as light:

<i>Mirîdî bi surê girtin rêzan e</i>	Mirîds ⁹¹ know God ⁹² by the mystery
<i>Li pêşiya wan gurîbû mom û çiran e.⁹⁰</i>	Wicks and lamps are lit in their presence.

<i>Erkanek jê rastî</i>	One of the obligations is truth
<i>Padşa ji ba xwe vegubastî</i>	King (i.e., God) sent it from Himself

⁸⁵ *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 975.

⁸⁶ *Du'aya Rojhilatî* (The Sunrise Prayer), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 980.

⁸⁷ You are God of all gods.

⁸⁸ *Du'a Nîvro* (The Noon Prayer), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 984.

⁸⁹ *Du'aya Çirayê* (The Prayer of the Lamp), seb. 1, in Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 57.

⁹⁰ *Du'a Mirîdîyê* (The Prayer of Mirîds), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1011.

⁹¹ I.e., Pupil: general caste of people of the Yezidi religion.

⁹² In Yezidism, the name *Rêzan* (literally, the path of knowledge), which could be translated as leader or scholar, is one of God's names.

*Bû mom û çirayê pêşiya wan veguhastî.*⁹³ It became a wick and a lamp that lightened their way.

Some of the Yezidis' religious learned men, and reciters of religious texts (*Qewlbêj*), assert that *Nûr* is the manifestation and symbol of God. There are several reasons for this and the major one is that the both are depicted as the Creator (s) of all creations, including the sun, the moon, other natural phenomena, and human beings. Some Yezidis say, "God is our belief, while *Nûr* is our belief too".⁹⁴

To conclude, the information provided above confirms that God is an eternal *Nûr*. He is the source of light and a holy light to be worshipped; therefore, the light of the sun represents the light of God for example, Yezidis pray facing the light of the sun.

1.2 God's characteristics related to nature

This section will describe God's characteristics that have a link with nature. The main themes are as follows:

1.2.1 God is the creator of nature and every creature

In Yezidi belief, with no doubt, God is the only one with absolute power and the creator of all creatures and nature. In the beginning, God created a *Dur* (pearl) with its four natural elements as the original source and the foundation of the other creatures in the world:

'Ebditu li me'bûd, lift û cema, nabit fîne Worshipping God, attraction and beauty
Peşayê min êkê bi tinê are immortal
*Enwê sewirand bû çendî dinê.*⁹⁵ My King (i.e., God) is the only one
He created all the world.

Paşê min î cebar e My King (i.e., God) is the all-powerful
Ji durê'efîran dibûn çar e Created the four [elements] from the
*Ax e û av e û ba ye û nar e.*⁹⁶ Pearl:
Wind, earth, water and fire.

Li wê nebû bi êkcar e Nothing existed there
Dura sor ye maldar e The red pearl is plentiful
Av û ax û bayê û agir disipare. Water, earth, air and fire are its elements.

Av û ax û bayê û agir e

⁹³ *Du'a Xerqe* (The Prayer of the Xerqe), seb. 10 in Reşo 2004 II: 1032.

⁹⁴ From the interviews with Se'îd Aliyas Nabo, 22.09.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqî Kurdistan; Xidir Berekat Keso, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqî Kurdistan; Aliyas Mîrza Derwêş, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq; Hesên Xudêda Garis, 06.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq.

⁹⁵ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 2, in Hecî, B. F. (1994a), "Stêrnasî û Hesabdârî û Qewlê Meha li Cem Êzidiya" (Astrology, Calculation and the Hymn of the Meha Months of the Yezidis), *Lalîş*, No. 2&3, p. 23.

⁹⁶ *Qewlê Şêxûbekîr* (The Hymn of Sheikh Ûbekîr), seb. 25, in Silêman 1985: 100.

*Dura sor ye bi xerz e ji bakir e
Çendê muxliq pê bi xatir e.⁹⁷*

Water, earth, air and fire
The red *Dur* contains the original seeds
It created all creatures.

1.2.2 God is one and has dualistic natural powers

The topic here is God's power as the source of dualistic powers in nature, and notably the phenomena that include light and darkness, day and night, hot and cold, etc. It will be explained and described through these themes:

Day and night:

*Pedşê min sur li sema
Xudanê şev û roj û dema
Ji ba wî îtîin kerema.⁹⁸*

My King (i.e., God) is the Mystery in the sky
[He is] the lord of night, day and all times

*Ew bû cara ji mêj e
Pedşê min quntar kir şev û roj e
Li nav da dana behîşt û doj e.⁹⁹*

From Him comes grace.

*Ya cebar, ya cebêr, ya pîrî kar
Ya Xundikarê ber û behir
A Xaliqê leyl û nehar ya Rebî! îsmek
sitar.¹⁰⁰*

It was a long time ago
My King (i.e., God) organized night and day
Placed paradise and hell into them.

O Mighty, all-Powerful, Pirî Kar¹⁰¹
O Lord of the desert and sea
O creator of the night and day, O Lord!
Your name is saviour.

Light and darkness:

*Textê Melikê Cebare
Pedşayê min tarî û ronayî îmane xwar e
Xasa pê bestbû firwar e.*

From the Great Throne of God
My King (i.e., God) brought down
darkness and light
Holy men promised by Him.

*Textê lê dibû Siltan
Pedşayê min tarî û ronayî dane 'erd û
'ezman
Xasa pê bestbû îman.¹⁰²*

The throne where Sultan (i.e., God) is
My King (i.e., God) gives darkness and
light to earth and sky
In whom the holy men believed.

⁹⁷ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 20, 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

⁹⁸ *Qewlê Pedşay* (The Hymn of the King), seb. 4, in Bozani 1997: 111.

⁹⁹ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 5, in Hecî 1994a: 23.

¹⁰⁰ *Du'a Nezerê, Şaxê 1* (The Prayer Against the Evil Eye, Version 1), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 996.

¹⁰¹ In Yezidi religious literature, there is no information found about the name Pirî Kar, perhaps he is a Yezidi mythological figure and is from the caste of Pîrs.

¹⁰² *Qewlê Texta* (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 4, 5, in Bâqasirî, 'A. S. (2003), *Mergeb* (Princedom), Duhok: LCSC, Khabat, p. 260.

Also, as a tradition, Yezidis swear an oath by “*Xudanê Şev û roja*” (lord of day and night). Hot and cold: God’s power consists of ice the elements (i.e., cold) and fire (i.e., hot):

<i>Textê melikê semed a</i>	The throne of the eternal God
<i>Bebreke û dû mewc dida</i>	Is the sea that gives two waves:
<i>Yek agir e û yek cemed a.</i> ¹⁰³	One is fire and one is ice.

Life and death, growth and fall: Yezidis believe that God gives both life and death, growth and decline in nature:

<i>Tu dişkênî û dicebirînî</i>	[O God], you break, and you mend
<i>Tu sax dikey û dimirînî</i>	You give life and you give death
<i>Tu rehmekeê bi me da bibarînî.</i>	Please shower us with mercy.

<i>Tu dibey û distînî</i>	[O God], you give, and you take
<i>Geş dikey û diwerînî</i>	You cause growth and decline
<i>Tu rehmekeê bi me da bibarînî.</i> ¹⁰⁴	Please shower us with mercy.

On this point, many learned religious men emphasize that God is one, but has dualistic powers such as light and darkness. This is because God is the creator of all creatures and all powers, and nothing is out of His control.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, and on the basis of the religious literature, this feature of God has many interpretations in religious philosophy.

Yezidism is a monotheistic religion, not a dualistic one; it believes in one God as the creator of everything and the source of all types of dualisms in nature, which are light and darkness, cold and hot, growth and fall, and as the emitter of life and death. Moreover, God is the source of a dualism that is not antagonistic and separate but is reconciled and integral within nature. In other words, in Yezidism, natural phenomena such as day and night, light and darkness, etc., complement each other and neither phenomenon can exist without its opposite. Furthermore, this dualism known as light and darkness has been in a permanent conflict since the beginning of the creation and is also infinite and unlimited in nature.¹⁰⁶

1.2.3 God’s power exists in nature and is the ruler of nature

At the beginning of creation, by God’s power, *Dur*, with its natural elements (water, soil, stone and air) was suspended in space:

¹⁰³ *Qewlê Nadir* (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 7, in Hekarî 2005: 173.

¹⁰⁴ *Qewlê Pedşay* (The Hymn of the King), seb. 42, 43, in Bozanî 1997: 119.

¹⁰⁵ From the interviews with Baba Çawiş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraq; Kurdistan; Hecî Mirad Keçel, 08.07.2015, Boza village, Iraq; Hesên Xudêda Garis, 06.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq.

¹⁰⁶ The second type of dualism in Yezidism is human (i.e., ethical) dualism, a dualism of good and evil. In religious texts and beliefs, God is referred to as the source of good and evil. As in these religious texts: “*Ji ba te tîn xêr û şerê*” (From you [God] come good and evil), from QS, seb. 26, in Reşo 2004 I: 143. Also, “*Ya rebî xêra bidey, şera wergerîn*” (O God, give good things, avert evil), from PD, seb.1, in Reşo 2004 II: 982. Further, “*Xêr û şer libin destê te bûn*” (Good and evil were in your [God] control), from QS, seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 115.

<i>Dura sor wa li bewa ye</i>	The red pearl is in space
<i>Bi qudreta Xudê rawesta ye</i>	It is suspended by God's power
<i>Ya bi av û ax û ber û ba ye.</i> ¹⁰⁷	With its water, soil, stone and air.

In a part of *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (the Hymn of Wednesday, QÇ), it is said that on the first Wednesday of the Eastern April of each year, life is renewed in nature and in plants by God's power:

<i>Li çarşembwê xoş bû jîyan</i>	Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays
<i>Kesik bûn deşit û çiya û zevî û zozan</i>	Plain, mountain, field and pasture are
<i>Hemû bi kerema Pedşê min î</i>	adorned with plants
<i>Yezdan.</i> ¹⁰⁸	All those by the mystical power of my
	King (i.e., God) Yezdan.

Moreover, a *sebege* from *Qewlê Hezar û Yek Nav* (the Hymn of the Thousand and One Names) emphasizes that God's power is the ruler in nature and is also the cause of power and movement in natural phenomena such as clouds and rain:

<i>Tu 'ewra digerîni</i>	You cause the clouds to drift
<i>Tu baranê dibarîni</i>	You cause the rain to fall
<i>Tu behrê giran dimeyîni</i>	You cause the great oceans to coagulate
<i>Tu vê dinyayê bi kar tîni</i>	You set this world in motion
<i>Tu bo me meseb û dînê, ...</i> ¹⁰⁹	You are religion and faith to us, ...

On this feature of God, the Yezidi author Ğ. Ā. Murād says, "God's power is always present in elements of nature."¹¹⁰ In this regard, 'Abūd states, "Yezidis worship natural manifestations such as the sun, moon, light, based on the belief that these manifestations are a part of God Himself and His power."¹¹¹ Because of the belief that God's power exists in nature, nature is holy in Yezidism and notably the four elements,¹¹² and, for this reason, it is a custom in the life of Yezidis that nature should be kept clean; it is not allowed to spit and deteriorate it or pollute it.¹¹³

God's *Sur* as God's power in nature

The term *Sur* can be translated literally as mystery, but according to the religious literature, its meaning is much deeper; many religious *sebege*s refer to and regard *Sur* as the power of God in nature and its related phenomena:

Under that name of *Sur*, Yezidis worship the creator:

¹⁰⁷ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 13, in Xêravay 2012: 62.

¹⁰⁸ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (the Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 5 in Kışto 2004: 206-207.

¹⁰⁹ *Qewlê Hezar û Yek Nav* (The Hymn of the Thousand and One Names), seb. 46, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 81.

¹¹⁰ Murād, Ğ. Ā. (1996), "al-Bāhiṭ wa al-Šā'ir Dr Ğāsim Āliyās Murād" (The Researcher and Poet Dr Ğāsim Āliyās Murād), *Laliş*, No. 6, p. 117.

¹¹¹ 'Abūd, Z. K. (2011), *al-Izîdîyat* (The Yezidism), 1st ed., Beirut: Dîmo, p. 690.

¹¹² From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Laliş, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Laliş, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹¹³ For further reading see "The Four Elements of Nature in Prohibitions and Taboos", in chapter IV, part II.

<i>Sura pê dîperisim Xaliq</i>	With that <i>Sur</i> I worship the Creator
<i>Mehibet di dilê da mabû maliq</i>	The love stayed suspended in the heart
<i>Min zor li vê diniyayê dîtin di rû sipê,</i>	I saw many pure and mature people in
<i>nû baliq.¹¹⁴</i>	this world.

Some religious texts describe *Sur* as the cause and source of the continuity of movement, power and energy in nature. For instance, through *Sur* it rains, trees grow, all springs flow; the moon rises, and day and night appear. This all means that movement, power and energy in all parts of nature (terrestrial and celestial) are under its control. It also connects all parts of nature together:

<i>Bi wê surê têtin baran e</i>	Because of that <i>Sur</i> , it rains
<i>Bi wê surê şîn dibit dar e</i>	Because of that <i>Sur</i> , trees grow
<i>Bi wê surê dikemle çendê behar e.¹¹⁵</i>	Because of that <i>Sur</i> , all the springs are completed (i.e., life).
<i>Ew sur li ber dura asteng e</i>	That <i>Sur</i> is an obstacle for the Pearl
<i>Li ber wê surê hîlê mang e</i>	Because of that <i>Sur</i> , the moon rises
<i>‘Elem bi navê wê surê bang e.¹¹⁶</i>	By that <i>Sur</i> , wise men talk [to people].

Moreover, day and night appear through that *Sur*:

<i>Kê dibêje ew sur e derew e</i>	Who says that <i>Sur</i> is a lie?
<i>Bi wê surê ron bûn roj û şev e</i>	By that <i>Sur</i> , days and nights appeared
<i>Wê surê pêk şîrîn kirin Adem û Hawa.¹¹⁷</i>	That <i>Sur</i> made affection between Adam and Eve.

To explain the above-mentioned *sebeqe*, Reşo writes, “With no doubt, God created day and night. Here the *Sur* mentioned is God’s mystery or is God Himself.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, a number of religious men and *Qewlbêj* about *Sur* confirm that in Yezidi belief *Sur* is God’s power. This is based on different grounds and the main one is that it is the reason and source of movement of all creatures. In this regard, Yezidis say, “*Em milletê Surê ne*” (we are the nation of the *Sur*).¹¹⁹ About God’s *Sur* and power, Reşo states, “[a]ccording to Yezidi faith, everything in the world is interrelated and interconnected, and there is nothing free from God’s soul, power and *Sur*.”¹²⁰ On the other hand, the Yezidi scholar K. Omarkhali, on the basis of the religious literature, refers to this *Sur* in the following manner:

¹¹⁴ *Qewlê Silava Melikê Kerim* (The Hymn of the Greeting of the Generous Angel), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 586.

¹¹⁵ *Qewlê Sura* (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 248.

¹¹⁶ *Qewlê Sura* (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 5, in Reşo 2004 I: 247.

¹¹⁷ *Qewlê Sura* (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 7, in Reşo 2004 I: 248.

¹¹⁸ Reşo 2004 I: 248.

¹¹⁹ From the interviews with Xidir Berekat Keso, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Adinan Xêravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

¹²⁰ Reşo 2004 I: 22.

Religious Hymn of the Lord gives a very clear image of God in Yezidism, which in fact is not so easy to explain because of the existent idea of Mystery (Sur) in Yezidism, which works as an instrument for transmission of the divine essence to other Beings, as well as to human beings. Moreover, a very strict specific point in the Yezidi belief is the connection of God with different natural phenomena.¹²¹

In short, religious texts describe *Sur* as God's power in nature; therefore, it becomes the cause and source of the continuity of movement, power and energy in nature, e.g. in rain, trees, grass, day, night, etc.

1.2.4 God is in all-natural places

The religious literature clarifies that God is in all places in the world:

Nûr is God's place:

<i>Ji qewlê 'ilmê seraw</i>	From the hymn of [Mystical] knowledge
<i>Medeha biden ji tebaf</i>	Praise it in every way
<i>Textê nûrî Padşayê min sekinî li nav.</i> ¹²²	The throne of light, my King (i.e., God) sat on it.

Also, in:

<i>Me êkê divêt xudan neder</i>	We need a visionary
<i>Ew dergeh vedibûn li ber</i>	Those doors open for him ¹²⁵
<i>Textê nûrî, Padşayê min sekinî li ser.</i> ¹²³	The throne of light, my King (i.e., God) sat on it.
<i>Textê melîkê elif</i>	The throne of the First Angel (i.e., God)
<i>Nûr dûsin li her çar teref</i>	The light shines [from it] in four
<i>Sur daye mange sedef.</i> ¹²⁴	directions
	[It] gave mystery to the luminous ¹²⁶ moon.

Furthermore, the place of God is on earth, in the sky, in the oceans and in the fundament, which means God's place is in all parts of nature:

<i>Ya Siltan Êzî, tu wê li 'erda tu wê li 'ezmana</i>	O God Siltan Êzî ¹²⁸ (i.e., God), you are on earth, in the sky
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¹²¹ Omarkhali 2009: 21.

¹²² *Qewlê Nadir* (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 2, in Hekarî 2005: 172.

¹²³ *Qewlê Nadir* (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 22, in Hekarî 2005: 176.

¹²⁴ *Qewlê Nadir* (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 5, in Hekarî 2005: 173.

¹²⁵ Who is wise about world affairs?

¹²⁶ Literally 'seashell moon.'

¹²⁸ According to Yezidi tradition, Siltan Êzî is one of God's names.

Tu wê li bebra, tu wê li binyana
*Tu wê z̄ara, tu wê li ser z̄imana.*¹²⁷

You are in the oceans, you are in the
 fundaments
 Your name is on many tongues.

There is a *sebeqe* asking about God's place; but with no specific answer, because He exists everywhere:

Herê berê ko bû
Xeber bide bêj nebû bû
Bêje min, ji'ewil Pedşayê min li ku
bû?¹²⁹

How was the beginning?
 Talk about it, before it existed
 Tell me, where was my King (i.e., God)
 at the beginning?

Pedşê min î sitar e
Xudêyekî cebar e
Ciyê wê li hemû cîya û war e.

My King (i.e., God) is the protector
 An omnipotent God
 His place is everywhere.

Pedşê min î hosta ye
Li 'alemê bi aga ye
*Ciyê wê li hemû erda ye.*¹³⁰

My King (i.e., God) is a builder (i.e.,
 creator)
 [He] is aware of the world
 His place is everywhere.

Ji qewlê Şêx Fexrê Adiya
Pedşayê min yî bêrî ya
*Yî dahir e li hemû cî ya.*¹³¹

From the hymn of Sheik Fexr of Adiya
 My King (i.e., God) is Primordial
 He is apparent everywhere.

In this regard, see "*Pedşayê min yî dahir e li hemû dere*" (My King (i.e., God) is apparent everywhere, QT).¹³² "*Ya rebî mekanê te wê li hemû'erd e*" (O my Lord, your place is everywhere, QTM).¹³³ As a consequence, God's connection with places can be illustrated by fact that God's place is in light and in all natural features. Because of this belief, nature is venerated, respected and sometimes worshipped in Yezidism.¹³⁴

1.2.5 God is eternal, always present in time

The purpose of this section is to show the connection of God with time and its effect on nature. Based on the belief that God created all creatures, and that His power exists in all of them (as discussed in the previous points), it can be concluded that God is

¹²⁷ *Qewlê Hezar û Yek Nav* (The Hymn of the Thousand and One Names), seb. 44, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 81.

¹²⁹ *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu?!* (The Hymn of Where was [God] at the beginning?!), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 I: 259.

¹³⁰ *Qewlê Pedşay* (The Hymn of the King), seb. 28, 29, in Bozanî 1997: 116.

¹³¹ *Qewlê Texta* (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 35, in Bâqasirî 2003: 264-265.

¹³² *Qewlê Texta* (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 8, in Bâqasirî 2003: 260.

¹³³ *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek), seb. 12, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 18.

¹³⁴ This whole study is about the veneration of nature, about worship and holiness of nature; also see "The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Acts of Worship and Devotion", chapter I, part II.

eternal, always present. The progress of time and of the year is directly ordained and controlled by God, who also established the special times of the year. The religious literature emphasizes that:

God is with day and night:

*Pedşê min sur li sema
Xudanê şev û roj û dema
Ji ba wî têtin kerema.*¹³⁵

My King (i.e., God) is the *Sur* in the sky
[He is] the lord of night, day and times
From Him comes grace.

God's presence is felt in the seasons of the year. Every year in spring, the first Wednesday of the Eastern April is the Yezidis' New Year.¹³⁶ God's power [light] descends to earth for the renewal of life and nature. Below, we can see how the *sebeqes* refer to this and are clearly in line with it, in the words "all those by the mystical power of my God Ezidan":

*Li çarşembwê xoş bû jîyan
Kesikê bûn deşit û çiya û zevî û zoşan
Hemû bi kerema Pedşê min î Yezdan.*

Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays
Plain, mountain, field and pasture are
adorned with plants
All those by the mystical power of my
King (i.e., God) Yezdan.

*Hat çarşembuwa sor e
Nîsan xemiland bû bi xo re
Ji batîna da ye bi mor e.*¹³⁷

Came the red Wednesday
Adorned April with itself
From the world of the Unseen it is
baptized.

In summer, the mystery of God comes down on 13 June of the Eastern Calendar; it is the time when the Yezidi summer feast starts:¹³⁸

*Sura pedşayî hate hindav e
Li şemis û fexrêt mîra dikem silav e
Li sêzdey Xizîranê vegeryabû tav e.*¹³⁹

The mystery of King (i.e., God) comes
down
My greeting to Şemis and Fexir of Mîra
On 13 June, the light of the sun comes
back.

In autumn, the months of October and November are rewarded by God and autumn is regarded as the 'princess' of the months:

*Em dû mehên navê me çirî
Ji cem Pedşayî di xelat kirî
Li me di kevin naz û nu'met û tirî.*

We are two months, our name is *Çirî*
(October and November)
We were rewarded by King (i.e., God)

¹³⁵ *Qewlê Pedşay* (The Hymn of the King), seb. 4, in Bozanî 1997: 111.

¹³⁶ See "*Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)", in chapter III, part II.

¹³⁷ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 5, 19, in Kişto 2004: 206-207, 209.

¹³⁸ For additional information see "*Cejna Çilê Havînê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Summer)", in chapter III, part II.

¹³⁹ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 52, in Hecî 1994a: 30.

*Em dû mehên di kamil û tamam
Li me dikevin naz û nu'met û tam
Go: Payîz mîr e, her yazde mehêt dî
bin xulam.¹⁴⁰*

In us, charm, benevolence and grapes become manifest.

We are two months, perfect and complete

In us, charm, benevolence and taste become manifest.

He said: The Autumn is the Prince, all other twelve months become its servants.

In winter, Yezidis use the word *Kanûn* for both months, *Kanûna Êkê* for December and *Kanûna Dwe* for January; they are the distinct months of winter and the time of the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter.¹⁴¹ They say, “*Em dû mehîn Pedşayî kirîn xelat*” (We are two month that were rewarded by King (i.e., God), QM):

*Ji qewlê Fexrê Zergûn e
Her ye bi herf e ye bi nasûn e
Binyata her diwaşde meha Kanûn e.*

From the hymn of Fexir Zergûn
If with writing or with knowledge
The foundation of the twelve months is Kanûn.

*Kanûn dibêjît:
Em dû mehîn Pedşayî kirîn xelat
Li me dikevin Çile û erbe'ynat
Ji hedê wî ye li gel me bikelimit
Subat.¹⁴²*

January says:
We are two month that were rewarded by King (i.e., God)
And gave us the forty days (i.e., the Feast of the Forty Days of the Winter)
February does not talk to us.

About the year, according to *Qewlê Meha*, all the twelve months are under the control of God.¹⁴³ Also, by God's power, the year is divided into two periods of six months; Winter and Spring have wet and cold weather and Summer and Autumn have hot and dry weather:

*Ji pedşê xo didem medeh e
Çar eynê û sê deh e
Li êk rukibandîn, kirne meh e.*

I praise my King (i.e., God)
Four weeks and three tens
Collected them to a month.

*Em diwaşde mehên bi nav
Şeş dibişkin şeş bi xunav
Her diwaşde meh wê li ber hîmeta
Melîk Şêx Sinê bi nav.*

We are twelve named months
Six are dry and six are dewy.
All of these twelve months are under the greatness of Angel Sheikh Sin.

Pedşê min î cebar e

My King (i.e., God) is almighty

¹⁴⁰ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 61, 62, in Hecî 1994a: 31.

¹⁴¹ See “*Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter)”, in chapter III, part II.

¹⁴² *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 21, 28, in Hecî 1994a: 25, 26.

¹⁴³ The name *Pedşa* (King) is one of Yezidi's names of God, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 91-99; Omarkhali 2009: 13-24.

*Ji ba wî wa firwar e
Her dimaẓde meh li êk rukibandin
kîrme sal e.¹⁴⁴*

The command is from Him
All the twelve months were combined to
a year.

God is present in periods and epochs:

*Êk qîrar î, bê şîrîk î bê beval î
Ya Xudê te ne wekîl e, te ne keşîl e
Tu wê li gel hemû dem û beywan û
bedîl e.¹⁴⁵*

(You are) alone,¹⁴⁶ you have neither a
partner nor a friend
O God you have neither guardian nor
sponsor
You are present in all times, periods and
epochs.

God is the Lord of all time and periods:

*Êzdanê min wê ji enzelê zemanâ
Xwedîyê hemû dem û hêwana, ...¹⁴⁷*

My God is from Pre-eternity
The Lord of all times and periods, ...

God is with all time, “*berhey*” (eternity):

*Ya rebî tu hakimê şah û geda yî
Ya rebî! her hayî, her hayî, her hayî!¹⁴⁸*

O Lord (i.e., God) you are the judge of
royal and civil people
O my Lord (i.e., God)! You always exist
and always exist!

*Ya Xudê her tu yî û her tu wê hey û
her tu dê hebî
Ya Xudê ne tu ji kesî û ne kes ji te
ye.¹⁴⁹*

O God, You are the only One, You
always exist and forever
O God, You were not born from anyone
and You did not give birth to anyone.

In this intellectual context and according to Yezidi tradition, there is a saying: *Hemû wexît, nexîtên Xudêne* (All times are times of God). The Baba Çawîş describes God in Yezidi belief as everlasting and existing with all times. Yezidis cannot set a beginning for God’s existence and also cannot define His existence, but they can feel it through creatures and life on the earth.¹⁵⁰ It follows that God has a direct connection with nature because God’s power and light exist in nature. Therefore, God is with all times of nature, the succession of night and day, the occurrence of the four seasons, the changes of atmosphere and climate change. God is *Nûr* and always gives light in nature.

To conclude, God created all creatures by *Dur* and its four natural elements. God is one and has two natural dualistic powers. His power exists in nature and is the ruler in nature and His *Sur* is His power in nature. He is in all places and with all time.

¹⁴⁴ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 17, 18, 19, in Hecî 1994a: 25.

¹⁴⁵ *Du’aya li Mala Mîrî* (The Prayer in Deceased Person’s House), seb. 1, 2, in Xelef 1994: 63.

¹⁴⁶ Literally, ‘one decision.’ This could also be translated as ‘Command.’

¹⁴⁷ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 1, in Xêravay 2012: 60.

¹⁴⁸ *Du’a Sipêdehê* (The Morning Prayer), seb. 8, in Reşo 2004 II: 979.

¹⁴⁹ *Du’aya li Mala Mîrî* (The Prayer in Deceased Person’s House), seb. 1, in Xelef 1994: 63.

¹⁵⁰ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

2 Tawusî Melek as *Nûr* and His Characteristics Related to Nature

This section consists of two sub-sections, *Tawusî Melek* as *Nûr*, and *Tawusî Melek's* characteristics related to nature. It is worth mentioning, before entering the core of the subject, there are different perspectives among authors about the content of *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (the Hymn of Tawusî Melek, QTM) and sometimes called *Du'a Tawusî Melek* (the prayer of Tawusî Melek). The content does not make difference, some believe that the content of the Hymn is about God and some others believe that this hymn describes Tawusî Melek in Yezidi beliefs, however, I deal with it according to the second view because Cindî, as first publisher¹⁵¹ of that hymn, writes thus about its content, “this hymn explains the role and the position of *Tawusî Melek* in *Yezidi religious philosophy*.”¹⁵² Moreover, according to some religious men the content of this hymn describes Tawusî Melek in Yezidi religious tradition.¹⁵³

2.1 Tawusî Melek as *Nûr*

Tawusî Melek as an eternal Nûr. According to Yezidi tradition, Tawusî Melek is eternal light and the source of light in nature. Several *sebeqes* emphasize that:

<i>Berî 'erda, berî 'ezmana</i>	Before earth, before sky
<i>Xudê hebû, nûrî nûran e</i>	God existed, the light of lights
<i>Ji qudrê kewn kîr beyan e.</i>	From whose Might was created the universe,
<i>'Erd û 'erş û îman e</i>	Earth, throne (i.e., sky), and faith
<i>Nav li xo kîrî Tawusî Mêran e.</i> ¹⁵⁴	And named Himself Tawusî Mêra. ¹⁵⁵

<i>Heke te divêt ji ser xo rakey cor e</i>	If you want to save yourself from punishment
<i>Zadekî li çarşembîyê bide dor e</i>	On Wednesday give a meal to those around you
<i>Tawusî Melek yî xefûr e û ew nûr e li ser nûr e.</i> ¹⁵⁶	Tawusî Melek is forgiving and He is light on light.

Some religious men assert that in religious folk beliefs “*Tawusî Melek herbey ye û nûra baqî ye*” (*Tawusî Melek* is eternal and an eternal light), also, in Yezidi mythology, in the beginning, when Tawusî Melek descended to earth, the seven colours of the rainbow turned into a seven-coloured bird, the peacock, and then began to fly around the earth to bless every part of it, and its last resort was in Lalish.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, *Tawusî Melek* shows

¹⁵¹ *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek), in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 16-19.

¹⁵² Ğindî 1998: 156; Reşo 2004 II: 990.

¹⁵³ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹⁵⁴ Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 I: 107.

¹⁵⁵ In Yezidism, Tawusî Mêran is another name of Tawusî Melek.

¹⁵⁶ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 45, in Kişto 2004: 213.

¹⁵⁷ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also, on Tawusî Melek and rainbow see Al-

his blessing with the sign of the rainbow; in the religious literature the bird (*Enqer*) is one of *Tawusî Melek*'s names,¹⁵⁸ manifestations and from that bird come light, luminosity, brightness:

<i>Çendî teyrekê li 'ezmana wê hey navê wî</i>	There is a bird in the sky, called <i>Enqer</i> by
<i>Enqer bi nav e</i>	name!
<i>Roja 'îd û 'erefata derkeft ji Kaniya</i>	On the day of the Feast ¹⁶⁰ and the day of
<i>Sî'anê</i>	Erefat it came out of the Spring of
<i>Çeng û baskêlê xo vedivesînê</i>	Sî'an ¹⁶¹
<i>Jê diçê şewiq û şemal û nûrîn û xûnav</i>	Spreading its feathers and wings
<i>e.¹⁵⁹</i>	From it comes light, luminosity, brightness and dew.

Tawusî Melek and the light of the sun. Several scholars believe that there is a connection between *Tawusî Melek* and *Mithra*, the ancient Lord of the world, and of the Sun. Kreyenbroek refers to “the combined evidence of Yezidism and Roman Mithraism (with its recognition of *Deus Arimanius* as well as *Mithras*), therefore suggests that a cult or cults existed at some stage in pre-Islamic times”¹⁶². Wahby points out that “*Tawusî Melek* became equated with the Sun-god, *Mihr* (*Mithra*)”¹⁶³. *Ĥabîb* asserts that “*Tawusî Melek* is the lord of the sun”¹⁶⁴. A number of Yezidi authors confirm this belief; *Ĝindî* believes that *Tawusî Melek* himself is the lord of the sun.¹⁶⁵ *Uṭmān* states, “for Yezidis, *Tawusî Melek*, in its essence, represents the idea of the Almighty God (the lord of the sun and its resource)”¹⁶⁶.

In Yezidi religious literature and tradition, there are some references to the idea that *Tawusî Melek* is “*Mêra*”. Also, the names (*Mêhrik*, *Mêhra* and *Mêra/Mêhra*), usually come with *Tawusî Melek*'s name. Here, its strong probability that there is a link between these names and *Mithra*.

Qewlê Tawusî Melek (the Hymn of *Tawusî Melek*, QTM) addresses *Tawusî Melek* as follows:

Rašîdânî, S. B. (2013), *Aşil al-i'tiqād al-Ayżîdî* (Origin of the Yezidi Beliefs), 1st ed., Erbil: Matba'at al-Tiqāfa, p. 72.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. The bird (*Enqer*) is one of *Tawusî Melek*'s names see “The Symbolism of the *Tawus* in Religious Life”, in chapter V, part II.

¹⁵⁹ *Xizêmok*, *Şaxê 1* (*Xizêmok*, Version 1), seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.

¹⁶⁰ It is not clarified which feast is meant here but perhaps it is *Sarsal* feast because in Yezidi tradition *Tawus Melek* as light descends on earth for renewing life and adorning earth with colour.

¹⁶¹ “It is a name of legendary-mythical spring”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.

¹⁶² Kreyenbroek 1992: 76.

¹⁶³ Wahby 1962: 45.

¹⁶⁴ *Ĥabîb*, K. (2003), *al-Ayżîdîyat Dîyānat Taqānîm Nawāb al-Zamān* (Yezidism: A Religion Resists the Ravages of Time), 1st ed., London: Dar al-Hikma, p. 77.

¹⁶⁵ *Ĝindî* 1998: 56.

¹⁶⁶ *Uṭmān*, M. F. (2013), *Dirāsāt wa Mabāhîṭ fî Falsafat wa Mahîyat al-Dîyānat al-Ayżîdîyat* (Studies and Researches in the Philosophy and Essence of the Yezidi Religion), Duhok: Duhok University Press, p. 155.

<p><i>Ya rebî tu xudawendê seper î</i> <i>Ya rebî tu xudanê meh û mer î [*mebr</i> <i>î].¹⁶⁷</i></p>	<p>O my Lord (i.e., God), you are the Lord of the firmament, O my Lord (i.e., God), you are the Lord of the moon and the sun.</p>
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Furthermore, in folk belief there are sayings among Yezidis in Iraq, like “*Mêhrik yê me ye, goneh e bas lê bikin*” (Mêhrik [Mithra] is ours, it is taboo to talk about Him). In religious texts, the phrase “*Tawusî min î mêran e*” (My *Tawus* is *Mêran* [Mithra]) is used to describe *Tawusî Melek*:

<p><i>Tawusî min î mêran e,</i> <i>Xalqê min î ‘erd û ‘ezman e,</i> <i>Êw Siltan Şêxadî ye, yê mêra bisaxî jê</i> <i>da beyan e.¹⁶⁸</i></p>	<p>My <i>Tawus</i> is <i>mêran</i> [Mithra] He is my creator of earth and sky He is Sultan Sheikh ‘Adî, whom people praised¹⁶⁹ when he was alive.</p>
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In the *Morkirin* ritual (baptism), as a religious obligation, *Du‘aya Morkirinê* (the prayer of the Baptism) is recited during *Mora Mêra*, which means baptism.¹⁷⁰

<p><i>Mor mora mêran e</i> <i>Kaniya Sipî xoş nêsan e</i> <i>Pedşay jê dabû beyan e</i> <i>Ciyê Êzîdîne Mîr û her çar biran e.¹⁷¹</i></p>	<p>The baptism is [the practice] of holy men <i>Kaniya Sipî</i> is the sacred symbol King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear) It is the place of Êzîdîne Mîr and four brothers.</p>
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This *sebeqe* signifies *Tawusî Melek*’s and *Şêsim*’ (the lord of sun) connection with light:

<p><i>Me bi mirîdiyê qebul e, ji berî xet û</i> <i>mişûr e</i> <i>Şêsim nûr e, melik Şêx Sin xefur e</i> <i>Ya Tawusî Melek! tu hîviya me, bikê li</i> <i>diywana melkê xefur e.¹⁷²</i></p>	<p>We accept the Yezidi way,¹⁷³ Before writing and scripture <i>Şêsim</i> is <i>Nûr</i>, Angel Sheikh Sin¹⁷⁴ is a forgiver O <i>Tawusî Melek</i>! You take our wish to the assembly of the forgiver angel.</p>
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The light of Tawusî Melek in other Yezîdî traditions. Several Yezidi traditions are based on the veneration of the light of *Tawusî Melek*. Religious texts, and also some religious men, refer to the belief that, on the first Wednesday of *Nêsan* (Eastern April) in every year, *Tawusî Melek* (as light) descends to earth for the renewal of life on earth and adorns its

¹⁶⁷ *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of *Tawusî Melek*), seb. 6, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 17. * Regarding the word *mêbrî* see Kreyenbroek 1995: 244, 248.

¹⁶⁸ *Mishabet Medb û Sena ji Şêxadî ra* (Sermon of the Praise and Compliment for Şixadî), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 782.

¹⁶⁹ Literally ‘statement.’

¹⁷⁰ On *Morkirin* see “Lalish, including *Kaniya Sipî*, is the place of *Morkirin* (Baptism)”, in chapter II, part II.

¹⁷¹ *Du‘aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 1, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 407.

¹⁷² *Du‘a Mirîdiyê* (The Prayer of Mirîds), seb. 16, in Reşo 2004 II: 1012.

¹⁷³ Literally, ‘general caste of people of Yezidi religion.’

¹⁷⁴ Cf., Sheikh Sin is a historical figure and the son of Şixadî II, and the ancestor of the Adanî Sheikhs clan see Kreyenbroek 1995: 105-106.

nature and renews the year; therefore, it became a holy day, and the day of the *Sersal* feast, i.e., the Yezidi New Year.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Yezidis light 365 (or 366) lamps on the eve of the feast as the symbol of the descending of Tawusî Melek's light.¹⁷⁶

<i>Çarşema serê nîsanê, Gul û çiçek hatin meydanê, Tawusî Melek reyîsê îmanê Nîsan le kîr e Bihar pê dixemile, Kesik û sor û sipî û zêr e.¹⁷⁷</i>	On the first Wednesday of April Flowers grow on earth ¹⁷⁹ Tawusî Melek is the leader of faith [He] created April Spring has been adorned by him With green, red, white and yellow.
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<i>Hat çarşembuwa sor e Nîsan xemiland bû bi xo re Ji batin da ye bi mor e.¹⁷⁸</i>	Came the red Wednesday Adorned April with itself From the world of the Unseen it is baptized.
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Furthermore, the light of a lamp is the symbol of the light of Tawusî Melek on earth; therefore, it is considered a religious duty to light *Çira* (lamp) on Wednesday as the day of Tawusî Melek:

<i>Hat çarşembuwa fer e Xelat ji melikê faxir e Bo ruha bi îman gorî dîket çire.¹⁸⁰</i>	Came the significant Wednesday The gift is from the glorious angel Light a lamp for the faithful soul.
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<i>Hincîyê navê Tawusî Melek bîne Ye fer e pêroziya çarşembîyê bisediqîne Da Tawusî Melek ruha wî ji qeda û bela bistirîne.¹⁸¹</i>	Whoever mentions Tawusî Melek's name It is obligatory to believe in the sanctity of Wednesday In order that Tawusî Melek may save his/her soul from calamities and misfortunes.
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To sum up, Tawusî Melek as light is reflected in religious literature and has a link with the veneration of many Yezidi traditions.

2.2 Tawusî Melek's characteristics related to nature

The features of Tawusî Melek that are related to nature will be explained and described in the following sub-sections:

¹⁷⁵ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

¹⁷⁶ For additional information see "*Çirabîlîkirin* (lighting lamps) during the feast", in chapter III, part II.

¹⁷⁷ Text details are unknown, in Boyîk, E. (2013), "Cejnên Kurdên Êzdî" (Yezidi Kurds feasts), in E. Boyîk (eds.), *Cejnên Ezîdîyan* (Yezidian Feasts), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, p. 21.

¹⁷⁸ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 19, in Kişto 2004: 209.

¹⁷⁹ Literally, 'come to field.'

¹⁸⁰ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.

¹⁸¹ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (the Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 14, in Kişto 2004: 208.

2.2.1 Tawusî Melek is the creator of nature and every creature

This feature is reflected in the following *sebeqes*:

Tawusî Melek is creator of earth and sky:

<i>Tawusî min î mêran e,</i>	My Tawus is <i>mêra</i>
<i>Xalqê min î 'erd û 'ezman e,</i>	He is my creator of earth and sky
<i>Ew Siltan Şîxadî ye, yê mêra bisaxî jê</i>	He is Sultan Sheikh 'Adî, whom people
<i>da beyan e.¹⁸²</i>	praised.

Tawusî Melek is one of God's names and, as such, He is the eternal *Nûr* and the creator of earth, sky and entire universe:

<i>Berî 'erda, berî 'ezmana</i>	Before earth, before sky
<i>Xudê hebû, nûrî nûran e</i>	God existed, the light of lights
<i>Ji qudrê kewn kir beyan e.</i>	From whose Might was created the
<i>'Erd û 'erş û îman e</i>	universe,
<i>Nav li xo kirî Tawusî Mêran e.¹⁸³</i>	Earth, throne (i.e., sky), and faith
	And named Himself Tawusî Mêra. ¹⁸⁴

All the *sebeqes* of *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (the Hymn of Tawusî Melek, QTM) start with the phrase *Ya Rebî* (O Lord), and their content emphasizes that Tawusî Melek is the creator of creatures, as in this one:

<i>Ya rebî tu xaliqê em muxliqîn</i>	O my Lord, you are the creator, we are
<i>Tu mirazî em daxwazîn.¹⁸⁵</i>	creatures,
	You are the desired, we are the desire.

2.2.2 Tawusî Melek is one and has dualistic natural powers

This feature is reflected in some religious texts, such as in *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (the Hymn of Tawusî Melek). Tawusî Melek is the lord of light and darkness:

<i>Xudanê meh û tarî</i>	Lord of the moon and darkness,
<i>Xudanê şems û narî.¹⁸⁶</i>	Lord of the sun and light.

Also, Tawusî Melek is the lord of the world and the hereafter; their contextual meaning is life and afterlife (i.e., death), as in: “*Ya Tawusî Melek tu melekê Axîretê û dinîyayê*” (O Tawusî Melek, you are the king of life and afterlife, QC).¹⁸⁷ In this context, there are some other sources that emphasize beliefs such as these: Tawusî Melek is one Divine

¹⁸² *Mishabet Medh û Sena ji Şîxadî ra* (Sermon of the Praise and Compliment for Şîxadî), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 782.

¹⁸³ Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 I: 107.

¹⁸⁴ In Yezidism, Tawusî Mêran is another name of Tawusî Melek.

¹⁸⁵ *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek), seb. 21, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 19.

¹⁸⁶ *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek), seb. 6, in Asatrian, G. and Arakelova, V. (2003), “Malak-Tawus: The Peacock Angel of The Yezidis”, *Iran and the Caucasus* (IC), 7.1-2 Brill, Leiden, p.19.

¹⁸⁷ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 10, in Kişto 2004: 207.

Being and has dualistic powers-light and darkness.¹⁸⁸ Likewise, nature, with its phenomena of light and darkness, is from one source, which is the Lord of this World, Tawusî Melek.¹⁸⁹ On the dualism of good and evil power, Kreyenbroek writes, “Yezidis often state that he [i.e., Tawusî Melek] is responsible for the affairs of this world, good or bad.”¹⁹⁰

2.2.3 Tawusî Melek’s power exists in nature and it is the ruler in nature

According to religious texts, Tawusî Melek’s power exists in nature and it is the ruler in it. *Sebeqes* emphasize Tawusî Melek’s power on earth, in the sky, in the sea, on the mountains and among residents, which means His power exists in all parts of natural features, celestial and terrestrial. The following *sebeqe* is said as if Tawusî Melek were the speaker:

<i>Ez bi hemû tišta ra me</i>	I am with everything
<i>Ez li ‘erd im, li ‘ezman im</i>	I am on the earth, in the sky
<i>Li behr im, li bihur im</i>	In the sea, in the ocean
<i>li çiya im, li sikan im.</i> ¹⁹¹	On the mountain, among bedrock.

Furthermore, the first point of part one of *Kitêba Celwa* states that, under the name of Tawusî Melek: “[...] I rule over all creatures and arrange their issues.”¹⁹² Also, the second point of part two of that book under the name of Tawusî Melek, states that “I rule all creatures in, above and underneath the earth.”¹⁹³

2.2.4 Tawusî Melek is in all-natural places

In the *sebeqe* of *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (the hymn of Tawusî Melek), and under the name of Tawusî Melek, Tawusî Melek exists in all-natural places:

<i>Ya rebî te nexafê te nexurde</i>	O my Lord, you have neither sleep nor
<i>Xudan mal î xudan perde</i>	food,
<i>Ya rebî mekanê te wê li hemu ‘erd e.</i> ¹⁹⁴	You are [like] a householder, you keep
	order
	O my Lord, your place is everywhere.

Likewise, His place in nature has a strong relation to the belief that He is the ruler in nature. Tawusî Melek says:

<i>Ez bi hemû tišta ra me</i>	I am with everything
<i>Ez li ‘erd im, li ‘ezman im</i>	I am on the earth, in the sky
<i>Li behr im, li bihur im</i>	In the sea, in the ocean

¹⁸⁸ Reşo 2004 I: 56.

¹⁸⁹ Hâbib 2003: 82; Uğmân 2013: 177.

¹⁹⁰ Kreyenbroek 1995: 94.

¹⁹¹ Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 II: 1047.

¹⁹² Bittner 1913: 12.

¹⁹³ Ibid: 16.

¹⁹⁴ *Qewlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek), seb. 12, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 18.

*li çiya im, li sikan im.*¹⁹⁵

On the mountain, among bedrock.

Additionally, the third point of part one of *Kitêba Celwa* states that under the name of Tawusî Melek: “I exist everywhere.”¹⁹⁶

2.2.5 Tawusî Melekis eternal and is with all time

As mentioned above, in religious folk belief Yezidis say: “*Tawusî Melek herbey ye û nûra baqî yê*” (*Tawusî Melek* is eternal and an eternal light), also, in *Qenlê Tawusî Melek* (the hymn of Tawusî Melek), Yezidis address Tawusî Melek as an eternal Lord:

Ya rebî tu melekê melikê cîhan î

O my Lord, you are the angel who is the ruler of the world,

Ya rebî tu melekê melikê kerîm î

Tu melekê ‘erşê ‘ezîm î

O my Lord, you are the generous one,
You are the King of the great Throne.

Ya rebî jî ‘ençel da her tu yî qedîm î.

O my Lord, from pre-eternity you have always been the ancient one.

Ya rebî her tu yî bey

O my Lord, you always exist,

Û her tu xûda yî

And you are forever God,

*Û her tu yî layîq î medh û sena yî.*¹⁹⁷

And you are always worthy of praise and homage.

To sum up, according to Yezidi tradition, as reflected in religious texts, there are many features and roles of Tawusî Melek that are related to nature; they are: Tawusî Melek is the creator of nature; He has dualistic natural powers; His power exists in nature, and He is the ruler of nature; He is in all natural places, and, as such, He is eternal and is with all time.

3 Şêşims as *Nûr* and His Characteristics Related to Nature

In Yezidism, two prominent figures are called by the name *Şêşims*; one of them is a historical figure who is highly venerated by Yezidis. He is the son of Êzdînê Mîr, and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî sheikhs.¹⁹⁸ The other one is the mythical figure who is the Lord of the sun.¹⁹⁹ Here the latter is the focus of the subject.

In religious poetic texts, the role and veneration of *Şêşims* (the lord of the sun) as light in Yezidi theology, and His features that connect Him to nature, will now be described and explained:

¹⁹⁵ Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 II: 1047.

¹⁹⁶ Bittner 1913: 14.

¹⁹⁷ *Qenlê Tawusî Melek* (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek), seb. 2, 20 in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 17, 19.

¹⁹⁸ See Kreyenbroek 1995: 38; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 26-27.

¹⁹⁹ See Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-99.

3.1 Şêşims as *Nûr*

Yezidi religious literature widely refers to *Şêşims* as *Nûr*. This will be clarified by examining the following main themes:

Şêşims as the lord of the sun and light. There are *sebeqes* that highlight this belief:

<i>Babekê Omera me bevojîn</i>	Let Babekê Omera ²⁰² educate us
<i>Şems û Fexirê mîra beyr û roj in.</i> ²⁰⁰	Şems and Fexir, of the princely family, are sun and moon.

<i>Dergebêt 'ezmana di zer in</i>	The gates of the sky are yellow
<i>Mijte Şems û Fexir in</i>	(luminous)
<i>'Aşiq berzê şa yê û qedr in.</i> ²⁰¹	The keys are Şems and Fexir ²⁰³ [they are] supreme and precious lovers (i.e., worshippers).

Traditionally, Yezidi venerate the sun and its lord, *Şêşims*, as light:

<i>Sibe ye roniyê şêşims dibû beyan e</i>	The light of <i>Şêşims</i> shone in the morning
<i>Nav û dikarê şêşims dikim silav e</i>	Greetings to the name and remembrance
<i>Ronahîya şêşims dabû çarde tebeqê erd</i>	of <i>Şêşims</i>
<i>û ezman e.</i> ²⁰⁴	The light of <i>Şêşims</i> brought forth fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

<i>Çendî sibe ye kê roj li min hiltêye</i>	By the morning when the sun over me!
<i>Şemsê min î bi nûr û keramet bû</i>	My <i>Şems</i> was full of light and mystical
<i>Şefeq dabû li binê bebra</i>	power
<i>Ronahî kiribû lalişa nûranî, beta bi</i>	He had placed dawn at the bottom of the
<i>banê kafê ye.</i> ²⁰⁵	oceans He had brought light to Laliş, the luminous, as far as the roof of the cave.

What is more, in Yezidi belief, *Şêşims*, as the lord of the sun, is the lord of all living and animate creatures; meanwhile, He is the lord of sustenance and blessing:

<i>Ji ba Şêşims ferwar e</i>	The rule is by <i>Şêşims</i>
<i>Çiqas mexlûqet bi giyan e</i>	All living creatures
<i>Here bi ins e, here bi giyan e</i>	Humans and animate beings
<i>Ew jî Şêşims xudan e.</i> ²⁰⁶	<i>Şêşims</i> is their lord also.

Also, in:

²⁰⁰ *Qewlê Babekê Omera* (The Hymn of Babekê Omera), Seb. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 376.

²⁰¹ *Qewlê Texta* (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 21, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 262.

²⁰² He is one of the authors of Yezidi *Qewls*, see Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 53.

²⁰³ In Yezidism, *Şêşims* and Fexir are lords of the sun and the moon.

²⁰⁴ *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 975.

²⁰⁵ *Xizêmok, Şaxê 1* (*Xizêmok*, Version 1), seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 402.

²⁰⁶ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 32, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.

<i>Ya Şêşims, me bi te mefer e</i>	O Şêşims, we take refuge in you
<i>Ya Şêşims, tu mefer î</i>	O Şêşims, you are [our] refuge
<i>Ya Rebî, tu xalîqekê min î herûber î</i>	O Lord, you are my creator forever
<i>Tu rizqa didî, tu rizqa dîberî.</i> ²⁰⁷	You give sustenance and you take it away.
<i>Şêşimsê min î nûrîn e</i>	My luminous Şêşims
<i>Ser kursîya zêrî</i>	On the golden throne
<i>Kilîl û mifte bi destê wî ne</i>	The keys are in his hand
<i>Wê vedike derê zor xezîna, ...</i> ²⁰⁸	He opens the doors of many treasures, ...

Yezidis believe that their religion is about worshipping light and sun:

<i>Rêka me nûr e zêrbav e</i>	Our way is light and pious being
<i>Ew ronah ye, ew tav e</i>	It is light and sunshine
<i>Ji tarî, tav dave.</i> ²⁰⁹	From darkness, it returned light.

Also, in:

<i>Ronahîya berê sibê dahir bû</i>	The light of the early morning (the dawn) shone
<i>Borê îbadetê sîwar bû</i>	People started worshipping ²¹¹
<i>Sed xozîma wî mêrî, bi heqî rawista bû.</i> ²¹⁰	Great wishes to that man who supports the truth.

Şêşims as the lord of light in other Yezidi traditions. Yezidis pray to Şêşims facing the sun during the three main periods of the day: morning, noon and evening. These three times are mentioned in the religious text named *Beyta Şêşims*:

<i>Roj hate têsta ne</i>	The sun has come to morning
<i>Şêşims bestî dîwan e</i>	Şêşims is present at the assembly ²¹³
<i>Maşa wê didete mêran e.</i>	He gives the holy men their wages.

<i>Roj hate nûvro ye</i>	The sun has come to midday
<i>Manga sipî jê diçoye</i>	The white moonlight has fled from it
<i>Şêşims yê bi misk e yê bi mo ye.</i>	Şêşims smells of musk and scent.

<i>Roj hat û ava bû</i>	The sun has come and gone down
<i>Şêşims li 'erş rawesta bû</i>	Şêşims has taken his place in the sky

²⁰⁷ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204.

²⁰⁸ *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 18, in Reşo 2004 II: 977.

²⁰⁹ *Qewlê Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî* (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.

²¹⁰ *Du'a Fecrê* (The Dawn Prayer), seb. 2, in Ğindî, H. (1993), "al-Adi'yat al-Ayzîdîyat, al-Qism al-Aul" (The Yezidi Prayers, part I) Laliş, No. 1, p. 68.

²¹¹ Literally, 'ride on the steed *Bor* of the worship.'

²¹³ "He has taken his place there (KhR)", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 211, n. 95.

*Aşıqa selawet lê veda bû.*²¹²

The Lovers have prayed to him.

Also, in:

Ebadetê bike rojê sê cara

Worship three times a day

Li fecirê û sibê û bêvara

At dawn, in the morning and in the evening

*Li pêşberî rojê, ew qubleta êxtiyare.*²¹⁴

Facing the sun is the direction of prayer.

Moreover, *Çira* (lamp) is the symbol of the light of *Şêşims* on earth;²¹⁵ religious texts emphasize this belief:

Şêx Şems ji Êzîdiya ra çira ye li dîwanê

For Yezidis, *Şêşims* is a lamp in the assembly

*Ya Êzî tu li me bikê xudanê.*²¹⁶

O God, be our saviour.

Because of this connection, Yezidis light a lamp inside the *Qub* (cupola) of *Şêşims* in Lalish, named “*Çirayê Şêşims*” (the lamp of *Şêşims*). Fire is *Şêşims*’ terrestrial counterpart.²¹⁷

To summarize, there are many Yezidi religious beliefs based on veneration of *Şêşims* as the lord of sun and light, such as that *Şêşims* is the lord of sustenance and blessing and the lord of all living creatures. He is the direction of prayers; *Çira* is the symbol of the light of *Şêşims*.

3.2 *Şêşims*’ characteristics related to nature

On the basis of the religious literature some features of *Şêşims*’ related to nature will be discussed in the following points:

3.2.1 *Şêşims* is the creator of nature and every creature

Şêşims is the creator of all creatures, including the world and human beings:

Ya Şêşims! tu yî rehman î

O *Şêşims*! You are compassionate

Xalqekê min î bi can î

[You] are my beloved creator

Hemû derda tî derman î

For all ills, you are the remedy

*Hemû mexluqa tu yî xudan î.*²¹⁸

To all creatures, you are the lord (creator).

Ji wê ko roj hiltêye

Since the sun is rising

Ji berî mang dertêye

It rises before the moon rises

²¹² *Beyta Sibê yan Beyta Şêşims* (The *Beyt* of the Morning or The *Beyt* of *Şêşims*), seb. 8, 10, 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 211-212.

²¹⁴ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 70, in Kişto 2012: 128.

²¹⁵ For more details about the symbolism of *Çira* see “The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

²¹⁶ *Du’a Êzîdiyatîyê* (Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1003.

²¹⁷ Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-98.

²¹⁸ *Du’a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 II: 976-977.

*Şêşims zeyinan dibû dinê ye.*²¹⁹

Şêşims has created the world.

In this regard, Kreyenbroek emphasizes that Şêşims it thought of as representing God the Creator, He is described as, in some way, God, He is the Creator, and is generally identified or closely associated with the sun. His role is in the affairs of the world.²²⁰

3.2.2 Şêşims is one and has dualistic natural powers

Şêşims has power over evil and good:

Ez gorî ber dû şêra

May I be a sacrifice²²² for both the lions

Bo çakêt lavêra

For the good men from here

*Destê Şêşims ser şeran û xêra.*²²¹

Şêşims has power²²³ over evil and good.

He is the source of light. Therefore, when the sun rises, His light is against night's darkness:

Çendê sibe ye kû roj li min hiltêye

By the morning when the sunrises over me!

Şemsê min î bi nûr û keramet bû

My Şems was full of light and mystical

Şefeq dabû li binê behra

power

Ronahê kêribû lalişa nûramî, beta bi

He had placed dawn at the bottom of the oceans

*banê kafê ye, ...*²²⁴

He had brought light to Lalish, the luminous, as far as the roof of the cave, ...

The *sebeqe* below highlights the following aspect: "You [Şêşims] give sustenance and you take it away." He therefore has a 'dualistic' aspect to his nature:

Ya Şêşims, me bi te mefer e

O Şêşims, we take refuge in you

Ya Şêşims, tu mefer î

O Şêşims, you are [our] refuge

Ya Rebê, tu xalîqekê min î herûber î

O Lord, you are my creator forever

*Tu rizqa didî, tu risqa dibeî.*²²⁵

You give sustenance and you take it away.

3.2.3 Şêşims' power exists in nature and is the ruler in nature

Şêşims' power and light exist in nature, in its fourteen spheres of earth and sky:

²¹⁹ *Beyta Sibê yan Beyta Şêşims* (the Beyt of the Morning or the Beyt of Şêşims), seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 211.

²²⁰ Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-98.

²²¹ *Qesîda Şêşims û Melîk Fexredîn* (The *Qesîde* of Şêşims and Angel Fexredîn), seb. 8, in Hecî, B. F. (1996), "Komeka Têkistên Ola Êzîdîya" (A Collection of Yezidi Religion Texts), *Lalîş*, No. 6, p. 58.

²²² "A common phrase in Kurdish and Persian, connoting great devotion", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 219, n. 161.

²²³ Literally, 'Şêşims' hand is over evil and good.'

²²⁴ *Xizêmok, Şaxê 1* (*Xizêmok*, Version 1), seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 402.

²²⁵ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204.

*Sibe ye roniyâ şêşims dibû beyan e
Nav û dikarê şêşims dikim silav e
Ronabîya şêşims dabû çarde tebeqê erd
û ezman e.*²²⁶

The light of *Şêşims* shone in the morning
Greetings to the name and remembrance
of *Şêşims*

The light of *Şêşims* brought forth
fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

Everything is a part of *Şêşims*:

*Here req e, here mar e
Here mixfî ya, here dihar e
Ewan jik bi Şêşim hebit pişk û par
e.*²²⁷

All tortoises, all snakes (i.e., all creatures)

All that is hidden, all that is visible

These too shall have a share and a part
of *Şêşim*.

*Here mer e, here mişk e
Here ter e, here hişk e
Ewan jî bi Şêşims heye par û pişk e.*²²⁸

All snakes, all mice (i.e., all creatures)

All that is wet, all that is dry (i.e., all
things)

That too shall have a share and a part of
Şêşims.

Şêşims is the ruler of nature and its four sacred elements and has control over all; it is also the source of power and movement in nature:

*Çendî ba û ax û av û agirî
Bi kerema Melik Fexredîn û Şêşims
dişuxilî
Covana Şêşims û Melik Fexredîn, jî
'evil beta bi axirî.*²²⁹

Wind and earth, water and fire, all these
Have their being through the power of
Fexredîn and *Şêşims*

The assembly of Fexredîn and
*Şemsedîn*²³⁰ exists from the beginning till
the end.

There are *sebeqes* that indicate that all snow and rain, and whatever comes down from the sky, come by *Şêşims*' command, i.e., His power and control:

*Cendî tê berf û baran e
Nuxte jî 'smana dibate xwar e
Ji ba Şêşims destûr e.*²³¹

All snow or rain that falls

Is a point that comes down from the sky

The command comes from *Şêşims*.

Şêşims has power in oceans:

*Ya Şêşims, tu yî emîn î
Bebrêt giran dimeyînî
Bo min meseb û dînî, ...*²³²

Şêşims, you are faithful

You cause oceans to coagulate

You are religion and faith to me, ...

²²⁶ *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 975.

²²⁷ *Qewlê Şêşimsê Tewrêzî* (The Hymn of *Şêşims* of Tabriz), seb. 7, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 95.

²²⁸ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 21, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204.

²²⁹ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 30, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.

²³⁰ They are Yezidi holy men, on them see Kreyenbroek 1995: 102-103.

²³¹ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 31, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.

²³² *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 203.

3.2.4 Şêşims is in all-natural places

While Yezidis pray to Şêşims during *Du'aya Rojbelatî* (the sunrise prayer), they say:

<i>Cihê te hemî 'erd e</i>	[O Şêşims], your place is everywhere.
<i>Tu Xalîqe cimletî 'alem, ...</i>	You are the Creator of all the world, ...
<i>Xudan mal î, Xudan perd e</i>	You are (like) a householder, you keep order
<i>Cihê te hemî 'erd e.²³³</i>	[O Şêşims], your place is everywhere.

Şêşims' light is everywhere in nature –lands and seas, earth and sky:

<i>Pîva û dikir qedar e</i>	[He] measured it and determined its size
<i>Şêşims xûndkar e</i>	Şêşims is the ruler
<i>Ronaya Şêşims da binêt beriyân û behîra.²³⁴</i>	The light of Şêşims is in lands and seas.
<i>Sibe ye roniyâ şêşims dibû beyan e</i>	The light of Şêşims shone in the morning
<i>Nav û dikarê şêşims dikim silav e</i>	Greetings to the name and remembrance of Şêşims
<i>Ronahîya şêşims dabû çarde tebeqê erd û ezman e.²³⁵</i>	The light of Şêşims brought forth fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

3.2.5 Şêşims is eternal and is with all time

As in *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (the prayer and hymn of Şêşims, DQŞ) and *Du'a Nîvro* (the noon prayer, DNÎ) while Yezidis pray for Şêşims, they face the sun and say:

<i>Ya Şêşims, me bi te mefer e</i>	O Şêşims, we take refuge in you
<i>Ya Şêşims, tu mefer î</i>	O Şêşims, you are [our] refuge
<i>Ya Rebî, tu xalîqekê min î herûber î, ...²³⁶</i>	O Lord, you are my eternal creator, ...
<i>Ya Rebî! tu me û sunetê bixune dîwana xas û mominêt jor e</i>	O my Lord! You invite us and our traditions to the assembly of holy beings and good believers
<i>Ya Rebî! her tu yî, her tu yî, her tu yî.²³⁷</i>	O my Lord! You are the only one who is eternal.

To conclude, Şêşims as light, many of his characteristics suggest that his concept is closely related to those of God, the Lord of all, and of Tawusî Melek, the Lord of this World. Şêşims is called the creator of nature; He has dualistic natural powers; His power exists in nature and He is the ruler of nature; He is in all-natural places; He is eternal and is

²³³ *Du'aya Rojbelatî* (The Sunrise Prayer), seb. 3, 7, in Reşo 2004 II: 980.

²³⁴ *Qewlê Keniya Maru* (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seb. 16, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 394.

²³⁵ *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 975.

²³⁶ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204.

²³⁷ *Du'a Nîvro* (The Noon Prayer), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 984.

with all time. According to Yezidi popular religious beliefs, *Şêşims* is a creature of God and is God's light on earth.

Additionally, according to Yezidi implicit theology, after the three holy and pure divine beings, respectively known as God, *Şêşims* and Tawusî Melek, the *Heft Sur* also have a connection with *Nûr*, and play a key role in Yezidi theology. The next section is devoted to exploring *Heft Sur* as *Nûr*.

4 *Heft Sur* (Seven mysteries) as *Nûr* and their Relation to Nature

4.1 *Heft Sur* as *Nûr*

In Yezidism, there is a belief in the existence of *Heft Sur*, usually translated as “Seven mysteries”, “Seven Holy Beings”, “Seven Divine Beings” and/or “Seven Angels“. According to the Yezidi myth of creation (cosmogony), and in religious texts, the following occurred. During the time of creation, God created *Heft Sur* from His light, then He created the universe from *Dur* (a pearl) and submitted the authority to the *Heft Sur*, Tawusî Melek being their leader and ruler:

*Pedşê min kîniyat avakir ji dur û
gewber e
Sîpart bû her hefît surêt herûber e
Melekê Tawus kire serwer e.*²³⁸

My King (i.e., God) created the universe from pearl and jewellery
Submitted it to all seven eternal mysteries
Tawusî Melek reigned as their leader.

Also, in:

*Padşê min û her heft surêt xemle ne
Rayekê dîkin, êqîn kinyatekê ava
bikene.*²³⁹

My King (i.e., God) and all *Heft Sur* exist in loneliness
They plan that they will definitely create a universe.

Their names are mentioned in the following *sebeqe*:

*Tu bêje min hefît surêt Siltan Êzî kê û
kîn e
Ewîl Şêxadî û Melik Şêx Sin û Êzdîn-
nemîr e
Şemsedîn û Fexiredîn nasirdîn û
sicadîn e*

You tell me, who *Siltan Êzî's* (i.e., God's) seven mysteries are
First Sheikh Adî, Melik Şêx Sin, Êzdîn-Nemîr
Şemsedîn, Fexiredîn, Nasirdîn and Sicadîn²⁴¹

²³⁸ *Qewlê Pedşay* (The Hymn of the King), seb. 6, in Bozanî 1997: 112.

²³⁹ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 37, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 62.

²⁴¹ They are sons of Êzdînê Mîr, and the eponyms of subdivisions of the Şemsanî sheikhs see Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-100; Omarkhalî, Kh. (2008), “On the Structure of the Yezidi Clan and Tribal System and its Terminology Among the Yezidis of the Caucasus”, JKS, vol. VI, p. 107.

*Ewan ew dinya bikartîne.*²⁴⁰

They have (always) ruled this world.

According to Yezidi religious literature and tradition, there are some characteristics of these *Hefî Sur* that have a connection with fire and light.

They were created from God's light:

Ew in melekt sekinîne

The ready angels²⁴⁴

Ji nûra Îlahê ne

They are created from God's light

*Xwarna wan El hemdulîlla û şikerê
ne.*²⁴²

Their food is praising and thanking
God.²⁴⁵

Nûr ji nûrê şifqî

From light brightened the light

Sibbane ji te xaliqî

Praise to you, my Creator.

*Meleke liber tifqî.*²⁴³

The angels were created from it (light).²⁴⁶

Moreover, in Yezidism, in succession, one *Sur* was created after the other, each one from the other's light, like 'lighting a lamp with the fire of another lamp.' The following *sebeqes* refer to it as happening in sequential order:

Padşê min sur li sem a

My King (i.e., God) is the Mystery in the
sky

Berê ne lewh hebû ne qelem e

Before, there was neither tablet nor pen

*Ya Siltan Êzî, liba te ew se'et e ew
dem e.*

O *Siltan Êzî* (i.e., God), you control time.

Berê ne qelem hebû, ne lewh e

Before, there was neither pen nor tablet

*Me yarek divê vê herfê şiro biket, ye li
kaw e*

We need a friend to explain this word,
where is he?

Melek êk bû bûne duw e.

There was one angel, he became two.

Li berî fîrvara padşê ye

By the command of King (i.e., God),

Tefîşsa me ji wê cîvabê ye

Our search is for an answer to this

Melek dû bûn bûne sê ye.

There were two angels, they became
three.

Padşê min î cebar e

My King (i.e., God) is all-powerful

Ji ba wî hatbû fîrwar e

From him came the power

Melek sê bûn bûne çar e.

There were three angels, they became
four.

²⁴⁰ *Qewlê Ji Hindav de Çome Banî* (The Hymn of I Rose to the Top), seb. 44, in Kişto, Ş. B. (2007), "Qewlê Ji Hindav de Çome Banî" (The Hymn of I Rose to the Top), Lalish, No. 26, p. 143.

²⁴² *Qewlê Şêx û Aqûb* (The Hymn of Sheikh and Jacob), seb. 24, in Xelef 1995: 63.

²⁴³ *Du'aya Sibeykê* (The Morning Prayer), seb. 3, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 21.

²⁴⁴ Literally, 'standing angels.'

²⁴⁵ I.e., their power is from God.

²⁴⁶ Cf. PX: *tifîq* 'being face to face,' Kreyenbroek 1995: 219, n. 4.

*Padşê min î mižênc e
Melek çar bûn bûne pênc e
Her pênc bûne sifetê her êk û rênc e.*

My King (i.e., God) is the almighty
There were four angels, they became five
All five shared one another's character
and qualities.

*Dilê min li vê yekê yî xoş e
Melen²⁴⁷ pênc bûn bûne şeş e
Her şeş bûne melekêd 'erş e.*

My heart is happy because of this:
There were five angels, they became six
All six became the angels of the Throne.

*Padşê min xoş keir subbet e
Lêk rûniştin muhbet e
Melek şeş bûn bûne heft e.*

My King (i.e., God) continued
They were gathering with Love
There were six angels, they became
seven.

*Her heftê ku di'firîn
Bi rastiye lêk diêwirîn
Bi muhbetê bi nedera²⁴⁸ êk
didebirîn.²⁴⁹*

All seven, when they were created,
Were exactly alike (animate)
In Love, lighting each other, they passed
the time.

Also compare the following:

*Her hefte ku diefirîn
Bi rasti lêk diêwirîn
Nûra êk dibirîn.²⁵⁰*

All seven, when they were created,
Were exactly alike (animate)
Lighting one another, they passed the
time.

*Ji nûrê, nûr ço
Heftê derec ço.²⁵¹*

A light came from the light (Angels are
from God's light)
It brightened seven levels (i.e., this light
gave seven Angels).

Accordingly, they are created from light and they give light:

*Ew bûn melekê ber bedîle
Ji wan ço şenq şemal û nûr e.²⁵²*

Those were the angels of the epochs
From them radiated light, lamp and
luminosity.

Furthermore, each one has his own place in the sky, and their light comes down to earth:

Roja sura sunetê kirin dîyar e

When tradition declared its mystery

²⁴⁷ The correct word is *Melek* (angel).

²⁴⁸ The word 'nedera' is replaced by 'nûra.' Yezidis use the words *nedera=nûra* (gazing and lighting) as synonyms. Also, the word *nedera* had been replaced by *nûra* in *Qewlê Şêxûbekîr, Şaxê 1* (The Hymn of Sheikh Êbekîr, Version 1), seb. 23, in Reşo 2004 I: 189.

²⁴⁹ *Qewlê Şêxûbekîr* (The Hymn of Sheikh Êbekîr), seb. 15-22, in Silêman 1985: 99-100.

²⁵⁰ *Qewlê Şêxûbekîr, Şaxê 1* (The Hymn of Sheikh Êbekîr, Version 1), seb. 23, in Reşo 2004 I: 189.

²⁵¹ *Qewlê Pîr Hemedê Boz* (The Hymn of Pîr Hemed Boz), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 I: 552.

²⁵² *Dû'a Banîrijê* (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 106.

<i>Nûra meleka hate xwar e.</i>	The light of angels came down.
<i>Ew ji me rakirin diyar e</i> <i>Her yek li ser koka xwe girt bû war</i> <i>e.</i> ²⁵³	That (light) was shown for us Each one (angel) took his own place.
<i>Ezman dibêjite 'erdî</i> <i>Ser min hene nûr û qendîl, ...</i>	The sky says to the earth: In me dwell light and <i>qendîl</i> (the lamp), ...
<i>Her Heft Melekêt kibîr</i> <i>Ji berî çendî bedîl, ...</i> ²⁵⁴	All seven great Angels Several epochs ago, ...

4.2 The *Heft Sur* and their relation to nature

As it has been clarified in the previous topic, in Yezidism, and according to the religious literature, the *Heft Sur* are created from light, they give light, they represent seven angels, and Tawusî Melek is their leader. There are some symbolic rituals that represent them in the following manner:

4.2.1 *Heft Sivarên Mala Adiya* (Seven Riders of the Adiya Family)

There seven lamps for the *Heft Sivarên Mala Adiya* at Lalish, beside the *Xerqê* of Şêxûbekir.²⁵⁵ In Yezidi tradition, these seven lamps represent seven angels. There is a distinctive (big) lamp in the middle of them that represents their leader, Tawusî Melek.²⁵⁶ Here, it is noticeable that these lamps are lit beside the *Xerqê* of Şêxûbekir and *Qewlê Şêxûbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Ūbekir, QŞB) refers to the creation of these seven angels from light (see above *sebeqes*, under 4.1):

²⁵³ *Du'a Êzîdiyatiyê* (The Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 1001.

²⁵⁴ *Qewlê Erd û Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 25, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 389.

²⁵⁵ See Image 01 in Appendices.

²⁵⁶ From the interview with Sebah Sebirî Se'îd, is the custodian of the *Heft Sivarên Mala Adiya* (seven riders of the Adiya family), 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

*Her hefite ku diefirin
Bi rastî lêk diêwirin
Nûra êk dibirin.*²⁵⁷

All seven, when they were created,
Were exactly alike (animate)
Lighting one another, they passed the
time.

4.2.2 Lighting seven lamps in *Dergehê Mîr*

Seven lamps are also lit beside *Dergehê Mîr* (the gate of Mîr) in Lalish²⁵⁸ which represent the Seven Angels. Kreyenbroek writes, “Seven lights on the wall next to the doorway [of Lalish] are said to be for the seven Great Angels.”²⁵⁹ This *sebeqe* refers to some aspects of this belief:

*Ew bûn melekêt ber bedîle
Ji wan çu şewq şemal û nûr e.*²⁶⁰

Those were the angels of the epochs
From them radiated light, lamp and
luminosity.

4.2.3 *Çeqeltu* (A candelabrum with seven lights)

There is a chandelier named *Çeqeltu* that is displayed during the *Sema* ceremony²⁶¹ which also represents the Seven angels; the distinctive one in the middle represents Tawusî Melek.²⁶²

4.2.4 *Çirayên Me'rifetê* (the lamps of knowledge)

There are seven lamps called *Çirayên Me'rifetê* that are lit beside *Sinceq* in *Tawuşgêran*.²⁶³ In Yazidi tradition, they represent the Seven Angels.²⁶⁴ Wahby writes:

The (Sanjaq) represents their seven-fold spiritual hierarchy, so the number of wicks of the lamp must be specified as seven; the greater one in its middle part representing (Tawus e Malak) the Sun-god and the other six, the other six deities. The seven lights of this secret Sanjaq reveal the identity of this symbol and can be taken as further evidence for confirming our belief that the seven Yazidi gods are deities of light, originally the seven planets of Mithraism. I see, in the circling of the Yazidis around their deities, a relation with the circling of the planets around the earth (according to ancient belief).²⁶⁵

²⁵⁷ *Qewlê Şêxûbekir, Şaxê 1* (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir, Version 1), seb. 23, in Reşo 2004 I: 189.

²⁵⁸ See Image 02 in Appendices.

²⁵⁹ Kreyenbroek 1995: 81.

²⁶⁰ *Dû'a Bawirîjê* (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 106.

²⁶¹ See Image 03 in Appendices.

²⁶² See “Lalish is the place of the *Semagêran* (the Religious Dance)”, chapter II part II.

²⁶³ See Image 04 in Appendices.

²⁶⁴ From the interview with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan.

²⁶⁵ Wahby 1962: 28.

As it was shown above, in Yezidi mythology the *Heft Sur* have a connection to fire and light. It is believed that God created them from His light. Moreover, there are some Yezidi religious symbolic rituals for them.

The main conclusions of this chapter are the following:

The chapter shows the central role of light and nature in Yezidi implicit theology. For instance, God, Tawusî Melek and *Şêşims* are thought of as being manifest as light, and their features have a linkage with nature such as their light and power in nature.

The findings of the section named God as *Nûr* and His characteristics related to nature, explore God is an eternal light. He, as light, is the manifestation of absolute power and He is the creator of all creatures and the source of life on earth. The belief God is light is reflected in many Yezidi traditions, such as the light of the sun and the lighting of the *Çira* (lamp) as the symbols of the light of God. Moreover, His characteristics have a direct relationship to nature as the creator of nature, and He has dualistic natural powers in nature. His power is again manifested in nature, notably in the four sacred elements, through His *Nûr* and *Sur*. He is omnipresent in every location in nature.

This research shows that Yezidis conceptualise Tawusî Melek as an eternal light in the world. It appears that Tawusî Melek is a manifestation of God's light. He is light and as such He plays a role in Yezidi traditions, for example on the first Wednesday of *Nîsan* (Eastern April) of every year, Tawusî Melek (as light) descends to earth for the renewal of life. There are many features and roles of Tawusî Melek related to nature, such as His power exists in nature and He rules over nature.

The other important outcome of this chapter is about *Şêşims* as the lord of the sun in the Yezidi tradition. He is the source of light and in a sense represents the continuity of life on earth. This belief is also reflected in some religious traditions, such as the fact that Yezidis face the sun when praying. There are some characteristics of *Şêşims* that have a link with nature, for example, *Şêşims* manifests God's light and is described as the creator of all creatures and ruling over the four elements of nature.

What stands out in this overview of Yezidi beliefs is the central role of light. Here, we see that the characteristics of God, Tawusî Melek and *Şêşims* are described in very similar ways, stressing their profound connection with light. Light is the 'creator' of all creatures and the source of the emergence of life on earth.

Finally, the study demonstrates that the *Heft Sur* also have a prominent connection with nature in Yezidism. It is believed that they were created from God's light; they give light and their creation is like 'lighting a lamp with the flame of another lamp.'

Chapter II

The Role of Natural Elements in the Yezidi Cosmogonical and Cosmological Myths

In Yezidi religious literature the term *Afirandina kinyatê* or *dinyayê* is used for the creation of the whole universe and the creation of earth and sky and the stages of their development; it also comprises the creation of all creatures and the emergence of life on earth; therefore, it can be defined as the sum of the Yezidi creation myths, cosmogonical and cosmological myths.

The main aim of this chapter is to determine the role of nature in Yezidi cosmogony and cosmology. Corresponding to the main stages of Yezidi cosmology, the chapter is divided into four main sections. The first one will focus on *Dur* and its four natural elements: water, fire, earth and air as sources of the creation of the world and the entire universe. The second will be about the main stages of the creation of the world, i.e., the liquid (watery and sea) stage, the solid stage and the stage of the creation of earth and sky. The third section will be concerned with the role of the four sacred elements of nature in the emergence of life on earth. As part of this section, special attention will be paid to the role of the water of *Kaniya Sipê*, the light of Lalish and *Nâra Mubibetê* (the light of love).

According to the creation myth, after the conclusion of the stages mentioned above, a kind of system with different natural phenomena was created. As a result, the fourth section will deal with *Xudan* (Lord) of the four elements and their features and phenomena. Finally, a summary and conclusions are presented.

1 The Original Source of the Creation of the World

First of all, as we saw in the previous chapter, the religion of the Yezidis is monotheistic. Yezidis believe in one eternal God, who is supreme and wields absolute power and is the primeval creator of all creatures in existence.

Regarding the creation myth, there is a *sebeqe* that ponders the way in which the world was created and through how many forms it has changed. The *sebeqe* does not supply any answers to these ponderings:

<i>We dibêjît Hesedê Altenwî,</i>	Hesed Altewrî says:
<i>Werin birayêd min êd misterî,</i>	Come my brothers who are scholars ²⁶⁷
<i>Ka ev dîniya bi çend lewna hat û çend</i>	How many forms did this world have and
<i>lewna borî.²⁶⁶</i>	pass through?

According to Yezidi cosmogony, in the beginning, the whole existence was *Tarîstan* (darkness) and it is described as emptiness, not holding creatures, not having life, and there was the absence of order:

<i>Ya rebê duniya hebû tarî</i>	O my Lord, in the world there was
<i>Têda nebû zêndarî</i>	darkness
<i>Te zêndî kir teze halî</i>	There were no living creatures (no life)
<i>Çu nema gul jê barî.²⁶⁸</i>	You freshly brought it (the universe) to
	life
	Flowers (i.e., creatures) almost burst
	from it.

There were no earth and no sky but only *Dur*, and God dwelt alone within it:

<i>Pedşa li nav Durê li xewle bû</i>	King (i.e., God) was alone in <i>Dur</i>
<i>Ne 'erd hebû, ne 'ezman bû</i>	There was no earth, no sky
<i>Ne çiya ne sikan bû</i>	No mountains, no population
<i>Bawerî naveke jê xuda bû.²⁶⁹</i>	One name for faith was God.

Then God created everything in existence from that *Dur*.

²⁶⁶ *Qewlê Hesedê Altenwî* (The Hymn of Hesedê Altewrî), seb. 1, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 54.

²⁶⁷ Literally, 'customers of [knowledge].'

²⁶⁸ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 1, Bâqasirî 2003: 235. Cf., this is another variant of that *sebeqe*.

<i>Ya rebê duniya hebû tarî</i>	O Lord, in the world there was darkness
<i>Têda tu nebûn mişk û marî</i>	There were neither mice nor snake
<i>Te zêndî kir teze halî</i>	You freshly brought it to life
<i>Çu nema gul jê barî.</i>	Flowers almost burst from it.

(*QAD*, seb. 1, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 40).

²⁶⁹ *Dû'a Bawiriyê* (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 1, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 104.

1.1 *Dur* and its four natural elements as the original sources of the creation

According to Yezidi cosmogony, in the beginning, God created a *Dur* as a plentiful light:

<i>Mêra di pîrsê bû ew sur e</i>	Men had been asking about that mystery
<i>Mêr heyran e bi xo ra</i>	Men are confused in themselves
<i>Pedşê min bi xo efrandibû dur e.</i> ²⁷⁰	My King (i.e., God) himself created the <i>Dur</i> .

Dur was a plentiful light:

<i>Pedşê min dur ji xo vavare</i>	My King (i.e., God) detached the <i>Dur</i>
<i>Dur qendîleke maldar e</i>	from himself
<i>Qendîlê nûr sitar e.</i> ²⁷¹	<i>Dur</i> is a plentiful light, The luminous light is [like] a star.

The *Dur* and its Natural Aspects after its Creation:

In the religious texts, the *Dur* has close links with aspects of nature, it contained four natural elements: fire, water, earth and air, i.e., all the elements in the universe and on earth. In other words, the *Dur* was a tiny object which contained all the elements of creation:

<i>Li wê nebû bi êkcar e</i>	Nothing existed there
<i>Dura sor ye maldar e</i>	The red pearl is plentiful
<i>Av û ax û bayê û agir disipare.</i>	Water, earth, air and fire are its elements.
<i>Av û ax û bayê û agir e</i>	Water, earth, air and fire
<i>Dura sor ye bi xerz e ji bakir e</i>	The red <i>Dur</i> contains the original seeds
<i>Çendî muxliq pê bi xatir e.</i> ²⁷²	It created all creatures.

This world developed fully in the *Dur*:

<i>Hat çarşembuwa ewilê</i>	Came the first Wednesday
<i>Zur [*Dur] bi renga xemilê</i>	The <i>Dur</i> was adorned with colours
<i>Eve diniya ye pê dikemilê.</i> ²⁷³	This world fully developed within it.

In this context, some Yezidi religious and learned men assert that the *Dur* is the first creature of God and then God created everything from it, including nature, life and human beings.²⁷⁴

Dur was in space; all its directions were open and were suspended by God's power:

²⁷⁰ *Qemlê Bê û Elîf* (The Hymn of B and A), seb. 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 72.

²⁷¹ *Qemlê Şêxûbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir), seb. 5, in Silêman 1985: 98.

²⁷² *Qemlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 20, 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

²⁷³ *Qemlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 28, in Kişto 2004: 210.

²⁷⁴ From the interview Heci Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also, about the role of the *Dur* in the creation see Haliil, A. M. (2006), *Min Ađrbîğân ila Lâlîş* (From Azerbaijan to Lalish), Duhok: Spîrêz, pp. 146-148; Kreyenbroek, Ph. G. (2008), "History in an Oral Culture: The Construction of History in Yezidi Sacred Texts", *JKS*, vol. VI, p. 88.

<i>Dura sor wa li hewa ye</i>	The red pearl is in space
<i>Bi qudreta Xudê rawesta ye</i>	It is suspended by God's power
<i>Ya bi av û ax û ber û ba ye.</i> ²⁷⁵	With its water, soil, stone and air.

It had a circular shape and was in continuous movement:

<i>Dura sor bi seranser e</i>	The red pearl in its entirety
<i>Her ya bi ger e û girover e</i>	Always rotates, it is round (circularity)
<i>Tijê av û ax û ber û ber e.</i> ²⁷⁶	It is full of water, soil, fire and stone.

The *Dur* continuously gives fire and light, which means *Dur* had this quality before and after it exploded:

<i>Dura zer bi seranser e</i>	The yellow pearl in its entirety
<i>Dixumxime behirê agir e</i>	Is a pile of blazing/flaming fire
<i>Şev û roj navemire</i>	It is not extinguished day and night
<i>Bi dewran dewran here hile.</i>	It is always alight. ²⁷⁸

<i>Dewran dewran dibilêtin</i>	It is always burning
<i>Bîhna agirê ji wê têtin</i>	The smell of fire comes from it
<i>Dura zer agir û pêtin.</i> ²⁷⁷	The yellow pearl is fire and flame.

The *Dur* is colourful; it is the source of all colours in the world:

<i>Hat çarşembuwa ewilê</i>	Came the first Wednesday
<i>Zur [*Dur] bi renga xemilê</i>	The <i>Dur</i> was adorned with colours (i.e., all colours)
<i>Eve diniya ye pê dikemilê.</i> ²⁷⁹	This world fully developed within it.

<i>Dur bi renga geş bû</i>	The <i>Dur</i> became radiant with colours.
<i>Berê ne 'erd hebû, ne 'ezman hebû ne 'erş bû</i>	There was neither earth, or sky, nor the throne.
<i>Ka bêje min pedşê min bi kê ra xos bû.</i> ²⁸⁰	Tell me, whom could my King (i.e., God) be delight in.

1.2 *Dur* and its characteristics in the creation

When the *Dur* could no longer withstand God's power, it exploded:

<i>Kirine riken û rikînî</i>	Foundations were laid and established
<i>Dur bi heybetê hincînî</i>	The <i>Dur</i> burst open in its awe ²⁸²

²⁷⁵ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 13, in Xêravay 2012: 62.

²⁷⁶ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 14, in Xêravay 2012: 62.

²⁷⁷ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 8, 9, in Xêravay 2012: 61.

²⁷⁸ Literally, 'turning'.

²⁷⁹ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 28, in Kişto 2004: 210.

²⁸⁰ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 11, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 36.

²⁸² "PX: *hincînî*, to be under pressure, shudder", Kreyenbroek 1995: 180, n. 16.

Taqet nema hilgiri.

It no longer had the strength to withstand.

*Taqet nema bisebirî
Dur bi renga xemilî
Sipî bû, sor bû, sefirî.²⁸¹*

It no longer had the strength to remain patient
The *Dur* became adorned with colours
It became white, red and yellow.²⁸³

The *Dur* shone its light everywhere; it lit the darkness around it that existed before Creation and it still shines and gives its light to everything and everywhere:

*Dura zer agirê sor e
Cî girt li 'ezmanê jor e
Şewiq avête Durê li dor e.²⁸⁴*

The Yellow *Dur* is the red fire
It took its place in space²⁸⁵
It shone everywhere around itself.

*Şevê tarî diken ronabî ye
Dura sipî jî wa digerîye
Ew jî li durê ya sor bi mehî ye.²⁸⁶*

It brightened the dark nights
The white pearl also rotates
It rotates around that red one monthly.

The *Dur* made a sound during its explosion; it became the ocean:

*Pedşa deng diket bi zar e
Dur mewicî bive behr e, ...²⁸⁷*

The King (i.e., God) calls out loudly
The *Dur* had waves, it became the ocean, ...

Water flowed out from *Dur* during its explosion:

*Av ji Durê diweriya
Bive behr û pengîya
Pedşê min merkeb dibest û nav
geriya.²⁸⁸*

Water came from the *Dur*
A sea came into being and water collected in it
My King (i.e., God) saddled a horse and roamed over it.

After the *Dur* burst open, it gave rise to the appearance of everything in the universe in several stages. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

²⁸¹ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 9, 10 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 58.

²⁸³ "The symbolism is interesting. When the Pearl, a whitish object, which appears to contain all colours, burst open, colours came into existence", Kreyenbroek 1995: 180, n. 18.

²⁸⁴ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 7, in Xêravay 2012: 61.

²⁸⁵ Lit. 'high sky.'

²⁸⁶ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 12, in Xêravay 2012: 62.

²⁸⁷ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 9, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 95.

²⁸⁸ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 21, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 37.

2 The Stages of the Creation of the World

From the analysis of content and meaning found in religious texts, it is clear that when the *Dur* exploded, the entire universe was created from its elements. In other words, the universe began when the *Dur* burst open. Thus, it brought this world into being:

<i>Av û ax û bayê û agir e</i>	Water, earth, air and fire
<i>Dura sor ye bi xerz e ji bakir e</i>	The red <i>Dur</i> contains the original seeds
<i>Çendî muxliq pê bi xatir e.²⁸⁹</i>	It created all creatures.
<i>Hat çarşembuwa ewilê</i>	Came the first Wednesday
<i>Zur [*Dur] bi renga xemilê</i>	The <i>Dur</i> was adorned with colours
<i>Eve diniya ye pê dikemilê.²⁹⁰</i>	This world fully developed within it.

Based on *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World, QAD), *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu?* (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning? QHBKB) and *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One, QZM), the main stages of the creation of the world and universe generally, and the sequence of events will be described and explained in the following sub-section.

2.1 The liquid (watery and sea) stage

In the beginning, when the *Dur* exploded, water flowed out of it and it became an ocean with neither beginning nor end, i.e., everywhere became water and waves appeared:

<i>Qendîla ji bana nezîlê</i>	The lamp from above came down
<i>Pedşê min pê hîlînabû çav e</i>	My King (i.e., God) had placed his eye in it
<i>Pedşay çî gote durê</i>	What did my King say to the <i>Dur</i> ?
<i>Ji Durê weryabû av e.</i>	From the <i>Dur</i> water was coming.
<i>Av ji Durê werya</i>	Water flowed from the <i>Dur</i>
<i>Bû behir û pengîya</i>	It became the sea and water collected in it
<i>Padşê min merkeb best, te gerya.²⁹¹</i>	

²⁸⁹ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

²⁹⁰ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 28, in Kişto 2004: 210.

²⁹¹ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 24, 25, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60-61. Cf., this is another variant of those *sebeqes*:

<i>Qendîl ji bana nizîlê, muhbet kefte nav e</i>	The Lamp came down from above, love came into (the world)
<i>Pedşê min pê hîlînabû çav e</i>	My King (i.e., God) seized it, it became an eye.
<i>Ka bêje min çî gote durê jê weryabû av e.</i>	Tell me what he said to Dur, water came from it.
<i>Av ji Durê dimeriya</i>	Water came from the Pearl
<i>Bîne behr û pengîya</i>	A sea came into being and water collected in it
<i>Pedşê min merkeb dibest û nav gerya.</i>	My King addled a horse and roamed over it.

(QZM, seb. 20, 21, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 37).

*Dur mewcî û hecîcî
Bive behir û mewcî
Pedşayê min nûr bû, bi hukmê xo
difericî.²⁹²*

My King saddled a horse and roamed
over it.

The *Dur* (like a sea) became liquid and
waved
It became sea, and waved
My King (i.e., God) was light and exerted
His rule.²⁹³

As well as:

*Av ji Durê herikî
Bû behira bê serî bê binî
Bê rê û bê derî
Êzdanê me ser behirê gerî.²⁹⁴*

Water flowed from the *Dur*
It became an ocean²⁹⁵ with neither
beginning nor end
With neither beginning nor end²⁹⁶
My God moved around over the ocean.

2.2 The solid (coagulated and stable) stage

After the entire universe was water, like an ocean, God threw rennet/leaven into it and it coagulated:

*Havên avête behirê, behir pê meyanî
Dexanek jê derxwenî
Hefût tebeq 'erd û 'ezman pê nijinî.²⁹⁷*

Threw leaven into the ocean and it
coagulated
Smoke appeared from it
Created seven spheres of earth and sky
from it.

*Havên avête behrê, behr pê meyanî
Dexanek jê derxwenî
Çarde tebeq 'erd û ezman pê nijnî
Êzdanê me dur deranî.²⁹⁸*

[God] threw leaven into the ocean and it
coagulated
Smoke appeared from it
He built fourteen spheres of the sky and
the earth,
Our God brought the Pearl out.

²⁹² *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu?* (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning?), seb. 19, in Reşo 2004 I: 261.

²⁹³ Literally, 'he watched his rule (authority).'

²⁹⁴ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 13, in Bâqasirî 2003: 237.

²⁹⁵ Literally, 'a sea has neither beginning nor end.'

²⁹⁶ Literally, 'with neither way nor door.'

²⁹⁷ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 11, in Bâqasirî 2003: 237.

²⁹⁸ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 10, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 41.

2.3 The creation of the earth and sky stage

After the previous stages (liquid and solidity), the earth and sky, with their fourteen spheres, are created:

<i>Havên avête behirê, behir pê meyanî</i>	Threw leaven into the ocean and it
<i>Dexanekê jê derxwenî</i>	coagulated
<i>Hefît tebeq ‘erd û ‘ezman pê nijînî.²⁹⁹</i>	Smoke appeared from it
	Created seven spheres of earth and sky
	from it.

<i>Havên avête behrê, behr pê meyanî</i>	[God] threw leaven into the ocean and it
<i>Dexanekê jê derxwenî</i>	coagulated
<i>Çarde tebeq ‘erd û ezman pê nijînî</i>	Smoke appeared from it
<i>Êzdanê me dur deranî.³⁰⁰</i>	He built fourteen spheres of the sky and
	the earth,
	Our God brought the Pearl out.

The following *sebeqe* also expresses this creative moment:

<i>Seyidî! behirê kef dane</i>	My Lord! The sea foamed
<i>Jê co duxan e</i>	Smoke came from it
<i>Pedşayê min jê nijiyar kir; ‘erd û</i>	My King (i.e., God) created earth and
<i>‘ezman e.³⁰¹</i>	sky from it.

After God created and separated the sky and the earth, He then created the sun and the moon between them:

<i>Belê Fexro, min ‘erd û ezman ji yek</i>	Indeed, Fexro, I separated sky and earth
<i>kîre</i>	I made the moon and sun visible in
<i>Min heyw û roj navda dahir dikire</i>	between
<i>Min ev meclisa bi navê Şêxadî û Melike</i>	And I established the community that is
<i>şêx Sin ava kîre.³⁰²</i>	named after Sheikh ‘Adî and Angel
	Sheikh <i>Sin</i> .

The stages of the creation of the earth

The creation of earth is the most important stage in the Yezidi creation cosmology. Based on religious texts, in the beginning, earth passed through various stages to reach today’s form. These stages are found in *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One) and there are further *sebeqes* on this subject from other *Qewls*.

²⁹⁹ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 11, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 237.

³⁰⁰ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 10, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 41.

³⁰¹ *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu* (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning?!), seb. 20, in Reşo 2004 I: 261-262.

³⁰² *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 28 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 99.

The liquid and unstable stage of earth

According to Yezidi cosmology, in the beginning, the earth was liquid and unstable. Religious *sebeqs* use the following terms to refer to this state: *bubtî* (unsettled), *netebitî* (not tranquil) and *negirtibû beşare* (not solid):

<i>Erd mabû bubtî</i>	The earth was still unsettled ³⁰⁴
<i>Xidûdekî xudîdî</i>	A fissure appeared
<i>Ezîzê min, 'erd bê wê surê netebitî.</i>	[He said] My dear one, without the Mystery the earth will not become tranquil.
<i>Be'dî çil salê bi hijmar e</i>	Afterwards count forty years:
<i>Erdê bi xora negirtibû beşar e</i>	The earth did not become solid ³⁰⁵
<i>Heta mîbbeta xerça nûranî bi nav da nedîbinare.³⁰³</i>	Until the luminous seed of Love, acting as rennet, was sent into it.

The solid and stable stage of earth

After forty years of the earth being in a liquid phase, it became solid and stable when Lalish came into the world. Outside the terrestrial sphere of earth and sky, a celestial form of Lalish as *mîbbeta xerça nûranî* (the luminous seed of love) existed on high. The coming of Lalish in some way caused the earth to become solid and stable:

<i>Be'dî çil salê bi hijmar e</i>	Afterwards count forty years:
<i>Erdê bi xo ra negirt beşar e</i>	The earth did not become solid,
<i>Heta Lalîş bi nav da dibate xwar e.³⁰⁶</i>	Until Lalish came down into (the world).

Another variant of the same *sebeqe* refers to *mîbbeta xerça nûranî* (the luminous seed of love) instead of Lalish:

<i>Be'dî çil salê bi hijmar e</i>	Afterwards count forty years:
<i>Erdê bi xo ra negirtibû beşar e</i>	The earth did not become solid
<i>Heta mîbbeta xerça nûranî bi nav da nedîbinare.³⁰⁷</i>	Until the luminous seed of Love [Lalish], ³⁰⁸ acting as rennet, ³⁰⁹ was sent into it.

On this stage as well as see:

³⁰³ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 31, 32 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61.

³⁰⁴ "Lit. had remained molten", Kreyenbroek 1995: 180, n. 36.

³⁰⁵ "Lit. took solidity unto itself", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n.21.

³⁰⁶ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 28 in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 38.

³⁰⁷ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 32 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61.

³⁰⁸ "The fact that Lalish is mentioned in the following stanza of this version suggests that the original myth attributed this function to Lalish", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n. 22.

³⁰⁹ "Lit. 'leaven, yeast'; since the substance in question causes liquids to coagulate, the translation 'rennet' seems preferable here", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n. 23.

*Wekî 'erd û 'ezman nedisekînî
Lalişek pêş miqabil dinjînî
Mihbeta xerça nûranî di nav da
disekînî.*

When the earth and the sky were not yet stable

[God] created a form of Lalish opposite them³¹¹

The love of the luminous seed, acting as leaven³¹² came to dwell in it.

*Dilê min da nemabû tû cor e
Lalişek ava kirin li jor e
Derge lêdan Qublet il-bidor e.³¹⁰*

No pain remained in my heart

A form of Lalish was created on high

Its gate was called the 'Qublet il-bidore'.³¹³

The *sebeqes* quoted below indicate that at Lalish, God threw rennet into the sea and it coagulated:

*Paş'a û her çar yare
Li merkebê dibûn siwar e
Tê seyrîn çar kinar e
Li Lalişê sekinîn, gotin eve heq war e.*

The King (i.e., God) and all four friends (i.e., four elements)

[They] mounted the ship

[They] travelled the four corners (directions).

They stopped at Lalish saying: This is the site of Truth.

*Heq war e, sekinî
Paşê min bêvên havête bebrê, behir
meyinî, ...³¹⁴*

It is the site of Truth!³¹⁵ They stopped

My King threw rennet into the sea and it coagulated, ...

Subsequently, from the solidity of the earth, all other natural phenomena were created, for instance, mountains, seas and plains:

*Paşê min çêkir 'erd û 'ezmîn e
Deşit û çiya û behir û zevîn e.³¹⁶*

My King (i.e., God) created earth and sky
Plains, mountains, seas and fields.

*Paşê min li ber hukmê xo yî rewa ye
Ewî deşit çêkir, rukêbande ser çiya ye
Kevna vê dinyayê ba ye.³¹⁷*

My King has balance in his control

He created plains, and set mountains on it

The origin of this world is air.

³¹⁰ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 18, 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 59-60.

³¹¹ "I.e., when earth and heaven had not yet come to rest, a celestial counterpart of Lalish was created outside these", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 59, n. 14.

³¹² "I.e., causing the world to grow solid and become as it is", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60, n. 15.

³¹³ *Qublet el-bidore* means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer see Reşo 2004 II: 573, n. 2.

³¹⁴ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 26, 27, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61.

³¹⁵ In Yezidi religion, Lalish is called "*Laliş heq warê*" (Lalish is the site of truth).

³¹⁶ *Qewlê Omer Xale û Hesin Çinarî* (The Hymn of Omer Xale and Hesin Çinarî), seb. 41, in Xelef 2001: 157.

³¹⁷ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 8, in Hecî 1994a: 23-24.

In Yezidi cosmogony,³¹⁸ after the abovementioned stages of the creation of the earth, the next stage is the emergence of life on earth. Because nature and its four sacred elements play a key role in this process, it will be explained as part of a special section.

3 Natural Elements in the Emergence of Life on Earth

3.1 The light of Lalış and *Nûra Mubibetê* (the light of love)

After the earth had become solid, life began through the light of Lalış, as eternal light, in the form of *Xerxa nûranê* (the luminous seed) and *Nûra mibbetê* (the light of love):

<i>Mora Kaniya Sipê fer e</i>	Baptism in the <i>Kaniya Sipê</i> is obligatory
<i>Lalış cîkê mehder e</i>	Lalış is the place of revival
<i>Nûra wê ji herûber e.</i> ³¹⁹	Its light is eternal.

When Lalış came down from high, it condensed the earth and life emerged and developed on it; therefore, it glowed (i.e., became animated) and plants began to grow on it, and it adorned the earth with colours:

<i>Be'dî çil salê bi hijmar e</i>	Afterwards count forty years:
<i>Erdê bi xo ra negirtibû beşar e</i>	The earth did not become solid
<i>Heta mibbete xerxa nûranê bi nav da nedibinare.</i>	Until the luminous seed of Love [Lalış], ³²¹ acting as rennet, was sent into it.

<i>Kû Lalış neçilê</i>	When Lalış came down
<i>Nûra mibbetê hatê qendilê</i>	The light of love came to the <i>Qendil</i> (Lamp)
<i>Erd şa bû, bi renga xemilê.</i>	The earth glowed; it was adorned with colours.

<i>Kû Lalış dibate</i>	When Lalış came
<i>Li 'erdê şîn dibû nebat e</i>	Plants began to grow on earth
<i>Pê zeyinandibû çiqas kinyat e.</i> ³²⁰	All creations were embellished by them.

³¹⁸ For information in general about Yezidi cosmogony and cosmology see Omarkhali 2017: 14-17.

³¹⁹ *Beyta Kaniya Sipê* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 11, in Sileyman 2013: 42.

³²⁰ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 32, 33, 34 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61-62. Cf., this is another variant of that *sebeq*:

<i>Be'dî çil salê bi hijmar e</i>	Afterwards, count forty years:
<i>Erdê bi xo ra negirt beşar e</i>	The earth did not become solid,
<i>Heta Lalış bi nav da dibate xwar e.</i>	Until Lalış, came down into (the world).

(QZM, seb. 28 in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 38).

³²¹ "The fact that Lalış is mentioned in the following stanza of this version suggests that the original myth attributed this function to Lalış", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n. 22.

Based on Yezidi creation myth, Kreyenbroek writes, “a celestial, ideal form of Lalish first existed on high, and later became manifest in the world.”³²² Reşo states, “*Xerxa nûranî* is the luminous leaven (linked with God’s Word) and everything was created from it. It is the leaven enabling everything (plants, animals and humans) to exist, and it is the cell that created life.”³²³

<p><i>Paşayê min î kamilî bukim giran e</i> <i>Di nav da dana zor erkan e</i> <i>Mibbeta xerxa nûranî dane wan bi</i> <i>nîşan e.</i>³²⁴</p>	<p>My King (i.e., God) is perfect, his judgment is weighty [He] placed many cornerstones As a sign he gave them the love of the luminous seed, acting as leaven.</p>
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3.2 The water of *Kaniya Sîpî*

According to some *sebeqes*, the rennet of *Kaniya Sîpî* has existed from pre-eternity.

<p><i>Heke tû pişyara hêvênê Kaniya Spî ji</i> <i>min dikê</i> <i>Hêvênê Kaniya Spî ji herûber e.</i>³²⁵</p>	<p>If you ask me about the rennet of <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> The rennet of <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> has existed from pre-eternity.</p>
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<p><i>Laliş ber sikan e</i> <i>Kaniya Spî nîşan e</i> <i>Nîşana ‘erd û ezman a [e].</i>³²⁶</p>	<p>Lalish lies at the centre <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> is the sacred symbol It is the symbol of earth and sky.</p>
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Therefore, the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* is the leaven of life on earth and it created all living creatures, as expressed in these *sebeqes*:

<p><i>Paşayê min çêkir: gayê û masî, behir û</i> <i>kursî</i> <i>Deşit û çiya, ‘erd û ‘esman, mêrg û zevî</i> <i>Xulyaqet tevî, hêvên ji Kaniya Sîpî bî</i> <i>Em ye we ye, wek paşê pêdivî.</i>³²⁷</p>	<p>My King (i.e., God) created the bull and the fish, the sea and the throne Plain and mountain, earth and sky, meadow and fields The leaven of all creatures is from <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> It is completed as King wanted it.</p>
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The Yezidi religious man, Hecî Şemo Mirad, says, “*Havênê Kaniya Sîpî ji berî ‘erd û ‘ezmana behû piştî xiliqbûna wan, ava Kaniya Sîpî bûye havênê beyatê li ser ‘erdê’.*³²⁸ (The leaven of *Kaniya*

³²² Kreyenbroek 2008: 88.

³²³ Reşo 2004 I: 154.

³²⁴ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 21, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60.

³²⁵ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 16, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 97.

³²⁶ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 20, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60.

³²⁷ *Qewlê Omer Xala û Hesên Çinarî* (The Hymn of Omer Xala and Hesên Çinarî), seb. 36, in Reşo 2004 I: 540.

³²⁸ From the interview with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraçî Kurdistan.

Sîpî existed before the creation of earth and sky; after that, its water became the leaven of life on earth).

3.3 The four elements of nature

According to the following *sebeqes*, the four elements of nature which existed in the *Dur* from primordial time, are the original seeds for creating all creatures, including living creatures:

<i>Li wê nebû bi êkcar e</i>	Nothing existed there
<i>Dura sor ye maldar e</i>	The red pearl is plentiful
<i>Av û ax û bayê û agir disipare.</i>	Water, earth, air and fire are its elements.
<i>Av û ax û bayê û agir e</i>	Water, earth, air and fire
<i>Dura sor ye bi xerzê e ji bakîr e</i>	The red <i>Dur</i> contains the original seeds
<i>Çendê muxliq pê bi xatir e.³²⁹</i>	It created all creatures.

The next *sebeqe* emphasizes the point that God created living creatures from the water of the sea:

<i>Enî çêkir 'erd û 'ezman e</i>	He created earth and sky
<i>Di nav da çêkir behîr û behîrsîtan e</i>	Placed sea and ocean in it (earth)
<i>Û zêndewer û însan û can e.³³⁰</i>	And organisms (living beings), human and soul.

According to Yezidi mythology, by God's power life renews itself in nature on the first Wednesday of April of each year. That is why, on that day, plain, mountain, field and pasture are adorned with plants and start a new life:

<i>Li çarşembê xoş bû jîyan</i>	Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays
<i>Kesikê bûn deşîr û çîya û zêvî û zozan</i>	Plain, mountain, field and pasture are adorned with plants
<i>Hemû bi kerema Pedşê min î Yezdan.</i>	All those by the mystical power of my King (i.e., God) Yezdan.
<i>Hat çarşembuwa sor e</i>	Came the red Wednesday
<i>Nîsan xemiland bû bi xo re</i>	Adorned April with itself
<i>Ji batin da ye bi mor e.³³¹</i>	From the world of the Unseen it is baptized.

To conclude, the Yezidi religion has its own myth and views about the creation of the universe. According to Yezidi cosmology, first of all, there is an eternal God as the supreme power and the only creator of existence in its entirety. God created a *Dur* with its four natural elements: water, fire, earth and air and they are the source of all creatures in the whole of existence. There are several stages of the creation of the universe, which are: liquid, solid, earth and sky, and finally, the emergence of life on earth and the

³²⁹ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 20, 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

³³⁰ *Qewlê Şîxadî Şêxê Şara* (Şîxadî is the sheikh of Cities), seb. 7, in Dinanî 2012: 134.

³³¹ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 5, 19, in Kişto 2004: 206-207, 209.

creation of human beings. The creation, in Yezidi cosmogony, ends with the creation of human beings.³³²

The final stage of the Yezidi cosmogony is the creation of human beings. Because it is the most significant and main stage in the creation, and because the four elements of nature play a central role within this process, the next chapter will be devoted to this event.

After the completion of all the stages within the Yezidi cosmogony, and particularly after the appearance of natural phenomena, the Yezidis believe that there are powers governing these natural features and phenomena. They called those powers *Xudans* (Lords), meaning, each phenomenon has its own *Xudan*. Because these *Xudan* play an important role within Yezidi cosmology, and within religious life in general, and because they have a direct connection with nature, they will be described and explained in the following section.

4 Manifestations of the Four Elements of Nature and their *Xudans* ('Lords')

Xudan is a prevalent term in religious beliefs and literature. As a term, it could be translated as "lord", "master", "owner", "holder", "proprietor" and "protector". Some religious men emphasize that, in Yezidi belief, God is almighty and absolute, and the

³³² Regarding the duration of the creation, religious texts generally refer to the process of the creation of the universe as completed in seven days, and Wednesday as being the final day:

*Pedşê min her heft roj dikirin hijmar e
Û ev dinyê çê dikir û hildîpesare, ...
(QM, seb. 16 in Hecî 1994a: 25).*

My King (i.e., God) counted these seven days
And created this world and controlled it, ...

*Xudavendê me îmî kir esas e
Şembî birî kiras e
Çarşemê kir xilas e
Hesed sal paş hewsir bat duran kas e.
(QAD, seb. 29, in Silêman and Cindî
1979: 43).*

Our God laid the foundation on Friday
On Saturday [He] cut the dress (drew up a plan)
[He] completed it on Wednesday
Seven hundred years later the seven mysteries came
to the pearl and the cup.

*Hat çarşembuwa ewilî
Zur [*Dur] bi renga xemilî
Eve dinyaya ye pê dikemilî.
(QÇ, seb. 28, in Kişto 2004: 210).*

Came the first Wednesday
Dur became adorned it with
colours
This world fully developed within
it.

Xudans are a part of God's power.³³³ Moreover, in relation to nature, Yezidis believe in *Xudans* for most of the natural elements and phenomena, which are regarded as divine powers that have control over these phenomena.

4.1 Manifestations of the fire and their *Xudans*

Şeşims is the *Xudan* of fire³³⁴ and fire is also *Şeşims'* terrestrial counterpart.³³⁵ Moreover, fire, as one of the four sacred elements, was a primordial element that existed in the *Dur* and it is the reason that *Dur* is always lit:

<i>Dura zer bi seranser e</i>	The yellow pearl in its entirety
<i>Dixumxime behirê agir e</i>	Is a pile of blazing/flaming fire
<i>Şev û roj navemire</i>	It is not extinguished day and night
<i>Bi dewran dewran here bile.</i>	It is always alight. ³³⁷

<i>Dewran dewran dibilêtin</i>	It is always burning
<i>Bîhma agirî ji wê têtin</i>	The smell of fire comes from it
<i>Dura zer agir û pêtin.</i> ³³⁶	The yellow pearl is fire and flame.

Şeşims is the lord of the sun and light; it has been explained in Chapter one under the name “*Şeşims* (the lord of the sun) as *Nûr* and his characteristics related to nature.”

<i>Çendî sibe ye kê roj li min hiltêye</i>	By the morning when the sun rises over me!
<i>Şemsê min î bi nûr û keramet bû</i>	
<i>Şefeq dabû li binêt bebra</i>	My <i>Şems</i> (<i>Şeşims</i>) was full of light and mystical power
<i>Ronahî kiribû lalişa nûranî, beta bi banê kafê ye, ...</i> ³³⁸	He had placed dawn at the bottom of the oceans
	He had brought light to Lalish the luminous, as far as the roof of the cave, ...

4.1.1 Lightning and Thunder

The *Xudan* of lightning and thunder is Sheikh Ebrus or Sheikh Hevrus.³³⁹ As is known, his name came from the word *Birusî* (thunder), and holy texts also refer to his name:

³³³ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haçî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Adinan Xêravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

³³⁴ From the interview with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

³³⁵ Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-98.

³³⁶ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 8, 9, in Xêravay 2012: 61.

³³⁷ Literally, 'turning.'

³³⁸ *Xizêmok*, *Şaxê 1* (*Xizêmok*, Version 1), seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 402.

³³⁹ On him see Kreyenbroek 1995: 112; Asatrian, G. and Arakelova, V. (2004), "The Yezidi Pantheon", *Iran and the Caucasus*, 8.2, Brill, Leiden, pp. 234-235, 242.

<i>Şemis qemer</i>	Sun and moon,
<i>Dawdî bin Derman, Pîrî Terciman, Şêx</i>	<i>Dawdî bin Derman</i> , ³⁴¹ Pîrî Terciman ³⁴²
<i>Hevrûz, ...</i> ³⁴⁰	Sheikh Hevrûz, ...

When it thunders, Yezidis say, “*Ya Şêxê Hevrûz (Ebroş), tu me xilas kê jîvan birus*” (O Sheikh Ebrus, you save us from these thunders).

4.1.2 The Rainbow

In Yezidi mythology, Tawusî Melek has a link with the rainbow. Yezidis believe that He shows his blessing with the sign of the rainbow. In Yezidi mythology, at the beginning of the creation, Tawusî Melek descended to the earth and as a result the seven-coloured rainbow turned into the seven-coloured bird, the peacock.³⁴³

4.2 Manifestations of the water and their *Xudans*

In the Yezidi tradition, the *Xudan* of the water is Xidir Liyas. In Yezidism, water is an essential and fundamental element in the creation of the world and is the source of life and its continuity on earth:³⁴⁴

<i>Av ji Durê herikê</i>	Water flowed from the <i>Dur</i>
<i>Bû behira bê serî bê binî</i>	It became an ocean ³⁴⁶
<i>Bê rê û bê derî</i>	With neither beginning nor end ³⁴⁷
<i>Êzdanê me ser behirê gerî.</i> ³⁴⁵	My God moved around over the ocean.

4.2.1 Springs

According to Ğindî, the *Xudan* of all springs and flowing water is *Kaniya Sipî*.³⁴⁸ There are many holy springs in Yezidi such as Lalish.³⁴⁹ *Kaniya Sipî* is very sacred in Yezidism and plays an important role in religious beliefs and mythology. It is the source of the leaven for the creation of all creatures and it is the source of life on the earth (see above *sebeqes*, under 3.2).

³⁴⁰ *Du'a Stêra Dembilqapî* (The Prayer of the *Dembilqapî*, 'pole star'), seb. 4, in Reşo 2004 II: 1000.

³⁴¹ For information on him see Kreyenbroek 1995: 114-115.

³⁴² On this figure see Kreyenbroek 1995: 113.

³⁴³ See al-Rašidānī 2013: 72. Also see “The Symbolism of the Tawus in Religious Life”, in chapter V, part II.

³⁴⁴ See “The Role of Natural Elements in *Afirandina Kinyatê* (the Yezidi Myth of Cosmogony and Cosmology)”, chapter I, part I.

³⁴⁵ *Qewlê Afirina Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 13, in Bāqasirî 2003: 237.

³⁴⁶ Literally, ‘a sea has neither beginning nor end.’

³⁴⁷ Literally, ‘with neither way nor door.’

³⁴⁸ Ğindî 1998: 28; ‘Amar, H. (2008), *Min Hum al-Ayżîdîyûn?* (Who are the Yezidis?), Duhok: Azadî, p. 102.

On the other hand, Sheikh Merwan said: In Yezidism, the lord (protector) of springs is Evdê Reş. (From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesen Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan).

³⁴⁹ About these springs see “The Natural Elements in the Structure of Lalish”, in chapter II, part II.

Furthermore, there are several holy springs in Yezidis areas: for the Shingal district, *Kaniya Pîraxayê* (the spring of Pîraxayê) near the village of Kulka,³⁵⁰ *Kaniya Kedrê* (the spring of Kedrê) in the *Kedrê* cemetery in the village of Solax, *Kaniya Leylê* (the spring of Leylê) near the *Pîrê Ewra* shrine in the village of Zorava, *Kaniya Şilo* (the spring of Şilo) in the *Şilo* valley near the village of Bara; and in Sheikhan district, *Kaniya Şêxê Zerî* (the spring of Şêxê Zerî) in the village of Bêtnar. There is a sacred spring devoted to Sheikh Mend in Bahzani. In Duhok province, *Kaniya Efdê Reş* (the spring of Efdê Reş) in the village of Dêrebûn, *Kaniya Bawê* (the spring Bawê) between the village of Bacid Kendala and the village of Kewrênî and *Kaniya Plohyê* (the spring of Plohyê) in the village of Mem Şivan.

Generally, springs are places of the reverence, admiration and veneration in religious life, and there are several springs that Yezidis specifically venerate highly, such as the *Kaniya Sîpî* and Zimzim in Lalish. Some of these springs are used for religious purposes, such as for healing practices.³⁵¹

4.2.2 Lakes, seas and oceans

Xidir Liyas is the *Xudan* of water and sea in Yezidism. In some *sebeqes*, Xidir is described as *Zindî* and his place is the sea (or the seashore); therefore, he is described as having an eternal life:

*Mûsê go: bo min bêje bi rehmanî
Tu kê çîdikê li derê deryanî
Bi xatira Xudê û xasêt cibanî.*

Moses said: Tell me by the Merciful one
Who are you and what do you do in the
sea?

For the sake of God and the holy beings
of the world.

*Xidir go: ez Xidirê Zindî me
Ji 'enzîl afirê Xudê me
Sura yarê bêrî me.*

Xidir said: I am Xidir Zindî (immortal
Xidir)

I am a creature of God from eternity
I am a Mystery of the primordial Friend.

*Me'rifet û sur û erkan e
Xudê da min subhan e
Di zanîm çi qeder dâr li bebran e.³⁵²*

Knowledge, mystery and principle
God gave me, praise be to Him

I know how many pearls are in the sea.

According to Yezidi cosmogony, the sea plays a great role in the creation of the universe because at the beginning, after *Dur* exploded, the universe became a sea.³⁵³ Then, from the sea (ocean), the seven spheres of earth and sky are created:

³⁵⁰ The water of this spring saved the lives of thousands of Yezidi people from thirst in hot weather when they were escaping the attacks of the Islamic terrorist group called Islamic State (ISIS), in August 2014.

³⁵¹ Details are given in "The Four Elements of Nature in Religious Healing Practices", in chapter IV, part II.

³⁵² *Qewlê Mûsa Pêxember û Xidrê Zênde* (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidrê Zênde), seb. 7, 8, 9, in Reşo 2004 I: 330.

³⁵³ See "The Stages of the Creation of the World", in chapter I, part I.

*Seyidî! behirê kef dane
Jê co duxcan e
Pedşayê min jê nijyar kêr; 'erd û
'ezman e.³⁵⁴*

My Lord! The sea foamed
Smoke came from it
My King (i.e., God) created earth and
sky from it.

The sea and water are the sources of life and creation of all living creatures (see above *sebeqes*, under 3.3). Furthermore, in religious texts, the sea has several metaphorical meanings.³⁵⁵

4.2.3 Streams and rivers

The *Xudan* of streams is Xidir Liyas. Streams are described as highly venerated in many Yezidi tradition. In *Qesîda Hecî 'Elî* (*Qesîde* of Hecî 'Elî), from the beginning to the end, the word *robar* (stream) is repeated several times and its content describes the nature of streams with veneration, as can be seen in these *sebeqes*:

*Çî robarekê xoş e
Tijîye jî gulê geş e
Hecî 'Elî sur jî 'erş e.*

What a nice river
Full of lustrous flowers
Hecî 'Elî is a mystery on high.

*Çî robarekê şîn e
Tijîye jî gulê rengîn e
Hecî 'Elî sur li ezman e.³⁵⁶*

What a blue river
Full of colourful flowers
Hecî 'Elî is a mystery from the sky.

In the religious literature, there is a special genre of poetry called *Robarîn*. The Yezidi writer, M. S. Hekarî, in his article about *Robarîn*, entitled *sebeqe u Zincîra Robarîna* (*sebeqes*

³⁵⁴ *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu* (The Hymn of Where was God [or Universe] at the Beginning?!), seb. 20, in Reşo 2004 I: 261-262.

³⁵⁵ Sea is a symbol of spiritual knowledge:

*Behira jî behirana zêde
Xewas meyzekê pêde
Behir ewe 'alim têde.
(QN, seb. 17, in Hekarî 2005: 175).*

There is a sea which is greater than all seas
The divers wondered about it
A great sea is full of knowledge.

*Roj û heyv nûr in
'Ulmê wan jî bebrêrê kêr in
Milyaketê Xudê yêd nêzîk in ne di dûr in.
(QMC, seb. 5, in Kışto 2012: 118).*

The sun and the moon are light
Mystic knowledge about them is from deep seas
God's angels are near not far.

The sea is the symbol of a deep religious faith:

*Hincîyê bawerî bi îmanê anî
Îman bîbir e jê diçin co û kanî
Momina Şebde û bawerî xwe bi navê
Tawusî Melek anî.
(DÎ, seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 II: 1014).*

To anyone who believes
Faith is (like) a sea with streams and springs,
Believers declared their faith by name of
Tawusî Melek.

³⁵⁶ *Qesîda Hecî 'Elî* (The *Qesîde* of Hecî 'Elî), seb. 1, 2, in Hecî 1996: 75.

and the Series of *Robarîn*), suggests that the word *Robarîn* derives from *robar*, ‘stream, river’, and he then points out the connection between pure water, eternal water, the continuous movement of streams, and the purity of the mystic’s love for God.³⁵⁷

<i>Robar çend car robar</i>	A river, rivers several times over!
<i>Esmêrêt şebabî</i>	The dark brown ones of youth
<i>Çereza Çelenga lawa beye li bal.</i> ³⁵⁸	Are (like) tidbits in the thoughts of the excellent ones, the young men.

In other religious texts, there is an analogy between human appearance and the nature of the river:

<i>Xemlêt robara çîne?</i>	What are the charms (ornaments) of the river?
<i>Xemlêt robara debil û dirî ne.</i>	The charms of a river are bush plants.

<i>Xemlêt kurka çîne?</i>	What are the charms (ornaments) of the young men?
<i>Xemlêt kurka tizbî û çêfî ne.</i> ³⁵⁹	The charms of young men are medals and scarfs.

4.2.4 Ponds

Sheikh Baloka is the *Xudan* of ponds. As a part of nature, the role of ponds is not prominent in comparison with other natural components in religious traditions. As a religious duty, Yezidis must keep ponds clean. There are many holy ponds in Lalish, such as Birka Sicadîn (the Pond of Sicadîn) and *Hewda Kewtele* (the Pond of Kewtel):

<i>Hêvên ji hewid li Kewtel e</i>	The leaven of the pond of <i>Kewtel</i>
<i>Şêx babik wê li ser e, ...</i> ³⁶⁰	Sheikh Babik stands on it, ...

Moreover, Birka/Pîra Mehmed Reşan (Mehmed Reşan’s pond) is in his *Mezar* (Cemetery) in the Meqlub Mountain.

4.2.5 Rain

The *Xudan* of the rain is Mehmed Reşan.³⁶¹ There is a *Qesîde* called *Qesîda Mehmed Reşan* (the *Qesîde* of Mehmed Reşan); it is about the consecration and dedication of Mehmed Reşan and the rain:

³⁵⁷ Hekarî, M. S. (1999), “Sebeqe û Zincîra Robarîna” (*Sebeqes* and Series of *Robarîna*) *Laliş*, No. 10, p. 147.

³⁵⁸ *Robarîn*, seb. 1, in Hekarî 1999: 147.

³⁵⁹ Text details are unknown, *Xizêmok*, in Reşo 2004 II: 1048-1049.

³⁶⁰ *Qesîda Şêx Babik* (The *Qesîda* of Sheikh Babik), seb. 3, in Hecî 1996: 66.

³⁶¹ Cf., Mehmed Reşan is a historical figure and the eponym of a subdivision of the Pîrs clan see Kreyenbroek 1995: 109-110; Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 234-243; Omarkhali 2008: 116.

*Meqlûbî mezîin e
Mehmed Reşa wê li bin e
Kerema Melik Şêx Hesin e.³⁶²*

[Mountain] Meqlub is big
Mehmed Reşa,³⁶³ who stands under it
Has the mystical power of Angel Sheikh
Hesin.

Some other *sebeqes*, from other texts, describe the water of rain as the source of life, goodness and sustenance on earth:

*Pedşê min î rehîm e
Baranekê dibarîne
Xelik û ‘alem pê dijîne.³⁶⁴*

My King (i.e., God) is merciful
It rains by him
People and beings live on it.

*‘Ezman we gufte daye
‘Erdo, beke ji cem min nehate baran û
ba ye
Ev kewna Xudê dê bi çî dibit awa ye?³⁶⁵*

The sky declared:
O earth, if rain and wind did not come
from me
How would this world become liveable?

About the goodness of rain, Yezidis believe that if it rains after a person’s funeral rites, his/her soul was good – it rained as God’s blessing and goodness on him/her. Also, when it rains during Yezidi festivals and ceremonies, this signifies the blessing of that ceremony. In short, rain has many positive connotations in religious life and literature, such as mercy, sympathy, grace, blessings and goodness, often connected with agriculture.

4.2.6 Floods

Pîra Fat³⁶⁶ is the *Xudan* who protects agricultural produce and human life against floods, storms and natural disasters:

*Ya Siltan Êzîd perda te li ber me bit
Ya Pîra Fat çarka te ye li me werkirî
bit.³⁶⁷*

O Sultan Ezîd! You save us
O Pîra Fat! You protect us.

³⁶² *Qesîda Mehmed Reşan* (The *Qesîde* of Mehmed Reşan), seb. 3, in Hecî 1996: 70.

³⁶³ He is the eponym of a subdivision of the Pîrs of Pîr Afat, whose tomb is located near Mt. Meqlub. For more information see Kreyenbroek 1995: 109-110.

³⁶⁴ *Qewlê Pedşay* (The Hymn of the King), seb. 26, in Bozanî 1997: 116.

³⁶⁵ *Qewlê ‘Erd û ‘Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 35, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 391.

³⁶⁶ A female figure and the eponym of a family of Pîrs see further: Kreyenbroek 1995: 109; Omarkhali 2008: 116; Ğirgû, A. F. (2010), *al-Qawmîyat al-Âyîzîdîyat: Ğîdûrbâ-Miqawmâthâ-Ma‘ânâthâ*, (Yazidi Nation: Its Roots, Resists and Sufferings), Baghdad: al-Taif, p. 60; Tolan, K. (2012), *Nasandîna Kewneşopên Êzîdîyatîyé II* (The Introduction of Ancient Vestiges of Yezidism), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, p. 222; Reşîd, T. (2012), *Êzîdîyatî Oleke bê ji Nenaskirî* (Yezidism: A Still Unknown Religion), 3rd ed., Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, p. 14.

³⁶⁷ *Du‘aya Oxirî* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 7, in Ğindî, H. (1994), “al-Adî‘yat al-Âyîzîdîyat, al-Qism al-Tânî” (The Yezidi Prayers, part II), *Lalîş*, No. 2, p. 147.

4.2.7 Clouds

The *Xudan* of the clouds is *Pîrê Enra*. Yezidis venerate clouds as the source of rain and snow in winter, as expressed in this *sebeqe*:

<i>Pîre Pyîzekê li min da</i>	Late autumn passed over me
<i>Bi ser me da batî zivistaneke bi bêlhêl e</i>	Winter came to me in full blast
<i>Peletekê 'ewirî girte pawanê jorî</i>	A small cloud surrounded the heights
<i>Jê dibarin xirîgêt befirê, nexîxêt</i>	Snowflakes and raindrops fall from it, ...
<i>baranê, ...</i> ³⁶⁸	

4.3 Manifestations of the earth and their *Xudans*

Derwêşê Erdê³⁶⁹ is the *Xudan* of earth and has control over it, with everything connected to it such as having control over Yezidis wherever they go to live. He keeps them safe from all evil things:

<i>Ev diniya erdê derwêş e,</i>	This world is the earth of the Darwish,
<i>Têda digerin cimle çêş e</i>	All people roam on it,
<i>Keseke bi nefsa kibar naçite pêş e.</i> ³⁷⁰	No one gets ahead with an arrogant mind.

He is invoked during the sowing season:

<i>Ya xwadê, milê [Sic] Êzîdîd p'arda te</i>	O God, be the protector for us, the
<i>sar ma,</i>	Yezidi nation
<i>Ya Pîra Fat, çara te sar me,</i>	O Pîra Fat, help us,
<i>Ya Xwedê, Dewrêşê E'rd, anemetê</i> ³⁷¹	O God, the Lord of earth, I belong to
<i>me te.</i> ³⁷²	you.

When someone is dead and buried, Yezidis say he/she is handed over to Derwêşê Erdê. During burying customs, religious men recite “*Du'aya Tesmîlî [T'eslîma] 'Erdê'*” (the prayer of Commitment to the earth). It is also called “*Du'aya Dewrêşê 'Erd'*” (the prayer of the lord of the earth):³⁷³

<i>T'eslîmî t'eslîmat e,</i>	[We] commit to you [to earth],
<i>T'esmîlî Dewrêş-'erd,</i>	[We] commit you to the lord of the
<i>Ya, Dewrêş 'e rd,</i>	Earth.
<i>Avê evdî herge jin e, herge mêr e,</i>	O lord of the Earth,

³⁶⁸ *Payîzok Rinde Giravî* (Autumn Song Rinde Giravî), seb. 5, in Bozanî 1998: 189.

³⁶⁹ He is the protector of earth in Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 113; Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 260-264.

³⁷⁰ *Qewlê Miskîno Jaro* (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 7, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 67.

³⁷¹ There are spelling and grammatical mistakes, *anemetê me te*- the correct is *Emanetê ta me* (I belong to you).

³⁷² *Du'ya Oxirê* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), the number of the *sebeqe* is unknown, in Voskianian 1999-2000: 159.

³⁷³ See the whole text of this prayer in “*Du'aya teslîma'erdê (the prayer of commitment to the earth)*”, in chapter I, part II.

*Bixefîrîni, bisetirîni.*³⁷⁴

This being, whether a man or a woman,
Protect and conciliate [him/her].

4.3.1 Mountains and hills

The *Xudan* of mountains and hills is Sexrî Cin.³⁷⁵ There are some mountains in Yezidi areas venerated by the Yezidi people, and each one of them has its reason for such veneration for example, Mt Mişet, Hizret and Erefat are very holy because they surround Lalish:

Kerema Çiyayê Mişetê
Çiyayê Hizretê, Çiyayê Erefatê
*Dar û berêt Geliyê Lalişê.*³⁷⁶

The mystical power of Mount Mişet
Mount Hizret, Mount 'Erefat
[The mystical power of] Trees and stones
of the Lalish Valley.

Also, Mt Meqlub³⁷⁷ is a sacred place for Yezidis, and another is *Mehmed Reşan Zên* (Mehmed Reşan's courtyard) with its pond named *Birka Mehmed Reşan* (Mehmed Reşan's pond):

Meqlûbê mezin e
Mehmed Reşa wê li bin e
*Kerema Melîk Şêx Hesin e.*³⁷⁸

[Mountain] Meqlub is big
Mehmed Reşan, who stands under it
Has the mystical power of Angel Sheikh
Hesin.

Furthermore, Yezidis venerate Mt Shingal,³⁷⁹ which has several natural features considered to be holy: *Kaniya Pîraxayê* (Pîraxayê Spring), *Darkên Qewala* (Qewalis Trees), *Şikefta Leylê* (Leylê Cave) and other caves in the Şilo valley. There are many religious places, such as *Qubs*, shrines and sanctuaries, for example, the shrines of Çilmêran, Şerfedîn³⁸⁰ and Şêbil Qasim.³⁸¹

In general, Yezidis build their places of worship and other religious places, such as *Qubs*, Shrines, etc., on mountains and hills. As Baba Çawîş puts it: these religious

³⁷⁴ *Du'aya Tesmîlî [Tesmîma] 'Erdê* (The Prayer of Commitment to the Earth), seb. 2, 3, in Rudenko 1982: 132.

³⁷⁵ *Ġîgû* 2010: 60.

³⁷⁶ *Diroze*, Seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 286.

³⁷⁷ Mt. Meqlub is in the southeaster part of the Sheikhan district in Mosul Province, northern part of Iraq, there is the shrine of Mehmed Reşan.

³⁷⁸ *Qesîda Mehmed Reşan* (The *Qesîde* of Mehmed Reşan), seb. 3, in Hecî 1996: 70.

³⁷⁹ It is in Mosul province in the north western part of Iraq. It is the place where Yezidis were saved from genocides and wars, particularly from the Ottoman Empire, which is why Yezidis say, "*Çiyayê Şingalê Em ji Fermana Parastin*" (Shingal mount saved us from genocides). See Farhan, 'A. Z. and Şamû, Q. S. (2009), *Maisât al-İzîdîyn 'al-Farmânât wa Hamalât al-İbâda Did al-Kürîd al-İzîdîyn 'Abira al-Târîh'* (Yezidis Tragedies: Genocides and Extermination Campaigns against Yezidi Kurds in History), Duhok: Xanî, pp. 27-221. Moreover, During the Islamic State (ISIS) attack on the Yezidi people in Shingal on 3 August 2014, about 300,000 Yezidi saved themselves by escaping to that mountain, and many children, women and elders died because of hunger, thirst and exhaustion.

³⁸⁰ He is the eponym of a subdivision of the Adanî Sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 106-107.

³⁸¹ He is a Yezidi Xas (holy men) and is from the caste of Sheikhs.

symbols and places are holy, so they must be built in holy places on mountains and hills. Also, Yezidis believe that high places are for holy beings, good powers and approaching God.³⁸² The British cultural anthropologist E. S. Drower states that, there are several flat rocks or enclosed spaces on mountaintops in Yezidi districts which are regarded as holy places, e.g. the shrine of *Şêşims*.³⁸³ Examples of this are the *Qub* of Çilmêran,³⁸⁴ on top of Mt Shingal, and the *Qub* of Kerecal³⁸⁵ on Mt *Zawa* in Duhok province. Likewise, on the top of hills, there are the *Qubs* of Bazîd, Sheikh *Mend* and Çawîş, and the sanctuary of *Memê Şivan* in the collective village of Khanke as well as that of *Şêşims* in the village of Girêpanê in the collective village of Shariya, etc. All of these are in Duhok province.

Yezidi religious literature also emphasizes this belief, as expressed in *Qewlê 'Erd û 'Ezman* (the hymn of earth and sky). The sky is regarded as the symbol of height, divinity, purity and good power, as in the dialogue between earth and sky:³⁸⁶

Ev qewl e qewlekê xas e
'Ezman bi 'erdê ra diket behs e
'Erdo, tu yê ejgerî, ez î pak im
Tu yê ejgerî, ez î xas im.

This *Qewl* is a special *Qewl*
 The sky disputes with the earth:
 O earth, you are impure, I am pure
 You are impure, I am good.

'Ezman dibêjite 'erdê
Ne ji nak im, ne ji xak im
Ez ji cewherekê pak im.³⁸⁷

The sky says to the earth:
 I am not made of an element, I am not
 made of dust
 I come from a pure essence.

The aim of all these is to approach God in the end:

Babo ez çil salê li çiyayê bûm
Lî çû dengê ne bîbay bûm
Çil salê ezî li cê bûm
Lî xilmeta mewlê bûm
Çu dengê na bîhê bûm.³⁸⁸

Oh father, I stayed forty years on the
 mountain
 I did not receive any news
 I stayed forty years there
 I was serving Lord (i.e., God)
 I did not receive any news.³⁸⁹

Regarding the valley as a part of the mountain, the holiest valley in the Yezidi religion is the valley of Lalish.³⁹⁰ There are some other valleys, like the valley of *Kûr Binbarîk* near the Şerfedîn cemetery in the village of Usifa on Mount Shingal. The valley of *Sinceq* is located in the north of the village of Bahzani on Mount Gerdum (or Mount Bahzani),

³⁸² From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

³⁸³ Drower 1941: 28.

³⁸⁴ Cf., Çilmêran is a historical figure and a Yezidi Xas; his famous shrine is on top of Shingal mountain, see Kreyenbrock 1995: 100-101.

³⁸⁵ Cf., he is a Yezidi Xas and is from the caste of Pîrs.

³⁸⁶ See *Qewlê 'Erd û 'Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 386-391.

³⁸⁷ *Qewlê 'Erd û 'Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 4, 5, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 386.

³⁸⁸ *Qewlê Hemedê Babê* (The Hymn of Hemedê Babê), seb. 4, in Silêman 1996: 5.

³⁸⁹ I.e., I was in service of my Lord.

³⁹⁰ See "The Natural Elements in the Structure of Lalish", in chapter II, part II.

and the ceremony of *Tawusgêran* starts from this valley and proceeds to Bahzani and Ba'shiqa.

There are various aspects to the veneration of mountains. As mentioned earlier, there are several holy natural features, such as springs, trees, caves, etc. There are also many holy buildings, such as *Qubs*, shrines, mausoleums and sanctuaries on mountains. The mountain, as a high place, is a symbol of holiness and of holy beings.

4.3.2 Caves

The *Xudan* of caves is Sexrî Cin.³⁹¹ The veneration of caves is attested in the following passage:

<i>Hûn bidene xatira behîstê û darê</i>	For the sake of the paradise and the tree,
<i>Kafê û mexarê, ...</i> ³⁹²	[For the sake of] the cave and the cavern, ...

There are several holy caves in Yezidi areas, such as those in Lalish are *Şikefta Berata*, *Şikefta Zimzim*, etc. There are many holy caves in the Yezidi areas as in Shingal mountain: *Şikefta Leylê* near the Pîrê Ewra shrine in the village of Zorava, and there is a large number of holy caves in the Şilo valley near the village of Bara.³⁹³ The cave of *Dîdefane* is located next to Pîrê Ewra's *Qub* and near the village of Zêrwa. There are holy caves in *Sixirî Cin* valley and *Hinarê* valley on the mountain of Boza behind the village of Boza; there are also holy caves in Boza named *Şikefta Sixirî Cin* (the cave of Sixirî Cin) and *Şikefta Evdê Reş* (the cave of Efdê Reş) and on Meqlub Mountain.³⁹⁴ There are also small caves, called *Xilwetigeb* (caverns), used for worshipping, such as the *Xilwetigeba Bazêdê Bastamî* (cavern of Bayazîd Bistamî) in the village of Dêrebûn in Duhok province.

4.3.3 Trees and plants

The *Xudan* of trees, plants and their fruits is Şerfedîn.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, *Sit Nefîsa* is the personification of a sacred tree ³⁹⁶ In this regard, Empson writes, "Tree-Worship is professed by the Yezîdis to this day. Again, and again one comes across trees protected by a low wall of stones in their districts."³⁹⁷ Moreover, religious texts refer to the holiness of the trees in Yezidism:

<i>Heke 'erdeke bibînî, îşaret ke</i>	When you see earth, mark it ³⁹⁹
<i>Dervêşekê bibînî, îbadet ke</i>	When you see a Darwish, venerate him

³⁹¹ Ğîgû 2010: 60.

³⁹² *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 22.

³⁹³ From the interviews with Xelef Hecî Hemed, 21.11.2017, Minden, Germany.

³⁹⁴ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

³⁹⁵ Ğîgû 2010: 60. Cf., Şerfedîn as a historical figure is the eponym of a subdivision of the Adanî Sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 106-107.

³⁹⁶ Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.

³⁹⁷ Empson 1928: 82.

³⁹⁹ "I.e., a structure intended to remind believers of God's power", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107, n. 233.

*Darekî bibînî, zîyaret ke.*³⁹⁸

When you see a tree, make a pilgrimage to it (i.e., kiss it).

In religious places, there are trees around many shrines. There have to be gardens and orchards in different religious places, like Lalish, *Mebdera Boza*, *Zêna Memê Şivan*, *Qubs*, shrines, etc.⁴⁰⁰ When Yezidis visit their shrines and other holy places during religious festivals and ceremonies, they bring green branches of the trees that are around the shrines as symbols of blessing and holiness. It is significant to note that the taking of green branches home, by pilgrims, means they have visited a holy place and participated in the ceremony associated with it.

It is a religious obligation to plant trees, orchards, flowers, plants and gardens in religious places and keep them clean. There is often at least one tree and a small garden next to every *Qub*, *Mezar*, and *Nîşangeh* in the different Yezidi areas in the Kurdistan region. Additionally, they are used for various purposes, such as healing practices, fulfilling wishes, good weather and pleasant smells, and for beauty and adoration.⁴⁰¹ As known in Yezidism, olive trees are a blessing for Yezidis, it is the symbol of immortal life.⁴⁰²

Furthermore, it is forbidden to cut down the trees regarded as holy in the religious places. There are many holy trees in Lalish, such as *Dara Qelindera* (the tree of *Qelender*) and *Dara Singa* (the tree of the stakes). Also, holy trees can be found in other holy places, in Khanke there are a large number of holy trees named *Heşşiyê Memê Şivan*. There are oak trees named *Darkêt Hemedkî* (Hemedkî's trees), *Dara Şîrî* (the tree of milk) in the village of Boza and *Dara Şexsê Batê* (the tree of Şexsê Batê) is a holy mulberry tree in the village of Xorza in Sheikhan district. In Shingal there is the *Dara Mizîlî* (Mizîlî tree) on the slope of Mehrigan valley, near the Çilmêran shrine. *Darkên Qewala* (Qewal trees) are a few trees located in the village of Kolkan on Shingal Mountain. There is a holy tree in the shrine of Sheikh Mend⁴⁰³ in the village of Cedalê and another in *Şêbil Qasim Mezar*, in the same village. There are two holy mulberry trees in the *Mezar* of Şerfedîn, which are called *Teskera Şerfedîn* (memorial of Şerfedîn). In Ba'shiqa and Bahzani, some trees are venerated and used for healing and treating diseases, such as the mulberry tree, named Sit Nefisa, in Ba'shiqa (see above).

³⁹⁸ *Dû'a Ziyaretbânê* (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), seb. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107. Cf., this is another variant of that *sebeqe*:

Heke te mominek dît, îbadet ke

When you see a believer, venerate him

Heke te darek dît, zîyaret ke

When you see a tree, make pilgrimage to it (kiss it)

Heke te 'erdeke dît, îşaret ke.

When you see earth, place a mark on it.

(*QAM*, seb. 15, in Kreyenbroek and Rasbow 2005: 382).

⁴⁰⁰ See detailed data in "The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Significant Religious Places", chapter II, part II.

⁴⁰¹ See "The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Significant Religious Places", chapter II, part II.

⁴⁰² For supplementary information see "*Dara Zeytûnê* (The Olive Tree)", in chapter V, part II.

⁴⁰³ He is the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî Sheikhs, and also the protector of snakes and has control over them in Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 103-104; Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 267-270; Omarkhali 2008: 116.

4.3.4 Holy stones

Evdê Reş⁴⁰⁴ has strong links with stones, and in this respect is reminiscent of Mehmed Reshan.⁴⁰⁵ Yezidi venerate stones located in holy places, for instance around shrines and in cemeteries. With regard to *Stûna Xasa* (the pillar of holy men), it should be explained that the *Stûm* (pillar) is made from holy stones. Most Yezidi *Xas* have a stone inside their *Qub* or building, such as *Stûna Şêşims* (the pillar of *Şêşims*) in the *Qub* of *Şêşims* in Lalish:

Kesera reş mergehê
Xozî derbas bame wê qubehê
Dê min tunaf kirba stûna Şêşims li gel
wê şerbehê.⁴⁰⁶

Keser Reş of *Mergeh*⁴⁰⁷
 I wish I went inside that *Qub* (i.e., the cupola in Lalish)
 I would circle the pillar of *Şêşims* with *şerbehê*.⁴⁰⁸

Ji sitûnê beta sitûnê
Şêşims xudanê Me'rifet û erkan û
nasînê.⁴⁰⁹

From pillar to pillar,
 Şêşims is the lord of [Mystical]
 knowledge, principles and
 understanding.

There is another pillar made of stones, called *Stûna Miraşa* (the wishing pillar) in the *Mezar* (i.e. shrine) of Şêşims in the village of Cifêriye in Shingal district. Moreover, there is another *Stûna Miraşa* is located in the *Şikefta Stûna Miraşa* (the cave of the wishing pillar). There used to be a stone in the village of Niseriye called 'the Stone of Sheikh-Mend'. No one allowed to step on that stone. In the late 1990s, the people of the village took it to a high place outside the village and built a *Qub* where is now called *Quba* Sheikh Mend.⁴¹⁰ There are Yezidi religious places called *Nîşangeh* (shrine) and *Silangeh* (place of greeting). They are mostly piles holy stones put together with lime (sometimes without it) and are usually named after a *Xas* or a holy man.⁴¹¹ There is also a *Berê Pişt Êşê* (headache stone) in the *Zimzim* cave, and another in *Mezar* of *Mem Şivan* in the collective village of Khanke. Moreover, some Yezidi mausoleums or shrines in various Yezidi areas (and also in Lalish) are built over holy stones, for example, the shrines of Şêxûbekir⁴¹² and Xatûna Fexran.⁴¹³ *Celsa* Sheikh 'Adî (Sheikh 'Adî's assembly) is a holy stone in a circular shape about 10

⁴⁰⁴ On this figure see Kreyenbroek 1995: 115.

⁴⁰⁵ Kreyenbroek 1995: 115.

⁴⁰⁶ *Qewlê Stiya Ês* (The Hymn of Stiya Ês), seb. 23, in Xelef 1996: 12.

⁴⁰⁷ It is the name of the area where the main Yezidi temple Lalish is located. According to the Yezidi folk belief, the name *Mergeh* is derived from *Mîrgeh* (the principedom), and it is the place of Yezidis' principedom.

⁴⁰⁸ *Şerbehê* is not understood.

⁴⁰⁹ *Du'aya Sibeykê* (The Morning Prayer), seb. 6, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 21.

⁴¹⁰ From the interview with Zayer Bibo Hakari, 10.10.2015, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁴¹¹ See "*Nîşangeh* (shrine)" and "*Silangeh* (Place of Greeting)", in chapter II, part II.

⁴¹² Şêxûbekir is a historical figure and the eponym of a subdivision of the Qatanî sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 101.

⁴¹³ A female figure and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî Sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 104; Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 250-251.

metres wide at the top of Mt Mişet. There are some holy stones in the village of Boza called *Berê Merê*, *Berê Niqare*, *Berê Likum* and *Berê Cilantkê*.⁴¹⁴ Generally, such stones are not themselves objects of worship or devotion, but rather play a role in religious observances, for example, for fulfilling wishes like *Stûma Mirazû* (the wishing pillar), lighting lamps on the holy stones like those in Lalish, or religious healing practices may involve stones.

4.4 Air and wind and their *Xudans*

The *Xudan* of the air and wind is Sheikh Musê Sor.⁴¹⁵ According to the Yezidi creation myth, air is one of the four sacred elements and was a primeval element that existed in *Dur* before it exploded (see above *sebeqes*, under 1.1). According to this *sebeqe* the origin of this world is air:

<i>Pedşê min li ber hukmê xo yî rewa ye</i>	My King (i.e., God) has balance in his
<i>Enî deşit çêkir, rukîbande ser çiya ye</i>	control
<i>Kenwa vê dinyayê ba ye.</i> ⁴¹⁶	He created plains, and set mountains on it
	The origin of this world is air.

As it is shown in this chapter, according to Yezidi cosmogonical and cosmological myths, the *Dur* and its four natural elements are the original sources of the creation of all creatures. Creation began when the *Dur* burst open and resulted in the creation of the universe. First of all, when the *Dur* exploded, the universe was liquid, the water flowed out of it and waves appeared. Next, God threw leaven into it and that water became solid. After that, the earth and heaven were created. Then, life emerged on earth from the four elements of nature, from the water of *Kaniya Sipî* and from the light of Lalish as *Xerxa nûranî* (luminous seed) and *Nûra mibbetê* (the light of love). The last stage of the Yezidi creation is the creation of human beings.

It is further shown that after the creation of the world there appeared *Xudans* (Lords) for the four elements of nature and their manifestations. God's power is the source of the power of *Xudans*, for example, the *Xudan* of fire, light and sun is Şêşîms, the *Xudan* of the water is Xidir Liyas, the *Xudan* of the earth is Derwêşê Erdê, and the *Xudan* of the air is Sheikh Musê Sor. Yezidis believe in many *Xudans* linked with fear of the danger from natural phenomena for property and wealth; for example, Sheikh Ebrûs (the *Xudan* of thunder and lightning), Pîra Fat (the *Xudan* of floods, storms and natural disasters). There are some further *Xudans* that are linked with nature for the spiritual love of nature, as Şêşîms is *Xudan* of the sun and light and Mehmed Reşan is the *Xudan* of rain. The belief in several *Xudan* may relate to the role of natural phenomena in the life of Yezidis as a source of sustenance, for example, *Kaniya Sipî*, as the *Xudan* of springs and flowing water, Şerfedîn as the *Xudan* of trees, plants and their fruits.

⁴¹⁴ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁴¹⁵ See 'Amar 2008: 105; Tolan 2012: 222. Sheikh Musê Sor is the eponym of a subdivision of the Adanî Sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 106.

⁴¹⁶ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 8, in Hecî 1994a: 23-24.

Chapter III

The Role of Natural Elements in the Anthropogonical Myth and in the Human Life Cycle

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the last stage in the Yezidi cosmogony is the creation of human beings. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to the role of the natural elements in the creation of human beings according to the Yezidi anthropogonical myth, and to the role they play in the life and death of humans.

The key aims of the study are to investigate what the role and religious significance of natural elements are in the creation, life and death of humans in the Yezidi tradition. The study will attempt to show how nature plays a role in these three stages. It will also discuss some beliefs about venerating nature within the life cycle of a Yezidi, which are considered here for the first time.

Addressing the role and veneration of nature within the three main stages of a Yezidi's life cycle, which are creation, life and death, the structure of the chapter includes three sections. First, the role of nature in human creation, with the focus on the four elements of nature: water, fire, earth and air. Second, the role and veneration of nature in the life of humans, with the focus on the dualism of light, humans' knowledge and good acts, as opposed to darkness and humans' ignorance and evil acts. Third, nature, human death and afterlife, with the emphasis on the role of the four elements of nature in *Kiraşuborîn* (rebirth). This discussion will be followed by an analysis of some results and will end with a conclusion.

1 Natural Elements in the Creation of Human Beings

Before proceeding with the chapter, it should be explained that the story of Adam and Eve in Yezidism has no direct link with nature, and is therefore only referred to in

footnotes, under two topics: first, Yezidi religion and the story of Adam and Eve,⁴¹⁷ and secondly, Yezidi religion and Adam alone.⁴¹⁸ It is worth mentioning that some Yezidi

⁴¹⁷ Yezidi religion and the story of Adam and Eve: Some of the Yezidi oral religious tradition and religious texts prove that Yezidis do/did not dare tell the truth about their belief in the creation of human beings because Yezidi beliefs are opposed to the Islamic Sharia (i.e., the sacred law of Islam), which may lead them to be persecuted under the name of Islamic Sharia if they tell their truth. The Yezidi story of human creation is that human beings had been created before Adam, which means before the story of Adam and Eve. Yezidis believe that they are the nation/people of *Sunetê* (primordial, original leaven) and the right path. For the interpretations of these next *sebeqes*, Rešo states that “*Sunet* existed before Adam, which means that Eizidis existed before Adam because they are from Tawusî Melek mystery” (Rešo 2004 I: 386. n, 5):

<i>Ez newêrim bikelimim</i>	I dare not say it.
<i>Heke ez bêjim, berî Adem im</i>	If I say that [Yezidi people] had existed before Adam,
<i>Dê bi Şir'a ra recimim.</i>	[I] will be stoned* according to the Sharia.
<i>Sunet berî Adem bû</i>	<i>Sunet</i> (Yezidi community) ** was before Adam,
<i>Ber firwara mîrê min bû</i>	With the command of my Prince
<i>Me'niya sunetê, me'niyeke mezin bû.</i>	The ‘ <i>Sunet</i> ’ has great meaning.
<i>(QEB, seb. 11, 12, in Rešo 2004 I: 386-387).</i>	

Cf., this is another variant of this *sebeqe* in (Qewlê Şêx Erebeğî Întûzî, seb. 8, 9, in Celîl and Celîl 1978b: 5-6.

* “So PX and several other informants. Cf. AL rajama ‘to stone’”, Kreyenbroek 1995: 279. n, 6. Here, the word *AL rajama* or *rajm* is Arabic, meaning ‘Stoning.’ In Islamic literature, it is a method of capital punishment whereby a group throws stones at a person until he/she dies. It is a practice found in Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc.

** “*Sunet*, Yezidi community, or Yezidism”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 28, 91.

⁴¹⁸ Yezidi religion and Adam alone: There is a narrative among Yezidis that says Yezidis were created from Adam alone. The narrative that Adam and Eve had a wager, and each deposited their seed in a jar for a time; as a result Eve’s seed turned into worms and insects but from the seed of Adam a person named Şîdî bin Cer was created and the Yezidi nation was created from him. The story does not give details about how Yezidis were created from Adam and it is not found in religious poetic texts such as *Qewls* which are the most prestigious and important part of the Yezidi religious literature. On the other hand, there are many religious texts (which are mentioned above and below in this topic) that confirm that this story may have been developed because of fear of oppression. Therefore, they tried to become close to and/or adapt their (Muslims’) story. Consequently, a number of Yezidi religious texts refuse the belief which says Yezidis are created from Adam but they are before Adam, i.e., they were created before Adam from a special leaven and there is a *sebeqe* emphasizes that Yezidis were created from a leaven with God and water (white sea), as in the following *sebeqes*:

<i>Ew kê bû berî Adem li'êrda bû</i>	Who was on earth before Adam?
<i>Yê bi çi bêvênî bû bi çi renga bû</i>	What was his leaven and what was his colour
<i>Kî Îmam bû kê bosta bû.</i>	(Species and origin)?
	Who was leader and who was master?
<i>Ew bêvêne yê bi çi rengê bû</i>	What was the colour (Species and origin) of that
<i>Yê bi sîdîq û heya û nasbînî bû</i>	leaven?
<i>Aşîqê bidayê û bî bû.</i>	That was righteous, timid and [Mystical] knowledge
	It was the lover of his parents.

sources emphasize that the story of Adam and Eve does not belong to the Yezidi religion.⁴¹⁹ Moreover, according to Yezidi belief, the marriage between Adam and Eve was forbidden.⁴²⁰ Although some religious texts refer to this, Yezidis changed some of their beliefs about Adam and Eve, presumably under Islamic influence.⁴²¹ As shown

*Miletek heye ne yî ji Adem e
Behîrêt giran av tê neme
Dar kesîkê bûn li berê çeme.*

There is a nation not from Adam
No water was left in great seas
The Trees became green in orchards.

*Ew mîlet e yê bi xîret e
Yî bi sidq e yî bi mîrwet e
Hêvênê wî ji ba milyaket e.
(QÎ, seb. 11, 12, 15,16, in Zeydîn 2010: 48,
49).*

That nation has volition (i.e., consciousness).
It is righteous and gracious
Its leaven is from angels (i.e., light).

*Ew Sultanê em çêkirîn
Berî Adem dahîr kirîn
Kî dîzanû çawa em dayîn çawa em birîn.*

That Sultan created us
Before Adam created us
Who knows, how [he] created us and how [he] took
us (i.e., give and take life)?

*Ew kê bu piştî Adem axê bû
Bi şola Xudê ney razî bû
Hêvênê me ji bebra sipî bû.*

Who did become soil after Adam?
Was not content with God's will
Our leaven was from the white sea (i.e., Yezidi
people
are created from leaven, water-white sea)

(BN, seb. 17, 19, in Hecî 2007: 73-74.)

⁴¹⁹ In this regard, Reşo writes, "I believe that the story of Adam and Eve is not from Yezidi religion and entered Yezidi religious literature from neighbouring religions, notably Islam" (Reşo 2004 I: 103). In addition, Othman states that "the details of this story (of Adam and Eve) were unknown to Izidies before the advent of heavenly religions to the area. After that, it became known to Izidies by Islam mystics around 1120 onwards" (Othman, M. (2012a), "Izidy Religion between the Sun-Worshippers and Mysticism, part II", trans. Fadhil H. Khudeda, *Lalish*, No. 35, p. 22).

⁴²⁰ There is a folk belief among Yezidis referring to the point that they are not from Adam and Eve because, according to that story, their children (brothers and sisters) married each other. Furthermore, some Yezidi religious leaders confirm that belief and regard it as a great sin, which is not allowed in Yezidism (from the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan).

⁴²¹ Yezidis consider themselves the people of Adam because, after the coming of Islam, Muslims were converting Yezidis to Islam by force (see Farhan and Şamû 2009: 27-221). Therefore, some Yezidis escaped from Islam and they did not convert while others were forced to stay and consider themselves as Adam's people, as it is in Islam, but in reality, they did not believe in Adam. The below *sebeqes* prove this belief:

*Wê 'Elmeyî te dîkin te dibesibînin
Wê te diceribînin
Hind wê direfîn û hind wê dimînin
Belê sed xwezma bi wî bit yê îmana xwe nexeyrînin.*

They inform you and considered you
They try you
Some escape and some stay
But if a hundred wishes form him, who does not convert
his belief.

from the above various sources confirm that the story of the creation of human beings from Adam and Eve is foreign to Yezidism and that it entered into Yezidi belief in Sheikh ‘Adî’s (1073/8-1162) era, from around 1120 CE. Despite this, whether the story of Adam and Eve is authentic/original or not in Yezidism, there are still a few *sebeqes* about the creation of the human being that refer to the name of Adam (see below *sebeqes*, under 1.2). Usually, in religious literature, the name of Adam is referred to instead of the name *mîrov* (human being).

Religious texts emphasize that Yezidis are created from *Nûr* (light) and *Dur* (pearl) are described as leaven from the power of God (creator) and natural elements (which will be discussed in the next topic). According to Yezidi oral religious tradition and religious textual tradition, the role of nature in the creation of human beings is described and analysed in the following themes:

1.1 Natural aspects *Nûr* (light) and *Dur* (pearl)

Religious texts refer to *Nûr* and *Dur* as the leaven of humans’ creation. They are explained in the following sections:

1.1.1 *Nûr* (light)

Nûr is the original source of human creation:

Nêr û mê ji yek dar in
Tev ji kaniya zêlal in
Lî dinê û exîretê beypar in.

Male and Female are from one source
 They are from pure springs
 They are friends in the world and the hereafter.

Ji yek nûrê vejîne
Xûn û goşt lê hûrîne
Teva ji tokê êqîne.⁴²²

They are created from one light
 Blood and flesh became animated in them
 They believe in *Tok*.

The following *sebeqe* emphasizes the point that the human is created from light and then comes to life:

Borê betêr bê lîxaf kirin
Av li behîra karkirin
Xwe bi mîletê Adem hisab kirin.

The reins of the steed Beter were opened
 (i.e., lost control of the spirit)
 The water flooded in the seas
 They considered themselves as Adam’s people.*

Mîletek beye ne yî ji Adem e
Behîrê giran av tê neme
Dar kesik bûn li berê çeme. (Q1, seb. 7, 14, 15, in
Zeydîn 2010: 47, 49).

There is a nation not from Adam
 No water was left in great seas
 The trees became green in orchards.

* (I.e., ‘*Mîlet*, an Islamic term meaning nation (sect, religion), and a body of people subscribing to religious doctrines).

⁴²² *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 14, 15, in Sileyman 2013: 43.

<i>Îlahiyol te em fariqe dikirin ji makê</i>	Oh God! You made (i.e., created) us
<i>Ji ronahiyê tême zîkakê</i>	apart from our mothers
<i>Wezne tême li ser şibakê</i>	I came from the light to earth
<i>Havêtim ber berê makê.⁴²³</i>	I was laid on the cradle
	I was laid on my mother's chest.

Besides, as it was shown earlier *Xerza Nûranî* (luminous seed) is the leaven of life on earth.⁴²⁴

About that belief, Reşo states that “*Xerza nûranî* is the luminous leaven (linked with God's Word) and everything was created from it. It is the leaven enabling everything (plants, animals and humans) to exist, and it is the cell that created life.”⁴²⁵

The following can be added regarding the belief that *Şêşims*, the lord of sun and light, can be described as the creator of all animate and living creatures, including human beings:

<i>Ya Şêşims! tu yî rehman î</i>	O Şêşims! You are compassionate
<i>Xalqekî min î bi can î</i>	[You] are my beloved creator
<i>Hemû derda tî derman î</i>	For all ills, you are the remedy
<i>Hemû mexluqa tu yî xudan î.⁴²⁶</i>	To all creatures, you are the lord
	(creator).

<i>Ji ba Şêşims ferwar e</i>	The rule is by Şêşims
<i>Çiqas mexlûqet bi gîyan e</i>	All living creatures
<i>Here bi ins e, here bi gîyan e</i>	Humans and animate beings
<i>Ew jê Şêşims xudan e.⁴²⁷</i>	Şêşims is their lord also.

Şêşims fashioned humans completely and brought them to life:

<i>Serî heya pêya</i>	From head to foot
<i>Ya Şêşims, te em neqşandin</i>	<i>Şêşims</i> , you designed (created) us
<i>Daniye serê rêya.⁴²⁸</i>	And set us on our paths.

Additionally, the light of Tawusî Melek as eternal light is the creator of the earth and sky and human beings:

<i>Tawusî min î mêran e,</i>	My Tawus is <i>Mêra</i>
<i>Xalqê min î ‘erd û ‘ezman e,</i>	He is my creator of earth and sky
<i>Ew Siltan Şîxadî ye, yê mêra bisaxî jê</i>	He is Sultan Sheikh ‘Adî, whom people
<i>da beyan e.⁴²⁹</i>	praised when he was alive.

⁴²³ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 I: 140.

⁴²⁴ See “The light of Lalish and *Nûra Muhîbetê* (the light of love)”, in chapter I, part I.

⁴²⁵ Reşo 2004 I: 154.

⁴²⁶ *Du’a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 II: 976-977.

⁴²⁷ *Du’a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 32, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.

⁴²⁸ *Du’au Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 9, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 203.

⁴²⁹ *Mishabet Medh û Sena ji Şîxadî ra* (Sermon of the Praise and Compliment for Şîxadî), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 782.

There are sayings in religious oral traditions that say: “*Em Êzîdî mîletê Tawusî Melekî*” (we Yezidis are people of Tawusî Melek), and “*Em Êzîdî ji Nûra Tawusî Melek in*” (we Yezidis are from the *Nûr* (light) of Tawusî Melek).⁴³⁰ The *sebeqe* below states that the leaven (seed, original source) of Yezidi people’s creation was from Tawusî Melek as a manifestation of light:⁴³¹

*De wextê diniya tev av bû, bê bê
Darek li orta wê avê bû, bê bê
Teyrekî enqerî li ser wê darê bû, bê bê
Tuxmê mîletê Ezîdî dest bû, bê bê
Serê min qurban be, navê wî Tawusî
Melek bû, hey malê.⁴³²*

When all the world was water, oh, oh
There was a tree in the middle of that
water, oh, oh
The bird *Anqîr*⁴³³ was on that tree, oh, oh
The seed⁴³⁴ of the Yezidi nation started, oh,
oh
Let my soul be sacrificed for its sake! its
name (i.e. that bird’s name) is Tawusî Melek
oh.

1.1.2 *Dur*

Some *sebeques* refer to the leaven that existed in *Dur*, and *Dur* with its natural elements is the original source and leaven of human creation:

*Av û ax û bayî û agir e
Dura sor ye bi xerz e ji bakir e
Çendî muxliq pê bi xatir e.⁴³⁵*

Water, earth, air and fire
The red *Dur* contains the original seeds
It created all creatures.

The *Dur* (as leaven) in the sea became the leaven and the original source for the creation of humans, and God gave it life from His own light:

*Te halê sazê kîr
Di bebra da tenê hebû dur
Nedîmaşîya, nedîmaşîya⁴³⁶
Te xaş rûb anî ber
Nûra xa lê pey dakir.*

You created it from yourself
In the ocean, there was only a pearl
It did not progress, it did not move
You quickly gave it a soul
You brought your light to it.

*Goşt û rûb hatine ber
Nûra çavan lê hate der
Dest û pê kire lêş*

Flesh and soul came to it
The light of the eyes entered it
Completed the body with hands and feet

⁴³⁰ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁴³¹ About Tawusî Melek as eternal light see “Tawusî Melek as *Nûr*”, in chapter I, part I.

⁴³² *Xizêmok*, Şaxê 2 (*Xizêmok*, Version 2), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 1054-1055.

⁴³³ Maybe Phoenix.

⁴³⁴ It could be translated as leaven, species or origin.

⁴³⁵ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

⁴³⁶ The correct sentence is *ne dihejîya* (did not move). Corrected by Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

*Lê şîrîn kîr got û bêj.*⁴³⁷

And then sweetened the speech.

As a result, the leaven of Yezidi people's creation is *Nûr* and *Dur*.

After this comes the creation of human beings, which took place after the explosion of the *Dur*. The four elements of nature: water, earth, fire and air, play a crucial role in the creation of human beings, as explained in detail in the next section.

1.2 The four elements of nature: fire, water, earth and air

There are many *sebeqes* that confirm that all creatures, including human beings, are created from the four elements of nature: water, soil, fire and air:

*Av û ax û bayî û agir e
Dura sor ye bi xerz e ji bakir e
Çendî muxliq pê bi xatir e.*⁴³⁸

Water, earth, air and fire
The red *Dur* contains the original seeds
It created all creatures.

Also, in:

*Xudavendê me rehmanî
Çar qîsm li rû dinê danî
Yek av e, yek ba ye
Yek ax e, yek jî agir e
Qalibê Adem jê njanî.*⁴³⁹

Our merciful God
Created four elements in this world:
Water, air,
Soil and fire
The body of Adam was created from them.

In the following *sebeqes*, the focus is on the soul and they refer to “*Nûra Mobbetê*” (the light of love) as the original source of the soul and mind of human beings:

*Û banda ruh bedirî
Hat û çû bihurî
Nûra mobetê hingavte serî
Hat qalibê Adem da hêvirî.*⁴⁴⁰

And the soul was present
It came and went and passed
The light of love entered the head
It came and animated the body of Adam.

Also, in:

*Şaz û qidûm batî û bidirî
Nûra mibbetê hingifte serî
Rûh bat û tê wetinî.*⁴⁴¹

Flute and tambourine came and were present
The light of love entered his head
The soul came and entered the body.

The role of the element water in the creation of humans

Several religious texts refer to the element water as an original source of the human creation and of all living creatures. The water of *Kaniya Sipî* (the White Spring) is the leaven of the creation of all creatures:

⁴³⁷ *Qewlê Afîrîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 4, 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 40.

⁴³⁸ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, Xêravay 2012: 63.

⁴³⁹ *Qewlê Afîrîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 25, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 239-240.

⁴⁴⁰ *Qewlê Afîrîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 31, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 43.

⁴⁴¹ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 63.

*Xulyaqet tevî, bêvên ji Kaniya Sîpî bî
Ew ye we ye, wek pedşa pêdivî.*⁴⁴² The leaven of all creatures is from *Kaniya Sîpî*
It is completed as King (i.e., God) wanted.

*Mala Bava maleke'enzelî ye
Havênê wan ji Kaniya Sîpî ye.*⁴⁴³ *Mala Bava*⁴⁴⁴ is a primordial family
Their leaven is from the White Spring.

There is a Yezidi myth which is about how human beings were created for the first time by the blessing of the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* in Lalish. Human beings were created on a holy stone in front of that spring. Until now there is a stone about one square meter in front of that spring with a fence around it and Yezidis believe that it is the same stone that came in the myth. Yezidis regard it as a holy stone.⁴⁴⁵

Perhaps because *Kaniya Sîpî* is in Lalish, Lalish is the first homeland from which humans spread to other places on earth:

*Siltan Êzîdî xweş rêber e
Laliş ko riknê beşer e
Niba Êzîdî jê xeber e.*⁴⁴⁶ Siltan Êzîdî (i.e., God) is a good guide
Lalish, which is the basis (i.e., source or homeland) of mankind
Now the Yezidis know about it.

Additionally, a *sebeqe* asserts the belief that all creatures, including human beings, are created from the sea:

*Ewî çêkir 'erd û 'ezman e
Di nav da çêkir behir û behirsitan e
Û zêndewer û insan û can e.*⁴⁴⁷ He created earth and sky
Placed sea and ocean in it (earth)
And organisms (living beings), human and soul.

Furthermore, religious texts confirm the analogy between a mother's womb and the seabed. The human birth from a mother's womb is similar to the belief of the creation of other creatures and animals from the bed of the sea (as in the *sebeqe* above). The main belief in this analogy is that both a mother's womb and the seabed are the sources of the creation of living creatures. Perhaps it is based on the belief that all creatures are created from water:

*Behira heq wetinî
Neh meha tê sekînî
Bî qudreta Îlahî dimekinî.* It [child] made its home in the sea of truth
For nine months it stayed there.
This was possible by God's power.

⁴⁴² *Qewlê Omer Xala û Hesên Çinarî* (The Hymn of Omer Xala and Hesân Çinêrî), seb. 36, in Reşo 2004 I: 540.

⁴⁴³ *Qewlê Omer Xale û Hesîn Çinêrî* (The Hymn of Omer Xale and Hesîn Çinêrî), the number of the *sebeqe* is unknown, the Qewl was transcribed by Omarkhali from Feqîr 'Elî (Pîr of Omarkhali's clan), Celle, Germany, 03.03.2008, cited in Omarkhali and Rezanîa 2009: 339.

⁴⁴⁴ *Mala Bava*, i.e., the clan of Omerxala's Pîr, Omarkhali and Rezanîa 2009: 339.

⁴⁴⁵ From the interview with Esmer Esmâil Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁴⁴⁶ *Qewlê Afîrîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 16, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 41.

⁴⁴⁷ *Qewlê Şîxadî Şêxê Şara* (Şîxadî is the sheikh of Cities), seb. 7, in Dinanî 2012: 134.

*Bi qudretê kir temam e
Çî bebreke tarî ye bi ximam e
Îlahîyo! Dibûm êqsîrê te, ez dibûm
xulam e.*

Through the power it became complete
What a dark, opaque sea it is
O God! I am your prisoner; I became a
servant [boy].

*Fikerûm li fikarê
Mersûm li firwarê
Îlahîyo! Te em xilaskirîn ji bebrê.⁴⁴⁸*

I was pondering on those thoughts
On the mandate, on the command
O God! You took us out of (i.e., created)
that sea.

Also, in this *sebeqe*:

*Peşayê min çêkir çiya û dest û berî û
behir bi temam e
Sibhane ji te Xaliqê, li bedena maka
heye behireka bi xemam e
Lî wê behirê çêbûn jin û zêlam e.⁴⁴⁹*

My King (i.e., God) created mountain,
plain, wilderness and sea completely
Glory to you, my Creator, there is a dark
sea in the mother's womb
Man and woman were created in that sea.

In summary, after the *Dur* exploded, from it came forth the four elements of nature: water, soil, fire and air; human beings were created on earth. However, the water element plays an essential role in it.

2 Natural Elements in Human Life

2.1 Light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance

According to oral religious tradition and religious textual tradition, there are some references that prove a connection between light and humans' knowledge, and between darkness and humans' ignorance. This is explained in the next paragraphs.

Regarding the light and the source of the mind of humans as the source of humans' knowledge, Yezidis say: *Aqil ji Nûra Xudê ye* (reason is from God's light). Religious texts refer to the belief that, during the creation of the human being, the light entered his head:

*Şaz û qidûm hatin û hîdirî
Nûra mîhbetê hingîfte serî
Rûh hat û tê wetinî.⁴⁵⁰*

Flute and tambourine came and were
present
The light of love entered his head
The soul came and entered the body.

Some *sebeqes* also indicate that reason is God's guidance for humans. In this regard, observe the use of *Aqil Hîdayete* as a reference to reason as a source of guidance:

⁴⁴⁸ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 6, 7, 8, in Reşo 2004 I: 140.

⁴⁴⁹ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 10, in Kişto 2012: 119.

⁴⁵⁰ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 63.

*Xelko bifikirin li vî 'ezmanî
Padşayê min qanun çêkir û asas danî
Aqil bidayeta wî Siltanî.⁴⁵¹*

O people, think about this sky
My King (i.e., God) established legislation
and bases⁴⁵²

Reason is guidance from Sultan (i.e.,
God).

Also, in:

*Aqil bîdayet e
Hincê mêrê bi terbiyet e
Ew rube li ber Padşayê xo bi 'izet e.⁴⁵³*

Reason is guidance
All educated people
Are souls that are dear to their King (i.e.,
God).

The source of the reason is from God's power:

*Rengê wê ji kasê ye
Peyva wê ji mîzînê ye
Aqilê wê ji qudrêtê ye.⁴⁵⁴*

Her colour is from the Cup
Her talk is from the balance
Her reason is from God's power.

Based on the belief that light is the source of humans' reason, light becomes the source of human knowledge. According to the same belief, light is the symbol of knowledge while darkness is the symbol of ignorance. This appears to be implied in the following *sebeqes*:

Şêşims is the lord of the sun and light and He also manifests God's light; He becomes the lord of knowledge:

*Ji sitûnê beta sitûnê
Şêşims xudanê Me'rifet û erkan û
nasînê.⁴⁵⁵*

From pillar to pillar,
Şêşims is the lord of [Mystical]
knowledge, principles and
understanding.

Mystical Knowledge is represented by light:

*Me'rifet rengê vekîrî
Erd çêkir, ezman di ser ra nijînî
Nûr li ezmana êwirî
Deryê cinetê xemilî.⁴⁵⁶*

[Mystical] knowledge is the light colour
It created the earth and the sky over it
The light became visible in the sky
Adorned the gate of heaven.

Similarly, in a prayer about knowledge called *Du'a Me'rifetê* (the prayer of knowledge, DM):⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵¹ *Qewlê Asasê* (The Hymn of the Basis), seb. 1, in Şemsanî 2005: 155.

⁴⁵² I.e., God created the universe by a system.

⁴⁵³ *Qewlê Mîştîqê Sê Bor im* (The Hymn of I Crave for Three Steeds), seb. 39, in Xelef 1999: 144.

⁴⁵⁴ *Beyta Nisra* (The Beyt of Nisra), seb. 13, in Hecî 2007: 73.

⁴⁵⁵ *Du'aya Sibeykê* (The Morning Prayer), seb. 6, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 21.

⁴⁵⁶ *Du'a Me'rifetê* (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.

⁴⁵⁷ For the whole text of this prayer see Reşo 2004 II: 1019-1021.

*Me'rifet ronahiya dila ne
Li ber guribûn mom û çira ne.*

[Mystical] knowledge is the light of hearts
Candles and lights are lit with it (knowledge).

*Me'rifet eşqa dile
E'rid çêkir e'zman di sere
Bû mom û çira, nebû muhibê xafila.⁴⁵⁸*

[Mystical] knowledge is the love of the heart
It created the earth and the sky over it
It was lamp and light; it had no love for the ignorant.⁴⁵⁹

In Yezidism, the light of *Çira* (the Lamp) is the symbol of knowledge; therefore, there are *Çirayên Me'rifetê* (lamps of knowledge):⁴⁶⁰

*Me'rifet û nasîn in
Çirayêt nûrîn in, rêbera pê dibînin.⁴⁶¹*

[Mystical] knowledge and understanding
Are brilliant lamps: one can recognise the leaders by them.

Using reason [light and knowledge] will save humans from darkness (i.e., ignorance and an unhappy life):

*Heke tu nekey hesabê bezar salî
Heke tu ne yê bi aqil î û ne yê maldar î
Îro roje wê li te bibe tarî.⁴⁶²*

If you do not prepare yourself for a thousand years
If you do not use your mind and you are not business-like
Today the sun (i.e., its light) will become dark to you.

The light will leave humans (i.e., disappear from the human's mind) and darkness will take its place when they listen to ignorant people, and vice versa:

*Hûn bifikirne bedîla
Gubê xo medene xafîlan û bexîla
Lew ronahî ji nav me rabû, ço qendîla.⁴⁶³*

Do ponder the epochs!
Do not listen to ignorant and greedy people!
Thus, the light disappeared from us, the light went to *Qendîla* (lit. to the Lamps).

The extinguished lamp symbolizes that there is no knowledge but there is darkness, as a symbol of ignorance:

*Wekî teyrê demletê li ser me firî
Li me bêsayî dikir çirayê gurî*

The bird of fortune has flown
It extinguishes flaming lights in us

⁴⁵⁸ *Du'a Me'rifetê* (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 1, 4, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.

⁴⁵⁹ I.e., the unbelievers.

⁴⁶⁰ See "The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life", in chapter V, part II.

⁴⁶¹ *Qewlê Mirîdiyê* (The Hymn of Mirîdiyê), seb. 23, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 295.

⁴⁶² *Qewlê Asasê* (The Hymn of the Basis), seb. 17, in Şemsanî 2005: 158.

⁴⁶³ *Qewlê Qendîla* (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 4 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 90.

*Nasîni li ser me birî.*⁴⁶⁴

Because of that, knowledge left us.

In conclusion, light and darkness, as natural aspects, are symbols of knowledge and ignorance, as human characteristics. Light is the symbol of knowledge, good habits and pure faith. Darkness is a symbol of ignorance and bad habits.

2.2 Light and darkness, good and evil acts

In religious textual tradition, there are many *sebeqes* confirming the belief that the light of the day is the symbol of goodness and that the darkness of night is the symbol of evil.

The Yezidis worship during the daytime, not during the night, they will wait for the coming of the day and the passing of the night, because according to Yezidi traditions the daytime is the symbol of good acts.

*Sîpî nûr e ji hidayet e
Rengê reş e bi zîlmat e*

White is the light of guidance
The black colour is darkness

*Şukîr şev diçu, roj dihate
Xudê xefurê qesar e.*⁴⁶⁵

Thankfully, the night went, and the day
came
God is the great Forgiver.

Also, in:

*Ya Elab! roj diço, şev dihate
Seydî li Xasa dikîr xelat e
Mîro 'ebadet bi ser da dihate, ...*

O God! The day went and night comes
My Lord rewarded holy men
O Lord, worshipping (worshipping time)
will come for them, ...

*Seydî! tariya şeva ne
Sitare ya mêran e
Seydî! Xas li pê diçîne, ê belê dîwan e.*⁴⁶⁶

O my Lord! It is the dark of night
Holy men should be saved [from any bad
thing]
O My Lord! Holy men went to the place of
rest.

The following *sebeqe* emphasizes that day (light) is the symbol of paradise, but night (darkness) is the symbol of hell:

*Ev bû cara ji mêj e
Pedşê min quntar kêr şev û roj e
Li nav da dana behîşt û doj e.*⁴⁶⁷

It was a long time ago
My King (i.e., God) organized night and
day
Placed paradise and hell into them.

⁴⁶⁴ *Qenlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 23, in Reşo 2004 I: 142-143.

⁴⁶⁵ *Beyta Dinê* (The Beyt of the world), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 II: 750.

⁴⁶⁶ *Beyta Ênarî* (=Hênare Dest) 'The Beyt of the Evening', seb. 10, 11 in Reşo 2004 II: 663.

⁴⁶⁷ *Qenlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 5, in Hecî 1994a: 23.

A number of religious men say that, in Yezidi belief, the light of day gives chances to do good acts. In contrast to this, the darkness of night gives chance for evil acts, like stealing and killing.⁴⁶⁸

Moreover, there is a religious oral tradition that refers to this belief: “*Dergebên xêra bi rojê di vekirî ne, û bi şevê di girtî ne*” (the doors of goodness are open during the daytime and are closed during the night-time), and because of this belief, there are some religious practices – for example, burying the dead and giving alms – that, must be done during daytime, not during night-time because that is the time when evil powers and souls appear. Religious *sebeqes* refer to this:

<i>Çarşembû rojêke bi hisab e</i>	Wednesday is an important day
<i>Ji ba meleka hatîye ev cewab e</i>	This response came from the angels
<i>Deryêt xêra divekirîne ji rojhelat beta bi rojava.</i>	The doors of alms (good deeds) are open from sunrise to sunset.
<i>Li çarşembîyê ‘emel xoş tê</i>	Wednesday is full of good deeds:
<i>Ji xêrê, ji xilmetê, ji xîretê, ji ‘ebadetê</i>	Alms, service, conscience and worship
<i>Xozka bi wê ruhê bicîbînit wê nesîhetê.</i> ⁴⁶⁹	Wish to that soul (person) who listens to advice.

About this belief, the Kurdish writer B. Ş. Dilkûvân states that “the ancient Aryans considered night, cold and darkness as the manifestations of the god of evil who hated human beings and wanted them bad, discomfort and death, on the other hand, day, heat and light as manifestations of the god of good.”⁴⁷⁰ About that, Utmân states, “In Yezidi religion, it is believed that the individual’s behaviour is the reflection of the dualism that exists in nature.”⁴⁷¹ He also adds, “in the philosophy of Yezidi religion, nature with its phenomena, day and night, light and darkness, ... and humans with their phenomena of good and evil, life and death, ... complete each other and each phenomenon cannot be in isolation without its rival.”⁴⁷²

To conclude, according to religious texts and traditions, the light of day and daytime means making an advantage for doing good acts. In contrast, the darkness of night is a chance for doing evil acts.

3 Natural Elements in Relation to Human Death and Afterlife

Concerning death in general, in Yezidi oral religious tradition, there is a proverb that says: “*Mirov tovê mirinê ye*” (Humans are the seed of death), meaning that all humans die. Moreover, there is an oral tradition that says: “*Mirov gîyayê buharê ye, destek dibêt û destek*

⁴⁶⁸ From the interviews with Aliyas Mirza Derwêş, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq; Cirdo Ebdo Hesên, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.

⁴⁶⁹ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 2, 18, in Kîşt 2004: 206, 209.

⁴⁷⁰ Dilkûvân, B. Ş. (1999), “Bilinda Bayna al-Amis wa al-Yawm” (Bêlinda Feast in the Past and Present), *Lalîş*, No. 11, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁷¹ Utmân 2013: 48.

⁴⁷² Ibid: 177.

diçil’ (the human is the grass of spring, a bunch comes, and a bunch goes). For explaining this religious saying, some of religious men say that there is an analogy between the life cycle of grass and human, how grass is created from natural elements like water, soil and air. The grass falls and dies likewise human is created from these elements and after his death goes back to them.⁴⁷³ In this regard, Reşo says, “in ancient times, woman and the earth were seen as the same. A woman was the goddess (lord and protector) of the earth. All blessings and good came from inside the earth, just as a child comes from a woman’s womb.”⁴⁷⁴ The similarity is that a human is created from a mother’s womb like grass that comes from inside the earth.

3.1 Nature and *Kirasguborîn* (Rebirth)

This sub-section will study the role of nature in the human afterlife; it is about the relation between the four elements of nature and a human soul and body in *Kirasguborîn* (lit. ‘changing one’s shirt’, i.e. ‘rebirth’ or ‘reincarnation’). The focus is on how the soul goes back to *Qendîl* (lamp) and the body goes back to the natural elements. This is expressed in the following themes:

3.1.1 Light and the destiny of the soul in *Kirasguborîn*

In Yezidism, there are some terms that play a role in beliefs about *Kirasguborîn*. They are: *Ruh* (soul), *Nûr* (light), *Qendîl* (lamp) and *Sur* (divine mystery). In the religious literature, the soul is from light. Also, *Qendîl* is the original source and treasure of the souls in the sky. In general, *Qewlê Qendîla*⁴⁷⁵ describes *Qendîl* as a light in the sky:

<i>Çê qendîleke nûrîn e</i>	What a luminous <i>Qendîl</i>
<i>Dahir bû ji ‘ezmîn e, ...</i> ⁴⁷⁶	It appeared from heaven, ...

Also, in:

<i>Pedşayê bi bawiriyê rûh nijyarkirin</i>	By means of faith, the King brought
<i>Li qendîla kîrîn, ...</i> ⁴⁷⁷	forth the souls
	He placed them in <i>Qendîl</i> , ...

In religious texts, the *Sur* is described as the soul or the divine mystery. There are many *sebeqe*s that highlight it, such as this *sebeqe* below and those in the next topic:

⁴⁷³ From the interviews with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Se’îd Aliyas Nabo, 22.09.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁴⁷⁴ Reşo 2004 I: 155.

⁴⁷⁵ *Qewlê Qendîla* (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 4-10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 90-93.

⁴⁷⁶ *Qewlê Qendîla* (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 7, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 91.

⁴⁷⁷ *Dû’a Bawiriyê* (The Prayer of Belief), Seb. 15, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 106.

*Ew qendîla li 'erşa ne
Tijî surêt xasa ne
Gotê ruba Reşê⁴⁷⁸ jî êk ji wan e.⁴⁷⁹*

That *Qendîl* in the thrones
Full of holy beings' divine mysteries (i.e.
souls)
Told him: Reşê's soul is one of them.

For a clearer understanding of this topic, it is important to explain two beliefs which go together, and which are explained in the following:

Light and soul during the time of human birth

When a human is born, his/her soul comes down to earth from *Qendîl* in the sky and enters the body to give it life:

*Ew Sura me dikujî
Serê qalib dinijî
Miskîno! binî Ademo! ruh hate te, hilo
bijî.*

That mystery which makes us dead
[That mystery] created the top of the
body
Oh, poor man! The soul entered your
body, rise and live.

*Ji qendîlê nazîl bû ew sur e
Îlahîyo! nesîbêk te 'efrandibû jî min re
Ez î razîm e, beke hendek e û beke pir
e.⁴⁸⁰*

That mystery came down from *Qendîl*
Oh, God had created a child⁴⁸¹ for me
I am content whether it is little or much.

This is also expressed in:

*Sura 'enzelî
Kire qendîl û nizîlî
Qalib pê kemilî.⁴⁸²*

The mystery of *Enzel* (Primordial),
Was put in *Qendîl* and came down,
The human body was completed with it.

Moreover, "*Nuqtek dê nazîl bit ji qendîla*"⁴⁸³ (a 'point' [soul] would descend from the Lamp, QZM). Furthermore, other aspects of Yezidi myths of human creation emphasize the above-mentioned belief, when the soul entered Adam's body in the form of light:

*Û banda ruh bedirî
Hat û çû bihurî
Nûra mobetê hingavte serî
Hat qalibê Adem da hêvirî.⁴⁸⁴*

The soul was present
It came and went and passed
The light of love entered the head
It came and animated the body of Adam.

⁴⁷⁸ *Reşê*, is the name of a person (Proper Noun).

⁴⁷⁹ *Qewlê Hemedê Babê* (The Hymn of Hemedê Babê), seb. 20, in Silêman 1996: 7.

⁴⁸⁰ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 4, 5, in Reşo 2004 I: 140.

⁴⁸¹ *Nisîbêk*, i.e., having newborn baby.

⁴⁸² *Qewlê Sera Mergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 4, in Celîl and Celîl 1978a: 382.

⁴⁸³ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 39.

⁴⁸⁴ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 31, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 43.

Also, in:

Şaz û qidûm hatin û bidirî
Nûra mibbetê hingîfte serî
*Rûb hat û tê wetinî.*⁴⁸⁵

Flute and tambourine came and were present
 The light of love entered his head
 The soul came and entered the body.

Light and soul in the time of human death

Religious texts say that when a human die, his/her soul rises to its original source, to *Qendîl* in the sky, which means that his/her soul is immortal, it does not die, it is circular and does not have a beginning or an end because the soul is from the eternal light of God; therefore it returns back to its God:

Ya me ji vê yekê bû
Rub ji desit û pêya cibê bû
Rub çaverênîya surê bû.

Our [story] was about this
 The soul separated from the hands and feet (body)
 The soul waited for the mystery.

Rubê ligel surê behis kêr
Berê xo li qendîlê bevrastit kêr
*Xudanê xo li wêder nas kêr.*⁴⁸⁶

The mystery argued with the soul
 The soul returned to *Qendîl*
 And recognized its God (i.e., source) there.

At the end of the declaration of someone's death, Yezidis say this *sebeqe*:

Ruba rehmanî
Nabit fanî
Her dê zivirte ber destê xudanî

The divine soul
 Is immortal
 It will return to its lord anyway

Soul as light in other religious traditions. There are various traditions based on the belief of the soul as light. It is evident in these themes: The light of a star is the symbol of a human soul, the fall of a star symbolizes the rising of the soul, when a human dies, from the earth to its original place, *Qendîl*, in the sky. As to this belief, Yezidis say, "*Rijîyana stêra nîşana mirina mirov e*" (the falling of stars is the sign of a human's death, 'the rising of the soul'). For instance, as in Sheikh Hesên's death and the falling of the black star:⁴⁸⁷

Çê bû çê cirîya
Stêra reş rijîya
Mûsil werdîgerîya
Şêx Sin Şêxê sunî ya

What happened, what transpired?
 A black star came down
 Mosul destroyed
 Sheikh Sin is the Sheikh of the Eizidis⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 63.

⁴⁸⁶ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 39, 40, in Reşo 2004 I: 145.

⁴⁸⁷ "The text frequently alludes to the conflict between Şêx Hesên (Sheikh Sin) and Badral-Dîn Lu 'lu' (Bedredin), the ruler of Mosul. The latter attacked and overcame the 'Adawis, and probably killed Sheikh Hesên, in 1254 CE", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 218, n. 147: 219, n.165.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf., there is another belief among Yezidis that says *Sunîya* from *Sin* of Sheikh Sin that is the followers of Sheikh Sin.

*Hey Şêx Sino bin Adî ye.*⁴⁸⁸

O Sheikh Sin, son of Adî.

Additionally, the light of the lamp is the symbol of the soul of a dead person; therefore, when a Yezidi dies, people light lamps for seven days in the place where he was washed as the symbol of his soul:⁴⁹⁰ perhaps this ritual is based on the belief of light as the source of the soul:

Hat çarşembuwa fer e

Came the significant Wednesday

Xelat ji melikê faxîr e

The gift is from the glorious angel

*Bo ruha bi îman gorî diket çire.*⁴⁹¹

Light a lamp for the faithful soul.

Yezidis light lamps inside and beside shrines and *Qubs* of their holy men as symbols of their souls:⁴⁹²

Sebir xelatekê Pedşa ye

Patience is King's (i.e., God's) gift

Ji ba xwe kir peyda ye

He provided it

Bi wê sebirê li ber wan ewiliya gurîbûn

Light wicks and lamps for the holy men

*mom û çira ye.*⁴⁹³

by that patience.

3.1.2 Natural elements and the destiny of the body in *Kirasguborîn*

For a better understanding of this topic, it is necessary to explain two beliefs which complement each other. The following details will be enough for this purpose:

Nature and the body during the time of human creation

According to Yezidi tradition, humans are created from the four elements of nature, which are water, earth, air and fire,⁴⁹⁴ as can be seen in the following *sebeqes*, where all creatures, including human beings, are created from *Dur* by those elements:

Av û ax û bayê û agir e

Water, earth, air and fire

Dura sor ye bi xerx e ji bakîr e

The red *Dur* contains the original seeds

*Çendê muxliq pê bi xatîr e.*⁴⁹⁵

It created all creatures.

Xudavendê me rehmanî

Our merciful God

Çar qîsm li rû dinê danî

Created four elements in this world:

Yek av e, yek ba ye

Water, air,

Yek ax e, yek jî agir e

Soil and fire

*Qalibê Adem jê nijanî.*⁴⁹⁶

The body of Adam was created from them.

⁴⁸⁸ *Qesîda Şêx Sin* (The *Qesîde* of Sheikh Sin), seb. 12, in Hecî 1996: 59.

⁴⁹⁰ For further information see “The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

⁴⁹¹ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.

⁴⁹² See “The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

⁴⁹³ *Du'a Sebrê* (Prayer of Patience), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 II: 1023.

⁴⁹⁴ See “Natural Elements in the Creation of Human Beings”, in chapter I, part I.

⁴⁹⁵ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

⁴⁹⁶ *Qewlê Afîrîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 25, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 239-240.

A human's body is made from clay:

Feqîra hîlanî xerqe ye
Mala Adiya şebde ye

The *Feqirs* have lifted up the *Xerqe*⁴⁹⁸
It is a profession of faith in the House of
Adi

Cesedê me ji axê ye
*Kaniya Spî quble ye.*⁴⁹⁷

Our bodies are made of clay
The White Spring is (our) direction of
prayer.

Nature and the body after death

The destiny of a human's body after death, as the core subject here, portrayed in religious texts and other sources in Yezidism.

According to religious folk beliefs, religious men and other sources, in Yezidism, when a human dies, the substance of their bodies is mortal and it goes back to its origin which is the four elements of nature.⁴⁹⁹ Moreover, religious texts emphasize that human body goes back to earth after death:

Ji qewlê Ebo Xanî
Rubê rehmanî nabit fanî
Qalibê gunebkar li nav axa sar danî.

From the hymn of *Ebo Xanî*
The divine soul is immortal
The sinful (i.e., earthly) body is put on
[returns to] cold soil.

Ji qewlê Ebo Nijî
Rubê rehmanî nedigurmijî
Qalibê gunebkar li nav axa sar
*dibuhinjî.*⁵⁰⁰

From the hymn of *Ebo Nijî*⁵⁰¹
The divine soul is immortal
The sinful (i.e., earthly) body melts (i.e., is
mortal) in cold soil.

In religious tradition, burying the dead under the earth is regarded as committing the body to Derwêşê 'Erdê (the *Xudan* of the earth).⁵⁰²

To conclude, in Yezidi beliefs, there is a special place and original source of souls as light in the sky, which is called *Qendîl*. When a human is born, the soul as light comes from *Qendîl* and enters the body, and when he or she dies, the soul in the form of light goes back to its place, but since the body is created from the four sacred elements of nature, after death it returns to its origin, which is these elements. Moreover, it is

⁴⁹⁷ *Qewlê Îmanê* (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 35, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 88.

⁴⁹⁸ It could be translated as black sacred woollen tunic. On which see below (*Çirayê Xerqe*) in "The use of *Çira* in religious life", in chapter V, part II.

⁴⁹⁹ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Al-Ğindî, Q. M. (2012), "al-Qibâb Târîhîhâ wa Dalâlatuhâ fî al-Diyâna al-Ayzîdiyyat" (Cupolas (*Qubi*), Its History and Indications in the Yezidi Religion), *Lalish*, No. 35, p. 217. For further information see Utman 2013: 136, 152.

⁵⁰⁰ *Qewlê Ebabekirê Omera* (The Hymn of Ebabekirê Omera), seb. 36, 37, in Mîrza 1997: 120-121.

⁵⁰¹ In Yezidi religious literature, there is no information found about the two names Ebo Xanî and Ebo Nijî.

⁵⁰² For additional details see "Du'aya Teslîma'Erdê (the Prayer of Commitment to the Earth)", in chapter III, part I.

believed that the soul is from God's light, therefore it is immortal and does not die. By contrast, the body is from natural elements, therefore it is mortal.⁵⁰³

3.2 Nature, paradise and hell

Based on religious oral and textual traditions, the connection between nature and paradise and hell can be explained as follows:

Regarding paradise and hell in another world, some Yezidi researchers state that there is no paradise and hell in another world in Yezidism, as in Abrahamic religions.⁵⁰⁴ In spite of that, some sources indicate that the belief in paradise and hell in another world came to Yezidism under the impact of Islam.⁵⁰⁵

Moreover, religious texts refer directly and indirectly to the concept of paradise and hell in Yezidism. It is explained in these themes:

3.2.1 Day and night, paradise and hell on earth

A number of religious men are of the view that in Yezidi belief day is the symbol of paradise because it is light, it gives life and humans can do good and humane acts during daytime, but night is the symbol of hell because of its darkness, it gives death and

⁵⁰³ In religious texts there is no evidence of a belief that a deceased person's soul will later enter another human's body on earth, or for example an animal, plant, etc. It is not indicated that there are two places for good and evil souls. There is no reference to the purification of souls. Finally, there is no reference to any reward and punishment of souls. In this regard, Rešo states that "the soul is from *Qendil* and from God's mystery [is a part of God], it is holy and immortal therefore there is no punishment for the soul" (Rešo 2004 I: 18).

⁵⁰⁴ Depending on the belief that the soul is immortal and is in *Qendil*, Rešo writes that "soul is from *Qendil* and from God's mystery, it is holy and immortal therefore there is no punishment for the soul, in this way, paradise and hell do not play a role. Human's paradise and hell are here on earth" (Rešo 2004 I: 18). He adds "Many times I have heard religious learned say human's paradise and hell are on earth and humans know that whether they are in paradise or in hell on this earth" (Rešo 2004 I: 23). Moreover, the Yezidi writer H. H.al-Ĥālī, in his article about death and after it in Yezidism, says: "Yezidis do not deny heaven and hell, but they deny the resurrection. Paradise and hell are not in another world, but paradise is limited within this world" (Al-Ĥālī, H. H. (1996), "al-Mūt wamā Ba'dihu 'Inda al-Ayzīdīyat" (Death and After it in Yezidim), *Laliş*, No. 6, p. 62). Additionally, Mihrdad confirms the above beliefs and says "the belief in paradise and hell in Yezidi religion is not a religious and divine belief. In this world, the happiness and sadness of human life become the real paradise and hell in this world and not in the last day or hereafter" (Mihrdad, E. (2013), "Peyam û Bawerî Ayînekanî Kurd-Ayîni Êzîdî" (Mission and Beliefs of the Kurdish Religions-Yezidi Religion), *Laliş*, No. 37, p. 32).

⁵⁰⁵ About it, Rešo states that "I believe the idea of a hereafter, a paradise and a hell, *Hesbir* and *Mesbir* and the coming of Mehdi, are foreign beliefs to Yezidism and they came into Yezidism after the coming of Islam" (Rešo 2004 I: 24). Likewise, Uṭmān indicates that "the story of the creation in Yezidism and the question of paradise and hell with its convergent concepts of Abrahamic religions entered and imposed on the belief of Yezidi religion in the eleventh century CE" (Uṭmān 2013: 102). I.e., in Sheikh 'Adi's (1073/8-1162) era. The Yezidi author T. Reşid affirms this idea when he said: "there is the belief of paradise and hell in Yezidism but it is not original, after Sheikh 'Adi's reforms it entered Yezidi beliefs but it did not become fundamental" (Reşid 2012: 40). He adds, "Paradise and hell entered Yezidi belief after the coming of Sheikh 'Adi and the influence of neighbouring Semitic religions" (Reşid 2012: 81).

opportunities for bad acts, like killing and stealing.⁵⁰⁶ Based on this belief, there is a *sebeqe* states that “the doors of good deeds” are always open in daytime as the symbol of good and humane acts i.e., they are closed during the night:

<i>Çarşembû rojêke bi hisab e</i>	Wednesday is an important day
<i>Ji ba meleka hatîye ev cewab e</i>	This response came from the angels
<i>Deryêt xêra dîvekîrîne ji rojbelat beta bi rojava.</i> ⁵⁰⁷	The doors of alms (good deeds) are open from sunrise to sunset.

Furthermore, many aspects of this belief are reflected in religious oral texts as in the following:

God created day and made it like paradise. He also created night and made it like hell:

<i>Ew bû cara ji mêj e</i>	It was a long time ago
<i>Pedşê min quntar kir şev û roj e</i>	My King (i.e., God) organized night and day
<i>Li nav da dana behîşt û doj e.</i> ⁵⁰⁸	Placed paradise and hell into them.

Also, in:

<i>Padşa dibêjê; Fexro! min xulqandin şev û roj e</i>	King says to him: Oh Fexro! I created night and day
<i>Min nav dana behîşt û doj e</i>	I named paradise and hell
<i>Min Melik Fexredîn dikîre heyv</i>	I made Melik Fexredîn the moon ⁵¹⁰
<i>Melik Şemsedîn dikîre roj e.</i> ⁵⁰⁹	Melik Şemsedîn the sun.

Referring to that day and night as corresponding to paradise and hell:

<i>Ya Rebî! tu bîdeye xatira şef û roj e, behîşt û doj e</i>	Oh, my Lord (i.e., God)! Give for the sake of night and day, [as] paradise and hell
<i>Ya Rebî! tu me û sunetê bixcune dâvana xas û momînêt jor e</i>	Oh, my Lord! You invite us and our traditions to the assembly of holy beings and good believers
<i>Ya Rebî! Her tu yî, her tu yî, her tu yî.</i> ⁵¹¹	Oh, my Lord! You are the only one who is eternal.

To conclude, the impact of the day and night on humans' life and the conditions of humans' life with its happiness and sadness, make this life a paradise or a hell for humans.

⁵⁰⁶ From the interviews with Aliyas Mirza Derwêş, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq; Cirdo Ebdo Hesên, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.

⁵⁰⁷ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 2, in Kişto 2004: 206.

⁵⁰⁸ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 5, in Hecî 1994a: 23.

⁵⁰⁹ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 29, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 99.

⁵¹⁰ “I.e. God made the moon in his manifestation as Fekhrêdîn”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 99, n. 203.

⁵¹¹ *Du'a Nîvro* (The Noon Prayer), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 984.

3.2.2 Earth and sky, paradise and hell

Religious texts highlight the connection of the earth and sky with the concept of paradise⁵¹² and hell, as in the following:

They are divided into two parts: sky as paradise and earth as hell. They have the same source, the same time and were created in the same way; their source is *Dur* and in the time of the creation of the universe it exploded and became the sea: the sea foamed, and they are created from the foam. The second *sebeqe* is about the sky and the earth, and the third one is about heaven and hell:

<i>Dur mewcî û hecîcî</i>	The <i>Dur</i> (like a sea) became liquid and
<i>Bîwe behîr û mewcî</i>	waved
<i>Pedşayê min nûr bû, bi hukmê xo</i>	It became sea, and waved
<i>dîferîcî.</i>	My King (i.e., God) was light and exerted
	His rule. ⁵¹³

<i>Seyidî! behîrê kef dane</i>	My Lord! The sea foamed
<i>Jê co duxcan e</i>	Smoke came from it
<i>Pedşayê min jê nijyar kîr; 'erd û</i>	My King created earth and sky from it.
<i>'ezman e.</i>	

<i>Seyidî! bebrê kef da gîsta</i>	My Lord! The sea foamed with all things
<i>Pedşayê min fikirê li ber û pişt e</i>	My King was thinking of the before and
<i>Pedşayê min jê nijyar kîr doj û buhişt</i>	after
<i>e.⁵¹⁴</i>	My King created heaven and hell from it.

They have the same number of spheres: seven for the sky and seven for the earth, likewise, for heaven and hell. The first *sebeqe* refers to the spheres of the sky and earth, and the second one refers to the spheres of heaven and hell:

<i>Tîfaq serê hemû erkan e</i>	Agreement is higher than all the
<i>Meleka girtibûn meclîs û dîwan e</i>	foundations
<i>Bi tîfaqê nijyar kîrîn çarde tebeqêt</i>	The angels took (their place at) the
<i>'Erd û 'ezman e.</i>	gathering and the assembly
	By agreement, they fashioned the
	fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

<i>Pedşayî tîfaq û biverî xemiland</i>	The King adorned agreement and
<i>Melek li ezmana bi wan rawestan</i>	truthfulness
	The angels took their place ⁵¹⁶ with them
	in the sky

⁵¹² It is worth mentioning, in the English language the word “heaven” is used for both sky and paradise, perhaps because heaven i.e., the sky is the source of the existence of the belief of paradise.

⁵¹³ Literally, ‘he watched his rule (authority).’

⁵¹⁴ *Qewlê Herê Berê Ko Bu* (The Hymn of Where was [God or universe] at the beginning?), seb. 19, 20, 23 in Reşo 2004 I: 261-262.

⁵¹⁶ “Lit. stopped”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 110, n. 257.

*Hefit cinet, hefit cebenim sewirand
Momina pê sediqand.*⁵¹⁵

The seven heavens, the seven hells were
created
The faithful were made sincere through
them.⁵¹⁷

There is some other evidence for the belief that the sky represents paradise and the earth represents hell, as in a dialogue between the Earth and the Sky in *Qewlê Erd û Ezman* (the hymn of earth and sky, QEE):

About their origin: the sky is pure and made of a pure essence [light], but the earth is impure and made of elements and dust.

*Ev qewle qewlekî xas e
Ezman bi 'erdê ra diket behs e
'Erdo, tu yî ejgerî, ez î pak im
Tu yî ejgerî, ez î xas im.*

This hymn is a special one
The sky disputes with the earth:
Oh earth, you are impure, I am pure
You are impure, I am good.

*'Ezman dibêjite 'erdê
Ne ji nak im, ne ji xak im
Ez ji cewherekî pak im.*⁵¹⁸

The sky says to the earth:
I am not made of an element, I am not
made of dust
I come from a pure essence.

The sky, with its objects and their phenomena, sun, moon, rain and wind, is the source of the liveability of the world. Here, the sky compares itself with the earth and shows that the earth does not possess similar things (elements). But in contrast to the sky, on earth there are murder, lying, adultery and sin, as reflected in these *sebeqes*:

*'Ezman dibêjite 'erdî
Ser min hene roj û heyv
Ez paktir im ji zêr û zîv.*⁵¹⁹

The sky says to the earth:
Sun and moon dwell in me
I am purer than gold and silver.

*'Ezman we gufte daye
'Erdo, heke ji cem min nebate baran û
ba ye
Ev kewna Xudê dê bi çî dibit ava
ye?*⁵²⁰

The sky declared:
O earth, if rain and wind do not come
from me
How will this world become livable?

*'Ezman dibêjite 'erdê
Ser te hene qetil, derem, zîne û 'êb
Ew jî digerin ser ruwê 'erdê bi 'ecêb.*⁵²¹

The sky says to the earth:
On you, there is murder, lying, adultery
and sin
Those too walk on earth, strangely.

⁵¹⁵ *Du'a Tifaqê* (The Prayer of Agreement), seb. 3, 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 110.

⁵¹⁷ "I.e., through agreement and truthfulness", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 110, n. 258.

⁵¹⁸ *Qewlê Erd û Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 4, 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 386.

⁵¹⁹ *Qewlê Erd û Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 33, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 390.

⁵²⁰ *Qewlê Erd û Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 35, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 391.

⁵²¹ *Qewlê Erd û Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 388.

There are descriptions in religious folk beliefs of the sky and paradise are the symbol of height, purity, cleanliness, originality and good power, also, they are the places of the divine soul, holy (spiritual) men, immortality, free will, justice, righteousness and gladness, compared to the earth and hell, which are the symbols of lowness, impurity, dirt and evil power, places of human beings, mortality, restricted will, injustice, wickedness and sadness.

In short, in the religious tradition, there are evidences that draw attention to the concept that earth and sky are described as paradise and hell.

Lalish as the Yezidi paradise on earth

In religious texts Lalish is regarded as paradise, as in the *sebeqe* below:

<i>Laliş behişteke xoş e</i>	Lalish is a pleasant paradise
<i>Xudan îman, xudan erkan</i>	The lord of faith, the lord of the
<i>Rûmet nema bo deliq reş e.</i> ⁵²²	principles (of the faith)
	No respect remained for those heart is
	black.

Also, some Yezidi religious men say Lalish is the Yezidi paradise on the earth.⁵²³ Furthermore, there are various natural features and objects in Lalish as the Yezidi paradise on earth which correspond to features of paradise in Islam.

According to religious stories, as in Islam, the snake and peacock are found in paradise; they are also found in Lalish as ornaments (engravings) on the walls, there is also a live peacock as a holy bird.

Birka Kelokê or *Hewida Kewtele* (the pond of *Kewtel*) is the name of a pond in paradise (in Islam, Arabic *al-Kawthar*) and it is also the name of a place in Lalish, which is thought of as its counterpart, and as a Yezidi paradise:

<i>Hêvên ji hewid li Kewtel e</i>	The heaven of the <i>Hewdil Kewtel</i>
<i>Şêx babik nê li ser e, ...</i> ⁵²⁴	Sheikh Babik stands on it, ...

Kaniya Horiya (the spring of Houris) is a spring in paradise in Islam, and there is also a spring with this name in Lalish, which is particularly intended for women:

<i>Çome ser kanîya horîya</i>	I went to the spring of the Houris (ladies)
<i>Mîn meyze kiribû li wan çîya li wan</i>	I stared at those mountains and high
<i>ûlîya</i>	places
<i>Êw bû meskenê wan stîya.</i> ⁵²⁵	Those were the residences of those ladies.

In Islam, the *Sirât* bridge (Kurd. *Pira Siratê*) is the bridge between paradise and hell, it has a terrestrial counterpart in Lalish:

⁵²² *Qewlê Kenîya Mara* (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seb. 43, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 398.

⁵²³ From the interviews with Baba Çawiş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Merwan Xelîl Babîrî, 25.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

⁵²⁴ *Qesîda Şêx Babik* (The Qesida of Sheikh Babik), seb. 3, in Hecî 1996: 66.

⁵²⁵ *Qewlê Mişetê* (The Hymn of Mişet), seb. 11, in Xelêf 2002: 234-235.

*En şîfat e ye we ye
Pira Seratê [*Sîratê], aliyek behîst e,
êk tarî ye êk doje ye
Haweke yar û birêd axiretê
sergunekarêd bira beye.⁵²⁶*

That intercession is like this
On one side of the Sirat Bridge is
paradise and on the other, there is
darkness and hell
There is help from the Friends and
Brothers of the Hereafter for their
brothers, the sinners.

Geliyê Waweylê (*Wewayl* valley) is a valley next to Lalish and it represents hell.⁵²⁷

*Ewan gunehkara, Xudanê Malê nas
nekirin
Xwe ji rêya Xudê dûr kirin
Derê qeda û bela li xwe vekirin
Zebênîya roja axiretê, ew li geliyê
waweylê werkirin.⁵²⁸*

Those disbelievers did not know the
protector of the home
They strayed from God's path
Opened the doors of problems on
themselves
Guards will throw them into *Waweyl*
valley in the hereafter.

Finally, most of these beliefs about Lalish as paradise are based on the natural objects there, like the pond of *Kewtel* and the spring of *Houris*. They represent the features of paradise.

Thus, in Yezidism in general, and according to several sources, it can be said that the concept and belief of paradise and hell (as in Abrahamic religions, especially Islam) does not exist, yet such beliefs came into Yezidism during Sheikh 'Adî's (1073/8-1162) era, under Islamic influence. Therefore, this belief may not be a part of original Yezidi beliefs. In Yezidi religious literature references to paradise and hell are not much more than words, and do not appear as real articles of faith among Yezidis.

In Yezidism, the ancient and the original belief is that paradise and hell relate to concepts of dualism in nature, such as day and night, light and darkness, earth and heaven. These dualisms in nature became the source of belief in paradise and hell in this life on earth and not in another place.

Generally, this chapter concludes that the role and veneration of nature are important sources of some of the Yezidi beliefs about human creation, life and afterlife. The evidence from the research proves that there were two main stages in the creation of human beings. First, as leaven before creation: this leaven of human creation existed with God and in the *Dur* and there are many terms for it, for example, *Nûr* and *Xerxa Nûranî* which are light. Secondly, after the *Dur* exploded, man was created from the four elements of nature: water, soil, fire and air, but the water element played a fundamental role in the creation.

Regarding nature in humans' life, the study shows that light and darkness are depicted as major components of many Yezidi religious beliefs about human life. God's

⁵²⁶ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 67, in Silêman 1985: 121.

⁵²⁷ Reşo 2004 II: 1017, n. 1.

⁵²⁸ *Du'a Xudanê Malê* (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 5, in Reşo 2004 II: 1016-1017.

light is the source of human knowledge; therefore, light became the symbol of knowledge. Consequently, light and darkness, as natural characteristics, have dualistic features and they correspond to the human characteristics of knowledge and ignorance. Moreover, in the religious literature, the light of day represents good acts and the darkness of night represents evil acts.

The research investigates the role played by the sacred natural elements, in which light became the essential source and basis for many Yezidi beliefs about human death and afterlife. According to *Kirasguborîn*, when a human is born, his/her soul is in the form of light, which comes down from *Qendîl* (lamp) in the sky and enters the body to give it life on earth. When a human dies, his/her soul rises from his/her body and goes back to its original source and formal place on high, which is also *Qendîl*, i.e., the soul is immortal. Regarding the body, it is created from the four sacred elements of nature, which are water, earth, air and fire. When the body dies, its substance goes back to its origin; the four sacred elements on earth, i.e., it is mortal.

The study illustrates that in the Yezidi tradition, there is a connection between day and night, the earth and the sky, with that of paradise and hell in this life. Religious texts show that God created day (light) and made it as paradise. He also created night (dark) and made it like hell. That belief has been explained as follows: day is light, it gives life and the doors of goodness are open during it; therefore, it is the symbol of paradise. Night is darkness, it gives death and the doors of goodness are closed and that provides opportunities for bad acts; evil powers and souls appear, and killing, stealing, etc., takes place.

Furthermore, the earth and the sky represent paradise and hell. They share the source, way and time of their creation. Their source is the *Dur* because, when it exploded, they were created from the foam that came out of it. They have the same number of spheres, seven for the sky and seven for the earth, as do heaven and hell. They have the same parts, the sky as paradise and earth as hell. Moreover, the sky is made of pure essence and its objects and phenomena are the sun, the moon and the rain, and it is also the symbol of height, purity, cleanness, originality and good power; the entire sky thus represents paradise. In contrast, the earth is made of dust and murder, lying and sin occur on it, and it is the symbol of lowness, impurity, clutter and evil powers, thus representing hell. In Yezidism, it could be argued that the original belief is that paradise and hell relate to other dualistic aspects of nature, such as day and night, light and darkness, earth and heaven.

It is worth mentioning, in Yezidism, and based on religious texts, that after completion of all stages of the Yezidi creation of the world, from the explosion of *Dur* until the creation of human beings as the last stage, there will be one day during which the world will end, and this is called *Talî Dinya* or *Talî Zeman* (i.e., Yezidi eschatology). Because it plays an essential role in Yezidi religious myths, and because nature and its four sacred elements and their phenomena play a central role in it, the next chapter will be devoted to that topic.

Chapter IV

The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Eschatology

In Yezidism there are some terms used for the eschatological events and the end of the world which are *Talî Zeman* (the end of the time) and *dinya xirabûn* (the destruction of the world). Some of the religious oral texts dealing with this subject are *Qewlê Qiyametê* (the Hymn of the End of the World, QQI), *Qewlê Tercal* (the Hymn of the False Saviour, QT), *Qewlê Nuh pêxember* (The Hymn of the Prophet Noah, QNP) and *Qewlê Lawê Pîran* (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran, QLP).

This chapter is concerned with the role of the natural elements and their phenomena in Yezidi eschatology. Here, the focus is on the natural disastrous phenomena and how they play their role in Yezidi eschatology.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first is the role of nature in the myth of the end of the present stage of the world's existence, with the focus on the big events, called *Tofans*. The second part will focus on the role of nature in the end of the world in the future and it pays attention to the signs of the end of the world and their relation to nature, such as natural disasters and other phenomena.

1 Natural Elements in the Myth of the End of the Present Stage of the World's Existence

According to Yezidi religious myth and religious texts, there are three *Tofans*, which are huge events in the history of the world. They are called *Tofan*, which can be literally translated as flood or storm. Each of these *Tofans* destroys the world by one of the natural elements. The first to mention is *Tofana Ba* (the *Tofan* of wind), the second is

Tofana Avê (the *Tofan* of water), and the final one will be *Tofana Agir* (the *Tofan* of fire).⁵²⁹ In this regard, Omarkhali writes:

While the Yezidi cosmological concept of time is dominated by the successive eras, it is believed that there are three big events during history named *Tofan* (literally a storm, a flood). These events play, one might say, a purificatory role, changing the quality of life in a positive manner. Each catastrophe, which ultimately brings renewal to the world, takes place through a basic element.⁵³⁰

1.1 *Tofana Bayî* (the *Tofan* of Wind)

According to some narrations of Yezidis from Iraq, this *Tofan* had already happened before *Tofana Avê*.⁵³¹ It marked the end of a world period by *Tofana ba*, i.e., a strong wind, it is possible to say a hurricane. According to some religious men, Yezidis believe that this *Tofan* happened because of people's sins and evil acts, such as unfaithfulness, murdering, stealing, etc., which spread among people on the earth not believing in God. Therefore, God punished them by sending this *Tofan*. Then a strong wind came and uprooted trees and forests, destroyed plains and mountains, and caused seas to flood, but after all of this, life and the world continued.⁵³²

A *sebeqe* from *Qewlê Qiyametê* (The Hymn of the End of the World) describes some features similar to the features of this *Tofan* but in the future tense⁵³³ as being a strong wind, a windstorm (i.e., a hurricane) that will come from the east and will devastate all the mountains. It will make this world like white cotton, which refers to the disintegration, collapse, decomposition and destruction of the earth from all directions:

<i>Ewê rojê ji şerqê ve dê êtin ba ye</i>	That day the windstorm will come from the east
<i>Dê hingêvit çî qas çiya ye</i>	It will destroy all the mountains
<i>Dê vê diniya yê kete pembûyekê nû jena ye</i>	It will make this world like new white cotton
<i>Tu ji muşriq birêne muxrib ye xuya ye</i>	When you look from the east, you will see the west

⁵²⁹ From the interviews with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁵³⁰ For further information see Omarkhali and Rezanian 2009: 348.

⁵³¹ Omarkhali, Kh. (2009-2010), "The Status and Role of the Yezidi Legends and Myths. To the Question of Comparative Analysis of Yezidism, Yârisân (Ahl-e Haqq) and Zoroastrianism: A Common Substratum?", *FO*, 45-46, p. 211.

⁵³² From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁵³³ This phenomenon of 'shifting the tense of the event' exists in religious poetic texts. Kereyenbroek also refers to it, he writes: "many of the verbs are in the past or perfect tense, although the event they refer to is clearly thought of as a future one. This is a common phenomenon in Yezidi religious poems", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 370, n. 33.

*Tu ji muxrib birêne muşriq ye xuya ye.*⁵³⁴ When you look from the west, you will see the east.

This *sebeqe* refers to the role of air in the world and indicates that it is the origin of this world:

Pedşê min li ber bukmê xo yê rewya ye My King (i.e., God) has balance in his control
Enî deşit çêkir, rukibande ser çiya ye He created plains, and set mountains on it
*Kewna vê dinyayê ba ye.*⁵³⁵ The origin of this world is air.

1.2 *Tofana Avê* (the *Tofan* of Water)

This *Tofan* is also called *Tofana Nuh* (the *Tofan* of Noah) and *Tofana Ava Reş* (*Tofan* of the black water). About the story of this *Tofan*, according to Yezidi mythology, Noah is from Ain Sifni, a village located approximately 12 kilometres south of Lalish. It forms the centre of the Sheikhan district, approximately 46 kilometres north of Nineveh province. Yezidis believe that this *Tofan* started from that village and more precisely, from a spring named *Me'ırka*. Yezidi mythology tells the story that the nation of Noah's time did not believe in God and did not worship Him. They also did not believe Noah's message warning them about a flood, and rather named him *Nuhkê Derewîn* (The liar Noah). As a result, God ordered Noah to build an ark and take his family and a pair of every animal on board the ark. Noah did what God told him. After that, God brought down a *Tofan* for them (the godless nation). The *Tofan* started on a winter day; a woman wanted to make a fire in her *Tandoor* (cylindrical clay oven), she tried many times but could not light it, so she became angry and cursed it and hit the *Tandoor* with a piece of fire wood. As a result, black water started flowing from it; the women ran and screamed: "it is coming." That place became a spring of black water that spread everywhere. In the meantime, it was raining heavily, and it continued to rain for forty days, so that the whole world became an ocean; all the people drowned, except Noah and his family, who were saved in the ark. During that time, the ark sprang a leak, but a black snake curled up to cover the leak and saved the Ark. After forty days, the water started to recede and life was brought back again.⁵³⁶ In this regard, Omarkhali writes: "It should be noted that the purification through water is connected with Noah and the myth of the flood."⁵³⁷

In religious texts, there is a *Qewl*, called *Qewlê Nuh Pêxember* (the Hymn of the Prophet Noah), and its contents tell about the story of the *Tofan* of water:

⁵³⁴ *Qewlê Qiyametê* (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 24, in Hecî, B. F. (1994b), "Hatina Şerfedîn û Roja Qiyametê di Mîtolojiya Êzidiyan da" (The Rise of Şerfedîn and Hereafter in Yezidi Mythology), *Laliş*, No. 4, p. 43.

⁵³⁵ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 8, in Hecî 1994a: 23-24.

⁵³⁶ From the interview with Xelîl Cindî Reşo, 22.12.2017, Göttingen, Germany; Bedelê Feqîr Hecî, 10.03.2019 Oldenburg, Germany. Also see Hürmî 1997: 92-107; Reşo 2004 I: 322-323.

⁵³⁷ Omarkhali and Rezanîa 2009: 348.

*Kijîr bûn hindî qewmê Nuh e
Pîr û kal, şeng û şox e
Gotine Nuhî: gala te dox e.*

Noah's nation became unbelievers
Elders and the young
They said to Noah: your saying is
complicated.

*Nuhî ji xudê xo xwast
Ev ne naêne rêka rast
Ji kîrîya bwiîne mest.*

Noah asked from his God
Those (i.e., his nation) do not follow the
right path
They became extreme unbelievers.

*Xudê go: ya Nuh! sefîne çêke
Bi çavdêriya me rêk û pêk ke
Hinçî mexloq çot-çot lêke.*

God said: O Noah! Make an ark
Build it under my care
Take a couple of every living creature on
board.

*Nuh pêxember sefîne çêkir
Însan, teyr, teval lêkir
Nêr, mê cot-cot lêkir.*

The prophet Noah made the ark
Took human, birds and animals on board
Took a couple of male and female on
board.

*Li Êsîfînê kelî tenor
Rabû avek reş û sor
Kijîrî kîrin gor bi gor.*

In Ain Sifni, a clay oven flowed
Raised black and red water
Buried [drowned] the unbelievers.

*Sefîn rabû ser avê
Çû rojhelat, rojavê
Bakur, başor da avê.*

The ark rose on the water
It sailed to east and west
North and south.

*Xwdawende me li sefînê çavdêr e
Ajote çar kînar e, dir e
Zivirande Mergêba mîr e.*

Our God is the caretaker of the ark
He drove it to the four directions
Turned it back to *Mergêb* of the prince.

*Sefîne niqul bû, av kete ser e
Marî xo xir kîr, da ber e
Ajote Laliş, got: xoş war e.*

The ship sprang a leak, water came in
The snake coiled itself over it
Sailed to Laliş and said: it is a nice place.

*Be'dî man heywane
Qewmekê dahir dibî, bê îman e
Ew jî dîxerqin bi ava tofan e.*

After all those epochs
A nation will appear that is faithless
They will also be drowned by the water
of *Tofan*.

*Paşî wê bêt Musa ye
Ew jî kelîmî Ela ye
Mîfete bo cîva ye.*

Then Moses will come
He is a messenger of God
He is useful for Jews.

*Paşî dahir dibit Îsê bê bab e
Fele qewî pê di şa be
Axir zeman dê rabe.⁵³⁸*

After that Jesus will appear
The Christians will be happy from him
The end of time will happen.

There are some other *sebeqes*, from different *Qewls*, which refer to some aspects of that *Tofan*: Noah's ark landing on the mountain of Judi. They also refer to the mystery of the angel Fexredîn as the luminous mystery that was in that ark:

*Ji man nebin serberda ye
Hûn birêne Cudî û çendî çiya ye
Cudî zebûnî kêşa ye, lew sefîna Nub ço
li ser rawesta ye.*

Do not be a stubborn person
You look at Mt Judi and all the mountains
Judi is devoted to worship, therefore
Noah's Ark sat on it.

*Kar kir sefîne
Wa têda sureke nûrîn e
Êqîn ew sura 'ezîz melik Fexredîn e.*

Prepared the ark
There is a luminous mystery in it
Definitely, it is the mystery of the beloved
angel Fexredîn.

*Melik Fexredîne bi sefîne ra
Enî havêtê ji nêr û mê ye
Melik Fexredîn bû delîl û digêra.⁵³⁹*

Angel Fexredîn is in the ark
He put male and female in it
Angel Fexredîn became the guide and
wandered.

The snake became the rescuer of humans and animals when it blocked the leak in Noah's ark. The ship also went from shore to shore, and as a final point, it arrived at Lalish, as the site of truth, and that is how God saved humankind, by saving the remaining members of Noah's family from the *Tofan*. Here, the story ends, marking the end of a world period by way of *Tofana Avê*, but life continued:

*Êzdanê me sefîne çêkir
Însan heywan teyr û tû
Cot bo cot li sefîne siyar kir.*

Our God made a ship
Men, animals and all sorts of birds
He gave a place in the ship, two by two.

*Xudawendê me sefîne ser e
Seryekê digere çar kînar e
Sefîne qûl bû, av kete ser e
Marê xerê xa dane ber e.⁵⁴⁰*

Our Lord is at the helm of the ship
He himself roams in all four directions
The ship sprang a leak, water came in
The snake coiled itself over it.

*Xudawendê me sefîne ajot
Ji kenar çû ber kenar e
Ajote Lalişê got: heq were [*war e].*

Our Lord sailed the ship
He went from shore to shore
He sailed to Lalish and said: It is the site
of Truth.

⁵³⁸ *Qewlê Nuh pêxember* (The Hymn of the prophet Noah), seb. 1-11, in Reşo 2004 I: 322-323.

⁵³⁹ *Qewlê Ez Rojekê Sefer Bûm* (The Hymn of "One Day I Made a Journey"), seb. 9-11, in Reşo 2004 I: 529.

⁵⁴⁰ The correct grammar is *Marî xo xir kir û da bere* (The snake coiled itself over it).

*Hey Ademo ru dine
Her dem bike îmanî
Xudawend em xilas kirin ji Tofanê.⁵⁴¹*

O man, on the face of the earth
At all times have faith!
The Lord has delivered us from the
storm.

1.3 *Tofana Agir* (the *Tofan* of fire)

Yezidis believe there will be an end of a world period brought about by *Tofana Agir*, one might say a firestorm. This *Tofan* will come as a punishment from God because of the unbelievers in Sultan Êzîd (i.e., God) who waged the great war among nations and peoples in the world. The great war will cause the killing of a great number of innocent people; therefore, God will punish those who started it by bringing about the *Tofan*. Plains and mountains will become balls of fire, everywhere will become fire and burn and finally all evil people will die.⁵⁴² There is a belief in a separate rescue of the Yezidi community; thus, life and the world will still continue.⁵⁴³

Based on the story of the *Tofan* of fire, there are many *sebeqes* of different *Qewls* refer to that *Tofan* and they describe various aspects of it. Some *sebeqes* of *Beyta Nisra* (the Beyt of Nisra, BN) for example, describe the *Tofan* of fire. It is said that there will be an epoch of fire; those who do not believe in the coming of Sultan Êzîd as saviour will create machines (i.e., war machines) that will cause the mass killing of innocent people. *Şêşims* will light a fire on them (unbelievers in Sultan Êzîd and war criminals) and their names will be in the list of murderers. They will seek to extinguish this fire, but they will not be able to do so because it is the command from the high God. The flames will rise from the east to the west:

*Nisra go halê me ji balê we xoştir e
Bedîla nehsed tev agir e
Xozka ruha bingî bibe ser e.*

Nisra says our situation is better than
yours
The epoch of nine hundred is full of fire
Wish of that soul that it is save.

*Ewan digot sultan Êzîd nayê
Sen'et çêkir agir dayê
Cimbûrîye û palek dayê.*

They said Sultan Êzîd (i.e., the saviour)
will not come
Created machine, gave fire to it
Pushed it collectively.

*Bela dizawin Şêşims dê li wan kar ket
Navê wan dê dinav kuştîya ket
Agir beye dê li wan bela ket.*

There are a lot of misfortunes, *Şêşims* will
expose them to them.
Their names will be in the list of murderers
And the fire will be on them.

⁵⁴¹ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 15, 38, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 41, 43.

⁵⁴² From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁵⁴³ Omarkhali 2009-2010: 205.

*Ewan divêt vî agirî bitemînin
Li ba hev runên da bîteşînin
Emrê jor e nateşînin.*

They want to extinguish this fire
They meet to extinguish the fire
It is the command from the high, they
cannot extinguish it.

*Agîr hîlbû kefte şerqê
Pêt bilînd bû kefte xerbê
Telbê faxîr hate herbê.⁵⁴⁴*

Fire lit to east
Flame raised to west
Telbê Faxîr came to war.

Additionally, still on the topic of this *Tofan*, and based on the following *sebeqe*, Omarkhali writes: “In a conversation between Tawusî Melek and Shemsê Êzdîn about the second ‘storm,’ that which acts through fire, it is denoted as an era without decision and spirituality.”⁵⁴⁵

*Tawusî Melek go: Ya Şemsê Êzdîne
Ew Bedîl bedîleke bê qîrar e...
Şemsê Êzdîne go: Ya Tawusî Melek
Ew bedîleke bê batîn e...⁵⁴⁶*

Tawusî Melek said: “O Shemsê Êzdîn,
This epoch is an epoch without
decision” ...
Shemsê Êzdîn answered: “Oh Tawusî
Melek,
This epoch is without hidden
(spirituality)” ...

Moreover, a part of *Qewlê Lawê Pîran* (the Hymn of Lawê Pîran) refers to some aspects of this *Tofan*. Sultan Êzîd is the saviour of the Yezidis and there will be fire in front of them:

*Ew e roja li pê pîr e
Pêşîya me agir e
Me bi Siltan Êzîdê xo mefer e.⁵⁴⁷*

On that day [we] follow many
There will be fire in front of us
Sultan Êzîd is our saviour.

That day is similar to doomsday and no one can help the other. The guardians of the hereafter are a strong army, they will take those who are sinners and there is a reward for innocent people because they will get their rights:

*Hey lawîkê Pîrano:
Ewe roja hezîm dibê
Qazî bixorê kerîm dibê
Ne sed xozma borê ruha derewîn dibê.*

O *Lawîkê Pîrano*:
That day will be destroyed
The judge will be generous
Not wishing for the soul of a liar.

*Hey lawîkê Pîrano:
Ew e roja qiyametê, kesek bi kêrî kesî
netê*

O *Lawîkê Pîrano*:
That day is doomsday, and no one can
help the other

⁵⁴⁴ *Beyta Nîsra* (The Beyt of Nîsra), seb. 11, 33, 40, 41, 42, in Hecî 2007: 73, 76, 77.

⁵⁴⁵ Omarkhali and Rezania 2009: 348.

⁵⁴⁶ From Merwanê Xelîl, interviewed by Khanna Omarkhali in Nienhagen, Germany, 09.12.2007, cited in Omarkhali and Rezania 2009: 349.

⁵⁴⁷ *Qewlê Lawê Pîran* (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran), seb. 73, in Xelêf 2006: 189.

*Ji xîrî şêxekê heqîqetê pîrekê
me'rifetê, ...*

Except a Sheikh who has truth and a *Pîr*
who has knowledge, ...

*Hey lawîkê Pîrano:
Ew in zebînê pîr xedar e, ew cêşekê ho
îy dijîmar e
Ji me distînin wan gunebkar e.*

O *Lawîkê Pîrano*:
The guardians of the hereafter are burly
and a strong army
They take sinners from us.

*Çî cêşekê ho îy dijîmar e, ew in zebînê îy
pîr xedar e
Dê ji me sitînin wan gunebkar e, ew e
maşê wan xilmetkar e.⁵⁴⁸*

What a strong army, they are burly
guardians of the hereafter
They will take sinners from us and that is
a reward for servants (innocent people).

2 Nature in the Future Stage of the World

Some *sebeqes* confirm that *axîr zeman* (the end of time) of the world is inevitable and absolute, i.e., it will surely happen one day, but its time is not specified:

*Ewan zanî
Ev dîniya dê weba bî
Êqîn dê axîr zeman rabî.⁵⁴⁹*

They knew
The world will be like this
The end of time is inevitable.

This is also expressed in the lines of the following *sebeqes*: “*Rojekê bive axîr zeman e*” (One day will come the end of time, QBBO)⁵⁵⁰ and “*Rojekê ji rojan dibî*” (One day it will happen).⁵⁵¹

In Yezidi eschatology, and according to religious oral texts, there are many signs of the end of the world that have a connection with nature. They are explained in the following:

2.1 *Terqîn li ‘erşan dibî* (There will be an explosion in the sky)

On that day, an explosion will happen in the sky; it could be imagined as like a thunderstorm (thunderclaps), full of wind and fire. Because of that there will be chaos, and no one will help the other and no one will remain powerful:

*Rojekê ji rojan dibî
Terqênî li ‘erşan dibî*

There will be one day
There will be an explosion in the sky

⁵⁴⁸ *Qewlê Lawê Pîran* (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran), seb. 57, 60, 61, 62, in Xelef 2006: 186-187.

⁵⁴⁹ *Qewlê Ji Hindaw de Çome Banî* (The Hymn of I Rose to the Top), seb. 11, in Kişto 2007: 137.

⁵⁵⁰ *Qewlê Bav Bekirê Omera* (The Hymn of *Bav Bekirê Omera*), seb. 39, in Celîl and Celîl 1978a: 366.

⁵⁵¹ *Qewlê Tercal* (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367.

Kursiya Pedşayî li xwar dibî
*Hakim bixor Pedşa dibî.*⁵⁵²

The seat of King (i.e., God) will come down

The judge will be King himself.⁵⁵³

As well as:

Enê rojê ne kesî keşa dibî
Ne babê pîsa dibî
*Terqîn li 'erşa dibî.*⁵⁵⁴

On that day no one helps the other
There will be no father of sons (i.e., no powerful helpers)

There will be an explosion at the throne (in the sky).

There will also be a creaking in the thrones:

Rojekê bive axir zeman e,
Qirçîna erşa ne,
*Zimînê erda ne.*⁵⁵⁵

One day will come the end of time.

[There will be] the creaking of the thrones,
Parts of the earth.

2.2 *Xebare li çiyana dibî* (There will be a dust storm on the mountain)

On that day, a dust storm will rise on the mountains. It can be foreseen as a great column of dust and a volcano. Also, on that day, no one will be helpful, no one will remain powerful and there will be an awful fate for bad people:

Hey, Lawekê Pîrano:
Rojekê terqîn li 'erşan debî
Xebare li çiyana debî,
Ne kesî keşa dibî
Ne babê pîsan debî
Ne sed xozma bi wê ruha nuşan
*dibê.*⁵⁵⁶

O Lawikê Pîrano:⁵⁵⁷

One day there will be an explosion in the sky

There will be a dust storm on the mountain

No one will help the other

There will be no father of sons (i.e., no one powerful remains)

No wishes for the inferior soul.

There is also a line in *Qewlê Qiyametê* (the Hymn of the End of the World, QQI) that says: “*Xebare li çiyana dibî*” (The dust storm will rise on the mountains).⁵⁵⁸

2.3 *Suniye li bebrana dibî* (There will be an earthquake in the oceans)

At the time of the end of the world, an earthquake will take place in the oceans, like the earthquakes that take place under the sea.

⁵⁵² *Qewlê Tercal* (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367.

⁵⁵³ “I.e., the Judge of the Last Judgment”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367, n. 17.

⁵⁵⁴ *Qewlê Qiyametê* (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 23, in Hecî 1994b: 43.

⁵⁵⁵ *Qewlê Bav Bekirê Omera* (The Hymn of *Bav Bekirê Omera*), seb. 39, in Celîl and Celîl 1978a: 366.

⁵⁵⁶ *Qewlê Lawê Pîran* (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran), seb. 54, in Xelef 2006: 186.

⁵⁵⁷ He is a Yezidi Xas (holy men) and is from the caste of Pîrs.

⁵⁵⁸ *Qewlê Qiyametê* (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 1, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 64.

This ‘sign’, as well as the two ‘signs’ discussed above, is reflected in the following *sebeqe*. It is also noticeable that this is a *sebeqe* that refers to the role of the main natural elements (air, fire, soil and water) with their phenomena in three features: the sky, earth and water:

<i>Rojekê ji rojan dibê,</i>	There will one day be
<i>Terqîn li ‘erşan dibê</i>	An explosion in the sky
<i>Xebare li çiyân dibê,</i>	A dust storm on the mountains
<i>Suniye⁵⁵⁹ li behran dibê.⁵⁶⁰</i>	An earthquake in the oceans.

Regarding this ‘sign’, (i.e., phenomenon), there are some *sebeqes* that refer to the water of the oceans drying up and the blessings on earth being reduced. The second part of the following *sebeqe* indicates that Siltan Êzî will shut off the water of springs and streams leading to oceans:

<i>Hacûc û Macûcêt cara</i>	Gog and Magog of the times
<i>Enê çikê ken avêt behra</i>	Will dry up the water of oceans
<i>Dê kêm ken bereketêt xware.</i>	They will reduce the blessings down below (i.e., on earth).
<i>Siltan Êzî li xafîla î bi xezêb e</i>	Sultan Ezi is wrathful to the ignorant
<i>Ji wan behra derînit kanî û selebe</i>	(i.e., the unbelievers.)
<i>We‘de hatiye Siltan Êzî vê dinyayê</i>	He shuts off the water of springs and streams to oceans
<i>Biket êkê meseb e.⁵⁶¹</i>	There is a promise that Sultan Ezi will unite this world
	Under a single religion.

2.4 *Xibar wê keve ‘erda ne* (There will be a dust storm on the earth)

A prominent sign of that day is that there will be a dust storm on the earth, and because of that, numerous people will die. That is why people should give alms before that day comes:

<i>Hey, Lawekê Pîrano:</i>	<i>O Lawikê Pîrano:</i>
<i>Rojekê terqîn wê keve ‘erşa ne</i>	One day there will be an explosion ⁵⁶³ in the sky
<i>Xibar wê keve ‘erda ne</i>	There will be a dust storm on the earth
<i>Hezêmeke mezîjn wê keve gorisitan e,</i>	There will be mass destruction in the cemetery,
<i>Bira ban dîke bira ne</i>	Brothers call each other,
<i>Hûn werin biken xêra ne,</i>	You should give alms,
<i>Berî rojêke hûn diçn ji vira ne</i>	
<i>Covanker sekînî li cê cova ne.⁵⁶²</i>	

⁵⁵⁹ It is a Kurdish word derived from the word *Sumial*, which means wave.

⁵⁶⁰ *Qemlê Qiyametê* (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 1, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 64.

⁵⁶¹ *Qemlê Tercal* (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 16, 23, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367, 368.

⁵⁶² *Qemlê Lawê Pîran* (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran), seb. 53, in Xelef 2006: 185-186.

⁵⁶³ Literally, ‘a loud sound.’

Before you go from here, one day
You have an appointment, will wait for it.

2.5 *Ji xerbê ve dê êtin roj e* (The sun will rise from the west)

On that day, the sun will rise from where it sets, so that heaven and hell will exchange places. This could mean that earth and sky will turn over, because the earth and the sky represent hell and heaven respectively:⁵⁶⁴

<i>Ji xerbê ve dê êtin roj e</i>	The sun will rise from the west
<i>Emê rojê dê qulpit behîst û doj e</i>	On that day heaven and hell will turn
<i>Ne sed xozîya wî mêrî îman e li koş</i>	over
<i>e.</i> ⁵⁶⁵	Woe the unbeliever.

2.6 *Ne deşt dimînit ne çiya ye* (There will be no plains and no mountains)

A part of *Qewlê Bedîla Si'net Kamil* (the Hymn of the Completing Period) refers to that day as one on which there will be no more plain or mountain and also no cities nor gathering of people:

<i>Rengekê jê serfa dîn e</i>	There is a religious rule
<i>Hincîyê bêjît qiyamet nîne</i>	Whoever says there is no end of the
<i>Şêx Fexrê Adiya jê ye bi gazîn e.</i>	world
	Sheikh Fexir Adiy has blame on him.
<i>Teqdîr batî débîte wefa ye</i>	It is fated, and will faithfully take place
<i>Ne bajêr dimînit ne cema ye</i>	There will be no cities nor gathering
<i>Ne deşt dimînit ne çiya ye.</i> ⁵⁶⁶	There will be no plains and mountains.

2.7 *Hezîz dê kevit qebristan e* (There will be an earthquake in the graveyard)

On that day, there will be an earthquake that will cause mass destruction in the graveyard. The following *sebeqes* emphasize this belief:

<i>Dê kêr ken bereketê 'erda ne</i>	They (Gog and Magog) will reduce the
<i>Hezîzê dê kevit qebristan e</i>	blessings on earth
<i>Bira dê gazî ken bira ne</i>	There will be an earthquake in the
<i>Da ji xo ra bikeyn xêra ne</i>	graveyard
<i>Êqîn îro li me axîr zeman e.</i> ⁵⁶⁷	Brothers will call their brothers
	To do offer alms for them
	Surely the end of time has come to us.

⁵⁶⁴ See above under this topic “Earth and sky, paradise and hell”, in chapter III, part I.

⁵⁶⁵ *Qewlê Qiyametê* (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 25, in Heçî 1994b: 43.

⁵⁶⁶ *Qewlê Bedîla Si'net Kamil* (The Hymn of the Completing Period), seb. 5, 6, in Şemsanî 2011: 32.

⁵⁶⁷ *Qewlê Terval* (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 17, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367.

Hey, *Lawikê Pîrano:*
Rojekê terqîn wê keve 'erşa ne
Xibar wê keve 'erda ne
*Hezêmeke mezîin wê keve gorisitan e.*⁵⁶⁸

Esey axir zeman dibate,
Gava hate ser giyanê we micat e,
*Ew axir zeman bi xote.*⁵⁶⁹

Oh, *Lawikê Pîrano:*
 One day there will be an explosion in the sky
 There will be a dust storm on the earth
 There will be mass destruction in the cemetery.

Surely the end of time comes
 When it comes to your soul, they will rest in peace⁵⁷⁰
 That is verily the end of time.

The evidence from this chapter shows the following:

It was shown in the previous chapter that in the beginning, the world was created from *Dur* and its four natural elements, and the present chapter illustrates that the world will end through phenomena associated with the same elements. Furthermore, the study has investigated how nature, with its four elements, became the important source of some Yezidi beliefs concerning eschatology and the end of the world. The belief of the three *Tofans* (a storm or a flood) describes how nature, and notably the four natural elements, play a central role in the event by causing these *Tofans* as huge events in the eschatological myth of the end of life in the history of the world. The first of these is a wind storm, called *Tofana ba*. The second is a flood of water, *Tofana awê*, then the world brings renewal again and ultimately life continues. The last one is the future *Tofana agir*, which will be by fire. In general, these elements play the role of purifier of the world from sinners and unbelievers.

Regarding the end of the world beliefs, this chapter demonstrates that the certainty of the event in some unspecified time. The four elements and their natural disastrous phenomena play a key role in the end of the world; for example, the mythology predicts an explosion in the sky in the form of a thunderstorm. A dust storm, as huge as a volcano, will rise from the mountains. An earthquake will occur in the oceans, and a windstorm, described as a hurricane, will come from the east and destroy all the mountains.

⁵⁶⁸ *Qewlê Lawê Pîran* (The Hymn of Lawê Pîran), seb. 53, in Xelef 2006: 185-186.

⁵⁶⁹ *Qewlê Hesedê Altewrî* (The Hymn of Hesedê Altewrî), seb. 35, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 57.

⁵⁷⁰ *Mecat* literary means glories.

Part II
Nature and Religious Practices:
The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Religious
Practices, Observances and Rituals

Chapter I

The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Acts of Worship and Devotion

This chapter is devoted to the role and veneration of nature and its four sacred elements in Yezidi acts of worship and devotion. The points of focus aim to illustrate what the role and veneration of natural elements in Yezidi worship and devotions are and how Yezidis practise them in their religious life. It furthermore aims to highlight the connection between the holiness of the natural elements and that of religious worship.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, the veneration of nature in prayers, which will be discussed under two sub-categories. The first sub-category is that of *Du'ayên xêrê* (Prayers of blessing), which is also referred to just as *Du'a* (prayers). The second sub-category is that of *Du'ayên ne yên xêrê* or *Nifîrîn* (Imprecatory Prayers or curses). They are explained in one section because in Yezidi religious traditions usually *Du'a* and *Nifîrîn* occur together. The second section deals with the role of the natural elements in the rites of pilgrimage. These are also described under two main types of pilgrimage: at ordinary times and in the *Cejna Cima* (the Festival of the Gathering). The third point of discussion is the role of the sacred natural elements, their phenomena and their features while fasting. Two sub-sections are discussed under this topic, namely that of the fast for the sun in *Cejna rojyên Êzî* (The Fast of Êzî) and that of the fast for *Xudans* (Lords) of the four elements of nature. Furthermore, reference will be made to other acts of worship that have a connection with nature, such as swearing oaths by the natural elements. In the conclusion at the end of the chapter, the main results are briefly set out.

1 The Four Elements of Nature in Prayers

This section will describe and explain the role of the sacred natural elements and their manifestations in both types of prayers, which are blessing and imprecatory prayers, as in the following:

1.1 *Du'ayên xêrê* (Prayers of blessing) about venerating the four elements

In religious poetic texts, this type of prayers has a specific category. About them, Yezidis say *Du'ayeka xêrê bêje* (say a blessing or good prayer). Religious texts state that prayer is one of the Yezidi obligations:

<i>Mor li Kaniya Sipî ye</i>	Baptism is by the water of the White
<i>Rojê bi navê Êzî ye</i>	Spring
<i>Duba fer e û heqî ye.</i> ⁵⁷¹	The fast is in the name of Êzî
	The prayer is obligatory and truthful.

Prayers refer to the veneration of natural elements such as *Du'aya Hêvarî* (the Evening Prayer):

<i>Hîn bidene xatira Dura zer e</i>	For the sake of the yellow Pearl,
<i>Ax û av û aqir e</i>	Soil, Water, and Fire,
<i>Erd û ezman û ber e, ...</i> ⁵⁷²	Earth, Sky, and Stone, ...

1.1.1 Fire and light

The prayers directed towards the sun and the light

There are some Yezidi prayers that are practised during daytime, facing the direction of the sun. They are divided into three main phases of the day. In the morning there are the *Du'a Şifaqê* (the Dawn Prayer), the *Du'a Sibê* (the Morning Prayer), and *Du'aya Rojhelatî* (the Sunrise Prayer). At noon, there will be *Du'a Nîvro* (the Noon Prayer) and in the evening, there is *Du'aya Hêvarî* (the Evening Prayer). Here are some examples of the *sebeqes* which emphasize the belief that the sun should be the direction of Yezidi prayers:

<i>Ebadetê bike rojê sê cara</i>	Worship three times a day
<i>Li fecirê û sibê û hêvara</i>	At dawn, in the morning and in the
<i>Li pêşberî rojê, ew qubleta êxtiyare.</i> ⁵⁷³	evening
	Facing the sun is the direction of prayer.

Before praying, Yezidis wash their hands and faces, as in *Beyta Cindî* (the *Beyt* of the commander) which is recited at dawn:

<i>Rabe ji tarî bave</i>	Wake up from the darkness (i.e., dawn)
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⁵⁷¹ *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 8, in Sileyman 2013: 41.

⁵⁷² *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 9, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 23.

⁵⁷³ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 70, Kişto 2012: 128.

*Qesid bike merzêd ave
Civan bike destan û çave
Eve bo 'edetê me zîrbave.⁵⁷⁴*

Go to the pool of water
Wash your hands and face
This is our custom.

Also, while praying, Yezidis turn their faces to the sun. They stand and put the left hand under the right.⁵⁷⁵ When they have finished praying, they kiss their *Tok* (Sacred Undershirt), which denotes that they kiss the sun because they believe that *Tok* symbolizes the sun.⁵⁷⁶ This can be seen in the following *sebeqe*:

*Roj bergeha tok nîşan e
Rist û simbêl jî erkan e
Pê temam dibin îman e.⁵⁷⁷*

The sun is the origin⁵⁷⁸ and *Tok* is its
symbol
Growing a moustache is an obligation
The faith is completed with them.

In *Du'a Sibê* and *Du'aya Hévarî*, Yezidis kiss the earth three times with their heads towards the sun, which in Reşo's view means they kiss the sun.⁵⁷⁹

The content of those prayers refers to various religious beliefs that are based on the veneration of the sun, its lord *Şêşims* and light. Prayers describe *Şêşims* as the symbol and manifestation of God, who plays a role in the creation. The sun is the source of light and the continuity of life on earth. Moreover, the sun is the source of giving goodness and sustenance.

It is worth mentioning that these prayers are usually long and each one has its own form and text;⁵⁸⁰ therefore, reference is made here only to some *sebeqes*.

In the morning part. In *Du'a Şifaqê* (the Dawn Prayer) the sun and light are regarded as holy and the symbol or manifestation of the supreme God:

*Ya Xudê bidî xatirê mêra, miliyaketa,
jê didin medeha
Ew in xasêt nîva qubeha.*

O God for the sake of holy men and
angels, those who give praise
They are holy beings among cupolas

*Ronîya berê sibeha li me dahir bû.
Borê 'îbadetê simar bû
Sed xwazêka mina bi wê ruhê, li ber
heqîqeta xwe westiya bû.
Ya mêrê (mîrê) li ber erkanê*

The light of the early morning shone on us.
People started worshipping
Great wish is to that soul, who stood with
its truth.
O holy being of obligation

⁵⁷⁴ *Beyta Cindî* (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 54, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 47.

⁵⁷⁵ See Image 05 in Appendices.

⁵⁷⁶ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see "Clothing customs, the symbolism of nature in clothing and appearance", in chapter IV, part II.

⁵⁷⁷ *Beyta Kaniya Sipê* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 9, in Sileyman 2013: 42.

⁵⁷⁸ Literally *Bergeh* means cover, but what it is supposed to cover is not clear. Perhaps i.e., sun is the cover of the origin of God's light. In Yezidism, *Nûr* is God's place, on which see "God is in all-natural places", in chapter I, part I.

⁵⁷⁹ Reşo 2004 II: 972.

⁵⁸⁰ For those religious texts see Reşo 2004 II: 967-987.

Ya siba roj û ronkayê O morning of sun and light
*Ya Xudayê bilind, Xudanê sozdayê.*⁵⁸¹ O supreme God, the Lord of promise.

In *Du'a Rojbilatî* (the Sunrise Prayer) Yezidi face the sun and say:

Ya rebî! tu Xudayê, tu Pedşayî O my Lord! You are God, you are King
Tu 'elîmê 'ilmayî You are the Omniscient
*Tu xundkarê ser çend Pedşayî.*⁵⁸² You are the ruler over all kings.

In *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (the Morning Prayer, version 2, DSS) there is an indication of the veneration of the sun and its light and *Şêşims* as the manifestation of God. The light of *Şêşims* lit the earth and sky:

Sibeye roj zeriqî The sun shone in the morning
Nûr ji nûrê şefiqî From light brightened the light
Melek Emeredîn li ber tifiqî Angel Emeredin was created from it
Sibhane ji navê te Xaliqî. O Creator, praise to your name.

Sibeye rojhilat The sun rose in the morning
Şukêrîna me pê hat. We were thankful for it.

Me ji navê xudayê şêşims hêviya ne We are hopeful of the name of the Lord
Me yek sidqe û heya û îman e Şêşims
Sibe ye ronîyîa şêşims dibû beyan e We have truth, respect and faith in [Him]
Nav û dikarê şêşims dikim silav e The light of Şêşims shone in the morning
Ronahîya şêşims dabû çarde tebeqê erd Greetings to the name and remembrance
û ezman e. of şêşims
 The light of Şêşims brought forth the
 fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

Ya Şêşims! tu yî rehman î O Şêşims! You are compassionate
Xalqekî min î bi can î [You] are my beloved creator
Hemû derda tî derman î For all ills you are the remedy
Hemû mexluqa tu yî xudan î. To all creatures you are the lord
 (creator).

Şêşimsê min î nûrîn e My luminous Şêşims
Ser kursîya zêrî On the golden throne
Kilîl û mifte bi destê wî ne The keys are in his hand
*Wê vedike derê zor xezîna, ...*⁵⁸³ He opens the doors of many
 treasures, ...

In *Du'a Fecrê* (the Dawn Prayer) reference is made to worshipping light and the sun:

⁵⁸¹ *Du'a Şîfaqê* (The Dawn Prayer), seb. 1, 2, 4, in Reşo 2004 II: 970.

⁵⁸² *Du'aya Rojhelatî* (The Sunrise Prayer), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 980.

⁵⁸³ *Du'a Sibê, Şaxê 2* (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 1, 3,14, 18 in Reşo 2004 II: 975, 976-977.

*Mêr û meleka den medeba
 Û xasêt nava qubeha
 Ronahî dabû berê sibeha.*

We praise holy men and angels
 And the holy beings among *Qubs*,
 [They gave] light to the dawn (before
 morning).

*Ronahîya berê sibê dahir bû
 Borê îbadetê simar bû
 Sed xozîma wî mêrê, bi heqî rawista
 bû.⁵⁸⁴*

The light of the early morning (the dawn)
 shone
 People started worshipping⁵⁸⁵
 Great wishes to that man who supports
 the truth.

In the noon part. In *Du'a Nîvro* (the Noon Prayer, DNÎ) there are mentions of asking God for sustenance. Here, the sun plays the role of giving sustenance, and the prayer also cries out to God and riders (lords) of the sun to forgive the sins of the Yezidis:

*Ya rebî! Tu bo me û sunetxanê virêkey
 rizqekê
 Ji xizîna xwe ya qûdretê.*

O my Lord (i.e., God)! Send a sustenance
 to us and the Yezidis
 From your treasure on high.

*Ya Rebî! Tu bideye xatira simarê simar
 buyî nîveka rojê
 Hatî ji şerqê çoyê bo xerbê
 Ya Rebî! Tu gunehê me xefir bikê û
 çendî sunetê.*

O my Lord! You for the sake of who
 rides on the sun
 Who came from east and went to west
 O Lord! You forgive our sins and all
 Yezidis'.

*Ya Rebî! Tu me û sunetê bixune dîwana
 xas û mominêt jor e
 Ya Rebî! Her tu yî, her tu yî, her tu
 yî.⁵⁸⁶*

O my Lord! You invite us and our
 traditions to the assembly of holy beings
 and good believers
 Oh, my Lord! You are the only one who
 is eternal.

In the evening part. *Du'aya Hévarî* (the Evening Prayer) states that the rider of the sunrise and sunset is the saviour of people from misfortunes and starvation. The sun is regarded as the source of sustenance. Also, this prayer calls for Şêşims to come in answer to the Yezidis' shouts and cries:

*Ya simarê rojhilatê, rojavayê
 Hûn bi dene xatira dotê û dayê
 Hûn me xilas ken ji qedayê ji belayê
 xelayê,
 Hûn bi dene xatira kaniya sipî 'eyn li
 beyzayê*

O rider of sunrise and sunset
 You, for the sake of daughter and
 mother
 You save us from misfortunes and
 starvation
 You for the sake of the white spring

⁵⁸⁴ *Du'a Fecrê* (The Dawn Prayer), Seb. 1, 2, in Ğindî 1993: 68.

⁵⁸⁵ Literally, 'ride on the steed *Bor* of the worship.'

⁵⁸⁶ *Du'a Nîvro* (The Noon Prayer), seb. 5, 8, 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 983-984.

<i>Ya Şêşims tu halê mala xo bipîrsî û me jî vê carê.</i>	O Şêşims, take care of your family and ours for this time.
<i>Ya Şêşims li dêwana Siltan Şêxadî tu bo mala xo û me jî bikeyê hîvî ye Hûn bidene xatira Dura sor e Êzdîne mîr e Qublet el-bidor e Ya Şêşims, bang û hawarêd me bêt melekê jor e.⁵⁸⁷</i>	O Şêşims, make wishes in the assembly of Sultan Sheikh 'Adî, for your family and for us too For the sake of the red <i>Dur</i> , Êzdîne Mîr, ⁵⁸⁸ The <i>Qublet el-bidore</i> ⁵⁸⁹ O Şêşims may the Angel on high come in answer to our shouts and cries.

In *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (the Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*, DQŞ), *Şêşims* is the source of life and gives goodness and sustenance:

<i>Ya Şêşims, me bi te mefer e</i>	O Şêşims, we take refuge in you
<i>Ya Şêşims, tu mefer î</i>	O Şêşims, you are [our] refuge
<i>Ya Rebî, tu xalîqekî min î herûber î</i>	O Lord, you are my creator forever
<i>Tu rizqa didî, tu risqa dîberî.</i>	You give sustenance and you take it away.
<i>Jî rojava beta rojbilat e</i>	From West to East
<i>Çiqas 'aşîq beynê, Şêşims hemîya diket xelat e</i>	To all lovers that exist, Şêşims gives a gift of honour
<i>Maş û debîr jî ba Şêşims dibate.⁵⁹⁰</i>	Our sustenance comes from Şêşims.

Du'aya Çirayê (The Prayer of the Lamp, DÇ)

Based on the veneration of the fire and light, there is a prayer called *Du'aya Çirayê* which consists of seven *sebeqes*. A *Micênîr* must recite it when lamps are lit in a religious place.⁵⁹¹ It is about the veneration of light. The light of *Çira* is the symbol of God's light and the symbol of worshipping Him, and lamps should be lit in the place of worship and prayer. The following is the whole text of the prayer:

<i>Çira çira</i>	The lamp, the lamp
<i>Jî mîra ra danî</i>	Lit for holy men
<i>Jî nûra rehmanî</i>	From the light of the Merciful One's
<i>Jî tegbîra rehmanî.</i>	(God)
	From the greatness of the Merciful One.

⁵⁸⁷ *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 1, 8 in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 22-23.

⁵⁸⁸ On this figure see Kreyenbroek 1995: 38.

⁵⁸⁹ *Qublet el-bidore* means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer, see Reşo 2004 II: 573, n. 2.

⁵⁹⁰ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 19, 49 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204, 208.

⁵⁹¹ Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 57.

*Ji tekbîra bukîr ji tekbîra ela
Melik Şêx Sin heq bebîb ela
Meqlûb û mergeh sela.*

From the pristine greatness and God's
greatness
Melik Şêx Sin, truly beloved friend of God
Greeting to Meqlub and Mergeh.

*Silavêt me li Meqlubî li Mergehê
Li cî mehê li binî mehê
Li Lalîşê xudanê qubehê.*

Our greetings to Meqlub and Mergeh
In the place of *mehê binî mehê* (not
understood)
The Lalish of the cupola (Lalish is the
owner of the *Qub*).

*Li wê 'erdê yê
Êzîdxan ser dikêşîna ber Şîxadî
'Ebadetê û sicûdetê.*

In that place
Where Yezidis make pilgrimage to Sheikh
Adi
They worship and pray.

*Ya Şîxadî û Melik Şêx Sin
Çirayêt wet gorîbin
Û simat û bisatêt wet daym bin
Royêt wa digel yê 'edenyê şerqê û şamê
divekirîbin
Esil zeman daym bin.*

O Sheikh Adi and angel Şêx Sin
Your lamps are always lit
May you keep your sacred food (*Simat*
and *bisat*) forever
You and the 'Adawiyya in the east and the
west are always generous in giving [alms]
May they live forever through time.

*Çirayê xudanê me û mîrê şêxa
Û babê şêx û van cîye û mekana
Û hazîr û gohdare digurîbin.*

The lamp of our lord and the prince of
Sheikhs
And the Babê Şêx, and these sites and
places
And those who are present and listen, be lit.

*Haveke sînetê
Gul bangê rehmê
Sela yar û birêt axretê.⁵⁹²*

A campaign of (many) Yezidis
With the call (invitation) to mercy
Greeting to friends and brothers of the
hereafter.

⁵⁹² This is the whole text of *Du'aya Çirayê* (The Prayer of the Lamp), in Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 57-58.

Du'a Xudanê Malê (the prayer of the protector of the home) refers to a ritual on the eves of religious occasions, when religious men light a lamp by the name of *çirayê xudanê malê* (the lamp of the protector of the home) in their house:

*Ew Xudanê malê xof û rehim li dilê
keirin*

*Me hêvî ji Xudanê malê beye, mom û
çira li ber vekirin*

Em ji dimanzêde bezar bela dâr keirin.⁵⁹³

The protector of the home⁵⁹⁴ has put fear and mercy in the heart

We have hope in the protector of the home, [we] light a lamp and wick for him

[He] kept us away from twelve thousand misfortunes.

1.1.2 Water and springs

Du'aya Morkirinê (The prayer of baptism)

In the religious literature, *Du'aya Morkirinê* consists of seven *sebeqes* about the veneration of water and springs.

The prayer is recited while the ritual of baptism is performed by the custodian of the shrine of *Kaniya Sîpî* (the White Spring). This is done by sprinkling the water of that spring three times on the head of a person to be baptized.⁵⁹⁵ The content of this prayer describes the holiness of the water of that spring in Yezidi baptism and in Yezidism in general. The prayer refers to the belief that the water of that spring has existed from pre-eternity as the eternal leaven. The White Spring is a direction of prayer (*qibla*) and it is a cure for many ills. The following is the whole text of the prayer:

Bi destorî Xudê

In the name of God

Mor mora mêran e.

Kaniya Sîpî xoş nîşan e

Pedşay jê dabû beyan e

Ciyê Êzîdîne Mîr û her çar biran e.

The baptism is [the practice] of holy men.

Kaniya Sîpî is the sacred symbol

King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear)

It is the place of *Êzîdîne Mîr* and four brothers.

Mora Kaniya Sîpî ye

Mêr batîn û medeh jê daye

Ew ciyê Pedşê min bi xo ye.

The baptism of *Kaniya Sîpî*

The holy men came and praised it

It is the place of my King himself.

Berê ne 'erd hebû ne 'ezman e

Ne behir hebû ne binîyan e

Ne çiya hebû ne sikan e.

Before there was neither earth nor sky

Neither seas nor lands

Neither mountain nor population.

⁵⁹³ *Du'a Xudanê Malê* (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II:1017.

⁵⁹⁴ Literally, 'householder'.

⁵⁹⁵ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

*Rê hebû me'rifet e
Îman hebû terîqet e
Ewê rojê kaniya sipî bo mîra kirbû
qublet e.*

There was a path as knowledge
There was faith as a path
From that day, *Kaniya Sipî* has been the
direction of prayer for holy men.

*Desta ji terîqetê berneden
Melik Şêx Sin îmamê xo ken
Xo li kaniya sipî Mor ken.*

Do not leave the path
Set *Melik Şêx Sin* as your leader
Baptize yourself with [the water of] *Kaniya
Sipî*.

*ji 'esmana beta bi 'erde
ji 'erda beta bi ser de
Ava Kaniya Sipî derman e li ser çiqas
derde.*

From the sky to the earth,
From the earth upward,
The water of the *Kaniya Sipî* is a cure for
so many ills.

*Te Mor kir li Kaniya Sipî ye
Nav li te dana berxê Êzî ye
Şehde û îmanêt te bûne bi navê Tawusî
Melek û Siltan Êzî ye
Em dikêmin Xudê yê tamam e.⁵⁹⁶*

You were baptized in the White Spring
You are called a believer⁵⁹⁷ of Êzî
Your declaration and faith are in the
name of *Tawusi Melek* and *Siltan Êzî*
We are deficient, God is perfect.

Du'a Îmanê (the prayer of the faith, DÎ) indicates that the *Kaniya Sipî* is eternal, i.e., its water is eternal and it existed before the creation of all creatures:

*Kaniya sipî ji berî 'erd û ezman e
Ji berî 'erd û binyan e
ji berî çiya û sikan e
Da medîha jê bi deyn bi nîsan e
[*nîşan e].⁵⁹⁸*

Kaniya Sipî is before earth and sky
Before earth and foundations
Before mountains and bedrocks
We will praise it as a sign (of Divine
Power).

There is a prayer named *Du'a Sîfrê/Xwarinê* (the prayer of the meal), which is recited after eating. It refers to the veneration and appreciation of the water of *Kaniya Sipî* as the leaven of sustenance and abundant food increase:

*Nanê ji xezîna Şîxadî ve
Hîvênê ji kaniya spî ve.⁵⁹⁹*

The bread (sustenance) is from Sheikh
'Adî's treasure
The leaven is from *the Kaniya Spî*.

⁵⁹⁶ This is the whole text of *Du'aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), in Bâqasirî 2003: 407-408.

⁵⁹⁷ Literally, 'You are called the lamb of Êzî'.

⁵⁹⁸ *Du'a Îmanê* (The prayer of the Faith), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 1013.

⁵⁹⁹ *Du'a [Sîfrê (=Xwarinê)]*, 'The Prayer of the Meal', seb. 4, in Celil and Celil 1978a: 435.

1.1.3 Earth and soil

Du'aya Teslîma 'Erdê (the Prayer of Commitment to the Earth)

In religious texts, there is a prayer about the veneration of the earth, named *Du'aya Tesmîlî* [*Teslîma*] *'Erdê*; it is also called *Du'aya Dewrêşê-'Erdê* (the prayer of the lord of the earth).⁶⁰⁰ *Derwêşê 'Erdê* is the lord (protector) of the earth. During burial customs, religious men recite that prayer and say that the deceased is handed over to *Derwêşê 'Erdê*. Its content is about the veneration of the earth and its lord. Burying the dead under the earth is regarded as committing the body to the lord of the earth. The following is the whole text of the prayer:

T'eslîmî t'eslîmat e, [We] commit to you [to earth],
T'esmîlî Dewrêş-'e rd, [We] commit you to the lord of the Earth.

Ya, Dewrêş 'e rd, O lord of the Earth,
Avî evdî herge jin e, herge mêr e, This being, whether a man or a woman,
Bixefîrînî, bisetîrînî. Protect and conciliate [him/her],

Sabibekê ruhê wî bikê Take care of his soul
Berxê Êzîdîda [He/she] is a lamb of Ezid,
Toqa Tawûse-Melek stûyê wî dane. The *Tok* of the Tawusî Melek is on his/her neck.

Benê Adem, wê bêne ser te Neke û O Sons of Adam, you will be visited by
Menkîn e, Naka and Mank,
Pîrskîn: "Xwedê te kê ye?" They will ask [you]: Who is your God?
Bê: "Xwedêyê min ezda xwedê" Say: My God is Ezda
Xwedêyê hişyar û mestan e, The God of the waking and the sleeping
Xwedêyê çol û bestan e, The God of wilderness and orchards,
Xwedêyê h'emû xwedan e, The God of all lords,
'Evd û benî nîzan e. The slave and servant (man) does not know.

Ew xaliqê menl û manî ye, He is the Creator of people and things,
Bê çander e, bê guna ye; Non-living creatures, without sin
Ew ne bîn e, ne jî ba ye, He [has] no smell, no breath
Ew ne emsî ye, ne nefsî ye. He [has] no passion, no body.

Heft xwezîla min vî nefsî, Seven times wishes to that person (i.e.,
Ewî reh'm lê pîrsî, the dead one)
*Weke e'melê te reh'mê xwedê li te be.*⁶⁰¹ Who is given mercy (i.e., God blesses his soul)
 The mercy of God be equal to your acts.

⁶⁰⁰ Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 260.

⁶⁰¹ This is the whole text of *Du'aya Tesmîlî* [*Teslîma*] *'Erdê* (The Prayer of Commitment to the Earth), in Rudenko 1982: 132.

There is a *sebeqe* that shows that this world is the land of the Derwêş, i.e., he has control over everything connected to the earth:

<i>Ev diniya erdê derwêş e,</i>	This world is the earth of the Darwish,
<i>Têda dîgerin cimle çêş e</i>	All people roam on it,
<i>Keseke bi nefsa kibar naçite pêş e.</i> ⁶⁰²	No one gets ahead with an arrogant mind.

Du'aya Oxîrî (the prayer of the fortunate) refers to the major role of Derwêşê Erdê which is to safeguard people from being hidden and awful things in life:

<i>Ya Derwêşê li 'erd! bi saxî ez êmanetî</i>	<i>O Derwêşê li 'erd!</i> I am dependent on you
<i>te me</i>	for safety while I am alive
<i>Bi destûrî Şêxadî û Melik Şêx Sin û</i>	In the name of Sheikh 'Adî and Angel
<i>Xefûrê Rêye.</i> ⁶⁰³	Sheikh Sin and Xefûrê Rêye (the
	Protector of Roads).

Another task of Derwêşê Erdê is to protect people's property from pawning and loss. In this regard, in the past, when Yezidis left something valuable on the ground for a few hours, they say: "*Ya Derwêşê Erdê ev êmanat e taslîmî te ye*" (O Lord of the earth, I commend its safety to you).⁶⁰⁴

1.1.4 Air and wind

There are Yezidi prayers about air and wind. A Yezidi asks Sheikh Musê Sor, as the lord of wind, for wind when he is working on the threshing-floor for winnowing, screening and cleaning the grain from the hay. Therefore, Yezidis say, "*Ya Şêx Mûsê Sor, bidey bayakê zor, dê bo te pêjin sawkêt sor*" (O Red Sheykh Mûs, give a great deal of wind, then we shall prepare for you baked [=red] loaves).⁶⁰⁵ which is in the form of a *sebeqe*:

<i>Ya Şêx Mûsê Sor,</i>	O Red Sheykh mûs,
<i>Bidey bayakê zor,</i>	Give a great deal of wind,
<i>Dê bo te pêjin sawkêt sor.</i>	Then we shall prepare for you baked
	[=red] loaves.

About the veneration of air, there is the use of *Bixurbilkirin* (Burning incense),⁶⁰⁶ i.e., burning a scented substance that is made of a grass.⁶⁰⁷ According to Yezidi traditions, *Bixurbilkirin* is a religious ritual.⁶⁰⁸ It is performed widely during religious occasions and ceremonies and in religious places, for example at Lalish on every eve of a Wednesday,

⁶⁰² *Qewlê Miskîno Jarî* (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 7, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 67.

⁶⁰³ *Du'aya Oxîrî* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 8, in Ğindî 1994:147.

⁶⁰⁴ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁶⁰⁵ Kreyenbroek 1995: 106.

⁶⁰⁶ The term *Bixurbilkirin* in the Kurdish language consists of two syllables. *Bixor*, meaning incense, and the verb *bilkirin*, lit. "sending up", as meaning "burning", it could be translated as "incense", but the meaning of this word is not just "incense", it also has religious meanings as explained in this topic.

⁶⁰⁷ Hāğar, A. (2000), "Raħlat Mi'a al-Bihūr min Ālif al-Tānī Q. M wa Ĥata Ālif al-Tānī Ba'da al-Milād" (Journey with the Incense from 2000 BC until 2000 AC), *Lalish*, No. 14, p. 55.

⁶⁰⁸ See Image 06 in Appendices.

on every eve of feasts and religious events, at the *Tiwafs* (local festivals), during the sessions of *Tawusgêran* ceremony, in the *Sema* ceremony and in the funerary customs.⁶⁰⁹

Regarding the role of air in *Bixurhilkirin*, some religious men emphasize that the purpose of *Bixurhilkirin* is to have a pleasant smell for a good atmosphere, to take our feelings to the spiritual world.⁶¹⁰ Overall, according to Yazidi traditions, incense keeps the evil souls (jinni) away from the holy places and from people's homes.⁶¹¹

The religious texts refer to *Bixor* predominantly for its pleasant smells, such as the smell of musk and ambergris:

*Mor ji kesik û sor û sipî û reş li ber
Jê tê bêhîna xoş, bixur û misik û
'enber.*⁶¹²

The baptism has colours: green, red,
white and black
It smells of incense, musk and ambergris.

*Şêx go: Aqubo! pira selatê a zer e
Bên misik û bixure û 'enber e
Dîwana Siltan Şêxadî a bi mal û ser e.*

The Sheikh said: O Jacob! Pira Selatê is
yellow
It smells of incense, musk and ambergris
Sultan Sheikh 'Adî's assembly has wealth
and a leader.

*Şêx go: Aqubo! pira selatê a kesk e
Te bên bixur e û 'enber e û misk e
Dîwana Siltan Şêxadî, a bi ser û mal û
rişq e.*⁶¹³

The Sheikh said: O Jacob! Pira Selatê is
green
It smells of incense, ambergris and musk
Sultan Sheikh 'Adî's assembly has head
(leader), wealth and sustenance.

1.2 *Du'ayên ne yê xêrê* or *Nîfirîn* (Imprecatory Prayers or Curses) for punishment by the four elements of nature

In contrast to the previous prayers, this one is another type of prayers in Yezidism and it is called *Nîfirîn*, i.e., imprecatory (cursing or vengeance) prayers. Also, it does not have a specific form, category or 'gene', but separate *sebeqes* from different religious texts refer to them. This section will explore how and why nature is used for punishment by cursing.

1.2.1 Fire and the flame of fire

Yezidis curse while facing the sun and ask *Şêşims* to set fire to those who let good people down:

⁶⁰⁹ From the interview with Fuqira Êro Hecî (Incense holder in Lalish), 05.10.2016, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁶¹⁰ From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Fuqira Êro Hecî (Incense holder in Lalish), 05.10.2016, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁶¹¹ From the interview with religious Fuqira Êro Hecî (Incense holder in Lalish), 05.10.2016, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁶¹² *Qewlê dî 'Emrekî da Mame* (The Hymn of I Remained in an Age), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 I: 373.

⁶¹³ *Qewlê Şêx û Aqubê Mûsa* (The Hymn of Sheikh and Jacob Moses), seb. 80, 81, in Reşo 2004 I: 526-527.

*Heke êkê divêt te bişkênîne
Tu xilmeta Şêşims dikey xo metirsîne
Bela dişavîn Şêşims dê jê ra îne.*

If someone wants to let you down
You serve Şêşims and do not be afraid
There are a lot of misfortunes, Şêşims will
bring to them.

*Bela dişavîn Şêşims dê li wan kêr ket
Navê wan dê dinav kuştîya ket
Agîr beye dê li wan bela ket.⁶¹⁴*

There are a lot of misfortunes, Şêşims will
expose them to.
Their names will be on the list of
murderers
There is a fire that will cause them
misfortune.

Also, cursing false accusers by the flames of fire:

*Ev in bêgoyêt kifîrî
Melik Fexredîn lê kêr nîfirî
Bi çengîlê wan girît û havête nav gurka
aqîrî.⁶¹⁵*

They are the irreligious false accusers
Melik Fexredîn cursed them,
Caught their arms and threw them to
flaming fire.

Fire is used for punishing and cursing bad people (hypocrites, the insincere) when saying or doing something evil, such as this curse “*Hey agîr bi mala te, wî, wê, ... ketû.*” (O let fire fall on your/his/her, ... house). Moreover, lightning and thunder are also invoked as a means of punishment of the unrighteous; for example, when someone wants to prove that he is right, he says, “*birq û broşiyên Xudê li mala derwîni bikevin*” (May the lightning and thunder of God struck the house of him who lies).

1.2.2 Water and flood

This kind of curse is made by saying that the water of springs and streams shall dry up for false accusers. In other words, they should not have sources of sustenance because of their bad actions:

*Çome kaniyê dêm dibî
Çome avê dêm dibî
Gelo! ‘emelê bêgoya nikê Şêx Fexirê
Adiya kêm dibî.⁶¹⁶*

I went to the spring and it dried
I went to the river and it dried
Surly the acts of false accusers are
worthless in the eyes of Sheikh Fexirê
Adiya.

As a flood, water is used for cursing bad people, e.g., “*Hey mala te, wî, wê, ... li ber avê çûyo*” (O let your/his/her, ... house be flooded flow by water). They also say, “*Hey Tofan li mala te, wî, wê, ... rabû yo.*” (O may a storm (flood) arise over your /his/her... house).

⁶¹⁴ *Beyta Nisra* (The Beyt of Nisra), seb. 39, 40, in Hecî 2007: 77.

⁶¹⁵ *Qewlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 12, in Reşo 2004 II: 581-582.

⁶¹⁶ *Qewlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 20, in Reşo 2004 II: 582.

1.2.3 Earth and dust storm

Soil is also used for cursing people who say and do evil things. Such curses are “*Hey xolî bi ser/ hey xolî bi eys*” literally (O may dust be on your head/your life) which means, “O may you have bad luck.” Also, when someone lies in an assembly, he/she is cursed by “*Hey xaniyê te li ber tozê çoyê*” literally (may your house go to dust). A *sebeqe* refers to cursing false accusers by wishing that a dust storm may hit them:

*Bêgo zoma ser bin
Havîné perxo ser bin
Toz û bagêra werbin.*⁶¹⁷

The false accusers shall have problems
[They] shall be displaced in summer
Wind and dust storms shall hit them.

1.2.4 Air, wind and windstorm

False accusers are cursed by *Bayê Sor* (‘red wind’, i.e., a hurricane or storm), which will beat against their homes, so that they will not even have caves to reside in:

*Em in yê xêra xelkê nevên
Bayê sor, hestî û xaniyêt wan bikevin
Çawa ji ber mehdera şê Fexirê Adiya
direvin.*

Those who do not want goodness for
people
Red wind (hurricane, storm) shall beat
their bones and their houses
How can they escape from Sheikh Fexir
Adiya’s presence?

*Bêgo! mila tu li banî
Ne şikeft desitî bikevit, ne xanî
Min bi Şêxadî û Melik Şêx Sin hîvîye,
ew dipêxîmas bin ji binîyanî.*⁶¹⁸

O false accusers! The hill that you are on
has neither cave nor house
I hope to Sheikh ‘Adî and angel Sheikh Sin
that they (the false accusers) may stay
barefoot forever.

Cursing false accusers by the windstorm of winter:

*Îlahîyol wê şevê befir û ba bê
Sika sayka Kanunê lê dabê
Da bêgo li wêderê bi heq û cizîa bê.*⁶¹⁹

O God! May that night be snowing and
windy
Cold wind of December beat against
them
In order that the false accuser get hard
punishments.

Wind is used for cursing bad people, e.g., “*Hey mala te li ber ba çîyê*” (Oh may the wind destroy your house).

Furthermore, cursing is done by saying they should warm their hands with snow instead of fire and rest their waist (body) on stones instead of quilts and mattresses:

⁶¹⁷ *Qenlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 11, in Reşo 2004 II: 581.

⁶¹⁸ *Qenlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 7, 8, in Reşo 2004 II: 581.

⁶¹⁹ *Qenlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 582.

*Bêgo şuna agirî, destê xo ber befîrê
gerim bikên
Şuna libêf û doşîka, tenştêt xo bi bera
nerim bikên.*⁶²⁰

The false accusers shall warm their hands
with snow instead of fire
They shall soften their waist (body) on
stones instead of quilts and mattresses.

Also, false accusers are cursed by the cold of winter and the heat of the summer because of their bad acts:

*Bêgo di ker, di kas bin
Havîne di pêxîwas bin
Zivîstanê di bê kiras bin
Min bi Şêxadî û melîk Şêx Sin hîvî ye
jî xoşîya vê dinê di xilas bin.*

May the false accusers be dumb and be
deaf,
Barefoot in summer,
Naked in winter.
I hope to Sheikh ‘Adî and angel Sheikh
Sin that they may be deprived of the
happiness of this world.

*Bêgo di ker, di kor bin
Havîne li cizîrê bin
Zivîstanê li bin befîra têr bin
Min bi Şêxadî û Melîk Şêx Sin hîvî ye
jî xoşîya vê dinê di dûr bin.*⁶²¹

May the false accusers be deaf and be
blind,
In summer, may they stay in deserts
In winter, under heavy snow
I hope to Sheikh ‘Adî and angel Sheikh
Sin that they (the false accusers) be
deprived of the happiness of this world.

Finally, some *sebeqes* state that Yezidis often punish those who are against humane behaviours and religious principles, by cursing them with natural elements and phenomena e.g., fire and the flame of fire, water and flood, dust and dust storm, wind and storm, etc.

2 Natural Elements in the Rites of Pilgrimage

This section will focus on the role and veneration of nature and its four elements in rites of pilgrimage through two main types of pilgrimage, which are: rites of pilgrimage at ordinary times and rites of pilgrimage in *Cejna Cimayê* (the Festival of the Gathering).

2.1 Rites of pilgrimage at ordinary times

Lalish is the place of religious pilgrimage⁶²² and it is a religious duty for Yezidis to make pilgrimage to Lalish. Religious texts also refer to that:

*Pedşayê min li nav textê xo yî mixfî bû
Li ser zarê hemû xasa û nebî bû*

My King (i.e., God) was hidden in his
own throne

⁶²⁰ *Qenlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 II: 582.

⁶²¹ *Qenlê Bêgoya* (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 5, 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 580, 581.

⁶²² See Image 07 in Appendices.

*Heca me lalisha nûranî bû.*⁶²³

All holy men and prophets talk about Him
Our pilgrimage is the luminous Lalish.

*Laliş ziyaret e
Kaniya Spî qublet e
Qubleta dinê û axiret e.*⁶²⁴

Lalish is the place of pilgrimage
Kaniya Spî is the direction of prayer
The direction of prayer of the world and the Hereafter.

Furthermore, religious texts emphasize that Lalish, with its natural features, through the springs of *Zimzim* and *Kaniya Spî*, and its cave and cavern, is the place of pilgrimage:

*Sibekê ji yêt 'Edewiya
Birme dîwana Şêxê 'Edî ye
Heca me: Zimzim e û Qubet li Bidor e
û Kaniya Spî ye.*⁶²⁵

In an 'Adawiyya morning
I was taken to Sheikh 'Adî's assembly
Our Pilgrimage is: *Zimzim*, *Qubet Libidor* (Sun)⁶²⁶ and *Kaniya Spî*.

*Kaniya Spî mora min e
Kaf û mixar û zimzim heca min e
Qublet el-bidor qubleta min e.*⁶²⁷

Kaniya Spî is my baptism,
The cave, the cavern and the *Zimzim* spring are my pilgrimage.
Qublet el-bidor is my direction of prayer.

There are various religious rites and duties performed during the rites of pilgrimage in Lalish that relate to the veneration of nature, as in the following:

First of all, as a religious duty the pilgrims must be barefoot in Lalish because the earth in Lalish is holy and they should respect it:

*Ferzêt xo bicîhke û derbas be
Berî mirinê here Lalişê pêxîvas be
Da li axretê xêra te ye nas be.*⁶²⁸

Perform your obligations and pass
Before death, visit Lalish with bare feet
So that your alms will be known in the last day.

Next, pilgrims must wash their faces and hands with the water of *Kaniya Spî* for blessing because it is the holy water. The meaning of this is that it is a purification and devotional act and intercession for Yezidis.⁶²⁹

*Feqîra û jê xeber da
Ji 'esman beta bi 'erda*

The *feqîrs* talk about this:
From the sky down to the earth,

⁶²³ *Qewlê Texta* (The Hymn of Thrones), seb. 10, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 260-261.

⁶²⁴ *Qewlê Keniya Mara* (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seb. 37, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 397.

⁶²⁵ *Qewlê Sibekê ji yêt 'Edewiya* (The Hymn of a Morning from the 'Adawiyya), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 573.

⁶²⁶ *Qublet el-bidore* means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer, see Reşo 2004 II: 573, n. 2.

⁶²⁷ *Şehda Dînî* (The Declaration of Faith), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 26.

⁶²⁸ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 82, in Kişto 2012: 130.

⁶²⁹ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish temple, Iraqî Kurdistan.

Ji 'erda beta bi ser da
*Ava Kaniya Sipî sijbeta [*şifeta] bi ser*
*çi qas derda.*⁶³⁰

From the earth upward,
 The water of the *Kaniya Sipî* is a healing
 for so many ills.

Also, during pilgrimage, some pilgrims take their children to *Kaniya Sipî* for *Morkirin*, i.e., performing the baptism ritual during pilgrimage days:

Mora Kaniya Sipî fer e
Ji bo îsanî mehdere
*Firwar ji melkê ekeber e.*⁶³¹

The baptism of the *Kaniya Sipî* is
 obligatory
 It is an intercession for the man
 That is the command of the greatest angels.

*Eve firwara Petşa ye*⁶³²
Mora Kaniya Sipî rema ye
*Fer e û atqata Ezîdî ye.*⁶³³

This command is from King (i.e., God)
 The baptism of *Kaniya Sipî* is a
 confession
 It is an obligation and faith for our Yezidis.

Then, pilgrims have to perform the *Selakirin* (holy greeting) ritual by sprinkling water of the *Zimzim* spring during pilgrimage days.⁶³⁴

Zimzim û qubet li bidor in
Kursiyêt di batin da bi mor in
*Mekanê Êzîdê min î sor in.*⁶³⁵

Zimzim and *Qublet el-bidor* (The sun)
 They are the thrones (i.e., place) of
 spiritual baptism
 They are the place of my red *Êzîd* (i.e.,
 God).

Also, in:

Kaniya Sipî mora min e
Kaf û mixar û zimzim beca min e
*Qublet el-bidor qubleta min e.*⁶³⁶

Kaniya Sipî is my baptism,
 The cave, the cavern and the *Zimzim*
 spring are my pilgrimage.
Qublet el-bidor is my direction of prayer.

Also, sometimes, pilgrims light lamps in some places in Lalish and usually by the names of holy men, like *Dergehê Mîr* (the gate of Mîr) which are seven lamps and also in the cave of *Zimzim*, and some other lamps next to the *Xerqê* of Şêxûbekir. Moreover, custodian lights lamps in religious places throughout the pilgrimage days. A *sebeqe* refers to lighting lamps in these places by the names of holy men and religious men:

⁶³⁰ *Qewlê Şêxûbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir), seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 100.

⁶³¹ *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 4, in Sileyman 2013: 41.

⁶³² According to the textual meaning the name *Petşaye* is misspelled, the correct spelling is *Pedşaye* (King, i.e., God).

⁶³³ *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 5, in Sileyman 2013: 41.

⁶³⁴ About this ritual see “*Selakirin* (Holy Greeting) with the water of the *Zimzim* spring”, in chapter II, part II.

⁶³⁵ *Qewlê Sibekê ji yêt 'Edeniya* (The Hymn of a Morning from the 'Adawiya), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 573.

⁶³⁶ *Şehda Dîni* (The Declaration of Faith), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 26.

Çirayê xudanê me û mîrê şêxa
Û babê şêx û van çiyê û mekana
Û bazîr û gohdare digurîbin.⁶³⁷

The lamp of our lord and the prince of
 Sheikhs
 And Babê Şêx and these sites and places
 And those who are present and listen, be
 lit.

After that, *Govenda Kaniya Sîpî* (the religious dance in front of the *Kaniya Sîpî*) is performed by pilgrims at the end of the religious feasts and festivals in front of *Kaniya Sîpî* for blessings.⁶³⁸

Finally, pilgrims take home some water of the *Kaniya Sîpî* and *Zimzim* as leaven for their production for their agricultural wealth. Religious texts refer to the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* as the leaven of food:

Nan ji xezîna Xudê bê
Hêvên ji Kaniya Sîpî bê.⁶³⁹

The bread (sustenance) is from God's
 treasure
 The leaven is from the White Spring.

Pilgrims have to take home a small branch of a tree which also symbolizes grace and participation in the pilgrimage. About this ritual, C. J. Edmonds states, "Some of them [i.e., Ezidis] would pick a sprig of olive to wear in the turban."⁶⁴⁰ Religious texts refer to those trees in Lalish as having mystical power:

Kerema Çiyayê Mişetê
Çiyayê Hizretê, Çiyayê 'Erefatê
Dar û berêt Geliyê Lalişê.⁶⁴¹

The mystical power of Mount Mişet
 Mount Hizret, Mount 'Erefat
 [The mystical power of] Trees and stones
 of the Lalish Valley.

2.2 Rites of pilgrimage in *Cejna Cimayê* (the Festival of the Gathering)

This feast is the occasion of a major pilgrimage to Lalish.⁶⁴² It is one of the largest and most famous Yezidi feasts. It is celebrated in Lalish, where Yezidis gather for seven days, from the 23rd of September to the 1st of October (Gregorian 6-14 October).⁶⁴³ Religious texts refer to the *Cima* feast in Lalish:

⁶³⁷ *Du'aya Çirayê (The Prayer of the Lamp)*, seb. 6, in Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 58.

⁶³⁸ For further details see "*Govenda Derê Kaniya Sîpî* (the religious dance in front of the *Kaniya Sîpî*)", in chapter II, part II.

⁶³⁹ Anonymous, (2000), "*Du'aya Sîfrê (=Du'aya Zadi)*", [The Prayer of the Meal], *Laliş*, No. 12, p. 254.

⁶⁴⁰ Edmonds 1967: 11.

⁶⁴¹ *Dirûze*, seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 286.

⁶⁴² See Image 08 in Appendices.

⁶⁴³ About this in general see Edmonds 1967: 9-21; Ahmed 1975: 360-367; Kreyenbroek 2009: 24. As a name, some sources refer to the fact that the popular meaning of the name *Cima* is derived from the Arabic word *Cema'y*, which means gathering. Moreover, there is another view about it which says the name is derived from the ancient word *Cem/Cemşid* in Avesta, *Yeme* in Sanskrit, *Cemek/Yemek* in Pahlavi, it became *Cem* in Islamic areas. The meaning behind this is sacrificing the bull by *Cem/Cemşid*. Likewise, Yezidis sacrifice the bull *Qebax* during this feast. For further reading in this regard, (see Nérway, 'E. T. (2000), "Mîtra Perêsi Mêjû û Bir û Bawer" (Mithraism Worship: History and Beliefs), *Laliş*, No. 14, pp. 134-137). Additionally, some religious men emphasize that the ceremonies that are held during this feast, are so meaningful and holy - such as the time of seven days and the *Qebax* ritual

Me ji Adiya beş e
Bi wê qubê kem serî li 'erş e
*Cimaya mêra wa li Laliş e.*⁶⁴⁴

We are thankful to the Adiya
 I swear by that *Qub* whose top is on
 throne (in the sky)
 The *Cima* festival of holy men is in Lalish.

The rituals of the feast that relate to the veneration of the natural elements and their symbolism will be given in detail in the sub-sections that follow.

During the first three days, general rituals are performed, for example those mentioned in the previous topic, such as *Selakirin*, *Morkirin*, etc.

2.2.1 *Perî Simarkirin* (Inaugurating *Perîs*)

On the fourth day of the feast (10 October), the ritual of baptising and inaugurating *Perîs* is performed. *Perîs* are pieces of colourful fabric and the length of each one is about 2-3 meters. They are placed on the tombs of Yezidi *Xas* called *Periyên Sindrukên Xasa* (*Perîs* of graves of holy men) inside their shrines in Lalish.⁶⁴⁵ There are seven of them and their names are: *Perîya Êzî*, *Perîya Şêşims*, *Perîya Sheikh Fexir*, *Perîya Stiya Ês*,⁶⁴⁶ *Perîya Sheikh 'Adî*, *Perîya Sheikh Hesên* and *Perîya Sheikh Übekir*.⁶⁴⁷ This ritual is about changing the old *Perîs* for new ones which are baptized with the water of *Kaniya Sîpî*.

Perîs have a link with the veneration of nature as follows, they are baptized with the holy water of *Kaniya Sîpî* for blessing. Some religious men believe that the colours of *Perîs* represent the colours in nature.⁶⁴⁸

2.2.2 *Qebaxgêran* (sacrificial bull) ritual

On the fifth day of the feast (11th October) the ritual of *Qebax* is celebrated. According to some sources, because the ritual of sacrificing a bull in the *Şêşims* shrine has many meanings that have links with sun and nature in Autumn, it has been explained under "*Cejna Cimayê* (The Festival of the Gathering)" in chapter three of part two.

- which all have ancient roots and a history that dates back to before the Sheikh 'Adî (1073/8-1162) era in 12th century CE. (From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan).

⁶⁴⁴ *Qesîda Adiya Şêxê Mine* (The Qesida of Adiya is my Sheikh), seb. 5, in *Reşo 2004 II*: 668. Cf., this is another variant of that *sebeqe*:

Me ji Adiya beş e
Wê qubê bi kem serî li 'erş e

We are thankful to the Adiya
 I swear by that *Qub* whose top is on throne (in
 the sky)

Cemaya mêra Laliş e.
(QD, v 3, seb. 8, in Reşo 2004 I: 411).

The *Cima* festival of holy men is in Lalish.

⁶⁴⁵ See Image 09 in Appendices.

⁶⁴⁶ She is Sheikh 'Adî's mother, see Kreyenbrock 1995: 40, n. 14

⁶⁴⁷ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁶⁴⁸ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

2.2.3 *Berê Şibakê* (Throne of Netting)

Berê Şibakê is also called *Textê Êzîd* (the throne of Êzîd). The ritual of *Berê Şibakê* is performed on the sixth day of the feast (12 October), after it is transferred from the village of Bahzani (where it is preserved in a special case) to Lalish. It is in the form of a throne; it is a grid piece of copper about a meter square. It consists of 81 copper rings that are linked to one another on a special carpet. This carpet is supported on its sides with two timbers, forming a rectangle with four handles in the same size. The arranging ceremony⁶⁴⁹ is attended by the prince, Babe Şêx and his entourage, the *Çeqeltu* (plentiful light) holder and the incense holder; *Qewals* recite the *Qewlê Texta* (the hymn of thrones). This throne is then carried on people's shoulders from inside the shrine of Sheikh 'Adî to the nearby pond, called *Kewtel* (or *Kelokê*), in order to be baptized and then to be returned to its place inside the shrine.⁶⁵⁰ Religious texts mention the name of *Berê Şibakê*:

<i>Li dîwana Berê Şibakê</i>	At the gathering of <i>Berê Şibakê</i>
<i>Xasê ber Şîxadî, bi qedr û qîmet bikê</i>	You should honour and value the holy men around Sheikh 'Adî
<i>Ya Şîxadî 'elêk il-selam.</i> ⁶⁵¹	O Sheikh 'Adî, greetings to you!

The connection of Berê Şibakê with the veneration of nature. *Berê Şibakê* is baptized by the water of the pond of *Kewtel* for blessing. Holding *Çeqeltu*, which is fire, in this ritual symbolizes the sun. Furthermore, there is a belief that the name *Berê Şibakê* is originally derived from *Berê Sibakê* (i.e., sunrise).⁶⁵² In this regard, the Iraqi historian G. Hâbîb says, "I believe this throne represents the circle of the sun which we see crossing the sky every day from east to west."⁶⁵³ It could be an indication that, when this throne is carried on people's shoulders from inside the shrine of Sheikh 'Adî in the east to the pond of *Kewtel* in the west, it perhaps symbolizes sunrise and the sunset. The *sebeqe* below draws a similarity between Şêşîms as the lord of the sun and *Berê Şibakê*; it refers to the kissing of Şêşîms' pillar instead of *Berê Şibakê*:

<i>Ez wê dinalim, birîna min wa li mêlakê</i>	I am crying, my wound is in the liver I am bleating like the sheep looking for its mother
<i>Wê dikalim wekê berxê li pê makê</i>	
<i>Dê min tuwaf kêriba stûna Şêşîms li gel stûna Berê Şibakê.</i> ⁶⁵⁴	I should have kissed Şêşîms's pillar instead of <i>Berê Şibakê</i> .

The content of *Qewlê Texta* (the hymn of thrones)⁶⁵⁵ refers to that throne as representing light and the sun, and it also describes it as giving light. More to the point, *Berê Şibakê* is the

⁶⁴⁹ See Image 10 in Appendices.

⁶⁵⁰ See Kreyenbroek 1995: 154-155; Ğindî 1998: 99; Bâqasîrî 2003: 151-152.

⁶⁵¹ *Diroze*, seb. 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 282.

⁶⁵² From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁶⁵³ Hâbîb, G. (1978), *al-Ya'zîdiyyat Baqā'ya Dīn Qadīm* (Yezidism Remains of an Ancient Religion), Baghdad: al-Ma'ārif, p. 42.

⁶⁵⁴ *Qewlê Stiya Ês* (The Hymn of Stiya Ês), seb. 24, in Xelef 1996: 12.

⁶⁵⁵ For the whole text of *Qewlê Texta* (The hymn of throne) see Bâqasîrî 2003: 259-265.

symbol of the throne of Êzîd, i.e., God's throne.that this could possibly meanHere, it ⁶⁵⁶ throne is the symbol of light or the throne of light that is the place of God in Yezidi belief:

<i>Pedşayê min textê nûrê çêkir</i>	My King (i.e., God) created the luminous
<i>Meskenê xo lê çêkir</i>	throne or the throne of light
<i>Seyirî û seyran lêkir.</i>	[He] made his place in it
	[He] gazed on and wandered in it.
<i>Pedşayê min li nav textê xo êkê ekber e</i>	My King is the greatest on his throne
<i>Ji ba wê diêtin nûr û neder e</i>	From him comes light and brightness ⁶⁵⁸
<i>Pedşayê min jî dahir e li bemû dere.</i>	My King is apparent everywhere.
<i>Pedşayê min li nav textê xo melik li</i>	My King is the angel in his throne
<i>'erş e</i>	The throne of light and moon, and the
<i>Textê nûr û heyv û şev û roja geş e</i>	shining sun
<i>Pedşayê min cî danî, Laliş e.</i> ⁶⁵⁷	My King took His place in Lalish.
<i>Me êk divêt xudan neder</i>	We need a visionary
<i>Ew dergêh vedibûn li ber</i>	Those doors open for him ⁶⁶⁰
<i>Textê nûrê, Pedşayê min sekinî li</i>	The throne of light, my King (i.e., God)
<i>ser.</i> ⁶⁵⁹	sat on it.

Thus, *Berê Şibakê* can be thought to be connected with nature and to represent sunrise and sunset.

On the seventh day, the other general ceremonies of the *Cima* feast in Lalish are performed. They are similar to the rites of pilgrimage at ordinary times, like *Govenda Kaniya sipî* (the religious dance in front of the *Kaniya Sipî*), which is performed by pilgrims at the end of the feast in front of the White Spring. Pilgrims also have to take home some water of the White Spring and the spring of *Zimzîm* for blessing.

3 The Four Elements of Nature in Fasting

In this part of the worship, the focus is on the veneration of the natural elements in fasting. It will be explained taking into account the two types of fasting, which are the fasts for the sun in *Cejna Rojîyên Êzî* (The Fast of Êzî) and *Rojîyên Xudana* (Fasts for the Lords), here the focus is on the Fasting for *Xudans* of the natural elements and their manifestations, both types of fasts are explained in the following.

⁶⁵⁶ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁶⁵⁷ *Qemlê Texta* (The hymn of throne), seb. 1, 8, 16, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 259, 260, 261.

⁶⁵⁸ Literally, vision.

⁶⁵⁹ *Qemlê Nadir* (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 22, in Hekarî 2005: 176.

⁶⁶⁰ I.e., who is wise about world affairs.

3.1 The Fast for the sun in *Cejna Rojîyên Êzî* (The Fast of Êzî)

This feast⁶⁶¹ is held on the first Friday of December (according to the Julian calendar) and the three preceding days, i.e., Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, are fasting days for all Yezidis. During the fast, Yezidis do not eat or drink anything between sunrise until sunset. Yezidis believe that this feast is based on this period of the year when the night (darkness) is longer than the day (light). The days begin to become longer approximately from the feast day and the nights become gradually shorter.⁶⁶²

The role and veneration of the natural elements and their symbolism in the feast will be clarified on the basis of its rituals:

3.1.1 *Çirahilkirin* (Lighting lamps)

On the eve of the feast the custodian lights the *Çira* (lamps) of the village shrine. According to some religious men, lighting lamps in this feast is based on the veneration of the sun and its light.⁶⁶³ Also, *Çira* is the symbol of the sun and its lord *Şêşims*.⁶⁶⁴ Moreover, there is *Çirayê Şêşims* (*Şêşims'* lamp) inside *Şêşims'* *Qub*:

Şêx Şems ji Êzîdîya ra çira ye li dîwanê For Yezidis, Şêşims is a lamp in the
*Ya Êzî tu li me bikê xudanê.*⁶⁶⁵ assembly
O God, be our saviour.

3.1.2 The time of the feast and the sun.

Yezidis believe that this feast is for Êzî (God) and *Şêşims*, in order to give them light and sustenance.⁶⁶⁶ Moreover, this feast is celebrated to commemorate the birth of the Holy Being Ezid.⁶⁶⁷ The 25th is the day of the birth of Yazid. He is (Al-Ezid, Mihr [Mithras]) the lord of the sun. In other words, the date is reminiscent of the birth of Mithras in Mithraism on 25th December.⁶⁶⁸ Some sources state that this feast originally goes back to Mithra's (the Lord of sun) birthday in Mithraism.⁶⁶⁹ The Yezidi author M. Othman moreover, stresses that this is the day of the Winter Solstice. The Yezidis believe that the sun was born on this day and then gradually grew bigger.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶¹ For further explanation see Ğindî 1998: 99; Bâqasirî 2003: 155.

⁶⁶² See Reşo 2004 I: 266.

⁶⁶³ From the interviews with Baba Çawiş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Adinan Xêravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

⁶⁶⁴ See "The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life", in chapter V, part II.

⁶⁶⁵ *Du'a Êzîdîyîyê* (Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1003.

⁶⁶⁶ From the interviews with Baba Çawiş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Adinan Xêravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

⁶⁶⁷ Kreyenbroek 2009: 23.

⁶⁶⁸ Dilkûvân 1999: 47.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Othman, M. (2012b), "Izidy Religion between the Sun-Worshippers and Mysticism, Tawoos Malak: The god of the Sun, part III", trans. p. T. Shukry, *Lalish*, No. 36, p. 10.

In Yezidism, fasting for three days is obligatory and Yezidis believe that after these three days of fasting, the days become longer and the nights become shorter, which means that it relates to the worship of the sun:

<i>Li axiretê xo rûsipî ke</i>	In the last day you should purify
<i>Li dinê 'ebadetê bike û xo bi rojî ke</i>	yourself
<i>Sê rojîya bigire û ferzêt xo bicîke.</i> ⁶⁷¹	In the world you should worship and
	fast
	Fast three days and perform your
	obligations.

3.1.3 The triumph of light over darkness.

A fasting period of three days expresses the veneration of the Yezidis for the light in its struggle with the darkness. It is felt that, after the three days of fasting, the light will defeat the darkness.⁶⁷² Likewise, it is regarded as a feast, expressing the joy of the triumph of 'light, sun and goodness' over 'darkness, night and evil.' The victory of the light means the sun will continue to send its rays.⁶⁷³ There are some *sebeqes* of religious texts emphasizing some aspects of this belief:

<i>Rêka me nûr e zêrbav e</i>	Our way is light and pious being
<i>Ew ronah ye, ew tav e</i>	It is light and sunshine
<i>Ji tarî, tav dave.</i> ⁶⁷⁴	From darkness, it returned light.

The Yezidis worship during daytime as a symbol of good acts:

<i>Sipî nûr e ji bidayet e</i>	White is the light of guidance
<i>Rengê reş e bi zîlmat e</i>	The black colour is darkness
<i>Şukir şev diçû, roj dibate</i>	Thankfully, the night went, and the day came
<i>Xudê xefurê qesar e.</i> ⁶⁷⁵	God is the great Forgiver.

3.1.4 The connection of the feast with hot and cold weather and the fluctuation of winter.

The day begins to become longer from this day on until day and night become equal and gradually as the fluctuation of winter ends.⁶⁷⁶ The feast is the celebration of the

⁶⁷¹ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 81, in Kişto 2012: 130.

⁶⁷² See Bahzānī, H. H. (2003), "Al-Zirā'a...A'yaduhā, Falsafatuhā, Asāfiruhā wa-Aşyaun Uħrra" (Agriculture... Its Festivals, Philosophy, Myths and other Things), *Lalish*, No. 20, p. 65; Silēman, p. X. (2013), "Cejna Rojîyên Êzî" (Êzî Fasting feast), in E. Boyîk (ed.), *Cejnên Ezîdîyan* (Yezidian Feasts), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, pp. 39-40.

⁶⁷³ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silēman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also, see Bāqasirî 2003: 155-156.

⁶⁷⁴ *Qewlê Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî* (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.

⁶⁷⁵ *Beyta Dinê* (The Beyt of the world), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 II: 750.

⁶⁷⁶ Bāqasirî 2003: 155-156; Uġmān 2013:169-170.

disappearance of the freezing cold and the coming of light and warmth.⁶⁷⁷ Moreover, there is a *Qewl* called *Qewlê Meha* (the hymn of the months) that refers to the fluctuation of winter in a dialogical way between months, and it describes the weather and its impact on nature. Also, *sebeqes* of this *Qewl* refer to the cold of winter during the time of the feast:

<i>Hatime nav kuf û kan e</i>	I came into <i>kuf û kan</i> (not understood)
<i>Wekê têt û dibit Zivistan e</i>	When it comes and winter starts
<i>Zêndan e ser çî qas mexlûqê bi giyan e.</i>	It is a prison for all living creatures.

<i>Kanûn dibê seqaya 'erda ez im</i>	January said: I am the weather of the earth
<i>Û ji sarya xo wa dîtezim</i>	I am freezing from my cold
<i>Ez jê li ber firwara mîrê xo ye bi lez im.</i> ⁶⁷⁸	I am in a hurry because of my prince's command.

February shows that December and January are cold weather and affect living creatures in a negative way, but it changes the weather for the better:

<i>Kanûn ço bi ser da hatî Subata reş e</i>	January went, followed by black February
<i>Di gel Kanûnê diket qerqes e</i>	And it argued with January
<i>Gotê: tu çoyî, bêna dinyayê bi min ye xoş e.</i> ⁶⁷⁹	It said: You went, and the world smelled nice with me.

As shown, the period of the three days of fasting has link with the days becoming longer and the nights becoming shorter i.e. the changing weather from darkness and cold to light and warmth. This implies that the light wins over darkness, and after that, it is the feast.

3.2 Fasting for *Xudans* ('Lords') of the natural elements

There is another type of fasting called *Rojjîyên Xudana* (Fasts for the Lords). They start in the beginning of December and continue until *Cejna Rojîya* (the fasting feast), i.e., about 10 days. During the fast, as on the three-day fast described above, Yezidis do not eat or drink anything from sunrise until sunset. Yezidis fast for many *Xudans* but here the focus is on the *Xudans* of the sacred four elements of nature and their phenomena, as explained in the following sections.

⁶⁷⁷ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Bâqasîrî 2003: 155-156.

⁶⁷⁸ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 22, 25 in Hecî 1994a: 25-26.

⁶⁷⁹ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 26 in Hecî 1994a: 26.

3.2.1 Fire and its manifestations

Yezidis, and especially Şemsanî Sheikhs and their Mirîds (followers), fast on one day which is Wednesday for Şêşîms,⁶⁸⁰ the lord of the sun, light and fire. Moreover, one week before the fasting feast there are three days named *Rojjîyên Şêşîms* (*Şêşîms* fasts).

Beyta Sibê or *Beyta Şêşîms* (the *Beyt* of the morning or the *Beyt* of *Şêşîms*) refers to the three times of the day: morning, afternoon and evening with the veneration of sun and its lord *Şêşîms*:

Roj hate têşta ne
Şêşêms bestî dîwan e
Maşa wê didete mêran e.

The sun has come to morning
Şêşîms is present at the assembly
He gives the holy men their wages.

Roj hate nîvro ye
Manga sipî jê diçoye
Şêşîms yî bi misk e yî bi mo ye.
Roj hat û ava bû
Şêşîms li 'erş rawesta bû
*Aşîqa selawet lê veda bû.*⁶⁸¹

The sun has come to midday
The white moonlight has fled from it
Şêşîms smells of musk and scent.
The sun has come and gone down
Şêşîms has taken his place in the sky
The Lovers have prayed to him.

There are also some Yezidis who fast for Sheikh Ebirus or Sheikh Hevrus, the lord of the lightning and thunder. This *sebeqe* refers to him:

Şemis qemer
Dawdî bin Derman, Pîrî Terciman, Şêx
*Hevrûz, ...*⁶⁸²

Sun and moon,
Dawdî bin Derman, Pîrî Terciman Sheikh
Hevruz, ...

3.2.2 Water and its manifestations

Some Yezidis fast for Xidir Liyas, the lord of water, on one day, which is Thursday. In religious texts, Xidir is described as *Zindî* (lively and immortal), eternal, and his place is in the sea. Here, the common feature between Xidir Liyas and water is the eternity.

Mûsê go: bo min bêje bi rehmanî
Tu kê çî dikê li derê deryanî
Bi xatîra Xudê û xasê cibanî.

Moses said: Tell me by the Merciful one
Who are you and what do you do in the
sea?
For the sake of God and the holy
beings of the world.

Xidir go: ez Xidirê Zindî me
Ji 'enzîl afîrê Xudê me

Xidir said: I am Xidir Zindî (immortal
Xidir)
I am a creature of God from eternity

⁶⁸⁰ Cf., Şêşîms is a historical figure and the son of Êzdînê Mîr, and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî sheikhs, see Kreyenbrock 1995: 97-100; Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 26-27.

⁶⁸¹ *Beyta Sibê yan Beyta Şêşîms* (The *Beyt* of the Morning or The *Beyt* of Şêşîms), seb. 8, 10, 19, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 211-212.

⁶⁸² *Du'a Stêra Dembilqapê* (The Prayer of the *Dembilqapê* 'pole star'), seb. 4, in Gîndî 1994: 145.

*Sura yarê bêrî me.*⁶⁸³

I am a mystery of the primordial one
(immortal).

According to religious texts, there is a *Kas* (cup) of eternal water with the name *Xidir Lîyas*. Its water is the symbol of eternal life and the symbol of *Xidir Lîyas*. Whoever drinks from it will always be young and will have immortal life. In the Xidir Lîyas shrine in the village of Ba'adra, there is a big cup called *Jamkê-Jam* or *kas*.⁶⁸⁴

Cindiyo tu yê rênas
Me şerab divêt ji kasêd xas
*Lî wê hendê ye le bramo*⁶⁸⁵ *milîkê Xidr û*
*lîyas.*⁶⁸⁶

O, young man, you are a guide
We want to drink from the special
cups.
Come, brothers, to this pond, the
property of Xidr-liyas.

Yezidis fast on one day for the lord of the rain, Mehmed Reşan, and there is a *Qesîde* in the religious literature called *Qesîda Mehmed Reşan* which is about venerating rain and its lord.⁶⁸⁷

When there is a year of drought, when rain is delayed or only a little fall, Yezidis perform a ritual to ask the lord of rain to send rain. This custom is called *Bûka Baranê* (Bride of the Rain). It is a bride in the shape of a human made of wood and adorned with clothes. Several people raise it up and march around the village while people sprinkle water over it.⁶⁸⁸ The following under-scores this tradition:

Mehmed Reşan baranê bireşîne
*Tîlxê kayê biveşîne.*⁶⁸⁹

Mehmed Reşan, let rain pour
Let it provide hay for us.

Also, Yezidis say:

Mehmed Reşano bireşîne
*Baranê bi cerga barîne.*⁶⁹⁰

Mehmed Reşan, let rain pour
Give us heavy rain.

There is a ritual that is performed at the shrine of Mehmed Reşan when there is little or no rain in the year. The village people visit the shrine and go to the spring of the shrine, pleading to God to send them rain.

Yezidis also fast one day for Pîra Fat, the lord against floods, storms and natural disasters/blights to protect agricultural production:

Ya Siltan Êzîdî perda te li ber me bit

O Sultan Ezîd! You save us
O Pîra Fat! You protect us.

⁶⁸³ *Qewlê Mûsa Pêxember û Xidrê Zênde* (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidrê Zênde), seb. 7, 8, in Reşo 2004 I: 330.

⁶⁸⁴ For more details see “*Xidir Lîyas and Kas* (the cup of water)”, in chapter III, part II.

⁶⁸⁵ According to the textual meaning the word *bramo* includes a spelling mistake, it should be *brano* (O brothers).

⁶⁸⁶ *Beyta Cindî* (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 31, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 48.

⁶⁸⁷ See the whole text of *Qesîda Mehmed Reşan* (The *Qesîde* of Mehmed Reşan), in Hecî 1996: 70-71.

⁶⁸⁸ See Image 11 in Appendices.

⁶⁸⁹ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdî, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁶⁹⁰ Text details are unknown, in Ğindî 1998: 27.

*Ya Pîra Fat çarka te ye li me werkirî
bit.*⁶⁹¹

Some Yezidis fast one day for the lord of the clouds, Pîrê Ewra. They sometimes swear an oath by the clouds and say: “*Bi van ‘ewira*” (I swear an oath by these clouds). The religious literature refers to venerating clouds as the source of rain and snow:

<i>Pîre Pyîzekê li min da</i>	Late autumn passed over me
<i>Bi ser me da batî zivistanêke bi hêlhêl e</i>	Winter came to me in full blast
<i>Peletekê ‘ewirê girte pawanê jorî</i>	A small cloud Surrounds the heights
<i>Jê dibarin xirûgê bafirê, nexîcê bawanê, ...</i> ⁶⁹²	Snowflakes and raindrops fell from it, ...

Some Yezidis fast on one day for Evdê Reş, Yezidis believe that he is the lord of springs.⁶⁹³

3.2.3 Earth and its manifestations

Yezidis fast on one day for Derwêşê Erdê, the lord (protector) of the earth. *sebeqes* refer to him and his role:

<i>Ev dîniya erdê derwêş e,</i>	This world is the earth of the
<i>Têda digerin cimle cêş e</i>	Darwish,
<i>Kesek bi nefsa kibar naçite pêş e.</i> ⁶⁹⁴	All people roam in it, No one gets ahead with an arrogant mind.

<i>Ya Derwêşê li ‘erd! bi saxî ez êmanetî te me</i>	O <i>Derwêşê li ‘erd!</i> I am dependent on
<i>Bi destûrî Şîxadî û Melik Şêx Sin û Xefûrê</i>	you for safety while I am alive
<i>Rêye.</i> ⁶⁹⁵	In the name of Sheikh ‘Adî and Angel Sheikh Sin and Xefûrê Rêye (the Protector of Roads).

Also, Yezidis fast for the lord of the mountains, hills and caves, who is *Sexrî Cin*, who is thought to have mystical powers and to have control over them:⁶⁹⁶

<i>Kerema Çiyayê Mişetê</i>	The mystical power of Mount Mişet
<i>Çiyayê Hizretê, Çiyayê ‘Erefatê</i>	Mount Hizret, Mount ‘Erefat
<i>Dar û berêt Geliyê Lalişê.</i> ⁶⁹⁷	[The mystical power of] Trees and stones of the Laliş Valley.

⁶⁹¹ *Du’aya Oxirî* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 7, in Ğindî 1994: 147.

⁶⁹² *Payîzok Rinde Giravî* (Autumn Song Rinde Giravî), seb. 5, in Bozanî1998: 189.

⁶⁹³ From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesên Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁶⁹⁴ *Qewlê Miskîno Jaro* (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 7, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 67.

⁶⁹⁵ *Du’aya Oxirî* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 8, in Ğindî 1994: 147.

⁶⁹⁶ Ğîgû 2010: 60.

⁶⁹⁷ *Diroze*, seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 286.

*Hûn bidene xatira behîştê û darê
Kafê û mexarê, ...*⁶⁹⁸

For the sake of the paradise and the tree,
[For the sake of] the cave and the
cavern, ...

Many Yezidis fast for *Şerfedîn*, who is the lord (protector) of trees, plants and their fruits. Moreover, Yezidis fast for *Sit Nefîsa*, who is the personification of a sacred tree.⁶⁹⁹

*Heke 'erdekeê bibînê, îşaret ke
Dewêşekê bibînê, 'ibadet ke
Darekê bibînê, ziyaret ke.*⁷⁰⁰

When you see earth, mark it⁷⁰¹
When you see a Darwish, venerate
him
When you see a tree, make a
pilgrimage to it (i.e., kiss it).

3.2.4 Air and wind.

Yezidis, in general, fast on one day, which is the day for the lord of the air, Sheikh Musê Sor:

*Pedşê min li ber hukmê xo yê rewê ye
Ewê deşit çêkir, rukîbande ser çiya ye
Kenna vê dinyayê ba ye.*⁷⁰²

My King (i.e., God) has balance in his
control
He created plains, and set mountains
on it
The origin of this world is air.

The Four Sacred Elements of Nature in Some Other Acts of Worship

This section will focus on some other acts of worship and devotion mostly performed in the religious daily lives of Yezidis, in which they estimate and venerate nature and its four elements.

Yezidis may swear an oath by the four sacred elements of nature, as when they say: “*bi ewê agirê pîrozê*” (I swear by this holy fire); “*bi ewê axa pîrozê*” (I swear by this holy solî), and “*bi ewê awa pîrozê*” (I swear by this holy water). Moreover, an oath is also sworn by Şêşims and the light of the sun. Yezidis say, “*Sê gavê Şêşims yan rojê bibê*” (take three steps towards Şêşims or sun). They also say, “*bi ronahiya Şêşims*” (I swear by Şêşims’ light). Furthermore, they swear an oath and say: “*bi wî Xudayê ba û baran ji bal tîn*” (I swear by the God who gives air and rain). Sometimes Yezidis will swear an oath by a cloud by saying: “*bi van ewirê*” (I swear an oath by these clouds).

Another form of venerating nature is by kissing the holy natural elements. The words *Ziyaretkirin* or *Ziyaretbûn* are used for it, such as kissing the soil of holy places in

⁶⁹⁸ *Du'aya Hévarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 22.

⁶⁹⁹ See, Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.

⁷⁰⁰ *Du'a Ziyaretbûnê* (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), seb. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107.

⁷⁰¹ “I.e. a structure intended to remind believers of God’s power”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107, n. 233.

⁷⁰² *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 8, in Hecî 1994a: 23-24.

Lalish and in *Xas' Qub* and also kissing the holy soil by kissing *Berat*. This *sebeqe* indicates that belief:

<i>Heke te mominek dît, 'ibadet ke</i>	When you see a believer, venerate him
<i>Heke te darek dît, ziyaret ke</i>	When you see a tree, make pilgrimage to it (kiss it)
<i>Heke te 'erdeke dît, îşaret ke.</i> ⁷⁰³	When you see earth, place a mark on it.

Yezidis do many things for the sake of the natural elements. To venerate the natural elements, Yezidis say, “*bi deye xatira evê rojê*” (for the sake of this sun), “*bi deye xatira evê agirê*” (for the sake of this fire), “*bi deye xatira evê avê*” (for the sake of this water), “*bi deye xatira evê axê/evê 'erdê*” (for the sake of this earth/land), “*bi deye xatira evê ba û baranê*” (for the sake of this wind and rain), etc. There are also some *sebeqes* on this:

<i>Hûn bidene xatira Dura zer e</i>	For the sake of the yellow Pearl,
<i>Ax û av û agir e</i>	Soil, water, and fire,
<i>'Erd û 'ezman û ber e, ...</i> ⁷⁰⁴	Earth, sky, and stone, ...

Also, in:

<i>Ya Melik Şerfedîne min yî herûber î</i>	O, my eternal Melik Şerfedîn
<i>Tu bideye xatira 'erd û 'ezman û dar û berî</i>	For the sake of the earth and the sky, tree and stone
<i>Tu li me nekeye tengavê zû li banga me werî.</i> ⁷⁰⁵	You do not leave us in trouble and come to rescue us immediately.

Moreover, Yezidis venerate the four sacred elements of nature for fulfilling wishes. Drinking water is a way of ensuring that wishes are fulfilled or securing a chance of marriage.⁷⁰⁶ There is also a ritual, performed during sessions of *Tawusgêran*, where people drink water from a *Şêrbîk* (jar) for the purpose of fulfilling wishes for a good chance of marriage.⁷⁰⁷ Sometimes, Yezidis ask for fulfilling wishes by praying in front of trees, such as *Dara Singa* (the tree of the stakes) on top of Mt Mişet, and visitors cut off branches of that tree and plant them, hoping that it will fulfil their desires. They also visit holy trees and hang threads on their branches.

Yezidis visit the *Stûn* (pillar) made from holy stones for fulfilling their wishes, for example, a *Stûna Miraza* (the wishing pillar) stands in Lalish. It is believed that if someone's hands reach around it, their wish will be fulfilled, especially with regard to marriage or having good chances:

<i>Şêxâtî miraz e</i>	To be Sheikh is a wish
<i>Xudê rêya beqîyê ji me ra dixwaze</i>	God wishes a true path for us
	O God! You fulfil our wishes through the Stone of Wishes.

⁷⁰³ *Qenlê Aşê Mihbetê* (The Hymn of the Mill of Love), seb. 15, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 382.

⁷⁰⁴ *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 9, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 23.

⁷⁰⁵ *Qenlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 39, in Kişto 2004: 212.

⁷⁰⁶ See “Drinking water and a chance of marriage”, in the Xidir Liyas feast, in chapter III, part II.

⁷⁰⁷ Details are given in “*Tawusgêran* (The wandering of the Tawus)”, in chapter III, part II.

*Ya Xudê! tu mirazê me bikê li ber berê
mirazê.*⁷⁰⁸

Lalish is the place of wishes because the pillar of wishes is there:

<i>Birme usîf nazê</i>	I was taken to describe attractive girls
<i>Wan derya, wan derwazê</i>	Those doors and those entrances
<i>Laliş beye cîyê mirazê.</i> ⁷⁰⁹	There is the place of wishing (Wishing pillar) in Lalish.

Moreover, during religious occasions and also in the course of ordinary days, Yezidis bring home a branch from a tree in one of the religious places, which means that they have participated in that occasion, visited a holy place, and it is also for purposes of blessing.

In Yezidi tradition, keeping the four sacred elements of nature clean and safe from all bad things that cause pollution and deterioration, is a grace and a blessing. However, deteriorating and spoiling the natural elements, for example, burning and cutting trees and polluting springs, are forbidden.

As a religious duty, the custodian of religious places plants trees and other plants in religious places and it is sinful to deteriorate and cut them, such as in Lalish, *Mehdera Bozê*, *Zêna Memê Şivan*, *Qubs*, etc.

Regarding the veneration nature, the following *sebeqe* describes how, when Sheikh Adi came to the Hakkari area, i.e., when he came to Lalish, he venerated stones and trees there:

<i>Şîxadî hate Hekar e</i>	Sheikh Adi came to Hakkari ⁷¹¹
<i>Sicûde bû li ber û dare</i>	Sheikh Adi bowed to stones and trees.
<i>Şîxadî li nav mêra serdar e.</i> ⁷¹⁰	Sheikh Adi is the leader among (holy) men.

To keep trees clean and protected, there is a ceremony named *Kêşana Qola* (Bring tree trunk) that takes place in Lalish at the beginning of April of every year.⁷¹² Yezidi religious men such as the Baba Sheikh and Baba Çawîş, and others, look for dry wood on the mountains around Lalish, and bring it to a special place in Lalish.

As becomes clear from the above information, in Yezidism, veneration of nature is the key feature of many religious observances that are connected to Yezidis' acts of worship and devotion.

The evidence and data from this chapter result in the following conclusions.

The study demonstrates that the role and veneration of nature, its elements and phenomena, become important reasons for many Yezidi religious acts of worship and veneration. One of these acts is prayer, for example, fire and light in *Du'a Çirabîkernê*

⁷⁰⁸ *Du'a Şêxîtiyê* (The Prayer of Sheikhs), seb. 7, in Reşo 2004 II: 1005.

⁷⁰⁹ *Qemlê Xewrê* (The Hymn of Xewrê), seb. 3, in Hecî 2006: 38.

⁷¹⁰ *Qemlê Qendîla* (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 16, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 92.

⁷¹¹ An area next to Lalish.

⁷¹² See Image 12 in Appendices.

(the prayer of lighting lamps), water in *Du'aya Morkirinê* (the prayer of baptism) and earth in *Du'aya Tesmîli 'Erdê* (the prayer of Commitment to the earth). There are also many *Nifîrin* (Imprecatory Prayers or Curses) based on the role of the four elements of nature and their phenomena, as Yezidis sometimes curse those who act inhumanely or breach religious principles to be punished by fire, flood, storm, or similar.

Regarding pilgrimage, there are many important rites based on the role and veneration of nature and its four sacred elements in the rites of the two main types of pilgrimage: ordinary times and during feasts. For instance, pilgrims should be barefoot because of the holiness of the soil and should wash their faces and baptize themselves with the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* for blessing; *Selakirin* with the water of *Zimzim*, where pilgrims have to take home some water of the white spring and *Zimzim*, and also a small branch of a tree which symbolizes grace, holiness and participation in the pilgrimage. In the rites of pilgrimage in the *Cejna Cimayê* (the Festival of the Gathering), nature and its symbolism play a major role, for example, *Perî Simarkirin* (inaugurating *Perî*). Yezidis are baptised with holy water and their colours symbolize the colours in nature.

The veneration and role of nature and its four sacred elements become the major source and reason for two types of fasting. The first is the fasting feast for the sun in *Cejna Rojîyên Êzî* (The Fast of Êzî), where the associated beliefs express the triumph of light over darkness. The other type is fasting for *Xudans* of the four elements of nature and their phenomena. There is fasting for the lords of each of these, namely air/wind, fire, earth, water and its manifestations such as rain and springs.

There are several other acts of worship and devotion, mostly in daily life, that are about venerating nature in general, such as swearing an oath by the four sacred elements of nature and their manifestations, kissing some of them, venerating them so that wishes will be fulfilled, and so on. Moreover, Yezidis should keep the natural elements and their environment pure from anything that may cause pollution and deterioration, for example, spitting on nature, plants, water and trees.

Chapter II

The Role of Natural Elements in Significant Religious Places

This chapter explores the role of, and the veneration for the natural elements in religious places. It will study how and why nature is venerated in these religious places in Yezidism. Moreover, it aims to highlight the link between the structure of these places and the veneration of nature. The focus is on the veneration of the four sacred elements of nature in these places.

In general, any place that has a *Qub*, shrine and other material symbols of Yezidism, is regarded as a sacred place. There are some sources about their number and locations in Sheikhan and Shingal regions.⁷¹³ It is estimated that there are about 218 Yezidi holy places in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and all of them belong to different categories of the seven categories of religious places⁷¹⁴ which are mentioned below. In what follows, detail will be given about these places.

According to seven categories of Yezidi religious places in the Kurdistan region of Iraq as the fieldwork of the study, the chapter is composed of seven sections, each of which deals with a specific religious place, they are Lalish, *Civata Boza* (the assembly of Boza), *Zêw* (courtyard), *Mezar/Zehman* (cemetery), *Qub û Avahîyê Xasa* (cupola and mausoleum), *Nîşangeh* (shrine), *Silavgeh* (place of greeting).

First, a general description of each of these places will be given. Next, a description and analysis are given of the role and veneration of nature in each of these places. There

⁷¹³ About their names and locations in general see Ahmed 1975: 23: 167-191; Kreyenbrock 1995: 3-84; Açıkyıldız: 117-136.

⁷¹⁴ From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesên Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan.

follows a description of the role of nature in the religious observances that are performed there. Key conclusions follow at the end of the chapter.

1 Lalish

Lalish is the holiest place in the world for Yezidis.⁷¹⁵ It is the centre of religious and devotional life for the Yezidi community. It plays an important role in religious beliefs⁷¹⁶ and also in religious life in general.⁷¹⁷ Lalish is a valley and there are several pleasant natural elements and features of the landscape; it has mountains on three sides where many types of beautiful trees and bushes are irrigated. Springs and streams run through its various corners. Some of the descriptions by Westerners of Lalish⁷¹⁸ are noteworthy, for example, that of the British author H. Ch. Luke, who describes it in the following manner:

It is a little paradise, this valley [Lalish], of luxuriant groves and running water, of olives and pistachios, walnuts and figs, and silvery poplars beside the stream. The tender green of early spring was around us, and at our feet hyacinths and other wildflowers grew in abundance; the sides of the valley were white with hawthorn and pink with almond-blossom.⁷¹⁹

1.1 The natural elements in the structure of Lalish

Yezidis believe that the valley with its natural elements is the holiest valley in the world. A *sebeqe* describes it as a famous place by its landscape and the place of worship:

<i>Geliyé Lalişê bi nav e</i>	The Lalish valley is famous
<i>Wê pêda dêtin av e</i>	It flows with water
<i>Zar mede zor silav e.</i> ⁷²⁰	You have to be quiet there (i.e., worship).

⁷¹⁵ Lalish is located about 58 km north of Mosul, 12 km north of Sheikhan district (Ain Safni).

⁷¹⁶ According to Yezidi religious texts, Lalish was recognized by early Holy Beings as *Heq nar* (the site of Truth). At the time of creation, the earth was motionless until Lalish had come down from heaven and it is the leaven of solidity of earth, the emergence of life on it and the first place of the creation of human beings. See “The Role of Natural Elements in *Afirandina Kinyatê* (the Yezidi Myth of Cosmogony and Cosmology)”, chapter II, part II.

⁷¹⁷ It is the centre of religious reference (the centre of Yezidis’ spiritual council). It is a religious duty for Yezidis to undertake a pilgrim to Lalish at least once during their lifetime. There are many religious monuments and engravings and unfortunately some of them have disappeared and replaced by new once (see Şivan, Rêzan (2012b), *Pirrojeyê ji bo Rêxistina Karûbarên Êzîdîyan û Peristgeh Laliş* (A Project for Organizing Yezidis Affairs and Lalish Temple), Duhok: Hawar, p. 54). There are many religious places, symbols and buildings that are specifically Yezidi in design and usually have a connection with holy men, and are objects of devotion, like *Qubs*, mausoleums, shrines, etc. Yezidis believe that their number is about 365, corresponding with the number of the days of a year. Moreover, many feasts and religious occasions are performed there.

⁷¹⁸ See Layard, A. H. (1850), *Nineveh and Its Remains*, Paris: European Library, p. 53; Empson 1928: 112-134; Edmonds 1967: 10-15; Kreyenbroek 1995: 77-83.

⁷¹⁹ Luke 1925: 134.

⁷²⁰ *Qewlê Stiya Ês* (The Hymn of Stiya Ês), seb. 8, in Xelef 1996: 11.

In Lalish, it is not permissible to cut trees or do anything that harms nature; some sources refer to this. As Luke writes, “where no wild animal may be killed, no vegetation cut, no water polluted. It is a little paradise, this valley.”⁷²¹

There are several holy springs in Lalish.⁷²² Their names are *Kaniya Sipi* (white spring), *Kaniya Zimzim* (*Zimzim* spring), *Kaniya Gulava* (Gulava spring), *Kaniya Horiya* (the spring of Houris), *Kaniya Şivana* (the spring of shepherds), *Kaniya Berbaykê* (the spring of Berbaykê) and *Kaniya Barbilî* (Barbilî spring). *Sebeqes* refer to some of them, such as *Horiya* and *Kulava*:

<i>Çome ser kanîya horiya</i>	I went to the spring of the Houris
<i>Min meyze kiribû li wan çîya li wan</i>	I stared at those mountains and high
<i>‘ûlîya</i>	places
<i>Em bû meskenê wan stîya.</i> ⁷²³	Those were the residence of those ladies.

<i>Bi qedrê Melik Şêx Hesên</i>	For the sake of the power of angel
<i>Kaniya Kulava, Pîr Şerefî</i>	Sheikh Hesên
<i>Mêranî, ...</i> ⁷²⁴	[For the sake of] the Kulava spring, Pîr
	Şerefî Mêranî, ... ⁷²⁵

In Yezidi mythology, the *Kaniya Sipi*⁷²⁶ is a spring of pure and holy water. It played a role in the creation of all creatures and is the ‘leaven’ for life on earth.⁷²⁷ It is highly venerated, being the place of Yezidi baptism. *Zimzim* is a holy spring,⁷²⁸ Yezidis perform the *Selakirin* (holy greeting) ritual there by washing their faces with that water and sprinkling it, and asking God to keep all their dear people safe.⁷²⁹ There are also two ponds: *Henda Kewtele* or *Kelokê* (the pond of *Kewtel*) and *Bîra Nasirdîn* (the pond of Nasirdîn).

<i>Hêvên ji hevid li Kewtel e</i>	The Leaven of the pond of <i>Kewtel</i>
<i>Şêx babik wê li ser e, ...</i> ⁷³⁰	Sheikh Babik stands on it, ...

The following are the trees found in Lalish;⁷³¹ *Dara Zengila* (the Tree of Bells), *Dara Qelindera* (the Tree of Qelender), *Dara Nezerê* (the Tree of [against] the evil eye), *Dara Xêvê* (the Tree of sleep), and *Dara Singa* (the Tree of the stakes). Additionally, there are many other trees named after *Xas* or holy figures, such as: *Dara Leylê* (the Tree of Leylê),

⁷²¹ Luke 1925: 134.

⁷²² See Image 13 and Image 20 in Appendices.

⁷²³ *Qewlê Mişetê* (The Hymn of Mişet), seb. 11, in Xelef 2002: 234-235.

⁷²⁴ *Diroze* Seb. 6, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 282-283.

⁷²⁵ He is one of the Yezidi Holy Men, see Silêman and Cindî 1979: 103-104; Kreyenbroek 1995: 121.

⁷²⁶ It springs from under Mişet mount in Lalish valley. It is in a room and a white coned dome is on it, which is called *Quba Kaniya Sipi*. The direction of its door is towards the east, including the water basin inside the shrine with the width of 200 cm and depth of 100 cm.

⁷²⁷ See “Natural Elements in the Emergence of Life on Earth”, in chapter I, part I.

⁷²⁸ It is inside a rock tunnel in the cave of *Zimzim* and is located at the bottom of Erefat mount; its depth is about 100 cm and width about 300 cm.

⁷²⁹ For further details see “*Selakirin* (Holy Greeting) with the water of the *Zimzim* spring”, in chapter II, part II.

⁷³⁰ *Qesîda Şêx Babik* (The *Qesîda* of Sheikh Babik), seb. 3, in Hecî 1996: 66.

⁷³¹ See Image 14 and Image 15 in Appendices.

Dara Baba İso (the Tree of Baba İso), *Dara İbrahim Lik* (the Tree of İbrahim Lik), and *Dara Hesên Kıyar* (the Tree of Hesên Kıyar). These trees have particular properties: for example, Yezidis take a branch of *Dara Xewê* for those who cannot sleep. A *Dara Nezerê* branch is used against the evil eye. Visitors also cut off a branch of the *Dara Singa* and plant it in the hope that it will fulfil their wishes.

The earth of the mountains in Lalish is venerated by Yezidis. There are three sacred mountains surrounding Lalish: *Erefat* in the north, *Mişet* in the south and *Hizret* in the west. Religious texts confirm their holiness:

<i>Kerema Çiyayê Mişetê</i>	The mystical power of mount Mişet
<i>Çiyayê Hizretê, Çiyayê Erefatê</i>	Mount Hizret, mount 'Erefat
<i>Dar û berêt Geliyê Lalişê.</i> ⁷³²	[The mystical power of] Trees and stones of the Lalish Valley.

The earth of caves is also respected by Yezidis. There are many holy caves in Lalish; their names are:⁷³³ *Şikefta Berata* (the Cave of Berats), *Şikefta Zimzim* (the Cave of *Zimzim*), *Şikefta Sitona Miraza* (the Cave of the Pillar of Wishes), *Çilexane* (the Cave of Çilexane), *Şikefta Cina* (the Cave of the Jinn), *Mexara Mara* (the Cave of snakes), *Şikefta Şêx Mend* (the Cave of Sheikh Mend), *Şikefta Seyd Ne'um* (the Cave of Seyd Ne'um), *Şikefta Qerqorî* (the Cave of Qerqorî), *Şikefta Mehmed Reben*⁷³⁴ (the Cave of Mehmed Reben), *Şikefta Hesên Çinarî* (the Cave of Hesên Çinarî), *Şikefta Pîr Omerxala* (the Cave of Pîr Omerxala), *Şikefta Mam İso* (the Cave of Mam İso), *Şikefta Mîr İbrahim* (the Cave of Mîr İbrahim), and *Şikefta Şerfedîn* (the Cave of Şerfedîn). Moreover, in this context, Kreyenbroek states that “[t]he system of caves beneath the Sanctuary of Sheikh Adi at Lalish, and particularly the two spaces here called the Cave (*kaf*) and the Cavern (*mixare*), are regarded as very holy. In the Cavern, the water of the *Zemzem* Spring (q.v.) springs from the rock.”⁷³⁵ This *sebeqe* refers to the veneration of caves and caverns:

<i>Kaniya Sipî mora min e</i>	<i>Kaniya Sipî</i> is my baptism,
<i>Kaf û mixar û zimzim beca min e</i>	The cave, the cavern and the <i>Zimzim</i> spring are my pilgrimage.
<i>Qublet el-bidor qubleta min e.</i> ⁷³⁶	<i>Qublet el-bidor</i> is my direction of prayer.

Particular uses are made of some of these caves, such as *Şikefta Berata*, which is for making *Berat*. *Şikefta Sitona Miraza* is for fulfilling wishes, while *Şikefta Zimzim* is for the *Selakirin* (holy greeting) ritual.⁷³⁷ Lalish is the place of wishes because the pillar of wishes is in *Şikefta Sitona Miraza*.

⁷³² *Diroze*, seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 286.

⁷³³ See Image 16 and Image 17 in Appendices.

⁷³⁴ His shrine is at Lalish temple, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 122.

⁷³⁵ Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 37.

⁷³⁶ *Şebda Dînî* (The Declaration of Faith), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 26.

⁷³⁷ About *Selakirin* see “*Selakirin* (Holy Greeting) with the water of the *Zimzim* spring”, in chapter II, part II.

Birme usif naxa
Wan derya, wan derwaxa
*Laliş beye çiyê miraxa.*⁷³⁸

I was taken to describe attractive girls
 Those doors and those entrances
 There is the place of wishing (wishing
 pillar) in Lalish.

1.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed in Lalish

There are some religious ceremonies, acts of worship and rituals practised in Lalish, which are related to nature:

1.2.1 Lalish including *Kaniya Sipî* is the Yezidis' Quble (direction of prayer)

During all prayers, except the morning and evening ones, Yezidis turn their faces to Lalish as their *Quble*:

Êzîdiyati şifa'et e
Kaniya Sipî kir qublet e
*Kir qubleta dinê û axret e.*⁷³⁹

Yezidism is intercession
Kaniya Sipî is the direction of prayer (qibla)
 The direction of prayer of the world and
 the Hereafter.

1.2.2 Lalish is the place of Yezidi religious pilgrimages

Based on the veneration of the natural elements in Lalish, like the water of *Zimzim* spring and the White Spring, it became the place of Yezidi religious pilgrimage, as in this *sebeqe* (also see a previous *sebeqe*):⁷⁴⁰

Sibekê ji yêt 'Edewiya
Birme dîwana Şêxê 'Edî ye
Heca me: Zimzim e û Qubet li Bidore
*û Kaniya Sipî ye.*⁷⁴¹

In an 'Adawiyya morning
 I was taken to Sheikh 'Adî's assembly
 Our pilgrimage is: *Zimzim*, *Qubet Libidor*
 (Sun)⁷⁴² and *Kaniya Sipî*.

Laliş ziyaret e
Kaniya Spî qublet e
*Qubleta dinê û axiret e.*⁷⁴³

Lalish is the place of pilgrimage
Kaniya Sipî is the direction of prayer
 The direction of prayer of the world and
 the Hereafter.

⁷³⁸ *Qewlê Xewrê* (The Hymn of Xewrê), seb. 3, in Hecî 2006: 38.

⁷³⁹ *Du'a Êzîdiyatiyê* (Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 7, in Reşo 2004 II: 1002.

⁷⁴⁰ Details are given in "Natural Elements in the Rites of Pilgrimage", in chapter I, part II.

⁷⁴¹ *Qewlê Sibekê ji yêt 'Edewiya* (The Hymn of a Morning from the 'Adawiyya), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 573.

⁷⁴² Cf., *Qublet el-bidore* means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer, see Reşo 2004 II: 573, n. 2.

⁷⁴³ *Qewlê Keniya Mara* (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seb. 37, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 397.

1.2.3 Lalish, including *Kaniya Sîpî*, is the place of religious healing practices

In Lalish, Yezidis use the water of springs, the soil of caves, and shrines of *Xas* for healing practices.⁷⁴⁴

<i>Hincîyê derdek lê dibîyê</i>	Anyone who has an illness
<i>Bi Lalişê qesit bikin zû ye</i>	Should pilgrimage to Lalish as soon as possible
<i>Derda, derman li wê dibîyê.</i> ⁷⁴⁵	The remedy of illness is there.

The water of *Kaniya Sîpî* is the remedy for ills and diseases:

<i>ji 'esmana beta bi 'erde</i>	From the sky to the earth,
<i>ji 'erda beta bi ser de</i>	From the earth upward,
<i>Ava Kaniya Sîpî derman e li ser çiqas derde.</i> ⁷⁴⁶	The water of the <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> is a cure for so many ills.

1.2.4 Lalish, including *Kaniya Sîpî*, is the place of *Morkirin* (Baptism)

As a historical hint, there are some sources that refer to *Morkirin* as having an ancient history.⁷⁴⁷ *Morkirin*⁷⁴⁸ is one of the most important obligations of the Yezidi religion,

⁷⁴⁴ See further information in “The Four Elements of Nature in Religious Healing Practices”, in chapter IV, part II.

⁷⁴⁵ *Qewlê Xoş Malê Baba, Şaxê 1* (The Hymn of Good Families, Version 1), seb. 28, in Reşo 2004 I: 405.

⁷⁴⁶ *Du'aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 6, in Bâqasirî 2003: 408.

⁷⁴⁷ A historical reference of *Morkirin*, Wahby writes, “[i]t seems probable that this cave and its spring (White Spring) was a place of worship to the god Mihr and the goddess Anahita (later *Nabûda*, *Nabûd*), who was the goddess of flowing springs and running fertile waters [sic], and that a fire temple was built over it” (Wahby 1962: 13). He adds, “Baptism: Amongst the other rites that the Yazidis may have inherited from Mithraism” (Wahby 1962: 36). Additionally, Ğindî refers to it thus “*Kaniya Sîpî* is the place of worship of the lord of the sun ‘*Mîbir*’ and ‘*Anahit*’ or ‘*Nabûd*.’ is the goddess of springs and streaming/running water” (Ğindî 1998: 28). The religious texts refer to “*Moru Şêşims*” (stamp or baptism of *Şêşims* the lord of sun) and “*Moru Mêbran*” (stamp or baptism of *Mêbra*/holy men) are associated with baptism. As these lines of *sebeqes*: “*Moru Şêşims geriyabû li navê*” (The *Mor* of *Şêşims* has circulated), (from DQŞ, seb. 8, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 202). Also, “*Mor moru mêran e, Kaniya Sîpî xoş nêşan e*” (The baptism is of *mêran* (the holy men) *Kaniya Sîpî* is the sacred symbol), (from DMO, seb. 1, in Bâqasirî 2003: 407). Also, this line “*Enê rojê Siltan Ezî Kaniya Sîpî kêre qubleta mêran e*” (That day Siltan Êzîdî (i.e., God) made *Kaniya Sîpî* the direction of prayer of *mêran*), (from QÎ, seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 83). Moreover, the name *Mîr* (prince) is one of God’s names in Yezidism (see Kreyenbroek 1995: 91-99; Omarkhali 2009: 13-24). Consequently, here the name *Mêran* may be derived from *Mêbra* and *Mêbir*, i.e., Mithra, in this regard Wahby writes, “*Mîran* is the Kurdish pronunciation of the name *Milbran* which is derived from *Mithra*. For *Mithra* was pronounced (*Mîbr*) from the first century CE onwards” (Wahby 1962: 42). As a result, it is possible for this above reason, *Morkirin* is performed near to *Şêşims*’ shrine in Lalish. Also, possibly *mor* is derived from *Milbr* (Mithra) both regarded as God. To sum up, according to the above sources, maybe *Morkirin* is a remainder of proto-Mithraism in Yezidism.

⁷⁴⁸ As a word in the Kurdish language, *Morkirin* consists of two syllables. *Mor*, which literary means “stamp”, and the verb *kirin*, which means “done”, and together they become *Morkirin*. In English, it is often translated as ‘Baptism.’

which is imposed on every Yezidi individual without specifying age, but preferably at childhood, but it can be done at any time during a person's life.⁷⁴⁹

The process of *Morkirin* is carried out on the hands of *Micênir* (the custodian) of the *Kaniya Sîpî* shrine in Lalish by sprinkling water three times by the head of the person to be baptized⁷⁵⁰ and reciting the *Du'aya Morkirinê*⁷⁵¹ (the Prayer of Baptism).⁷⁵² There is no specific time; it may be done at any time but is mostly performed during the time of religious feasts and occasions. The only place for *Morkirin* is *Kaniya Sîpî* at Lalish:

<i>Te Mor kir li Kaniya Sîpî ye</i>	You were baptized in the White Spring
<i>Nav li te dana berxê Êzî ye</i>	You are called a believer ⁷⁵⁴ of Êzî
<i>Şebde û îmanêt te bûne bi navê Tawusî</i>	Your declaration and faith are in the
<i>Melek û Siltan Êzî ye.</i> ⁷⁵³	name of Tawusî Melek and <i>Sultan Êzî</i> .

According to religious men, *Morkirin* is a religious duty; it is the symbol of a spiritual washing and purity to prepare for God's love. The Yezidis baptize, hoping to have good health during their lifetime. Overall, *Morkirin* means giving a promise, being truthful and being faithful to this belief (Yezidi religion).⁷⁵⁵

The role and holiness of the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* are explained and proved in the points that follow.

Morkirin is a religious obligation for all Yezidis; therefore, every Yezidi must practise *Morkirin* during his/her lifetime:

<i>Eve firwara Petşa ye</i>	This command is from King (i.e., God)
<i>Mora Kaniya Sîpî rewya ye</i>	The baptism of <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> is a
<i>Fer e û atqata Ezîdî ye.</i> ⁷⁵⁶	confession
	It is an obligation and faith for our
	Yezidis.

Morkirin is an obligation from *Şêşims* and *Mêran* (Holy Men):

<i>Mor mora mêran e</i>	The baptism is [the practice] of holy men
<i>Kaniya Sîpî xoş nîşan e</i>	<i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> is the sacred symbol
<i>Pedşay jî dabû beyan e</i>	King (i.e., God) created it (made it
<i>Ciyê Êzîdîne Mîr û her çar biran e.</i> ⁷⁵⁷	appear)
	It is the place of Êzîdîne Mîr and four
	brothers.

⁷⁴⁹ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The Custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁵⁰ See Image 18 in Appendices.

⁷⁵¹ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁵² For the whole text of the *Du'aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism) see Bâqasîrî 2003: 408.

⁷⁵³ *Du'aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 7, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 408.

⁷⁵⁴ Literally, 'You are called the lamb of Êzî.'

⁷⁵⁵ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁵⁶ *Beyta Kaniya Sîpî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 5, in Sileyman 2013: 41.

⁷⁵⁷ *Du'aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 1, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 407.

Ji çavî beta devî
Mora Şêşims lê dikevî
Meydana mezîna germa nabêlîn
*binivî.*⁷⁵⁸

From eye to mouth (face)
 The baptism of Şêşims has circulated
 The great ones are active, they do not
 allow you to sleep.

Mora Kaniya Sipî ye
Mêr hatin û medebê jê daye
*Ew ciyê Pedşê min bi xo ye.*⁷⁵⁹

The baptism of *Kaniya Sipî*
 The holy men came and praised it
 It is the place of my King (i.e., God)
 himself.

Morkirin is a spiritual washing and baptising, therefore Yezidis should be baptized before death to have their soul purified.⁷⁶⁰ Thus, the custodian of the *Kaniya Sipî*, Esmer says, “*Morkirin* is spiritual washing.”⁷⁶¹ In this regard, Alwenî states that it becomes clear from *Morkirin* that the water in Yezidism is a holy element and has the ability to forgive humans’ sins and make them pure and clean.⁷⁶² Also, its leaven is from God. The following *sebeqes* refer to that belief:

Mora Kaniya Sipî fer e
Ji bo însanî mehder e
*Firvar ji melkê ekeber e.*⁷⁶³

The baptism of the White Spring is
 obligatory
 It is an intercession for the man
 That is the command of the greatest angels.

Ferz e ji bo nêr û mê ye
Tevaya xulyaqetê erdê ye
*Hêvênê wê ji Xwedê ye.*⁷⁶⁴

It is a religious obligation for male and
 female.
 All the creatures on earth
 Its leaven is from God.

Morkirin as a healthy washing of the body to give good health to a Yezidi person for longevity (i.e., lifetime):⁷⁶⁵ Yezidis are baptized by the water of *Kaniya Sipî* because they believe that *Kaniya Sipî* is the remedy for ills:

ji ‘esmana beta bi ‘erde
ji ‘erda beta bi ser de
Ava Kaniya Sipî derman e li ser çiqas
*derde.*⁷⁶⁶

From the sky to the earth,
 From the earth upward,
 The water of the *Kaniya Sipî* is a cure for
 so many ills.

⁷⁵⁸ *Du’aya Sibeykê* (The Morning Prayer), seb. 7, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 21.

⁷⁵⁹ *Du’aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 2, in Bâqasirî 2003: 407.

⁷⁶⁰ Ğindî 1998: 118.

⁷⁶¹ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁶² Alwenî, n. (1999), *Aiyînê Êzîdî le Nêwan Çend Cemserî û Birway Yektaperistî da* (Yezidi Religion between Polytheism and Monotheism), 1st ed., Erbil: Salahaddin University Press, p. 103.

⁷⁶³ *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 4, in Sileyman 2013: 41.

⁷⁶⁴ *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 3, in Sileyman 2013: 40.

⁷⁶⁵ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan

⁷⁶⁶ *Du’aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 6, in Bâqasirî 2003: 408.

<p><i>Feqîra û jê xeber da</i> <i>Ji 'esman beta bi 'erda</i> <i>Ji 'erda beta bi ser da</i> <i>Ava Kaniya Sipî sijbeta [*şifeta] bi</i> <i>ser çî qas derda.</i>⁷⁶⁷</p>	<p>The <i>Feqîrs</i> talk about this: From the sky down to the earth, From the earth upward, The water of the <i>Kaniya Sipî</i> is a healing for so many ills.</p>
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Yezidis baptize some religious objects with the water of *Kaniya Sipî* for blessing, such as the *Sinceq*, bread and yoghurt, the *Xerqe*, the *Perîs* of *Hilêl* on top of the *Qub* during *Timafs* festivals, and also *Perîs* of tombs of Yezidi *Xas* during *Perî Simarkirin* (inaugurating *Perîs*) in *Cejna Cimayê*.⁷⁶⁸ This *sebeqe* refers to Baptising *Perîs* of tombs and *Xerqe*:

<p><i>Ev in sindirûkêt kes û sor e</i> <i>Tê heyne xerqê reşî nazîkî bi mor e</i> <i>Feqîra ji vê dinê hilanîn heyf û cor e.</i>⁷⁶⁹</p>	<p>Here are the green and red graves of holy men Among them, there are elegant black <i>Xerqes</i>, baptized with holy water The <i>Faqîrs</i>⁷⁷⁰ will abolish⁷⁷¹ laments and injustice from this world.</p>
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1.2.5 *Govenda Derê Kaniya Sipî* (the religious dance in front of the *Kaniya Sipî*)

Yezidis, both ‘men of religion’ and lay people, perform this dance with the sacred musical instruments *Def* (tambourine) and *Şîbab* (flute)⁷⁷² in front of the door of *Kaniya Sipî* in Lalish,⁷⁷³ during and mostly at the end of all religious festivals and occasions, for instance, at *Sersal* and *Cejna Cimayê*.

Regarding the nature symbolism in *Govenda derê Kaniya Sipî*, different sources, such as interviews with religious men in Lalish who perform it, and religious texts, emphasize that it symbolizes the water of *Kaniya Sipî* and its features. This belief is explained and clarified in the following:

According to cosmogony, the rennet or leaven, in this case the water of *Kaniya Sipî* has existed from pre-eternity and it is the symbol of earth and sky:

⁷⁶⁷ *Qewlê Şêxûbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir), seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 100.

⁷⁶⁸ On these religious objects see “The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals”, chapter III, part II.

⁷⁶⁹ *Qewlê Şerfedîn* (The Hymn of Şerfedîn), seb. 8, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 369-370.

⁷⁷⁰ This refers to whoever is part of a pious group of Yezidi people, some of them wear a *Xerqe* as the dress of the mystics.

⁷⁷¹ “From here on many of the verbs are in the past or perfect tense, although the event they refer to is clearly thought of as a future one. This is a common phenomenon in Yezidi religious poems”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 370, n. 33.

⁷⁷² They are special musical instruments for religious observances played only by Qewals.

⁷⁷³ See Image 19 in Appendices.

<i>Heke tû pisyara hêvênê Kaniya Spî ji min dikê</i>	If you ask me about the rennet of <i>Kaniya Sipî</i>
<i>Hêvênê Kaniya Spî ji herûber e.</i> ⁷⁷⁴	The rennet of <i>Kaniya Sipî</i> has existed from pre-eternity.
<i>Lalişa ber sikan e</i>	Lalish lies at the centre
<i>Kaniya Spî nîşan e</i>	<i>Kaniya Sipî</i> is the sacred symbol
<i>Nîşana 'erd û ezman a [e].</i> ⁷⁷⁵	It is the symbol of earth and sky.

In this ritual, dancing and music represent the movement and the sound of the water of *Kaniya Sipî* as the symbol of the first movement and first sound of the water that flowed out of the *Dur* (after it exploded) at the time of Creation.⁷⁷⁶ A *sebeqe* refers to this feature of the *Dur*:

<i>Av ji Durê herikê</i>	Water flowed from the <i>Dur</i>
<i>Bû behira bê serî bê binî</i>	It became an ocean ⁷⁷⁸ with neither beginning nor end
<i>Bê rê û bê derî</i>	With neither beginning nor end ⁷⁷⁹
<i>Êzdanê me ser behirê gerî.</i> ⁷⁷⁷	My God moved around over the ocean.

Regarding this belief, Ğindî writes, “in the beginning, the universe did not come out of the ecstasy of the wise through the mind, but by the movement of the body. God of the universe did not create the phenomena (material universe) of nature by the word, but by the transformation of His body, which created the heavens and the earth.”⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁴ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 16, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 97.

⁷⁷⁵ *Qewlê Zebûnî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 20, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60. Cf., this is another variant of that *sebeqe*.

<i>Laliş sikan e</i>	Lalish is the place*
<i>Kaniya Spî ser nîşan e</i>	The White Spring is the sign (of divine power)
<i>Nîşana 'erd û 'ezman e. (QKM, seb. 38, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 397).</i>	It is the sign of earth and sky.

* Perhaps it means Lalish is the centre of the Yezidi religion.

⁷⁷⁶ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁷⁷ *Qewlê Afirîna Dinyayê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 13, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 237.

⁷⁷⁸ Literally, ‘a sea has neither beginning nor end.’

⁷⁷⁹ Literally, ‘with neither way nor door.’

⁷⁸⁰ Ğindî 1998: 106.

1.2.6 *Selakirin* (Holy Greeting) with the water of the *Zimzim* spring

*Selakirin*⁷⁸¹ is one of the Yezidi obligatory rituals when they visit Lalish at ordinary times and during religious occasions.⁷⁸² In this ritual, they wash their hands and faces first and then sprinkle the water of *Zimzim* and pray to obtain fulfilment of all hopes by recalling some names of the members of their families, friends, or anyone who has asked them for *Selakirin*. This sprinkling will continue until all the names have been remembered.⁷⁸³ Here, *sebeqes* refer to *Zimzim* as the place of *Selakirin* and pilgrimage for Yezidis:

Zimzim û qubet li bidor in
Kursiyê di batin da bi mor in
*Mekanê Êzîdê min î sor in.*⁷⁸⁴

Zimzim and *Qublet el-bidor* (the sun is the direction of prayer)

They are the thrones (i.e., place) of spiritual baptism (i.e., *Selakirin*)

They are the place of my red Êzîd (i.e., God).

Kaniya Sipî mora min e
Kaf û mixar û zimzim heca min e
*Qublet el-bidor qubleta min e.*⁷⁸⁵

Kaniya Sipî is my baptism,

The cave, the cavern and the *Zimzim* spring are my pilgrimage.

Qublet el-bidor (sun) is my direction of prayer.

The sprinkling of water in *Selakirin* has many purposes: to recall the person mentioned in that holy place so that they participate spiritually there; to protect them from ills and diseases and also to keep them away from problems, to fulfil their hopes and most importantly, that through the water they may have a good chance of marriage.⁷⁸⁶ Here the water is the main natural element in this ritual and many of beliefs are based on it. This ritual seems to have a connection with the belief that giving water may result in a good chance of marriage as a symbol. This belief is widely reflected in religious traditions, for instance, the water of *Şerbik* in the *Tanuşgêran* festival,⁷⁸⁷ the custom of drinking water in a dream in the Xidir Eliyas feast, which symbolizes having a good chance of marriage.⁷⁸⁸ Moreover, as a Yezidi marriage custom, the bride and groom are

⁷⁸¹ *Selekirin* could be translated as a “Holy Greeting”, but the meaning of this word is not just a “Greeting” it is much deeper. It is explained throughout *Selekirin* ritual. Moreover, the essential difference between *Morkirin* and *Selakirin* is that Yezidis are baptized by the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* only once in their lives, but *Selakirin* is by the water of the *Zimzim* spring and can be performed at any time when Yezidis visit Lalish, i.e., more than once.

⁷⁸² See Image 20 in Appendices.

⁷⁸³ From the interview with Himê Berekat Hesên (The custodian of *Zimzim* Spring), 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁸⁴ *Qewlê Sibekê ji yê Êdewiya* (The Hymn of a Morning from the ‘Adawiyya), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 573.

⁷⁸⁵ *Şebda Dîmî* (The Declaration of Faith), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 26.

⁷⁸⁶ From the interview with Himê Berekat Hesên, 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁷⁸⁷ About it see “*Tanuşgêran* (The wandering of the Tawus)”, in chapter III, part II.

⁷⁸⁸ For additional information see “*Cejna Xidir Liyas* (the Xidir Liyas Feast)”, in chapter III, part II.

taken to the water of a spring or at home to splash water on the unmarried people so that they will have a good marriage.⁷⁸⁹

1.2.7 Lalish is the place of the *Semagêran* (the Religious Dance)

*Sema*⁷⁹⁰ is a collective regular religious dance performed by a group of religious men⁷⁹¹ in Lalish during religious festivals with sacred musical instruments, such as the *Def* (tambourine) and the *Şibab* (flute). Religious men (exclusively) go around the flames of the sacred *Çeqeltu* (a candelabrum with seven lights) in a circular way, anti-clockwise, three times, but “originally there were seven times.”⁷⁹² They perform either individually (seven men) or seven pairs, walking with reverence and slow steps. They move leftwards in circles and placing the right hand on the chest (left shoulder), but lowering their hands at each step, in harmony with the march and the musical rhythm.⁷⁹³ There are seven types of *Sema* related to religious texts in Yezidism.⁷⁹⁴ The time and place of performing *Sema* are the eve of every day of the festivals celebrated at Lalish.⁷⁹⁵

Biçîne ser çiyayê Mişetê
*Bikêşîn sê gerêd Semayê.*⁷⁹⁶

Let us go up the *Mişetê* mount
[We] perform *Sema* three times.

Xozî runiştbane li celsa mîr e

I wish we could sit in the prince's
assembly

⁷⁸⁹ For more explanation see “Wedding customs”, in chapter IV, part II.

⁷⁹⁰ About *Sema* in general: *Sema*, could be translated as a ‘religious dance and sky.’ but the meaning of this term is much wider and deeper. As a word, Wahby writes, “in Arabic (*Sema*) that is (hearing). In Kurdish (*Sema*) means (dance) it may have been borrowed from the Darwish orders in remote times” (Wahby 1962: 29). Moreover, Kreyenbroek states that “*Sema*, in Sufi terminology is a session in which music and sometimes dancing help the participants achieve a mental state where they feel closer to God” (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 48). A historical indication of *Sema*, some sources refer to the word (*Sema*), which is originally from the word ‘*soma*’ or ‘*som*’ in the Sanskrit Language, which means sacred grass, and is found in religious rituals and practices, especially in the circles and gatherings of Darwish mystics, (Nirway, A. T. (2008), *al-Miṭṭāyat Tārīḥ wa Mu’taqidāt* (Mithraism: History and Beliefs), trans. Kh. Suliaman, Duhok: Xani, p. 26). Cf., since ancient times, the ‘*Homa*’ plant had been burnt and was called ‘*soma*’ or ‘*sema*.’ During that time, religious men celebrated the special dance and singing around that fire (their own dancing and singing); therefore, this rite was named after the sacred plant ‘*Soma*, *Sema*.’ (Bāqasirî 2003: 145). Also, in Yezidism, religious men rotate around the flames of a fire.

⁷⁹¹ *Semagêr* (the person who performs the *Sema* ceremony) are the members of the spiritual council of Yezidis, they are Pêşimam, Mîr Hec, Şêxê Wezîr, Baba Şêx, Koçek, Baba Çawîş and Babê Gavan.

⁷⁹² Bāqasirî 2003: 144.

⁷⁹³ See Image 03 in Appendices.

⁷⁹⁴ Which are *Êzî*, *Qanûnî*, *Şêşims*, *Şerfedîn*, *Bilind*, *Zerça* and *Sertirba* (Bāqasirî 2003: 144; Reşo 2004 I: 51-52). Each of them has its own music (melody) according to its texts but their movements are similar. The ceremony of each type is performed on a certain eve of the days of the festivals in Lalish. For the name of each *Sema* and its religious texts see Reşo 2004 I: 51-52; Omarkhali 2011-2012: 187-188.

⁷⁹⁵ I.e., in *Cejna Cimayê* (the festival of the gathering), *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter), *Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year). The places of performing *Sema*, as it is clear in religious texts, *Sema* are *Celisa Mîr* (the assembly of Mîr) and on the top of the *Mişet* mount at Lalish. Moreover, one *Sema* is performed exclusively at graves and is called *Sema Mîriya* (*Sema* of the deceased people) (Omarkhali 2011-2012: 185). It has another name, *Sema Sertirba* (*Sema* of the cemetery).

⁷⁹⁶ *Beyta Lanijê Pîrê* (the Beyt of *Lanijê Pîrê*), seb. 4, in X. Silêman and X. Cindî 1979: 128.

*Cihê Sema lê dikêşin feqîr e.*⁷⁹⁷

The place where *Faqir* perform *Sema*.

The role of nature and nature symbolism in Semagêran. The *Çeqeltu* contains seven lamps in a metal bowl, placed on a lamp stick, which contains oil. The one in the middle is the biggest one, which means ‘seven lamps or plentiful light.’ The meaning behind *Çeqeltu* is that the distinctive one in the middle represents Tawusî Melek and the other six angels of the *Heft Sur*.⁷⁹⁸ Likewise, *Sema* is said to symbolize angels circling around the sun.⁷⁹⁹ It may also symbolize the rotation of the planets around the sun.⁸⁰⁰

The seven religious men and their seven rotations and circulation around the *Çeqeltu*, represent and explain the seven planets and the movement of the universe, and notably, the rotation of the planets around the sun. The performance of movements is also an indication of the whole universe (planets, stars, etc.) that are in continuous movement.⁸⁰¹ In this regard, Wahby says, “I see in the circling of the Yazidis around their deities a relation with the circling of the planets around the earth (according to ancient belief)”⁸⁰² What is more, Omarkhali writes:

Their number is significant because it could help to understand the essence of the *Sema*’ performance, that is, its connection with astrology and the seven planets, their movement, the direction of movement, the Time of Creation, and the Creation of Seven Archangels.⁸⁰³

Religious texts refer to that the angels perform *Sema* in the sky which symbolizes the rotation of the planets around the sun:

<i>Xerqe sitar e, dervêşa li pê wê xelatî keir teftêş e</i>	<i>Xerqe</i> is a tunic, Darwish looked for ⁸⁰⁵ that gift
<i>Meleka li ezmana Sema Qanûnî keşa, ...</i> ⁸⁰⁴	The angels performed <i>Sema Qanûnî</i> in the sky ...
<i>Bawirî serê hemû xêra</i>	Faith is above all good things
<i>Meleka sema qanûnî li ‘ezmana digêra</i>	The angels performed the ritual <i>Sema</i>
<i>Momin bi wê bawiriyê gebiştin dîwana Cebêr a [e].</i> ⁸⁰⁶	<i>Qanûnî</i> in the sky

⁷⁹⁷ *Qewlê Stiya Ês* (The Hymn of Stiya Ês), seb. 17, in Xelef 1996: 12.

⁷⁹⁸ Wahby 1962: 28.

⁷⁹⁹ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁸⁰⁰ See Ğindî 1998: 73; Al-Ğindî, Q. M. (2013), “al-Falak wa al-Nigûm fî al-Manzûr wa al-Hasâb al-Falakî al-Ayzîdî” (Astronomy and the Stars in the Yezidi Perspective and Astronomical Calculations), *Lalish*, No. 38, p. 115.

⁸⁰¹ See Ğindî 1998: 73; al-Ğindî 2013: 115.

⁸⁰² Wahby 1962: 28.

⁸⁰³ Omarkhali 2011-2012: 185.

⁸⁰⁴ *Dû’a Xerqe* (The Prayer of the *Xerqe*), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 II: 1033.

⁸⁰⁵ Literally, ‘inspection’.

⁸⁰⁶ *Dû’a Bawiriyê* (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 16, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 106.

Through that faith, the believers reached the assembly of the All-powerful One.

As a result of the information obtained from these different sources, *Sema* is a ritual that symbolises the rotation of the angels (or planets) around the sun. Here, natural elements, like the fire of seven lights or lamps plays a key role in it.

There are some other religious ceremonies based on the veneration of nature which are performed in Lalish during religious festivals. Each of the following topics is explained in detail later in chapter three of part two: “The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals” they are: *Cejna Sersalê* (the Feast of the Yezidi New Year), *Cejna Çilê Havînê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Summer), *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter), *Cejna Cimayê* (the Festival of the Gathering), *Sefera Nan û Mast* (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) and the ceremony of Baptising the *Tawus Sinceq* before *Tawusgêran*.

2 *Civata Boza* (the assembly of Boza)

This is the second holiest place in Yezidism⁸⁰⁷ after Lalish, which is why it is called *Kiçik Lalish* (Small Lalish). It is believed that *Civata Boza*⁸⁰⁸ was the place of assembly of Yezidis’ *Xas*:

<i>Bi qedrê Civata Boza</i>	For the sake of the assembly of <i>Boza</i>
<i>Rivalê Kevin û Şahsiwarê deşta Bêbanê</i>	Riwale Kevin and Şahsiwar ⁸¹⁰ in the plain
<i>key, ...</i> ⁸⁰⁹	of Beban, ... ⁸¹¹

Moreover, it is named *Mehdera Boza* (the Presence of *Boza*), which may be connected with the belief that Sheikh ‘Adî was present there in the past. According to some sources, its history dates back to Sheikh Adî’s era.⁸¹²

2.1 The natural elements in the structures of *Civata Boza*

The structure of *Civata Boza* has many natural elements and features. Yezidis consider it holy, notably, its water and springs. Its spring is named *Kaniya Boza* (the Spring of Boza),

⁸⁰⁷ *Civata Boza* is located to the east of Bozan village in the Alqush district and to the north of Mosul province, 51 km. It is 37 km to the west of Lalish. Several sources date its history back to Sheikh ‘Adî’s era (1073/8-1162), when Sheikh ‘Adî and his adherents came from Baalbek and the Levant to Lalish. They took shelter in *Boza* village for a period. Until now, their symbols exist there (Rešo 2004 II: 963; Xetari, E. n. (2011), “Kiçik Lalish” (Small Lalish), *Mehfel*, No. 5, p. 69.

⁸⁰⁸ See Image 21 in Appendices.

⁸⁰⁹ *Dirazê*, seb. 10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 284-285.

⁸¹⁰ About Şahsiwar figure see Kreyenbroek 1995: 115-116.

⁸¹¹ Riwalê Kevin and Şahsiwar are holy men and their sanctuaries are located in the village of Bêban.

⁸¹² “According to tradition, when Sheikh Adî and those who accompanied him migrated from Syria to Lalish, they halted for a while at the village of Boza, in the Shey Khan, some thirty kilometres east of Ain Sifni. Some relics were left there, and the place is now regarded as holy”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 284, n. 62.

there is an oak tree named *Dara Şîrî* (the Tree of Milk), also there are two ‘holy’ stones named *Berê Nîqara* and *Berê Lukim*.⁸¹³

2.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed in *Civata Boza*

Because of the veneration of *Civata Boza*, there are many religious ceremonies, rituals and customs performed there and also some acts of worship and devotion, such as the following.

As a ritual, in the past, many people were baptized in *Kaniya Boza* (the spring of *Boza*) if they could not go to Lalish for any reason.⁸¹⁴ Now, its water is still considered holy and Yezidis drink it and take it home for many purposes, such as healing. As a religious custom, Yezidis take home soil and water from *Civata Boza* for grace and blessings. During religious occasions, and on Wednesdays, lamps are lit by its custodian. Moreover, dead people are buried there because of the holiness of its earth.⁸¹⁵

There are some acts of worship and devotions performed there; for example, people pray there in front of its spring, trees and lamps. They swear oaths by its natural phenomena, such as the spring and lamps, to confirm that something is true. They kiss its earth and its stones for blessings. As a pilgrimage, brides and grooms are taken there for blessings. Additionally, it is obligatory on Yezidis not to pollute the nature there by spitting, or to cut its trees.⁸¹⁶

3 *Zêw* (Courtyard)

Zêw means ‘courtyard’. As a general term in Yezidism it is used for cemeteries, temples and religious places.⁸¹⁷ Nowadays, it is a holy site and has religious aspects. As is known, it has a large number of religious shrines, symbols, etc. There are several *Zêws* in different Yezidi areas⁸¹⁸ such as *Zêwa Mehmed Reşan* on Mt *Meqlub*, *Zêwa Pîrê Êsîbiya*,⁸¹⁹ about 6 km north of the town of Ain Sifini, and about 4 km south-east of Lalish; *Zêwa Îsîfîne* (*Zêwa Mendê Mal Ava*) in Ain Sifni; *Zêwa Pîr Cerwan* in the village of *Cerwan*, about 11 km to the east of Ain Sifni; *Zêwa Pîra Fat* in the village of Kîs Qel’ê, about 3 km to the south of Ain Sifini; and *Zêwa Şexsê Batê* in the village of Babîrê. All of them are in the Sheikhan district. There is also a *Zêw* named *Zêwa Başîkê û Behzan*, in Ba’shiqe; and *Zêwa Pîr Hesin Memar*⁸²⁰ in the Herîr plain in Erbil province. Among all of them, there is a famous *Zêwa* in the collective village of Khanke in Duhok province, called *Zêwa Memê Şivan*. Yezidis

⁸¹³ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn (the custodian of *Civata Boza*), 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁸¹⁴ Babeşêx, ‘E. (2011), “Careke din... Kiçik Laliş” (Again... Small Lalish), *Mehfel*, No. 6, p. 25.

⁸¹⁵ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁸¹⁶ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁸¹⁷ See Reşo 2004 II: 963-964.

⁸¹⁸ See Image 22 and Image 23 in Appendices.

⁸¹⁹ *Pîr Êsîbiya* is the eponym of a subdivision of the Pîrs of Cerwan, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 110.

⁸²⁰ He is the eponym of a family of Pîrs and the head of the forty families of Pîrs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 108-109; Omarkhali 2008: 116.

believe that, like Lalish and small Lalish, *Zêwa Memê Şivan* has about 365 religious shrines and symbols. Yezidis believe that their number is 365 i.e., equal to the number of the days of a year. There is also a holy orchard of trees in the collective village of Khanke, called *Hevşîyé Memê Şivan*.

Religious texts refer to the names and holiness of some of these *Zêws*, as land and courtyard in Yezidism:

The *Zêw* of *Mem Şivan*:

*Bi qedrê mêr û mergeha Şîxadî
Memê Şiva, Gavanê Zerza, ...*⁸²¹

For the sake of the holy men and the sanctuary of Sheikh ‘Adî
[For the sake of] Memê Şiva, Gavan Zerza, ...⁸²²

*Ew quba li dûban e
Dû şêr li ser rawestan e
Yek meme yek ‘Ebdil Rehman e.*⁸²³

That *Qub* in the Duban area,
Two lions stand on it
One is Mem and the other is ‘Ebdil Rehman.

The *Zêw* of *Pîr Êsîbiya*:⁸²⁴

*Zêwa dergehê Lalişê
Hey Şero yî ji Lalişê
Îsîbiya bi te neşê.*⁸²⁵

The *Zêw* (courtyard) at the front of Lalish valley
O, lion in Lalish
May (the *Zêw* of) *Êsîbiya* be ‘peasant’⁸²⁶ to you.

The *Zêw* of *Hesin Çinarî*:

*Bi qedrê dîwana Omerxala
Zêwa Hesin Çinarî, ...*⁸²⁷

For the sake of the assembly of Omerxala⁸²⁸
The courtyard of Hesin *Çinarî*, ...

The *Zêw* of *Pîr Cerwan*:

*Distrêm feqîre
Zêwa nava zûr e
Wî têda lawê pîr e.*⁸²⁹

I am talking about Feqîrs
Zêw is in the moor⁸³⁰
Lawê Pîr is inside it.

⁸²¹ *Dirozê*, seb. 9, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 284.

⁸²² These two holy men are revered as the shepherd and the cattleman, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 111-112; Omarkhali 2008: 116.

⁸²³ *Qesîda Memê Şivan* (Qesîde of Memê Şivan), seb. 6, in Hecî 1996: 77.

⁸²⁴ He is the eponym of a subgroup of the Pîrs clan, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 110.

⁸²⁵ *Qesîda Îsîbiya* (Qesîda of Îsîbiya), seb. 7, in Hecî 1996: 72.

⁸²⁶ The meaning of the word *neşê* is not clear.

⁸²⁷ *Dirozê*, Seb.12, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 286.

⁸²⁸ He is the eponym of a subgroup of the Pîr clan, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 111; Omarkhali 2008: 116.

⁸²⁹ *Qesîda Pîrê Cerwan* (Qesîda of Pîrê Cerwan), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 695.

⁸³⁰ This is an indication the place of the *Zêw* of *Pîr Cerwan*.

3.1 The natural elements in the structures of *Zêws*

The whole earth of *Zêws* is respected by Yezidis and most of them also have holy water, springs, gardens, trees, stones, etc.

3.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed in *Zêw*s

There are many religious rituals, customs and acts of devotion performed in *Zêw* that have a link with the veneration of nature:

As acts of devotion, people pray there in front of its natural objects, such as the light of lamps and trees. They kiss these natural elements, as stones, for blessings. They swear an oath by it as holy earth. Because of the veneration of the earth of *Zêws*, Yezidis should be barefoot when they go there. They go there individually or in groups, at ordinary times and during occasions for blessings and to perform their devotions.⁸³¹

As a religious ritual, the custodian lights a lamp during religious occasions and on Wednesdays in the *Zêw*. Also, Yezidis go there for the purpose of healing through its natural elements, e.g. taking some earth, some water and the branches of trees. Yezidis bury their dead there since its earth is holy. What is more, it is a religious obligation to keep it clean from pollution.⁸³²

4 *Mezar/Zehman* (Cemetery)

The word *Mezar* means ‘a (holy) place to visit’. In English, it is mostly translated as ‘cemetery’ or ‘shrine’. The Yezidi writer, H. Şinkârî, says that *Mezar* means the place and monument of a righteous being, and Yezidi people in ancient times used it for worship or gathering during feasts and other occasions.⁸³³ Among the structure of *Mezars* there are mostly *Qubs* together with buildings, shrines or cemeteries. They may consist of the tomb of a holy man and *Xas*.⁸³⁴ They are named after Yezidi *Xas* and other holy beings. Sometimes the name of one *Mezar* is found in different Yezidi areas, for example, the *Mezar* of *Şêşims* in the village of Cifêriye and also in Kiroc valley in Shingal. There is another one in the village of Girêpan and in the Sheikhan district. There are many Yezidi *Mezars* in different Yezidi areas in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.⁸³⁵

⁸³¹ From the interview with Xezal Silêman Yousif (the custodian of the *Zêws* of Memê Şivan), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁸³² From the interview with Xezal Silêman Yousif (the custodian of the *Zêws* of Memê Şivan), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁸³³ Şinkârî, H. S. (2000), “Mazârât al-Ayzidîyat fî Ğabal Şinkâr” (Yezidi Shrines in Sinjar Mountain), *Laliş*, No. 13, p. 23.

⁸³⁴ See Image 24 and Image 25 in Appendices.

⁸³⁵ Yezidis’ *Mezars* in the Shingal mountain are: Amadinin the Eastern part, Sheikh Sin, Sheikh Mend, Siwarê Girukê, Deqê Mêra, Amadîn (another one) and Pîrê Ewra are in the Northeast, Fexredîn in the Western part, Sheikh Abdulqadir in the Southwest, Çilmêran in the top of it, *Mam Reşa û Reşka* on the edge of a mount, Şêşims and Pîra Fat both in Cifêriye village, Sheikh Mend (another one) in Hilêqî area, Şêbilqasim and Sheikh ‘Adî, both near to Kersê valley, Hacı and Şerfedîn both near to Raşid village, Şêşims (another one) in Kiroc valley. Additionally, there is a number of *Mezar* in Sheikhan

4.1 The natural elements in the structure of *Mezars*

Most of the natural structures of *Mezar*,⁸³⁶ in general, have holy water, springs, gardens, trees, stones, caves, etc. About *Mezar*, Drower writes, “[i]t was noticeable that one might represent a spring, stream, sacred tree, cave or sacred stone, and the other be actually a tomb.”⁸³⁷ Luke also refers to this: “Beside each shrine, there was generally a sacred tree enclosed by a wall.”⁸³⁸

Most *Mezar* have holy water and springs, for instance, Sheikh Mend and Sit Nefisah in the village of Bahzani. In *Mezar* of Evdê Reş, there is *Kaniya Evdê Reş* (the Spring of Evdê Reş) in the village of Dêrebûn, in Duhok province. Also, at the *Mezar* of Pîraxay, in Shingal there is *Kaniya Pîraxayê* (the spring of Pîraxayê), with a holy stream and trees. There is a spring called *Kaniya Kedrê* (the Spring of Kedr), which is located in the village of Solax in Shingal, and there are holy trees there.

The majority of *Mezar* have holy trees, for example, sacred trees in the *Mezarê Sit Nefîsa* (the *Mezar* of *Sit Nefîsa*) in Ba’shiqa. Also, there are a fig tree and a spring in the *Mezar* of Sheikh Beko in Bahzani.⁸³⁹ Moreover, such places often have holy stones; at the *Mezar* of Memê Şivan, there is a holy stone in the wall, which is used for healing backache.

4.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed in *Mezars*

Mezar serve several functions, and there are many religious observances performed there directly and indirectly, which have a connection with nature. It is worth mentioning, customs associated with the *Mezar* are largely the same as those of the *Zên*, such as Yezidis kiss its natural elements, like trees and stones. People pray there in front of its trees and lamps.⁸⁴⁰ Further, Yezidis use *Mezar* for burying the dead because of the holiness of its soil. Traditionally, Yezidis go there for the purpose of healing by its natural elements, like taking some earth, some water and the branches of trees of *Mezar*.⁸⁴¹ In addition to that, cleaning the nature of *Mezar* is good and gracious, in contrast to deteriorating and polluting it, which is forbidden.

district, such as Ebdê Reş in the village of Derabun, Mem Şivan in the collective village of Khanke, Şêşims in the village of Girêpan, etc.

⁸³⁶ See Drower 1941: 27-28; Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 13-14.

⁸³⁷ Drower 1941: 28.

⁸³⁸ Luke 1925: 133.

⁸³⁹ See, Kreyenbrock 1995: 113-114.

⁸⁴⁰ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

⁸⁴¹ For additional information see “The Four Elements of Nature in Religious Healing Practices”, in chapter IV, part II.

5 *Qub û Avahîyê Xasa* (cupola and Mausoleum)

A *Qub*⁸⁴² It could be translated as cupola, dome and spire in English. It is a religious building; its colour is white, it varies in width and length, but in general it consists of one structure. It is built in a polygonal and conical shape. It starts with the construction of a square-shaped base and has a certain distance and height that determine the type of *Qub*, which is generally three metres wide and five metres long.⁸⁴³ *Qubs* are found in Lalish and many other Yezidi areas which are considered places of worship and devotions. These are usually named after a Yezidi *Xas* and other holy beings. Sometimes the name of a *Qub* is found used for other *Qubs* in different Yezidi areas, such as the *Qub* of *Şêşims* in the Sheikhan and Shingal districts. About its structure, there are *Qubs* standing alone and *Qubs* with adjacent buildings.

5.1 The natural elements in the structure of *Qubs*

Most *Qubs* have holy water, springs, gardens, trees, sacred stones, etc., for example *Kaniya Pîraxayê* (the spring of *Pîraxayê*) with a stream in the *Qub* of *Pîraxayê*, also, in the *Qub* of *Evdê Reş* there is *Kaniya Evdê Reş* (the spring of *Evdê Reş*) with a stream and trees. There are holy stones in a circular shape in different sizes, mostly like a ball, named *Topên Xas* (the orb of *Xas*) on the corner of *Qubs* and inside them, like *Qub* of *Çawîş* in Khanke.

5.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed beside *Qubs*

Yezidis should be barefoot when visiting *Qubs* because of the holiness of the earth of those places. Moreover, on both ordinary and special days, such as feasts and *Timafs*, Yezidis visit a *Qub* to kiss the stones of its doors as an act of veneration. On a wedding day, as a religious custom, the bride and groom are taken to the nearest *Qub* to kiss it and its stones for blessings.

<i>Hey, Adîye Şêxê min e Xudanê quba</i>	O Adî is my sheikh, the lord of the great
<i>mezîn e</i>	<i>Qub</i>
<i>Ziyaretî jê diçine</i>	Pilgrims visit it
<i>Dê tewaf ken babê Melik Şex Sin e.</i> ⁸⁴⁴	They will kiss the gate of [the <i>Qub</i> of] Melik Sheikh Sin.

During religious occasions and on Wednesdays, the custodian light lamps in those places. Yezidis may swear oaths by a *Qub*:

<i>Bi wê qubê kem ser li erş e</i>	I swear by the <i>Qub</i> whose top is in the
<i>Wê di bin da dûsiyên find û şemalêt geş</i>	sky
<i>e, ...</i> ⁸⁴⁵	Wicks and lamps shone beside it, ...

⁸⁴² Their number is not determined in sources according to Yezidi territories, but they could be around 95-100.

⁸⁴³ See Image 26 in Appendices.

⁸⁴⁴ *Qesîda Adîya Şêxê Mine* (The Qesida of Adîya is my Sheikh), seb.1, in Reşo 2004 II: 668.

⁸⁴⁵ *Qewlê Şêxê Hesenî Siltane* (The Hymn of Sheikh Hesen is the Sultan), seb. 10, in Hecî 2002: 322.

Yezidis stand beside *Qub* and pray towards the sun and ask *Şêşims* to fulfil their wishes:

<i>Mestim ji qedebê</i>	I am intoxicated from the cup
<i>Lalişê xudanê qubebê</i>	O Lalish is the owner of the <i>Qub</i>
<i>Da em bi Şêşims bideyn medebê.</i> ⁸⁴⁶	Let us give praise to <i>Şêşims</i> .
<i>Fericîn li wan qubêt bi nûr</i>	I gazed on luminous <i>Qubs</i>
<i>Xasa li ber bestî mehder û mişûr</i>	The holy men gathered around <i>Qub</i> [as
<i>Behîşt ewe wê li gelîyê kûr.</i> ⁸⁴⁷	the place of] for good deeds and
	consolation
	Paradise is the one in the deep valley. ⁸⁴⁸

All this is based on Yezidi religious folk belief that the shape of *Qub* is the symbol of sun and its rays; they therefore say *Qubêt bi Nûr* (luminous *Qubs*) as in the above *sebeqe*. *Sebeqes* stress the connection between *Qub* and light when they refer to *Qub* as the light that brightens from the light:

<i>Şexsekê wê li ber bur de</i>	A holy man is in the assembly
<i>Bîyî qubê kem bi gelîyê kûr de</i>	I swear by that <i>Qub</i> in the deep valley
<i>Şewqa nûrê ji nûr de.</i> ⁸⁴⁹	The light brightened from the light.

Furthermore, Yezidis go there for the purpose of healing by its natural elements, taking some earth, some water and the branches of trees. Polluting these places is forbidden.

6 *Nîşangeh* (Shrine)

The word *Nîşangeh* literally means “Place of a Sign (of holy being)”, and it is generally used to mean ‘shrine’. It is a sacred place for Yezidis. Most *Nîşangehs* have the shape of a small *Qub* or a pile of stones connected together by lime (and sometimes without it), and lamps may be placed on the top. Sometimes a tree, a spring or a cave are also regarded as *Nîşangeh*. They symbolize *Xas* or holy beings and are mostly named after them. The name *Nîşangeh* may be used for more than one holy place in different Yezidi areas. There are many *Nîşangeh* in Lalish, *Civata Boza* and in *Mezars* and they are also found alone in different Yezidi holy places.⁸⁵⁰

6.1 The natural elements in the structure of *Nîşangehs*

Some *Nîşangehs* consist of natural phenomena, such as springs, garden, cave, stones or piles of stones, and trees.

⁸⁴⁶ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 1, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 202.

⁸⁴⁷ *Qewlê Stiya Ês* (The Hymn of *Stiya Ês*), seb. 7, in Xelef 1996: 10.

⁸⁴⁸ I.e., Lalish valley.

⁸⁴⁹ *Qewlê Mişetê* (The Hymn of *Mişet*), seb. 13, in Xelef 2002: 234.

⁸⁵⁰ There are no data about their number but only in *Civata Boza* there are almost one hundred *Nîşange*, From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

As to springs,⁸⁵¹ there are the *Kaniya Şivana* in Lalish, *Kaniya Efdê Reş* in the village of Dêrebûn, *Kaniya Şêxê Zerî* in the village of Bêtmar in Sheikhan, *Kaniya Pîraxayê* in the village of Kulkan on Shingal Mountain and *Kaniya Bekîra* is located near to the village of Zorava on Shingal Mountain and *Tanuşgêran* ceremony should be held at the *Bekîra* spring, before the *Qewwals* go touring the Shingal area. The following *sebeqe* refers to the point that *Kaniya Sîpî* is *nîşan*:

<i>Mor mora mêran e</i>	The baptism is [the practice] of holy men
<i>Kaniya Sîpî xoş nîşan e</i>	<i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> is pleasant <i>nîşan</i> (i.e., <i>Nîşangeh</i>)
<i>Pedşay jê dabû beyan e</i>	King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear)
<i>Ciyê Êzîdîne Mîr û ber çar biran e.</i> ⁸⁵²	It is the place of Êzîdîne Mîr and four brothers.

There are many trees in Lalish that are regarded as *Nîşangeh* and are mostly named after *Xas*,⁸⁵³ such as *Dara Baba Îso*, *Dara Îbrahîm Lik*, and *Dara Hesên Kîyar*. In other Yezidi areas, *Neh Dar* (Nine trees) in the North of the Ain Safni town, *Dara Şexsê Batê* (the tree of Şexsê Batê) is a mulberry tree in the village of Xorza in Sheikhan district, *Dara Hacî Alî* is also a mulberry tree, located in the east of the village of Pêbizinê, and *Dara Sixirî Cin* is an oak tree in Helêqîya district in Shingal. *Dara Miraşa* (the Tree of Wishes) is in the west of the village of Ba'adra; people tie knots of fabrics to it. Then there is the *Dara Mizîlî* (Mizîlî Tree), located at the slope and end of the valley of Mehrigan, near the Çilmêran shrine. This *sebeqe* emphasizes the veneration of trees in general, but when it comes to the word *Ziyaret*, it can be translated as pilgrimage and kissing. Yezidis pilgrimage only to those trees that are identified as being *Nîşangeh* (i.e., make it a religious symbol):

<i>Heke 'erdeki bibîni, îşaret ke</i>	When you see earth, mark it (i.e., make it a religious symbol)
<i>Dervêşekî bibîni, îbadet ke</i>	When you see a Darwish, venerate him
<i>Darekî bibîni, zîyaret ke.</i> ⁸⁵⁴	When you see a tree, make a pilgrimage to it (i.e., kiss it).

Regarding caves, there are several caves named by *Xas* and are known as *Nîşangeh* in Lalish, such as *Şikefta Omerxala*, *Şikefta Hesên Çinarî*, *Şikefta Mam Îso* and *Şikefta Mehmed Reben*. In other Yezidi areas, *Şikefta Dîdevana* is located near the village of Zêrwa on the Shingal Mountain. There are many sacred caves in the Şilo valley, near the village of Bara in Shingal, named *Şikeftên Geliyê Şilo* (the caves of Şilo valley). Religious texts emphasize the holiness of the caves:

<i>Hûn bidene xatira behîştê û darê</i>	For the sake of the paradise and the tree,
<i>Kafê û mexarê, ...</i> ⁸⁵⁵	[For the sake of] The cave and the cavern, ...

⁸⁵¹ See Image 27 and Image 28 in Appendices.

⁸⁵² *Du'aya Morkirinê* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 1, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 407.

⁸⁵³ See Image 29 and also see Image 14, Image 15 Image and 56 in Appendices.

⁸⁵⁴ *Dû'a Ziyaretbûnê* (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), seb. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107.

⁸⁵⁵ *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 22.

About a stone or a pile of stones, for this type there are many *Nîşangeh* named by *Xas* in Lalish, like *Nîşangeha Zebênîya*, *Nîşangeha Melek Zeyn*, *Nîşangeha Pîr Bûtâr*, etc. In other Yezidi areas, there are *Nîşangeha Mam Xînuq*, about 1 km west of *Mezarê Şerfedîn* in Shingal, and *Nîşangeha Gavanê Zerza*⁸⁵⁶ in the village of Keberto in the Duhok province. This *sebeqe* refers to the veneration of stones:

<i>Şêxîtî miraz e</i>	To be Sheikh is a wish
<i>Xudê rêya heqîyê ji me ra dixwazê</i>	God wishes a true path for us
<i>Ya Xudê! tu miraza me bikê li ber berê mirazê.</i> ⁸⁵⁷	O God! You fulfil our wishes through the Stone of Wishes.

6.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed beside *Nîşangehs*

There are some religious observances based on the veneration of nature in *Nîşangeh*, as people pray in front of its natural phenomena, such as trees, and kiss these for blessings. Also, people swear oaths by it. People visit *Nîşangeh* at ordinary times and on special occasions and ask for wishes to be fulfilled. Yezidis must remove their shoes when visiting there because of the holiness of its nature.⁸⁵⁸

Yezidis often believe in healing practices through natural elements found at *Nîşangeh*. Moreover, during religious occasions and on Wednesdays, the custodian lights lamps there. It is also obligatory to keep it clean as holy nature and spoiling it is a great sin.⁸⁵⁹

7 *Silavgeh* (Place of Greeting)

Silavgeh is a Kurdish word that literally means “place of greeting”⁸⁶⁰, but as a religious term it means a holy place. It is mostly called by the name of a *Xas* and it usually consists of one stone or a pile of stones.⁸⁶¹ It is located near *Qubs* and other holy places, and denotes the path of knowing that place and also the symbol of greeting that place and the *Xas* after whom *Silavgeh* is named.⁸⁶² Perhaps the name of *Silavgeh* is used for other holy places in different Yezidi places.⁸⁶³ A great number of *Silavgeh* are in Lalish, *Mehdera Boza* and *Mezar*, and they are also located individually in different places.

⁸⁵⁶ Gavanê Zerza is the protector of cattle in Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 112; Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 256-259.

⁸⁵⁷ *Du'a Şêxîtîyê* (The Prayer of Sheikhs), seb. 7, in Reşo 2004 II: 1005.

⁸⁵⁸ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (the custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁰ As a name, *Silavgeh* is a compound word consisting of two parts, the first *Silav*, i.e., glorification and greeting, and the second *Geh* is a suffix that refers to a place, the term means “the place of greetings”.

⁸⁶¹ See Image 30 in Appendices.

⁸⁶² From the interview with Heçî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁸⁶³ The number of *Silavgeh* is not specified. From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

7.1 The natural elements in the structure of *Silavgebs*

As previously mentioned, *Silangeb* consists of natural elements, such as one stone or a pile of stones.

7.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed at *Silavgebs*

People who visit a *Silangeb* and pass by it should put a small stone on it, indicating greeting to the *Xas* and kissing the *Qub* facing that *Silangeb*.⁸⁶⁴ There is a *Silangeb* in Lalish, on the top of Mt Mişet, which know as simply *Silangeb*, or *Silangeba Lalish* (*Silangeb* of Lalish). When Yezidis used to come to Lalish through Ba'adra and over the mountain, they first saw the top of Lalish *Qubs* from there, they greeted Lalish and kissed that place. *Silangeba* Pîr Hacî Ali/Haciyal is near Baadir; when people from Niserye visited Ba'adra, they first saw the *Qub* of Hacî Ali and kissed a stone and put it on that pile. *Silangeba* Memê Şivan in the village of Zeynya faces Memê Şivan *Mezar* in Khanke, *Silangeba* Pîrê Haciyal faces Pîrê Haciyal *Mezar* in Shingal, *Silangeba* Sheikh Mend faces Sheikh Mend *Qub* in the village of Cedalê and *Silangeba* Çinçinkogê in the village of Osifa is located in East of Sinun town.⁸⁶⁵ Additionally, it is a religious duty to keep it clean from anything not suitable, like spitting and decay.

sebeqes refer to the same belief as mentioned above about *Silangeb* as the point or place where people can see the *Qubs* at a distance:

<i>Çome silangebê</i>	I went to the <i>Silangeb</i>
<i>Ferecî me li qubehê</i>	I gazed on the <i>Qubs</i> ,
<i>Pîrê Libnano gyano.</i> ⁸⁶⁶	O, beloved Pîrê Libnan.

<i>Çome silangebê</i>	I went to the <i>Silangeb</i>
<i>Ferdî me li qubehê, ...</i> ⁸⁶⁷	Our duty is towards the <i>Qub</i> , ...

Important conclusions drawn from this chapter

The study demonstrates that there are different types and forms of elements of the natural structure of religious places. For instance, sometimes one of the natural elements becomes a religious site, such as *Nîşangeb* (shrine) which consists of a sacred spring, a tree or a cave. The *Silangeb* (place of greeting) consists of a sacred pile of stones. Most of these places have sacred soil, water, springs, trees or caves. Furthermore, natural elements play a prominent role in the religious observances at these religious locations which Yezidis engage in such practices as healing with spring water and lighting a lamp in that place; kissing its natural elements, such as the trees and stones for blessings, and similar. Prayers and supplications for specific requests also occur there.

⁸⁶⁴ From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesên Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁸⁶⁵ From the interviews with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan; Xidir Berekat Keso, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁸⁶⁶ *Beyta Cindî* (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 45, in Silêman and Cindî 1979:50.

⁸⁶⁷ *Qewlê Sêxê Hesênî Siltane* (The Hymn of Sheikh Hesên is the Sultan), seb. 20, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 360.

Chapter III

The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals

This chapter aims to explain and analyse the role and veneration of nature and its four sacred elements in religious feasts and festivals. It needs to be pointed out that this chapter is only concerned with observances held in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The chapter is divided into four sections. Each will discuss a season of the year, with a specific focus on the role of nature in the feasts and festivals during that season, and their characteristics that express and dedicate it to each season. In spring there are: *Cejna Sersalê* (the Feast of the Yezidi New Year). In summer: *Cejna Çilê Havînê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Summer). In autumn: *Cejna Cîmayê* (the Festival of the Gathering). In winter: *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of the Winter), *Cejna rojîyên Êzî* (the Fast of Êzî), *Cejna Bêlîndê* (*Bêlîndê* Feast) and *Cejna Xidir Lîyas* (*Xidir Lîyas* Feast). These feasts are immobile and follow the Julian calendar.

Some historical sources make references to feasts and festivals and their linkage with nature; it seems that Yezidi feasts in their early religious history were nature-related and followed an agricultural calendar.⁸⁶⁸ Furthermore, Kreyenbroek states, “most of the immobile festivals seem to be essentially seasonal celebrations not unlike those of the ancient Iranian calendar. The mobile feasts are directly linked to major Islamic observances.”⁸⁶⁹ What is more, on the veneration of the four seasons, the second point

⁸⁶⁸ Wiessner, G. (1984), “in das tötende Licht einer fremden Welt gewandert. Geschichte und Religion der Yezidi”, in R. Schneider (eds.), *Die Kurdischen Yezidi. Ein Volk auf dem Weg in den Untergang*, Göttingen: pogrom-Taschenbücher 1011, pp. 45-46.

⁸⁶⁹ Kreyenbroek 1995: 150.

of part four of *Kitêba Celwa* (the Book of Revelation) states that “the four elements, the four seasons and the four bases were presented to meet the needs of creatures.”⁸⁷⁰

1 In Spring

1.1 *Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)

This feast has different names: *Sersal* (Yezidi’s New Year feast), *Ida Héka* (the eggs feast), and *Çarşema Sor* (red Wednesday). As a term, this feast occurs on the first Wednesday of *Nîsan* (April, according to the eastern calendar). This is one of the holiest feasts in Yezidi tradition. Yezidis generally celebrate the feast in their religious places and visit one other’s houses. It is identified by its name, that is, it is the celebration of the beginning of the Yezidi New Year. The feast has a link with nature and spring as the start of a renew life in nature; therefore, Yezidis regard it as a feast of nature. The Yezidi writer, Silêman, says that “this is the feast of nature, the feast of reviving and renewing all creatures; plants, trees and all animals.”⁸⁷¹ The sources refer to the point that it has an ancient history.⁸⁷²

1.1.1 Nature and the time of the feast

According to Yezidi tradition, on the first Wednesday of *Nîsan* in every year, Tawusî Melek (as light) descends to the earth for the renewal of life in nature and for the renewal of the year; therefore, it becomes the holy day and it is the day of the Feast of the Yezidi New Year:

<i>Çarşema serê nîsanê,</i>	On the first Wednesday of April
<i>Gul û çiçek hatin meydanê,</i>	Flowers grow on earth ⁸⁷⁴
<i>Tawusî Melek reyîsê îmanê</i>	Tawusî Melek is the leader of faith
<i>Nîsan le kêr e</i>	[He] created April
<i>Bihar pê dixemile,</i>	Spring has been adorned by him
<i>Kesik û sor û spî û zêr e.</i> ⁸⁷³	With green, red, white and yellow.

Consequently, on the first Wednesday of *Nîsan*, plain, mountain, field and pasture are adorned with colourful plants and a new life in nature starts:

⁸⁷⁰ Bittner 1913: 20.

⁸⁷¹ Silêman 1985: 11.

⁸⁷² According to a historical reference of the feast, on the one hand, Yezidis believe that the history of the *Sersal* feast is linked with the creation of the earth and the emergence of life on it, which is why it is not determined in which year it started. The best evidence is the egg-symbol in this feast as a symbol of the oval shape of the earth, emergence of life and colourful nature (From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacı İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan). On the other hand, some sources refer to the view that it has ancient historical roots, as Kreyenbroek refers to it: “Pre-Islamic Iranian traditions may also survive in the Yezidi New Year (*Sersal*), which is celebrated in early spring” (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 17).

⁸⁷³ Text details are unknown, in Boyîk 2013: 21.

⁸⁷⁴ Literally, ‘come to field.’

*Li çarşembê xoş bû jîyan
Kesikê bûn deşit û çiya û zêvê û zozan
Hemû bi kerema Pedşê min î Yezdan.*

Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays
Plain, mountain, field and pasture are
adorned with plants
All those by the mystical power of my
King (i.e., God) Yezdan.
Came the red Wednesday
Adorned April with itself
From the world of the Unseen it is
baptized.

*Hat çarşembuwa sor e
Nîsan xemiland bû bi xo re
Ji batin da ye bi mor e.⁸⁷⁵*

Nîsan is the month during which grass appears and starts to grow on earth. It is also the month of fruit production:

*Nîsan wa didet xebere
Heke ez behara xo bixemlînim ji kesik
û sor û sîpê û zêr e
Ji bedê her yazde meha li gel min biden
xeber e.⁸⁷⁶*

April is saying:
If I adorn my spring with green, red,
white and yellow
The other eleven months do not dare to
talk to me.

It is forbidden for Yezidis to dig and plough the earth, or to cut trees, plants and flowers in *Nîsan*. In Yezidi tradition, the reason is clear: the earth is pregnant with grass, weed, and the fruits of the earth. Another reason is to keep the beauty of the nature. Moreover, there are many *Tîwafîs* that are held during *Nîsan* because they express the joys for the growth of many types of grass and vegetables, the renewing and revival of life in nature and the coming of spring as a result of the coming of the New Year.⁸⁷⁷

1.1.2 *Çirahilkirin* (lighting lamps) during the feast

It is a religious obligation to light lamps on the eve of the feast in the houses and *Xas* shrines in villages and other holy places. In Lalish,⁸⁷⁸ particularly, the lamps of cotton, soaked in oil, are lit and put on the stones in the external arena *Sûka Me'rifetê* (market of [mystical] knowledge)⁸⁷⁹ by the people present there. The number of lamps is 365 (or 366) and according to Yezidi belief, this number corresponds to the number of the days of the year.⁸⁸⁰ This *sebeqe* refers to that number with the eternal light:

⁸⁷⁵ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 5, 19, in Kişto 2004: 206-207, 209.

⁸⁷⁶ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 40, in Hecî 1994a: 28.

⁸⁷⁷ Details are given in “*Tîwafîs* (local annual festivals)”, in chapter III, part II.

⁸⁷⁸ Some sources refer to the ritual of lighting lamps in Lalish, for instance: Empson states that “it [the Lalish temple] has been computed that over three hundred and fifty lamps are lighted in the valley during the principal feast [The Feast of the Yezidi New Year]” (Empson 1928: 127). According to Luke, “at night, when every dome and eminence and grove and spire is illumined by flares of bitumen (for no lamps are allowed at Sheikh ‘Adi [the Lalish temple], and the wicks for the flares are spun at the shrine), the effect is beautiful in the extreme” (Luke 1925: 137).

⁸⁷⁹ *Sûka Me'rifetê* is located in the valley of Lalish. It is a square about 40 metres long and 25 metres wide; it consists of eight shops (2×3) metres. See Image 31 in appendices.

⁸⁸⁰ See Image 32 in Appendices.

<i>Sureka ji surêt batinê</i>	A mystery of the mysteries of the esotery
<i>Sê sed û şêst û şeş 'alim têda dikin</i>	Three hundred and sixty-six wise men are
<i>xundinê</i>	studying
<i>Lî ser sekiniye Siltan Êzî, nûra baqî,</i>	The head of all is only Siltan Êzî (i.e.,
<i>Êkî bi tinê.⁸⁸¹</i>	God), the eternal light.

Also, this *sebeqe* refers to that number with the name of Tawusî Melek:

<i>366 sê sed û şêst û şeş silav lê ye, hé hé</i>	Three hundred and sixty-six greetings to
<i>Toxmê miletê Êzî xilas kiriye ji tovanê,</i>	him oh oh
<i>hey mala malê</i>	He rescued the seed of the Yezidi nation
<i>Navê wî ye, mala min, mala min, mala</i>	from the flood, oh oh
<i>babê min e, Tawusî Meleke, hey</i>	His name is Tawusî Melek, oh, ...
<i>malê, ...⁸⁸²</i>	

Some religious men refer to it as the symbol of the descending light of Tawusî Melek on earth and the coming of goodness and blessings on earth.⁸⁸³ Hence, the common point between Tawusî Melek and the sun is the eternal light.

1.2.3 *Serderî* (decorating the doors of the house)

Yezidis adorn the doors of their homes with red anemones and colourful eggshells, as well as dough or mud. This ritual is called *Serderî*.⁸⁸⁴ This ritual has various purposes and meanings, such as that, just as nature is adorned in the New Year, so the houses should be adorned too.⁸⁸⁵ It is also the symbol of eternal life and it is hung on the doors as glad tidings for the world,⁸⁸⁶ the glad tidings of the coming of goodness and renewal.⁸⁸⁷ Religious texts emphasize the explanation given thus far, namely that it is the symbol of Tawusî Melek (i.e., the symbol of eternal life and the renewal of life in nature); it is also the symbol of the New Year and of spring that newly adorns the earth with flowers:

<i>Hat çarşembuwa sor û zêr e</i>	Came the red and yellow Wednesday
<i>Behar xemiland bû ji kesik û sor û sipî</i>	It adorned the Spring with green, red,
<i>û zêr e</i>	white and yellow
<i>Me pê xemiland sereder e.</i>	We adorned the house-door with it.

<i>Hincîyê serederê bixemlîne</i>	Whoever adorns the house-door?
<i>Bila pirsîyar biket eve ji ber cîne</i>	They should ask what this is for

⁸⁸¹ *Qewlê Şirura* (The hymn of Shirura), seb. 4, in Reşo 2004 I: 375.

⁸⁸² *Xizêmok*, Şaxê 2 (*Xizêmok*, Version 2), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 1056.

⁸⁸³ From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Deştî Şêx Zeydîn, 02.04.2018, Pforzheim, Germany.

⁸⁸⁴ See Image 33 in Appendices.

⁸⁸⁵ Silêman 1985: 10.

⁸⁸⁶ Ğindî 1998: 114.

⁸⁸⁷ Bâqasirî 2003: 138; Ğindî 1998: 114.

Eve xelatêt Tawusî Melek û Siltan
*Êzîm e.*⁸⁸⁸

This is the gift (symbol) of Tawusî Melek and Siltan Êzî (i.e., God).

1.1.4 Washing the face with dew

On the morning of the feast, before sunrise, Yezidis should wipe their hands and faces with the dew of the grass. Some religious men interpret this as symbolizing baptism (revival) with the New Year's water, renewing the vitality, activity⁸⁸⁹ and return of youth.⁸⁹⁰

1.1.5 Nature and egg symbolism in the feast

The egg is one of the most important elements and symbols of this feast. The shape of the egg, the boiling, its colouring⁸⁹¹ and its breaking, have a special significance in this feast and that is why this feast is sometimes called *Îda Hêka* (the feast of eggs). Yezidis have a ritual of playing by eggs in a competition. Moreover, Yezidis spread eggshells in their orchards, plantations and animal pens in order to increase goodness, as well as to bestow blessing and fertility on their agricultural and animal production.⁸⁹² This *sebeqe* refers to the colourfulness of the egg in this feast:

Li mehiderê deng bike

Pray for intercession

Li çarşembuwa serê nîsanê reng bike

Adorn it [the egg] on the first Wednesday of April with colours

*Emelê xo safî bike.*⁸⁹³

Purify your acts.

The presence of the egg in the feast and its symbolic link with the earth, is described in the following points:

The shape of the egg is said by some informants to symbolize the shape of the earth, and the boiling of the egg symbolizes the coagulation and solidity of the earth to what it is now.⁸⁹⁴ The colouring of the egg symbolizes the adornment of nature and the earth with its colours and all its splendour and beauty.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁸⁸ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 20, 21, in Kişto 2004: 209.

⁸⁸⁹ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Bâqasirî 2003: 134, 137; Hâlû, M. H. (2013), *al-Ayşîdîyat* (Yezidism), Duhok: Hawar, p. 157.

⁸⁹⁰ Ğindî 1998: 112.

⁸⁹¹ See Image 34 and and Image 57 in Appendices.

⁸⁹² See Ğindî 1998: 96; Ğindî, H. and Birükâ, H. (2003), *al-Ayşîdîyat: Tārîhîya wa Tîqûsûba* (Yezidism: Its History and Rituals), Sulaimanya: PUK Office, p. 62; Bâqasirî 2003: 137.

⁸⁹³ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 17, in Kişto 2004: 208.

⁸⁹⁴ See Furât, A. (1994), "al-Ayşîdîyün wa al-Ğudûr al-Awla" (The Yazidis and the Early Roots), *Lalish*, No. 2&3, p. 169; Ğindî and Birükâ 2003: 62; Bâqasirî 2003: 137.

⁸⁹⁵ See Ğindî and Birükâ 2003: 67; Bâqasirî 2003: 137; Hâlû 2013:157.

1.1.6 The symbolism of new clothes

As a custom of the feast, Yezidis should wear new clothes and should wash and clean their bodies as a religious duty to welcome the New Year. Believing that the year and nature are renewed, Yazidis should also renew their clothes.⁸⁹⁶

It is worth pointing out, there are other rituals of the feast, as it is celebrated in Lalish, which are common to other religious feasts and festivals, i.e., they are not exclusive to the *Sersal* feast, but they are only performed in Lalish. Therefore, these are discussed in chapter two of part two “The natural elements in religious observances performed in Lalish.”

1.2 *Tiwafs* (local annual festivals)

Tiwafs are annual, local and communal religious festivals that are mostly celebrated in spring. They begin on the first Friday after the Feast of the Yezidi New Year in April, according to the Eastern calendar and continue for about a month and a half. However, some *Tiwafs* are held during other seasons.⁸⁹⁷ Almost every Yezidi village⁸⁹⁸ has its *Tiwaf* on a specific day and on a fixed date in a religious place such as a shrine or *Qub* of one of the Yezidi's *Xas* and in his name. They generally have a long history.⁸⁹⁹

The rituals of *Tiwafs* are mostly similar but there are slight variations in some. There are many religious rites performed in *Tiwafs* and they have a festive atmosphere, which includes like playing the sacred music of the *Def* (tambourine) and *Şibab* (flute), dancing, and communal meals.⁹⁰⁰

1.2.1 *Çirahilkerin* (Lighting lamps)

It is a religious obligation for custodians to light lamps in religious places where *Tiwaf* is to be performed, on the night before its performance. Here, lighting the lamps is the symbol of the sun and the light as a prerequisite for the continuity of life.⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁶ From the interviews with Xewace Xudêda Elî, 03.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq; Merwan Xelîl Babîrî, 25.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

⁸⁹⁷ About the name, time and place of *Tiwafs* see the annual calendar of Lalish centre; Bâqasîrî 2003: 169-170; Heso, M. (2013), “Tûafên [sic] Êzdiyan, Dîrok, Rewîşt û Tîtal” (Yezidis Spring Festivals, History and Ritual), in E. Boyîk (ed.), *Cejnên Ezîdîyan* (Yezidian Feasts), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, pp. 168-171.

⁸⁹⁸ It is noteworthy that Yezidis from the Shingal area have similar rituals and ceremonies of the *Tiwaf*, they are called *Cema*, and their festivals are mostly in the summer and autumn seasons, like *Cema Şerfedîn* and *Cema Şêbil Qasim*. About them see Reşo, A. S. (2013), “Cemayê Şengalê” (Local Annual Festivals in Sinjar), in E. Boyîk (ed.), *Cejnên Ezîdîyan* (Yezidian Feasts), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbîrî, pp. 243-251.

⁸⁹⁹ A historical reference of *Tiwafs*; Sileman states, “I asked many elders about the history of *Tiwafs*. They said our *Tiwafs* date back before Sheikh ‘Adî’s [1073/8-1162] era” (Silêman 1985: 25). Moreover, some religious men believe that *Tiwafs* relate to *Sersal* (the Feast of the Yezidi New Year), therefore their history is also linked with the *Sersal* history. It is not clear, but it is before Sheikh ‘Adî’s era in the 12th-century, (From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Şero Bîrahîm Kîştî, 07.07.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqî Kurdistan).

⁹⁰⁰ See Image 35 in Appendices.

⁹⁰¹ See “The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

1.2.2 *Morkirina Perya* (Baptising *Perîs*)

Perîs are pieces of colourful fabric, originally seven in number, with seven different colours, tied to the top of the *Qub*. On the day before *Tinaf*, the *Micênvir* (the custodian) of the *Qub* replaces the old *Perîs* with the new ones⁹⁰² after baptising them with the water of the White Spring in Lalish for blessing. This *sebeqe* refers to the colourfulness of the *Perîs* on the top of the *Qub*

Me ji Adiya deng e
Bi wê qubê kem serî bi reng e
*Ji hawîrî şara têne ceng e.*⁹⁰³

We call for Adî
 I swear by that *Qub* with the colour on
 top (i.e. the colourfulness of the *Perîs*)
 They gather⁹⁰⁴ from all cities.

As regards renewing the *Perîs*, some informants connect these with the colours in nature.⁹⁰⁵ Renewing them indicates the renewal of nature and the coming of spring.⁹⁰⁶

1.3 *Sefera Nan û Mast* (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt)

Sefera Nan û Mast literary means ‘the visiting of bread and yoghurt’ which could be understood as (the ceremony of bread and yoghurt). It is an annual religious festival in which Yezidi people of almost each village or region make a special collective visit to Lalish on various days during the spring season, from the beginning of March to the beginning of April (according to Julian calendar), i.e., until Yezidi New Year’s Day. Yezidis take bread, yoghurt and some bottles of oil with them.⁹⁰⁷ Some of the yoghurt and bread is baptized with the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* and is brought back to the village for blessings, to renew the leaven of yoghurt and bread. A portion of bread is kept in *Xezîna Nan* (the treasure of bread), also called *Xezîna Şêxadî* (Sheikh ‘Adî’s treasure) in Lalish.⁹⁰⁸ The oil is saved in *Den* (vases, jars) in Lalish and is then used for lighting lamps in holy places there.⁹⁰⁹

Baptising yoghurt and bread with the water of Kaniya Sîpî. According to Yezidi beliefs, the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* is the leaven of the creation of all creatures and the continuity of life;⁹¹⁰ it is also the seed of fertility, increase, reproduction and grace.⁹¹¹ Based on this belief, a

⁹⁰² See Image 36 in Appendices.

⁹⁰³ *Qesîda Adiya Şêxê Mine* (The Qesida of Adiya is my Sheikh), seb. 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 668. The same *sebeqe* is in *Qewlê Distrême, Şaxê 3* (The hymn of Distrême, Version 3), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 I: 411.

⁹⁰⁴ It seems the use of the word *cenge* (literary, “war”) seems to be for the purpose of rhyme.

⁹⁰⁵ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haçî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁹⁰⁶ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Hâlû 2013: 83.

⁹⁰⁷ See Image 37 in Appendices.

⁹⁰⁸ See Image 38 in Appendices.

⁹⁰⁹ See Image 39 in Appendices.

⁹¹⁰ See “Natural Elements in the Emergence of Life on Earth”, in chapter I, part I.

⁹¹¹ Details are given in “Lalish, including *Kaniya Sîpî*, is the place of *Morkirin* (Baptism)”, in chapter II, part II.

number of religious men emphasize that Yezidis, by baptising their bread and yoghurt in the water of *Kaniya Sîpî*, take a part of its leaven for their production and food, believing that it will increase their wealth and their agricultural production, and in order to bring goodness and blessings on them.⁹¹²

When Yezidis perform *Du'a Sîfrê / Xwarinê* (the prayer of the meal), they say, "bread is from God's treasure and its leaven is from *Kaniya Sîpî*":

*Nan ji xezîna Xudê bê
Hêvên ji Kaniya Sîpî bê.*⁹¹³

The bread (sustenance) is from God's
treasure

The leaven is from the White Spring.

*Nanê ji xezîna Şîxadî ve
Hîvênê ji kaniya spî ve, ...*⁹¹⁴

The bread (sustenance) is from Sheikh
'Adî's treasure

The leaven is from the White Spring, ...

Bringing oil for *Çirahilkirin* (lighting lamps), and the lighting of the lamps, are the symbol of the sun, of light and of the continuity of life.⁹¹⁵

1.4 *Tawusgêran* (The wandering of the Tawus)

Tawusgêran,⁹¹⁶ as a religious festival, is performed twice a year, in spring and in autumn. During it, *Qewals* take the *Sinceq*⁹¹⁷ (the image of *Tawus*) from its place in *Xezîna Rehman* (Rehman's treasure) in the village of Ba'adra and traditionally they visit Yezidi communities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.⁹¹⁸ In *Tawusgêran*, religious men (*Tawusgêran's* staff) tour with the *Sinceq* in Yezidi areas⁹¹⁹ and conduct special ceremonies. *Qewals* recite the holy hymns and play the holy music of the *Def* and the *Şibab*.

⁹¹² From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Bâqasîrî 2003: 168.

⁹¹³ *Du'aya Sîfrê (=Du'aya Zadî)*, "The Prayer of the Meal", seb. 4, in Anonymous 2000: 254.

⁹¹⁴ *Du'a [Sîfrê (=Xwarinê)]*, "The Prayer of the Meal", seb. 4, in Celîl and Celîl 1978a: 435.

⁹¹⁵ See "The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life", in chapter V, part II.

⁹¹⁶ In the Kurdish language, the term *Tawusgêran* is a compound word that consists of two words *Tawus* as sacred images representing the peacock and associated with Tawusî Melek and *Gêran* as contextual meaning 'wandering' and together they become *Tawusgêran* (the wandering of *Tawus*). Also, Yezidi use the word *Sincaq* for Tawus in *Tawusgêran*. As a historical brief, some sources refer to that, because the veneration of *Tawusgêran* is connected with *Sincaq* (Tawus status, banner and peacock image), its history dates back to ancient times, i.e., before Sheikh 'Adî's (1073/8-1162) era in the 12th-century CE. Generally, its history is not clear, but after that time systematically and thoughtfully wandered in Yezidis areas (See, Wahby 1962: 39; Silêman 1985: 30-44). Besides, Wahby believes that "I see in the Sanjaq of the Yazidis a corrupted form of the Mithraic standard of Hatra", Wahby 1962: 39.

⁹¹⁷ *Sinceq*, it is a sacred object of metal statue or banner, mostly bronze; its head is shaped like a peacock and it is the symbol of Tawusî Melek, see Image 04 in Appendices. For more information see Silêman 1985: 29-30; Ğindî 1998: 122; Bâqasîrî 2003: 146; Allison, C. (2004) "Yazidi i. General", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, retrieved 20 March 2018 from <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/yazidis-i-general-1>,

⁹¹⁸ Because of the political situation of the 20th-century, it was extremely difficult to continue these visits to Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Syria. This ceremony is only observed in Iraq. Kreyenbrock 2009: 22-23.

⁹¹⁹ Traditionally, Yezidis have seven *Sinceqs* (*Sinceqs*), each one of them is dedicated to a Yezidi area and they are named by the geographic names of those areas. There are different names and areas mentioned for these *Tawus*, Anzal Tawus is allotted to the Sheikhan, Ba'shiqa and Bahzani, Shingal

1.4.1 *Tawus Cîwankîrin* (baptising the *Sinceq*)

In the seasons of *Tawusgêran*, the *Sinceq* is brought to Lalish to be baptized by sprinkling it with the water of *Kaniya Sîpî*.⁹²⁰ Moreover, Empson states that the “[*Sinceq*] when put into holy (Sheikh ‘Adî) water, had curative power. Here we have a reason for the cult.”⁹²¹ This *sebeqe* refers to bringing the *Sinceq* out of Lalish, perhaps it is after baptising them:

<i>Ew sinceqa sor û sipî ye</i>	That red and white <i>Sinceq</i>
<i>Wê ji Lalişê deraniye</i>	Brought them out of Lalish
<i>Sinceq, sinceqê Şêxê Edî ye.</i> ⁹²²	The <i>sinceq</i> belongs to Sheikh ‘Adî.

1.4.2 *Şerbik* (the jar of water)

During *Tawusgêran*, there is a jar which is filled with the water of *Kaniya Sîpî*. *Qewals* in a special ritual distribute it as holy water to young single boys and they drink it, and *Qewals* wish them a good chance of marriage and recite the following *sebeqe*:

<i>Yê bidete min awekê</i>	Whoever gives me a cup of water
<i>Xudê bidetê bejin zîravekê Xudan</i>	God gives him a slim and faithful girl
<i>îmanekê</i>	That is the water of <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> ,
<i>Ava kaniya sipî ye</i>	In the jar of Sheikh ‘Adî
<i>Şîrpikê Şêxadî ye</i>	Drink from it, money is useless.
<i>Jê vexon mîşbetê ankê çije.</i> ⁹²³	

Moreover, Yezidis use the water of the *Şerbik* (jar) for baptism if the child cannot come to Lalish for any reason.⁹²⁴ This ritual is based on the water of *Şerbik* from *Kaniya Sîpî* as the place of baptism.

1.4.3 *Çirayên Me’rifetê* (the lamps of knowledge)

Seven lamps are lit beside the *sinceq* on the eve of *Tawusgêran*, and people gather around them. They are called *Çirayên Me’rifetê*. These *sebeqes* refer to lighting lamps for knowledge:

Tawus is dedicated to the Shingal area; Aleppo Tawus is dedicated to the Aleppo area; Xalta Tawus is dedicated to the Xalta area; Zozan Tawus is dedicated to the Hakkari area; Maqûf Tawus is dedicated to Georgia and Armenia and the Torin Tawus is dedicated to the Torin area in Iran, (Halû 2013: 94). On the other hand, these provinces were Sheikhan, Shingal, Aleppo, Xalta (around Marden), Zozan (Şîrnak and Batman), Haweri (Jazira) and Transcaucasia (Kars, Van, Yerevan and Tabilisi), (see Açıkyıldız 2010: 80; Ce’fo and Silo 2013: 78-79).

⁹²⁰ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (the custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁹²¹ Empson 1928: 191.

⁹²² *Qewlê Distrême, Şaxê 3* (The Hymn of I am Singing, Version 3), seb. 20, in Reşo 2004 I: 412.

⁹²³ Text details are unknown, in ‘Amar 2008: 137.

⁹²⁴ Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 18.

*Me'rifet ronahiya dila ne
Li ber guribûn mom û çira ne.*⁹²⁵

[Mystical] knowledge is the light of hearts,
Candles and lights are lit with it
(knowledge).

1.4.4 Taking *Berat*

During *Tawusgêran*, sacred clay balls, known as *Berat*, are distributed amongst the people as a blessing. These *Berat* are believed to be the symbol of holy water and holy earth.

2 In Summer

2.1 *Cejna Çilê Havînê* (The Feast of the Forty Days of Summer) and *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê*

This feast and *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter) are explained together because the rituals and observances concerned have similar rituals and observances and it will also be more understandable to explain them as a unity. Other Winter observances will be discussed under 'In Winter', below.

During *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê*,⁹²⁶ religious men such as Babe Şêx, Baba Çawîş, koçeks, Xerqepoş and others fast for forty days. This takes place from 13 December to 20 January in the Julian calendar (Gregorian, 26 December to 4 February). The last three days are the feast days and their ceremonies are performed in Lalish. Likewise, during *Cejna Çilê Havînê*,⁹²⁷ religious men fast for forty days. This takes place from 13 June to 20 July in the Julian calendar (Gregorian, 25 June to 3 August). In a similar fashion, the last three days are the feast days and the ceremonies of this feast also take place in Lalish. Moreover, according to some sources, they have an ancient history.⁹²⁸ There are religious texts that refer to the holiness of both feasts:

*Çilegira neêşîne ew jî bi batinê bîvê ne
Havînê û zivistanê bi rojî ne û bi wekaz
û tizbî ne
Pênc cara bi 'ebadetin û cindiyêt Siltîn
e.*⁹²⁹

Do not hurt *Çilegirs*;⁹³⁰ they also have hope
for the hidden (spiritual world)
They fast in summer and winter, and they
fast and have beads and sticks,⁹³¹

⁹²⁵ *Du'a Me'rifetê* (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.

⁹²⁶ About this feast in general see Ahmed 1975: 358; Ğindî 1998: 99; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 17.

⁹²⁷ See Ğindî 1998: 97; Al-Yūsif, M. (1999), *Dümūzî (Tāwusî Malak): Baht jî Ğidur al-Diyāna al-Kurdiyā al-Qadīma*, [Dümūzî (Tāwusî Malak) Searching in the Roots of the Kuridsh Ancient Religion], s.l., s.n., p. 131; Sîmū, H. (n.d.), *al-Izîdîyat 'Abra al-'Işūr* (Yazidism Through the Ages), Germany: Bāfit, p. 156.

⁹²⁸ Cf., a reference to that, as in Zoroastrianism, the Summer and Winter feasts exist in Yazidism (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 17).

⁹²⁹ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 43, in Kişto 2012: 124.

⁹³⁰ *Çilegîr* is a religious person who fasts for forty days.

⁹³¹ "All these are features of the apparel of dervishes", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 411, n. 121.

*Bi qedrê çilê Kaniya Spî
Êzdîne mîr, qubleta bidor, ...*⁹³³

Five times they worship [God] and they are the worshippers of Sultan (i.e., God).⁹³²

For the sake of the forty days of the White Spring⁹³⁴
[For the sake of] Ezdina Mir, the sun circle is the direction of prayer (*qubleta bidor*), ...⁹³⁵

2.1.1 The connection of the time of both feasts with seasonal weather conditions and the cold and hot weather

The forty days of winter. Some sources refer to that this time is a period of mourning in order to reduce the pain of coldness on the growth of humans, animals and plants in general.⁹³⁶ *Sebeqes* (22, 23, 25 and 28) from *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months) emphasise that the cold weather of winter (January as the period of the feast) is a prison for living creatures and that they cannot live because of its freezing cold, and the last *sebeqe* confirms that this is the weather of this feast:

Hatîme nav kuf û kan e I came into *kuf û kan*⁹³⁸
Wekê têt û dibit Zivistan e When it comes and winter starts
Zêndan e ser çî qas mexlûqê bi giyan e. It is a prison for all living creatures.

Kanîne te malik nebit wêran O January, how hard you are
Heke dom key sayan û befîra û baygêran If you keep on clear weather and heavy snow and wind
Dê di bîşa da zebûn key şêran. The lions (i.e., living creatures) cannot live in their places.

Kanûn dibê seqaya 'erda ez im January said: I am the weather of the earth
Û jî sarya xo wa ditezîm
Ez jî li ber firwara mîrê xo ye bi lez im. I am freezing from my cold
I am in a hurry because of my prince's command.

⁹³² Literally, 'Many times they worship and soldiers as Monarch'.

⁹³³ *Diroze*, seb. 7, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 283.

⁹³⁴ "In KhR's opinion the reference must be to one of the traditional forty-day fasts", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 17.

⁹³⁵ "I.e., Lalish", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 283, n. 48.

⁹³⁶ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see al-Yûsif 1999: 132.

⁹³⁸ Not understood.

*Kanûn dibêjît:
Em dû mehîn Pedşayê kirîn xelat
Li me dikevin Çile û erbe'ynat
Ji bedê wî ye li gel me bikelimit
Subat.⁹³⁷*

January says:
We are two month that were rewarded by
King (i.e., God)
And gave us the forty days (i.e., the Feast
of the Forty Days of the Winter)
February does not talk to us.

The forty days of summer. Religious texts refer to the 13th of June as the time of the start of the summer feast. Because of the hot weather of June, the meadows of grass become dry:

*Xizîran we deng dibiltîni
Ez mebek im ye bê behare, ye bê şîn î
Li min peyda dibin bêderêt hingivîni.*

June is raising its voice:
I am a month without spring and grass
I make many honey fields.

*Sura pedşayê hate hindav e
Li şemis û fexrê mîra dikem silav e
Li sêzdey Xizîranê vegerya bû tav e.⁹³⁹*

The mystery of King (i.e., God) comes
down
My greetings to Şemis and Fexir of Mîra
On June 13, the light of the sun comes
back.

There are some religious sayings about the hot weather in the feast, such as: “*Xizîran xinzîrî, gîya li mêrga kuzîrî tîşteke xo li ber negirî ji bilê dar û ber û mewa tîrî.*” (Because of the heat of June, grass in the meadow was burned, nothing resists except trees, stones and grapevines). Another one says, “*Tebaxê agir çû li axê*”⁹⁴⁰ (In August, fire is set to the earth).

A number of sources confirm that Yezidis fast so that humans and their sustenance will be safe from the harm of the severe heat.⁹⁴¹ To sum up, these fasts are therefore associated with the coldest forty days of winter and the hottest forty days of summer. They have their role and effect on nature and agricultural products. After the forty days, the weather is supposed to become moderate, neither hot nor cold.

2.1.2 Nature and the time of planting and harvesting wheat during both feasts

The time of the forty days of winter. Several sources indicate that the time of the feast is the period that the grain of wheat needs for germination from the day it is buried in the soil until it becomes a plant.⁹⁴²

⁹³⁷ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 22, 23, 25, 28, in Hecî 1994a: 25-26.

⁹³⁹ *Qewlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 50, 52, in Hecî 1994a: 30.

⁹⁴⁰ Hecî 2002: 139-140.

⁹⁴¹ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see al-Yûsif 1999: 132.

⁹⁴² See Hâbib1978: 47; Ğindî 1998: 104; Hürmî, H. (1998), “al-Zirā’a ‘ādāt wa Taqālîd” (Agriculture: Habits and Traditions), *Laliş*, No. 9, p. 81.

The time of the forty days of summer. Some sources highlight that this is the time of harvesting wheat during the summer season.⁹⁴³ Moreover, this feast is a sign of the end of the harvesting season, i.e., storing, cleaning and segregation of the wheat field, and the farmer has finished all the work and now celebrates it.⁹⁴⁴ The *sebeqe* below indicate the period of the feast as being full of wheat and it is an indication to harvest it:

<i>Gulanê te li malê bikevit xizîran e</i>	After May comes June
<i>Devleteka ho ye giran e</i>	It (June) has a great wealth
<i>Ye bi dexl e, ye bi dan e.</i> ⁹⁴⁵	It is full of wheat and yield.

It is worth mentioning, there are some rituals and ceremonies celebrated in Lalish that are shared with some other religious feasts and festivals, which means they are not exclusive to these feasts. They are only performed in Lalish; therefore, they are explained in detail under “The natural elements in religious observances performed in Lalish”, in chapter two of part two.

3 In Autumn

3.1 *Cejna Cimayê* (The Festival of the Gathering)

It is worth mentioning that here is only reference to the connection of the time of the feast and its ritual *Qebaxgêran* (sacrificial bull) with nature. The other rituals of the feast have been explained in chapter one of part two “Rites of pilgrimage” because this feast concerns the Yezidi rites of pilgrimage.

This feast is one of the most famous Yezidi feasts.⁹⁴⁶ It is celebrated at Lalish when Yezidis gather for a period of seven days, starting from the 23rd of September to the 1st of October (Gregorian, 6-14 October). Some references focus on that the time of the feast and its ritual *Qebaxgêran* have a link with the time of the earth fertility in autumn.⁹⁴⁷

In the feast, the ritual of *Qebaxgêran*⁹⁴⁸ is celebrated. It could be translated as “the bull sacrifice”. The tribes *Qaydî*, *Tirik* and *Mamosî* exclusively with *Qenmals*, *Çeqeltu* (a candelabrum with seven lights) holder and the incense holder attend a *Celse* (session) in Lalish; during this session pilgrims carry out the popular dance with the music of *Def*

⁹⁴³ Ses Habîb 1978: 47; Ğindî 1998: 104.

⁹⁴⁴ Hürmî 1998: 81.

⁹⁴⁵ *Qenlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 46, in Hecî 1994a: 29.

⁹⁴⁶ Regarding this in general see Edmonds 1967: 9-21; Ahmed 1975: 360-367; Kreyenbroek 2009: 24; Açıkyıldız 2010: 106-107.

⁹⁴⁷ See Ğindî and Birükâ 2003: 69-72.

⁹⁴⁸ There are some sources that refer to the origin of the *Qebax* ritual and its link with nature. Wahby writes, “Shams is Mihr. Thus, it can be said that the ceremony is concerned with Mihr and that it is a debased form of Mithra’s capture and slaughter of the bull” (Wahby 1962: 31). He adds, “This is conclusive proof that this ceremony goes back to Pre-Islamic days” (Wahby 1962: 31). Ahmed refers to it thus “[t]his is no doubt a remnant of the Mithraic cult of the bull” (Ahmed 1975: 365). Likewise, Yezidis slaughter a bull at Lalish annually as a sacrifice to *Şemsedîn* (*Şêşims*) or the sun during the *Cema* feast. It is a remnant of a ritual of Mithraism (see Habîb 1978: 44; Nirway 2008: 24; Farhan, M. p. (2010), “Izidy Religion Before Sheikh Ady, part I”, trans. Fadhil H. Khudeda, *Lalish*, No. 31, p. 11).

and *Şebab* (flute and tambourine). Meanwhile, in Lalsih they transfer the bull from its place called *Gayî Koj* to the shrine of *Şêşims* and slaughter it there; they cook its meat and boil wheat and distribute it among the people as *Simat* (religious food). At the end, each of the participants holds a small branch of a tree in his turban.⁹⁴⁹

Regarding the connection of this ritual with nature, the sacrifice of the bull takes place in Lalish, at the shrine of *Şêşims* (the Lord of sun). Many sources explain that in the Yezidi belief, the bull is sacrificed for the sun and its lord for blessing.⁹⁵⁰ Moreover, some authors give details about this belief that the blood of the sacrifice results in the fertility of the earth and the good crops product from the earth in spring.⁹⁵¹ A number of religious men believe that eating *Simat* (boiling wheat with bull's meat) as religious food and carrying a small branch of a tree in their turbans on their heads after the sacrifice of the bull by those attending, all this symbolizes the coming of the greenness of the earth and the germination of wheat in spring as a result of the sacrifice of the bull.⁹⁵²

4 In Winter⁹⁵³

4.1 *Cejna Bêlindê* (Bêlindê Feast)

There are two *Bêlindê* festivals, both follow each other and are celebrated during winter. The first one is *Bêlinda Pîran*,⁹⁵⁴ and it is dated on the first Friday after *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (13th of December in the Julian calendar/24th of December, Gregorian). It is celebrated only by *Pîrs* of the lineage of Pîra Fat. In Yezidism, it is known that Pîra Fat is the protector of agricultural blights and is associated with hail and damage to crops, inundations and storms. Yezidis celebrate the feast to ask Pîra Fat to protect people and their crops from floods, cold and everything that harms agriculture in winter.⁹⁵⁵

Ya Siltan Êzîd perda te li ber me bit O Sultan Ezîd! You save us
Ya Pîra Fat çarka te ye li me werkirî O Pîra Fat! You protect us.
*bit.*⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁴⁹ See Image 40 in Appendices. Turban is a very old-fashioned Yezidis cloth that old women still wear.

⁹⁵⁰ See Wahby 1962: 31; Hâbîb 1978: 44; Ğindî and Bîrûkâ 2003: 79; Nîrway 2008: 24.

⁹⁵¹ Hâbîb 1978: 43; Dilkûvân, B. Ş. (2005), "Lamahât 'An al-Ĥaġ wa Taqîs al-Qabâh 'inda al-Ayzidiyat'" (Glances about Pilgrimage and *Qebax* Rite in Yezidism), *Lalish*, No. 22, p. 29.

⁹⁵² From the interviews with Se'îd Aliyas Nabo, 22.09.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqî Kurdistan; Xewace Xudêda Elî, 03.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq.

⁹⁵³ There are two important notes. About *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter), because of similarities between ceremonies of this feast and *Cejna Çilê Havînê* (the forty days of summer), they are explained together (on which see above: *Cejna Çilê Havînê*). Moreover, *Cejna rojiyên Êzî* (The Fast of Êzî) is explained in the chapter one of part two in topic named "The Four Elements of Nature in Fasting".

⁹⁵⁴ Ğindî 1998: 99; Bâqasirî 2003: 157.

⁹⁵⁵ From the interview with Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁹⁵⁶ *Du'aya Oxirî* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 7, in Ğindî 1994: 147.

The other festival is *Bêlinda Am*⁹⁵⁷ and it is celebrated by all Yezidi people. It is dated on the second Friday after the *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* (13th of December in the Julian calendar/24th of December, Gregorian) and its duration is one day. There are some historical indications dating its origin back to ancient times.⁹⁵⁸

4.1.1 Nature and the time of the feast

About the weather during this time of the year, there is a Yezidi saying: “*Bêlinde, û bêdera befrê ye hind ê*” (In *Bêlinde*, snow piles up very high). Some sources refer to that Yezidis believe that the time of the feast as the day when the sun is rejuvenated to heat up and protect the seeds under the ground from death from cold and snowfall.⁹⁵⁹ Furthermore, in Yezidism, it is the feast of rebirth and germination of the plants, where the sun stays longer from this time and the temperatures start to rise slightly, which helps the growth of agriculture and its appearance on the surface of the earth.⁹⁶⁰

4.1.2 *Gurka Gay* (the fire-flame of the bull)

Gurka Gay is a compound word which consists of *Gurk* (fire-flame) and *Gay* (the bull) and, by combining the two words, it means “the fire-flame of the bull”. Regarding this, Silêman states that it is named as such because a fire is lit when the bulls come home from ploughing the fields at that time of winter.⁹⁶¹ As a term, it refers to the fire that is lit on the evening of the last day of the *Bêlinde* feast, after the farmers have finished ploughing the land, i.e., the process of sowing and burying grain in the earth. The fire is lit in front of the farm animals (bulls earlier). These animals jump over it and sweets mixed with wheat and barley are showered over the farmer and his farm animals.⁹⁶² Nowadays, when a fire is lit, people rejoice and dance around it and jump over it.⁹⁶³ Moreover, the fire and the bull are natural symbolism in these rituals:

Fire. According to religious beliefs, some sources explain that fire, as in this analogical ritual, conveys the heat that the sun emits to protect the grain from damage, resulting from the frost, and to keep the grains intact under the earth and for the fertility of the earth to play its role.⁹⁶⁴ It is also an essential ritual that aims at stimulating the sun to appear throughout the day, in order to promote warmth in nature.⁹⁶⁵

Bull. Some authors describe that the role of the bull in this process refers to the symbolism of this animal and its power in fertilization.⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁵⁷ See Ğindî 1998: 100; Bâqasirî 2003: 157.

⁹⁵⁸ There are many sources dating it back to the era of Mithraism and linking it with the holiness of light and sun against darkness and night (See Ğalîl 2006: 79; Dilkûvân 1999: 44-46).

⁹⁵⁹ See Bâqasirî 2003: 160-161.

⁹⁶⁰ See al-Yûsif 1999: 133.

⁹⁶¹ Kreyenbroek 1995: 156.

⁹⁶² Ğindî 1998: 100; Dilkûvân 1999: 48-49; Bâqasirî 2003: 158.

⁹⁶³ See Image 41 in Appendices.

⁹⁶⁴ See Dilkûvân 1999: 48-49.

⁹⁶⁵ al-Yûsif 1999: 133.

⁹⁶⁶ al-Yûsif 1999: 133; Bahzânî 2003: 66.

Based on this information, it is possible to say that in this ritual, fire is the symbol of the sun, light and heat. The bull plays a role as a means for ploughing the earth and as a symbol of the power of fertility.

4.1.3 Preparing *Xewlêre*

Xewlêre is a thick circular loaf of bread made of wheat. There are scratches on its surface with a raisin inside it.⁹⁶⁷ It is prepared by every family. In the evening, the head of the family cuts it into as many pieces as the number of members of the family. The one who has the raisin in his/her piece is rewarded. It is believed that the sustenance of that family over the next year depends on the luck of that person who has the raisin in his share.

There is a view among Yezidis that *Xewlêre* is a Kurdish name that derives from *Xor lêre*, which means 'sun disk' and its circular shape and the scratches on its surface represent the shape and the rays of the sun, and its function is the giving of sustenance. It is clear *Şêşims* as the lord of the sun is the lord of sustenance as well.

4.2 *Cejna Xidir Liyas* (the Xidir Liyas Feast)

This feast is celebrated after three days of fasting on the first Thursday of February, according to the Julian calendar (14th of February according to the Gregorian calendar). It is especially celebrated by those Yezidis whose names are Xidir or Liyas, as well as by religious men.

In Yezidism, in the story of *Xidir Liyas*⁹⁶⁸ it is said that Xidir and Liyas are always alive (they are immortal). This is because in Yezidi mythology, *Ava Heyatê/Ava Hêwanê* (the water of life or eternal water) fell on them (they drank it) and they gained eternal life.⁹⁶⁹ The legend also talks about the Macedonian, Alexander the Great,⁹⁷⁰ where reference is made to the figure Xidir. Alexander asks people in his kingdom to bring the water of life; Xidir is a good man and tells that story to his uncle Liyas. Liyas is a great old man and the thinker behind all Xidir's works and he tells Xidir that he is capable of doing that, then Xidir brings that water of *Ava Heyatê*.⁹⁷¹ The story is very long but what is important here is that the story has a link with *Ava Heyatê*. The following *sebeqes* refer to both names:

⁹⁶⁷ See Image 42 in Appendices.

⁹⁶⁸ A historical reference of the feast; it is celebrated by many communities in the Middle East, (see Kreyenbroek 1995: 156). Consequently, some sources refer to Xidir-Liyas as one figure, and it is regarded as one of the famous mythological figures with a prominent role in human society and is known in other religions by different names and forms; the Arabs call him Al-Khithir Al-Hay (living/eternal Xidir), while the Muslim Kurds call him Xidir Zêndî (Living Xidir), the Christians and the Jews call him the prophet Iliya, the Yezidis call him Xidir-Liyas and Xidir Nebî and the Indian Muslims call him Khawaja Khidr (Hudida, K. (1999), "Hîdir-Liyâs", *Lalîş*, No. 11, p. 66).

⁹⁶⁹ For information about this mythology see Omerxalî 2013: 46.

⁹⁷⁰ He was also named Alêksanderê Çar Qwrnet (the Great Alexander) in Yezidism.

⁹⁷¹ For further reading see Hudida 1999: 76.

*Şeref deng diket ji esas e
Fihmê min zor qiyas e
Tu Xidirî anî Liyas e*⁹⁷²

Şeref⁹⁷³ speaks of fundamentals,⁹⁷⁴
My understanding is very great
Are you Xidirî or Liyas?

Xidir Liyas as the lord of water and the sea

In Yezidism, Xidir has a link with water as the symbol of the eternity of life; therefore, he has the feature of an eternal god and is called Xidir Zêndî (immortal Xidir). In the religious literature, there is a *Qewl* called *Qewlê Mûsa Pêxember û Xidirê Zindî* (the hymn of the prophet Moses and *Xidirê Zindî*, QMPXZ) in the form of a dialogue between Moses and Xidir Zindî. Xidir is described as *Zindî* (living and immortal) and as an eternal mystery, and his place is the sea; therefore, he symbolizes water and eternal life:

*Mûsê go: bo min bêje bi rehmanî
Tu kê çîdikê li derê deryanî
Bi xatira Xudê û xasêt cihanî.*

Moses said: Tell me by the Merciful One
Who are you and what do you do in the
sea?
For the sake of God and the holy beings
of the world.

*Xidir go: ez Xidirê Zindî me
Ji 'enzîl afirê Xudê me
Sura yarê bêrî me.*

Xidir said: I am Xidir Zindî (immortal
Xidir)
I am a creature of God from eternity
I am a mystery of the primordial one
(immortal).

*Me'rîfet û sur û erkan e
Xudê da min subhan e
Di zanim çî qeder dûr li bebran e.*⁹⁷⁵

Knowledge, mystery and principle
Great God gave me
I know how many pearls are in the sea.

Xidir Liyas, as the diver of seas, indicates that Xidir symbolizes water and immortality:

*Dê rabite bedîleke sar e
Xidir Liyas bewasê bebra
Dê ête nişî Ticara.*⁹⁷⁶

There will come a cold epoch
Xidir Liyas the diver of seas
There will come a generation of
merchants.

⁹⁷² *Qewlê Pîr Şeref* (The hymn of Pîr Şeref), seb. 28, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 107.

⁹⁷³ He is one of the Yezidi Holy Men, See Silêman and Cindî 1979: 103-104; Kreyenbroek 1995: 121.

⁹⁷⁴ I.e., Şeref asks about origins of Xidir-Liyas.

⁹⁷⁵ *Qewlê Mûsa Pêxember û Xidirê Zênde* (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidirê Zênde), seb. 7, 8, 9, in Reşo 2004 I: 330.

⁹⁷⁶ Text details are unknown, recited by Merwanê Xelil, interviewed by Omarkhali in Germany, 22.07.2007, cited in Omarkhali and Rezanîa 2009: 344-345.

4.2.1 Nature and the time of the feast

Regarding the feast and the end of the agricultural season and particularly crops, Xidir Liyas (as the lord of agriculture and water) has a strong link with agriculture and germination in Yezidism. With the coming of the Xidir Liyas Feast, the season of grain cultivation is about to end. In this regard, Yezidis say, “*Xidir Liyas û tov xilas*” (in the Xidir Liyas Feast, the cultivation of grains ends); this means, after the Xidir Liyas Feast, the process of cultivating the grain has already ended. Regarding the feast and the beginning of spring, after the coming of the Xidir Liyas Feast, the winter season (as an agricultural season) is about to end. There is a Yezidi saying about this: “*Xidir Liyas û Sal Xilas*” (Xidir Liyas and the year is about to end), and a new year in spring starts. Also, some *sebeqes* emphasize the belief that Xidir is the symbol of the coming of spring, which means greenery and the renewal of nature:

<i>Xidirnebî, were, di nav cinetê re were</i>	Xidirnebî, come through the paradise
<i>Bi pîwong, ser hêşnayê re were</i>	With grass, come on the grass
<i>Were, were, êdî bihar e</i>	Come, come, from now on it is spring
<i>Tu bereketê bîne bi xwe re.</i> ⁹⁷⁷	You bring grace with you.

Moreover, the author al-Yūsif states that the Xidir Liyas Feast is the feast of fertility, growth and greenness in nature.⁹⁷⁸ Also, another author, Hūdīda, described the ceremonies of the Xidir Liyas Feast as being very old rituals, associated with the life of agriculture and the life-cycle in nature.⁹⁷⁹

4.2.2 Xidir Liyas and *Kas* (the cup of water)

In the Xidir Liyas shrine in the village of Ba‘adra, there is a big cup called *Jamkê-Jam* or *Kas* from which barren women drink water.⁹⁸⁰ Also, according to religious texts, the cup of water is the symbol of Xidir-Liyas. Many aspects of this belief are reflected in *sebeqes*:

The pond of Xidir-Liyas (as the place of eternal water) that young people drink from:

<i>Cindiyo tu yî rênas</i>	O, young man, you are a guide
<i>Me şerab divêt ji kasêd xas</i>	We want to drink from the special cups.
<i>Li wê bendê ye le bramo milkê Xidr û liyas.</i> ⁹⁸¹	Come, brothers, to this pond, the property of Xidr-liyas.

Xidir-Liyas gives the water of the cup to people:

<i>Hey Xidiro bin Xidir</i>	O, Xidir, son of Xidir!
<i>Te kasek da min bukir</i>	You gave me an unsullied (pure) Cup

⁹⁷⁷ Text details are unknown, recited by Eminê Evdal from Axîmê Çolo in Elegezê village in 1939, cited in Omerxali 2013: 52.

⁹⁷⁸ al-Yūsif 1999: 134.

⁹⁷⁹ Hūdīda 1999: 76.

⁹⁸⁰ See Barwārī, K. (2001), “al- ‘Alāğ al-Rūhī Ladā al-Yzidiyat” (The Spiritual Therapy in Yezidism), *Laliş*, No. 16, pp. 84-85.

⁹⁸¹ *Beyta Cindî* (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 31, in Silêman and Cindi 1979: 48.

<i>Min vexwar bi nav û dikir</i>	I drank, pronouncing [God's] Name ⁹⁸³
<i>Dibirime ser 'elmekî faxîr.</i> ⁹⁸²	I was taken to a superior knowledge.

Regarding this, Reşo says, "this is the cup of life, life continuity and love of God."⁹⁸⁴

4.2.3 Drinking water and a chance of marriage

As a religious habit, before sleeping in the evening of the Xidir Liyas Feast, unmarried man and woman eat *Pêxum* (special religious food of this feast) without drinking water, because Yezidis believe when he/she drinks water in his/her dream from the spring of a village or from one of the houses, he/she will have a chance to marry someone from that village or that family. This *sebeqe* refers to this belief through the words cup (i.e., water) and fulfilling marriage wishes:

<i>Dû Çavîş li qedemgeha rawestan</i>	Two guards stood on the threshold
<i>Êk dibêjinê Xidir êk dibêjinê Liyas</i>	One is called Xidir and the other is called Liyas
<i>Ji muhibetê digêrin kas.</i>	From love they distribute the cup.
<i>Kas Ji quderitê dolî ji dureke elmas, ...</i>	The cup of grace, the bowl of a diamond
<i>Sultan Êzî mirazêt me û bazîra basil bikeet</i>	pearl, ...
<i>Û çî kesê miraz ximaz.</i> ⁹⁸⁵	Sultan Ezî fulfil our wishes (i.e., our marriage) ⁹⁸⁶ and present people's
	And a person who wishes.

4.2.4 Ploughing the earth and cutting grass

Yezidis believe that because of the fertilization and renewal of nature it is forbidden to plough the earth and cut the grass during the days of the feast.

4.2.5 Nature and religious food during the feast

There are many types of religious food in this feast.⁹⁸⁷ *Pêxum* is prepared by frying seven varieties of seed, such as wheat, barley, broad bean, maize, chickpea, sunflower seeds, watermelon seeds, etc., which are called *Qalatikê*. These grains are then ground together, and the result is a floury food called *Pêxum*. On the day of the feast, the farmers go to their fields to throw a quantity of *Pêxum* on their plants for blessing and to increase production. Yezidis believe that these ground grains symbolize the end of the ploughing and sowing season; therefore, frying them means that they are useless for planting. Another food prepared during the feast, is *Çerxûs*; it is crushed wheat grain fried on a fire. It is served on the day of the feast. The housewife keeps a surplus of raw *Çerxûs* because it will be used in the summer

⁹⁸² *Qewlê Îmanê* (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 8, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 84.

⁹⁸³ "Lit, with the Name and recollection", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 84, n. 129.

⁹⁸⁴ Reşo 2004 I: 172.

⁹⁸⁵ *Qewlê di 'Emrekî da Mame* (The Hymn of I Remained in an Age), seb. 39, in Mîrza 2006: 182.

⁹⁸⁶ Yezidi in Kurdistan region use the word *miraz*, which means to fulfil wishes for marriage.

⁹⁸⁷ See Image 43 in Appendices.

for the opening of harvesting the wheat fields.⁹⁸⁸ Moreover, *Senik* is a small thick loaf of bread baked on the eve of the feast. Each family bakes large amounts of it as a holy bread and distributes it as a sign of goodness and blessing among their neighbours.

The data and results of this chapter indicate these main conclusions:

There are several Yezidi religious feasts and festivals that are celebrated according to the Julian calendar because they are based on the role of the sun and the weather conditions of the year. The main sources of most of the rituals and ceremonies of these religious feasts and festivals are the succession of the seasons, greenery, and the fertility of the earth, in which the four elements of nature play a vital role, are.

In spring there is the *Sersal* feast. In Yezidi traditions, this is when Tawusî Melek (as light) descends to the earth, therefore, the renewal of life in nature and the fertilization of the earth begin, adorning the earth with several types of grass and colourful flowers, i.e., the start of a new life in nature is regarded as a new year. Rituals of the feast are based on this belief, like *Çirahilkirin*, the *Serderî* (decorating the house-doors) and colouring eggs. Some rituals of *Tıwafs* (local festivals) have a link with nature, for example lighting the lamps and baptising the Perîs (pieces of colourful fabric) with holy water. Some informants refer to the occasion of *Tıwafs* as indicating the renewal of nature and the coming of spring. Furthermore, the purpose of *Sefera Nan û Mast* (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) and baptising the bread and yoghurt with the water of the *Kaniya Sîpî* in Lalish, is for the increase of goodness, grace and reproduction of wealth through agricultural products in spring. In addition, *Tawusgêran* ceremony has a link with spring season and there are various rituals representing the veneration of natural elements, such as *Tawus Cimankirin* (Baptising *Tawus Sinceq*) by sprinkling it with the water of the *Kaniya Sîpî*; the *Şerbik* (jar of water) is filled with the water of the *Kaniya Sîpî*, seven lamps are lit beside the *Sinceq*, and sacred clay balls, known as *Berut*, are distributed amongst the people for blessing. In spring, Yezidis celebrate more religious feasts and festivals than in other seasons. This has a link with the season of renewal of life in nature.

In summer, the traditions of both the *Cejna Çilê Havînê* and the *Cejna Çilê Zivistanê* are based on forty days. Their timing has a link with the coldest weather in winter and the hottest in summer and their impact on agricultural production. They also have a link with the planting of wheat in the winter and harvesting it in the summer.

In autumn, the time of the Cima feast is associated with the fertility of the earth, and the ritual of sacrificing a bull in *Qebaxgêran* (sacrificial bull) is connected to Şêşims, the lord of the sun.

In winter, the *Bêlinde* feast has a link to the cold weather and the growth of agricultural produce, especially wheat. The time and the rituals of this feast emphasize this belief, such as that of *Gurka Gay* (the flame of the bull). The Xidir Liyas feast has a link to the end of the cold in winter and the agricultural season, and the beginning of spring. Because of this belief, Yezidis prepare a religious food called *Pêxun*. Because this season is dedicated to the fertilization of nature and earth, ploughing of earth and cutting of grass are forbidden.

⁹⁸⁸ Hakârî, M. S. (1996), “al-Zâd fî A’yâd wa Minâsîbât al-Ayzîdiyat” (The Food in the Yezidi Festivals and Occasions), *Lalîş*, No. 6, p. 24.

Chapter IV

The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Customs

This chapter discusses the role of nature and its four sacred elements in religious customs. The scope of this chapter primarily investigates religious customs among Yezidis in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI), the fieldwork of the study.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first deals with religious customs that belong to Yezidi rites of passage: childbirth, marriage and funerary customs. The second deals with customs related to the religious daily life of Yezidis – customs that have a strong relation to nature, such as those regarding washing, eating, sleeping and clothing oneself. The third section will look at the prohibitions and taboos, depending on the role and veneration of the four sacred elements of nature. This section will be subdivided into four subsections, each devoted to one of the four elements of nature. The fourth section is about religious healing practices. Examining the role of the four sacred elements of nature in healing practices, it will also consist of four subsections. Each of these is devoted to one element, referring to the way it is used in the processes of healing. Finally, the key conclusions will follow.

1 Natural Elements in the Rites of Passage

1.1 Childbirth customs

The role and veneration of nature in Yezidi childbirth customs and also initiatory rites are given in detail through the next subjects.

Morkirin (baptism)

The newborn baby should be baptized with the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* in Lalish for blessing:

<i>Eve firwara Petşa ye</i>	This command is from King (i.e., God)
<i>Mora Kaniya Sîpî rewa ye</i>	The baptism of <i>Kaniya Sîpî</i> is a
<i>Fer e û atqata Ezîdî ye.</i> ⁹⁸⁹	confession
	It is an obligation and faith for Yezidis.

Taking soil from religious places

Yezidis bring a very small amount of soil, the size of a hazelnut, from religious places, such as Lalish and *Mezars* in general. They keep it in a white piece of fabric and hang it over their children's shoulders. The reason for doing this is that Yezidis believe that the place has mystical power for protection and giving health; therefore, they use it for protection from illnesses and to keep children safe from evil spirits. This *sebeqe* clarifies that Lalish as a religious place gives health:

<i>Hincîyê derdek lê dibîye</i>	Anyone who has an illness
<i>Bi Lalişê qesit bikin zû ye</i>	Should pilgrimage to Lalish as soon as
<i>Derda, derman li wê dibîye.</i> ⁹⁹⁰	possible
	The remedy of illness is there.

Using *Berat*

Yezidis place *Berat* as a sacred soil ball under the pillow of the newborn baby. They believe it will protect it from illnesses and keep it away from all evils. The following *sebeqes* express Yezidis' practice of keeping *Berat* with themselves:

<i>Xet û Beratê Siltan Êzî zêr in</i>	Lines (of script) and <i>Berat</i> of Siltan Êzî are
<i>Da Mirîd bixox⁹⁹¹ helînin û bi xo</i>	gold (i.e., precious)
<i>veşêrin.</i> ⁹⁹²	So that Mirîds ⁹⁹³ can keep and hide them
	for themselves.

Moreover, Yezidis should put their children in a cradle made of wood for blessing:

<i>Çî weledekê miskîn e</i>	What a poor little baby it is
<i>Danabû li nav tabûteke darîn e</i>	It was laid in a wooden cradle ⁹⁹⁵
<i>Bi şevê û rojê hijîne û girîne.</i> ⁹⁹⁴	Night and day, there is rocking and wailing.

⁹⁸⁹ *Beyta Kaniya Sîpî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 5, in Sileyman 2013: 41.

⁹⁹⁰ *Qenlê Xoş Malê Baba, Şaxê 1* (The Hymn of Good Families, Version 1), seb. 28, in Reşo 2004 I: 405.

⁹⁹¹ According to the textual meaning the phrase *bixox* is misspelled, the correct spelling is *bo xo* (for themselves).

⁹⁹² *Qenlê Hensarê* (The Hymn of Control), the number of the *sebeqe* is unknown, in Ğindî, S. M. (1999), "al-Barât wa Qudsîyatuhā Lidā al-Ayzidîyat" (The Symbol Barat and Its Sacredness in Yezidism), *Lalish*, No. 10, p. 38.

⁹⁹³ I.e., Pupil: general caste of people of the Yezidi religion.

⁹⁹⁴ *Qenlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 12, in Silêman 1985:114.

⁹⁹⁵ *Tabûteke darîne* indicates a child's cradle, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005:155, n. 3.

Nature symbolism in childbirth custom

A few days after childbirth, the family of the newborn tie a thin circular thread around its neck, called *Benkê Şêşims* (thread of *Şêşims*). This is to keep the newborn away from all evils and protect it from diseases, since the *Benkê Şêşims* has spiritual power. As religious men say that it is clear from its name that the thread of *Şêşims* (the lord of the sun) is the symbol of the sun circle and its light. Furthermore,⁹⁹⁶ *Pêçolîkê* (baby clothes) is a sheet of white fabric wrapped around the newborn. Here, the white colour is the symbol of light and pure faith:

Sîpê nûr e ji bidayet e
*Rengê reş e bi zîlmat e.*⁹⁹⁷

White is the light of guidance (i.e.,
guidance of God)
The black colour is darkness.

1.2 Wedding customs

Even though variants clearly exist, the following features appear to be characteristics of a traditional Yezidi marriage and wedding custom. Only those are included which have a connection to the veneration of nature:

Şikandina Şerbik (breaking the jar of water)

The bride breaks a *Şerbikê* when she enters the groom's house. It is generally filled with water and agricultural products, such as wheat, peas, rice, and so forth.⁹⁹⁸ According to religious folk belief, it denotes bringing-in of sustenance to that house.

The water and *Debnokêt Bûkê* (Bride's grains)

Seven days after the wedding, Yezidis cook special food to welcome the bride. It is a porridge made with seven kinds of grain, including wheat, called *Debnokêt Bûkê*. On that day, the bride is accompanied by her friends and they go to a stream or a spring. There, she throws seven handfuls of that porridge into the water. The women then cross the water and eat the rest of the porridge.⁹⁹⁹ Nowadays they use a big container filled with water and then she sprinkles the water over her friends, especially unmarried ones, to give them a chance of marriage. This *sebeqe* refers to some aspects of that ritual:

Fere roja buk û sunet e
Zadekê çêke û bike dawet e
*Em ferzekê Şêxê sunet e.*¹⁰⁰⁰

It is a duty in the days of wedding and
tradition
Make a meal [*Debnokêt Bûkê*] and have a
party
This is an obligation of Sheikh's tradition.

⁹⁹⁶ From the interviews with Se'îd Awdî Reşo, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

⁹⁹⁷ *Beyta Dinê* (The Beyt of the world), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 II: 750.

⁹⁹⁸ See Image 44 in Appendices.

⁹⁹⁹ For further reading see Kreyenbroek 1995: 158.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Qewlê Mersîma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 38, in Kişto 2012: 123.

Furthermore, in some other Yezidi religious observances, the water symbolizes the chance of marriage.¹⁰⁰¹

Drinking from the holy water

One of the rituals of marriage is that, on the wedding day, the bride and groom should each have a ‘brother or sister of the hereafter’. The ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ puts *Berat* in a cup of water, both of them drink from that holy water, then they sprinkle that water over each other, and they become hereafter brother and sister. This *sebeqe* confirms that this ritual is an obligation for Yezidis:

<p><i>Şêx fer e û Pîr nîşan e</i> <i>Hoste û Merebî şubhetî man a</i> <i>Ferzê Yar û Birayêt Axretê ferzekê</i> <i>giran a.</i>¹⁰⁰²</p>	<p>Having Sheikh is obligatory and Having Pîr is the symbol Hoste and Merebî are like them The obligation of having friends and brothers of the hereafter is a grave duty.</p>
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One of the purposes of using *Berat*, made of the holy water of *Kaniya Sîpî* and the holy soil of Lalish, is to make a promise and stay faithful for a brotherhood bond.¹⁰⁰³

<p><i>Heke te da êkê bexit û Berat e</i> <i>Berat nîşana ‘erd û kîniyat e</i> <i>Xudê beye ew atqat e.</i>¹⁰⁰⁴</p>	<p>If you gave someone conscience (i.e., a promise) and <i>Berat</i> <i>Berat</i> is the symbol of the earth and the universe O God, it is faith.</p>
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Forbidding Marriage in *Nîsan* (Julian April)

According to Yezidi tradition, in *Nîsan*, nature is the bride of the year because of its beauty therefore it is forbidden to have any other bride in that month.¹⁰⁰⁵

1.3 Funerary customs

This sub-section will describe and explain funerary customs and also mortuary rites that are related to the role and veneration of nature in a series of points with *sebeqes* from religious texts.

Şuştîna mirî (washing the dead)

As a religious duty, the body of the deceased should be washed with pure water by religious men for blessing:

¹⁰⁰¹ See “Drinking water and a chance of marriage” in the Xidir Liyas feast; *Şerbik* (the jar of water) in *Tavusgêran* (The wandering of the Tawus), both are in chapter three of part two.

¹⁰⁰² *Qewlê Ebabekirê Omera* (The Hymn of Ebabekirê Omera), seb. 38, Mîrza 1997: 121.

¹⁰⁰³ See “*Berat* (Sacred Soil Ball)”, in chapter V, part II.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 90, in Kişto 2012: 131.

¹⁰⁰⁵ See “*Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)”, in chapter III, part II.

*Hegê mirîya xêr û rehm e
Kijîn û şuştin û gor û xem e
Û qewl û beyt hemû dem e.*¹⁰⁰⁶

It is a duty to give alms and show mercy
for the dead
Shroud, washing, grave and grief
And always recite hymns and *Beyt*.

On the death of those who did not have the opportunity to be baptized by the water of *Kaniya Sipî*, religious men, either their Sheikh or their *Pîr*, sprinkle normal water over their bodies by calling the name of *Kaniya Sipî* and it is regarded as baptism.¹⁰⁰⁷ Alwenî refers to water in baptism in Yezidi religion has the ability to wash away humans' sins and make them pure and clean.¹⁰⁰⁸

Putting *Berat* on the face of the dead

After washing, *Berat* as holy soil is put on the dead one's face. Yezidis believe that this is to bless and purify his/her body with the *Berat* as holy earth. Furthermore, one of the deceased's family throws a handful of soil (that was previously taken from inside the grave) into the grave meaning the dead person's body will return to soil.¹⁰⁰⁹

Burying by soil

Traditionally, the grave is dug about 1.5 m deep and 1 m wide. As a religious duty, when the coffin is taken to the cemetery, it should be placed on the soil that was taken from inside the grave, and then buried with that same soil as a holy element. A *sebeqe* of the *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death, QS) refers to some aspects of this custom:

*Birîme aliyê gorîstanê
Li ser axa tîrbê danî
Hînd nê dijîrîn bo vî cîwanî
Axir ji rûwê dinê dibû fanî.*¹⁰¹⁰

They took me to the cemetery
They laid me down on the soil of the
tomb
Some were crying for this youth
Who is mortal on the face of the earth.

The direction of the dead face to the sun

Accordingly, the dead person's head is laid towards the direction of the sunset and the legs towards the sunrise.¹⁰¹¹ It is for the purpose when the sun rises, its rays will directly shine on the dead one's head:

*Dema dikolîn tîrb e
Ji şerq beta bi xerb e
Kes nema ve nexîmarbû ji ew şerb e.*¹⁰¹²

When they are digging the grave
[Its direction] From the east (sunrise) to
the west (sunset)

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 47, in Kişto 2012: 124-125.

¹⁰⁰⁷ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Alwenî 1999: 103.

¹⁰⁰⁹ From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Deştî Şêx Zeydîn, 02.04.2018, Pforzheim, Germany.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 45, in Silêman 1985: 118.

¹⁰¹¹ See Image 45 in Appendices.

¹⁰¹² *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 46, in Silêman 1985: 118.

There is no one who has not drunk from this drink (cup).¹⁰¹³

On this belief, the British archaeologist, A. H. Layard, states that “the sun rises, and towards it, they turn the faces of their dead”¹⁰¹⁴. According to Yezidi tradition, this means the life of the deceased ends and this is based on a Yezidi saying: “*Roja mirî awa bî*” (the sun of the dead one sets).

Furthermore, it is not permissible to dig graves after sunset and before sunrise. It is based on Yezidis believe that “*Deryêt xêra dîvekîrîne ji rojbelat beta bi rojava*” (the doors of alms and ‘good deeds’ are open from sunrise to sunset). This *sebeqe* emphasizes that belief:

<i>Çarşembû rojeke bi hisab e</i>	Wednesday is an important day
<i>Ji ba meleka hatîye ev cevab e</i>	This response came from the angels
<i>Deryêt xêra dîvekîrîne ji rojbelat beta bi rojava.</i> ¹⁰¹⁵	The doors of alms (good deeds) are open from sunrise to sunset.

Putting stones and soil in the grave

To stabilize the sides of the coffin, boulders and large stones are placed in the grave:¹⁰¹⁶

<i>Îlehîyo melîk li ‘erş e</i>	O God, King of the throne
<i>Ser singê min radixên ferş e</i>	They are putting rocks (boulders) on my chest
<i>Her ferşek wekê xerş e.</i> ¹⁰¹⁷	Each rock is like <i>xerş</i> . ¹⁰¹⁸

After that, the tomb is filled with the soil. Clay is placed in the gaps between the stones. Moreover, two *Kêls* (tombstones), one in the east and the other in the west, are set at the ends of the tomb in the soil. They are considered holy and Yezidis kiss these tombstones when they go there. This *sebeqe* refers to some aspects of that custom:

<i>Heriyê datînin li derz e</i>	They sealed (the tomb) up with mud
<i>Axê diînine ser min bi lez e</i>	They hastily put soil over me
<i>Du kêla danên Go: Ewe ferş e.</i> ¹⁰¹⁹	They put up two tombstones, saying: This is obligatory.

¹⁰¹³ “I.e., no one is exempt from death”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 346, n. 71.

¹⁰¹⁴ Layard, A. H. (1851 I), *Nineveh and Its Remains*, in two volumes, vol. I, New York: George p. Putnam, p. 248.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 2 in Kişto 2004: 206.

¹⁰¹⁶ Empson writes, “to prevent the earth, as far as possible, from touching the corpse” (Empson 1928: 63). Cf., Kreyenbroek says, “it may be relevant to note that, while the Zoroastrian laws of purity clearly aim at preventing defilement of the earth by a dead body, hard rock was apparently felt to be impermeable to pollution”, Kreyenbroek 1995: 167, n. 134.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 49, in Silêman 1985: 119.

¹⁰¹⁸ Its meaning is not understood, perhaps it is used only for rhythm.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 50, in Silêman 1985: 119.

Çirahilkirin (lighting lamps)

Yezidis light candles in the evenings of the first seven days in the place where the deceased was washed. In Yezidism, the lamp is a symbol of the soul.¹⁰²⁰ A *sebeqe* stresses lighting a lamp for the faithful soul:

<i>Hat çarşembûna fer e</i>	Came the significant Wednesday
<i>Xelat ji melikê faxîr e</i>	The gift is from the glorious angel
<i>Bo ruha bi îman gorê dîket çire.</i> ¹⁰²¹	Light a lamp for the faithful soul.

Planting a tree beside the head of the grave

Yezidis plant a tree, mostly an olive tree or another plant, beside the head of the grave.¹⁰²² A religious man explains that Yezidis believe this indicates the greenery that denotes the continuity of life and the immortality of the soul of the dead one.¹⁰²³

2 Natural Elements in Religious Daily Customs

This section will describe and analyse the role and veneration of nature in religious customs that have a link with the important fields of daily life, as in the following.

2.1 Washing customs

Generally, water is a sacred element in the affairs of Yezidis' lives. According to religious texts, Yezidis believe that washing and cleanliness of the body while worshipping are obligatory and are religious duty for them and imply a deep faith. They say, "*Paqijê ji îmanê ye*" (cleanliness is faith). They must be clean and wash themselves with water before praying and worshipping. These *sebeqes* emphasize this:

<i>Şuştin fer e û xoş tişt e</i>	Washing is obligatory and a good thing
<i>Paqija jê diêt bêhîna behîst e</i>	(useful)
<i>Bişu serî û desî û çava û leşî û cila gişt e.</i>	Cleanliness smells like paradise
	Wash the head, hands, eyes (face), body, and everything.
<i>Îman çêbû bi êqîn e</i>	Faith was achieved by truth (i.e., certainty)
<i>‘Ebadetê bike bi bijîwîn e</i>	Worship with cleanliness
<i>Êw sunet e û nasîn e.</i> ¹⁰²⁴	It is an obligation and [Mystical] knowledge.

Yezidis hold wash their hands and faces before worshipping and praying. *Beyta Cindê* (the *Beyt* of the commander) which is recited at dawn refers to that custom:

¹⁰²⁰ See "The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life", in chapter V, part II.

¹⁰²¹ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.

¹⁰²² See Image 45 in Appendices.

¹⁰²³ From the interview with Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹⁰²⁴ *Qewlê Mersîma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 51, 52, in Kişto 2012: 125.

<i>Rabe ji tarî have</i>	Wake up from the darkness (i.e., dawn)
<i>Qesid bike merzêd ave</i>	Go to the pool of water
<i>Civan bike destan û çave</i>	Wash your hands and face
<i>Eve bo ‘edetê me zîrhave.</i> ¹⁰²⁵	This is our custom.

About that belief, the author Drower states that “before all worship, the Yazidi should wash himself, and before any feast the body should be cleansed completely in hot or cold water, and white garments should then be put on”¹⁰²⁶.

2.2 Eating customs

In the religious literature, there is a prayer named *Du‘a Sifrê/Xwarinê* (the prayer of the meal), which is recited after eating. Its content is about venerating and appreciating wheat, bread and food in general. Also, there is reference to bread in *Xezîna Nan* (the treasure of bread) and the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* in Lalish as the leaven and the source of sustenance:

<i>Nanê ji xezîna Şîxadî ve</i>	The bread (sustenance) is from Sheikh
<i>Hîvênê ji kaniya sîpî ve.</i> ¹⁰²⁷	‘Adî’s treasure
	The leaven is from the White Spring.

Regarding *Xezîna Nan* (the treasure of bread) and *Kaniya Sîpî* in Lalish, when Yezidis come back from their pilgrimage to Lalish, they bring bread from that treasure and water from that spring as *Simat* because they are holy and they are the leaven of increasing wealth.¹⁰²⁸

Drinking the water of some springs is grace and the source of sustenance and a blessing, such as *Kaniya Sîpî* and *Zimzîm* in Lalish, *Kaniya Efdê Reş* (the spring of Efdê Reş) in the village of Dêrebûn, *Kaniya Pîraxayê* (the spring of Pîraxayê) in Shingal, etc.

Yezidis often swear an oath by bread, saying: *Bi evî qutê îmanê sund dixwim, yê nexot bê dîn e û bê îman e* (I swear by this food of faith (wheat), whoever does not eat it has no religion and faith). Another common Yezidi oath is *Bi evî nanî* (I swear by this bread).

There are many types of religious food made from wheat in feasts and occasions in general, such as bread, *Simat* and *Sewik*, in the *Xidir Liyas Feast*; *Qelatik*, *Pêxûm* and *Çerxus*, in the *Bêlindê Feast*; as well as *Xewlêr*, *Şilik* and *Keşik*.¹⁰²⁹ Also, Yezidis prepare *Simat* (religious food) as the product of wheat.¹⁰³⁰ In Lalish, there is a place called *Celsa Şîxadî* (the assembly of Sheikh ‘Adî) for eating *Simat*. In religious texts, *Simat* is sacred and is regarded as holy food and a symbol of true faith:

¹⁰²⁵ *Beyta Cindî* (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 54, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 47.

¹⁰²⁶ Drower 1941: 92.

¹⁰²⁷ *Du‘a [Sifrê (=Xwarinê)]*, ‘The Prayer of the Meal’, seb. 4, in Celîl and Celîl 1978a: 435.

¹⁰²⁸ For further details see “*Sefera Nan û Mast* (The Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt)”, in chapter III, part II.

¹⁰²⁹ About these types of religious food see “The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals”, chapter III, part II.

¹⁰³⁰ See Image 46 in Appendices.

Bi qedrê cels û rewaqêt Şêxadî

- - -

Simat û sayêt xo dayim bikê

For the sake of the sessions and halls
of Sheikh ‘Adî

- - -

May you keep your *Simat* and *Sayî*
(sacred food) forever

Ya Şêxadî, çirayêt te digurîbin

*Simat û sayêt te didayimbin.*¹⁰³¹

O Sheikh ‘Adî, may your lamps burn
forever

May you keep your *Simat* and *Sayî*
(sacred food) forever.

Also, in:

Simate ye sebîl e

Ye bê qal e, bê qîl e

Ye bi rê ye bê bertîl e

*Razdarêt Dervêşan û delîl e.*¹⁰³²

*Simat*¹⁰³³ is path

It is not controversial

It has permission, and it is healthy¹⁰³⁴

The trusted service for Darwish and
poor (helpless).

As a religious duty, Yezidis must, in general, keep food and drinking water clean from pollution, and throwing it away is a sin and forbidden, especially with regard to food. Moreover, while cooking, if Yezidis throw away hot water, they must say: “*Ya Şêşims*” (O *Şêşims*) to be saved from evil powers.

2.3 Sleeping customs

Regarding the way of sleeping and the veneration of nature, it is normal to sleep in whatever way, but the head should not be directed towards the sunset, nor the legs towards the sunrise. This belief is based on the veneration and reverence of the sun; sunrise means the continuity of life and sunset means the end of life, and this way is only allowed for burying the dead.¹⁰³⁵

2.4 Clothing customs

The role of the symbolism of nature in Yezidi religious clothing will be described and explained through the types of clothes discussed below.

It is known that the wearing of white clothes is significant and religious for Yezidis, and white is the common colour for them. In Iraq, many old Yezidi women tend to wear white clothes and a white headscarf even today. Also, religious men wear white clothes,¹⁰³⁶ like Baba Sheikh, Baba Çawîş, Babê Gavan, etc. Moreover, *Toke* (the sacred

¹⁰³¹ *Dirozê*, seb. 3, 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 282, 286.

¹⁰³² *Qewlê Stiya Ês* (The Hymn of Stiya Ês), seb.16, in Xelef 1996: 11.

¹⁰³³ Literally, ‘Taste’.

¹⁰³⁴ Literally, ‘Without bribe’.

¹⁰³⁵ See “Funerary customs”, in chapter IV, part II.

¹⁰³⁶ See Image 47 in Appendices.

undershirt), *Pêçolîk* (baby clothes) and the shroud of the dead are white. According to Yezidism, white clothes are the clothes of pure faith, purity and cleanliness; this is because it is believed that “*Libisê îmanê spî ye*” (the cloth of faith is white). Religious texts refer to that belief:

<i>Libisê îmanê spî ye</i>	The garment of faith is white!
<i>Î nazîk e, î letîf e, î qewî ye</i>	It is delicate, charming and strong
<i>Hûn me hingêvinê gelê sunîye</i>	O Eizidi people do not make it impure
<i>Ew zor rengê dixeyîriye.</i> ¹⁰³⁷	It is quick to change colour. ¹⁰³⁸

Nature symbolism in the white clothes and their designs

In Yezidism, the veneration of white colour is the colour of light and its symbol, this below *sebeqe* confirms this:

<i>Sîpî nûr e ji bidayet e</i>	White is the light of guidance (i.e.,
<i>Rengê reş e bi zîlmat e.</i> ¹⁰³⁹	guidance of God)
	The black colour is darkness.

There are many religious clothes that are white, their designs have link with the veneration of the sun and its rays.

Tok as Yezidis religious cloth should be white. According to folk religious beliefs, some religious men and *sebeques*, it is the symbol of the sun circle and its light is a luminous gift from God and it¹⁰⁴⁰ comes from high. These *sebeques* confirm this belief:

<i>Roj bergeha tok nîşan e</i>	The sun is the origin ¹⁰⁴² and <i>Tok</i> is its
<i>Rist û simbêlê jî erkan e</i>	symbol
<i>Pê temam dibin îman e.</i> ¹⁰⁴¹	Growing a moustache is an obligation
	The faith is completed with them.
<i>Tok xelatekî bi mor e</i>	<i>Tok</i> is a luminous gift [from God]
<i>Hatbû ji xizîna jor e</i>	It came from the treasure in the high ¹⁰⁴⁴
<i>Danî ser milê Êzîdiya, bi qirara Êzî ye</i>	The Yezidis were invested with it by Red
<i>sor e</i>	Ezid's decision

¹⁰³⁷ *Qewlê Mirîdiyê* (The Hymn of Mirîdiyê), seb. 14, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 294.

¹⁰³⁸ “I.e. if Yezidis hurt each other, the colour of their faith will quickly change, and they will not remain true Yezidis”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 294, n. 26.

¹⁰³⁹ *Beyta Dinê* (The Beyt of the world), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 II: 750.

¹⁰⁴⁰ From the interviews with Se'îd Awdî Reşo, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Dasin, A. (1999), “Gîrîvâ al-Ayzîdiyê Amtîdad li-Halaqat al-'Ahîd al-Mîtrâyat” (The Yezidi Symbol Gîrîvân Extension of the Ring of Mithraism Era), *Lalîş*, No. 10, pp. 26-36; Hasû, 'A. (2008), *al-Yazîdiyât wa Falsafat al-Dârat* (Yezidism and the Circle Philosophy), Damascus: al-Takwîn, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Beyta Kaniya Sîpî* (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 9, in Sileyman 2013: 42.

¹⁰⁴² Literally *Bergeh* means cover, but it is not clear it is the cover of what. Perhaps i.e., sun is the cover of the origin of God's light. In Yezidism, *Nûr* is God's place, on which see “God is in all-natural places”, in chapter I, part I.

¹⁰⁴⁴ I.e., here it symbolizes the sun.

*Rêya Tokê bi hîf û cor e.*¹⁰⁴³

The path of the *Tokê*¹⁰⁴⁵ is torment and torture.

Tokê ji Êzîdîya ra qebl kir

He accepted the *Tok* for the Yezidi people

Nûr bi nûrê, te'mîd kir

He baptized the light by light.

Enil Xudê silav li Melik Şêx Sin û

First, God greeted Angel Sheikh Sin and

*Tawusî Melekê kir.*¹⁰⁴⁶

Tawusî Melek.

*Tac (crown) and Hil (robe).*¹⁰⁴⁷ These are holy clothes that are worn by only one person during the *Sema* ceremony.¹⁰⁴⁸ Here, a *Hil* is a long robe. A *Tac* is a kind of hat in a conical shape and it has artificial braids. Reşo writes that the “*Tac* is a long hat with braids called *Gulê* or *kezî* that represent sun’s rays that come down from the *Tac* [sun]”¹⁰⁴⁹. In other words, the *Tac* is the symbol of the sun and its *Gulê* or *kezî* are symbols of the sun’s rays. These *sebeqes* refer to them as the luminous *Tac* and *Hil*:

Siltan Ezîdê min Xerqe li ber kir

My Sultan Ezîd put on the *Xerqe*

Tacekê reşî qudrêtî nûranî li ser kir

He placed a luminous black crown of power on his head

*Feqîra li pê sefer kir.*¹⁰⁵⁰

The *Feqîrs* set out on a journey to reach him.

Also, in:

Rojekê subehî ye

One day, in the morning

Min dîtibû sivarek borîye

I saw a horseman passing by

Li berda tac û hîle, xerqe nûranî ye

Who wore a luminous crown, robe, and

Eve çil sal min ji berî te zanî sura Şêxê

Xerqe

*‘Edî ye.*¹⁰⁵¹

I knew the mystery forty years before you: it was that of Sheikh Adi.

*Kum, the Gosik and the Kofî.*¹⁰⁵² *Kum* is a type of hat in a conical shape and white in colour. Yezidi men in Shingal wear it. They put their hair in twelve braids, which are regarded as sacred and are called *Gosik*, they also say, Şerfedînê *gosike/golî zêrîn* (Şerfedîn had luminous braids). It is believed that *Kum* symbolizes the sun and *Gosik* represents the sun rays during the twelve months of the year.¹⁰⁵³ Moreover, a *Kofî* is a type of turban that is white in colour. It must have a circular shape and is wrapped seven times around

¹⁰⁴³ *Du’â Tokê* (The Prayer of the *Tok*), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 1035.

¹⁰⁴⁵ I.e., here it means the path of worshipping.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Du’â Tokê* (The Prayer of the *Tok*), seb. 8, in Reşo 2004 II: 1035.

¹⁰⁴⁷ See image 03 in appendices.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Reşo 2004 I: 120.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Reşo 2004 I: 120.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Qewlê Îmanê* (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 86.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Qewlê Rabi’e il-‘Edenîye* (The Hymn of *Rabi’e il-‘Edenîye*), seb. 10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 197.

¹⁰⁵² See Image 48 in Appendices.

¹⁰⁵³ From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesên Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok, Iraqi Kurdistan.

the head of Yezidi women in Shingal; they still wear it nowadays. It is believed that it symbolizes the sun and the seven days of the week.¹⁰⁵⁴

3 The Four Elements of Nature in Prohibitions and Taboos

This section consists of four subsections. The focus is on the prohibitions about each of the four elements of nature and how to keep it clean. Finally, the main conclusions are drawn.

In Yezidi beliefs, these four elements are primordial elements in *Dur* before the creation of the world, which later became the source of the creation of all creatures. Moreover, God's *Sur* (mystery or power) always exists in them; therefore, they are sacred in Yezidism. These *sebeqes* show this:

Av û ax û bayî û agir e
Dura sor ye bi xerz e ji bakîr e
*Çendî muxliq pê bi xatîr e.*¹⁰⁵⁵

Water, earth, air and fire
The red *Dur* contains the original seeds
It created all creatures.

Çendî ba û ax û av û agirî
Bi kerema Melik Fexredîn û Şêşims
dişuxilî
Covana Şêşims û Melik Fexredîn, ji
*'evîl beta bi axirî.*¹⁰⁵⁶

Wind and earth, water and fire, all these
Have their being through the power of
Fexredîn and Şêşims
The assembly of *Fexredîn* and *Şemsedîn*¹⁰⁵⁷
exists from the beginning till the end.

Bi wê surê têtin baran e
Bi wêsurê şîn dibit dar e
*Bi wê surê dikemle çendî behar e.*¹⁰⁵⁸

By that *Sur*, it rains
By that *Sur*, trees grow
By that *Sur*, all the springs are completed
(i.e., life).

Polluting these elements is prohibited on ground respect and veneration, because these are the 'creations' and 'elements' of which the world consists. As Kreyenbroek states, "taboos are often based on a prohibition to pollute the sacred 'elements': fire, earth, water, and air."¹⁰⁵⁹ He adds, "the frequent references to various taboos in the literature suggests that such prohibitions were considered by Yezidis and researchers alike to be conspicuous markers of Yezidi identity."¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁴ From the interview with Xelef Hecî Hemed, 21.11.2017, Minden, Germany.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Qewlê Dura* (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 30, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.

¹⁰⁵⁷ They are Yezidi holy men, on them see Kreyenbroek 1995: 102-103.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Qewlê Sura* (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 248.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Kreyenbroek 2009: 19.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Kreyenbroek 1995: 147.

3.1 Fire and its manifestations

There are prohibitions based on keeping a fire clean; throwing anything into a fire is supposed to pollute it, and stones and clay are prohibited. Yezidis also do not extinguish the fire of lamp with their breath it is not considered clean therefore, this is prohibited.¹⁰⁶¹ Yezidis do not extinguish a fire (except when a fire is set somewhere unintentionally) with water because it is prohibited, they do so only with soil. Moreover, spitting on a fire is also forbidden.¹⁰⁶² Additionally, Yezidis do not urinate on a fire, out of as respect for its sacredness, nor do they urinate while facing a fire, lamps or the direction of the sun. Uttering disrespectful words and cursing fire under any circumstances are prohibited.

There are some prohibitions depending on the veneration of the sun and the light; it is forbidden for Yezidis to direct their legs towards the sunrise while sleeping, because of the veneration of the sun. It is not permissible, when someone dies, to dig a grave after sunset and before sunrise, because daytime is the time of good acts.¹⁰⁶³ Moreover, leaving one's shoes upside down is forbidden, mainly because of the sacredness of the sky and its celestial bodies, such as the sun, the stars and the rain. Also, Yezidis should not say impolite words and should not be angry when there is lightning and thunder, and any improper conduct is forbidden towards them, for example spitting.

3.2 Water and its manifestations

There are also some prohibitions based on keeping water clean. Polluting and spoiling water in general, especially the water of springs, rivers and ponds, is forbidden. Spitting and urinating in them are also forbidden; even the saying of disrespectful words and cursing water are not tolerated. You may, for example, not curse heavy rain and heavy snow; you are also not permitted to throw away hot water. Water must be drunk with respect; it is forbidden to gargle while drinking or to drink it while in a lying position.

3.3 Earth and its manifestations

The following are some prohibitions based on keeping the earth and the soil clean. Damaging and polluting the earth in general, and specifically in religious places, is forbidden. Spitting on the ground, cursing and saying inappropriate words to the earth, is prohibited. Based on the veneration of earth, in all Yezidi religious places wearing shoes by pilgrims is forbidden because of the holiness of its earth, such as in Lalish:

Ferzêt xo bicîhke û derbas be
Berê mirinê here Lalişê pêxivas be
*Da li axretê xêra te ye nas be.*¹⁰⁶⁴

Perform your obligations and pass
 Before death, visit Lalish with bare feet
 So that your alms will be known in the last
 day.

¹⁰⁶¹ See also Ainsworth, W. F. (1842 II), *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea and Armenia*, in two volumes, vol. II, London: John W. Parker, p. 187.

¹⁰⁶² Ibid.

¹⁰⁶³ For additional information see "Funerary customs", in chapter IV, part II.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Qewlê Mersîma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 82, in Kişto 2012: 130.

Additionally, ploughing the earth and spoiling its nature in *Nîsan* is forbidden, and this includes cutting down trees, or removing plants and flowers during this time. According to Yezidism, this is prohibited for the following reasons: It is the time when the earth is alive with seeds during the period of germination.¹⁰⁶⁵ Also, the earth is pregnant with grass, weed, and fruits of the earth.¹⁰⁶⁶ The beauty of nature and the continuity of germination are to be preserved.¹⁰⁶⁷ These *sebeqes* refer to the earth adorned with plants during this month:

Lî çarşembwê xoş bû jiyan

Kesik bûn deşit û çiya û zewî û zozan

Hemû bi kerema Pedşê min î Yezdan.

Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays¹⁰⁶⁹

Plain, mountain, field and pasture are adorned with plants

All those by the mystical power of my King (i.e., God) Yezdan.

Hat çarşembuwa sor e

Nîsan xemiland bû bi xo re

*Ji batin da ye bi mor e.*¹⁰⁶⁸

Came the red Wednesday

Adorned April with itself

From the world of the Unseen it is baptized.

Based on the belief discussed above, and according to Yezidi beliefs in general, marriages and weddings are forbidden in *Nîsan* because its beautiful nature is the bride of the year and it is forbidden to have any other bride in that month.¹⁰⁷⁰ Besides, Yezidis believe that there is a holy marriage in *Nîsan*, and that is why it is forbidden for humans to marry.¹⁰⁷¹ According to Yezidi tradition, in *Nîsan*, Tawusî Melek as a light from the sky descent to earth for the fertilization and germination of the earth.¹⁰⁷² Moreover, according to Ğindî, the purpose behind humans not marrying in this month, is because the lord of sun embraces the goddess of the earth and makes her pregnant with grass, weed, and the fruits of the earth, that is why it is forbidden to get married and plough the earth during this month.¹⁰⁷³ According to custom the earth is female while the sky is male (has rain and sun rays). As a result of the marriage between them the earth becomes pregnant with grass and adorns with flowers like a bride.

Generally, based on the sacredness of nature, burning nature, cutting down trees (especially the fruitful ones) and spoiling, damaging and destroying plants, grass, crops

¹⁰⁶⁵ Silêman 1985: 9; al-Yūsif 1999: 130.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ğindî 1998: 113.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Bâqasirî 2003: 137-138.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 5, 19, in Kişto 2004: 206-207, 209.

¹⁰⁶⁹ I.e., the first Wednesday of Eastern April, which is the Yezidi New Year.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See Silêman 1985: 9; Ğindî and Birūkā 2003: 64.

¹⁰⁷¹ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Birūkā, H. (1995). *Dirāsât fî Mîwûlûğîyâ al-Diyânat al-İzîdîyat* (Studies of the Yazidi Religion Mythology), 1st ed., Germany: s.n., 165; al-Yūsif 1999: 130; Ğindî and Birūkā 2003: 63.

¹⁰⁷² For supplementary information see “*Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)”, in chapter III, part II.

¹⁰⁷³ Ğindî 1998: 113.

and trees, is prohibited, especially in holy places for instance, Lalish and shrines. There is a saying in Yezidism, “*Dar jî wekî mirova bi rub in*” (trees like humans have souls). Moreover, grafting plants and trees is forbidden because Yezidis believe it is against natural rules to do so.

Heke 'erdeki bibîni, îşaret ke
Dervêşekî bibîni, 'îbadet ke
*Darekî bibîni, ziyaret ke.*¹⁰⁷⁴

When you see earth, mark it
 When you see a Darwish, venerate him
 When you see a tree, make a pilgrimage
 to it (i.e., kiss it).

Also, in:

Ya Melik Şerfedîne min yê herûber î
Tu bideye xatira 'erd û 'ezman û dar û
berî
Tu li me nekeye tengavî zû li banga me
*werî.*¹⁰⁷⁵

Oh, my eternal Melik Şerfedîn
 For the sake of the earth and the sky, tree
 and stone
 You do not leave us in trouble and come
 to rescue us immediately.

3.4 Air and wind

Yezidis regard keeping the air and the wind clean as an obligation and it is as such, prohibited to pollute the air and wind. Spitting in the air is forbidden for Yezidis and they do not urinate while facing the wind. Also, it is forbidden for Yezidi men to urinate while standing up because it is inappropriate. Saying inappropriate and disrespect words to the air/wind, hurricane, dust storm, etc., is prohibited.

Other taboos based on nature

The nature of food as a product of natural elements entails the taboo of spoiling and throwing food away and stepping on bread. If someone unwittingly steps on food or bread, he/she must pick it up, kiss it and touch his/her forehead with it, then put it in a clean place.

Regarding nature and the taboo of eating some plants (vegetables), this type of prohibition is found among some Yezidi groups. Some clans of sheikhs and Pîrs are associated with specific plants and vegetables, for example, Sheikhs of Xatûna Fexran and their followers do not eat lentils, Sheikhs of Fexredîn and their followers do not eat beans and pumpkin. For all Yezidis, it is taboo to eat some vegetables, for example, lettuce, cauliflower and cabbage; there is not a clear reason for that.

Nature symbolism and taboos

Nature symbolism and the taboo of killing and eating some animals. Some clans of sheikhs and Pîrs are associated with specific animals that have a link with the symbolism of nature. The peacock is the symbol of the sun and it is holy for all Yezidis;¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Dû'a Ziyaretbûnê* (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), seb. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Qewlê Çarşembîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 39, in Kişto 2004: 212.

¹⁰⁷⁶ For more details see “The symbolism of the *Tanus* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

therefore, it is forbidden to kill it and eat its meat. Moreover, Sheikhs of Amadîn¹⁰⁷⁷ and their followers do not eat the meat of the cockerel, it is considered to be the messenger of sunrise and the light because it crows when the sun rises.¹⁰⁷⁸ Moreover, a black snake is holy for Yezidis, and killing it is forbidden. In Yezidi traditions, the veneration of black snake has link with the *Ava Hêwanê/Ava Jîyanê* (the water of life) and immortality.¹⁰⁷⁹ With regard to the scorpion, it is believed that the *Pîrs* of the *Pîr Cerwan* clan have control over it and killing it is forbidden. These *Pîrs* wander in villages and sprinkle water in houses to keep scorpions away. Here, the water plays a role to keep the house safe. Even regarding fish, there are a number of Yezidi people who do not eat fish because it is forbidden. The fourteenth point of ‘the Yezidi petition to the Ottoman Government (1872).’ states that “The Yezidis do not eat fish.”¹⁰⁸⁰ The fish is the symbol of water in Yezidi belief.

Traditionally, wearing blue clothes, and using blue colour in houses, is forbidden, especially during religious ceremonies. Point twenty-four of the *Mishêfa Reş* (The Black Scripture) states that “It is forbidden [...] to use blue colour”¹⁰⁸¹, On this belief, Layard writes, “the colour blue, to them (i.e. Yezidis), as to the Sabaeans, is an abomination; and never to be worn, as in dress, or to be used in their houses.”¹⁰⁸² About the link of this belief with nature, according to Yezidi religious folk beliefs it is prohibited because blue is regarded as a heavenly colour i.e. it is the colour of the sky. In Yezidism, the sky is the place of divine souls and powers;¹⁰⁸³ therefore, it is not permissible for people to wear this colour on earth because it is sacred. Moreover, Yezidis look at it as holy and as possessing spiritual power that can be used against evil power. There are many religious practices based on this belief, for instance, hanging a blue bead on a baby’s forehead, hanging blue amulets in the house, on the shoulders of a bride and groom, etc.; all of these are done to preventing evil eyes, envy and diseases.

4 The Four Elements of Nature in Religious Healing Practices

Yezidis believe that the natural elements have spiritual power; therefore, they have curative powers for many sicknesses:

*Çendî ba û ax û av û agirî
Bi kerema Melik Fexredîn û Şêşims
dişuxçilî*

Wind and earth, water and fire, all these
Have their being through the power of
Fexredîn and Şêşims
The assembly of Fexredîn and Şemsedîn
exists from the beginning till the end.

¹⁰⁷⁷ He is the son of Şêşims and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 102; Omarkhali 2008: 107.

¹⁰⁷⁸ For further information see “The symbolism of the *Dikeil* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

¹⁰⁷⁹ In details see “The symbolism of the *Marê Reş* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

¹⁰⁸⁰ ‘The Yezidi petition to the Ottoman Government (1872)’, Kreyenbroek 1995: 7.

¹⁰⁸¹ Bittner 1913: 32.

¹⁰⁸² Layard 1851 I: 248.

¹⁰⁸³ For detailed information see “Earth and sky, paradise and hell”, in chapter III, part I.

*Covana Şêşims û Melik Fexredîn, jî
'evil beta bi axirî.'*¹⁰⁸⁴

4.1 Fire and its manifestations

Certain illnesses are associated with fire and are treated by Sheikhs or Pîrs, for example *Ağirok* (red spots) appear mostly on babies' faces, and these are cured by putting the fire of *Heste û beriste* (names of two pebbles) close to the infected skin of the baby, with the hands of *Şêşims'* sheikhs.¹⁰⁸⁵ Nowadays, the fire of *Stewbir* (lighter) is used for the same purpose.¹⁰⁸⁶ Furthermore, for the treatment of some of the skin diseases such as *Bîrov* (ringworm), *Kelipandin* (athlete's foot), the patient should go the Sheikhs and Pîrs home where they put their saliva on the infected place of the body, it should not become wet and should be exposed for a moment to the light and heat of sunrise for three following Wednesdays. Moreover, there are some skin diseases such as *Terikandin/Terikê* (cracked skin), the patient needs the same above treatment but this time the infected place should not be exposed to the light of the sun for three following Wednesdays.¹⁰⁸⁷

4.2 Water and its manifestations

Yezidis believe that water, and specifically the water of some springs, can be used to treat many diseases, as highlighted in this sub-section.

Yezidis use the water of certain springs, believing it will heal several illnesses and diseases, for example, the water of *Kaniya Sipî* and *Kaniya Zimzim* in Lalish, *Kaniya Evdê Reş* in the village of Derabun, *Kaniya Mi'êrka* in the centre of Ain Sifin, *Kaniya Pîraxayê* in the village of Kulkan and *Kaniya Kedrê* in the village of Solax in Shingal, etc. Religious texts confirm that the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* is a cure for many ills. Yezidis visit it for this purpose:

<i>Feqîra û jê xeber da</i>	The Feqîrs talk about this:
<i>Jî 'esman beta bi'erda</i>	From the sky down to the earth,
<i>Jî 'erda beta bi ser da</i>	From the earth upward,
<i>Ava Kaniya Sipî sîfbeta [*şifeta] bi ser</i>	The water of the <i>Kaniya Sipî</i> is a healing
<i>çî qas derda.</i> ¹⁰⁸⁸	for so many ills.

Another *sebeqe* indicates that the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* is a treatment for several illnesses, such as headaches, rheumatism and depression:

<i>Hege ba ye û hege jan e û kovan e</i>	If it is air (rheumatism), and if it is headache and depression
--	--

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Du'a û Qewlê Şêşims* (The Prayer and Hymn of *Şêşims*), seb. 30, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.

¹⁰⁸⁵ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Xemo, T. Ş. (2007), *Jimare (3, 7, 40) di Mîtolociya Êzîdîyan da* (Numbers (3, 7, 40) in Yezidis Mythology), Duhok: Spîrêz, p. 44.

¹⁰⁸⁷ From the interview with Zezal Silêman Yousif (the custodian of the *Zêns of Memê Şivan*), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Qewlê Şêxîbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir), seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 100.

Ava Kaniya Sipî, mij'etê çiqas derid û derman e The water of the *Kaniya Sipî* is a remedy for all illnesses
*Lê bike û lê dibû derman e.*¹⁰⁸⁹ Use it and it becomes a healing for them.

Additionally, the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* in a *Şerbik* (jar), during the *Tanûsgêran* festival, is drunk by sick people for the purpose of healing.¹⁰⁹⁰ Moreover, Yezidis turn their patients' faces towards Lalish and give them a *Berat* melted in a bowl of water. The patient then stands in awe and humility and drinks a dose of that water, accompanied by praying, for the purpose of healing.¹⁰⁹¹

Here are the names of those ills that are healed by water, with reference to the way of their treatment:

For skin diseases (dermatosis) in general, the patient should go to the *Kanî Gurîk* spring (the spring of itching) in Ain Safni in the centre of the Shiekhhan district. If he/she is inflamed and infected with scabies and severe suppuration, the treatment is done by washing the skin with its water and daubing it with the clay of that spring.¹⁰⁹² For itching of the skin (also known as pruritus), the patient should visit Sheikh Mend's shrine in the village of Bahzani to wash the affected part with the water of a spring located inside the shrine.¹⁰⁹³ To treat warts, there is a pond near the Ain Sifin district, named *Şêbaloka*. This pond can be used to treat warts by washing the skin with its water and clay.

Rheumatism is treated with the water of springs in several ways and in different locations. The patients go to the springs where they drink from their water and bathe in it. Most of these springs are mineral and are spread around most areas inhabited by Yezidis, such as the *Kanî bayê* (the spring of air/rheumatism) near the village of Êsiyan, and the *Kaniya Barbaykê* (the spring of air/rheumatism) in Lalish, near *Xana Êzî*. Also, the *Kaniya Bawê* (the spring of *Bawê*) is between the village of Bacid Kendala and the village of Kewrênî, in Duhok province. There is another spring that has the same name and same function in the village of Ribêbî in the Duhok province.

About *zerik* (anaemia) and jaundice, there is a spring called the *Kanî Zerik* or *Kaniya Şêxê Zerî* (*Şêxê Zerî's* spring) in the village of Bêtmar in the Sheikhhan district. Its water and clay are for healing anaemia. Yezidis also believe it heals those afflicted by jaundice. To be healed, patients swim in the spring.¹⁰⁹⁴ In fact, Yezidis use the name *zerik* for both anaemia and jaundice. Here, the name of the spring comes from *zerik*, the name of the illness.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Du'a Serêşê, Şaxê 1* (The Prayer Against Headache, Version 1), seb. 3, in 'Esker, S. X. (2011), *Du'ayên Êzîdîyan* (The Yezidi Prayers), Duhok: Hawar, p. 58.

¹⁰⁹⁰ From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Kreyenbroek 1995: 75.

¹⁰⁹¹ Barwārî 2001: 75

¹⁰⁹² It is believed that the water of this spring was the source of the flood during the time of the Prophet Noah. From the interviews with Xelîl Cindî Reşo, 22.12.2017, Göttingen, Germany; Bedelê Feqîr Hecî, 10.03.2019 Oldenburg, Germany. Also see Barwārî 2001: 79.

¹⁰⁹³ Barwārî 2001: 79.

¹⁰⁹⁴ From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesên Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Ahmed 1975: 167.

For inflammation of the mouth and gums, the patient goes to Sheikh Mend's shrine in the village of Bahzani to pick green olives from the trees of the shrine, then chews them well and after that rinses his/her mouth with the water of the spring of the shrine, which is a mineral spring inside the shrine.¹⁰⁹⁵

To heal fever, there is a spring in the shrine of Sheikh Baliko at Bahzani, used for sprinkling water over those who have a fever.

Ophthalmitis (eye infection) is treated by putting water into the patient's eyes. There are some families who do this in Bahzani and in Ba'shiqa.¹⁰⁹⁶

To remedy women's sterility, there is a spring in the village of Kulkan, on the Shingal Mountain, called *Kaniya Pîraxayê*. Yezidi women visit it to conceive.¹⁰⁹⁷ Women also go for this purpose to the Xidir Liyas shrine in the village of Ba'adra. There is a big cup called Jamkê-Jam, from which sterile women drink water.¹⁰⁹⁸ Here, there are some *sebeqes* that refer to the holy water of the cup with the name of Xidir Liyas:

<i>Cindiyo tu yê rênas</i>	O, young man, you are a guide
<i>Me şerab divêt ji kasêd xas</i>	We need to drink from special cups.
<i>Li wê bendê ye le bramo milkê Xidr û liyas.</i> ¹⁰⁹⁹	Come on, brother, (let us go) to this pond, the property of Xidr-liyas.

Also, in:

<i>Hey Xidiro bin Xidir</i>	O Xidir, son of Xidir!
<i>Te kasek da min bukir</i>	You gave me an unsullied (pure) cup
<i>Min vexwar bi nav û dikir</i>	I drank, pronouncing [God's] name
<i>Dibirime ser 'elmekê faxîr.</i> ¹¹⁰⁰	I was taken to superior knowledge.

Moreover, the Birka/Bîra Mehmed Reşan (Mehmed Reşan's pond) in his *Mezar* in the Meqlub mountain, is where infertile Yezidi women go to drink from it in order to have children.

To cure the sting of a scorpion or the bite of a snake, the following are noteworthy. Sheikhs of the Sheikh Mend clan are considered to be able to heal those who have been bitten by these creatures. It is also believed that the family of Pîre Carwan has control over scorpions. They wash the infected place of the body with cold water. Also, there is a prayer, recited by religious men, for avoiding the stings of scorpions and the bites of snakes. The reciter should put his finger in a bowl of water and move his finger in it while he recites the prayer three times, and then he must sprinkle that water around the house, believing that scorpions cannot get close to those places. Moreover, this prayer is recited while treating the stings and also to keep scorpions and snakes away from people's houses.¹¹⁰¹ Here is the text of the prayer:

¹⁰⁹⁵ Barwārî 2001: 79-80.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid: 80.

¹⁰⁹⁷ From the interview with Aliyas Mîrza Derwêş, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Barwārî 2001: 84-85.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Beyta Cindî* (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 31, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 48.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Qewlê Îmanê* (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 8, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 84.

¹¹⁰¹ From the interview with Xidir Silêman, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Barwārî 2001: 86.

<i>Şêx Mendî Fexiran e</i>	Sheikh Mendî Fexirane
<i>Pîrê Cerman e</i>	Pîrê Cerwane ¹¹⁰³
<i>Heke dubîşk e</i>	If it is a scorpion
<i>Heke mar e</i>	If it is a snake
<i>Di serî de bike hefsar e</i>	They control them ¹¹⁰⁴
<i>Berde çol û çolbeyaran</i>	Free them to moors and the wilderness
<i>Heya em sibê bibin hişyar e</i>	Until we wake up in the morning
<i>Û roj li me bibe diyarî e.</i> ¹¹⁰²	And the sun rises on us.

When it comes to ear diseases, a person infected must visit a certain place in Lalish, called Eba Guşguş. They are treated by putting some water into the patient's ears.¹¹⁰⁵

4.3 Earth and its manifestations

As a religious practice, Yezidis use soil and clay to treat some diseases and illnesses, as will now be explained:

In general, Yezidis take a little soil from religious places, such as *Qub*, *Mezar* and *Xas'* shrines, and keep it for healing, for example, when a baby is afraid and keeps crying at night, some of that soil is placed on its body or its bed. Moreover, Yezidis bring a very small amount of soil, the size of a hazelnut, they keep it in a white piece of fabric and hang it over their children's shoulders.

To heal skin diseases, the patient scabies and impetigo is taken to the *Kurbekira* shrine in the village of Boza to cover the site of the infection with the spot of that shrine, for a period of three days.¹¹⁰⁶ Moreover, to cure *Bîrov* (Ringworm), the infected person goes to *Şikefta Gundî* (the cave of the village) in the village of Memê Şivan in the collective village of Khanke and rubs the infected spot with the soil of that cave.¹¹⁰⁷

In the case of ophthalmitis, if it becomes severe for the patient, then he/she will go to the Sheikh Musê Sor shrine, located between the villages of Ba'shiqa and Bahzani. They will daub their forehead with the clay of the shrine and return to their home, awaiting recovery.¹¹⁰⁸

When a person is struck with malaria, the patient is taken to the *Melekê Méran* shrine in Boza or Ba'shiqa, and the *Micênir* gives him/her a quantity of the soil of that shrine. The patient will then knead it with the water of a spring close to the shrine and daub his/her forehead with it.¹¹⁰⁹ On this practice, Drower states that those who suffer from

¹¹⁰² *Du'a Dûpişk û Mar* (the Prayer [Against the Poison] of the Scorpion and the Snake), seb. 2, 3, in Hecî 2002: 334-335.

¹¹⁰³ He is the eponym of a family of Pîrs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 110; Omarkhali 2008:116.

¹¹⁰⁴ Literally, 'Bound reins to the head.'

¹¹⁰⁵ Esker 2011: 60.

¹¹⁰⁶ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

¹¹⁰⁷ From the interview with Xezal Silêman Yousif (the custodian of the *Zêrs of Memê Şivan*), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹¹⁰⁸ Barwârî 2001: 80.

¹¹⁰⁹ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

malaria come to Sit Nafisah shrine, they scrape some sacred dust from the small enclosure for cure.¹¹¹⁰

For Typhoid fever, the patient goes to the stone of *Garmek* in the south of Bahzani. He/she then smears his/her face with the soil of that place. Moreover, patients go to the shrines of *Melekê Mêran* in the village of Boza for the same purpose.¹¹¹¹

Zerik (anaemia) is also believed to be cured with soil. Sufferers visit the family of *Şêşims* Sheikhs for healing; one of them smears the soil, in the name of *Şêşims*, on the patient's forehead.¹¹¹² In the *Du'a Zerkê* (Prayer of *Zerkê*) this practice is made clear:

<i>Ya Xudê ya Şêşims bi destê we bit, ne</i>	O God, O Şêşims, by your hand and not
<i>bi yê min bit</i>	by mine
<i>Tu vê nexoşî sax keyî</i>	You heal the sick one
<i>Çi qesta we û vê malê kiriye</i>	Whoever visited this house
<i>Divêt tu sax keyî.</i> ¹¹¹³	You should heal him/her.

Rheumatism sufferers take some soil from the sanctuary of *Melikê Mêran*,¹¹¹⁴ near Ba'shiqa, and then go down to a stream, mix the soil with its water to make mud, and then rub it on the belly.¹¹¹⁵ This is also done for the same purpose with soil taken from the shrine of the *Melikê Mêran* the village of Boza.¹¹¹⁶

4.3.1 Plants

Trees. There are religious texts that refer to the veneration of trees in Yezidism:

<i>Hûn bidene xatira behîştê û darê</i>	For the sake of the paradise and the tree,
<i>Kafê û mexarê, ...</i> ¹¹¹⁷	The cave and the cavern, ...

Yezidis believe that trees have mystical powers; therefore, they are used for healing practices:

<i>Kerema Çiyayê Mişetê</i>	The mystical power of Mount Mişet
<i>Çiyayê Hizretê, Çiyayê 'Erefatê</i>	Mount Hizret, Mount 'Erefat
<i>Dar û berêt Geliyê Lalişê.</i> ¹¹¹⁸	[The mystical power of] Trees and stones of the Laliş Valley.

Furthermore, Empson states that mulberry trees generally seem to claim their adoration, as they are thought to be endowed with sacred qualities such as having the power to cure disease.¹¹¹⁹

¹¹¹⁰ Drower 1941: 28.

¹¹¹¹ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

¹¹¹² 'Esker 2011: 56.

¹¹¹³ *Du'a Zerkê* (Prayer of *Zerkê*), seb. 1, in 'Esker 2011: 56.

¹¹¹⁴ On this religious figure see Kreyenbroek 1995: 115.

¹¹¹⁵ See Edmonds 1967: 74; Kreyenbroek 1995: 115.

¹¹¹⁶ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

¹¹¹⁷ *Du'aya Hênarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cîndî 1979: 22.

¹¹¹⁸ *Dirozê*, seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 286.

¹¹¹⁹ Empson 1928: 82.

Generally, there are many sacred trees in Yezidi districts which are believed to have certain powers to cure several diseases. For instance, trees at the *Sit Nafisa* shrine in Basheiq, the blackberry bushes of Sheikh Mend in Bahzani, the oak tree on the road heading from Ain Sifni and Lalish, called the *Dara Kocek* (Kocek tree), then there are also the *Neb Dar* (Nine trees), etc. Moreover, *Zora Gabara* is an orchard in the village of Gabara, near Alqush. There are some Nerium oleander trees and people go there for recovering from several diseases.¹¹²⁰

For treating fever, the *Dara ta yî* (the tree of fever) is located in a valley in the north of the village of Ba'adra, where people go for treatment and tie threads to its branches. Then there is a tree named *Dara ta û bayê* (the tree of fever and rheumatism) in Lalish; people of the area who have fever visit it and thread a band on the tree and ask for healing.¹¹²¹ Moreover, for this purpose, there is also a fig-tree at the *Sit Nefise* shrine, in the village of Ba'shiqe¹¹²² and a fig tree at the shrine of Sheikh Beko in the village of Bahzani.¹¹²³

For protection from the evil eye, there is the *Dara Nezerê* (the tree of [against] the evil eye) near the *Şêşims* shrine in Lalish. Yezidis take their children to it and take home a small piece of it. In addition to this, the *Du'a Nezerê*, (the prayer [against] the evil eye) is recited while treatment is received.

<i>Ya cebar, ya cebêr, ya pîrî kar</i>	O Mighty, all-powerful, Pîrî Kar
<i>Ya Xundikarê ber û behir</i>	O Lord of the land and sea
<i>A Xaliqê leyl û nebar ya Rebî! îsmek</i>	O creator of the night and day, O Lord!
<i>sitar.</i> ¹¹²⁴	Your name is saviour.

To treat children's deprivation, there is tree-trunk in Lalish, in front of *Kaniya Sipê*, that is named the *Dara Xenê* (the tree of sleeping). A small piece of it is tied around the child's neck, hoping it will help it to sleep. A sacred olive tree at Ba'shiqa also cures insomnia.¹¹²⁵ To restore the milk of mothers' dry breasts, Yezidi women go to *Dara Şîrî* (the tree of milk) in the village of Boza; they take its branches and its soil for healing.¹¹²⁶ Moreover, for skin disease, a wart is treated religiously by praying on the root of the carob tree.¹¹²⁷

Grass. Abdominal pains are treated with a bitter syrup of a herb called Heşîşê Şêşims (the herb of Şêşims).¹¹²⁸ To cure wounds, the ancestor of Hekîm Fêris¹¹²⁹ (Luqman and his descendants) used drugs and aromatic plants.¹¹³⁰ For protection from harm and

¹¹²⁰ Barwārî 2001: 87.

¹¹²¹ See Image 14 in Appendices.

¹¹²² Kreyenbroek 1995: 73.

¹¹²³ Ibid: 114.

¹¹²⁴ *Du'a Nezerê, Şaxê 1* (The Prayer Against the Evil Eye, Version 1), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 996.

¹¹²⁵ Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.

¹¹²⁶ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

¹¹²⁷ Barwārî 2001: 79.

¹¹²⁸ Ibid: 83.

¹¹²⁹ About Hekîm Fêris see Kreyenbroek 1995:123.

¹¹³⁰ Kreyenbroek 1995: 123.

hardships, there is an ordinary cane in the Şahsiwar shrine in the village of Bêban, near Alqush. Yezidis visit it to take pieces of it because they believe it will protect them from harm and hardships.

4.3.2 Stones

Religious texts venerate stones, as in this *sebeqe*:

<i>Hîn bidene xatira Dura zêr e</i>	For the sake of the yellow pearl,
<i>Ax û av û agir e</i>	Soil, water, and fire,
<i>Erd û 'ezman û ber e, ...¹¹³¹</i>	Earth, sky, and stone, ...

In healing practices, Yezidis venerate some stones, such as the following.

To heal backache, there is a *Berê Pişt Êşê* (headache stone) inside the *Zimzim* cave spring in Lalish. Another one is to be found in the *Mezarê Mem Şivan* (the Cemetery of *Mem Şivan*) in the collective village of Khanke.¹¹³² Yezidis go to both stones and put their backs to them, believing it will cure backache. For kidney diseases, there is a shrine called *Naxsî* in the village of Ba'shiqa; the patient kisses it and he takes a piece of thread with him/her to the stone of *Naxsî*, then throws it on the stone and goes back home without saying a single word.¹¹³³ For wasting syndrome (cachexia), there is a shrine in the village of Bozan, near Alqush, named *Barê Boza* (the stone of Bozan). If a child has wasting syndrome or a chronic illness, he is taken there and put on that stone; if the child starts crying, it is a prediction that he will be cured and if he does not it means he will not live.¹¹³⁴

General and prominent conclusions of this chapter are as follows:

The role of nature is the major reason for the existence and observance of many religious customs. These takes place in the following main ways: in rites of passage, in daily religious customs, in customs based on taboos and prohibitions, and lastly, in customs related to healing practices.

In terms of the rites of passage, there are many Yezidi rites of passage depending on the role and veneration of nature and its four sacred elements, such as *Morkirin* (baptism), using *Berat* as holy soil and taking soil from religious places for a newborn baby as part of the customs of childbirth, the drinking of water from the *Şerbik* (jar), as well as the water and the *Dehnokêt Bûkê* (bride's grains) in wedding customs. In the funerary rites, we may reiterate the custom of washing the corpse for blessing, putting *Berat* as holy soil on the face of the deceased, and burying the deceased in soil. Lighting lamps for the first seven days in the place of the deceased are also part of the funerary customs.

There are some religious daily customs based on the veneration of nature, for example, as part of their religious duties, Yezidis must be clean and wash their faces with water before the daily prayers. In food consumption customs, water, wheat and its

¹¹³¹ *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), seb. 9, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 23.

¹¹³² See Image 49 in Appendices.

¹¹³³ Barwârî 2001: 83-84.

¹¹³⁴ *Ibid*: 86.

products are venerated by Yezidis. While sleeping, the Yezidis should face the sun. There is also noteworthy symbolism of nature in clothing and appearance. As mentioned, the colour white and the style of some clothes, like *Tac* and *Kezî*, *Kom*, *Gosik* and *Kofi*, symbolize the circular shape of the sun, its light and its rays.

In general, there are many prohibitions and taboos based on keeping the natural elements and their environment pure from anything that causes pollution, spoilage and deterioration, such as spitting on natural elements, urinating on fire, water and plants, burning trees and harming plants, as well as uttering curses and inappropriate words towards natural elements and phenomena. Furthermore, there are some prohibitions and taboos based on the symbolism of nature, for instance, blue clothes are said by some to be the symbol of the colour of the sky; the peacock may be a symbol of the sun, etc.

The study explains how nature and its four sacred elements play a key role in religious healing practices. Yezidis try to treat several different illnesses and diseases by using nature, and the most prominent natural resources used for this purpose are water, soil, clay, tree, plants and stones. In some cases, prayers are recited during the process of healing. Moreover, there are some natural manifestations, like springs and trees, dedicated as religious places for healing practices. These places are mostly named after the illness that each treats, for instance, *Kanî Zerik* (the spring of anaemia), *Kanî Gurîk* (the spring of itching), *Kaniya Barbayké* (the spring of air/rheumatism), *Dara ta û bayé* (the tree of fever and rheumatism), *Dara Nezerê* (the tree of [against] the evil eye), and similar.

Chapter V

The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Symbols and Objects

This chapter is dedicated to the study of the role of nature and its four sacred elements in Yezidi religious symbols, objects and concepts directly connected with nature. It is divided into nine sections. First, for most of the symbols and objects, there is a general description of their structure. Next, an analysis of the role and veneration of nature in each symbol is given, mostly through its symbolism and its usages in religious life. The significance of these symbols will be discussed at the end of each symbol. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the major conclusions are drawn.

1 *Berat* (Sacred Soil Ball)

The *Berat*¹¹³⁵ is one of the most sacred religious symbols in Yezidism.¹¹³⁶ It is a small ball, about the size of a chickpea, and it has a bone-white colour.¹¹³⁷ It is formed from earth and water from Lalish. This is done by a group of unmarried young girls and boys. There is no specific time to make *Berat*, but it is usually made during ceremonies performed in Lalish. Besides, Yezidi people take the *Berat* from religious men during their pilgrimages to Lalish, and notably in ceremonies and festivals, also in the ceremony of *Tawusgêran* and in the homes of religious men.

1.1 The symbolism of the *Berat* in religious life

The symbolism of *Berat* and the materials it is made of is significant. *Berat* is regarded as holy water and earth. It is made from the soil of a special place called *Şikefta Berata* (the cave of *Berats*) in Lalish, which is holy soil in the Yezidi religion. It is kneaded into balls with the water of *Kaniya Sipê*, which is also sacred in Yezidism. It must exclusively be dried under the rays of the sun; the sun is the holiest celestial object in Yezidism. The following *sebeqe* refers to the substance of *Berat*. It also refers to the point that the *Berat* appeared by *Şêşims*⁹ (lord of Sun) mystical power, perhaps because it is dried under the rays of the sun:

<i>Bi awa Kaniya Sipê Berat çêdikirin</i>	<i>Berat</i> was made by the water of the White
<i>Celwe bû nîşana meleke Şêx Sin</i>	Spring
<i>Bi qeweta Şêşims hate diyarkirin.</i> ¹¹³⁸	Jelwe was the symbol of angel Sheikh Sin It appeared by the mystical power of Şêşims.

According to Yezidism, the bone-white colour of *Berat* symbolizes cleanliness and purification. In Yezidi folk belief, the circular shape of the *Berat* symbolizes the earth. Also, religious men emphasize that the *Berat* symbolizes the mixture of pure water with holy soil and represents the creation of the planet earth and the emergence of life on

¹¹³⁵ Regarding the name and history of the *Berat*, as a word, Kreyenbroek writes, “the word *berat* has a range of meanings, notably ‘innocence’ and ‘decree’ (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 36). He adds, in “Kurd. *berat* can mean ‘innocence, freedom from guilt or sin’ (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107, n. 248). Moreover, the Yezidi writer Z. B. Hakari states that “the *Berat* may give the meaning of ‘living’ or ‘livelihood’ in Kurdish. In other words, it refers to the everyday earnings someone gets in order to continue his/her life” (Hakari, Z. B. (2010), “Berat (Baraat) In Yezidiaty”, *Shekhan*, No. 14, p. 1). There are two views about the history of *Berat*, one of them emphasizes that it existed before Sheikh ‘Adî (1073/8-1162) coming to Lalish and the other view dates it after Sheikh ‘Adî’s time (Ĝindî 1999: 37-38). Cf., Wahby states, “it perhaps indicates the Mithraic origin of the certificate (i.e., *Berat*)” (Wahby 1962: 38).

¹¹³⁶ For further general information about the *Berat* see Wahby 1962: 37; Ĝindî 1999: 37-38; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 14, 36.

¹¹³⁷ See Image 50 in Appendices.

¹¹³⁸ *Qewlê Celwê* (The Hymn of *Celwe*), seb. 17, in Xalid 2011: 70.

it.¹¹³⁹ Moreover, in religious texts, such as in this *sebeqe*, the belief that *Berat* symbolizes the earth, is highlighted:

Hekê te da êkê bexit û Berat e
Berat nîşana 'erd û kîniyat e
*Xudê heye ew atqat e.*¹¹⁴⁰

If you gave someone conscience and
Berat
Berat is the symbol of the earth and the
 universe
 Oh truly,¹¹⁴¹ it is faith.

1.2 The use of the *Berat* in religious life

Because the *Berat* is made of holy earth and water in Lalish, it is extremely holy and is used in many aspects of religious life for example, the *Berat* is carried by Yezidis, notably while travelling between countries. Moreover, Kreyenbroek states many Yezidis always carry *Berat*.¹¹⁴² A *sebeqe* refers to some features of this:

Bexşî bûne Berat
Min dengê xo dida gelek welat
*Min aşiq dikirin xelat.*¹¹⁴³

I was awarded with a *Berat*
 I was wandering in many countries
 I gave gifts to lovers.

Yezidis also believe that *Berat* will bring them blessings, good fortune and protect them from harm and the evil eye.

It is obligatory that every Yezidi household keeps *Berat* in a special sack, named the *Turikê Berata* (Sack of *Berats*) which is hang up in a special place in the house:

Xet û Beratê Siltan Êzî zêr in
Da Mirîd bixo belînin û bixo
*veşêrin.*¹¹⁴⁴

Lines (of script) and *Berat* of Siltan Êzî are
 gold (i.e., precious)
 So that Mirîds can keep and hide them for
 themselves.

Yezidis believe that *Berat* offers sustenance, reproduction and increase in agricultural wealth; this is why they keep it in their houses:¹¹⁴⁵ These *sebeqes* makes a link between sustenance and the *Berat*:

Şêxadê maş û berata, bide Ezîdiyê şerqê
û şamê
*Hazîr û gubdêra, ji xizîna qudretê.*¹¹⁴⁶

O Sheikh 'Adî, give wages and *Berat* to the
 Yezidis of East and West
 Those who are present and listen, from
 the treasury of power.

¹¹³⁹ From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Hecî Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 90, in Kişto 2012: 131.

¹¹⁴¹ Literally, 'God exists. Swear by God.'

¹¹⁴² Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 372, n. 52.

¹¹⁴³ *Qewlê Firvarê* (The Hymn of the Order), seb. 19, in Hecî 2002: 346.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Qewlê Hensarê* (The Hymn of Control), the number of the *sebeqe* is unknown, in Ğindî 1999: 38.

¹¹⁴⁵ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

¹¹⁴⁶ *Qewlê Îmanê* (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 45, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 89.

Em ê zîyaret biken wan xelata
Sura Lalişê jî jor dibate
Pê zeyinê çiqas kînyat e
Mêra jî ber bir maş û berat û xelat
e.¹¹⁴⁷

Let us kiss those *Berat robes*
 The mystery of Laliş came from above
 The whole universe was adorned with it
 Men received from it a sustenance, *Berat*
 and its robes.

The *Berat* is placed in pure water is used to cure oneself by cleaning and massaging the body, or used for healing diseases and complaints such as headaches, abdominal pain, etc.¹¹⁴⁸ Moreover, *sebeges* refer to the view that Siltan Êzî is the healer and has *Berat*, which is perhaps an indication that the *Berat* has spiritual power for healing:

Ya Siltan Êzî tu 'ewil yê bi Beratê
Tu Xudanê atqatê
Tu wê li ser pîra selatê.

O Siltan Êzî, you possess *Berat* from the
 beginning
 You are the Lord of faith
 You are on the *Selat bridge*.¹¹⁵⁰

Ya Siltan Êzî li me birêne bi çavekê
rehmetê
Dilê xo li me bike şîfeqetê
Ronayekê fêxe ber me û çendî sunetê.¹¹⁴⁹

O Siltan Êzî, look upon us with the eye of
 mercy
 By your heart, give us recovery (i.e.,
 healing)
 Lit a light for us and all the tradition.

The *Berat* is also the symbol of promise and commitment on an agreement. Yezidi people exchange *Berat* between themselves as a symbol of a promise and a vow on an agreement in different cases (see the *sebeges* below). For instance, two enemy parties, whether at the level of clans, families or individuals, will exchange *Berat* to signify the end of enmity and differences and to gain peace, reconciliation, brotherhood and love between them.¹¹⁵¹ On this, Ahmed writes, “to retrieve the *Barat* they have once exchanged at a peace settlement, the other tribe accepts this as a declaration of war.”¹¹⁵² Moreover, it is taken as a promise of marriage between two lovers. It is used as a sign of betrothal and as a marriage contract between the bride and the groom. This belief (about *Berat*, conscience and promise) is expressed in religious texts. Yezidis usually use the words *Bexit û Berat* (conscience and *Berat*) as the synonyms of promise:

Heke te da êkê bexit û Berat e
Berat nîşana 'erd û kînyat e
Xudê beye ew atqat e.¹¹⁵³

If you gave someone conscience and *Berat*
Berat is the symbol of the earth and the
 universe
 Oh God, it is faith.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Dû'a Zîyaretbînê* (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), seb. 14, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 109.

¹¹⁴⁸ Layard states that *Berat* is regarded as very useful against diseases and evil spirits. See Layard 1851 I: 235.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Qewlê Şerfedîn* (The Hymn of Şerfedîn), seb. 22, 23, in Heçî 1994b: 37.

¹¹⁵⁰ On this bridge see Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 372, n. 53; Kreyenbroek 1995: 79, 88.

¹¹⁵¹ See Ğindî 1999: 40; Ğalû 2013: 100.

¹¹⁵² Ahmed 1975: 290-291.

¹¹⁵³ *Qewlê Mersîma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 90, in Kişto 2012: 131.

As well as:

Peyman dan destur e
Nivîsîn Berat û mişur e
*Hemî badir bişûr e.*¹¹⁵⁴

They promised legally¹¹⁵⁵
 Bring¹¹⁵⁶ *Berat* and a manuscript
 With the presence of all (in assembly).

Berat is the basis of other acts of veneration, such as when Yezidis swear an oath by it after placing it in their hand to prove the reliability of the testimony. Making a false oath by it is considered a huge sin. Furthermore, Yezidis must kiss the *Berat* before starting a long journey. Likewise, they kiss the *Berat* during their prayers and particularly during sunrise and sunset prayers. Additionally, Yezidis should keep the *Berat* clean and not say any rude words about it or mistreat it, e.g. by throwing it away. This is because *Berat* is made from holy water and earth.

Using Berat as a part of religious observances. In customs of childbirth, *Berat* is put under the pillow of the newborn for blessing. It is believed that it protects the child from the evil eye and any harm.¹¹⁵⁷ Besides, the water of the *Berat* (i.e. water with a *berat* diluted in it) is used for *Morkîrin*, instead of the water of *Kaniya Sipî*, for those Yezidis who cannot visit Lalish for any reason.¹¹⁵⁸

The *Berat* is a significant religious element in the observances establishing ‘brother/sisterhood of the hereafter’. On the wedding day, the bride and bridegroom must each have a ‘brother or sister of the hereafter’, and this bond is concluded by the act of drinking ‘water of the *Berat*’.¹¹⁵⁹ Moreover, it is not permissible for a husband to give *Berat* directly to his wife, nor vice versa, because in this case it is considered forbidden and it is a sign of separation and divorce between them. The reason is not clear, but the Yezidi author, Hâlû, believes that giving or exchanging *Berat* between a couple means brotherhood.¹¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, in funerary customs, *Berat* is put on the face of the dead person which is for blessing.¹¹⁶¹

2 Şerbik (The Jar of Water)

Şerbik is a copper container filled with water.¹¹⁶² The role and the veneration of its water will be explained in religious observances.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Qewlê Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî* (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmedê Kurdî), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.

¹¹⁵⁵ Literally, ‘Permission and law.’

¹¹⁵⁶ Literally, ‘Writing.’

¹¹⁵⁷ For more information see “Childbirth customs”, in chapter IV, part II.

¹¹⁵⁸ From the interview with Esmir Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹¹⁵⁹ For further explanation see “Wedding customs”, in chapter IV, part II.

¹¹⁶⁰ Hâlû 2013: 100-101.

¹¹⁶¹ For more details see “Funerary customs”, in chapter IV, part II.

¹¹⁶² See Image 51 in Appendices.

2.1 *Şerbik* symbolism in religious life

There are some beliefs about the symbolism of the *Şerbik*, such as the following. In Yezidism, the water of the *Şerbik* is the symbols of the eternal life (see next topic). Ğindî says that in Yezidism, the *Şerbik* resembles the mother's womb as the storehouse which hides the seed of life in its darkness until it emerges from the womb.¹¹⁶³ The Yezidi writer, H. Sînû, also emphasizes the same belief when he states that the *Şerbik* is the symbol of the uterus that gives humans life.¹¹⁶⁴ Here, this analogy is based on the circular shape of the *Şerbik* and the water inside it, with the circular shape of the womb. It is known that in Yezidi tradition, water is the symbols of eternal life.

Religious texts refer to the analogy between the womb and the dark sea. This analogy is based on how living creatures came into existence in the sea, in the same way that humans spring from the mother's womb:

*Pedşayê min çêkir çiya û dest û berî û
behir bi temam e
Sibhane ji te Xaliqê, li bedena maka
heye behireka bi xemam e
Li wê behirê çêbûn jin û zelam e.*¹¹⁶⁵

My King (i.e., God) created mountain, plane,
wilderness and sea completely
Glory to you, my Creator, there is a dark
sea in the mother's womb
Man and woman were created in that sea.

As well as:

*Behira beq wetinî
Neh meha tê sekînî
Bi qudreta Îlahî dimekinî.*

It made its home in the sea of truth
For nine months it stayed there.
This was possible by God's power.

*Bi qudretê kêr temam e
Çî behreke tarî ye bi ximam e
Îlahîyo! dibûm êqsîrê te, ez dibûm
xulam e.*¹¹⁶⁶

Through the power it became complete
What a dark, opaque sea it is
O God! I am your prisoner; I became a
servant [boy].

2.2 The use of *Şerbik* in religious life

Generally, the symbolism regarding the *Şerbik* and its holy water has been used in three main religious observances, which are *Tavvûsgêran*, *Sema* and wedding customs:

During *Tavvûsgêran*, *Qewals* bring the *Şerbik* and place it next to the *Sinceq*. *Şerbik* contains the water of *Kaniya Sîpî* which is distributed to young single boys by *Qewals*. *Qewals* wish them a good chance of marriage while reciting the following religious text:

*Yê bidete min avekê
Xudê bidetê bejin zîravekê Xudan
îmanekê*

Whoever gives me a cup of water
God gives him a slim and faithful girl
That is the water of *Kaniya Sîpî*,

¹¹⁶³ Ğindî 1997a: 35.

¹¹⁶⁴ Sînû (n.d.): 176.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Qewlê Mersûma Cebêre* (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 10, in Kişto 2012: 119.

¹¹⁶⁶ *Qewlê Seremergê* (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 6, 7, in Reşo 2004 I: 140.

*Ava kaniya sipî ye
Şîrpike Şîxadî ye
Jê vexon mijbetê ankê çîye.¹¹⁶⁷*

In the jar of Sheikh ‘Adî
Drink from it, money is useless.

There is a *Şerbik* filled with the water of *Kaniya Sipî* that is used during the *Sema* ceremony. After completion of the *Sema*, the *Şerbik* is presented to religious men and attendants, and they drink from it for a blessing.¹¹⁶⁸

In wedding customs when the bride enters the groom’s house, she breaks a *Şerbik* that usually contains water with some wheat, peas, rice, and so forth. Yezidis believe that it symbolizes the bringing-in of sustenance to that family.

3 *Kas* (the cup of water)

According to religious literature, the *Kas* (the cup of water) symbolizes the human life cycle, as will be explained here.

3.1 The *Kas* and human life

According to religious texts, when man drank from the water of the *Kas*, he came to life, in other words, its water is the source of the emergence of human life. This *sebeqe* underwrites this view.

*Ew kasa nûrîn e
Adem veximarî ji dîl û eşiq û êqîn e
Lew cînsê wê geriyabû goşit û xivîn
e.¹¹⁶⁹*

That cup is luminous
The Adam drank from it with the love of
a faithful¹¹⁷⁰ heart
Therefore, flesh and blood animated his
body.

The *Kas*, containing the water, symbolizes eternal life:

*Ew bû kasa ji muhibetê
Hincîyê Pedşayê min nuxtekê ji wê kasê
didetê
Sed xoşke min bi wê be, bi wê subbetê.*

That was the cup of love
Whoever, my King (i.e., God) gives
him/her a drop of that cup
I wish I were with that company.

*Ew bû kasa baqî
Pedşayê min di nav da bû saqî
Dilo tu çendî muştaqî.¹¹⁷¹*

That was the eternal cup
My king became the water inside it
O heart! How much you long for that.

¹¹⁶⁷ Text details are unknown, in ‘Amar 2008: 137.

¹¹⁶⁸ Bâqasirî 2003: 146.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Qewlê Menlê Me (=Qewlê Kasa)*, ‘The Hymn of our Master (=The Hymn of the Cups)’, seb. 8, in Reşo 2004 II: 946.

¹¹⁷⁰ ‘Lit. Certain; the word is used of those (notably mystics) who have no doubt left in his heart’, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 63, n. 27.

¹¹⁷¹ *Qewlê Menlê Me (=Qewlê Kasa)*, ‘The Hymn of our Master (=The Hymn of the Cups)’, seb. 2, 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 945.

Rešo has the following to add regarding the *Kas*: “in Yezidism *Kas* is mystery, holy soul and holy leaven.”¹¹⁷²

3.2 The *Kas* and human death

Religious texts, such as the below *sebeqe*, indicate that no matter how long humans live, whatever they achieve in their lives they will all drink from the *Kas* of death in the end:

<i>Biniyademo! bezar salê tamam key</i>	O man! If you live a thousand years
<i>Mîriyatîya şerîq beta bi şam key</i>	If you dominate from East to West ¹¹⁷⁴
<i>Her dê ji kasa mirinê tam key.</i> ¹¹⁷³	In the end, you must taste the cup of death.

Yezidi religious literature asserts that the term *Kasa Jîyanê û Kasa mirinê* (the cup of life and the cup of death) is connected with human life and death.

In religious *sebeqes*, sometimes, only the name *Kas* is mentioned, but the purpose of the water inside it is clear. Here, water is the symbol of eternal life and the immortality of a human soul. Therefore, drinking from the *Kas* of life is mentioned with humans' life and drinking from the *Kas* of death is mentioned in relation to humans' death, hence, the *Kas* is the symbol of the continuity of life from both concepts. Life and death rotate in the same circle and complete each other and the one cannot exist without the other. Based on that belief, the water of the cup is the symbol of the eternal cycle of life.

4 Çira (Lamp)

The *Çira*,¹¹⁷⁵ as a term, means a wick or a lamp made of cotton, saturated in olive oil, which is placed in a special bowl called the *Qendîl* (lamp), or without a bowl in a specific site in religious places. The *Micêwir* (custodian) should light the lamps on every Wednesday eve, but also on every eve of religious feasts, occasions and events in holy places, such as Lalish, *Civata Boza*, *Zên*, *Nîşangeh*, *Qub*, *Mezar*, etc. Based on the veneration of the lamp, there is a prayer called *Du'aya Çirayê* (the prayer of the lamp)¹¹⁷⁶ and also a hymn called *Qewlê Qendîla* (the hymn of [the source of] the Lights, QQ).¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷² Rešo 2004 I: 152, n. 4.

¹¹⁷³ *Qewlê Miskîno Jaro* (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 33, in Rešo 2004 II: 650-651.

¹¹⁷⁴ Literally, 'Sham. Levant: Eastern Mediterranean Sea countries: Syria, Lebanon and Palestine'. It is located in the west of the Yezidi areas (Lalish temple area).

¹¹⁷⁵ According to some historical references, the history of *Çira* dates back to B.C. This is one of the rites of the pre-B.C., sun worshipping nation (See Bâqasîrî 2003: 140). Moreover, this ritual is ancient among Yezidis and dates back to the period prior to Sheikh 'Adî's [1073/8-1162] coming to Lalish. The Yezidis were sun worshippers during that time and were lighting lamps in their holy places, (From the interview with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan).

¹¹⁷⁶ For the whole text of this prayer see “*Du'aya Çirayê* (The Prayer of the Lamp)”, in chapter I, part II.

¹¹⁷⁷ For the whole text of the *Qewlê Qendîla* (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights) see Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 90-93.

There are several types and forms of *Çira*,¹¹⁷⁸ like *Fitîle* (wicks), *Çeqeltu* (a candelabrum with seven lights) and *Qendîl* (lamp). Besides, *Qendîl*¹¹⁷⁹ has several meanings in religious traditions, and many sources refer to its meaning as the following: it is the name of a lamp placed in a bowl and hung in a place and it is also the symbol of the stars in the sky.¹¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, the *Qendîl* is the source of light or the eye of the sun.¹¹⁸¹ Omarkhali, about the meaning of the *Qendîl*, says:

Qendîl is sometimes translated literally as 'lamp'. The meaning of this word in the religious context is 'the source of the Light,' as in the explanation of this term by the Yezidi Pîr Rizayê Kakê: "Qendîl is a place, where the rennet of the first Yezidi man was kept, it was in the Pearl, the innermost place, from which the Light originated, which was the first primary source of the Light (Nûr/Nûra Xwedê 'The Light of God') from which everything was created."¹¹⁸²

4.1 The symbolism of *Çira* in religious life

According to religious texts, *Çira* has many symbolic meanings in Yezidism; they are discussed under the following topics:

The symbolism of Çira and God's light on earth. In the religious literature, *Du'aya Çirayê* (the prayer of the lamp) confirms that the lamp is from God's light; therefore, it could be the symbol of God's light on earth:

<i>Çira çira</i>	The lamp, the lamp
<i>Ji mêra ra danî</i>	Lit for holy men
<i>Ji nûra rehmanî</i>	From the light of the Merciful One's
<i>Ji tehbîra rehmanî.</i> ¹¹⁸³	(God)
	From the greatness of the Merciful One.

Yezidis swear an oath by the lamp and say: "*Bi evê çiraya Xudê*" (By this lamp of God) because it is sacred and is the symbol of God's light.

Çira is the symbol of worshipping God, it is also the symbol of devotion and the right path:

<i>Mirîdî bi surê girtin rêzan e</i>	Mirîds know God ¹¹⁸⁵ by the mystery
<i>Lî pêşîya wan gurîbû mom û çiran</i>	Wicks and lamps are lit in their presence.
<i>e.</i> ¹¹⁸⁴	

¹¹⁷⁸ See Image 52, Image 53 and in Appendices.

¹¹⁷⁹ Cf., there is a possibility that *Qendîl* in Kurdish and candle in English have one origin etymologically and one meaning although with different pronunciation.

¹¹⁸⁰ Reşo 2004 I: 210, n. 1.

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid: 140, n. 1.

¹¹⁸² Omarkhali 2011-2012: 150.

¹¹⁸³ *Du'aya Çirayê* (The Prayer of the Lamp), seb. 1, in Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 57.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Du'a Mirîdîyê* (The Prayer of Mirîds), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1011.

¹¹⁸⁵ In Yezidism, the name *Rêzan* (literally, the path of knowledge), which could be translated as leader or scholar, is one of God's names.

*Erkanekê jê rastî
Padşa ji ba xwe vegubastî
Bû mom û çirayê pêşîya wan
vegubastî.¹¹⁸⁶*

One of the obligations is truth
King (i.e., God) sent it from Himself
It became a wick and a lamp that lightened
their way.

Çira is the symbol of the light of *Şêşims* (the Lord of sun). Also, there is *Çirayê Şêşims* (*Şêşims'* lamp) inside the *Qub* of *Şêşims* in Lalish.

*Şêx Şems ji Êzîdiya ra çira ye li dîwanê
Ya Êzî tu li me bikî xudanê.¹¹⁸⁷*

For Yezidis, *Şêşims* is a lamp in the
assembly
O God, be our saviour.

Çira is the symbol of sunlight and light in the sky in general:

*Tifaq û tebayî ji eşq û dile
‘Erd çêkirin, ‘ezman di ser ra mom û
çira
Padşa nebû muhibê rûhê xafîla.¹¹⁸⁸*

Agreement and unity come from love and
from the heart
They created the earth, and the sky over it
as lights and lamps
King (i.e., God) had no love for ‘the souls
of the ignorant’.¹¹⁸⁹

*Me’rîfet eşqa dil e
E’rid çêkir ‘ezman di ser re
Bû mom û çira, nebû muhibê xafîla.¹¹⁹⁰*

Knowledge is the love of the heart
It created the earth and the sky over it
It was lamp and light; it had no love for
the ignorant.¹¹⁹¹

The light of Çira and human soul. Yezidis light a *Çira* for their dead, especially in the place where the corpse is washed:

*Hat çarşembûva fer e
Xelat ji melikê faxîr e
Bo ruha bi îman gorî diket çire.¹¹⁹²*

Came the significant Wednesday
The gift is from the glorious angel
Light a lamp for the faithful soul.

Çira and spiritual knowledge. *Çira* also symbolizes spiritual knowledge, and there are lamps called the *Çirayên Me’rîfetê* (the lamps of knowledge); these are lit on the eve of *Tawusgêran*, when people gather around the Tawus. Religious texts refer to this as in *Du’a Me’rîfetê* (The Prayer of Knowledge):

¹¹⁸⁶ *Du’a Xerqe* (The Prayer of the *Xerqe*), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 1032.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Du’a Êzîdiyatîyê* (Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1003.

¹¹⁸⁸ *Du’a Tifaqê* (The Prayer of Agreement), seb. 12, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 111.

¹¹⁸⁹ “I.e. the unbelievers”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 111, n. 265.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Du’a Me’rîfetê* (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 4, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.

¹¹⁹¹ I.e., the unbelievers.

¹¹⁹² *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.

*Me'rîfet ronahiya dila ne
Li ber gurîbûn mom û çira ne.*¹¹⁹³

[Mystical] knowledge is the light of hearts
Candles and lights are lit with it (knowledge).

*Me'rîfet û nasîn in
Çirayêt nûrîn in, rêbera pê dibînin.*¹¹⁹⁴

[Mystical] knowledge and understanding
Are brilliant lamps, one can recognize the leaders by them.

4.2 The use of Çira in religious life

Based on the veneration of the Çira and its symbolism, there are many usages of Çira in religious life. Lamps are lit on the eve of every Wednesday in religious places by *Micêwir*, such as Lalish, *Civata Bozqa*, and *Nîşangehs*. Wednesday is regarded as the day of Tawusî Melek:

*Hat çarşembuwa fer e
Xelat ji melikê faxir e
Bo ruha bi îman gorî diket çire.*¹¹⁹⁵

Came the significant Wednesday
The gift is from the glorious angel
Light a lamp for the faithful soul.

Yezidis light lamps for the holy beings in their shrines and by their names, such as for *Şêşims* and in his shrine at Lalish:

*Sebir xelatekî Pedşa ye
Ji ba xwe kir peyda ye
Bi wê sebirê li ber wan ewiliya gurîbûn
mom û çira ye.*¹¹⁹⁶

Patience is a God's gift
He provided it
Light wicks and lamps for the holy men
with that patience.

Lamps are lit during religious events and ceremonies in religious places as mentioned before. Lalish is famous under the name of *Lalişa Nûranî* (the luminous Lalish); more lamps are lit there than in any other holy place. During the *Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year), there are 365 (or 366) lamps, corresponding to the number of the days in a year.¹¹⁹⁷

Lamps are lit in the homes of religious men during religious occasions. This is done by the religious men themselves, and they are lit by the name of *çirayê xudanê malê* (the lamp of the protector of the home):

¹¹⁹³ *Du'a Me'rîfetê* (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Qewlê Mirîdiyê* (The Hymn of Mirîdiyê), seb. 23, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 295.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Qewlê Çarşembûyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.

¹¹⁹⁶ *Du'a Sebrê* (Prayer of Patience), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 II: 1023.

¹¹⁹⁷ See "*Cejna Sersalê* (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)", in chapter III, part II.

*En Xudanê malê xof û rehîm li dilê
kîrîn
Me hîvî ji Xudanê malê heye, mom û
çira li ber vekîrîn
Em ji diwanzêde bezar bela dûr kîrîn.¹¹⁹⁸*

The protector of the home has put fear
and mercy in the heart
We have hope in the protector of the
home, [we] light a lamp and a wick for
him
[He] kept us away from twelve thousand
misfortunes.

There are generally many religious symbols in front of which Yezdis light lamps, such as lighting a *Çira* beside or inside *Qubs*:

*Bi wê qubê kem ser li erşê e
Wê di bin da diêsiyên find û şemalêt geşê e
Mîrê dîwanê Şêxadî ye
Dîwan begî bi xwe Şêşîms e.¹¹⁹⁹*

I swear by the *Qub* whose top is in the sky
Wicks and lamps shone beside it
The prince of the assembly is Sheikh ‘Adî
The head of the assembly is Şêşîms.

Also, in:

*Xudanê malê, xudanê quba nûrîn e
Kursiya wî serbanê ‘erşê ‘ezmîn e
Li ber diêsiyêt şimalê nûrîn e.¹²⁰⁰*

The protector of the home is the master
of the luminous *Qub*
His position is on the throne of the high
sky
There are shining lamps beside it.

*Çirayê Xerqe*¹²⁰¹ (the lamp of *Xerqe*) is lit in the houses of *Xerqepaş* (the one who wears *Xerqe*) on Wednesdays for blessing,¹²⁰² and *Du‘a Xerqe* (the prayer of the *Xerqe*) refers to this:

*Erkanek jê beya ye
Padşa ji ba xwe kîr peyda ye
Pêşiya wan gurîbû mom û çira ye
Em miraza xwe dixwazîn ji Xuda
ye.¹²⁰³*

One of the obligations is modesty
King (i.e., God) made it appear from
himself
Wicks and lamps were lit in their
presence
We ask God to grant our wishes.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Du‘a Xudanê Malê* (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 1017.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Qewlê Şêxê Hesênî Siltane* (The Hymn of Sheikh Hesênî is the Sultan), seb. 10, in Hecî 2002: 322.

¹²⁰⁰ *Du‘a Xudanê Malê* (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 4, in Reşo 2004 II: 1016.

¹²⁰¹ *Xerqe* is considered one of the most sacred symbols in Yezidism, which is a holy garment woven in a special way from pure wool and it is black. This garment is the dress of a group of Yezidis called *Feqîr* and the dress of the worshippers and mystics. The holiness of the *Xerqe* is widely reflected in religious oral traditions as well as in *Du‘a Xerqe* (The Prayer of the *Xerqe*), see Reşo 2004 II: 1031-1033; *Qewlê Xerqe* (The Hymn of the *Xerqe*), see Ce‘fo and Silo 2013: 107-112.

¹²⁰² From the interview with Kovan Hesên Cindî (The custodian of *Xerqe* of Sheikh Ûbekir at Lalish), 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also, Reşkanî, M. H. (2010), “*Xerqe Pirozî, Sund û bawerî di Êzidiyatîyê da*” (*Xerqe, Sanctity, Swearing Oath and Faith in Yezidism*), *Mehfel*, No. 2, Duhok, p. 30.

¹²⁰³ *Du‘a Xerqe* (The Prayer of the *Xerqe*), seb. 12 in Reşo 2004 II: 1032-1033.

Du'aya Çirayê (the prayer of the lamp) is recited during different religious observances. The prayer takes place when lamps are lit in religious places; the *Micêvir* must recite it,¹²⁰⁴ and here is a *sebeqe* that mention this:

Çirayê xudanê me û mîrê şêxa
Û babê şêx û van cîye û mekana
*Û bazîr û gobdare digurîbin.*¹²⁰⁵

The lamp of our lord and the prince of
 Sheikhs
 And Babê Şêx and these sites and places
 And those who are present and listen, be
 lit.

Lighting seven lamps for the Heft Sur (seven mysteries). In religious life, Yezidis light seven lamps as symbols of *Heft Sur* on earth,¹²⁰⁶ namely the seven lamps beside the *Sinceq* in *Tawusgêran*, which are called the *Çirayên Me'rifetê* (the lamps of knowledge).¹²⁰⁷ There are also seven lamps in the *Sema* ceremony, in the form of the *Çeqeltu* (a candelabrum with seven lights).¹²⁰⁸ Furthermore, there are also seven lamps beside the *Xerqe* of Şêxûbekir at Lalish, called the *Heft Sîmarên Mala Adiya* (the seven riders of the Adiya family).¹²⁰⁹ Finally, there are the seven lamps next to *Dergehê Mîr* (the gate of Mîr) at Lalish¹²¹⁰ Moreover, because of the holiness of the lamp, its shape and image are drawn on the walls of Yezidi homes, as well as on religious, cultural and academic centres.

5 Dara Zeytûnê (The Olive Tree)

In Yezidism, there are many religious traditions based on the veneration of the olive tree and its symbolism, highlighted in the following themes:

5.1 The symbolism of *Dara Zeytûnê* in religious life

In Yezidi mythology, *Ava Hêvanê/ Ava Jîyanê* (the water of life) was dropped on the olive tree, which is why it is always green. Therefore, it is the symbol of continuity and eternal life in Yezidism.¹²¹¹ This is a common feature between the olive tree and water: both are symbols of eternal life.

5.2 Religious observances connected with *Dara Zeytûnê*

In general, when it comes to *Çirabîlêkirin* (lighting lamps), Yezidis use olive oil in religious places. There is a sacred orchard of olive trees, called *Rezqê Zeytûna* (olive orchard), in

¹²⁰⁴ Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 57.

¹²⁰⁵ *Du'aya Çirayê (The Prayer of the Lamp)*, sub. 6, in Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 58.

¹²⁰⁶ See “*Heft Sur* (Seven Mysteries) as *Nûr* and their Relation to Nature”, in chapter I, part I.

¹²⁰⁷ For further information see “*Tawusgêran* (The wandering of the Tawus)”, in chapter III, part II.

¹²⁰⁸ For more details see “*Semagêran* (the Religious Dance)”, in chapter II, part II.

¹²⁰⁹ See Image 01 in Appendices.

¹²¹⁰ See Image 02 in Appendices.

¹²¹¹ From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

Lalish,¹²¹² its oil is used for lighting lamps there. Here, light and the olive tree are the symbols of eternal life in Yezidism. Furthermore, Yezidis usually plant an olive tree beside the head of a grave as a symbol of eternal life. Here, it is an indication of eternal life for the soul of the deceased.¹²¹³ What is more, the olive tree is used for healing practices, for example, for healing inflammation of the mouth and gums. The patient goes and picks green olives from the trees of Sheikh Mend's shrine in the village of Bahzani, then chews them well and after that, rinses his/her mouth with the water of a spring inside the shrine.¹²¹⁴ There is also a sacred olive tree at the Feqîr 'Elî shrine in Ba'shiqe that cures insomnia.¹²¹⁵ Moreover, after the ceremonies in Lalish, Yezidis take home a small branch of the olive tree as a symbol of its holiness and their participation in those ceremonies. About this, C. J. Edmonds, writes that "some of them [i.e., Yezidis] would pick a sprig of olive to wear in the turban"¹²¹⁶. In this *sebeqe*, the olive and the olive tree are treated as a good tree and a good fruit on the earth:

*Ji min dibînin; gul û sosin
Xox û beybûn, bî û sêv û zeytûn
Ew jî liser min hasil dibûn.*¹²¹⁷

[The earth says] On me one finds roses
and lilies
Peaches and chamomile, willows, apples
and olives
These also have flourished on me.

6 Zergûz (Walnut Tree)

6.1 The symbolism of Zergûz in religious life

According to the religious literature, Zergûz is the symbol of holy trees because its 'rennet'¹²¹⁸ or 'leaven' is from the water of the White Spring:

*We dibêjît Pedşayê min î nûranî ye:
Mêş e û zergûz e û mî ye
Hêvênê her sêka ji Kaniya Spî ye.*¹²¹⁹

Thus, speaks my King (i.e., God), the
luminous:
Bees and Zergûz and sheep
The rennet of all three is from the White
Spring.

Also, in:

¹²¹² See Image 54 in Appendices.

¹²¹³ From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

¹²¹⁴ Barwârî 2001: 79-80.

¹²¹⁵ Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.

¹²¹⁶ Edmonds 1967: 11.

¹²¹⁷ *Qewlê 'Erd û 'Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 9, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 387.

¹²¹⁸ The word *hêvên* basically means 'yeast'; for the translation 'rennet'. It is clearly used here to mean a substance causing something or someone to take solid shape. Thus, the White Spring is here depicted as the source of material existence, see Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 101, n. 210, and p. 96, n. 195.

¹²¹⁹ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 39, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 101.

<i>Bawirî rastî ye</i>	Faith is truth
<i>Xulqandin Gay û Masî ye</i>	The bull and fish were created
<i>Zergûz û Mî ye</i>	The <i>Zergûz</i> tree and the sheep ¹²²¹
<i>Hêvênê wan çêkirin ji Kaniya Spî ye.</i> ¹²²⁰	Their leaven is produced from the White Spring.

A *sebeqe* refers to the view that *Zergûz* comes from God on high down to the earth:

<i>Pedşê min zergûz tefsîl dikire</i>	My King (i.e., God) fashioned the <i>Zergûz</i>
<i>Nazîlî 'erda dikire</i>	He revealed it on earth
<i>Teslîmê Melik Fexredîn dikire</i>	He entrusted it to Melik Fekhredin
<i>Melik Fexredîn tesmîlî xasê Şîxadî dikire.</i> ¹²²²	Melik Fekhredin entrusted it to the holy men of Sheikh Adi.

6.2 The use of *Zergûz* in religious life

The leaves of *Zergûz* are used for colouring *Xerqe* black:

<i>Pedşê min zergûz dirusit dikire</i>	My King (i.e., God) made the <i>Zergûz</i>
<i>Feqîra Xerqê xo pê reş dikire</i>	<i>Feqîrs</i> coloured their <i>Xerqe</i> with it
<i>Sunetxanê şebde û bawerî pê dikire.</i> ¹²²³	Tradition house (Yezidi people) declared and believed in it.
<i>Pedşa dibêjit; Fexro! nava mîhê û zergûzê dê çêkem Xerqe ye!</i> ¹²²⁴	King (i.e., God) says: Fekhr! From the sheep and the <i>Zergûz</i> I shall fashion <i>Xerqe</i>
<i>Feqîr dê ken berxoye</i>	The <i>Feqîrs</i> shall wear it
<i>Sunetxane dê pê înit bawerî û şebde ye.</i> ¹²²⁵	The Yezidi people will believe in it and adhere to it.

Moreover, this tree should not be cut or burnt under any circumstances, because it is holy.¹²²⁶

7 *Tawus* (peacock)

In a variety of sources, such as in oral religious traditions, interviews and others, there are some natural symbolisms connected with the peacock. They are explained below.

¹²²⁰ *Dû'û Bawiriyê* (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 105.

¹²²¹ "I.e. the sources of the dye and the wool for the *khirqe*", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 105.

¹²²² *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 42, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 101.

¹²²³ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 40, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 287.

¹²²⁴ According to the textual meaning the name *Xerqe ye* contains a spelling mistake, the correct spelling is *Xerqe ye*.

¹²²⁵ *Qewlê Qere Ferqan* (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 40, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 101.

¹²²⁶ Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 113.

7.1 The symbolism of the *Tawus* in religious life

There are some sources that refer to the peacock as the symbol of the sun and Tawusî Melek.¹²²⁷

According to the sources on this subject, there are two main features of the symbolism of the peacock and nature, as in the following:

The colourfulness of peacock feathers and the colours of nature. The Yezidis took the peacock as their symbol, and the beauty of this bird is that all the colours in nature are present in its feathers.¹²²⁸ Moreover, Utmân writes, “the multicoloured feathers of the peacock, plus its beauty, made the Izidies attach it to Tawoos Malak and make it His symbol.”¹²²⁹

The open feathers of the peacock and the sunrise. Some sources indicate that in the Yezidi religion, the feathers of the peacock symbolize the rays of the sun, such as these: the way the peacock opens the feathers of its tail in a circular shape symbolize the sunrise.¹²³⁰ Additionally, Ğindî believes that the peacock is in one aspect the symbol of the sun and its integration.¹²³¹ Moreover, Ahmed states that “the peacock resembles the revolving of the sun, if not the sun itself”¹²³². In this context, Wahby writes, “in classic Persian literature, we find the sun described as ‘Tawusî Ataşınpar’ (the fiery winged peacock) and also ‘Tawusî Uliwy Aşıyan’ (the peacock of the heavenly nest).”¹²³³

Regarding the belief which says that peacock feathers are the symbol of the sun rays and Tawusî Melek in the same time, religious texts state that the peacock is a mythological bird in the sky and from its feathers comes light, luminosity and brightness.

<i>Çendî teyrek li 'ezmana wê hey navê wî</i>	There is a bird in the sky, called <i>Enqer</i> by
<i>Enqer bi nav e</i>	name
<i>Roja 'îd û 'erefata derkeft ji Kaniya</i>	On the day of the Feast ¹²³⁵ and the day of
<i>Sî'anê</i>	Erefat, it came out of the Spring of
<i>Çeng û baskêt xo vediveşîne</i>	Sî'an ¹²³⁶
<i>Jê diçê şeniq û şemal û nûrîn û xûman</i>	Spreading its feathers and wings
<i>e.</i> ¹²³⁴	From it comes light, luminosity,
	brightness and dew.

¹²²⁷ See Farman, M. (2004), “Man’s Place in Izidy Religion”, trans. Fadhil H. Khudeda, *Lalish*, No. 21, p. 338; Othman 2012b: 6.

¹²²⁸ Sînû (n.d.): 78.

¹²²⁹ Utmân 2013: 164.

¹²³⁰ From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xewace Xudêda Elî, 03.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq. Also see Sînû (n.d.): 78; Bîrûkâ, H. (2014), *Lîgîç Tawusî Malak: Aw Aşîlu al-hîr wa l-Şar jî al-Îzîdîyat* (Mystery of Tawusi Melek, or (The Origin of Good and Evil in the Yezidism), 1st ed., Damascus: Tamoż, pp. 272-273.

¹²³¹ Ğindî 1997a: 34; Ğindî 1998: 36.

¹²³² Ahmed 1975: 194.

¹²³³ Wahby 1962: 44.

¹²³⁴ *Xizêmok, Şaxê 1* (Xizêmok, Version 1), seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.

¹²³⁵ It is not clarified which feast is meant here, but perhaps it is the *Sarsal* feast because in Yezidi tradition, Tawus Melek (as light) descends to the earth for renewing life and adorning the earth with colours.

¹²³⁶ “It is a name of a legendary mythical spring”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.

Rešo states that “here, in this *sebeqe* [previous *sebeqe*] the bird (*Enqer*) is one of Tawusî Melek’s symbols”¹²³⁷. Also, according to Yezidis mythology and religious texts, *Enqer* is a peacock and is regarded as a symbol of Tawusî Melek and His name:

<p><i>De wextê diniya tev av bû, hê hê</i> <i>Darek li orta wê avê bû, hê hê</i> <i>Teyrekê enqerî li ser wê darê bû, hê hê</i> <i>Tuxmê miletê Ezdîyî dest bû, hê hê</i> <i>Serê min qurban be, navê wê Tawusî</i> <i>Melek bû, hey malê.</i>¹²³⁸</p>	<p>When all the world was water, oh, oh There was a tree in the middle of that water, oh, oh The bird <i>Enqer</i> was on that tree, oh, oh The seed¹²³⁹ of the Yezidi nation started, oh, oh Let my soul be sacrificed for its sake! its name (i.e. that bird’s name) is Tawusî Melek oh.</p>
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Furthermore, in Yezidi mythology, the peacock is a seven-coloured bird. At the beginning of creation, Tawusî Melek descended to earth, the seven-coloured rainbow turned into a seven-coloured bird, the peacock, and then began flying around the earth to bless every part of it, and finally landed in Lalish.¹²⁴⁰ Likewise, Tawusî Melek showed his blessing with the sign of the rainbow.¹²⁴¹ Moreover, in Yezidi religion, the angel of light is Tawusî Melek.¹²⁴²

7.2 *Tawus* in religious life

Based on the previously mentioned beliefs about the peacock, it can be seen how its holiness is reflected in many aspects of Yezidi religious life. Yezidis do not hunt the peacock and do not eat its meat, because of its holiness. Yezidis pen it in religious places, such as Lalish and also some Yezidi houses as a holy bird. It is forbidden to say bad words to or ill-treat a peacock. Moreover, the image of a peacock is drawn on the walls of Lalish and *Qubs*, and also in other Yezidi places, such as in their houses, as well as in Yezidi religious, social, cultural and academic centres. It is also made as a logo and is carried as a medal.

8 *Dîkil* (Cockerel)

8.1 The Symbolism of the *Dîkil* in religious life

In Yezidi traditions, the veneration of the cockerel relates to the sun, with relation to the sunrise and sunset. When it crows at sunrise, it proclaims the coming of the sun and

¹²³⁷ Rešo 2004 II: 1050.

¹²³⁸ *Xizêmok, Şaxê 2* (*Xizêmok*, Version 2), seb. 2, in Rešo 2004 II: 1054-1055.

¹²³⁹ It could be translated as leaven, species and origin.

¹²⁴⁰ See al-Rašîdânî 2013: 72.

¹²⁴¹ Asatrian and Arakelova 2003: 24.

¹²⁴² See complementary information in “*Heft Sur* (Seven Mysteries) as *Nûr* and their Relation to Nature”, in chapter I, part I.

the light, and as such, it denotes a new life in a new day. Here, it is regarded as the messenger of the promise of the sunrise. In contrast, when it crows at sunset, it announces misfortune and negative things.¹²⁴³

Beyta Cindî (the *Beyt* of the commoner), which is recited in the morning, refers to the role of the cockerel in waking people up and starting a new day with sunrise, but also to ask help from *Şêşims* (the lord of the sun). Here, it emphasizes the belief that when it crows at sunrise, it does so for starting a new life:

Dîkilê perê wî sor e
Wê dixûnit li 'erşê jor e
Wê li ber melikê bi mor e
Bang û hawarêd me ji dîwana qublet bi
dor e.

The cockerel, its feathers are red
 It is calling from the throne on high,
 It is with the angel that has *Mor*
 [mihr=Mithra; *Şêşims*].
 Our shouts and cries for help are
 directed to the sun.

Dîkilê perê wî zêr e
Wê dixûnit li 'erşê di ser e
Wê li ber melikê ekber e
Bang û hawarêd me ji Şêşimsê Teter e.

The cockerel, its feathers are yellow
 It is calling from the throne on high,
 It is with the angel of the *Mor* (i.e., Mihr,
 Mithra and *Şêşims*)
 Our shouts and cries for help are
 directed to *Şêşimsê Teter*.

Cindî yo rabe roj e
Feqîr çone ber roj e
Bi xunav kefî peykan û xerqan û
bişkoj e.¹²⁴⁴

Oh, young man, get up, it is sunrise
 The *Feqîrs* have gone to face the sun
 The fronts of their *Xerqe* and buttons have
 become wet with dew.

8.2 *Dîkil* in religious life

It is forbidden for the Sheikhs of Amadîn and their followers to eat the meat of a cockerel because of its holiness. Point twenty-four of *Mishefa Reş* (The Black Scripture) emphasizes that “the Sheik and his disciples do not eat the flesh of the cock, [...]”¹²⁴⁵

9 *Marê Reş* (Black Snake)

9.1 The symbolism of the *Marê Reş* in religious life

The snake and Ava Hêwanê/ Ava Jîyanê (the water of life). According to Yezidi mythology, the snake drank from *Ava Hêwanê/ Ava Jîyanê* (the water of life or the water of eternal life),

¹²⁴³ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Sînam, H. A. (2004), *Al-Muntzr: Baht ft al-Târîh al-Ayşidî wa al-Diyānat al-Ayşidîyat* (The Expected: A Study in Yezidi History and Religion), Berlin: s.n., p. 231.

¹²⁴⁴ *Beyta Cindî* (The *Beyt* of the Commander), seb. 14,15, 21, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 46, 47.

¹²⁴⁵ Bittner 1913: 34.

and as such it never dies, so it is eternal.¹²⁴⁶ In Yezidism, it also plays the role of the keeper and protector of the water of springs.¹²⁴⁷ Possibly because of this belief, the snake's image is found on the walls of different holy springs, for example its shape on the gate of *Qapî*, the entrance to the *Zimzim* spring. This shows that the snake relates to water and symbolizes eternal life. Moreover, Yezidis say, "*Mar yê nemir e*" (the snake is eternal).

The black snake and the start of the spring season. As a religious custom, a Sheikh of Sheikh Mend (considered to have control over black snakes) makes his rounds in Yezidis villages with a black snake. This takes place in the beginning of spring and Yezidis can touch the snake by hand then they kiss the hand of the Sheikh.

Some sources refer to the meaning behind it as a strong relationship between spring and the black snake. In spring, nature renews and changes its dress i.e. replaces its old grass with new grass. As such, it is the symbol of renewal. Since the black snake sheds its old skin and starts a new life, it is the symbol of renewal. It is therefore no coincidence that making the rounds with the black snake takes place in spring.¹²⁴⁸ Yezidis consider the entrance of a Sheikh with his black snake in their home in spring, to be a sign of renewal, healing, good, bestowal, and of protection against disease and poverty.¹²⁴⁹ Here, it represents the prosperous income of produce in spring. In this regard, Yezidis use the word *Kiras* (dress) for both the skin of the snake and the grass of the earth; therefore, when the snake changes its skin, they say: "*Mar kirasê xwe guborî*" (literally, the snake changes its dress). The same expression is used for *Kirasguborîn* (literally, 'changing one's shirt', i.e. 'rebirth' or 'reincarnation').¹²⁵⁰ Likewise, when the new spring comes and the earth adorns itself with new grass, Yezidis say: "*Erdê kirasê xwe guborî*" (literally, the earth changes its dress). A *sebeqe* refers to the link between the snake and spring:

Bi xêr bêt bebar e
Bilbil dixûnit bi hezar e
*Bi şevê vediket deftera mar e.*¹²⁵¹

Let us welcome the spring
 Nightingales sing by the thousands
 At night they open the Book of
 Snakes.¹²⁵²

¹²⁴⁶ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan.

¹²⁴⁷ Marunî, 'E. (2000), "Êzidiyatî wek Dînekî Kevinê Kurdî" (Yezidism as a Kurdish Ancient Religion), *Lalîş*, No. 14, p. 112.

¹²⁴⁸ See Hürmî, H. (2000), "al-Hayat fî al-Mîlûgiyâ al-Qadîmat wa al-Ayziyât" (The Serpent in Ancient Mythology and Yezidism), *Lalîş*, No. 12, pp. 79-80.

¹²⁴⁹ From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqî Kurdistan. Also see Hürmî 2000: 79-80.

¹²⁵⁰ About *Kirasguborîn* see "Nature and Kirasguborîn (Rebirth)", in chapter III, part I.

¹²⁵¹ *Beyta Bilbila* (The Beyt of Nightingales), seb. 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 257.

¹²⁵² "The 'Book of Snakes' is presumably a mythical sacred book, the snake being an important religious symbol in Yezidism", Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 257.

9.2 *Marê Reş* in religious life

According to the previous belief about the black snake, its image appears on the walls of various religious places,¹²⁵³ such as in Lalish, in the cemetery of *Mem Şivan* in the collective village of Khanke, and also in *Qub û Avabîyê Xasa* (cupola and mausoleum) in different Yezidi areas, notably *Qubs* of Sheikh Mend. It is believed that the Sheikhs of Sheikh Mend have control over snakes and can protect people from snake bites. Those who have been bitten by snakes go to the Sheikhs of the Sheikh Mend clan for healing.

The following conclusions are drawn in this chapter

The study shows that nature and its symbolism are the source of many religious symbols and their aspects. Also, based on the veneration of nature, there are various forms and functions of religious symbols that play an important role in religious traditions and life.

Berat, for example, has a sacred position and plays a big role in religious life because of its substance as the symbol of holy water and soil. There are some customs based on the veneration of *Berat*, such as holding it, and it is also regarded as a form of contracting an agreement. Moreover, there are some acts of devotion, like swearing an oath by it and kissing it.

The symbolism of *Şerbikê Avê*, in religious life, is that of the symbol of holy water and immortal life. There are many uses of *Şerbikê Avê* in religious life, as in *Tanvûşgêran*, in the *Sema* ceremony and in wedding customs. Accordingly, the water of *Kas* (the cup of water) plays a similar role to the water of *Şerbik*, i.e., it is the symbol of immortal life. *Kas* is, therefore, the symbol of the cycle of human life and death.

Çira, in religious life, is the symbol of the light of God and the sun on the earth. Moreover, the light of *Çira* is the symbol of a human soul and spiritual knowledge. There are several religious observances connected with *Çira* in religious life, as it is lit on the eve of every Wednesday in religious places. It is also lit during religious events and ceremonies in general, and in the houses of Yezidi religious men during religious occasions. Moreover, lamps are lit next to religious symbols, such as *Qub* and *Xerqe*. What is more, lighting seven lamps for *Heft Sur* as the symbol of the seven mysteries, as *Çirayên Me'rîfetê* in *Tanvûşgêran*, *Çeqeltu* in *Sema*, *Heft Sivarên Mala Adiya* at Lalish, and also other seven lamps beside *Derê Mîr* at Lalish.

The olive tree also plays a symbolic role in religious life, being a symbol of the continuity of life and of immortality. Based on this belief, it is used in various ways in the religious life of Yezidi worshippers, as its oil is used for *Çirahilkirin*. It is also planted beside the headstone of a grave, and the olive tree is also used for healing practices. In addition, the *Zerûşz* (Walnut tree) is the symbol of sacred trees and its leaves are used for colouring the *Xerqe* black.

The peacock symbolizes nature mainly in two respects. The colourfulness of the peacock feathers represents the colours of nature. Also, the open feathers of the peacock, which are in a circular way, are said by some to represent the sunrise. The peacock is a sacred bird, its role is reflected in several aspects of the Yezidi religious life.

The symbolism of the cockerel in religious life relates to the sunrise and sunset. When the cockerel crows at sunrise, it proclaims the coming of the light and the sun.

¹²⁵³ See Image 55 in Appendices.

Here, it is regarded as the messenger of the sun. In contrast, when it crows at sunset, it means misfortune.

The black snake in Yezidism is the symbol of immortality. The snake is also the warden of springs and is the symbol of *Ava Hêmanê*/*Ava Jîyanê* (the water of life). Both the snake and water have one common feature, namely their association with immortality. The snake can also represent renewal. The black snake, changing from its old skin to its new skin, is symbolic of the renewal of life, just as nature in spring replaces old grass with new grass. Consequently, the black snake is regarded as a sacred symbol in many aspects of the religious life as its image is found on the walls of many religious places. Some Sheikhs wander around with it the during spring season for a blessing.

Conclusion

The following general conclusions can be drawn from the study.

In the study of Yezidism, relatively little attention has hitherto been paid to the veneration of natural elements in this religion. No specific or near-comprehensive academic study has been devoted to the elements of nature, although there are a few articles about natural elements. Several earlier studies focus particularly on historical references and give general and superficial information about some aspects of the natural elements. Also, these studies on Yezidism mention the holiness of these elements without drawing attention to the considerable importance of the beliefs and observances connected with them in Yezidi religious life. The present study is an initial attempt to fill that gap. It is hoped that this work will pave the way for more research in this field.

The present work aims to offer an in-depth description and analysis of the considerable role that the four 'elements of nature' – fire/light; water; earth; air/wind – play in many aspects of Yezidi beliefs and practices on the basis of religious poetic texts and living religious traditions. For instance, regarding beliefs, the study explains the role which these elements play in accounts of the process of creation, and specifically in the creation of the world; in the emergence of life on earth; in the creation of human beings; and in the end of the world. Furthermore, concerning religious practices and observances, the work studies the role of the elements in acts of worship and devotion; religious places; rituals of feasts and festival; religious customs; religious objects and symbols.

The study sheds light on some aspects of the role of these elements in Yezidism, studied here for the first time, such as, in Yezidi beliefs: the role of light/fire in the implicit theology of that faith and in Yezidism in general; the role of these elements in the creation of the world; the creation of man, his death and afterlife; the emergence of

life on earth; the concept of *Xudan* (Lord) of the four elements of nature and their manifestations; and the end of the world. In the sphere of religious observances: the role of these elements in relation to praying; rites of pilgrimage; in observances concerning religious places; religious customs such as healing practices, taboos, and prohibitions. Elements of nature also have a direct connection with certain religious objects, such as *Berat* as holy soil, *Şerbikê Avê* (Jar of water), *Çira* (Lamp), etc.

According to the theology that is implicit in both traditional hymns and modern narratives, *Nûr* (light), described as eternal light, is the manifestation of God. Furthermore, the four 'elements of nature' play a key role in the creation myth, in narratives of the end of the world and in Yezidi religious thinking generally.

The central role of *Nûr* (light) in Yezidi implicit theology has not been sufficiently recognised to date. Light plays a central role in the Yezidi religious beliefs. First of all, there is one God, described as eternal light, who has absolute power, the creator of all creatures and their ruler. Some of His characteristics have a direct relationship to light, as His power is manifested in nature, notably in the four elements, through His *Nûr* (light) and *Sur* (mystery). This belief is reflected in many Yezidi traditions, such as the veneration of the light of the sun and the lighting of the *Çira* (lamp) as symbols of the light of God.

As regards the veneration of light, the characteristics of God, Tawusî Melek and Şêşims are described in very similar ways, stressing their profound connection with light. Tawusî Melek and Şêşims are described as manifestations of God's light. Moreover, Tawusî Melek, as light, plays a prominent role in Yezidi traditions: for instance, on the first Wednesday of *Nîsan* (Eastern April) in every year, He (as light) descends to earth for the renewal of life on earth. Also, Şêşims is the lord of the sun and light in the Yezidi tradition.

Furthermore, the *Heft Sur* (Seven Mysteries) also have a prominent connection with light. It is believed that they were created from God's light; they give light and their creation is like 'lighting a lamp with the flame of another lamp.'

In the tradition, the light is from eternal God and, being a part of him, it is eternal. It is believed that eternal light is the source of human soul, which is why the soul is also a part of God and is eternal. Based on this belief, and according to the belief in *Kirasguborîn* (lit. 'changing one's shirt', i.e. reincarnation), when a human is born, his/her soul has the form of light, which comes down from the *Qendîl* (lamp) in the sky, and enters the body to give it life on earth. When a human dies, his/her soul rises from his/her body and goes back to its original source and place on high, which is again the *Qendîl*, i.e., the soul is immortal. As a religious custom, Yezidis light lamps as the symbol of the souls of their dead.

The four elements in religious beliefs

The study shows that the four elements of nature are venerated and holy in Yezidism, based on the concept that they are primordial elements that existed in the *Dur* (Pearl) which God created from His pure light, and which was with God from pre-eternity. Then the *Dur* and its four natural elements became the source of the creation of all

creatures, the creation of the world, the creation of human beings, and human destiny after death including the end of the world.

Creation began when the *Dur*, which contained the four elements, burst open and resulted in the creation of everything. First of all, when the *Dur* exploded, water flowed out of it and waves appeared and resulted in a world submerged in an ocean. Next, God threw leaven into it and part of the water became solid. After that, earth and heaven were created. Then life emerged on the earth from these elements, and particularly from the water of *Kaniya Sipî*, and also from the light of Lalish as *Xerza Nûranî* (luminous seed) and *Nûra Mihbetê* (the light of love). The elements light/fire and water play a key role in this stage.

Regarding the creation of human beings and their destiny after death, the study observes that Adam's body was created from the four elements of nature as the last stage of the Yezidi creation myth. Furthermore, it is explained that the four elements of nature, and notably light, play an essential role in many beliefs in relation to humans' destiny after death. About light and the soul, in *Kirasguborîn*, when a human is born, the soul comes down to earth from *Qendîl* in the sky and enters the body to give it life. When a human dies the soul as light rises from the body and goes back to its original source and former place on high, which is *Qendîl* (lamp, the source of light), i.e., it is immortal. Moreover, regarding the body, when the body dies, its substance goes back to its origin which is the four elements of nature on the earth, i.e., it is mortal. It is shown that, in the beginning, the human being was created from these four elements, and after death his body goes back to these four elements.

As regards the end of the world, the study investigates how these elements and their manifestations became important sources of some beliefs about it. These elements play a crucial role in the causes of *Tofans* (a storm or a flood) as huge events in the myth of the end of life in the history of the world. The first of these was by way of wind, called *Tofana Ba* (the *Tofan* of Wind). The second was by way of water, *Tofana Arê* (the *Tofan* of Water), then the world brings renewal again and ultimately life continues. The last one is *Tofana Agir* (the *Tofan* of fire), which will be by fire, in the future. In general, these elements play the role of purifier of the world from sinners and unbelievers. Furthermore, the study reveals how the four elements of nature and their natural disastrous phenomena will become the signs of the end of the world (i.e., Yezidi eschatology), for example, a big dust storm will rise on the mountains, a catastrophic earthquake will be in the oceans, and a wind storm, described as a hurricane, will come from the east and will destroy all the mountains, etc. As becomes clear, in the beginning, the world was created from *Dur* and its four natural elements, and the world will end by those four elements and their phenomena.

The four elements in religious practices and observances

The major outcomes of this work with reference to the role that these elements play in several aspects of religious practices and observances are the following:

Regarding acts of worship and devotion, one of the acts that is connected to natural elements is prayer, for example we find the elements fire and light in *Du'a Çirabilkernê* (the prayer of lighting lamps), water in *Du'aya Morkirinê* (the prayer of baptism) and earth

in *Du'a Teslîma'Erdê* (the prayer of commitment to the earth). There are many significant rites of pilgrimage to Lalish based on the role and veneration of these elements: for instance, pilgrims should be barefoot because of the holiness of the soil in that place and should wash their faces with the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* for blessing; performing the *Selakîrin* ritual with the water of *Zimzim*, the pilgrims take home some water from these springs for blessing. Another act of worship is fasting for *Xudans* (Lords) of each of the four elements of nature. There are also several other acts of worship and devotion, mostly in daily life, that are about venerating natural elements such as swearing an oath by the natural elements, as when Yezidis say, *bi evê agirê pêroz* (I swear by this holy fire) and *bi evê axa pêroz* (I swear by this holy soil), and kissing some of them in religious places, etc.

The study demonstrates that these natural elements relate to the holiness and veneration of many religious places. There are different types and forms of elements of the natural structure of sacred sites e.g., sometimes one of the natural elements has become a religious place, a holy site or shrine of pilgrimage, such as *Nîzangeb* (shrine) which is very often only one sacred spring, a tree or a cave. Another example, the (place of greeting) consists of a pile of stones. Usually, these sites are named with the name of that natural element such as *Kaniya Pîraxayê* (the spring of Pîraxayê) in Shingal and *Dara Qelîndera* (the tree of *Qelender*) in Lalish. Generally, most religious places have sacred water, springs, gardens, trees, caves or sacred stones. Yezidis take soil and water from these places for different religious purposes.

The study demonstrates that natural elements provide an essential background for various rituals of religious feasts and festivals. There are rituals and ceremonies specifically about the veneration of natural elements – for instance the veneration of fire and light in *Çirahîlkîrin* (lighting lamps) in all of these feasts and festivals, and performing the *Gurka Gay* (the flame of the bull) ritual during the *Bêlînde* feast. In addition, some rituals and ceremonies are based on the holiness of the water, such as the ceremony of *Sefera Nan û Mast* (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) in which bread and yoghurt are 'baptized' with the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* in Lalish for blessing, the ritual of *Tavus Cîwankîrin*, i.e. Baptising the *Sinceq* of *Tavus* by sprinkling it with the water of the same spring and drinking from the holy water of the *Şerbîk* (jar of water) during the *Tavusgêran* ceremony. Other acts and rituals that represent this concept of veneration are *Bixorhîlkîrin* (Burning incense), which gives the air a pleasant smell in order to create a spiritual atmosphere during most religious feasts and festivals. Ploughing the earth is forbidden in some feasts as in *Sersal* and *Bêlînde* because of the season of fertility of the earth and renewal of nature. It is noticeable that Yezidis celebrate many religious feasts and festivals in spring more than in other seasons; this has a link with the season of starting a new life in nature and the fertility of the earth for planting and increasing agricultural production.

The study surveys the various religious customs connected with the role and veneration of natural elements. It is shown that Yezidis perform these customs because of the holiness of the elements of nature, for example in the rites of passage; *Morkîrin* (baptism) and taking soil of religious places for a newborn baby in the custom of childbirth, in wedding customs like drinking from the *Şerbîk* (jar) of water, as well as water with the *Dehnokêt Bâkê* (bride's grains), and in funerary customs such as putting

Berat on the face of the deceased, and throwing a handful of soil into the grave, lighting lamps for the first seven days in the place of the deceased, etc. Among all of these religious customs, the most noteworthy ones that are based on the role and veneration of the four elements of nature are some prohibitions, taboos and healing practices.

About prohibitions and taboos, in the Yezidi community, as in Zoroastrianism, sullyng or polluting one of the natural elements constitutes a grievous sin. There are several prohibitions and taboos based on keeping the natural elements and their environment clean from anything that causes pollution, spoiling and deterioration, such as spitting on natural elements, urinating in water and on plants, burning trees and harming plants, as well as uttering curses and inappropriate words towards natural elements and phenomena such as heavy rain and strong wind, etc.

Regarding customs related to religious healing practices, Yezidis treat different illnesses and diseases by using natural elements that are regarded as holy and contain mighty power, and the most important natural resources used for this purpose are water, soil, clay, trees and other plants. Some natural elements such as springs and trees are also dedicated to healing practices. These elements are usually named after the illness that each treats, for instance, *Kanî Zerik* (the spring of anaemia), *Kanî Gurîk* (the spring of itching), *Kaniya Barbaykê* (the spring of air/rheumatism), *Dara ta û bayê* (the tree of fever and rheumatism), *Dara Nezerê* (the tree of [against] the evil eye), etc.

In relation to religious objects and nature symbolism, concerning the concept of the veneration of nature, there are different forms and functions of religious symbols and objects that have a role in religious traditions and life – for example, *Çira* (lamps) and its fire, *Şerbikê Avê* (the jar of water) and its water, *Berat* (sacred soil ball) and its soil, etc.

Natural elements are represented symbolically in some aspects of religious life. This is the source of various religious objects and rituals as in the following: fire in the ritual of *Gurka Gay* (the flame of the bull) in the *Bêlindê* feast is the symbol of the sun and light. The fire and light of the *Çira* on every Wednesday and the eves of every religious occasion in religious places are the symbol of the light of the sun on the earth. Also, the light of *Çira* is the symbol of the human soul and spiritual knowledge. Regarding water symbolism, the water of *Şerbikê* (jar) in *Tamsusgêran* and in wedding customs is the symbol of holy water and immortal life and also the symbol of having good fortune in marriage and good health. The water of the *Kaniya Sipê* is the symbol of pure and spiritual water which is used for baptism. This water is also the symbol of the increase of goodness and grace in wealth and substance as in the *Seferu Nan û Mast* (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) ceremony. The water of *Zimzim* in *Selakirin* is the symbol of good health, saving life, fulfilling wishes, etc. *Berat* as the symbol of holy soil is extremely venerated in religious life such as swearing an oath by it and kissing it and holding it. The clean air and pleasant smell in *Bixurbilkirin* (Burning incense) is the symbol of good atmosphere and spiritual feelings.

Further general conclusions about the role of the elements of nature in the Yezidi tradition

The identity and the role of the *Xudan* (Lord) of the various natural elements and their manifestation have been described here, perhaps for the first time in the Western academic literature on Yezidism. The role of *Xudan* is that he has control over natural

elements and phenomena that belong to him. The *Xudan* of fire and sun is Şêşims, the *Xudan* of the water is Xidir Liyas, the *Xudan* of the earth is Derwêşê Erdê, and the *Xudan* of the air is Sheikh Musê Sor. The study clarifies that believing in many *Xudans* might be connected to the role of a certain natural element and phenomena as a source of sustenance and spiritual love, such as that Şêşims is the lord of the sun and also sustenance, Mehmed Reşan is the *Xudan* of rain, *Kaniya Sîpî* is the *Xudan* of springs and flowing water, Şerfedîn is the *Xudan* of trees, plants and their fruits. Some further *Xudans* are linked with fear from of the danger from natural phenomena for property and wealth; for example, the *Xudan* of thunder and lightning is Sheikh Ebrûs, the *Xudan* of floods, storms and natural disasters is Pîra Fat.

The findings of the study illustrate the belief that God's power exists in the four elements of nature and their manifestations, and He is ruler over them. Therefore, generally, Yezidis venerate, respect and revere these elements and sometimes treat them as holy, but they do not worship them. However, they worship God's power through some elements of nature, e.g. when praying towards the light of sun and lamp, and swearing oaths by natural elements saying, *bi evê agirê pîroz* (I swear by this holy fire); *bi evê axa pîroz* (I swear by this holy soli), and *bi evê ava pîroz* (I swear by this holy water), kissing some of these elements in religious places for blessing, etc.

The study concludes that among the four elements of nature, light/fire and water are particularly revered and they play a particularly prominent role in Yezidi traditions. In the creation myth, when the *Dur* exploded, the water flowed out of it and the whole universe became water. Life emerged on earth from the water of *Kaniya Sîpî*, and also from the light of Lalish. In addition, water plays a central role in the creation of human beings. Also, light is the source of human soul in the creation in birth, and after death the soul becomes eternal light in *Qendîl*. Moreover, the first big *Tofan* was by way of water and was called *Tofana avê*, the last one is *Tofana agir*, which will be by fire. Furthermore, both fire and water are revered in Yezidi religious life; *Çira* is lit on almost all religious occasions and in all religious places, also, fire in *Gurka Gay* (the flame of the bull) ritual and in *Çeqeltu* (a candelabrum with seven lights) in the *Sema* ceremony, etc. Concerning water, it is used for baptism, in the *Sefera Nan û Mast* ceremony, in the *Şerbikê* (jar of water) in wedding customs, in the *Tawusgêran* ceremony and in the *Selakirin* ritual. Pilgrims to Lalish have to take home some water from the springs there for blessing. Several healing practices are only performed with water, etc.

The study elaborates on how the four elements of nature play their roles in two main different ways; first, they play their role collectively and this is mostly expressed in religious beliefs, as explained in Part One which is about the description of the creation myth and the end of the world, etc. Secondly, they play their role individually, which is very often shown in religious practices, observances, rituals, customs, ceremonies, etc., as explained in Part Two.

In Yezidism, there are some beliefs and myths that have a link with nature and become the source of some practical observances in religious life. In other words, some elements of nature become the source of religious beliefs, myths and their practical observances in religious life. Therefore, there are interrelated themes in religious beliefs and practices; for instance, Yezidis believe that light is the source of the soul and they light lamps for someone recently deceased as the symbol of his/her soul. Moreover, in

their beliefs, light is the symbol of spiritual knowledge; therefore they light lamps in *Tannusgêran* named *Çirayên Me'rîfetê* (the lamps of knowledge). Also, it is believed that *Heft Sur* (Seven Mysteries) were created from light like 'lighting a lamp with the flame of another lamp' and they light seven lamps for them in Lalish. In addition, they believe that the water of *Kaniya Sipî* is the symbol of increase and grace for wealth and substance, so they baptize their bread and yoghurt in a special ceremony called *Sefera Nan û Mast*. Another belief is that after death the human's body returns to the soil; therefore, they throw a handful of soil into the coffin in the funeral customs, etc.

The study reveals that the role and veneration of nature are the most important themes in the content of many religious poetic texts, particularly the *Qewls* and *Du'as*. Moreover, the content of some of these texts is mostly or completely about the veneration of natural elements, such as fire and light in the text of *Du'a Çirahilkirinê* (the prayer of lighting lamps), the light of the sun in all of the texts of prayers performed towards the sun, like *Du'aya Sibeykê* (The Morning Prayer) and *Du'aya Hêvarî* (The Evening Prayer), water in the text of *Du'aya Morkirinê* (the prayer of baptism) and also in the text of *Beyta Kaniya Sipî* (Beyt of the White Spring), earth in *Du'a Teslîma 'Erdê* (the prayer of commitment to the earth), in *Qewlê 'Erd û 'Ezman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), etc. On the basis of this finding, it could be said that in Yezidism nature is described as the source of inspiration for the composition of such religious texts.

Appendices

I. Interviewees

In general, I interviewed many Yezidis from different cities and villages in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and Germany who are interested in Yezidism. Information taken from these interviewees can be categorized into three main groups, depending on the fieldwork of the research:

Group A: People learned in Yezidi religion

This group consist of those who have considerable knowledge about the Yezidi religion in general, and are well-known among the Yezidi community in Iraq:

Adinan Xêravay

Adinan is a well-known *Qewlbej* (reciter of the religious hymns) from the caste of *Mirîds* (laymen). He was born in 1974 in the village of Xêrava in Duhok city. He knows many religious texts and their interpretation. The phone interview with him was conducted on 26.11.2017 in Oldenburg, Germany.

Aliyas Mîrza Derwês

Aliyas is a *Feqîr* from the family called *Mala Hemo* who is famous among Yezidis in Shingal. He was born in 1949 in Shingal. He is a religious man in Shingal. A group interview with him and Cirdo Ebdo Hesên was conducted on 31.10.2016, in the village of Serdeştê, Shingal Mountain, when he was displaced there.

Babê Çawîş Hesên Silêman

Hesên is from the Pîr caste. He was born in 1973 in the village of Kendal in Iraq. His religious position is Babê Çawîş and he is regarded as a Yezidi religious leader. He works in the Lalish temple and has a considerable knowledge of the Yezidi tradition and the interpretation thereof. He plays a great role in religious rituals and ceremonies performed in Lalish. A group interview with him and Se'îd Awdî Reşo was conducted on 03.07.2015, at Lalish temple in Iraqî Kurdistan.

Babê Şêx Xirto Hacî İsmail

Xirto is from the Sheikh caste. He was born in 1931 in Iraq. His religious position is the *Babê Şêx* and is also called *Êxtiyarê Mergebê*-the Yezidi spiritual leader which is a hereditary position in Yezidism. The interview was conducted on 03.07.2015 at Lalish temple in Iraqî Kurdistan.

Cirdo Ebdo Hesên

Cirdo is a *Feqîr* from the caste of Mirîds (laymen) and was born in 1950 in the village of Xirbê Qewala in the Shingal region. He is from a famous family called *Mala Zero* among the Yezidis of Shingal. He is famous for being a religious man, *Xerqepoş* and *Qewlbêj* in Shingal. He is an expert in religious oral texts and traditions and their interpretation, and he bases his knowledge only on the religious oral tradition. A group interview with him and Aliyas Mîrza Derwêş was conducted on 31.10.2016 in the village of Serdeştê, Shingal Mountain in Iraq, when he was displaced there.

Deştî Şêx Zeydîn

Deştî is from the caste of Sheikhs and was born in 1964 in the village of Khanke, Duhok city. He is a custodian of the sacred place of Mehmedê Cindar in the village of Khanke as well as a cleric and a famous *Qewlbêj*. He is an expert in religious texts and his knowledge is based on religious oral tradition, oral history and the written sources for their interpretation. The interview with him was conducted on 02.04.2018 in Pforzheim, Germany.

Hecî Mirad Keçel

Hecî is a *Feqîr* from the caste of Mirîds, born in 1971 in Shingal. He is a *Qewlbêj* and a religious man. The interview with him was conducted on 08.07.2015 in the village of Boza in Iraq when he was displaced there.

Hecî Şemo Mirad

Hecî is a *Feqîr* who wears a *Xerqe* (black sacred woollen tunic) from the caste of Mirîds, Hecî was born in 1928 in the village of Gabara west of Ba'adra, in Iraqî Kurdistan. He is an expert and has a deep knowledge of Yezidi tradition, texts and observances and the interpretation thereof. He is a famous religious man and a *Qewlbêj* in Sheikhan. As mentioned in the present study, Hecî is the source of publications of several Yezidi religious texts. He is fluent in both Kurdish and Arabic. The interview with him was conducted on 23.07.2015 in Ba'adra in Iraqî Kurdistan.

Hesen Xudêda Garis

Pîr Hesen was born in 1970 in the village of Khatara in Iraq. He is a religious man and a *Qewlbêj*. The interview with him was conducted on 06.07.2015 in Khatara, Iraq.

Merwan Xelîl Babîrî

Merwan is from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1981 in the village of Babîr, Iraq. He is a *Qewlbêj* well-known among the Yezidis and an expert in religious texts and observances and he has participated in religious events in the Kurdistan region and Germany as a cleric. The phone interview with him was conducted on 25.11.2017 in Oldenburg, Germany.

Se'îd Aliyas Nabo

Se'îd is a *Feqîr* from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1967 in the village of Cîdalê in Shingal. He is a religious man and a *Qewlbêj*. The interview with him was conducted on 22.09.2015 in the collective village of Shariya, Iraqi Kurdistan, when he was displaced there.

Se'îd Awdî Reşo

Se'îd is a Pîr. He was born in 1970 in the village of Bêtmar in the Sheikhan district in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is a *Şikestî* (monk/friar) in Lalish and he is a helpmate of Babê Çawîş Hesen Silêman. A group interview with him and Babê Çawîş was conducted on 03.07.2015 at Lalish in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Şero Bîrahîm Kîşto

Şero is from the caste of Mirîds and was born in 1963 in the village of Xerşeniya in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is a religious man and a *Qewlbêj*. The interview with him was conducted on 07.07.2015 in the collective village of Shariya in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Xewace Xudêda Elî

A *Qewlbêj* from the caste of Mirîds, Xewace was born in 1985 in the village of Khatara in Iraq. I conducted an interview with him on 03.07.2015 in Khatara, Iraq.

Xidir Berekat Keso

Xidir is a *Feqîr* from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1930 in Shingal Mountain, Iraq. He is famous for being a learned *Xerqepoş* and *Qewlbêj*, and a member of the religious coterie in Shingal. He is an expert in religious oral texts and tradition and their interpretation. He follows a traditional way of understanding the Yezidi religion. The interview with him was conducted on 05.07.2015, in the village of Sêcê in Iraqi Kurdistan when he was displaced there.

Group B: The *Micêwirs* (custodians) of religious places

This group includes *Micêwirs* of religious places who provided me with information about those places and the religious ceremonies and events performed there.

Êro Hecî

Êro is from the caste of *Mirîds*. She was born in 1959 in the village of Bahzani in the Sheikhan district in Iraq. She is a religious *Feqîra* (nun) and *bixurbilgr* (incense holder) at the Lalish temple. The interview with her was conducted on 05.10.2016 at the Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Esmer Esmâil Mirad

Esmer is from the *Pîr* caste and was around 52 years old at the time of the interview. She is the custodian of the White Spring in Lalish. I conducted an interview with her on 03.07.2015 at the Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Himê Berekat Hesên

A *Feqîr* from the caste of *Sheikhs*, Himê was born in 1985 in the Sheikhan district in Iraq. He is the custodian of *Zimzîm* Spring in Lalish and the interview with him was conducted on 07.07.2015 at Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Kovan Hesên Cindî

Kovan is a *Feqîr* from the caste of *Sheikhs* from the *Şêxûbekir* lineage. He was born in 1988 in the village of Mihet in the Sheikhan district. He is the custodian of *Xerqê Şêxûbekir* in Lalish. The interview with him was conducted on 07.07.2015 at the Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Sebah Sebirî Se'îd

Sebah is from the *Sheikh* caste. He was born in 1985 in the collective village of Khanasor in the Shingal district. He is the custodian of the *Hefî Sîwarên Mala Adîya* (seven riders of the *Adîya* family) in Lalish. The interview was conducted with him on 07.07.2015 at Lalish in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn

Tariq is a *Sheikh*. He was born in 1968 in the village of Boza, Iraq, and acts as one of the custodians of the sacred place of *Civata Boza* (the assembly of *Boza*) and the *Mezar* of Melkê Mêran in Boza, Iraq. The interview with him was conducted on 25.04.2018 in Göttingen, Germany.

Xêrî Xidir Emer

Xêrî is a *Feqîr* from the village of Ba'adra and belongs to the *Sheikh* caste. At the time of the interview he was around 41 years old. His duty is to light the candles in Lalish. I conducted an interview with him on 06.07.2015 at the Lalish temple, Iraqi Kurdistan.

Xezal Silêman Yousif

Xezal is from the Pîr caste. She was born in 1967 in the village of *Mem Şivan* in Duhok. She is the custodian of *Zêva Memê Şivan* (Memê Şivan's Courtyard). She has been serving in the shrine for almost ten years. She provided me with a lot of information about that *Zêv*. The researcher conducted an interview with her on 10.07.2015 at the Lalish temple in Iraqî Kurdistan.

Group C: People interested in Yezidi religion

This group includes those writers who are interested in the Yezidi religion and who provided important information for this research:

Bedelê Feqîr Hecî

Bedelê is a *Faqîr* and from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1966 in the village of Ba'adra, in Iraqî Kurdistan. He supplied a lot of important information about the core of the subject of the study which is the role of nature in Yezidism and how it is reflected in religious texts. He received his knowledge about Yezidism from his father Hecî Şemo Mirad (see above). I conducted an interview with him on 10.03.2019, in Oldenburg, Germany.

Merwan Şêx Hesên Reşkanî

Sheikh Merwan was born in 1969 in the village of Zeyniya in Duhok city. He is involved in Yezidism and has published some articles about Yezidism in the *Mehfel Magazine*. The phone interview with him was conducted on 10.11.2016 at the Lalish Centre in Duhok, Iraqî Kurdistan.

Pîr Xidir Silêman

Pîr Xidir belongs to the *Cerwan* lineage. He was born in the Sheikhan district in Iraq. He is a well-known Yezidi researcher and possesses solid knowledge of religious oral texts and written works on Yezidism. He is one of the first Yezidi writers who, alongside Sheikh Xelîl Cindî Reşo, published a book in 1979 named: *Êzîdiyâtî: Li ber Roşnaya Hindek Têkstêd Ayîne Êzîdîyan*, (Yezidism: in the Light of some Religious Texts of the Yezidis). He has also published some other books and articles about Yezidism. The interview with him was conducted on 10.11.2016 in Duhok, Iraqî Kurdistan.

Xelef Hecî Hemed

Xelef belongs to the Mirîd caste. He was born in 1981 in the collective village of Tell Banat in the Shingal region. He is interested in Yezidism, and he has published some articles about Yezidism in the *Lalish Magazine*. The interview with him was conducted on 21.11.2017 in Minden, Germany.

Xelîl Cindî Reşo

Sheikh Xelîl was born in 1952 in the Sheikhan district in Iraq. He cooperated with Pîr Xidir Silêman in 1979 to publish some of the formerly unpublished Yezidi religious texts in a book named: *Êzîdiyâtî: Li ber Roşnaya Hindek Têkstêd Ayîne Êzîdîyan*, (Yezidism: in the

Light of some Religious Texts of the Yezidis). He also published a book with Prof. Dr Ph. G. Kreyenbroek in 2005, named: *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect: Sacred Hymns and Religious Narratives of the Yezidi Tradition*. He provided me with valuable assistance in understanding the contents and interpretations of religious poetic texts. The interview with him was conducted on 22.12.2017 in Göttingen, Germany.

Zayer Bibo Hakari

Shekh Zayer was born in 1980 in the village of Nisêriyê, Iraq. He is interested in Yezidism, and he published several articles on Yezidism in *Silangeba Lalish*, *Qebax* and *Sheikhan* Magazines. He provides me with much information about Yezidi religious places in his area. The phone interview with him was conducted on 10.10.2015 in the collective village of Khanke, Duhok in Iraqi Kurdistan.

II. Glossary of Terms

These terms are specific to the Yezidi tradition and literature and they have contextual meanings within the Yezidi culture; as such they are, therefore, explained as described in Yezidi religious literature:

Ava jîyanê

It is literally the water of life. In Yezidi tradition, there are many names for that water, but they all have one concept in common: they are *Ava Hêwanê* (the water of life) and *Ava Heyatê* (the water of life). According to Yezidi religious mythology, this refers to the point that there is water for eternal life in this world and whosoever finds it and drinks it will have eternal life in this world. It is also reflected in other Yezidi myths, that water was dropped on the olive tree, which is why it is always green, and it is the symbol of the immortality of life in Yezidism. It is also said that the snake drank from that water and that is why it never dies because it has eternal life. Moreover, in *Xidir* and *Liyas* mythology in Yezidism, that water fell over them (they drank it) and they gained eternal life, and therefore they are always alive (they are immortal).

Çeqeltu

It is sometimes literally translated as ‘a candelabrum with seven lights’ and refers to a container in which seven wicks are lit. There is also a big one in the middle as in the *Sema* ceremony. The meaning of this word in religious context refers to the symbol of the seven angels, where the one in the middle symbolizes Tawusî Melek. This probably represents the same belief that says that these lamps are the symbols of the seven planets around the sun.

Çirayên Me’rifetê

There are seven lamps called *Çirayên Me’rifetê*, ‘the lamps of knowledge’, which are lit beside the *Sinceq* in *Tavusgêran*. In Yezidi tradition, they represent the belief that the light of a lamp is the symbol of knowledge (see QMI) and they are also symbolic of the seven angels.

Dur

It literally means ‘Pearl’. But it is not just a pearl: it is much deeper, and it plays a central role in Yezidi cosmogony. In Yezidi tradition and religious texts, God created it from his pure light. It contains all the elements in existence, notably the four sacred elements of nature: fire, water, earth and air/wind, and it was the original source of the creation of everything in existence after it exploded (see QDU, QŞB and QAD).

Êzî

It is one of the names of God in Yezidi tradition (see QKM and BKS).

Êzidi

Whoever follows the Yezidi religion; it could be translated as a Yezidi believer or as the Yezidi people.

Êzidiyatî

It refers to the Yezidis’ religion, tradition and culture and can be translated as Yezidism.

Heft Siwarên Mala Adiya

They literally refer to the seven riders of the Adiya family, it is the name of seven lamps in Lalish and it includes a big one in the middle. These are lit beside the *Dergehê Mîr* (the gate of Mîr). There are also other seven other lamps near *Xerqê Şêxûbekîr* by that name. According to Yezidi tradition, they symbolize the seven angels and Tawusî Melek is their leader (see QP). In another interpretation they are the symbol of the seven planets and the one in the middle represents the sun.

Heft Sur

It is usually translated as “Seven Mysteries”, “Seven Divine Beings”, “Seven Holy Beings”, and/or “Seven Angels”. According to the Yezidis’ creation myth and based on their religious texts, in the time of creation, God created *Heft Sur* from His pure light and they gave light, then He created the universe from *Dur* (pearl) and submitted it to the *Heft Sur* and Tawusî Melek reigned as their leader and ruler (see QP, QŞB, DÊ, QEE, DB and QP).

Hêvên/havên

It literally means ‘leaven or rennet’. According to religious texts (see QAD and QOXHÇ), it was with God before the creation of everything and after that, it became the original source of the creation, including the creation of human beings.

Kas

It is usually translated as ‘cup’ but the purpose of the water inside it is clear. According to religious literature, this water is the symbol of life and death. In this regard, when Yezidis say, “*Kasa jîyanê û Kasa Mîrnê*”, they refer to the cup/water of life and death. In religious texts, drinking from the *Kas* of life is mentioned with relation to a human’s life

(see QMM) and drinking from the *Kas* of death is mentioned in relation to human's death (see QMJ), hence, the *Kas* is the symbol of the continuity of life from both concepts. Based on that belief, the water of the cup is the symbol of the eternal cycle of life.

Kirasguborîn

It is literally 'changing the shirt', but as a term, it is used for rebirth, the transmigration of souls, metempsychosis and reincarnation.

Mêr

It means holy men and has the same role and holiness as *Xas* (see *Xas*).

Micêwir

It literally means 'custodian' or religious man of the local community, but it often denotes the custodian of a local religious place like a shrine, *Qub*, *Mezar*, etc. *Micêwir*'s main religious duty is lighting lamps in those places.

Mirîd

It could be translated as disciple, laypeople, and it is a caste of laymen in Yezidism (see QH and DM).

Nûr

It is usually translated as 'light'; the term has a very deep meaning in the Yezidi tradition and according to religious literature, God is an eternal Nûr and always gives light and is the source of light (see QPHD, DMI and QHBKB), and God is Nûr as the holy light for worshipping (see QBE), but essentially it is God's light and by it God created all creatures in the universe (see QN). Furthermore, Tawusî Melek is described as Nûr (see QÇ and QTM) and Şêşims is also believed to have the characteristics of the light (see QBO, DSS, DÊ and QKM). Moreover, Nûr has a link with the human soul and mind in the Yezidi tradition (see DB, QHB, QAD and QZM).

Pîr

It is a priesthood in Yezidi religion and is one of the three main castes in Yezidism.

Qendîl

It literally means 'lamp or the source of the lights', but as a term it has several meanings in Yezidi religious textual traditions as 'the source of the light'. It is hidden in heaven (see QEE and QQ), which is the original source and place of the light (the light of God) and the place of human souls before birth and after death. It is regarded as the treasure of the human souls in the sky (see DB and QHB). Yezidis believe that when a human is born, the soul comes from *Qendîl* and enters the body, and when that dies, it goes back to its place in *Qendîl* (see QS). On the other hand, there is a symbolic ritual for *Qendîl* by the name *Qendîl* where Yezidis light a *Çira* (lamp) placed in a bowl which they then hang in a certain place.

Qewlbêj

It refers to the reciter of the Yezidi religious hymns and who has knowledge and experience in reciting, explaining and interpreting Yezidi religious oral and poetic texts.

Qewwals

The name means ‘speaker’, ‘reciter’ or ‘chanters’. They settled in the villages of Bazani and Bashiqa. They are specialized in playing religious music on sacred instruments, the def (tambourine) and şibab (flute) and in reciting religious hymns, songs, poems, odes, and prayers which are in fact the oral tradition of the Yazidis. They perform them in religious occasions, such as *Tawusgêran*, village feasts and funerals.

Şemsanî

It is a main religious lineage, but Yezidis, in general, define themselves as Şemsanî, which means Sun Worshipers because they worship the sun. Yezidis also believe that their religion is about worshipping the light and the sun.

Sheikh

It is a main religious caste in Yezidism.

Simat

It is a special and sacred food for religious feasts and festivals. It is made of wheat and stewed meat. Religious texts point out the veneration of Simat (see DÇ and QSÊ).

Sur

It can literally be translated as mystery, but according to religious literature, it has several meanings and it is mainly regarded as the power of God in nature and its related phenomena and it is the cause and source of the movement in the elements of nature (see QSU, QSMK and QMPXZ).

Tarîstan

It literally means ‘darkness’. In Yezidi cosmogony, in the beginning, i.e., before the creation of the world, the whole of existence was Tarîstan and it is described as emptiness, there was an absence of order without any creatures and with no life (see QAD).

Tawus

In religious literature, it has different meanings. It is the peacock and is regarded as a holy bird and the symbol of Tawusî Melek. In Yezidi mythology, the peacock is a seven-coloured bird. The word Tawus is also used for Tawusî Melek. Sometimes Yezidis say Tawus instead of Tawusî Melek, for example when they say, “bi Tawusê” which means “I swear an oath by Tawusî Melek”. The third meaning of Tawus is a sacred object in the form of a metal statue or banner; its shape is like a peacock and it is the symbol of Tawusî Melek, it is also called *Sinceq*.

Tofan

It is literally translated as flood and storm. According to Yezidi tradition and religious texts, there are three *Tofans*: *Tofana Ba* (the *Tofan* of wind), (see QQ), *Tofana Arê* (the *Tofan* of water), (see QNP and QERS) and *Tofana Agir* (the *Tofan* of fire), (see QLP and BN) which are huge mythological events during the history of the world. Each of these *Tofans* destroys the world by one of the natural elements.

Tok

The word literally means ‘collar’ and is used for the round opening at the upper part of the sacred dress and it could be translated as a ‘sacred undershirt’. It is a white dress made of cotton that is worn by Yezidis under the clothes directly on the body. Yezidis of both genders must wear a *Tok* from life to death (see DT). Here, the object of importance is its circularity and its white colour. Yezidis believe that the circularity of the *Tok* is the symbol of the circularity of the shape of the sun and its white colour is the symbol of purity and cleanness.

Xas

They are holy men and are considered to be an object of devotion. According to Yezidi tradition, they have spiritual powers from God and there are many Yezidi holy places such as shrines, *Qub* and mausoleums by the names of those *Xas* (see DN and BH).

Xerza Nuranî

It literally means ‘luminous leaven’ or ‘luminous seed’. In religious tradition it is the leaven of life; it was with God before *Dur* exploded and in the time of creation it solidified the earth and established life on it. Lalish, as *mibbeta xerza nûranî* (the luminous seed of love), was on high and plays the same role as *Xerza Nuranî* (see QZM).

Xerzê Gulê

It is literally translated as ‘the leaven of flowers’ but in religious texts, it has the same concept of *Xerza Nuranî*, it is the leaven of life on earth, (see *Xerza Nuranî*).

Zergûz

It is a walnut tree. According to religious literature, it is the symbol of holy trees because its rennet is from the water of the *Kaniya Sipî* (see QQF and DB). Its leaves are also used to colour the *Xerqe* black (see QQF).

Ziyaret

In Yezidi religious literature, this term is used for kissing holy objects and holy natural elements, as in case “*li darê ziyaret be*” ‘kiss the tree’, (see DZ). It is also used for a pilgrimage to religious places like *Ziyaretkirin* or *Ziyaretbûn* to Lalish (see QKM).

III. Images

These images have direct connection with many topics of the study, and they have been used as the sources for valuable information. Those that are not referred to their sources are taken by me.



Image 01: Heft Sivarên Mala Adiya (the seven riders of the Adiya family), Lalish 2015.



Image 02: Seven lamps beside Dergehé Mîr (the gate of Mîr), Lalish 2015.



Image 03: Çeqeltu (a candelabrum with seven light), in Sema ceremony, Lalish 2013. Photo by Yousif Beri's archive.



Image 04: Çirayên Me'rifetê (the lamps of knowledge), in Tannusgêran, 2013. Photo by Sheikb Tariq's archive.



Image 05: A Yezidi direct his face to the sun while praying. Photo by Sbeikh Tariq's archive.



Image 06: Bixorhilkirin (Burning incense) in the Tinav of Kerecal, Shariya, Dubok 2018. Photo by Macid's archive.



Image 07: Lalish temple, is the holiest place for Yezidis in the world, 2017.



Image 08: Religious pilgrimage in Cejna Cimayê (the festival of the gathering), Lalish 2016.



Image 09: Periyên Sindrukên Xasa (Perîs of graves of holy men) inside their shrines, Lalish 2015.



Image 10: Berê Şibakê (Throne of Netting) ritual, Lalish 2018.



Image 11: Bûka Baranê (Bride of the Rain), by Roj Dasuk.



Image 12: Kêşana Qola (bring tree trunk), Lalish 2018. Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 13: Kaniya Sipê (White Spring) a holy spring in Lalish, Duhok 2015.



Image 14: Dara ta û bayê (the tree of fever and rheumatism), Lalish 2015. Yezidis tie a thread over it.



Image 15: Dara Qelindira (the tree of Qelender), Lalish 2015.



Image 16: Şikefita Pîr Omerxala (the cave of Pîr Omerxala), Lalish 2015.



Image 17: Şikefta Mam Íso (the cave of Mam Íso), Lalish 2015.



Image 18: Morkirin (baptism) with the water of Kaniya Sipê and wearing Tok (sacred undershirt), Lalish 2015.



Image 19: Goven Daderê Kaniya Sipê (the religious dance in front of the Kaniya Sipê) ritual, Lalish 2018.



Image 20: Selakirin (Holy Greeting) with the water of the Zimzim spring, Lalish 2015.



Image 21: A part of Civata Boza (the assembly of Boza), the village of Boza 2015.



Image 22: Zêw and Mezar of Mehmed Reşa in the Mt Meqlub, 2016.



Image 23: Zêw and Mezar of Memê Şivan in the collective village of Khanke, Dubok 2015.



Image 24: Mezar of Evdê Reş in the village of Dêrebûn, Dubok 2012. Photo by Sbeikh Tariq's archive.



Image 25: Mezar of Pîraxayê in the village of Kulkan, Mt Shingal 2016.



Image 26: *Qub û Avahîyê Xasa (Cupola and Mausoleum), Qub of Sheikh Mend, Khanke, Dubok 2015.*

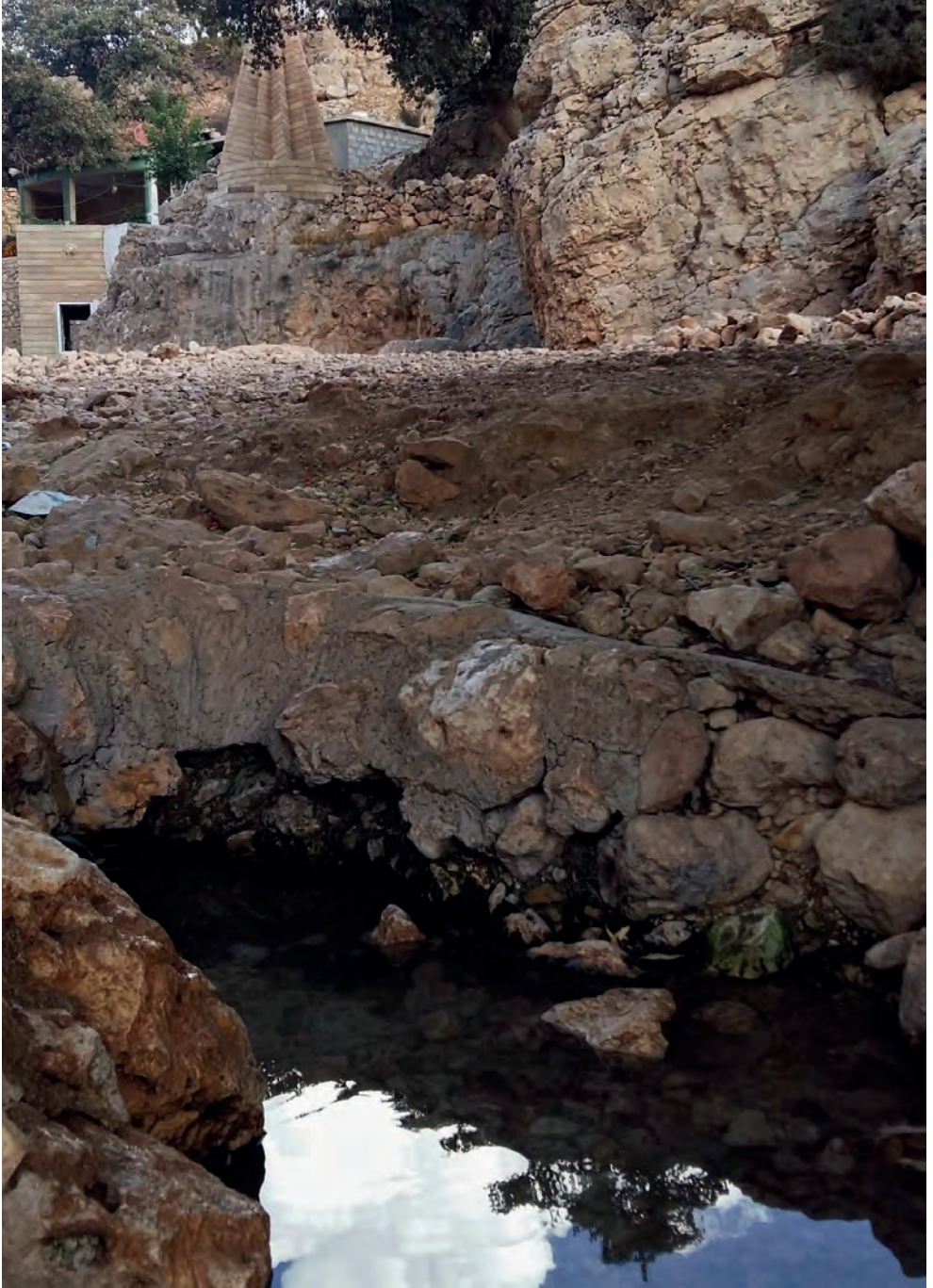


Image 27: The spring of Mezar of Pîraxayê in the village of Kulkan, Mt Shingal 2016.



Image 28: Evdé Reş's spring and his Tiwaf in the village of Dêrebûn, Dubok 2018.



Image 29: Neb Dar (nine trees) in the North of the Ain Safni town, 2015.



Image 30: Silargeba Çinçinkogê (place of greeting of Çinçinkogê) in the village of Osifa in Mt Shingal, 2016.



Image 31: Sûka Me'rifetê (market of [mystical] knowledge), Lalish 2015.



Image 32: Lighting 365 lamps in Lalish in the evening of the Sersal feast, Lalish 2016. Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 33: Serderî (decorating the doors of the house) in Sersal (the Yezîdi New Year), 2016.



Image 34: Colourful eggs and lit candles in Sersal (the Yezidi New Year), 2016.



Image 35: Tivaf of Evdê Reş in the village of Dêrebûn, Dubok 2019. Photo by Karwan Shivan.



Image 36: Replaces the old Perîs of Qub with the new ones in the Tivaf of Hekîm Fêris, Khatara, 2019. Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 37: Sefera Nan û Mast (the ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt), Lalish 2016.



Image 38: Xezîna Nan (the treasure of bread) or Xezîna Şîxadî (Sheikh 'Adî's treasure), Lalish 2015.



Image 39: Den (vases, jars) for saving oil in Lalish, is used for lighting lamps there, Lalish 2015.



Image 40: Qebaxgêran (sacrificing bull) ritual in Cima festival, Lalish 2018. Photo by Yousif Beri's archive.



Image 41: Gurka Gay (the fire-flame of the bull) in Bêlindê festivals 2013, Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 42: Pieces of Xewlère in Bélinde feast, 2018.



Image 43: Qalatic (sacred food) in Xidir Liyas feast, 2017. Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 44: Şerbik (jar) of water in Wedding customs, 2018.



Image 45: Planting a tree beside the head of the grave in Mezar of Mem Şivan, Khanke, Dubok 2016.



Image 46: Simat (religious food), Lalish 2015. Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 47: The white cloths of religious men; Baba Sheikh, Babê Gavan, Lalish 2016. Photo by Sheikh Tariq's archive.



Image 48: Kum (hat) and Gosik/kezî (braid), a Shingali young man, Lalish 2016.



Image 49: Berê Pişt Êşê (headache stone), the Cemetery of Mem Şivan, Khanke, Dubok 2016.



Image 50: Berat (Sacred Soil Ball) the most sacred Yezîdi religious symbols, 2015.



Image 51: The holy Şerbik (The Jar of Water), Lalish 2016.



Image 52: Çirabilkirin (lighting lamps), Lalish 2015.



Image 53: Qendil (lamp), Lalish 2015.



Image 54: Rezê Zeytîna (olive orchard), Lalish 2015.



Image 55: Black snake on the wall of the Qapêye gate, Lalish 2015.



Image 56: Dara Şexsê Batê (the tree of Şexsê Batê) in the village of Xorça in Sbeikhan district, 2015.



Image 57: A Yezidi man and woman playing with colourful eggs, with the presence of red anemones and preparing candles in Sersal, 2020.

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Yezidis are a religious minority living in Kurdistan as the native land. They also live in Transcaucasia and in other countries as diaspora communities such as Russia and Western Europe and particularly in Germany. Their shared language is Kurmanji-Kurdish dialect. Yezidism is a cultural and religious system based on ancient religious traditions and it has roots in some ancient Iranian religions, Mesopotamian cultures and Sufism. Generally, it is regarded as a way to understand life, not an acquired dogma. In addition, each of monotheism, gnosticism, orthopraxy and the holiness of elements of nature play a central role in its traditions. What is more, its religious beliefs and practices have been preserved through oral traditions, which can be considered as a religious literature that has its own forms and categories such as Qewl, Beyt and Qeside, etc. Lalish which is located in Kurdistan is the Yezidis' holiest place in the world. This book contains a detailed study of describing and analyzing the considerable role that the elements of nature, notably the four elements: fire, water, earth and air/wind play in Yezidism, in its religious beliefs and practices, and on the basis of the religious poetic texts and living religious traditions. The fieldwork of the study was carried out in Yezidi areas in the Kurdistan region of Iraq which is the centre of their religion.



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