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.
Rezan Shivan Aysif
The Role of Nature in Yezidism

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Rezan Shivan Aysif

The Role of Nature in Yezidism

Poetic Texts and Living Tradition

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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
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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), Çina (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


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 Vekoline ke bi awayeki têrûtesel rola giring a xweza û elemêntên wê di ola Êzdiyatê de li ser asta bawer û praktizê vedikole. Cexité dikete ser her çar elemêntên xwezayê; agir, av, ax û ba, ku bi pîroz dibêne naskirin di Êzdiyatê de. Piraniya vekolinên li ser Êzdiyatê hatine encamdin, tenê amaje bi pîrozîya van elemênta dane, lê vekolineke taybet, tevkin û pispor derbarê rola xweza di bawer û praktizên jiyanê Oli de ne hatiye kirin. Lewra, ev vekoline dibe bizaveke destpêki bo pîrkirin va biyavi.

Vekolin bi pile yek pîştbestinê dîke ser têkistên hozankî yên oli û teradînên jiyanê oli. Herwsa, gerdin jelerên din ji sudbexî bûn, minak: gotinên oli, keltûra metriyalî ya oli, rêbazên çavdêrîkirinên, hevpeyvinên hemecor û jederên lawekî. Serbarî hindê, vekolinê bi awayekî serekî rêbazên saloxdan û şirovekarê bi karinane. Li gel vê yekê ji, dîtina îmîk (êmîc) rola xwe di ravekirina teradînên serzari yên oli, belgename û keltûra metriyalî, htd de digêre. Biyava karê vekolinê, deverên Êzdiya li hirêma Kurdistana Iraqê û bakorê Iraqê vedgire.

Vekolin ji dû pişka, ku dibine neh çapte, pêk dihê: Pişka yekê, taybet e bi şirovekîrîna rola elemêntên xweza di bawerên oli yên Êzdiya de, di çarçova çar çapte de: Ya yekê vekolinên li Nûr (Ronahî) û elemêntên xweza di Xudênasîya Êzdiya de encam dîde. Çapte ra yey, rola elemêntên xweza yên pîroz di Afrîndina Kinyatê de diyar dîke. Çapte ra yey, bal dikeșinê ser rola van elemênta di entropognî, afrîndin û mirna mirovi de li gorî mitologiya Êzdiya. Çapte ra yey, rola elemêntên xweza û diyardeyên wan di Talî Dîngyoyan Talî Zemane de aškîra dîke.

Pişka yey, ya terxankirinê ji bo rola elemêntên xweza di piraktiz û helkefên oli yên Êzdiya de, li jêr pênc çapte ra de: Çapte ra yekê, rola xweza û her çar elemênta di rêkên perestinên de, wekî di perwestebûnê, rê û risimên perdeyênî nan Narişê û rojikîrînên de, xuya dîke. Çapte ra yey, ji bo destnîşîşîrîna rola elemêntên xweza li cîhên oli de, hatiye danan. Di çapte ra yey, rola elemêntên xweza di cejin û fîstevalên oli de di maweyas her çar werzên salê de, zelal dîke. Çapte ra yey, vekolinê li rola elemêntên xweza yên pîroz di nerêt (cestem) ên oli de dike, wan ji jî yên girêçayî rê û risimên derbûnên û jiyanê rojane ya oli. Herwsa, wan kestmenên têkeldari qedexêrîn, bedkari, tabo, û çareserîyên praktizê yên oli. Çapte pêncê, ku dibê çapte dawiyê ji vekolinê, pêk dihê
الخلاصة

هذه الطرق مخصصة لدراسة أهمية دور الطبيعة وعناصرها الأساسية في المعتقدات وممارسة الطقوس الدينية الإيزيدية، وذلك بالتركيز على العناصر المقدسة الأربعة: النار، الماء، الصرف، الهواء. وعلى الرغم من تناول بعض الدراسات بشكل جانبي وغير منهجي في التطرق إلى قياسة العناصر الأربعة في الدينية الإيزيدية، ولكن دون الخوض في التفاصيل حول أهمية المعاني والتفسيرات المرتبطة بها في الممارسات الدينية وترك فجوات أساسية، لذلك تحاول هذه الطرقة بشكل منهجي وفعلاً، تلك الفجوات بالاضماع في المقام الأول على النصوص الدينية المقدسة وتقاليد الحياة الدينية، ومن ثم على الأعراف والمواقع والتراث الدينية الشفوي، وجمع المواد والمعلومات المطلوبة من خلال البحث الميداني وإجراء المقابلات النصية وكذلك تدوين الملاحظات من خلال المشاهدات الشخصية في العمل الميداني في مناطق الإيزيديين في إقليم كوردستان وسماحة العراق، بالإضافة إلى الاستفادة من عدد من المصادر الثانوية. واعتبر منهجي البحث بشكل رئيسي علىمنهج الوصفي والتحليلي في تناول موضوعات الطرقة، حيث تستكشف من خلال ذلك أهمية وجهة النظر الداخلية في تفسير النصوص الدينية الشفوية وممارسة الطقوس والتراث المادي والعادات والتقاليدي الدينية.

تتكون الطريقة من قسمين رئيسين متضمنين على تسعة فصول، يتناول القسم الأول دور وتسير العناصر الطبيعية في المعتقدات الدينية الإيزيدية، ويتلتف من أربعة فصول، النافذ الأول يتركز في دراسة مفهوم الطلب والعنصر الطبيعي في اللاهوت الدينية الإيزيدية، الفصل الثاني مخصص للتوضيح وإقليم الضوء على دور العناصر الطبيعية المقدسة في أسطورة خلق الكون عند الدينية الإيزيدية. أما الفصل الثالث فهو يبحث دور وتسير تلك العناصر في استمرار خلق الإنسان ودوره حيوي، وما بعد مماته، في حين قد خصص الفصل الرابع لتتناول دور وأهمية العناصر الطبيعية الأربعة في الاعتقادات الدينية في العالم.

أما الفصل الثاني للطريقة فهو يتناول دور العناصر الطبيعية في الطقوس والاحتفالات الدينية ويتضمن على خمسة فصول: حيث يتطرق الفصل الأول على دور الطبيعة وعناصرها الأربعة في العبادات، كالصلوات، وقبل الحج والصيام، والفصل الثاني يبحث دور العناصر الطبيعية في الأماكن الدينية المقدسة، أما الفصل الثالث فهو يتعامل في دراسة عن دور العناصر الطبيعية في العبادات والاحتفالات الدينية خلال السنة الأربعة، بينما الفصل الرابع هو دراسة دور الطبيعة وعناصرها الأربعة المقدسة في العبادات والتقاليدي الدينية، كما هو الحال في العادات التي ترتبط ببطرق العبادة والعادات المرتبطة بالحياة اليومية للإيزيديين بالإضافة
إلى العادات التي ترتبط بالمحرمات والمحظورات الدينية، وأيضاً ممارسات العلاج الديني المعتمدة على العناصر الطبيعية. والفصل الخامس والأخير يركز في البحث وتتناول الرموز والمعتقدات الدينية ذات الصلة المباشرة بالعناصر الطبيعية المقدسة، مثل الالبان (كرة مصنوعة من تربة معبد لاش مقدسة)، وشرب كنفي (جرة الماء)، عبر (الشعلة المقدسة)، وغيرها من العناصر.

بختِم الاصطِرحة في تقديم استنتاجات تستكشف فيها أن تقديم وتبجيل العناصر الطبيعية الأربعة في الديانة الإيزيدية تستند على الاعتقاد بأنها المصدر الأصلي لخلق كافة الأشكال وأن تلك العناصر الطبيعية ومظاهرها دوراً رئيسيًا في مختلف العادات 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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Majid Hassan at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Bamberg, Germany, for his friendly cooperation, which contributed to the improvement of the study. He provided me with rare resources. Also, I am gratefully indebted to Dr Thorsten Wettich at the University of Bremen for his kind assistance and for providing me with some sources about Yezidism.

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Rezan Shivan Aysif
Göttingen, 3 March 2020
Abbreviations

Religious Texts

BH  Beyta Hévarî (The Beyt of the Evening)
BKS  Beyta Kanfa Śpi (The Beyt of the White Spring)
BN  Beyta Nisra (The Beyt of Nisra)
DB  Dil’a Baŵirîyî (The Prayer of Belief)
DC  Du’aya Çînyîyî (The Prayer of the Lamp)
DÈ  Du’a Ezdiyatîyî (The Prayer of Yezidism)
DÎ  Du’a İmanî (The Prayer of the Faith)
DM  Du’a Meřîfîyî (The Prayer of Knowledge)
DMI  Dil’a Mirazi (The Prayer of Wishes)
DMO  Du’aya Murkirînî (The Prayer of Baptism)
DN  Du’a Nîrro (The Noon Prayer)
DQ$  Du’a ù Qewî Śêmsîs (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêmsîs)
DS$  Du’a Śîbê, Şassê 2 (The Morning Prayer, Version 2)
DT  Du’a Tokê (The Prayer of Tokê)
DZ  Dil’a Ziyarethînî (The Prayer of Pilgrimage)
PD  Pâş Du’a (After Prayer)
QAD  Qewî Afirînâ Dînayê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World)
QAM  Qewî Aşî Mîhibbê (The Hymn of the Mill of Love)
QBBO  Qewî Bav Bekirê Omera (The Hymn of Bav Bekir Omer)
QBE  Qewî Bê ù Elîf (The Hymn of B and A)
QBO  Qewî Babekê Omera (The Hymn of Babek Omera)
QÇ  Qewî Carşemîbûyê (The Hymn of Wednesday)
QD  Qewî Dîstrîmî (The Hymn of I am Singing)
QDU  Qewlî Dura (The Hymn of the Pearls)
QEB  Qewlî ‘Ereb Begîja (The Hymn of ‘Ereb Begiya)
QEE  Qewlî ‘Erîd ü ‘Ezman (The hymn of Earth and Sky)
QERS  Qewlî Ezrajê Sefer Bûm (The Hymn of One Day I Made a Journey)
QH  Qewlî Herrarî (The Hymn of Control)
QHB  Qewlî Hemedê Babê (The Hymn of Hemedê Babê)
QHBBK  Qewlî Herê Berê Ko Bu (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning?)
QI  Qewlî İmanê (The Hymn of the Faith)
QKM  Qewlî Kenîya Mara (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes)
QLP  Qewlî Lawê Piran (The Hymn of Lawê Piran)
QMG  Qewlî Mehê (The Hymn of the Months)
QMC  Qewlî Mersûma Cebêre (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones)
QMI  Qewlî Miridîyê (The Hymn of Miridîyê)
QMJ  Qewlî Miskînum Jaro (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One)
QMM  Qewlî Mevlê Me (=Qewlî Kasa), ‘The Hymn of our Master (=The Hymn of the Cups)’
QMPXZ  Qewlî Mîsûr Pîçember ü Xidê Zênde (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidê Zênde)
QN  Qewlî Nadîr (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge])
QNP  Qewlî Nûb Pîçember (The Hymn of the Prophet Noah)
QOXHC  Qewlî Omêr Xala ü Hesen Cînari (The Hymn of Omêr Xala and Hesen Cînari)
QP  Qewlî Pedêy (The Hymn of the King)
QPHB  Qewlî Pîr Hemedê Bog (The Hymn of Pîr Hemed the Grey)
QQ  Qewlî Qênûlî (The Hymn of [the Source of] the Lights)
QQF  Qewlî Qere Fergan (The Hymn of the Black Furqan)
QQI  Qewlî Qiyanêti (The Hymn of the End of the World)
QS  Qewlî Seremergê (The Hymn of the Moment of Death)
QSB  Qewlî Şîcîhekir (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir)
QSE  Qewlî Sîyäê Ês (The Hymn of Sîyäê Ês)
QSMK  Qewlî Silava Melêk Kerîn (The Hymn of the Greeting of the Generous Angel)
QSU  Qewlî Sûra (The Hymn of the Mysteries)
QT  Qewlî Tercal (The Hymn of the False Saviour)
QTM  Qewlî Tawusî Melêk (The Hymn of Tawusî Melek)
QZM  Qewlî Zebûni Mokârî (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One)
seb.  sebeq (Stanza of the Yezidi Religious Poetic Text)
## Abbreviations

### Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMIT</td>
<td><em>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FKBKS</td>
<td><em>Fritillaria Kurdica. Bulletin of Kurdish Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FO</td>
<td><em>Folia Orientalia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td><em>Iran and the Caucasus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JKS</td>
<td><em>The Journal of Kurdish Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPCHEH</td>
<td><em>Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography, and Ecclesiastical History</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td><em>Manuscripta Orientalia</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td><em>confer, compare</em> it is an indication for the reader to make a comparison between the topic being discussed and other material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAIEA</td>
<td><em>Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Eurasien-Abteilung</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DKAWW</td>
<td><em>Denkschriften der Kaisertlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td><em>exempli gratia, for example</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed.</td>
<td>Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td><em>et cetera, and so forth</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EZIA</td>
<td><em>Yezidi Zentrum im Ausland (Yezidian Centre outside Homeland)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOF</td>
<td><em>Göttinger Orient Forschungen</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSGG</td>
<td><em>Graduiertenschule für Geisteswissenschaften Göttingen (the Graduate School of Humanities in Göttingen)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e.</td>
<td><em>id est, that is</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ibid.</td>
<td><em>Ibidem that refers to the same author and source in the preceding reference.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td><em>Iranian Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td><em>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or Islamic State)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISZ</td>
<td><em>Internationales Schreibzentrum (International Writing Centre)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KhR</td>
<td><em>Khalil Jindy Rashow</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRG</td>
<td><em>Kurdistan Regional Government</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRI</td>
<td><em>Kurdistan Region of Iraq</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCSC</td>
<td><em>Lalish Cultural and Social Centre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lit.</td>
<td>literally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td><em>Magazine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt</td>
<td><em>Mount</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MZS</td>
<td><em>Methodenzentrum Sozialwissenschaften (Centre of Methods in Social Sciences)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td><em>Note and Footnote</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td><em>Used where no date of publication is given</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIP</td>
<td><em>New Age International Publishers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td><em>Number</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
p. page  
pp. pages  
PUK Patriotic Union of Kurdistan  
PX Pir Xidir Silêman  
RASGBI The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland  
s.l. *sine loco*, is used when no place of publication is given  
s.n. *sine nomine*, is used when no publisher is given  
sic *sic erat scriptum*, 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 Şirana (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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbol selection</th>
<th>Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet</th>
<th>Notes and pronunciation examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>Say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>*schwa sound like in driver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Vowels</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ē</td>
<td>ē</td>
<td>Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>keep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>û</td>
<td>û</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Jump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>Hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>[q], the equivalent of the Arabic q sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>Shine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>The sound of the Scottish pronunciation of the ‘ch’ in Loch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ḫ</th>
<th>ḥ/h</th>
<th>The equivalent of the Arabic voiceless /ḥ/, such as ḥayāt (life) in Arabic and ḥeşıkirin (love) in Kurdish.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>上がり</td>
<td>ą/x</td>
<td>* The equivalent of Arabic sound ąyn. As in ąwa (َاَّ ْوَا) in Kurdish and ąezdil (gazelle, dear) in Arabic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ą</td>
<td>ą</td>
<td>* Bedirxan’s alphabet does not refer to the sound ą, which represents the Arabic ąyn sound. This sound is pronounced in Karmanji in some regions and it is used in many religious texts that are in this study. Such as ądil (fair) in Arabic and ązmun (sky) in Kurdish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Notes on spelling

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

---

2 Bedirxan 2002: 12.

Introduction

Ar ú ac ú bayî ú aqîr e
Dura sor ye bi xerç e ji bakir e
Čendi mescîq pé bi xati e.*

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

The Yezidis are a minority religious group living in the Near East as the native land 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. A number of Yezidis from Transcaucasia moved to Russia and Ukraine, mainly as a result of economic hardship. In the second half of the 20th century and onwards, many Yezidis from their homelands fled the violence migrated to

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


European countries and particularly to Germany, as well as to the United States of America and Australia.\textsuperscript{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 religions\textsuperscript{9} and ancient Mesopotamian culture.\textsuperscript{10} However, in the early 12\textsuperscript{th} century CE, it was profoundly influenced by contact with the 'Adawiyya Sufi order.\textsuperscript{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 Mihrâb Rêq (The Black Book) which consists of only fourteen pages and Cehâl (The Book of Revelation) which is only eight pages,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{13} In that respect, I. B. Gül (1933 d.) who is from the Yezidi princeedom family says: “they [the Yezidis] say that our hearts are our books.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{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.


\textsuperscript{10} See Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 3; Rashow 2005: 21-23.


\textsuperscript{15} From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîro Haci Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Şâmîn, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xîdî Berekat Kewo, 05.07.2015, Şêrîv village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xecêm 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’. It includes such categories as Qewê, Beysî, Du’a, Qesîde and three types of songs: Xezîmok, Payêzok and Roharîn. 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). The majority of them lived between 12th–13th centuries. Sometimes their names and pseudonyms are mentioned at the end of the text or suggested by its title such as Sheikh Xexî Adîyan, Pir Reşê Heyran, Lâwikê Piran and some others. Unfortunately, little is known about most of these figures. 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. 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.

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 *Ninêdên Ezidiyan* (Yezidis’ prayers), consisting of some religious poetic texts known as Du’a. In 1978, O. Celîl and C. Celîl published *Zargotina Karda* (Kurdish folklore) that consist of about 60 Yezidi religious texts (including variants). Following that, in 1979, X. Silêman and X. Cindi published the

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17 From the interview with Qewîbêj (reciter of Qewî) Merwan Xelîl, conducted by Omarkhalil on 02.03.2008, Nienhagen, Germany, cited in Omarkhalil 2017: 98.
21 Omarkhalil 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 Omarkhalil 2017: 85.

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. In 1995, Ph. G. Kreyanbroek published his book *Yezidism: its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* 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 (*naçî*) to allow it to 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 (*qerê*) and a study of Yezidi rituals and observance. This ‘implicit theology’ will here be referred to by the Kurdish term *Xudênî*. 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

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31 Omârkhalî 2017.
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 worshipers 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 Jersal 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 Yezidism (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 Yezidis: 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

36 Empson 1928.
38 Wahby 1962.
the role of natural elements through the description of some religious feasts and festivals.\textsuperscript{39}

In 1995, Kreyenbroek published \textit{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.\textsuperscript{40} In 1997, H. Hürmüz in an article entitled “al-Tūfān” (Flood), pointed out the history of the flood myth in Yezidism and the role of water in it.\textsuperscript{41} In the same year, H. Ğindifi [Rashow] in his two articles ‘al-Dalālāt al-Ramūzīya fī al-Adab al-Dinī al-Ayyūzī, al-Halqat al-Ula wa al-Tanīyat’ (Symbolic Indications in Yezidi Religious Literature, Part I-II), referred to the origin of some religious symbols and objects such as Şerīkā Avê (Jar of water) and Zergêz (Walnut tree); he analyzes their meaning and symbolic indications based on Yezidi religious literature.\textsuperscript{42} Also, in 1998, in his book \textit{Nahwa Ma\textsuperscript{r}i\textsuperscript{f}at Ha\textsuperscript{\textdag}\textsuperscript{\textdag}at al-Diyā\textsuperscript{n}at al-Ayyūzīyyat} (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.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1999-2000, V. Voskanian in his article “Dewrēşē Erdê: The Yezidi Lord of the Earth”, shows the role of that figure in Yezidi religious beliefs and life.\textsuperscript{44} In 2005, Kreyenbroek in collaboration with Kh. J. Rashow in the book \textit{God and S\textsuperscript{\textdag}\textsuperscript{\textdag}h 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 Herber], Qendil (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.\textsuperscript{45} In 2009,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Ahmed, S. S. (1975), \textit{The Yezidis: Their Life and Beliefs}, Miami: Field Research Projects.
  \item Kreyenbroek 1995.
  \item Ğindifi, H. (1998), \textit{Nahwa Ma\textsuperscript{r}i\textsuperscript{f}at Ha\textsuperscript{\textdag}\textsuperscript{\textdag}at al-Diyā\textsuperscript{n}at al-Ayyūzīyyat} (Towards a Knowledge of the Truth of Yezidi Religion), Uppsala: Raban.
  \item Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005.
\end{itemize}
In 2010, B. Açıkyıldız in her book *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion*, explains baptism with water and holy coves; she also describes holy trees, springs and stones in religious places, the myth of water, and the holiness of some natural elements during festivals and ceremonies. In 2013, Omorkhani in her article “Rê û Rismên Cejna Xidî Nebî û Xidî Eylas li Cem Êzidiyên Kafasîyayê” (The Ceremonies of Xidî Nebî and Xidî Eylas Feast Among the Yezidis of the Caucasus), which is about the feast of Xidî Lîyhas, refers to *Avn Heyatê/Avn Hêwanê* (the water of life or eternal water) and its role in the Yezidi mythology. In 2013, Kh. Salih in an article under title of “The Yezidian 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 *Girîvan/Tuk* (Sacred Shirt) as the symbol of the circle of the life. In 2013, X. A. Ce’fo and Z. E. Silo in their book *Jî Pîrozîyên Ezîdîyan* (Of the Yezidi Holy Objects), based on the religious oral tradition and some *seheps* of religious texts, give general information about some Yezidi religious objects and symbols in Yezidism, such as the sun, the moon, Çirî (lamp), Berat, Zeynêk (walnut tree), the Kanîya Sûpî (White Spring) and Zimzim spring. In 2017, Omorkhani in her book *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written*, provides general information about *Dûrê Herberê* (the endless tree), water, sea and earth in the Yezidi myths of Cosmoogy and Cosmology.

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 whale 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

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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”. 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 Methods**

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. Cell 1978 II: *Zargostinaarda (Kurdish Folklore); *Siléman and Cindl 1979: *Ýezidyat: *Li ber Roşnayia Hindet Têkstêl Aynê Ýezîyan* (Yezidism: in the Light of some Religious Texts of the Yezidis); *Siléman 1985: *Gundiyâti: Aýeki Emtipoaedic* (Village Lore). Reço 2004: *Perin ji Edelê Dîne Ýezîyan* (Pages of the Yezidi Religious Literature) in two volumes; Hecı 2002: *Baueri u Mitolojya Ýezîyan* (Belief and Mythology of Yezidis); Dinani 2012 and 2013: *Çend Têkistên Piroçên Ola Ýezîyan* (Some Sacred Texts of the Yezidi Religion) in two volumes. However, many of those religious poetic texts are taken from magazines – *Lalish, Roj* and *Mehbîl* (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 *Şerbikê 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

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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 Şex and Babê Çawiş as members of the Yezidi Spiritual Council, and most of the Mikêwrs (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, Fitîle/Çira (Lamps), Tok/Kîrût/Gîrîvân (Sacred undershirt), and Kûşûk.

54 Kothari 2004: 2-3.
55 Ibid.
Lalish/Mehdara Bozã/Civata Bozã (the assembly of Bozã). 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 Pedşa, Xinda, Reb, Ézî, 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 Adî 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, Omarkhalî’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 sebeges 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 sebeges; I refer to the ‘correct’ forms in footnotes.
- In most cases, sebeges have been transcribed without punctuation, whilst punctuation is used in the translation.
- Some sebeges 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 sebeges 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 ã Kaniya Sîpî ye
Raji bi navê Ézî ye
Duha fer e ã bêqî ye.56
```

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

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Introduction

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 Xudé (God), Tawus Melek, Şêxim 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 Lalish, Cîvata Beşa (the assembly of Beşâ), Zêw (Courtyard), Meqaret Zebman (Cemetery), Qûb û Arawîyê Xasa (cupola and Mausoleum), Nîşangeb (Shrine), and Silangeb (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), Şerbişê Avê (Jar of water), Çîra (Lamp), Dîra
Zeptine (Olive tree), Zergâz (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 Xudēnasi, 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, Tawusî Melek, Şêşimes 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 Tawusî Melek as Nûr and his characteristics related to nature. The third part further explores Şêşimes, 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. The names are of Iranian origin in the Kurdish language, such as Xudê/Xweda (God), Ezda/Yezdan (God), Êzê (God), Xudawend/Xudawend (Lord), Xudan (Lord), Padiqa (King), Shab (King), Mîr (Prince), but also from Arabic: Xalîq (Creator), Allah (God), Ėlahtyo (My God), Milîk (King), Rehî/Rehî (Lord, My Lord). There is a hymn called Qewî 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:

\[
\text{Pedşayê min i hezêr û yek nav e}
\]
\[
\text{Li bu wi ev dinya se'at û gav e, …}^{39}
\]

My King (i.e., God) has a thousand and one names
For him, this world is a matter of an hour, an instant, …

Also, in:

\[
\text{Pedşayê hezêr û yek nav li xo dana ye}
\]
\[
\text{Navê mezin ber Xuda ye.}^{60}
\]

My King has a thousand and one names
The greatest name is Xuda (God).

Ezda, Xuda Şâb and Pedşya:

\[
\text{Ezdaêyê min Xuda ye}
\]
\[
\text{Şa ye, Pedşya ye}
\]
\[
\text{Hezêr nav pé daye.}^{61}
\]

My creator is Xuda (God)
[He] is the Lord, [and] the King
[He] is called by one thousand names.

As regards the terms Nîr as light, Dur as pearl and Sûr 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 Sûr 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 Sûr, is used here.

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39 Qewî Hezâr û Yek Nav (The Hymn of the Thousand and One Names), seb. 1, in Krejnenbroek and Rashow 2005: 74.


61 Qewî Mîr Mehmêdê Kurdî (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmêd Kurdî), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 I: 556.

62 They are the two names of God in Yezidism.
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Eyjia we go ye} & \quad \text{Wise men have said} \\
\text{Peye min ber bêbî ye} & \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) is eternal}\textsuperscript{64} \\
\text{Nûr bû, nûrî lê çî ye.}\textsuperscript{65} & \quad \text{[He] was light and the light has come from Him.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Peyê li nav durê dîbêwaz e} & \quad \text{[Our] longing is for King (i.e., God) in the pearl} \\
\text{Nûra wî bi sê hêzûr û sê lîbas e} & \quad \text{His light has three thousand and three forms}\textsuperscript{66} \\
\text{Navek ji ye Xûdê miraz e.}\textsuperscript{67} & \quad \text{One of God’s names is the object of [our] wishes.}
\end{align*}
\]

Also, in:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Beri ‘erda, beri ‘ezmana} & \quad \text{Before earth, before sky} \\
\text{Xûdê bêbî, nûrî nûran e} & \quad \text{God existed, the light of lights} \\
\text{Ji qudretê kewn kîr beyan e, ...}\textsuperscript{67} & \quad \text{From whose Might was created the universe, ...}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ewê Peyêyê miu nûr bû} & \quad \text{In the beginning, my King (i.e., God) was} \\
\text{Neqasî neqasî bur bû} & \quad \text{Nûr} \\
\text{Ji berî zet û kitêb û deşter û mişûr bû.}\textsuperscript{68} & \quad \text{[He] was the designer of detailed designs}\textsuperscript{69} \\
\text{Before writing, [holy] book, copybook and scripture.}
\end{align*}
\]

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Qawê Pîr Hemedê Bêê} (The Hymn of Pîr Hemed the Grey), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 I: 552.
\textsuperscript{64} Literally, ‘always exist.’
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Dût’s Miraçê} (The Prayer of Wishes), seb. 1, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 279.
\textsuperscript{66} This is an Arabic word that literally means ‘garments.’
\textsuperscript{67} Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 I: 107.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Qawê Hêvê Berê Ko Bêê} (The Hymn of Where was [God] at the beginning?), seb. 5, in Reşo 2004 I: 259.
\textsuperscript{69} Literally, ‘He was an engraver of small things.’
Furthermore, God as Nūr lighted the sun, the moon and the entire universe, i.e., God created them:

_Ew qesira osewer binyat_  
_Raj ū beyr ji nav hilat_  
_Bi wē nūrē rubā dibī ūndē kinyat._

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

Moreover, Nūr in xerqā nūrānī (luminous seed) solidified the earth and established life on it in the time of creation:

_Weki ěrd ū 'ezman nēdeškini_  
_Lalịshek pēq miqabil dinjini_  
_Mibbeta xerqā nūrānī dī nav da disekini._

_When the earth and the sky were not yet stable_  
_[He] created a form of Lalish opposite them_  
_The love of the luminous seed, acting as leaven, came to dwell in it._

_Be'dī či̇l sāli bi hijmar e_  
_‘Erđi bi zo ra neqrihibē bēṣar e_  
_Heta mibbeta xerqā nūrānī bi nã nav da nedibinar._

_Afterwards, count forty years:_  
_The earth did not become solid_  
_Until the luminous seed of Love, acting as rennet, was sent into it._

_Kū Lalịsh dibate_  
_Li 'érđi šīn dibū nebat e_  
_Pē żqinandibī čiqas kinyat e._

_When Lalish came_  
_Plants began to grow on earth_  
_All creations were embalmed by them._

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

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

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70 _Qewē Nadir_ (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 20, in Hekari 2005: 175.
71 _Qewē Zerbiani Mekār_ (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 _Qewē Zerbiani Mekār_ (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 32, 34 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61–62.
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.
78 Rešo 2004 I: 154, n. 1.
Ew bi xo diperiste  
Mibhet ber yek û best e  
Ew nûr bû bi xo diperiste.

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

Peşê min nûr bû, nûr hate bal e  
‘Aşiq cellê e, me’sûq celal e  
Mûr dipîrî ew bal e.\(^7\)

My King (i.e., God) was Nûr, and Nûr came from him  
The Lover is splendid, and the beloved is splendor\(^8\)  
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  
Ew ronah ye, ew tav e  
Jî tarî, tav dave.\(^3\)

Our way is light and pious being\(^8\)  
It is light and sunshine  
From darkness, it returned light.

\textit{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 \textit{Du’u Şifaqê} (the Dawn Prayer), light and the sun are regarded as the symbols of the supreme God:

Ya mîrê (mîrê) li ber erkanê  
Ya sîba roj û rokayê  
Ya Xudayê bînd, Xudanê sozdayê.\(^7\)

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

In a version of \textit{Du’u Sîpêdêhê} (the Morning Prayer) which is performed in the direction of the sun, all its \textit{sebeqes} start with the phrase \textit{Ya Rebi} (O Lord) and the first \textit{sebeq} starts with \textit{Xwêdeyo} (O God):

\textit{Xwêdeyo!} ji bona şanê te, şuna te  
\textit{Jî bona} Padhêbya te.\(^8\)

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 \textit{sebeq} this light is addressed as “Creator”:

\(^{7}\) \textit{Qewê Bê û Elîf} (The Hymn of B and A), seb. 3, 4, in Kreyenbroek and Rshaw 2005: 72.

\(^{8}\) “In the Yezidi tradition, the word ‘beloved’ is thought to refer to God; ‘lover’ to Tawusi Melek (KhR)”, Kreyenbroek and Rshaw 2005: 72, n. 60.

\(^{9}\) \textit{Qewê Mîr Mehmêdê Kardî} (The Hymn of Mir Mehmêdê Kurdî), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.

\(^{10}\) “Lit. ‘a good man,’ the term \textit{çerhab} is often used for pious mystics”, Kreyenbroek and Rshaw 2005: 211, n. 89.


\(^{12}\) \textit{Du’u Sîpêdêhê} (The Morning Prayer), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 978.
Part I: Nature and Religious Beliefs

Silêye ruj zeriçi
The sun shone in the morning
Nûr ji nûrê şêşqê
From light brightened the light
Melek Emeredin li ber tîfqi
Angel Emeredin was created from it
Sibbane ji navê te Xalişî
O Creator, praise to your name.

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

Ya rebê tu Xudayi, tu Peșayi
O my Lord! You are God, you are King
Tu 'elîmînê 'ilmîyê
You are the Omniscent
Tu xandkarê ser şend Peşayî
You are the ruler over all kings.

All the xebeqes of Du'a Nîvrî (the noon prayer, DNî) also start with the phrase Ya Rebê (O my Lord), recited while facing the sun:

Ya Rebê tu me ù suñetê bêzûne disûna
O my Lord! You invite us and our traditions to the assembly of holy beings and good believers
Ya Rebê' ber tu yê, ber tu âî, ber tu yê
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'êya Çirayê (the prayer of the lamp, DCê):

Çira çira
The lamp, the lamp
Jî mîra ra dani
Lit for holy men
Jî nîrê rehmanî
From the light of the Merciful One’s
Jî tehêrê rehmanî
(God)
From the greatness of the Merciful One.

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

Mirîdî bî sarê girîn rézân e
Mirids know God by the mystery
Li pêşya wan garîbû mom û çiran e.
Wicks and lamps are lit in their presence.

Erkanek jî rastî
One of the obligations is truth
Paşka ji ba xwe vegêbastî
King (i.e., God) sent it from Himself

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86 Du'êya Raghêlatî (The Sunrise Prayer), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 980.
87 You are God of all gods.
88 Du'a Nîvrî (The Noon Prayer), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 984.
89 Du'êya Çirayê (The Prayer of the Lamp), seb. 1, in Cêflo and Silo 2013: 57.
90 Du'a Mirîdîê (The Prayer of Mirids), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1011.
91 I.e., Pupil: general caste of people of the Yezidi religion.
92 In Yezidism, the name Rêzoy (literally, the path of knowledge), which could be translated as leader or scholar, is one of God’s names.
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

Bû mom ū çirayê pêşîyê wau vegubasti.\(^{93}\) It became a wick and a lamp that lightened their way.

Some of the Yezidis’ religious learned men, and reciters of religious texts (Qewlivê), 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 Dar (pearl) with its four natural elements as the original source and the foundation of the other creatures in the world:

\textit{Ehalîtan li me\'bud, lišî cemal, nabî finê} \quad Worshipping God, attraction and beauty are immortal
\textit{Pâşûgê min čékê li tînê} \quad My King (i.e., God) is the only one
\textit{Ewî sewirand bû ķendi dinê}\(^{95}\) \quad He created all the world.

\textit{Pâşûgê min i cebar e} \quad My King (i.e., God) is the all-powerful
\textit{Jî darê'efran dibîn şar e} \quad Created the four [elements] from the
\textit{Ax e û av e û ha ye û nar e}\(^{96}\) \quad Pearl:
Wind, earth, water and fire.
\textit{Li wê nebî bi ćezar e} \quad Nothing existed there
\textit{Dura sor ye maîdar e} \quad The red pearl is plentiful
\textit{Av û ax û bâyî û agîr disîparê} \quad Water, earth, air and fire are its elements.
\textit{Av û ax û bâyî û agîr e}

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\(^{93}\) \textit{Du\'a Xerqê} (The Prayer of the Xerqê), seb. 10 in Reşo 2004 II: 1032.

\(^{94}\) From the interviews with Se\'id Aliya Nabo, 22.09.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xidir Berekat Keso, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Aliya Mirza Derwêş, 31.10.2016, Serdeşê village Shingal mountain, Iraqi Hesen Xudêdana Gari, 06.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq.


\(^{96}\) \textit{Qewê Şicalebeki} (The Hymn of Sheikh Ûbekir), seb. 25, in Silêman 1985: 100.
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:

*Dura sur ye bi xerç e ji bakir e*  
Çandî munçaq pe bi xatir e.97

Water, earth, air and fire

The red *Dur* contains the original seeds

It created all creatures.

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

[He is] the lord of night, day and all times

From Him comes grace.

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, Piri Kar99

O Lord of the desert and sea

O creator of the night and day, O Lord!

Your name is saviour.

Light and darkness:

*Textê Meleê Cêbar e*

*Puşêyê min tarî û ronayî imane xorar e*

*Xasa pe bestîb jînwar e.*

From the Great Throne of God

My King (i.e., God) brought down darkness and light

Holy men promised by Him.

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.

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97 Qonaê Dura (The Hymn of the Pearls), sëb. 20, 21, in Xêrazay 2012: 63.
98 Qonaê Peleêgê (The Hymn of the King), sëb. 4, in Bozani 1997: 111.
99 Qonaê Mehe (The Hymn of the Months), sëb. 5, in Hêcê 1994a: 23.
100 Dëa Negêri, Satê I (The Prayer Against the Evil Eye, Version 1), sëb. 1, in Rejo 2004 II: 996.
101 In Yezidi religious literature, there is no information found about the name Piri Kar, perhaps he is a Yezidi mythological figure and is from the caste of Pirs.
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

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

Textê melikê semed a
Behrek ú dá meve dida
Yek aqir e ú yek cemed a.¹⁰³

The throne of the eternal God
Is the sea that gives two waves:
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:

Tu dîkînî ú dîcêrinî
Tu sæx dîkey ú dîmirînî
Tu rûmêke bi me da biharînî.

O God], you break, and you mend
You give life and you give death
Please shower us with mercy.

Tu dîbekî ú dîsitînî
Geş dîkey ú diwerînî
Tu rûmêke bi me da biharînî.¹⁰⁴

O God], you give, and you take
You cause growth and decline
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 Qvarî Niadr (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 7, in Hekari 2005: 173.
¹⁰⁴ Qvarî Pekey (The Hymn of the King), seb. 42, 43, in Bozani 1997: 119.
¹⁰⁵ From the interviews with Baba Çavuş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Heci Mûrad Keçel, 08.07.2015, Bozâ village, Iraq; Hesen Xudêda Garis, 06.07.2015, Khataara 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: “İh ba te têv xêrê xêrê” (From you [God] come good and evil), from QS, seb. 26, in Reço 2004 I: 143. Also, “Ya revê xêrê, xêrê, xêrê” (O God, give good things, avert evil), from PD, seb.1, in Reço 2004 II: 982. Further, “Xêrê xêrê, xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê, xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê, xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê xêrê” (Good and evil were in your [God] control), from QS, seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 115.
Dura sor wa li beha ye The red pearl is in space
Bi qadret Xadé nawesta ye It is suspended by God’s power
Ya bi ar ü azc ü ber ü ba ye.107 With its water, soil, stone and air.

In a part of Qewli Çarşembüyê (the Hymn of Wednesday, QC), 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:

Le çarşembüwé sox bi jijan Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays
Kezik bin dešt û ciya û xerî û xezan Plain, mountain, field and pasture are adorned with plants
Hemî li kerema Peşê min i All those by the mystical power of my
Yezdan.108 King (i.e., God) Yezdan.

Moreover, a sebeqê from Qewli Hezur û Yek Naw (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:

Tu ‘ewra digertînî You cause the clouds to drift
Tu baranê dîbarînî You cause the rain to fall
Tu bebrît gîrân dîneyînî You cause the great oceans to coagulate
Tu vê dînyêyî bi kari tînî You set this world in motion
Tu bo me mesêb û dînî You are religion and faith to us, …

On this feature of God, the Yezidi author Ġ. Ā. Murâd says, “God’s power is always present in elements of nature.”110 In this regard, ‘Abûd 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 Sor as God’s power in nature

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

Under that name of Sor, Yezidis worship the creator:

107 Qewli Duro (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 13, in Xêravay 2012: 62.
108 Qewli Çarşembüyê (the Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 5 in Kişto 2004: 206-207.
110 Murâd, Ġ. Ā. (1996), “al-Bâbît wa al-Sâtîr Dr Ġâsim Âliyâs Murâd” (The Researcher and Poet Dr Ġâsim Āliyâs Murâd), Ladî, No. 6, p. 117.
112 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Hacî Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çavîk Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
113 For further reading see “The Four Elements of Nature in Prohibitions and Taboos”, in chapter IV, part II.
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:

-Bi wé suré têtin baran e
-Bi wé suré šin dibit dar e
-Bi wé suré dikemle çendê bebar e.115

-Est sur li ber dura asteng e
-Li ber wé suré hîlê mang e
-Elem bi navé wé suré hang e.116

Because of that *Sur*, it rains
Because of that *Sur*, trees grow
Because of that *Sur*, all the springs are completed (i.e., life).

That *Sur* is an obstacle for the Pearl
Because of that *Sur*, the moon rises
By that *Sur*, wise men talk [to people].

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

-Kî dibêr o m suré derew e
-Bi wé suré ron bûn roj û ûşev e
-Wé suré pêk šîrîn kirîn Adêm û Hava.117

Who says that *Sur* is a lie?
By that *Sur*, days and nights appeared
That *Sur* made affection between Adam and Eve.

To explain the above-mentioned *selêqê*, 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 *Qevlêjê* 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 miitê 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. Omarkhani, on the basis of the religious literature, refers to this *Sur* in the following manner:

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115 *Qevlê Sura* (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 248.
116 *Qevlê Sura* (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 5, in Reşo 2004 I: 247.
118 Reşo 2004 I: 248.
119 From the interviews with Xûdrê Berekat Keso, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Heçi Şêmo Mîrêd, 23.07.2015, Ba’âdra 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:

_Nūr_ is God’s place:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item Ji qewlé ‘ilmé xerav
\item Medebá biden ji tehaf
\item Texté nūñí Padşayé min sekini li nav.122
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

From the hymn of [Mystical] knowledge
Praise it in every way
The throne of light, my King (i.e., God) sat on it.

Also, in:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item Me èk daverse xudan neder
\item Ew derqeb vebedīn li ber
\item Texté nūñí, Pedşayé min sekini li sat.123
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

We need a visionary
Those doors open for him125
The throne of light, my King (i.e., God) sat on it.

Texté meliké elif
_Nūr_ diisín li ber çar teref
_Sur_ daye mange sudef.124

The throne of the First Angel (i.e., God)
The light shines [from it] in four directions
[It] gave mystery to the luminous126 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:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item Ya Sîltan Ëzí, tu wê li ‘erda tu wê li ‘ezmana
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

O God Sîltan Ëzí127 (i.e., God), you are on earth, in the sky.

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122 Qælé Naqîr (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 2, in Hekari 2005: 172.
123 Qælé Naqîr (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 22, in Hekari 2005: 176.
124 Qælé Naqîr (The Hymn of Rare [Knowledge]), seb. 5, in Hekari 2005: 173.
125 Who is wise about world affairs?
126 Literally ‘seashell moon.’
127 According to Yezidi tradition, Sîltan Ëzí is one of God’s names.
Tu wê li behra, tu wê li binyana
Tu wê zara, tu wê li ser zîmanâ.127

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

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Herê berê ko bû} & \quad \text{How was the beginning?} \\
\text{Xeber bide bêj nehû bû} & \quad \text{Talk about it, before it existed} \\
\text{Bêje min ji-tevî Peêşayê min li ku bû?}^{129} & \quad \text{Tell me, where was my King (i.e., God) at the beginning?} \\
\text{Peêşayê min î sitar e} & \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) is the protector} \\
\text{Xudîyêkê ecebar e} & \quad \text{An omnipotent God} \\
\text{Ciyê wi li hemû ejya û war e.} & \quad \text{His place is everywhere.} \\
\text{Peêşayê min î bosta ye} & \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) is a builder (i.e., creator)} \\
\text{Li ‘alemê bi aga ye} & \quad \text{[He] is aware of the world} \\
\text{Ciyê wi li hemû erda ye.}^{130} & \quad \text{His place is everywhere.} \\
\text{Jî qewê Şêc Fecrê Adiya} & \quad \text{From the hymn of Sheik Fexr of Adiya} \\
\text{Peêşayê min yî bêrî ya} & \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) is Primordial} \\
\text{Yî dahir e li hemû cî ya.}^{131} & \quad \text{He is apparent everywhere.}
\end{align*}
\]

In this regard, see “Peêşayê min yî dahir e li hemû dêrê” (My King (i.e., God) is apparent everywhere, QT).132 “Ya rêbi mekanê te wê li hemû’er’dê” (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 Qawê Hezar ê Yêk Nav (The Hymn of the Thousand and One Names), seb. 44, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 81.
129 Qawê Herê Berê Ko Bêr! (The Hymn of Where was [God] at the beginning?), seb. 1, in Rêşo 2004 I: 259.
130 Qawê Peêşayê (The Hymn of the King), seb. 28, 29, in Bozani 1997: 116.
131 Qawê Texta (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 35, in Bâqasîr 2003: 264-265.
132 Qawê Texta (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 8, in Bâqasîr 2003: 260.
133 Qawê Tawûsi Melek (The Hymn of Tawusi Melek), seb. 12, in Sîlêman and Cîndî 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:

Pedê min sur li sema
Xudanê sev û roj û dema
Jî ba wê têtin kerema,\textsuperscript{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 if felt in the seasons of the year. Every year in spring, the first Wednesday of the Eastern April is the Yezidis’ New Year.\textsuperscript{136} God’s power [light] descends to earth for the renewal of life and nature. Below, we can see how the \textit{sebages} refer to this and are clearly in line with it, in the words “all those by the mystical power of my God Ezidan”:

\textit{La çarsenbê vac bi jîyan}
Keskî bûn deşt û čiya û zevî û çozan
\textit{Hemû bi kerêma Pedê min û 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.

\textit{Hat çarsenbawa sor e}
\textit{Nisan xemîland bû bi xo re}
\textit{Jî batin da ye bi mor e.}\textsuperscript{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:\textsuperscript{138}

\textit{Sura pedêxî bate bindav e}
\textit{La şemis û fecrêt mira dikem silav e}
\textit{La sêzdey Xezfanê vegeyabû tav e.}\textsuperscript{139}

The mystery of King (i.e., God) comes down
My greeting to Şemis and Fexir of Mira
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:

\textit{Ems dê mebên navê me çîrê}
\textit{Jî cem Pedêxî dî xelat kîrî}
\textit{Lê me dî kevin nacz û nu’met û tîrî.}

We are two months, our name is \textit{Çîrê} (October and November)
We were rewarded by King (i.e., God)

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Qawûlê Pedêxî} (The Hymn of the King), sb. 4, in Bozani 1997: 111.
\textsuperscript{136} See “\textit{Cênina Serêli} (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)”, in chapter III, part II.
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Qawûlê Çarsenbêwê} (The Hymn of Wednesday), sb. 5, 19, in Kişto 2004: 206-207, 209.
\textsuperscript{138} For additional information see “\textit{Cênina Çîlê Hazênî} (the Feast of the Forty Days of Summer)”, in chapter III, part II.
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Qawûlê Mebe} (The Hymn of the Months), sb. 52, in Heci 1994a: 30.
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, Kanûn Ẹkbê for December and Kanûn Dukr for January; they are the distinct months of winter and the time of the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter. They say, “Em dû mehûn Pedçayî kûrûn xelat” (We are two month that were rewarded by King (i.e., God), QM):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ji qenê Fexêr Zergûn e</td>
<td>From the hymn of Fexir Zergûn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her ye bi berf e ye bi nasûn e</td>
<td>If with writing or with knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bûtyata ber düwazgê meba Kanûn e.</td>
<td>The foundation of the twelve months is Kanûn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanûn dibîjit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Em dû mehûn Pedçayî kûrûn xelat</td>
<td>January says:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li m dêkêrîm Çile i i erbe’ynat</td>
<td>We are two month that were rewarded by King (i.e., God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ji bêde wê yê li gel me bikelimit</td>
<td>And gave us the forty days (i.e., the Feast of the Forty Days of the Winter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subat.</td>
<td>February does not talk to us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About the year, according to Qewê Mehâ, all the twelve months are under the control of God. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ji pedê zo didêm medeb e</td>
<td>I praise my King (i.e., God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Çar eyê î sê deb e</td>
<td>Four weeks and three tens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li êk rukhabîdin, kûrûn meh e.</td>
<td>Collected them to a month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Em düwazgê mehen bi nav</td>
<td>We are twelve named months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şeş dübîkîn Así bi xunuav</td>
<td>Six are dry and six are dewy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her düwazgê meb wê li ber himeta</td>
<td>All of these twelve months are under the greatness of Angel Sheikh Sin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melîk Şêc Sinê bi nav.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedê min i celib e</td>
<td>My King (i.e., God) is almighty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

140 Qewê Mehâ (The Hymn of the Months), seh. 61, 62, in Heçî 1994a: 31.
141 See “Çejîna Çilî Zewastûnî (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter)”, in chapter III, part II.
142 Qewê Mehâ (The Hymn of the Months), seh. 21, 28, in Heçî 1994a: 25, 26.
143 The name Peçê (King) is one of Yezidi’s names of God, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 91-99; Omarkhal 2009: 13-24.
The command is from Him
All the twelve months were combined to a year.

God is present in periods and epochs:
(You are) alone,\textsuperscript{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:
My God is from Pre-eternity
The Lord of all times and periods, …\textsuperscript{147}

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

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: \textit{Hemî uccî, wezîhî Xûdîne} (All times are times of God). The Baba Çawiş 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Nûr} and always gives light in nature.

To conclude, God created all creatures by \textit{Dûr} 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 \textit{Nûr} is His power in nature. He is in all places and with all time.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Qâwhî Mehê} (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 17, 18, 19, in Heci 1994a: 25.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Du'ayê li Mala Mîrî} (The Prayer in Deceased Person’s House), seb. 1, 2, in Xelef 1994: 63.
\textsuperscript{146} Literally, ‘one decision.’ This could also be translated as ‘Command.’
\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Qâwhî Dûrê} (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 1, in Xêrvay 2012: 60.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Du'ayê Sîhpêhê} (The Morning Prayer), seb. 8, in Reşo 2004 II: 979.
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Du'ayê li Mala Mîrî} (The Prayer in Deceased Person’s House), seb. 1, in Xelef 1994: 63.
\textsuperscript{150} From the interview with Baba Çawiş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

2 Tawusi Melek as Nûr and His Characteristics Related to Nature

This section consists of two sub-sections, Tawusi Melek as Nûr, and Tawusi 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 Qwûhî Tawusi Melek (the Hymn of Tawusi Melek, QTM) and sometimes called Du’a Tawusi Melek (the prayer of Tawusi 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 Tawusi Melek in Yezidi beliefs, however, I deal with it according to the second view because Cindâ, as first publisher151 of that hymn, writes thus about its content, “this hymn explains the role and the position of Tawusi Melek in Yezidi religious philosophy.”152 Moreover, according to some religious men the content of this hymn describes Tawusi Melek in Yezidi religious tradition.153

2.1 Tawusi Melek as Nûr

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

Berî 传染, berî 传染
Xûdê beîû, nûrî nûrân e
Jî qadretê kêmî kîr bêyan e.
‘Êrî u ‘ayî u iman e
Nav î xo kîrî Tawusi Méran e. 154

Heke te dîvêt ji ser xo rasey cor e
Zadekî û çarşambâyê bide dor e
Tawusi Melek yi zefîr e û ew nûr e li ser nûr e. 156

Before earth, before sky
God existed, the light of lights
From whose Might was created the universe,
Earth, throne (i.e., sky), and faith
And named Himself Tawusi Méra. 155
If you want to save yourself from punishment
On Wednesday give a meal to those around you
Tawusi Melek is forgiving and He is light on light.

Some religious men assert that in religious folk beliefs “Tawusi Melek bergey ye u nûra laqî ye” (Tawusi Melek is eternal and an eternal light), also, in Yezidi mythology, in the beginning, when Tawusi 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, Tawusi Melek shows

153 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîrtî Haci Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çavuş Hesen Sîleman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
154 Text details are unknown, in Reço 2004 I: 107.
155 In Yezidism, Tawusi Méran is another name of Tawusi Melek.
156 Qwûhî Çarşambâyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 45, in Kûto 2004: 213.
157 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîrtî Haci Îsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Heci Şêmî Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba‘adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also, on Tawusi Melek and rainbow see Al-
his blessing with the sign of the rainbow; in the religious literature the bird (Enqer) is one of Tawusi Melek’s names,\textsuperscript{158} manifestations and from that bird come light, luminosity, brightness:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Çendi terykk li ‘ezmana wî hey navê wî} \\
&\text{Enqer li nav v} \\
&\text{Roja ‘id û ‘erfata derkeft ji Kaniya} \\
&\text{Si‘anî} \\
&\text{Çeng û baskêt xo vediwêsinê} \\
&\text{jê dişt şewiq û şemal û mîrin û xênav} \\
&\text{e.\textsuperscript{159}} \\
&\text{There is a bird in the sky, called Enqer by name!} \\
&\text{On the day of the Feast\textsuperscript{160} and the day of} \\
&\text{Ereft it came out of the Spring of} \\
&\text{Si‘an\textsuperscript{161}} \\
&\text{Spreading its feathers and wings} \\
&\text{From it comes light, luminosity,} \\
&\text{brightness and dew.}
\end{align*}
\]

\textit{Tawusi Melek and the light of the sun.} Several scholars believe that there is a connection between Tawusi 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 Armanitus as well as Mithras), therefore suggests that a cult or cults existed at some stage in pre-Islamic times”\textsuperscript{162}. Wahby points out that “Tawusi Malak became equated with the Sun-god, Mihr (Mithra)\textsuperscript{163}. Habib asserts that “Tawusi Melek is the lord of the sun”\textsuperscript{164}. A number of Yezidi authors confirm this belief; Gündî believes that Tawusi Melek himself is the lord of the sun.\textsuperscript{165} ‘Utmân states, “for Yezidis, Tawusi Melek, in its essence, represents the idea of the Almighty God (the lord of the sun and its resource)”\textsuperscript{166}.

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

\textit{Qewê Tawusi Melek} (the Hymn of Tawusi Melek, QTM) addresses Tawusi Melek as follows:

\begin{quote}
Raîdîn, S. B. (2013), \textit{Aşıl al-‘ıqâd al-Azîdî} (Origin of the Yezidi Beliefs), 1\textsuperscript{st} ed., Erbil: Matha‘at al-İşqafa, p. 72.
\footnote{Cf. The bird (Enqer) is one of Tawusi Melek’s names see “The Symbolism of the Tawus in Religious Life”, in chapter V, part II.}
\footnote{Xizêmîk, \textit{Şrîcê 1} (Xizêmîk, Version 1), seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.}
\footnote{It is not clarified which feast is meant here but perhaps it is \textit{Samad} feast because in Yezidi tradition Tawus Melek as light descends on earth for renewing life and adorning earth with colour.}
\footnote{“It is a name of legendary-mythical spring”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.}
\footnote{Kreyenbroek 1992: 76.}
\footnote{Wahby 1962: 45.}
\footnote{Gündî 1998: 56.}
\footnote{‘Utmân, M. F. (2013), \textit{Dirâsât wa Maltâhî fi Vidaşat wa Maltâhî al-Dîvânât al-‘Azîzîyat} (Studies and Researches in the Philosophy and Essence of the Yezidi Religion), Duhok: Duhok University Press, p. 155.}
\end{quote}
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

Ya rehê tu xudanwê deper i
Ya rehê tu xudanê meb û mer i [mehr i].\(^{167}\)

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.

Furthermore, in folk belief there are sayings among Yezidis in Iraq, like “Mêrik yê me ye, goneb e has ë bikîn” (Mêrik [Mithra] is ours, it is taboo to talk about Him). In religious texts, the phrase “Tawusi min î mêran ë” (My Tawus is Mêran [Mithra]) is used to describe Tawusi Melek:

Tawusi min î mêran e,
Xalqê min î ’erd û ’ezman e,
Ew Sîlant Şêcîdî ye, yê mêra bisacî jê
da beyân e.\(^{168}\)

My Tawus is Mêran [Mithra]
He is my creator of earth and sky
He is Sultan Sheikh ‘Adî, whom people praised\(^{169}\) when he was alive.

In the Morkirîn ritual (baptism), as a religious obligation, Du’aya Morkirînê (the prayer of the Baptism) is recited during Mora Mêra, which means baptism.\(^{170}\)

Mor mora mêran e
Kaniya Sîpi xos núsan e
Peşay jê dabû beyân e
Ciyê Ezidîne Mir û her çar biran e.\(^{171}\)

The baptism is [the practice] of holy men
Kaniya Sîpi is the sacred symbol
King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear)
It is the place of Êzidîne Mir and four brothers.

This xeboqe signifies Tawusi Melek’s and Şêsimê (the lord of sun) connection with light:

Me hi mirîdiyê qebûl e, jî berî xet û mûjûr e
Şêsimê nur e, melêk Şêc Sin xefur e
Ya Tawusi Melek! tu hêçîa me, bikî li
diyawan melêk xefur e.\(^{172}\)

We accept the Yezidi way,\(^{173}\) Before writing and scripture
Şêsimê is Nûr, Angel Sheikh Sin\(^{174}\) is a forgiver
O Tawusi Melek! You take our wish to the assembly of the forgiver angel.

The light of Tawusi Melek in other Yezidi traditions. Several Yezidi traditions are based on the veneration of the light of Tawusi Melek. Religious texts, and also some religious men, refer to the belief that, on the first Wednesday of Nîzān (Eastern April) in every year, Tawusi Melek (as light) descends to earth for the renewal of life on earth and adorns its

\(^{167}\) Qenî Tawusi Melek (The Hymn of Tawusi Melek), seb. 6, in Sîlêman and Cindi 1979: 17. * Regarding the word ‘mehr see Kreyenbroek 1995: 244, 248.

\(^{168}\) Mishabê Medî û Sena ji Şêcûdî ra (Sermon of the Praise and Compliment for Sîxadî), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 782.

\(^{169}\) Literally ‘statement.’

\(^{170}\) On Morkirîn see “Lalish, including Kaniya Sîpi, is the place of Morkirîn (Baptism)”, in chapter II, part II.

\(^{171}\) Du’aya Morkirînê (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 1, in Bûqasîrî 2003: 407.

\(^{172}\) Du’û Mîrîdyê (The Prayer of Mîrîdyê), 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 Sîxadî II, and the ancestor of the Adani 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 Tawusi Melek’s light.176

Çarşamba serê nisanê,
Gul û çêcek batîn meydanê,
TawUSî Melek reyişê ûmanê
Nîsan le kîr e
Bihar û dûsêmiel,
Këşik û tor û sipê û zer e.177

Hat çarşembûwa sor e
Nîsan xemîland bû bi xo re
Jî batin da ye bi mor e.178

On the first Wednesday of April
Flowers grow on earth179
Tawusi Melek is the leader of faith
[He] created April
Spring has been adorned by him
With green, red, white and yellow.

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

Furthermore, the light of a lamp is the symbol of the light of Tawusi Melek on earth; therefore, it is considered a religious duty to light Çira (lamp) on Wednesday as the day of Tawusi Melek:

Hat çarşembûwa ferê
Xelat ji melêkê fêxîrê
e
Bo ruha bi îman gorî diket çire.180

Hıncêşê navê TawUSî Melek bîne
Ye fer e pirêzîya çarşembûyê bîsedîgîne
Dî TawUSî Melek ruha wi ji qeda û bêla bîstîrine.181

Came the significant Wednesday
The gift is from the glorious angel
Light a lamp for the faithful soul.

Whoever mentions Tawusi Melek’s name
It is obligatory to believe in the sanctity of Wednesday
In order that Tawusi Melek may save his/her soul from calamities and misfortunes.

To sum up, Tawusi 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 Tawusi Melek that are related to nature will be explained and described in the following sub-sections:

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175 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawiş Hesen Siléman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
176 For additional information see “Çirahîêkîrın” (lighting lamps) during the feast”, in chapter III, part II.
178 Qenal Çarşembûyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 19, in Kişto 2004: 209.
179 Literally, ‘come to field.’
180 Qenal Çarşembûyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.
181 Qenal Çarşembûyê (the Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 14, in Kişto 2004: 208.
2.2.1 Tawusi Melek is the creator of nature and every creature

This feature is reflected in the following sebega:

Tawusi Melek is creator of earth and sky:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tawusi min i méra e,} & \quad \text{My Tawus is méra} \\
\text{Xalig min i 'erd û 'ezman e,} & \quad \text{He is my creator of earth and sky} \\
\text{Ew Sultān Şîzâdî ye, yê mëra biyazî jê} & \quad \text{He is Sultan Sheikh 'Adî, whom people} \\
\text{da bêyan e.} & \quad \text{praised.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Beri 'erdê, beri 'ezmanê} & \quad \text{Before earth, before sky} \\
\text{Xudê bebû, nîrî nîrên e} & \quad \text{God existed, the light of lights} \\
\text{Jî qurdêtê kewên kir bêyan e.} & \quad \text{From whose Might was created the} \\
\text{'Erdê û 'ezê û ûman e} & \quad \text{universe,} \\
\text{Nav î xo kirî Tawusi Méran e.} & \quad \text{Earth, throne (i.e., sky), and faith} \\
\text{And named Himself Tawusi Méra.}
\end{align*}
\]

All the sebegas of Qewlî Tawusi Melek (the Hymn of Tawusi Melek, QTM) start with the phrase Ya Rebi (O Lord), and their content emphasizes that Tawusi Melek is the creator of creatures, as in this one:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ya rebi tu xaligî em mûciqîn} & \quad \text{O my Lord, you are the creator, we are} \\
\text{Tu mirazî em dazawaçîn.} & \quad \text{creatures,} \\
\text{You are the desired, we are the desire.}
\end{align*}
\]

2.2.2 Tawusi Melek is one and has dualistic natural powers

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Xudanî meh û tari} & \quad \text{Lord of the moon and darkness,} \\
\text{Xudanî şems û nari.} & \quad \text{Lord of the sun and light.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[\text{182 Mishabû Meleû û Sena ji Şîzâdî ra (Sermon of the Praise and Compliment for Şîzâdî), seb. 1, in Reço 2004 II: 782.}\]

\[\text{183 Text details are unknown, in Reço 2004 I: 107.}\]

\[\text{184 In Yezidism, Tawusi Mîrân is another name of Tawusi Melek.}\]

\[\text{185 Qewlî Tawusi Melek (The Hymn of Tawusi Melek), seb. 21, in Silêman and Cindli 1979: 19.}\]

\[\text{186 Qewlî Tawusi Melek (The Hymn of Tawusi Melek), seb. 6, in Asatrian, G. and Arakelova, V. (2003),}\]

\[\text{“Malak-Tawus: The Peacock Angel of The Yezidis”, Iran and the Caspian (IC), 7.1-2 Brill, Leiden, p.19.}\]

\[\text{187 Qewlî Çosêmêyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 10, in Kisto 2004: 207.}\]
Being and has dualistic powers-light and darkness. Likewise, nature, with its phenomena of light and darkness, is from one source, which is the Lord of this World, Tawusi Melek. On the dualism of good and evil power, Kreyenbroek writes, “Yezidis often state that he [i.e., Tawusi Melek] is responsible for the affairs of this world, good or bad.”

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

According to religious texts, Tawusi Melek’s power exists in nature and it is the ruler in it. Sebeque emphasize Tawusi 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 sebeque is said as if Tawusi Melek were the speaker:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ez li bami ti\'sta ra me} & \quad \text{I am with everything} \\
\text{Ez li 'erd im, li 'ezman im} & \quad \text{I am on the earth, in the sky} \\
\text{Li behr im, li bishar im} & \quad \text{In the sea, in the ocean} \\
\text{li qiya im, li sikan im} & \quad \text{On the mountain, among bedrock.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

2.2.4 Tawusi Melek is in all-natural places

In the sebeque of Qewlê Tawusi Melek (the hymn of Tawusi Melek), and under the name of Tawusi Melek, Tawusi Melek exists in all-natural places:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ya rebi te mecafe te mecarde} & \quad \text{O my Lord, you have neither sleep nor food,} \\
\text{Xudan mal i xudan perde} & \quad \text{You are [like] a householder, you keep order} \\
\text{Ya rebi mekanet te we li benn 'erd e} & \quad \text{O my Lord, your place is everywhere.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ez li bami ti\'sta ra me} & \quad \text{I am with everything} \\
\text{Ez li 'erd im, li 'ezman im} & \quad \text{I am on the earth, in the sky} \\
\text{Li behr im, li bishar im} & \quad \text{In the sea, in the ocean}
\end{align*}
\]

188 Reşo 2004 I: 56.
189 Halîb 2003: 82; Utmân 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 Tawusi Melek (The Hymn of Tawusi Melek), seb. 12, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 18.
On the mountain, among bedrock.

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

2.2.5 Tawusi Meleks eternal and is with all time

As mentioned above, in religious folk belief Yezidis say: “Tawusi Melek herhey ye u nûra baği yê” (Tawusi Melek is eternal and an eternal light), also, in Qewli Tawusi Melek (the hymn of Tawusi Melek), Yezidis address Tawusi Melek as an eternal Lord:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ya\ rebî\ tu\ melekê\ melêkê\ ûultan\ i & \quad \text{O my Lord, you are the angel who is the} \\
Ya\ rebî\ tu\ melekê\ melêkê\ kerim\ i & \quad \text{ruler of the world,} \\
\text{Tu\ melêkê\ 'erçê\ ûzên} & \quad \text{O my Lord, you are the generous one,} \\
Ya\ rebî\ ji\ 'enzel\ da\ her\ tu\ yi\ qedim\ i. & \quad \text{You are the King of the great Throne.} \\
\text{O my Lord, from pre-eternity you have} & \quad \text{O my Lord, from pre-eternity you have} \\
\text{always been the ancient one.} & \quad \text{always been the ancient one.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
Ya\ rebî\ her\ tu\ yi\ bey & \quad \text{O my Lord, you always exist,} \\
\text{Ü\ her\ tu\ xadda\ yi} & \quad \text{And you are forever God,} \\
\text{Ü\ her\ tu\ yi\ layiq\ i\ medh\ û\ xena\ yi.} & \quad \text{And you are always worthy of praise and} \\
& \quad \text{homage.}
\end{align*}
\]

To sum up, according to Yezidi tradition, as reflected in religious texts, there are many features and roles of Tawusi Melek that are related to nature; they are: Tawusi 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 Şêşim; one of them is a historical figure who is highly venerated by Yezidis. He is the son of Îzîdî Mîr, and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî sheikhs. The other one is the mythical figure who is the Lord of the sun. Here the latter is the focus of the subject.

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

---

\[^{195}\text{Text details are unknown, in Reşo 2004 II: 1047.}\]

\[^{196}\text{Bitner 1913: 14.}\]

\[^{197}\text{Qewli Tawusi Melek (The Hymn of Tawusi Melek), seb. 2, 20 in Sîlêman and Cindi 1979: 17, 19.}\]

\[^{198}\text{See Kreyenbroek 1995: 38; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 26-27.}\]

\[^{199}\text{See Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-99.}\]
3.1 Şêîms as Nûr

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

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

- Babekê Omera me bergin
  Şêms û Fexîrê mîra beyy û roj în.\(^{200}\)
  Let Babekê Omera\(^{200}\) educate us
  Şêms and Fexir, of the princely family,
  are sun and moon.

- Derêhêt ‘ezmana di zêr in
  Mîftê Şêms û Fexîr in
  ‘Aştî berzê şa yî û qedîr în.\(^{201}\)
  The gates of the sky are yellow
  (luminous)
  The keys are Şêms and Fexîr\(^{203}\)
  [they are] supreme and precious lovers
  (i.e., worshippers).

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

- Şîbe ye rontiya şêîms dibî beyan e
  Nav û dikarê şêîms dibî silav e
  Ronahiya şêîms dibû çarde teheqê erd
  û ‘ezman e.\(^{204}\)
  The light of Şêîms shone in the morning
  Greetings to the name and remembrance
  of Şêîms
  The light of Şêîms brought forth
  fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

- Çêndî şîbe ye kû roj li min hilîêre
  Şemê min î bi nûr û keramet hû
  Şêîg dibû li binêî behra
  Ronahi kirbû lalîya nûranî, beta bi
  banê kaffê ye.\(^{205}\)
  By the morning when the sun over me!
  My Şêms was full of light and mystical
  power
  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.

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

- Ji ba Şêîms ferwar e
  Çaças mecîtakê bî gîyan e
  Here bi ûn e, here bî gîyan e
  Emin ji Şêîms xudan e.\(^{206}\)
  The rule is by Şêîms
  All living creatures
  Humans and animate beings
  Şêîms is their lord also.

Also, in:

\(^{200}\) Qawî Babekê Omera (The Hymn of Babekê Omera), Seb. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 376.

\(^{201}\) Qawî Tece (The Hymn of the Throne), seb. 21, in Bâqasîr 2003: 262.

\(^{202}\) He is one of the authors of Yezidi Qawî, see Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 53.

\(^{203}\) In Yezidism, Şêîms and Fexir are lords of the sun and the moon.

\(^{204}\) Du‘a Siîhê, Sarê 2 (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 3, in Rejo 2004 II: 975.


\(^{206}\) Du‘a û Qawî Şêîms (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêîms), seb. 32, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

Ya Şēṣims, me bi te mefer e
Ya Şēṣims, tu mefer i
Ya Rebi, tu xalıqekî min i beriber i
Tu riṣqı dili, tu riṣqı diberi.207

Şēṣimsé min i närin e
Ser kersiya zeri
Kılîl â mîte bi destê wi ne
Wê vedike derê zer xeziña, …208

O Şēṣims, we take refuge in you
O Şēṣims, you are [our] refuge
O Lord, you are my creator forever
You give sustenance and you take it away.

My luminous Şēṣims
On the golden throne
The keys are in his hand
He opens the doors of many treasures, …

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

Réka me när e zerbav e
Ew ronah ye, ew tav e
Ji tari, tav dave.209

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

Also, in:

Ronahîya berê sibê dahir bû
Borê 'hodeîtè swar bû
Sêd xeziña wê mîrê, bi boqî rawîsta bû.210

The light of the early morning (the dawn) shone
People started worshipping211
Great wishes to that man who supports the truth.

Şēṣims as the lord of light in other Yezidi traditions. Yezidis pray to Şēṣims 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 Şēṣims.

Roj hate têsta ne
Şēṣims bestê diwan e
Maṣa wê didete mênan e.

The sun has come to morning
Şēṣims is present at the assembly213
He gives the holy men their wages.

Roj hate niro ye
Mangû sipî jê diyeye
Şēṣims yî bi misk e yî bi mo ye.

The sun has come to midday
The white moonlight has fled from it
Şēсимs smells of moon and scent.

Roj hat â ava bû
Şēṣims li 'erê rawesta bû

The sun has come and gone down
Şēсимs has taken his place in the sky

---

207 Du’a ò Qewlê Şēsim (The Prayer and Hymn of Şēsim), sebh. 19, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 204.
209 Qewlê Mîr Mehmêdî Kurdî (The Hymn of Mir Mehmêd Kurdî), sebh. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.
211 Literally, ‘ride on the steed Bar of the worship.’
212 “He has taken his place there (KhR)”, Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 211, n. 95.
Ašiqa selavet lê veda bû.\textsuperscript{201} The Lovers have prayed to him.

Also, in:

‘Ebadetê bîke rojê sî cara
Lê fecirê û sihê û bêvara
Lî pêberî rojê, ew qubleta êctiyare.\textsuperscript{214}

Worship three times a day
At dawn, in the morning and in the
evening
Facing the sun is the direction of prayer.

Moreover, Çîra (lamp) is the symbol of the light of $Şėşims$ on earth;\textsuperscript{215} religious texts emphasize this belief:

Şex Şems ji Êzêdiya ra çîra ye li
diwânê
Ya Êzî tu li û me bêki xudanê.\textsuperscript{216}

For Yezidis, Şêşims is a lamp in the
assembly
O God, be our savour.

Because of this connection, Yezidis light a lamp inside the \textit{Qub} (cupola) of Şêşims in Lalish, named “Çîrayê Şêşims” (the lamp of Şêşims). Fire is Şêşims’ terrestrial counterpart.\textsuperscript{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; Çîra 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:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Ya Şêşims! tu yê rehman i} O Şêşims! You are compassionate
\item \textit{Xalqêkî min î bi can i} [You] are my beloved creator
\item \textit{Hemû derda ti derman i} For all ills, you are the remedy
\item \textit{Hemû necluqa tu yê xudan i.}\textsuperscript{218} To all creatures, you are the lord (creator).
\item \textit{Jî wê ko roj hiîtêyê} Since the sun is rising
\item \textit{Jî beri mang dertiye} It rises before the moon rises
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{201} Berêzê Sîhê yêng Berêzê Şêşims (The Bezt of the Morning or The Bezt of Şêşims), seb. 8, 10, 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 211-212.

\textsuperscript{214} Oramê Merêma Cebêrê (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 70, in Kiço 2012: 128.

\textsuperscript{215} For more details about the symbolism of Çîra see “The Symbolism of Çîra in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

\textsuperscript{216} Du‘a’ Ezîdayê (Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1003.

\textsuperscript{217} Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-98.

\textsuperscript{218} Du‘a’ Sîhê, Sêxê 2 (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 14, in Reşo 2004 II: 976-977.
Şêîms zeûина dîbû diné ye,
şêîms has created the world.

In this regard, Kreyenbroek emphasizes that şêîms 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 Şêîms is one and has dualistic natural powers
Şêîms has power over evil and good:

Ez gorî ber dû şêra
Bo šakêt larêra
Destê Şêîms ser şeran û xêra.221

May I be a sacrifice222 for both the lions
For the good men from here
Şêîms has power223 over evil and good.

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

Çendî sibe ye kû roj li min hîltêye
Şemînînîn i bi nir û keramet bi
Şeşeq dibû li bitêt berêa
Ronâbî kiribû lašşa nûranî, beta bi
banê kafê ye, …224

By the morning when the sunrises over me!
My Şems was full of light and mystical
power
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, …

The sebîrî below highlights the following aspect: “You [Şêîms] give sustenance and you
take it away.” He therefore has a ‘dualistic’ aspect to his nature:

Ya Şêîms, me bi te mefer e
Ya Şêîms, tu mefer ì
Ya Rebi, tu xalîqekî min i berîber ì
Tu risqa didî, tu risqa diberi.225

O Şêîms, we take refuge in you
O Şêîms, you are [our] refuge
O Lord, you are my creator forever
You give sustenance and you take it
away.

3.2.3 Şêîms’ power exists in nature and is the ruler in nature
Şêîms’ power and light exist in nature, in its fourteen spheres of earth and sky:

219 Beyto Silîa Pnx Beyto Şêîms (the Beyt of the Morning or the Beyt of Şêîms), seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 211.
220 Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-98.
223 Literally, ‘Şêîms’ hand is over evil and good.’
225 Du’a û Qoşî Şêîms (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêîms), seb. 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204.
Silâ ve ronîyâ Şişims dîhâ heyân e
Nav â dikârê Şişims dîkîm silav e
Ronâhîya Şişims dâbû çarde tebêqê erd
û ezman e.226

The light of Şişims shone in the morning
Greetings to the name and remembrance of Şişims
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 misfiya, here dîbar e
Ewan jik bi Şêşim bebi pişkû 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 Şêşims.

Here mer e, here mişk e
Here ter e, here bişk e
Ewan ji bi Şêşims beye 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 axcû av û açîrî
Bi kere Mêlik Fezredîn û Şêşims
diçêli
Cewana Şêşims û Mêlik Fezredîn, ji
êwil beta bi açîrî.229
Wind and earth, water and fire, all these
Have their being through the power of
Fezredîn and Şêşims
The assembly of Fezredîn and
Şemsedîn230 exists from the beginning till
the end.

There are tebeqê that indicate that all snow and rain, and whatever comes down from
the sky, come by Şêşims’ command, i.e., His power and control:
Çendî té berf û baran e
Nucê ji ‘smâna dibête xwar e
Jî ba Şêşims destîr 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 erew i
Bêrêt gira dîmeya
Bo minестеств û dûń, …232
Şêşims, you are faithful
You cause oceans to coagulate
You are religion and faith to me, …

227 Qeval Şêşimes Teveçî (The Hymn of Şêşims of Tabriz), seb. 7, in Sîlêman and Cindi 1979: 95.
228 Du’u à Qeval Şêşimes (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 21, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 204.
229 Du’u à Qeval Şêşimes (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 à Qeval Şêşimes (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 31, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.
232 Du’a à Qeval Şêşimes (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşims), seb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 203.
3.2.4 Şēsim is in all-natural places

While Yezidis pray to Şēsim during Du‘a‘ya Raḩelāt (the sunrise prayer), they say:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cihê te benê ‘erd e} & \quad \text{[O Şēsim], your place is everywhere.} \\
\text{Tu Xalîqê cimleti ‘alem, …} & \quad \text{You are the Creator of all the world, …} \\
\text{Xudan mal i, Xudan perd e} & \quad \text{You are (like) a householder, you keep order} \\
\text{Cihê te benê ‘erd e}\text{.}\quad \text{[O Şēsim], your place is everywhere.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Şēsim’ light is everywhere in nature—lands and seas, earth and sky:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Piwa û dikê qedar e} & \quad \text{[He] measured it and determined its size} \\
\text{Şēsim xândêkê e} & \quad \text{Şēsim is the ruler} \\
\text{Ronâyê Şēsim û bûnêt berîyan û behirê.}\text{\textsuperscript{235}} & \quad \text{The light of Şēsim is in lands and seas.} \\
\text{Sêhe ye ronîyê şēsim dibê beyan e} & \quad \text{The light of Şēsim shone in the morning} \\
\text{Nav û dikêrê şêsim dikêm silêv e} & \quad \text{Greetings to the name and remembrance} \\
\text{Ronahêya şêsim dabû çerde tebeqê e} & \quad \text{of Şēsim} \\
\text{êv ezman e.}\text{\textsuperscript{236}} & \quad \text{The light of Şēsim brought forth} \\
\text{fourteen spheres of earth and sky.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

3.2.5 Şēsim is eternal and is with all time

As in Du‘a‘ ú Qewê Şēsim (the prayer and hymn of Şēsim, DQS) and Du‘a‘ Nîrû (the noon prayer, DNI) while Yezidis pray for Şēsim, they face the sun and say:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ya Şêsim, me bi te mefer e} & \quad \text{O Şēsim, we take refuge in you} \\
\text{Ya Şêsim, tu mefer i} & \quad \text{O Şēsim, you are [our] refuge} \\
\text{Ya Rebi, tu xalîqti min û berîber} & \quad \text{O Lord, you are my eternal creator, …} \\
\text{î, …}\text{\textsuperscript{236}} & \quad \text{O my Lord! You invite us and our} \\
\text{Ya Rebi! tu me û sunêtê bitxane} & \quad \text{traditions to the assembly of holy beings} \\
\text{diwana xas û mominêt jor e} & \quad \text{and good believers} \\
\text{Ya Rebi! ber tu yê, ber tu yê, ber tu} & \quad \text{O my Lord! You are the only one who is} \\
yê}\text{.}\text{\textsuperscript{237}} & \quad \text{eternal.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

To conclude, Şēsim 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. Şēsim 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

\textsuperscript{235} Du‘a‘ya Raḩelāt (The Sunrise Prayer), seb. 3, 7, in Reşo 2004 II: 980.
\textsuperscript{234} Qewê Kenîyê Mara (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seb. 16, in Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 394.
\textsuperscript{236} Du‘a‘ ú Qewê Şēsim (The Prayer and Hymn of Şēsim), seb. 19, in Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 204.
\textsuperscript{235} Du‘a‘ Nîrû (The Noon Prayer), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 II: 984.
with all time. According to Yezidi popular religious beliefs, Şêîms 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, Şêîms and Tawus 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, Tawus Melek being their leader and ruler:

\[
\text{Padšê min kinyat avakir ji dur û gewber e} \\
\text{Sîpart bû ber heft surêt herêber e} \\
\text{Melekê Tawus kire server e.}^{239}
\]

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

Also, in:

\[
\text{Padšê min û ber heft surêt xeude ne} \\
\text{Rayekê dikin, êçin kinyatekê avu bikene.}^{240}
\]

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 sebeqê:

\[
\text{Tu bêje min heft surêt Sîlan Êçê kî û kîn e} \\
\text{Ewil Şêcadi û Melîk Şêx Sin û Êzdîn nemîr} \\
\text{Şêmsedin û Fexiredin nasirdin û} \\
\text{sicadin e}
\]

You tell me, who Sîlan Êçê’s (i.e., God’s) seven mysteries are
First Shêkîh Adî, Melîk Şêx Sin, Êzdîn-Nemîr
Şêmsedin, Fexiredin, Nasirdin and Sîcadin^{241}

239 Qawîlê Pukêy (The Hymn of the King), seb. 6, in Bozani 1997: 112.
240 Qawîlê Zebânî Makêsîr (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 37, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 62.
Chapter I: Light and Other Elements of Nature in Yezidi Implicit Theology

Ewan ev dinya bikartine. They have (always) ruled this world.

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

They were created from God’s light:

- *Ew in melekt sekinine*
- *Ji niira 1labi ne*
- *Xwarna wan El bendulilla ü şikri ne.*

They are the ready angels244

From light brightened the light

Praise to you, my Creator.

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 *sébeger* refer to it as happening in sequential order:

- *Padzê min sur li sem a*
- *Beri ne lewb behû ne qelem e*
- *Ya Sîltan Êzî, liha te ev se’et e ev dem e.*

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

Before, there was neither tablet nor pen

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

- *Beri ne qelem behû, ne lewb e*
- *Me yarek dîvé vê berî şiro biket, ye li kow e*
- *Melek êk bû bûne daw e.*

Before, there was neither pen nor tablet

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

There was one angel, he became two.

- *Li berî firwara padzê ye*
- *Teftîka me ji wê ciwahê ye*
- *Melek dû bûne sê ye.*

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

Our search is for an answer to this

There were two angels, they became three.

- *Padzê min i cebar e*
- *Jî ba wî batbî firwar e*
- *Melek sê bûne bûne çar e.*

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

From him came the power

There were three angels, they became four.


242 Qewlê Şec î Aquî (The Hymn of Sheikh and Jacob), seb. 24, in Xelef 1995: 63.


244 Literally, ‘standing angels.’

245 I.e., their power is from God.

246 Cf. PX: tîfîq ‘being face to face’, Kreyenbroek 1995: 219, n. 4.
Padêkê min i mîzênc e
Melek șar bûn bûne pênc e
Her pênc bûne sifte her êk û renc 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 xoq e
Melen247 pênc bûn bûne şeq e
Her şeq bûne melekêêl ‘erz e.

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

Padêkê min xoq kîr subbet e
Lêk rûnsîtin mulbêt e
Melek şeq bûn bûne heft e.

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

Her hefit ku dî‘fîrin
Bi rastîyê lêk dîwekîrin
Bi mulbêtê bi medêra248 êk
dîdhêrin.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 hefitê ku dîsefîrin
Bi rastî lêk dîwekîrin
Nûra êk dhêrin.250

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

Jî nûre, nûr çô
Hefit derec çô.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 bûlekê bêr bedîle
Jî wan çô şeqw şemal ê 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 kîrin diyar e

When tradition declared its mystery

247 The correct word is Melêk (angel).
248 The word ‘medêra’ is replaced by ‘nûra.’ Yezidis use the words medêra=nûra (gazing and lighting) as
synonyms. Also, the word medêra had been replaced by nûra in Qâwîl Şêlêbekîr, Şavê 1 (The Hymn of
250 Qâwîl Şêlêbekîr, Şavê 1 (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekîr, Version 1), seb. 23, in Reşo 2004 I: 189.
251 Qâwîl Pîr Hemêdî Boz (The Hymn of Pîr Hemêdê Boz), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 I: 552.
252 Di‘ûn Bawîrîjê (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 18, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 106.
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 Tawusi Melek is their leader. There are some symbolic rituals that represent them in the following manner:

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

There seven lamps for the *Heft Siwarên Mala Adîya* 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, Tawusi Melek.\(^{256}\) Here, it is noticeable that these lamps are lit beside the *Xerqê* of Şêxûbekir and *Qewlê Şêxûbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Ùbekir, QSB) refers to the creation of these seven angels from light (see above *selnqes*, under 4.1):

\(^{255}\) *Du'a Eşqûbiyyê* (The Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 1001.

\(^{256}\) *Qewlê 'Erêlâ 'Esizman* (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 25, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 389.

\(^{253}\) See Image 01 in Appendices.

\(^{254}\) From the interview with Şehab Şehrî Şê'îd, is the custodian of the *Heft Siwarên Mala Adîya* (seven riders of the Adiya family), 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
4.2.2 Lighting seven lamps in Dergibé Mir

Seven lamps are also lit beside Dergibé Mir (the gate of Mir) 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 bān melekēt ber bidile_ Those were the angels of the epochs
_Ji wan čo šewq ševel u niir e._260 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 Tawusi Melek.262

4.2.4 Çinayên Me’îşetê (the lamps of knowledge)

There are seven lamps called Çinayên Me’îşetê that are lit beside Sineq in Tawusgerân.263 In Yezidi 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

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258 See Image 02 in Appendices.
259 Kreyenbroek 1995: 81.
260 Dî’a Bawirjê (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 Semağēran (the Religious Dance)”, chapter II part II.
263 See Image 04 in Appendices.
264 From the interview with Hecl Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.
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, Tawusi Melek and Šēms 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 Čira (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 Tawusi Melek as an eternal light in the world. It appears that Tawusi 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 *Nisan* (Eastern April) of every year, Tawusi Melek (as light) descends to earth for the renewal of life. There are many features and roles of Tawusi 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 Šēms 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 Šēms that have a link with nature, for example, Šēms 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, Tawusi Melek and Šēms 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 *Afîrandina kînyatê* or *dînyayê* 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 *Kamiya Sîpê*, the light of Lalish and *Nîra Mulhibê* (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 sebuge that ponders the way in which the world was created and through how many forms it has changed. The sebuge does not supply any answers to these ponderings:

We dibijit Hesedê Altewri, Hesed Altewri says:
Werin biniyed min êd misteri, Come my brothers who are scholars
Ka ev duniya bi ûend lêwna bat û ûend How many forms did this world have and lêwna bori? 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:

Ya rebê duniya behû tari O my Lord, in the world there was
Tîda ûend ûendari darkness
Te ûend kîr tezê halî There were no living creatures (no life)
Çu nema gül jê bari You freshly brought it (the universe) to life

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

Pêkça li nav Durê li xewde bû King (i.e., God) was alone in Dur
Ne ‘erî behû, ne ‘ezman bû There was no earth, no sky
Ne çiya ne sikan bû No mountains, no population
Bawêri ñavek jê xuda bû, One name for faith was God.

Then God created everything in existence from that Dur.

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266 *Qoralê Hesêdê Altewri* (The Hymn of Hesedê Altewri), seb. 1, in Sîlêman and Cindî 1979: 54.
267 Literally, ‘customers of [knowledge].’
268 *Qoralê Afrîne Dînêyê* (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 1, Bâqasîf 2003: 235. Cf., this is another variant of that sebuge.
269 *(QAD, seb. 1, in Sîlêman and Cindî 1979: 40).*
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:

- Mira di pirsi bi ece sur e
- Mit beyrun e bi xo ra
- Pedê min bi xo efrandibû dur e.\(^{270}\)

Men had been asking about that mystery
Men are confused in themselves
My King (i.e., God) himself created the Dur.

**Dur** was a plentiful light:

- Pedê min dur ji xo vavare
- Dur qendileke maldar e
- Qendî jî nîr sitar e.\(^{271}\)

My King (i.e., God) detached the Dur from himself
**Dur** 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:

- Lî we nebu bi ûxar e
- Dura sor ye maldar e
- An û ûx û hayê û aşîr disparê.

Nothing existed there
The red pearl is plentiful
Water, earth, air and fire are its elements.

- An û ûx û û háyê û ûşîr e
- Dura sor ye bi xerê e ji bakir e
- Çendî mazêqê ù bi xattr e.\(^{272}\)

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

This world developed fully in the **Dur**:

- Hat çarşembava ewîli
- Zur ["Dur"] bi reNGa xemili
- Ëve dînya ye ù pê dekemîli.\(^{273}\)

Came the first Wednesday
The **Dur** was adorned with colours
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:

\(^{270}\) Quodl Bê ø Elîf (The Hymn of B and A), seb. 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 72.

\(^{271}\) Quodl Şêculohe (The Hymn of Sheikh Übêkê), seb. 5, in Süleyman 1985: 98.

\(^{272}\) Quodl Durê (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 20, 21, in Xêraway 2012: 63.

\(^{273}\) Quodl Çerşembêyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 28, in Kiço 2004: 210.

Part I: Nature and Religious Beliefs

Dura sor wa li bëw a ye
Bi qudrêta Xëdë nawesta ye
Ya bi ar û aoz û ber û ba ye.  

The red pearl in space
It is suspended by God’s power
With its water, soil, stone and air.

It had a circular shape and was in continuous movement:

Dura sor û beranzer e
Her ya bi ger û û giraver e
Tijî va û aoz û agir û ber û  

The red pearl in its entirety
Always rotates, it is round (circularity)
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:

Dura zer bi seranzer e
Dixumcime bëbrë agir e
Sêv û roj navemir
Bi durwan durwan bere bile.

The yellow pearl in its entirety
Is a pile of blazing/flaming fire
It is not extinguished day and night
It is always alight.

Dewran dewran dibîltîn
Bîhna aqîrî ji û wê têtin
Dura zer aqîr û pêtîn.

It is always burning
The smell of fire comes from it
The yellow pearl is fire and flame.

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

Hat çarzimbowa ewîlî
Zur (*Dur*) bi renga cemîlî
Ere dînya ye pé dikemîlî.

Came the first Wednesday
The Dur was adorned with colours (i.e., all colours)
This world fully developed within it.

DUR bi renga ges bû
Beri ne ’erd bëbû, ne ’ezman bëbû ne ’ery bû
Ka biye min pedê min bi ké ra xos bû.

The Dur became radiant with colours.
There was neither earth, nor sky, nor the throne.
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:

Kirine riku û rikînî
Dur bi heytêti hîcînî

Foundations were laid and established
The Dur burst open in its awe

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275 Qurîlî Dura (The Hymn of the Pearls), sem. 13, in Xêravay 2012: 62.
276 Qurîlî Dura (The Hymn of the Pearls), sem. 14, in Xêravay 2012: 62.
277 Qurîlî Dura (The Hymn of the Pearls), sem. 8, 9, in Xêravay 2012: 61.
278 Literally, ‘turning’.
280 Qurîlî Zebînî Mekoîr (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), sem. 11, in Sîlêman and Cindi 1979: 36.
282 “PX: hîcînî, to be under pressure, shudder”, Kreyenbroek 1995: 180, n. 16.
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Taqt nema bilgirı.  It no longer had the strength to withstand.

Taqt nema bisehirı  It no longer had the strength to remain patient
Dur bi renga xemili  The Dur became adorned with colours
Sipi bi, sor bu, sefirı.  It became white, red and yellow.

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 agrı sor e The Yellow Durı is the red fire
Ci griit li ‘ezmane jor e It took its place in space
Sewiq avete Durı li dur e It shone everywhere around itself.

Şevë tari dikin ronali ye It brightened the dark nights
Dura sipi ji wa digerye The white pearl also rotates
Ew ji li durı ya sor bi mebiye 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 The King (i.e., God) calls out loudly
Dur mawåci biwe behr e, … The Dur had waves, it became the ocean, …

Water flowed out from Dur during its explosion:

Ar ji Duré diveriya Water came from the Dur
Biwe behr ù pengiya A sea came into being and water collected in it
Pedşa miin merkeb diket ù nav My King (i.e., God) saddled a horse and roamed over it.
geriya.

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.

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281 Quralı Zebünı Meksır (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 9, 10 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 58.
282 “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.
283 Quralı Durı (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 7, in Xerayav 2012: 61.
284 Lit. ‘high sky.’
285 Quralı Durı (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 12, in Xerayav 2012: 62.
286 Quralı Dore Vergan (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 9, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 95.
287 Quralı Zebünı Meksır (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 21, in Si|man and Cindi 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:

- Av ute aye batay a ejir e (Water, earth, air and fire)
- Dura sar ye bi xerx e ji bakir e (The red Dur contains the original seeds)
- Čendí mačlaq pe bi xatir e (It created all creatures.
- Hat Čaršemywa avili (Came the first Wednesday)
- Zur [“Dur”] bi reng zemili (The Dur was adorned with colours)
- Ewe diniya ye pê dikezili (This world fully developed within it)

Based on Qwélé Afrína Dinayé (The Hymn of the Creation of the World, QAD), Qwélé Horé Beré Ko Ba (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning? QHBKB) and Qwélé Zebérie Meksiir (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:

- Qendiril ji bana neži (The lamp from above came down)
- Peksi min pe huylabu čav e (My King [i.e., God] had placed his eye in it)
- Peşay ci gete duri (What did my King say to the Dur?)
- Ji Durë wewyalub av e. (From the Dur water was coming).

Av ji Durë wetric
Bá behir ú pengiya
Padi xe miše merkeb best, te getiya. (Water flowed from the Dur
It became the sea and water collected in it)

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200 Qwélé Dura (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêraway 2012: 63.
201 Qwélé Zebérie Meksëir (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 24, 25, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60-61. Cf., this is another variant of these two lines:

- Qendiril ji bana neži, mubbet kejtë nav e (The Lamp came down from above, love came into (the world)
- Peksi min pe huylabu čav e (My King [i.e., God] seized it, it became an eye.
- Kë bëlu min ci go te duri ji wewyalub av e. (Tell me what he said to Dur, water came from it.

Av ji Durë dwetri
Bëw behir ú pengiya
Padi xe miše merkeb diheb û nav getiya. (Water came from the Pearl
A sea came into being and water collected in it
My King addled a horse and roamed over it.
(QZM, seb. 20, 21, in Sültem and Cindli 1979: 37).
Chapter II: The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Cosmogonical …

My King saddled a horse and roamed over it.

Dur mevi û beciq
Biwe behir û meviq
Pedâyê min nûr bû, bû bukmê xo diferici.292

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 berêkê
Biê behira bê seri bê bûni
Bê ré û bê deri
Özdanê 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
Descanek jê dercwenî
Hêtît tebêq ‘erd û ‘ezman pê njinî.297

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

Havên avête behirê, behir pê meyanî
Descanek jê dercwenî
Çarde tebêq ‘erd û ezman pê njinî
Özdanê 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 Qewêê Herê Berê Ko Berê (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning?), seb. 19, in Rejo 2004 I: 261.

293 Literally, ‘he watched his rule (authority).’


295 Literally, ‘a sea has neither beginning nor end.’

296 Literally, ‘with neither way nor door.’

297 Qewêê Afîrêna Dinaşiê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 11, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 237.

298 Qewêê Afîrêna Dinaşiê (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:

- Havên avête behirê, behir pé meyanî
- Decamek jê dorcavenî
- Hêfit tebeq ‘erd û ‘ezman pé nijini. ²⁹⁹

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

- Havên avête behirê, behir pé meyanî
- Decamek jê dorcavenî
- Çarle tebeq ‘erd û ‘ezman pé nijini
- Eţzanê me dur derani.³⁰⁰

[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.

The following sebeqê also expresses this creative moment:

- Seydi! behirê kef dane
- Jê co ducan e
- Pêşayê min jê nijjiyar kir; ‘erd û ‘ezman e.³⁰¹

My Lord! The sea foamed
Smoke came from it
My King (i.e., God) created earth and sky from it.

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

- Belê Fecro, min ‘erd û ‘ezman ji yek kire
- Min beyê û roj navda dabir dikire
- Min ev medîsa bi navê Şîxadî û Melîk şêx; Sin ava kire.³⁰²

Indeed, Fecro, I separated sky and earth
I made the moon and sun visible in between
And I established the community that is named after Sheikh ‘Adi and Angel Sheikh Sin.

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 Qewî Zebûnî Meksûr (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One) and there are further sebeqê on this subject from other Qewî.

³⁰¹ Qewî Herê Berê Ko Ba (The Hymn of Where was God [or the Universe] at the Beginning?), seh. 20, in Reşo 2004 I: 261-262.
The liquid and unstable stage of earth

According to Yezidi cosmology, in the beginning, the earth was liquid and unstable. Religious *sebeges* use the following terms to refer to this state: *bubiti* (unsettled), *netebiti* (not tranquil) and *negiribiti beşare* (not solid):

- *Erd mahu bubiti* (The earth was still unsettled)
- *Xididek xaditi* (A fissure appeared)
- *Ezgi mi, ‘erd be wî szare netebiti.* [He said] My dear one, without the
- *Be’di čil sali bi bijmar e* (Mystery the earth will not become
- *Erdi bi xo ra negiribiti beşar e* tranquil.
- *Heta mibbeto xerza närani bi nav da nedihinare.* Afterwards count forty years:

The earth did not become solid

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 *mibbetxerză närani* (the luminous seed of love) existed on high. The coming of Lalish in some way caused the earth to become solid and stable:

- *Be’di čil sali bi bijmar e* Afterwards count forty years:
- *Erdi bi xo ra negiribiti beşar e* The earth did not become solid,
- *Heta Lalis bi nav da dibate xwar e.* Until Lalish came down into (the world).

Another variant of the same *sebeg* refers to *mibbetxerză närani* (the luminous seed of love) instead of Lalish:

- *Be’di čil sali bi bijmar e* Afterwards count forty years:
- *Erdi bi xo ra negiribiti beşar e* The earth did not become solid
- *Heta mibbetxerză närani bi nav da nedihinare.* Until the luminous seed of Love

[ Lalish],308 acting as rennet,309 was sent

into it.

On this stage as well as see:

303 *Qudî Zebini Meksir* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 31, 32 in Kreycenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61.
304 “Lit. had remained molten”, Kreycenbroek 1995: 180, n. 36.
306 *Qudî Zebini Meksir* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 28 in Siíleman and Cindi 1979: 38.
307 *Qudî Zebini Meksir* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 32 in Kreycenbroek 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”, Kreycenbroek 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”, Kreycenbroek and Rashow 2005: 61, n. 23.
Weki 'erd ü ‘ezman nediskini
Lalšek pès mihabil dinjini
Mihbata zerça nîrani di nav da
diskini.

When the earth and the sky were not yet stable
[God] created a form of Lalish opposite
them\(^{311}\)
The love of the luminous seed, acting as
leaven\(^{312}\) came to dwell in it.

Dilê min da nemalû tü cor e
Lalšek avu kîrin li jor e
dere lédan Qublat il-bidôr e.\(^{310}\)

No pain remained in my heart
A form of Lalish was created on high
Its gate was called the ‘Qublet il-
bidôre’\(^{313}\)

The \textit{sebeqes} quoted below indicate that at Lalish, God threw rennet into the sea and it
coagulated:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Padşa ü ber çar yare}
  \textit{Li merkebê dibûn sinar e}
  \textit{Tê seyrîn çar kirar e}
  \textit{Li Lalîşê sekinîn, gatîn eue heq war e.}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item The King (i.e., God) and all four friends
  \item [They] mounted the ship
  \item [They] travelled the four corners
  \item (directions).
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item They stopped at Lalish saying: This is the
  \item site of Truth.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Heq war e, sekinî}
  \textit{Padşe min hêvên bavête behirê, behir
  meyinî, …}\(^{314}\)
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item It is the site of Truth\(^{315}\) They stopped
  \item My King threw rennet into the sea and it
  \item coagulated, …
\end{itemize}

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

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Padşe min çekir ‘erd ü ‘ezmin e}
  \textit{Deşit ü çiya ü behir ü zevên e.}\(^{316}\)
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item My King (i.e., God) created earth and sky
  \item Plains, mountains, seas and fields.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Pedşe min li ber bukêmi xo yi rewa ye}
  \textit{Ewî deştî çekir, rukibande ser çiya ye}
  \textit{Kewna vê dînyayê ba ye.}’’
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item My King has balance in his control
  \item He created plains, and set mountains on it
  \item The origin of this world is air.
\end{itemize}

\(^{310}\) \textit{Qurûlê Şêhêntê Meksûr} (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 18, 19, in Kreyenbrook 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”, Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 59, n. 14.

\(^{312}\) “i.e., causing the world to grow solid and become as it is”, Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 60, n. 15.

\(^{313}\) \textit{Qurûlê il-bidôr} means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer see Reço 2004 II: 573, n. 2.

\(^{314}\) \textit{Qurûlê Şêhêntê Meksûr} (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 26, 27, in Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 61.

\(^{315}\) In Yezidi religion, Lalish is called “\textit{Lalîş hêq wên}” (Lalish is the site of truth).

\(^{316}\) \textit{Qurûlê Omer Xale û Hasîn Cînarti} (The Hymn of Omer Xale and Hasîn Cînarti), seb. 41, in Xelef 2001: 157.

\(^{317}\) \textit{Qurûlê Mehû} (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 8, in Hecî 1994a: 23-24.
In Yezidi cosmogony, 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 Lalish and Nûra Mûbibêtê (the light of love)

After the earth had become solid, life began through the light of Lalish, as eternal light, in the form of Xerza nûranî (the luminous seed) and Nûra mûbibêtê (the light of love):

Mora Kaniya Sîpî fer e
Laliş cîke mebdêr e
Nûra we ji berêber e.

Baptism in the Kaniya Sîpî is obligatory
Lalish is the place of revival
Its light is eternal.

When Lalish 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:

Be’dî cîl salî bi bijmar e
‘Erîdî bi xo na ngejîrî buh e
Hêta mûbibêta xerza nûranî ni nav da nedibinare.

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

When Lalish came down
The light of love came to the Qendîl (Lamp)
The earth glowed; it was adorned with colours.

Kû Laliş neqîli
Nûra mûbibêtê hatî qendîli
‘Erîdî şa bû, bi renga xemîli.

Kû Laliş dibate
Lî ’erdê şin dibû nebât e
Pê zejînandîbû şîpas kînîyat e.

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

318 For information in general about Yezidi cosmogony and cosmology see Omarkhalî 2017: 14-17.
319 Beyta Kaniya Sîpî (Beyt of the White Spring), seh. 11, in Sîleyman 2013: 42.
320 Qenê Zehêbî Meksîn (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seh. 32, 33, 34 in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 61-62. Cf., this is another variant of that strophe:

Be’dî cîl salî bi bijmar e
‘Erîdî bi xo na ngejîrî buh e
Hêta Laliş bi nav da dibate xawîr e.

(QZM, seh. 28 in Sîleyman and Cindî 1979: 38).

321 “The fact that Lalish is mentioned in the following stanza of this version suggests that the original myth attributed this function to Lalish”, Kreyenbrock 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.”\textsuperscript{322} Reşo states, “\textit{Xerə nîrənt} 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.”\textsuperscript{323}

\textit{Padçayê min i kamili bukîm giran e} \\
\textit{Dî nät da dana zîr erkan e} \\
\textit{Mihbêta xerə nîrənt dane wan bi nîşan e.}\textsuperscript{324}

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.

\subsection*{3.2 The water of \textit{Kaniya Sîpî}}

According to some \textit{sebeqs}, the rennet of \textit{Kaniya Sîpî} has existed from pre-eternity.

\textit{Hêke tî piyara bêvînê Kaniya Sîpî ji min dikî} \\
\textit{Hêvînê Kaniya Sîpî ji berîber e.}\textsuperscript{325}

If you ask me about the rennet of \textit{Kaniya Sîpî} \\
The rennet of \textit{Kaniya Sîpî} has existed from pre-eternity.

\textit{Lalîşa ber sikan e} \\
\textit{Kaniya Sîpî nîşan e} \\
\textit{Nişana ‘erd û ezman a [e].}\textsuperscript{326}

Lalish lies at the centre \\
\textit{Kaniya Sîpî} is the sacred symbol \\
It is the symbol of earth and sky.

Therefore, the water of \textit{Kaniya Sîpî} is the leaven of life on earth and it created all living creatures, as expressed in these \textit{sebeqs}:

\textit{Padçayê min čêkir; geyî û masîl, behîr û kuri} \\
\textit{Dêzît â çiya, ‘erd û ‘ezman, mîrî û čëvî} \\
\textit{Xîhyaçêt têvi, bêvîn ji Kaniya Sîpî bî} \\
\textit{Ew ye we ye, wed peتخa pêdîvî.”}

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 \textit{Kaniya Sîpî} \\
It is completed as King wanted it.

The Yezidi religious man, Heci Şemo Mirad, says, “\textit{Havînê Kaniya Sîpî ji berî ‘erd û ‘ezmana bolî piştî xilîqûbûna wan, ava Kaniya Sîpî bûye havînê bûyalet li ser ‘erdê}.”\textsuperscript{328} (The leaven of \textit{Kaniya Sîpî}...)

\textsuperscript{322} Kreyenbroek 2008: 88.
\textsuperscript{323} Reşo 2004 I: 154.
\textsuperscript{324} \textit{Qavlî Zebûnî Meksûr} (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 21, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60.
\textsuperscript{325} \textit{Qavlî Qere Fergan} (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 16, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 97.
\textsuperscript{326} \textit{Qavlî Zebûnî Meksûr} (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 20, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 60.
\textsuperscript{327} \textit{Qavlî Omer Xala û Hesên Çinarî} (The Hymn of Omer Xala and Hesên Çinarî), seb. 36, in Reşo 2004 I: 540.
\textsuperscript{328} From the interview with Heci Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba‘adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.
Sipî 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Li wē nebā bi ńkzar e} & \quad \text{Nothing existed there} \\
\text{Dura sor ye makar e} & \quad \text{The red pearl is plentiful} \\
\text{Av u as ń bayi ń agir dispare.} & \quad \text{Water, earth, air and fire are its elements.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Av u as ń bayi ń agir e} & \quad \text{Water, earth, air and fire} \\
\text{Dura sor ye bi xezg e ji bakir e} & \quad \text{The red *Dur* contains the original seeds} \\
\text{Çendi musel qe bi xatir e.} & \quad \text{It created all creatures.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ewē čečir ęrd u 'ezman e} & \quad \text{He created earth and sky} \\
\text{Di nar da čečir behir u behirihan e} & \quad \text{Placed sea and ocean in it (earth)} \\
\text{Ū gêndeuer u insan u can e.} & \quad \text{And organisms (living beings), human and soul.}
\end{align*}
\]

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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Li čeşmênwē xos bû jiyan} & \quad \text{Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays} \\
\text{Kesik bûn deșit u 'çya u zevi u şozan} & \quad \text{Plain, mountain, field and pasture are} \\
\text{Hemû bû kerema Pedê min i Yezdian.} & \quad \text{adorned with plants} \\
\text{All those by the mystical power of my} & \quad \text{All those by the mystical power of my} \\
\text{King (i.e., God) Yezdian.} & \quad \text{King (i.e., God) Yezdian.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hat čeşmênwa sor e} & \quad \text{Came the red Wednesday} \\
\text{Nisan şemilanda bû bi xo re} & \quad \text{Adorned April with itself} \\
\text{ji batin da ye bi mor e.} & \quad \text{From the world of the Unseen it is} \\
\text{baptized.} & \quad \text{baptized.}
\end{align*}
\]

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

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320 *Qawli Dur* (*The Hymn of the Pearls*), seb. 20, 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.
330 *Qawli Şêcêli Şêcêli Sare* (*Sixadi is the sheikh of Cities*), seb. 7, in Dinani 2012: 134.
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 \textit{Xudans} (Lords), meaning, each phenomenon has its own \textit{Xudan}. Because these \textit{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.

\section*{4 Manifestations of the Four Elements of Nature and their Xudans (`Lords`)}

\textit{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

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{Pedê min ber heft rij dikirin biymar e}
\textit{Üv ev duniyê dêkîr û bûlûqesare, …}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushright}
My King (i.e., God) counted these seven days
And created this world and controlled it, …
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{Xudanendê me imê keş eşa e}
\textit{Şemhî birî ilîras e}
\textit{Çarşemî keş zîlas e}
\textit{Hersed sal paş bessar bêt duran kas e.}
(\textit{Q\textit{-AD}}, \textit{heb. 29}, \textit{in Şêlêman and Cindêri 1979:} 43).
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushright}
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.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{Hat çarşembarus ewîlî}
\textit{Zur ["Dur" bi renja sejîlî}
\textit{Eve demya ye pê dêkemîlî.}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushright}
Came the first Wednesday
\textit{Dur} became adorned it with
colours
This world fully developed within it.
\end{flushright}

\(^{332}\) Regarding the duration of the creation, religious texts generally refer to the process of the creation of the universe us completed in seven days, and Wednesday as being the final day:
Xudans are a part of God’s power. 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

Şêîms is the Xudan of fire and fire is also Şêîms' terrestrial counterpart. 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:

- **Dura zer bi seranser e**
  - The yellow pearl in its entirety
- **Diznameşime beheře ağir e**
  - Is a pile of blazing/flaming fire
- **Şev u roj navemir e**
  - It is not extinguished day and night
- **Bi dewan dewan bere bile.**
  - It is always alight.

Durwan dewan dibišëtn
- It is always burning
- Bûna ağirî ji wë têtin
  - The smell of fire comes from it
- Dura zer ağir û pêtin
  - The yellow pearl is fire and flame.

Şêîms is the lord of the sun and light; it has been explained in Chapter one under the name “Şêîms (the lord of the sun) as Nûr and his characteristics related to nature.”

- **Cendi sibe ye kû roj li min bûtëye**
  - By the morning when the sun rises over me!
- **Şensî min li nûr ú keramuê bu**
  - My Şems (Şêîms) was full of light and mystical power
- **Şêq davëli li binet bebra**
  - He had placed dawn at the bottom of the oceans
- **Ronahi kiribû ašiga nûranî, beta bi banê kafê ye, ...**
  - 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 Hervus. As is known, his name came from the word Birûni (thunder), and holy texts also refer to his name:

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333 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xiro Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawih Hesen Stêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Adinam Xeravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.
334 From the interview with Heci Şerno Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.
335 Kreyenbroek 1995: 97-98.
336 *Qûdûl Dûru* (The Hymn of the Pearls), sëb. 8, 9, in Xeravay 2012: 61.
337 Literally, ‘turning.’
338 Xî1, 31 (Xî1, Version 1), sëb. 13, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 402.
When it thunders, Yezidis say, “Ya Şêxê Hewruz (Ebrus), tu me såla ëkêjîn birnu” (O Sheikh Ebrus, you save us from these thunders).

4.1.2 The Rainbow

In Yezidi mythology, Tawusi 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, Tawusi Melek descended to the earth and as a result the seven-coloured rainbow turned into the seven-coloured bird, the peacock.

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:

- Av ji Durê berêkê
- Bê berîna bê serî bê lînî
- Bê rê û bê derî
- Êzdanê me ser beberê gerî

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

4.2.1 Springs

According to Gindî, the Xudan of all springs and flowing water is Kaniya Sipî. There are many holy springs in Yezidi such as Lalish. 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 zeheq, under 3.2).

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340 Du’a Siêra Demûlêşpê (The Prayer of the Démûlêşpê; ‘pole star’), seq. 4, in Reço 2004 II: 1000.
341 For information on him see Kreynbroek 1995: 114-115.
342 On this figure see Kreynbroek 1995: 113.
343 See al-Ra’îdînî 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 Afrandina Kimatê (the Yezidi Myth of Cosmogony and Cosmology)”, chapter I, part I.
346 Literally, ‘a sea has neither beginning nor end.’
347 Literally, ‘with neither way nor door.’
349 About these springs see “The Natural Elements in the Structure of Lalish”, in chapter II, part II.
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Furthermore, there are several holy springs in Yezidis areas: for the Shingal district, Kaniya Piraxayê (the spring of Piraxayê) near the village of Kulka,350 Kaniya Kedrô (the spring of Kedrô) in the Kedrô cemetery in the village of Solax, Kaniya Leylê (the spring of Leylê) near the Pêre Eva shrines in the village of Zorava, Kaniya Šîlo (the spring of Šîlo) in the Šîlo valley near the village of Bara; and in Sheikhan district, Kaniya Šêçê Zêrî (the spring of Šexê Zêrî) in the village of Bêtmar. There is a sacred spring devoted to Sheikh Mend in Bahzani. In Duhok province, Kaniya Efdê Reşt (the spring of Efdê Reşt) in the village of Derbûn, Kaniya Bawê (the spring Bawê) between the village of Bacid Kendala and the village of Kewrêni and Kaniya Plôyê (the spring of Plôyê) in the village of Mem Şîvan.

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 Šîpê 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 zebeqer, Xidir is described as Zîndî and his place is the sea (or the seashore); therefore, he is described as having an eternal life:

Mîsê go: bo min bêê bi rehmantî  
Tu kî çîlxîli li derê deryanî  
Bi xatîra Xudê â xastel aibanî.  

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 Zîndî me  
Jî `enxîl aîfî Xudê me  
Sûra xarê bêrî me.  

Xidir said: I am Xidir Zîndî (immortal Xidir)  
I am a creature of God from eternity  
I am a Mystery of the primordial Friend.

Meîrîfêt â sur û erkan e  
Xudê da min subban e  
Dîzanîm çî qeder dîr 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 Quadê Mása Pêcênerê û Xidirê Zênde (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidré Zênde), scb. 7, 8, 9, in Reço 2004 I: 330.
353 See “The Stages of the Creation of the World”, in chapter I, part I.
Part I: Nature and Religious Beliefs

Sezidi! bebré kef dane
Jé co daccan e
Paşayé min jé niijyar kír; ‘erd i’
‘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 Qesida Heçi ‘Elì (Qeside of Hecci Elì), from the beginning to the end, the word robark (stream) is repeated several times and its content describes the nature of streams with veneration, as can be seen in these sebeqes.

Či robarké xaq e
Tijîye ji gülê gêş e
Heçi ‘Elî sur ji ’erş e.

What a nice river
Full of lustrous flowers
Heçi ‘Elî is a mystery on high.

Či robarké şın e
Tijîye ji gülê rènin e
Heçi ‘Elî sur li ez mín e.356

What a blue river
Full of colourful flowers
Heçi ‘Elî is a mystery from the sky.

In the religious literature, there is a special genre of poetry called Robarin. The Yezidi writer, M. Ş. Hekari, in his article about Robarin, entitled sebeq u Zîncîra Robarîn (sebeqes

354 Qesídê Heçê Be rê Ko Ba (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:

Behîra ji behîrana qêde
Xerwa meyêkî pêde
Bebir e wêzîmê kîde.
(QN, seb. 17, in Hekari 2005: 175).

Raj û heyê nîr in
‘Imên wan ji behrêt kîr in
Mîşêkêêt Xudê yêl nêşêk in ne dî dîr in.
(QMC, seb. 5, in Kêste 2012: 118).

The sea is the symbol of a deep religious faith:

Hîncêjê hawerî bi îmânê ani
Îmân bilîr e jê dêçên co u kani
Momina şêhêde û hawerî swe bi nêrêl
Tawusi Melek ani.
(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
Tawusi Melek.

356 Qesidê Heçê ‘Elî (The Qeside of Hecci ‘Elî), seb. 1, 2, in Hecci 1996: 75.
and the Series of Roobarı̇n), suggests that the word Roobarı̇n 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.  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Roobar } & \text{ şen car robar} \\
\text{Ezmerêt } & \text{ şebabê} \\
\text{Çereza Çalengê lawa bêyê li bal.} & \text{A river, rivers several times over!} \\
\text{The dark brown ones of youth} & \text{Are (like) tidbits in the thoughts of the} \\
& \text{excellent ones, the young men.}
\end{align*}
\]

In other religious texts, there is an analogy between human appearance and the nature of the river:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{XemÎlet } & \text{ robara çine?} \\
\text{XemÎlet } & \text{ robara debil } \& \text{ diri ne.}
\end{align*}
\]

What are the charms (ornaments) of the river? 
The charms of a river are bush plants.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{XemÎlet } & \text{ kurka çine?} \\
\text{XemÎlet } & \text{ kurka tîzêh û çeft ne.}
\end{align*}
\]

What are the charms (ornaments) of the young men? 
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 Birkê Sicadin (the Pond of Sicadin) and Hewda Kewtel (the Pond of Kewtel):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hêrên ji bêwed li Kewtel e} \\
\text{Şêc babik wê li ser e, \ldots}
\end{align*}
\]

The leaven of the pond of Kewtel 
Sheikh Babik stands on it, …

Moreover, Birkê/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. There is a Qesêde called Qesêde Mehmed Reşan (the Qesêde of Mehmed Reşan); it is about the consecration and dedication of Mehmed Reşan and the rain:

---

358 Roobarın, seh. 1, in Hekari 1999: 147.
359 Text details are unknown, Xezînûkê, in Reşo 2004 II: 1048-1049.
Meqlûbi mežin e
Mehmed Reşâ wê li bin e
Kerema Melik Şêc Hesin e.\textsuperscript{562}

[Mountain] Meqlûb is big
Mehmed Reşâ,\textsuperscript{563} who stands under it
Has the mystical power of Angel Sheikh Hesin.

Some other strophes, from other texts, describe the water of rain as the source of life, goodness and sustenance on earth:

\textit{Parê min i rebûm e} \quad My King (i.e., God) is merciful
Baraniê dîbarine \quad It rains by him
Xelik it ‘alem pé dîjine.\textsuperscript{564} \quad People and beings live on it.

\textit{Ezîman we guște daye} \quad The sky declared:
‘Erdî, beke ji cem min neba re dan it \quad O earth, if rain and wind did not come
ba ye \quad from me
Ev kewna Xûdé dê bi cî dibit ava ye?\textsuperscript{565} \quad 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

Pira Fat\textsuperscript{566} is the \textit{Xûdan} who protects agricultural produce and human life against floods, storms and natural disasters:

\begin{align*}
&\text{Ya Sûltan Ezîd perda te li ber me bit} & \text{O Sultan Ezîd! You save us} \\
&\text{Ya Pira Fat çarka te ye li me werkiri bit.}\textsuperscript{567} & \text{O Pira Fat! You protect us.}
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{562} \textit{Qesîda Mehmed Reşan} (The \textit{Qesîde} of Mehmed Reşan), seb. 3, in Heci 1996: 70.
\textsuperscript{563} He is the eponym of a subdivision of the Pirs of Pir Afat, whose tomb is located near Mt. Meqlub. For more information see Kreyenbroek 1995: 109-110.
\textsuperscript{564} \textit{Qurûlê Pekay} (The Hymn of the King), seb. 26, in Bozani 1997: 116.
\textsuperscript{565} \textit{Qurûlê Ezîd} it \textit{Ezîman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 35, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 391.
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4.2.7 Clouds

The Xudan of the clouds is Pird Ewra. Yezidis venerate clouds as the source of rain and snow in winter, as expressed in this sebeq:

Pird Piryekê li mín da
Bi ser me da hati cizesanke bi hébi é
Peletê' 'ewê girê pawanê jorî
Jé diharî xirîgêêt beîrê, neçîsît baranê, …668

Late autumn passed over me
Winter came to me in full blast
A small cloud surrounded the heights
Snowflakes and raindrops fall from it, …

4.3 Manifestations of the earth and their Xudans

Derwêşê Erdê669 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:

Ev dînya erdê derrêg e,
Têda dîgin cîmle çêg e
Kosek bi nêfîa keîbar naxîte pêg e.670

This world is the earth of the Darwish,
All people roam on it,
No one gets ahead with an arrogant mind.

He is invoked during the sowing season:

Ya xwerê, milê [Sirê] Ëzêlîd p'arda te sar ma,
Ya Pîra fat, çara te sar me,
Ya Xuweèdê, Dêwêrê Erdê, anumêtê671 me te.672

O God, be the protector for us, the Yezidi nation
O Pîra Fat, help us,
O God, the Lord of earth, I belong to you.

When someone is dead and buried, Yezidis say he/she is handed over to Derwêşê Erdê. During burying customs, religious men recite “Du'eyê Tesmîlê [Teslima] ‘Erêd” (the prayer of Commitment to the earth). It is also called “Du'eyê Dêwêrê ‘Erêd” (the prayer of the lord of the earth).673

Telêmî teslimat e,
Tesmîlî Dêwêrê-'erêd,
Ya, Dêwêrê 'erêd,
Avê avê berge jîn e, berge mîr e,

[We] commit to you [to earth],
[We] commit to you to the lord of the Earth.

669 He is the protector of earth in Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 113; Asatian and Arakelova 2004: 260-264.
670 Qarwê Miskênê Jan (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 7, in Siêman and Cindi 1979: 67.
671 There are spelling and grammatical mistakes, anumêtê me to the correct is Emanêtê te me (I belong to you).
672 Du'eyê Oxirê (The Prayer of the Fortunate), the number of the sebeq is unknown, in Voskanian 1999-2000: 159.
673 See the whole text of this prayer in “Du'eyê teslima ‘Erêd (the prayer of commitment to the earth)”, in chapter I, part II.
Bixonfrini, bisetirini. 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 Sexri 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 ‘Erefetê
Dar au berêt Gênyê Laligê. 376

The mystical power of Mount Mişet
Mount Hizret, Mount ‘Erefat
[The mystical power of] Trees and stones of the Lalish Valley.

Also, Mt Meşlub 377 is a sacred place for Yezidis, and another is Mehmed Reşan Zêw (Mehmed Reşan’s courtyard) with its pond named Bîrka Mehmed Reşan (Mehmed Reşan’s pond):

Meşlubî meçên e
Mehmed Reşan wê li bin e
Kerema Melîk Şêx Hesin e. 378

[Mountain] Meşlub 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: Kamiş Pirxayê (Pirxayê Spring), Darêkên Qewala (Qewalis Trees), Şîkoştî Leyê (Leyê Cave) and other caves in the Şilo valley. There are many religious places, such as Qubs, shrines and sanctuaries, for example, the shrines of Çîlmîrên, Şerfedîn 380 and Şêbil Qasîm. 381

In general, Yezidis build their places of worship and other religious places, such as Qubs, Shrines, etc., on mountains and hills. As Baba Čaŵiş puts it: these religious

375 Göğân 2010: 60.
377 Mt. Meşlub is in the southeastern part of the Sheikhan district in Mosul Province, northern part of Iraq, there is the shrine of Mehmed Reşan.
378 Qezîda Mehmed Reşan (The Qezîde of Mehmed Reşan), seb. 3, in Heci 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 Şingalî En jî Ferma‘a Parazin” (Shingal mount saved us from genocides). See Farhan, ‘A. Z. and Samû, Q. S. (2009), Mawût al-Iţîfûn ‘al’Furmûnût wa Hamâtât al-Tûrûb (The Destruction of the Uses), Calcutta: Al-Maktaba al-Islâmiyya, pp. 77-78 and 222. 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 Adani 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.\textsuperscript{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 Şeqims.\textsuperscript{383} Examples of this are the Qub of Çilmérän,\textsuperscript{384} on top of Mt Shingal, and the Qub of Kerecal\textsuperscript{385} on Mt Zawa in Duhok province. Likewise, on the top of hills, there are the Qubs of Bazíd, Sheikh Menà and Çawiš, and the sanctuary of Memê Şanî in the collective village of Khanke as well as that of Şeqims in the village of Girêpanî in the collective village of Shartiya, etc. All of these are in Duhok province.

Yezidi religious literature also emphasizes this belief, as expressed in \textit{Qewlê Erêd î 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:\textsuperscript{386}

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textit{Ev qewl e qewleki xas e} & This \textit{Qewl} is a special \textit{Qewl} \\
\textit{Ezman bi 'erdê ra diket behs e} & The sky disputes with the earth: \\
\textit{'Erdê, tu yi egeri, ez i pak im} & O earth, you are impure, I am pure \\
\textit{Tu yi egeri, ez i xas im.} & You are impure, I am good.
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textit{'Ezman dibêjitê 'erdê} & The sky says to the earth: \\
\textit{Ne ji nak im, ne ji xak im} & I am not made of an element, I am not \\
\textit{Ez ji cëberekê pak im.}\textsuperscript{387} & made of dust \\
& I come from a pure essence.
\end{tabular}

The aim of all these is to approach God in the end:

\begin{tabular}{l}
Babo ez çil satî li çiyay bûm & Oh father, I stayed forty years on the \\
Li çil denga ne bihay bûm & mountain \\
Çil satî ez çî ù bûm & I did not receive any news \\
Li xilmeta mewaî bûm & I stayed forty years there \\
Çu denga na bibê bûm.\textsuperscript{388} & I was serving Lord (i.e., God) \\
& I did not receive any news.\textsuperscript{389}
\end{tabular}

Regarding the valley as a part of the mountain, the holiest valley in the Yezidi religion is the valley of Lalish.\textsuperscript{390} There are some other valleys, like the valley of Kûr Binburâk near the Şerfedîn cemetery in the village of Usîfà on Mount Shingal. The valley of Şînce is located in the north of the village of Bahzani on Mount Gerdum (or Mount Bahzani),

\textsuperscript{382} From the interview with Baba Çawiš Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\textsuperscript{383} Drower 1941: 28.
\textsuperscript{384} Cf., Çilmérän is a historical figure and a Yezidi Xas; his famous shrine is on top of Shingal mountain, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 100-101.
\textsuperscript{385} Cf., he is a Yezidi Xas and is from the caste of Pirîs.
\textsuperscript{386} See \textit{Qewlê Erêd î Ezman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 386-391.
\textsuperscript{387} \textit{Qewlê Erêd î Ezman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 4, 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 386.
\textsuperscript{388} \textit{Qewlê Hemedê Babê} (The Hymn of Hemedê Babê), seb. 4, in Silêman 1996: 5.
\textsuperscript{389} I.e., I was in service of my Lord.
\textsuperscript{390} See “The Natural Elements in the Structure of Lalish”, in chapter II, part II.
and the ceremony of *Tawusîran* starts from this valley and proceeds to Bahzani and Ba’shiqâ.

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 Sexri Cin.391 The veneration of caves is attested in the following passage:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hán bidene xatira belbişté ÿ daré} & \quad \text{For the sake of the paradise and the tree,} \\
\text{Kafé ÿ mecařé, …} & \quad \text{[For the sake of] the cave and the} \\
& \quad \text{cavern, …}
\end{align*}
\]

There are several holy caves in Yezidi areas, such as those in Lalish are *Şikefta Berata, Şikefta Zimçin*, etc. There are many holy caves in the Yezidi areas as in Shingal mountain: *Şikefta Leyê* near the Pirê Ewra shrine in the village of Zorâ, and there is a large number of holy caves in the Šilo valley near the village of Bara.392 The cave of *Dilefane* is located next to Pirê Ewra’s *Qub* and near the village of Zêrwa. There are holy caves in *Sixiri Cin* valley and *Hinarê* valley on the mountain of Boza behind the village of Boza; there are also holy caves in Boza named *Şikefta Sexiri Cin* (the cave of Sixiri Cin) and *Şikefta Ezêl Reş* (the cave of Ezêl Reş) and on Meqlub Mountain.394 There are also small caves, called *Xilwetige* (caverns), used for worshipping, such as the *Xilwetige Bazîdî Bastami* (cavern of Bayazid Bistami) 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, *Sît Nefisa* is the personification of a sacred tree.396 In this regard, Empson writes, “Tree-Worship is professed by the Yezidis 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Heke ‘erdekkê bîñînî, ùsáret ke} & \quad \text{When you see earth, mark it} \\
\text{Derwîşêkê bîñînî, ‘ibadet ke} & \quad \text{When you see a Darwish, venerate him}
\end{align*}
\]

---

391 Gügün 2010: 60.
393 From the interviews with Xelef Hêcir Hemêd, 21.11.2017, Minden, Germany.
394 From the interview with Taqiê Xidîr Ézûldîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
395 Gügün 2010: 60. Cf., Şerfedîn as a historical figure is the eponym of a subdivision of the Adani Sheikhs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 106-107.
396 Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.
397 Empson 1928: 82.
In religious places, there are trees around many shrines. There have to be gardens and orchards in different religious places, like Lalish, Mahédi Boza, Zéwa Memé Şivan, Qubs, shrines, etc. 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 Qebh, Mezår, and Nıșangeb 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. As known in Yezidism, olive trees are a blessing for Yezidis, it is the symbol of immortal life.

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 Khankê there are a large number of holy trees named Hefsiyê Memê Şivan. There are oak trees named Darkët Hemedi (Hemedi’s trees), Dara Şiri (the tree of milk) in the village of Boza and Dara Şexê Batê (the tree of Şexê Batê) is a holy mulberry tree in the village of Xorza in Sheikhan district. In Shingal there is the Dara Mizili (Mizilî tree) on the slope of Mehrigan valley, near the Çilmérân shrine. Darkên Qewala (Qewal trees) are a few trees located in the village of Kolkän on Shingal Mountain. There is a holy tree in the shrine of Sheikh Mend in the village of Çedalê and another in Şehîl Qasîm Mezår, in the same village. There are two holy mulberry trees in the Mezår of Şerfedên, which are called Teşekera Şerfedûn (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).

308 Dē's Ziṣārêhêni (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), sbh. 2, in Kreyenbroek and Rasbow 2005: 107. Cf., this is another variant of that sêne:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hoko te mominok dît, 'shadet ka} & \quad \text{When you see a believer, venerate him} \\
\text{Hoko te darêk dît, 'ziyarêt ka} & \quad \text{When you see a tree, make pilgrimage to it (kiss it)} \\
\text{Hoko te 'rdek dît, 'qaret ka} & \quad \text{When you see earth, place a mark on it.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Q-AM, sb. 15, in Kreyenbroek and Rasbow 2005: 382).

309 See detailed data in “The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Significant Religious Places”, chapter II, part II.

310 See “The Role of Natural Elements in Yezidi Significant Religious Places”, chapter II, part II.

311 For supplementary information see “Dara Zeya(h)êni (The Olive Tree)”, in chapter V, part II.

312 He is the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsani Sheikhs, and also the protector of snakes and has control over them in Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 103-104; Asatirian and Arakelova 2004: 267-270; Omarkhalil 2008: 116.
4.3.4 Holy stones

Evdé Reş⁴⁰⁴ has strong links with stones, and in this respect is reminiscent of Mehmed Reshan.⁴⁰⁵ Yezidis venerate stones located in holy places, for instance around shrines and in cemeteries. With regard to Şînuţa Xasa (the pillar of holy men), it should be explained that the Şînuţ (pillar) is made from holy stones. Most Yezidi Xas have a stone inside their Qub or building, such as Şînuţa Şeşims (the pillar of Şeşims) in the Qub of Şeşims in Lalish:

**Kesera raş mergêhê**
Xoqêr derbas bame wê qebêhê
Dê min tuwaft kirba şînuţa Şeşims li gel wê şerbebê.⁴⁰⁶

**Keser of Mergêhê**
I wish I went inside that Qub (i.e., the cupola in Lalish)
I would circle the pillar of Şeşims with şerbebê.⁴⁰⁶

**Jî sittine beta sittine**
Şeşims xudane Me’rîfêt a erkan a nasînê.⁴⁰⁹

**From pillar to pillar,**
Şeşims is the lord of [Mystical]
knowledge, principles and understanding.

There is another pillar made of stones, called Şînuţa Miraţa (the wishing pillar) in the Mezar (i.e. shrine) of Şeşims in the village of Cifêriye in Shingal district. Moreover, there is another Şînuţa Miraţa is located in the Şikefta Şînuţa Miraţa (the cave of the wishing pillar). There used to be a stone in the village of Nisertiye 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 Nûşangeh (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 Pîştê Ezê (headache stone) in the Zînûzîm cave, and another in Mezar of Mem Šivan 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 Şexûbekir⁴¹² and Xatûnê Fezran.⁴¹³ Cèla Sheikh ‘Adî (Sheikh ‘Adî’s assembly) is a holy stone in a circular shape about 10

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⁴⁰⁴ On this figure see Kreyenbrook 1995: 115.
⁴⁰⁶ Qudî Şîya Îê (The Hymn of Şîya Îê), seb. 23, in Xelêf 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 Mergê is derived from Mîrêb (the princeedom), and it is the place of Yezidis’ princeedom.
⁴⁰⁸ Şerbebê is not understood.
⁴⁰⁹ Dêrsya Silêyêkê (The Morning Prayer), seb. 6, in Silêman and Cîndî 1979: 21.
⁴¹⁰ From the interview with Zayer Bîbo Hakari, 10.10.2015, Duhok city, Iraqi Kurdistan.
⁴¹¹ See “Nûsangeh (shrine)” and “Silangeh (Place of Greeting)”, in chapter II, part II.
⁴¹² Şexûbekir is a historical figure and the eponym of a subdivision of the Qutani sheikhs, see Kreyenbrook 1995: 101.
⁴¹³ A female figure and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsani Sheikhs, see Kreyenbrook 1995: 104; Asatryan and Arakelova 2004: 250-251.
metres wide at the top of Mt Mişê. There are some holy stones in the village of Boza called Berê Merê, Berê Nûqare, Berê Likum and Berê Cîlantê. 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 Stînâ Mîrêzâ (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. 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 sebege, under 1.1). According to this sebege the origin of this world is air:

**Pedê min li ber hakme za ya reza ye**
My King (i.e., God) has balance in his control

**Ewi deşit şekir, rukibande ser şüja ye**
He created plains, and set mountains on it

**Kewna vé duyuyê ba ye.**
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 Sîpî and from the light of Lalish as Xerê nûranî (luminous seed) and Nûra midbetê (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 Xudant (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 Derweşê 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), Pirê 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 Sîpî, as the Xudan of springs and flowing water, Şerfedîn as the Xudan of trees, plants and their fruits.

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414 From the interview with Tariq Xidir Ezidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
Chapter III
The Role of Natural Elements in the Anthropogenous 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 anthropogenous 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 Kirasuborin (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, and secondly, Yezidi religion and Adam alone. It is worth mentioning that some Yezidi

Yeşidi religion and the story of Adam and Eve: Some of the Yeşidi oral religious tradition and religious texts prove that Yeşidis do/did not dare tell the truth about their belief in the creation of human beings because Yeşidi 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 Yeşidi story of human creation is that human beings had been created before Adam, which means before the story of Adam and Eve. Yeşidis believe that they are the nation/people of Sunniel (primordial, original leave) and the right path. For the interpretations of these next sēbeqes, Reşo states that “Suniel existed before Adam, which means that Ezielids existed before Adam because they are from Tawus Melek mystery” (Reşo 2004: 386. n. 5):

Eğ nevêrim hevecemim I dare not say it.
Heke ez bêjim, bêrê Adam im If I say that [Yezidi people] had existed before Adam, [I] will be stoned* according to the Sharia.
Dê bi Şirê na recêmim.
Sunet bêrê Adam bû Sunet (Yezidi community) ** was before Adam, With the command of my Prince
Ber firaseta mûre mâh bû Mehejya suneter, mehejsha mezin bû. The ‘Sunet’ has great meaning.
Ve šîra suneter, mehejsha mezin bû. (QEB, sch. 11, 12, in Reşo 2004: 386-387).

Cf., this is another variant of this sēbeqe in (Qewel Şêx Erebeğî İntûzî, sch. 8, 9, in Cell and Celli 1978b: 5-6.

* “So PX and several other informants. Cf. AL raja ‘to stone,’” Kreyenbroek 1995: 279, n. 6. Here, the word AL raja or rajma in 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, Yeşidi community, or Yeşidism”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 28, 91.

Yeşidi religion and Adam alone: There is a narrative among Yeşidis that says Yeşidis 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 Şîli bin Cer was created and the Yeşidi nation was created from him. The story does not give details about how Yeşidis were created from Adam and it is not found in religious poetic texts such as Qewels which are the most prestigious and important part of the Yeşidi 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 Yeşidi religious texts refuse the belief which says Yeşidis are created from Adam but they are before Adam, i.e., they were created before Adam from a special leave and there is a sēbeqe emphasizes that Yeşidis were created from a leave with God and water (white sea), as in the following sēbeqes:

Ew kê bû bêrê Adam û’erda bû Who was on earth before Adam?
Yê bî ci bêvûnê bû bî ci wêngê bû What was his leaven and what was his colour
Kî ÎÎâmê bû kê bozta bû (Species and origin)?
Who was leader and who was master?

Ew bêvûnê yê bî ci wêngê bû What was the colour (Species and origin) of that
Yê bî sidiq û boşa û mashûnê bû leaven?
Aşîgel hûdanê û bil bû. 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.\textsuperscript{419} Moreover, according to Yezidi belief, the marriage between Adam and Eve was forbidden.\textsuperscript{420} Although some religious texts refer to this, Yezidis changed some of their beliefs about Adam and Eve, presumably under Islamic influence.\textsuperscript{421} As shown

| Miletə bəxə ne yə yî Adem e | There is a nation not from Adam |
| Kathyə gəran av tə nəmə | No water was left in great seas |
| Dar xəzək bən li bə rè ənəm. | The Trees became green in orchards. |
| Èw xəlet e yə bı şəxət e | That nation has volition (i.e., consciousness). |
| Yı bı isəd e yə bı mərət e | It is righteous and gracious |
| Həvətə nə bı xa əlləyəket e. | Its leaven is from angels (i.e., light). |
| (QI, səh. 11, 12, 15,16, in Zeydil 2010: 48, 49). | |
| Èw Sultanə em xəxərın | That Sultan created us |
| Bert Adem dihər xərin | Before Adam created us |
| Kl dizəni şawə em dayın şawə em bırin. | Who knows, how [he] created us and how [he] took us (i.e., give and take life)? |
| | |
| Èw ké bu şəxti Adem xəc bı | Who did become soil after Adam? |
| Bı şəda Xədə məy xəzə bı | Was not content with God’s will |
| Həvətə mə ji bərəsə xəpt bı. | Our leaven was from the white sea (i.e., Yezidi people |
| (BN, səh. 17, 19, in Hası 2007: 73-74.) | are created from leaven, water-white sea) |

\textsuperscript{419} In this regard, Rejo writes, “I believe that the story of Adam and Eve is not from Yezidi religion and entered Yezidi religious literature from neighboring religions, notably Islam” (Rejo 2004: I: 103). In addition, Othman states that “the details of this story (of Adam and Eve) were unknown to Izidis before the advent of heavenly religions to the area. After that, it became known to Izidis by Islam mysteries around 1120 onwards” (Othman, M. (2012a), “Izidy Religion between the Sun-Worshipers and Mysticism, part II”, trans. Fadhil H. Khudeda, Lalan, No. 35, p. 22).

\textsuperscript{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 Hası Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çavış Hesen Sileman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan).

\textsuperscript{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 Samih 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 \textit{zëbqes} prove this belief:

| Wë ‘Elmeyt e dıkən te dibəzələtin | They inform you and considered you |
| Wë te diqvələtin | They try you |
| Hind wë dibəf nə hind wë dominin | Some escape and some stay |
| Belë te dəxəqəna bı wı bı yə lımana xew nescərənin. | 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 Yezidis and that it entered into Yezidi belief in
Sheikh ‘Adi’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 mirov (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:

\[
\begin{align*}
Nûr û mè ji yek dar in & \quad \text{Male and Female are from one source} \\
Ter ji kaniya zyalal in & \quad \text{They are from pure springs} \\
Lî dînê û esrêli bêspar in. & \quad \text{They are friends in the world and the hereafter.} \\
\text{Jî yek, nûrê vêjîne} & \quad \text{They are created from one light} \\
Xûn û guşt û bêrîne & \quad \text{Blood and flesh became animated in them} \\
Têva ji tokê ûspîne. & \quad \text{They believe in Tôk.}
\end{align*}
\]

The following sebeqe emphasizes the point that the human is created from light and then
comes to life:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Borê beter bê lexaf kîrin} & \quad \text{The reins of the steed Beter were opened} \\
\text{Ar û behira karkîrin} & \quad (\text{i.e., lost control of the spirit}) \\
\text{Xor û nîtê Adam bisah kîrin.} & \quad \text{The water flooded in the seas} \\
\text{They considered themselves as Adam’s people.} \quad * \\
\text{Miletê beye me yê ji Adam e} & \quad \text{There is a nation not from Adam} \\
\text{Bêhîrî gîran av tê nême} & \quad \text{No water was left in great seas} \\
\text{Dur kesik bûn û berê çême. (Qê, seb. 7, 14, 15, in } & \quad \text{The trees became green in orchards.} \\
\text{Zeydiq 2010: 47, 49).} &
\end{align*}
\]

* (I.e., ‘Milet, an Islamic term meaning nation (sect, religion), and a body of people subscribing to religious
doctrines).

422 Beysî Kaniya Sîpé (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 14, 15, in Sileyman 2013: 43.


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Íbahiyol te em farīqe dikirin ji maké
Ji ronahiyé témé zìkaké
Wezne tém li ser ṣìbáké
Havètím ber beré maké.⁴²³

Oh God! You made (i.e., created) us
apart from our mothers
I came from the light to earth
I was laid on the cradle
I was laid on my mother’s chest.

Besides, as it was shown earlier Xerza Nūrānī (luminous seed) is the leaven of life on earth.⁴²⁴

About that belief, Reșo states that “Xerza nūrānī 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 Şēşims, the lord of sun and light, can be described as the creator of all animate and living creatures, including human beings:

Ya Şēşims! tu yì rehman i
Xalqê ki min i bi can i
Hemû dèrdê ti dèrmân i
Hemû meççuqsa tu yì xudan i.⁴²⁶

O Şēşims! You are compassionate
[You] are my beloved creator
For all ills, you are the remedy
To all creatures, you are the lord
(creator).

Ji ha Şēşims ferwar e
Çaqa meççuqst bi ğyân e
Here bi îs e, here bi ğyân e
Ew ji Şēşims xudan e.⁴²⁷

The rule is by Şēşims
All living creatures
Humans and animate beings
Şēşimsis their lord also.

Şēşims fashioned humans completely and brought them to life:

Seri bêya pêya
Ya Şēşims, te em negandîn
Danîye seré rêya.⁴²⁸

From head to foot
Şēşims, you designed (created) us
And set us on our paths.

Additionally, the light of Tawusi Melek as eternal light is the creator of the earth and sky and human beings:

Tawusî min i mîrân e,
Xalqê min i ‘erî tî ‘ezman e,
Ew Sîltan Şêzadî ye, yê mûra bîsaczî jê
da bêyan e.⁴²⁹

My Tawus is Mêra
He is my creator of earth and sky
He is Sultan Sheikh ‘Adî, whom people praised when he was alive.

---

⁴²³ Qewlê Serwerengê (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 I: 140.
⁴²⁴ See “The light of Lalish and Nûra Mabûbetê (the light of love)”, in chapter I, part I.
⁴²⁵ Reşo 2004 I: 154.
⁴²⁷ Du’a u Qewlê Şēşims (The Prayer and Hymn of Şēşims), seb. 32, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205.
⁴²⁸ Du’alê Qewlê Şêzims (The Prayer and Hymn of Şēşims), seb. 9, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 203.
⁴²⁹ Mishabêê Mêdh u Sênâ ji Şêzadî ra (Sermon of the Praise and Compliment for Şêzadî), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 782.
There are sayings in religious oral traditions that say: “Em Ézidi mîletê Tawusî Melekê” (we Yezidis are people of Tawusî Melek), and “Em Ézidi ji Nûra Tawusî Melek it” (we Yezidis are from the Nûr (light) of Tawusî Melek). The sebeqe below states that the leaven (seed, original source) of Yezidi people’s creation was from Tawusî Melek as a manifestation of light:

De wectê diniya ter ap bû, bê bê
Darek li orta wi ârê bû, bê bê
Teyrêkê engerê li ser wi darrê bû, bê bê
Tiçmê mîletê Ezdzîyê dest bû, bê bê
Serê min guharan be, navê wi Tawusî Melek bû, heymalê.

When all the world was water, oh, oh
There was a tree in the middle of that water, oh, oh
The bird Anqîr was on that tree, oh, oh
The seed 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 sebeqes refer to the leaven that existed in Dur, and Dur with its natural elements is the original source and leaven of human creation:

**Ar â xac û baiyî û agîr e**
**Dura sor ye bi xerç e ji bakîr e**
**Çendî mûsîqî pé bi xatir e.**

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 halî xaz kir**
**Di hebra da tênê hebû dar**
**Nedîmîça, nedîmîça**
**Te xaz rîb anî ber**
**Nêra sañ lê peyda kir.**

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 rîb batine ber**
**Nêra çavan lê bate der**
**Dest î pé 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 Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
431 About Tawusî Melek as eternal light see “Tawusî Melek as Nûr”, in chapter I, part I.
433 Maybe Phoenix.
434 It could be translated as leaven, species or origin.
435 Qurê Duro (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêravay 2012: 63.
436 The correct sentence is ne dîhejiya (did not move). Corrected by Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
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...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:

- Ar ú az ú basî ú aqir e
- Dura sor ye bi xerç e ji bakir e
- Çendi m journalist pé bi xâtit e.

Water, earth, air and fire

- The red Dur contains the original seeds
- It created all creatures.

Also, in:

- Xudavenel me rebmanî
- Çar qism li rû dînû dañî
- Yek av e, yek ba ye
- Yek av e, yek ji aqir e
- Qalîbê Adam jë njirani.\(^{439}\)

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 Mohbetê” (the light of love) as the original source of the soul and mind of human beings:

- Ú banda rub bediri
- Hat ú çû bîhûrî
- Nûra mohbetê hînqatê seri
- Hat qalîbê Adam da bêuri.\(^{440}\)

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 ú qidâm hâtîn ú hidîrî
- Nûra mohbetê hîngîfê seri
- Réh hat ú té wetînî.\(^{441}\)

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 Sîpî (the White Spring) is the leaven of the creation of all creatures:

\(^{437}\) Qurlê Afrîna Dinçê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 4, 5, in Sîlêman and Cindi 1979: 40.

\(^{438}\) Qurlê Durê (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, Xîravay 2012: 63.

\(^{439}\) Qurlê Afrîna Dinçê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 25, in Bûqasîrî 2003: 239-240.

\(^{440}\) Qurlê Afrîna Dinçê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 31, in Sîlêman and Cindi 1979: 43.

\(^{441}\) Qurlê Zêhêntê Meaksê (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Kreyenbrook and Rasbow 2005: 63.
Xalıqaget terë, hêven ji Kaniya Sîpî bi
Ew ye we ye, wek peda pedêvi.\textsuperscript{433}

The leaven of all creatures is from Kaniya Sîpî
It is completed as King (i.e., God) wanted.

\textit{Mala Bawa maleke' enzêli ye
Havênê wan ji Kaniya Sîpî ye.\textsuperscript{433}}

\textit{Mala Bawa}\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{445}

Perhaps because \textit{Kaniya Sîpî} is in Lalish, Lalish is the first homeland from which humans spread to other places on earth:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item[7Kh] Êzidi xaw xêber e
\item Lalis ko rîkêne bezêr e
\item Niha Êzidi jê xeber e.\textsuperscript{446}
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

Sîltan Êzidi (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 \textit{sebeqe} asserts the belief that all creatures, including human beings, are created from the sea:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item[7Kh] Geheq erd û 'ezman e
\item Dit nar da qêkir behir û behirsitan e
\item Ú zêndiwer û insan û can e.\textsuperscript{447}
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

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 seabe'd. 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 \textit{sebeqe} above). The main belief in this analogy is that both a mother’s womb and the seabe’d are the sources of the creation of living creatures. Perhaps it is based on the belief that all creatures are created from water:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item Behira heq wetini
\item Neb meha té sekini
\item Bi qudreta Îahi dakekimii.
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

It [child] made its home in the sea of truth
For nine months it stayed there.
This was possible by God’s power.

\textsuperscript{433} \textit{Qewî Omer Xala û Hesen Çinëri} (The Hymn of Omer Xala and Hesen Çinëri), seb. 36, in \textit{Reșo} 2004 I: 540.

\textsuperscript{434} \textit{Qewî Omer Xala û Hesen Çinëri} (The Hymn of Omer Xala and Hesen Çinëri), the number of the \textit{sebeqe} is unknown, the Qewî was transcribed by Omarkhalî from Fosî Tel (Pîr of Omarkhalî’s clan), Celle, Germany, 03.03.2008, cited in Omarkhalî and Rezania 2009: 339.

\textsuperscript{435} \textit{Malâ Bara}, i.e., the clan of Omexala’s Pîr, Omarkhalî and Rezania 2009: 339.

\textsuperscript{444} From the interview with Esmer Esmal Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{446} \textit{Qewî Afîrînên Dinôgî} (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 16, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 41.

\textsuperscript{447} \textit{Qewî Sêcûlî Sêcûlê Shûra} (Sêcûlî is the sheikh of Cities), seb. 7, in Dinâni 2012: 134.
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Through the power it became complete
What a dark, opaque sea it is
O God! I am your prisoner; I became a servant [boy].

I was pondering on those thoughts
On the mandate, on the command
O God! You took us out of (i.e., created) 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 Nûrû Xûdê 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:

Flute and tambourine came and were present
The light of love entered his head
The soul came and entered the body.

Some sebeqs also indicate that reason is God’s guidance for humans. In this regard, observe the use of Aqîl Hidayete as a reference to reason as a source of guidance:

448 Qûrû Şerûmêjî (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 6, 7, 8, in Reşo 2004 I: 140.
449 Qûrû Mûrûmû Cîhêre (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 10, in Kişo 2012: 119.
450 Qûrû Zohûlî Mezkûr (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Kreysenbrock and Rashow 2005: 63.
Xelko bİşşİkinİ li sİ ‘ezmanİ
Pedişay İm qınun qİskİr u asas danİ
Aqİl bİdaya wİ Sİlİntİ.\footnote{Qurayş Asatı (The Hymn of the Basis), seb. 1, in Şemsanı 2005: 155.}

O people, think about this sky
My King (i.e., God) established legislation and bases\footnote{I.e., God created the universe by a system.}
Reason is guidance from Sultan (i.e., God).

Also, in:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Aqİl bİdayet e
  \item Hİncİ mİrİ bi terhİyet e
  \item EV rube li ber Pedişay xo bi ‘iqİzet e.\footnote{Qurayş Mİşqay Şİ Bor İm (The Hymn of I Crave for Three Steeds), seb. 39, in Xelef 1999: 144.}
\end{itemize}

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:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Rengİ wİ ji kası ye
  \item Peyva wİ ji mİçİnİ ye
  \item Aqİle wİ ji qudrİye.\footnote{Beyt İı Nİra (The Beyt of Nİra), seb. 13, in Heci 2007: 73.}
\end{itemize}

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 sebeqa:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Şêşîmî is the lord of the sun and light and He also manifests God’s light; He becomes the lord of knowledge:
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Jî sîtînê hêta sîtînê
  \item Şêşîmî xurdanî Me’rîfet û erkan û naştînê.\footnote{Du’yu Silêkî (The Morning Prayer), seb. 6, in Silêman and Cîndî 1979: 21.}
\end{itemize}

From pillar to pillar,
Şêşîmî is the lord of [Mystical] knowledge, principles and understanding.

Mystical Knowledge is represented by light:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Me’rîfet rengê rekîrî
  \item Erdê qêkîr, ezmanî dî ser ra niyînî
  \item Nîr li ezmana êwîrî
  \item Deryê çînêtê xemîlî.\footnote{Du’a Me’rîfet (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.}
\end{itemize}

[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 \textit{Du’a Me’rîfet} (the prayer of knowledge, DM):\footnote{For the whole text of this prayer see Reşo 2004 II: 1019-1021.}
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Marifet ronahiya dila ne
Li ber guribin mom u cira ne.  
[Mystical] knowledge is the light of hearts
Candles and lights are lit with it
(knowledge).

Marifet esaqqa dile
E’rid cikir e’zaman di sere
Bu mom u cira ne, nebu muhiba safila.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 Cirra (the Lamp) is the symbol of knowledge; therefore, there are Cirayen Marifete (lamps of knowledge);460
Marifet u nasin in
Cirayet narin in, rebera pe dibinin.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 hisahbe bezar sali
Heke tu ne yi bi aqil i u ne yi maldar i
Iro rije we li te bibe tarzi.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:
Han biyikirne bedila
Gabé xo medene safilan u bezila
Lew ronah ji nav me rabii, so qendila.463
Do ponder the epochs!
Do not listen to ignorant and greedy people!
Thus, the light disappeared from us, the light went to Qendila (lit. to the Lamps).

The extinguished lamp symbolizes that there is no knowledge but there is darkness, as a symbol of ignorance:
We’ki terre dewleti li ser me firi
Li me bësayi dikkir cirayeg guri
The bird of fortune has flown
It extinguishes flaming lights in us

458 Du’a Marifet (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 1, 4, in Rejo 2004 II: 1019.
459 i.e., the unbelievers.
460 See “The symbolism of Cirra in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.
461 Qura’i Miridiyy (The Hymn of Miridiyy), seb. 23, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 295.
462 Qura’i Asar (The Hymn of the Basis), seb. 17, in Şemsani 2005: 158.
463 Qura’i Qendila (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 4 in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 90.
Nasini li ser me biri.\(^{464}\) 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.

\[\text{Sipî nûr e ji bidayet e} \quad \text{White is the light of guidance} \]
\[\text{Rengê roq e bi zîmat e} \quad \text{The black colour is darkness} \]
\[\text{Şukir sev diçê, roj dibate} \quad \text{Thankfully, the night went, and the day came} \]
\[\text{Xudê xêfûre qesar e.}\(^{465}\) \quad \text{God is the great Forgiver.} \]

Also, in:

\[\text{Ya Elah! roj dico, sev dibate} \quad \text{O God! The day went and night comes} \]
\[\text{Seydi li Xasa dikir xolat e} \quad \text{My Lord rewarded holy men} \]
\[\text{Miro ‘budet bi ser da dibate, …} \quad \text{O Lord, worshipping (worshipping time) will come for them, …} \]

\[\text{Seydi! tarîya şeva ne} \quad \text{O my Lord! It is the dark of night} \]
\[\text{Siçare ya méran e} \quad \text{Holy men should be saved [from any bad thing]} \]
\[\text{Seydi! Xas li pé diçine, ê belê diwan e.}\(^{466}\) \quad \text{O My Lord! Holy men went to the place of rest.} \]

The following sebeq emphasizes that day (light) is the symbol of paradise, but night (darkness) is the symbol of hell:

\[\text{Ew bi cara ji mîj e} \quad \text{It was a long time ago} \]
\[\text{Pedê min quntar kîr şev ü roj e} \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) organized night and day} \]
\[\text{Li nav da dana bebişt ü doj e.}\(^{467}\) \quad \text{Placed paradise and hell into them.} \]

\(^{464}\) Quvîlê Serenergê (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 23, in Reşo 2004 I: 142-143.

\(^{465}\) Beşta Dinê (The Beyt of the world), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 II: 750.


\(^{467}\) Quvîlê Meha (The Hymn of the Months), seb. 5, in Hecî 1994a: 23.
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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.  

Moreover, there is a religious oral tradition that refers to this belief: “Dergehen xera bi rojê di vekirê ne, û bi șevê di girtê 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  sözges refer to this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cârşemhê rajoÊê bi bisab e} & \quad \text{Wednesday is an important day} \\
\text{ji ba meleka hatêve ev cenasab e} & \quad \text{This response came from the angels} \\
\text{Deyjê xêra davêkêrêne ji røjelat hêta bi rojave.} & \quad \text{The doors of alms (good deeds) are open from sunrise to sunset.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Li cârşemhêyê 'emel xoş té} & \quad \text{Wednesday is full of good deeds:} \\
\text{ji xêrê, ji xêmêtê, ji xêrêtê, ji 'beddê} & \quad \text{Alms, service, conscience and worship} \\
\text{Xoşka bi wê rubê biçênût vê nesilêtê.} & \quad \text{Wish to that soul (person) who listens to advice.}
\end{align*}
\]

About this belief, the Kurdish writer B. Ş. Dilkâvân 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.” About that, Uşmân states, “In Yezidi religion, it is believed that the individual’s behaviour is the reflection of the dualism that exists in nature.” 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.”

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: “Mênôv tuvê mirine ye” (Humans are the seed of death), meaning that all humans die. Moreover, there is an oral tradition that says: “Mênôv giyê buharê ye, destek dibêt û destek.

\footnote{From the interviews with Aliyas Mira Derweç, 31.10.2016, Serdeşht village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.}
\footnote{Cirdo Ebdo Hesen, 31.10.2016, Serdeşht village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.}
\footnote{Qarêli Çarşemhêyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 2, 18, in Kışto 2004: 206, 209.}
\footnote{Dilkâvân, B. Ş. (1999), “Bêlinda Bayna al-Amis wa al-Yawm” (Bêlinda Feast in the Past and Present), \emph{Laši}, No. 11, pp. 44-45.}
\footnote{Uşmân 2013: 48.}
\footnote{Ibid: 177.}
**dişîl** (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: **Rub** (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, *Qewê Qendîlê*475 describes **Qendîl** as a light in the sky:

\[
\text{Cî qendîleke nîrîn e} \quad \text{What a luminous **Qendîl**}
\]

\[
\text{Dalîr bû ji ّezûnîn e, …} \quad \text{It appeared from heaven, …}
\]

Also, in:

\[
\text{Peqşayî bi bawirîyê rûb nîyarkîrin} \quad \text{By means of faith, the King brought}
\]

\[
\text{Lî qendîla kîrin, …} \quad \text{forth the souls}
\]

\[
\text{He placed them in **Qendîl**, …}
\]

In religious texts, the **Sur** is described as the soul or the divine mystery. There are many *selêqes* that highlight it, such as this *selêq* below and those in the next topic:

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473 From the interviews with Heî Şêmî Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adora village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Se'id Aliyas Nabo, 22.09.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqi Kurdistan.

474 Reşo 2004 I: 155.

475 *Qewê Qendîlê* (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 4-10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 90-93.


477 *Di‘ûn Bawirîyê* (The Prayer of Belief), Seb. 15, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 106.
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Ew qendila li 'erça ne
Tiji surët xasa ne
Gotë ruha Resë" jë ëk ji wan e."

That Qendil in the thrones
Full of holy beings’ divine mysteries (i.e. souls)
Told him: Resë’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 Qendil in the sky and enters the body to give it life:

Ew Sura me ëkayji
Serë qalëh dinji
Mirzina! binâ Adem! ruh bate te, bilo biji.

ji qendilë nazil bë ew sur e
İlahiyet neşîbe tek ‘efrändibû jë min ne
Ez-i razim e, beke bendeke e a beke pir e.469

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.
That mystery came down from Qendil
Oh, God had created a child481 for me
I am content whether it is little or much.

This is also expressed in:

Sura ‘ençëli
Kire qendil û nizilë
Qalib pê kemili.482

The mystery of Ençël (Primordial),
Was put in Qendil and came down,
The human body was completed with it.

Moreover, “Nüteq dë nazil bit ji qendilë”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:

Ú banda ruh bediri
Hat û çâ bibeû
Nëra mëvâtê hingavte seri
Hat qalibê Adem da bëvirî.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 Resë, is the name of a person (Proper Noun).
480 Qendê Serenweqê (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 4, 5, in Reço 2004 I: 140.
481 Nisêleq, i.e., having newborn baby.
482 Qendê Sera Morgê (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 4, in Cellî and Cellî 1978a: 382.
483 Qendê Zebînê Meçêrî (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Sîlêmen and Cindi 1979: 39.
484 Qendê Aşırinê Diqêqê (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 31, in Sîlêmen and Cindi 1979: 43.
Also, in:

Şaz ʿa qidiem ṣatin ʿu bidiri  Flute and tambourine came and were present
Nüra miḥbeti bingijfe serı The light of love entered his head
Rāb bat ʿu te wetini.485 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 Qendil 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 yeq bû  Our [story] was about this
Rab ji disput û péya cibê bû The soul separated from the hands and feet (body)
Rab şaverênyiya surû bû. The soul waited for the mystery.

Rabê ligê surû bebis kir The mystery argued with the soul
Berê xo ʿu qendîlê hevrasit kir The soul returned to Qendîl
Xudanê xo ʿu wêder nas kir.486 And recognized its God (i.e., source) there.

At the end of the declaration of someone’s death, Yezidis say this sebeqe:

Raba rehmanî The divine soul
Nabît fanî Is immortal
Her dé zîvrît her destê zudanî 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, “Rijîyanā stêra nişana mirîna nirov e” (the falling of stars is the sign of a human’s death, ‘the rising of the soul’). For instance, as in Sheikh Hesen’s death and the falling of the black star:487

Çê bû ʿe cîrîya What happened, what transpired?
Stêra rûj rîjîya A black star came down
Mûsul werdîrîya Mosul destroyed
Şêx Sin Şêcê sunî ya Sheikh Sin is the Sheikh of the Eizidis489

485 *Qawāl Zebînî Meksûr* (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 41, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 63.
487 “The text frequently alludes to the conflict between Şêx Hesen (Sheikh Sin) and Badral-Din La La’ (Bedredin), the ruler of Mosul. The latter attacked and overcame the ‘Adawin, and probably killed Sheikh Hesen, in 1254 CE”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 218, n. 147: 219, n.165.
489 Cf., there is another belief among Yezidis that says Şaniya from Sin of Sheikh Sin that is the followers of Sheikh Sin.
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Hey Şêc Sîn bin Adî ye.\textsuperscript{488} O Sheikh Sîn, 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:\textsuperscript{490} perhaps this ritual is based on the belief of light as the source of the soul:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Hat çarşambuva fer e & Came the significant Wednesday \\
Xelat ji melêk jaxir e & The gift is from the glorious angel \\
Bo ruha bi iman görî diket çirê & Light a lamp for the faithful soul. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Yezidis light lamps inside and beside shrines and \textit{Qohs} of their holy men as symbols of their souls:\textsuperscript{492}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Sebir xelateki PedêŞa ye & Patience is King’s (i.e., God’s) gift \\
\hspace{1cm} Ji ba xwê kir peyda ye & He provided it \\
\hspace{1cm} Bi wê sebîrê li ber wan ewiliya gurîbûn & Light wicks and lamps for the holy men \\
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} mom â çîra ye.\textsuperscript{493} & by that patience. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

3.1.2 Natural elements and the destiny of the body in \textit{Kirazgubarin}

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,\textsuperscript{494} as can be seen in the following \textit{sebeges}, where all creatures, including human beings, are created from \textit{Dur} by those elements:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Av î ux î baxî î agîr e & Water, earth, air and fire \\
\hspace{1cm} Durra sor ye bi xerx e ji baxîr e & The red \textit{Dur} contains the original seeds \\
\hspace{1cm} Çendi marciq pê bi xatîr e.\textsuperscript{495} & It created all creatures. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Xudâvenidê me rehmani & Our merciful God \\
\hspace{1cm} Çar qisim li rî dinê danî & Created four elements in this world: \\
\hspace{1cm} Yêk av e, yek ba ye & Water, air, \\
\hspace{1cm} Yêk xec e, yek ji agir e & Soil and fire \\
\hspace{1cm} Qalîbê Adem jê njînê.\textsuperscript{496} & The body of Adam was created from them. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{488} \textit{Qestê Şîn Sin} (The \textit{Qestîde of Sheikh Sin}), seb. 12, in Hecî 1996: 59.

\textsuperscript{490} For further information see “The symbolism of \textit{Çerû} in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

\textsuperscript{491} \textit{Qestê Çarşambûhê} (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kuşto 2004: 211.

\textsuperscript{492} See “The symbolism of \textit{Çerû} in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

\textsuperscript{493} \textit{Du’a Şêhêrî} (Prayer of Patience), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 II: 1023.

\textsuperscript{494} See “Natural Elements in the Creation of Human Beings”, in chapter I, part I.

\textsuperscript{495} \textit{Qestê Dûrû} (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêrvayî 2012: 63.

\textsuperscript{496} \textit{Qestê Aṣîrîna Dimayê} (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 25, in Baqışî 2003: 239-240.
A human’s body is made from clay:

Feqırsı bilani xerbe ye
Mala Adıya şehbe ye

The Feqırs have lifted up the Xerbe.\(^499\)
It is a profession of faith in the House of

Cesedê me ji avce ye
Kaniya Sı qalbe ye.\(^507\)

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:

\(\begin{align*}
\text{Ji qewå Ebo Xani} & \quad \text{From the hymn of Ebo Xani} \\
\text{Rabè ræmæni nabit fani} & \quad \text{The divine soul is immortal} \\
\text{Qalibê gænebækær li nav aza sar dæni.} & \quad \text{The sinful (i.e., earthly) body is put on}
\text{[returns to] cold soil.}
\end{align*}\)

\(\begin{align*}
\text{Ji qewå Ebo Nijî} & \quad \text{From the hymn of Ebo Nijî}\(^501\) \\
\text{Rabè ræmæni nédgærmæjî} & \quad \text{The divine soul is immortal} \\
\text{Qalibê gænebækær li nav aza sar} & \quad \text{The sinful (i.e., earthly) body melts (i.e., is}
\text{dibæji.}\(^506\) & \quad \text{mortal) in cold soil.}
\end{align*}\)

In religious tradition, burying the dead under the earth is regarded as committing the
body to Derweşê 'Erđê (the Xädan 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

\(^{497}\text{Qewål Ìmanc (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 35, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 88.}\)

\(^{498}\text{It could be translated as black sacred woollen tunic. On which see below (Çınçê Xerba) in “The use of}
\text{Çınu in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.}\)

\(^{499}\text{From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xıro Hacî Ísmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Heçi}
\text{Şêmo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Al-Ğindî, Q. M. (2012), “al-Qıhâb}
\text{Tärlîşîa wa Dalâlûruhût ﬁ al-Dijûma al-Ayyāzîyyat” (Copulas (Qabba), Its History and Indications in}
\text{the Yezidi Religion), Lalîb, No. 35, p. 217. For further information see Urmân 2013: 136, 152.}\)

\(^{500}\text{Qewål Esbêkêrê Omera (The Hymn of Esbêkêrê Omera), seb. 36, 37, in Mirza 1997: 120-121.}\)

\(^{501}\text{In Yezidi religious literature, there is no information found about the two names Ebo Xani and Ebo}
\text{Nijî.}\)

\(^{502}\text{For additional details see “Da'aaya Teslama’Erđê (the Prayer of Commitment to the Earth)”, in chapter}
\text{III, part I.}\)
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 death.

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, Reşo 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” (Reşo 2004 I: 18).

504. Depending on the belief that the soul is immortal and is in *Qendil*, Reşo 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” (Reşo 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” (Reşo 2004 I: 23). Moreover, the Yezidi writer H. F.Al-Ḥālit, 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-Ḥālit, H. H. (1990), “al-Mār warrah Ba‘dihu ‘Inda al-Ayziyyat” (Death and After it in Yezidism), *Lašq*, No. 6, p. 62). Additionally, Mihrrad 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” (Mihrrad, E. (2013), “Peyam u Baweri Ayinekani Kurd-Ayini Ezidi” (Mission and Beliefs of the Kürdish Religions-Yezidi Religion), *Lašq*, No. 37, p. 32).

505. About it, Reşo states that “I believe the idea of a hereafter, a paradise and a hell, *Heshir* and *Mešir* and the coming of Mehdi, are foreign beliefs to Yezidism and they came into Yezidism after the coming of Islam” (Reşo 2004 I: 24). Likewise, Ümân 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.” (Ümân 2013: 102). I.e., in Sheikh ‘Adî’s (1073/8-1162) era. The Yezidi author T. Reşîd affirms this idea when he said: “there is the belief of paradise and hell in Yezidism but it is not original, after Sheikh ‘Adî’s reforms it entered Yezidi beliefs but it did not become fundamental” (Reşîd 2012: 40). He adds, “Paradise and hell entered Yezidi belief after the coming of Sheikh ‘Adî and the influence of neighbouring Semitic religions” (Reşîd 2012: 81).
opportunities for bad acts, like killing and stealing. Based on this belief, there is a sehêqe 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:

Çarşembâ rojêke bi bîsab e
Jî ba meleka hátîye ev ceveban e
Deyêl xêra dîvekirîne ji rêbelat hêta bi rojav. 507

Wednesday is an important day
This response came from the angels
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:

Ew bî cara ji mêj e
Pedê min quntar kîr şey û roj e
Lî nav da dana behişt û doj e. 508

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

Also, in:

Padşa dibêjî; Fexro! min zulqandin şev û roj e
Min nav dana behişt û doj e
Min Melik Fexredin dîkîre beyv
Melik Şemsedin dîkîre roj e. 509

King says to him: Oh Fexro! I created night and day
I named paradise and hell
I made Melik Fexredin the moon510
Melik Şemsedin the sun.

Referring to that day and night as corresponding to paradise and hell:

Ya Rebî! tu bideye zatîra şef û roj e, behişt û doj e
Ya Rebî! tu me û sunetê bizume dîwanu xas û nomînit jor e
Ya Rebî! Her tu yi, her tu yi, her tu yi. 511

Oh, my Lord (i.e., God)! Give for the sake of night and day, [as] paradise and hell
Oh, 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.

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 Derwex, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq; Cirdo Ebdo Hesen, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.
507 Qavlê Çarşembâyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seh. 2, in Kişo 2004: 206.
508 Qavlê Mehê (The Hymn of the Months), seh. 5, in Hecl 1994a: 23.
511 Da’s Niêm (The Noon Prayer), seh. 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 paradise\(^\text{512}\) 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 sebeq is about the sky and the earth, and the third one is about heaven and hell:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Dur meu'i û heci'i} & \quad \text{The Dur (like a sea) became liquid and waved} \\
\text{Bure behir û meu'i} & \quad \text{It became sea, and waved} \\
\text{Pe'aqey min nûr bû, bi buknê xo diferici.} & \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) was light and exerted His rule.}\(^\text{513}\)
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Seiyid! behirê kef dane} & \quad \text{My Lord! The sea foamed} \\
\text{Jê co duçan e} & \quad \text{Smoke came from it} \\
\text{Pe'aqey min jê niyår kir; 'erd û 'ezman e.} & \quad \text{My King created earth and sky from it.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Seiyid! behirê kef da gişta} & \quad \text{My Lord! The sea foamed with all things} \\
\text{Pe'aqey min fikirê û ber û pişt e} & \quad \text{My King was thinking of the before and after} \\
\text{Pe'aqey min jê niyår kir daj û bakişt e.}\(^\text{514}\) & \quad \text{My King created heaven and hell from it.}
\end{align*}
\]

They have the same number of spheres: seven for the sky and seven for the earth, likewise, for heaven and hell. The first sebeq refers to the spheres of the sky and earth, and the second one refers to the spheres of heaven and hell:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tîfâq serê hemû erkan e} & \quad \text{Agreement is higher than all the foundations} \\
\text{Meleka gîrtîbûn meulis û dîwan e} & \quad \text{The angels took (their place at) the gathering and the assembly} \\
\text{Bi tîfâqî niyår kirîn çarde tebeqît} & \quad \text{By agreement, they fashioned the fourteen spheres of earth and sky.} \\
\text{'Erî û 'ezman e.} & \quad \text{Erd û ezman e.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pe'aqey tîfâq û biwerî xemîland} & \quad \text{The King adorned agreement and truthfulness} \\
\text{Mele û ezmana bi wan ravestan} & \quad \text{The angels took their place}\(^\text{516}\) with them in the sky.
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{512}\) 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).'

\(^{514}\) \textit{Qawîl Herî Berê Ko Bu} (The Hymn of Where was [God or universe] at the beginning?), sth. 19, 20, 23 in Rejo 2004 I: 261-262.

\(^{516}\) “Lit. stopped”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 110, n. 257.
Hefit cinet, befit tebehnum sernand
Monina pé sediqand.\textsuperscript{515}

The seven heavens, the seven hells were created
The faithful were made sincere through them.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Qawâlî 'Erdî ù 'Ezman} (the hymn of earth and sky, QEE):

About their origin: the sky is pure and made of a pure essence \textit{[light]}, but the earth is impure and made of elements and dust.

\textit{Ev qewe qewlekí xas e}
\textit{'Ezman bi 'erđé ra diket behs e}
\textit{'Erdo, tu yî ejiţeri, ez û jik im}
\textit{Tu yî ejiţeri, ez û 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.

\textit{'Ezman dibôjite 'erđé}
\textit{Ne ji nak im, ne ji zek im}
\textit{Ez ji cewberekî ûjik im.}\textsuperscript{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 \textit{sebges}:

\textit{'Ezman dibôjite 'erđé}
\textit{Ser min bene rej û beyv}
\textit{Ez ûjik im ji êîr û zgî.}\textsuperscript{519}

The sky says to the earth:
Sun and moon dwell in me
I am purer than gold and silver.

\textit{'Ezman we gôfta daye}
\textit{'Erdo, heke ji cem min nehate baran û ba ye}
\textit{Ev kewna Xudê dê bi çê dibit ava ye.}\textsuperscript{520}

The sky declared:
O earth, if rain and wind do not come from me
How will this world become livable?

\textit{'Ezman dibôjite 'erđé}
\textit{Ser te bene qettîl, dever, zinê û 'êb}
\textit{Ew ji digerin ser rauê 'erđê bi 'êbê.}\textsuperscript{521}

The sky says to the earth:
On you, there is murder, lying, adultery and sin
Those too walk on earth, strangely.

\textsuperscript{515} \textit{Du’u Tiqâqî} (The Prayer of Agreement), seb. 3, 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 110.
\textsuperscript{517} “\textit{I.e., through agreement and truthfulness}”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 110, n. 258.
\textsuperscript{518} \textit{Qawâlî 'Erdî ù 'Ezman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 4, 5, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 386.
\textsuperscript{519} \textit{Qawâlî 'Erdî ù 'Ezman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 33, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 390.
\textsuperscript{520} \textit{Qawâlî 'Erdî ù 'Ezman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 35, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 391.
\textsuperscript{521} \textit{Qawâlî 'Erdî ù 'Ezman} (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 388.
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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 *sebeg* below:

Laliq beşişteke xox e  
Xudan ınan, xudan erkan  
Rûmet nema bo deliq roq e. 522

Lalish is a pleasant paradise  
The lord of faith, the lord of the 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.

*Bûrka Kelokê* or *Hewdî Hewtetel* (the pond of Kewtet) 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:

Hêvên ji bêwîd li Kewtet e  
Şec babîk wê li ser e, … 524

The leaven of the Hewdî Hewtetel  
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:

Çome ser kaniya horiya  
Min meyêz ki rihiya li wan êya li wan  
Sîlya  
Èw bû meskenê wan stîya. 525

I went to the spring of the Houris (ladies)  
I stared at those mountains and high places  
Those were the residences of those ladies.

In Islam, the *Sinât* bridge (Kurd. *Pîra Sinatê*) is the bridge between paradise and hell, it has a terrestrial counterpart in Lalish:

523 From the interviews with Baba Çaviş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Merwan Xell Babîrî, 25.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.
525 *Qêdîa Mişet* (The Hymn of Mişet), seb. 11, in Xelef 2002: 234-235.
Finally, most of these beliefs about Lalish as paradise are based on the natural objects there, like the pond of Kevelt 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 ‘Adi’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 Dor and there are many terms for it, for example, Nār and Xerqa Nūrānī which are light. Secondly, after the Dor 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

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526 Qewîl Seremonî (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), sèb. 67, in Sîlêman 1985: 121.
527 Reço 2004 II: 1017, n. 1.
528 Du’a Xudanî Madî (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), sèb. 5, in Reço 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 Kiraguhowrin, when a human is born, his/her soul is in the form of light, which comes down from Qendil (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 Qendil, 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 Tall Dinya or Tall 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 Tali Zemn (the end of the time) and diya xairob (the destruction of the world). Some of the religious oral texts dealing with this subject are Qewê Qiyametê (the Hymn of the End of the World, QQI), Qewê Tercal (the Hymn of the False Saviour, QT), Qewê Nuh pêcember (The Hymn of the Prophet Noah, QNP) and Qewê Lawê Piran (The Hymn of Lawê Piran, 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).\textsuperscript{520} In this regard, Omarkhalı 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.\textsuperscript{530}

1.1 Tofana Bayê (the Tofan of Wind)

According to some narrations of Yezidis from Iraq, this Tofan had already happened before Tofana Avê.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{532}

A sebeq from \textit{Qewlé Qiyametê} (The Hymn of the End of the World) describes some features similar to the features of this Tofan but in the future tense\textsuperscript{533} 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:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Ewê rojê ji şerqê ye dê ātin ba ye}  
  \textit{That day the windstorm will come from the east}
  \item \textit{Dê bingêri şî qas şîya ye}  
  \textit{It will destroy all the mountains}
  \item \textit{Dê vê dînya ye kete pembiyêkê nû}  
  \textit{It will make this world like new white}
  \item \textit{jena ye}  
  \textit{cotton}
  \item \textit{Tu ji maşriq birêne mescîî ye xaya ye}  
  \textit{When you look from the east, you will see}
  \item \textit{the west}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{520} From the interviews with Heci Şêmo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{530} For further information see Omarkhalı and Rezania 2009: 348.

\textsuperscript{531} Omarkhalı, 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.

\textsuperscript{532} From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîrto Hacî İsmail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Heci Şêmo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{533} This phenomenon of ‘shifting the tense of the event’ exists in religious poetic texts. Kreyenbroek 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.
This veheqe refers to the role of air in the world and indicates that it is the origin of this world:

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.

1.2 Tofana Avê (the Tofan of Water)

This Tofan is also called Tofana Nub (the Tofan of Noah) and Tofana Avsa Rû (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'îrka. 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 Nûhê Derêwîn (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, Omarkhalî 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 Qwêlî, called Qwêlî Nûb Pësvêmbr (the Hymn of the Prophet Noah), and its contents tell about the story of the Tofan of water:

536 From the interview with Xellî Çindî Roşo, 22.12.2017, Güttîing, Germany; Beidelî Fûqr Heči, 10.03.2019 Oldenburg, Germany. Also see Hûrnî 1997: 92-107; Roşo 2004 I: 322-323.
537 Omarkhalî and Rezania 2009: 348.
Kifir bən hindiy qərmə Nəb e
Pir ū kal, şəng ū şəx e
Gotine Nəbə qala te dox e.

Nəbə ji xudə xo xwast
İz ne nańe rēkə rast
ji kifirya buńe mext.

Xudə go: ya Nəb! sefənê êkê
Bi cavaderya me rēk ū pēk ke
Hinçi mecalog cot-çot èkê.

Nəb pəxəmber sefənê êkîr
İnsan, teyr, teval lêkîr
Nîr, mê cot-cot lêkîr.

Lî Êşifînê keli tenor
Rabû avek rēş ū sor
Kifirî kirîn gor bi gor.

Sefîn rabû ser avê
Çû rojhelat, rojavê
Bakur, bûşor da avê.

Xudawende me li sefînê cavdër e
Ajûve târ kınar e, dîr e
Zavüründe Merebê mîr e.

Sefînê niqul bû, av kete ser e
Mari xo xir, da ber e
Ajûte Lâşi, got: xoş war e.

Be'dî əwan beywanê
Qemnek dabir dihi, bê iman e
Ew ji dizerêqin bi ava tofan e.

Paşi wâ bêt Masa ye
Ew ji kelîmê Eka ye
Mîfête bo ciwa ye.

Noah’s nation became unbelievers
Elders and the young
They said to Noah: your saying is complicated.

Noah asked from his God
Those (i.e., his nation) do not follow the right path
They became extreme unbelievers.

God said: O Noah! Make an ark
Build it under my care
Take a couple of every living creature on board.

The prophet Noah made the ark
Took human, birds and animals on board
Took a couple of male and female on board.

In Ain Sifni, a clay oven flowed
Raised black and red water
Buried [drowned] the unbelievers.

The ark rose on the water
It sailed to east and west
North and south.

Our God is the caretaker of the ark
He drove it to the four directions
Turned it back to Mereb of the prince.

The ship sprang a leak, water came in
The snake coiled itself over it
Sailed to Lalish and said: it is a nice place.

After all those epochs
A nation will appear that is faithless
They will also be drowned by the water of Tofan.

Then Moses will come
He is a messenger of God
He is useful for Jews.
Paşı dabir dibil 'Le bé bab e
Fəle qewi pé di şa be
Asir ze man de rabe.\footnote{Qewi να Μαθητή (The Hymn of the prophet Noah), 11, εν Reșo 2004 1: 322-323.}

There are some other 
sebebes, from different \textit{Qewi}, which refer to some aspects of that \textit{Tofan}: Noah’s ark landing on the mountain of Judi. They also refer to the mystery of the angel Fexredin as the luminous mystery that was in that ark:

\begin{align*}
\text{ji wan nebîn serberda ye} & \quad \text{Do not be a stubborn person} \\
\text{Hàn hirêne Cudi à çendi ciya ye} & \quad \text{You look at Mt Judi and all the mountains} \\
\text{Cudi' çehêni kêxa ye, lêw sefîna Nûb ço li ser râvesta ye.} & \quad \text{Judy is devoted to worship, therefore} \\
\text{melîk Fexredin bi sefîne ra} & \quad \text{Noah’s Ark sat on it.}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Kar kîr sefîne} & \quad \text{Prepared the ark} \\
\text{Wa têla serke nûrin e} & \quad \text{There is a luminous mystery in it} \\
\text{Eşîtin av sura 'eçîq melîk Fexredin e.} & \quad \text{Definitely, it is the mystery of the beloved angel Fexredin.}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Melîk Fexredin bi sênîn ra} & \quad \text{Angel Fexredin is in the ark} \\
\text{Ewê havêtê jî nîr ù mê ye} & \quad \text{He put male and female in it} \\
\text{Melîk Fexredin bi dêllî ù digêrim.} & \quad \text{Angel Fexredin became the guide and wandered.}
\end{align*}

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 \textit{Tofan}. Here, the story ends, marking the end of a world period by way of \textit{Taşna Avê}, but life continued:

\begin{align*}
\text{Ezdanê me sefîne çêkir} & \quad \text{Our God made a ship} \\
\text{ÎnÊna haywan teyr ú tû} & \quad \text{Men, animals and all sorts of birds} \\
\text{Cot bo cot li sênîn siyar kîr.} & \quad \text{He gave a place in the ship, two by two.}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Xudawendê me sênîne ser e} & \quad \text{Our Lord is at the helm of the ship} \\
\text{Seryêkê digêr ûr kënar e} & \quad \text{He himself roams in all four directions} \\
\text{Sefîne qîl bû, av kete ser e} & \quad \text{The ship sprang a leak, water came in} \\
\text{Marê zerê xa dame be r e.} & \quad \text{The snake coiled itself over it.}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Xudawendê me sênîne ajot} & \quad \text{Our Lord sailed the ship} \\
\text{Ji kênar çû ber kênar e} & \quad \text{He went from shore to shore} \\
\text{Ajîte Lalîsh got: beq were [*war e].} & \quad \text{He sailed to Lalish and said: It is the site of Truth.}
\end{align*}

\footnote{\textit{Qewi Eç Rûjêktê Sêfer Bûûm (The Hymn of “One Day I Made a Journey”),} εν Reșo 2004 1: 529.}

\footnote{The correct grammar is \textit{Marî xo sîr kîr û da here (The snake coiled itself over it).}
Hey Ademo ru dine
Her dem bike imani
Xudawend um xilas kirin ji Tofané.44

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 Ézid (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.45 There is a belief in a separate rescue of the Yezidi community; thus, life and the world will still continue.46

Based on the story of the Tofan of fire, there are many sebebes of different Qewn refer to that Tofan and they describe various aspects of it. Some sebebes 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 Ézid as saviour will create machines (i.e., war machines) that will cause the mass killing of innocent people. Şeşims will light a fire on them (unbelievers in Sultan Ézid 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 ge balé me ji balé we xoştir e | Nisra says our situation is better than yours |
| Bedîka nehsed tert aqîr e | The epoch of nine hundred is full of fire |
| Xoşka ruba bingî bibe xer e. | Wish of that soul that it is save. |

| Eswan digot sultan Ézîd naye | They said Sultan Ézîd (i.e., the saviour) |
| Sen'te çekîr aqîr dayê | will not come |
| Çinbîrîye û palek, dayê. | Created machine, gave fire to it |
| Pushed it collectively. |

| Bela dizavin Şeşims de li wan kar ket | There are a lot of misfortunes, Şeşims will |
| Navê wan de dinav kuştîya kat | expose them to them. |
| Agir beye de li wan bela ket. | Their names will be in the list of murderers |
| And the fire will be on them. |

44 Qewî Afeîna Dimayê (The Hyman of the Creation of the World), sib. 15, 38, in Silêman and Cindî 1979:41, 43.
45 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
46 Omârkhali 2009-2010: 205.
Ewan divêti vi ağıri biteminin
Li ba bev ruı men da bêtesinîn
Emré jor e natefinin.

They want to extinguish this fire
They meet to extinguish the fire
It is the command from the high, they
cannot extinguish it.

Ağır bitîbî keşte şerqê
Pêdü bilind bî keşte xerbe
Tellê fazîr bate bêrbê.\(^{544}\)

Fire lit to east
Flame raised to west
Tellê Faxîr came to war.

Additionally, still on the topic of this Tofan, and based on the following sebqê, Omarkhali writes: “In a conversation between Tawusi Melek and Shemsê Ezdîn about the second ‘storm,’ that which acts through fire, it is denoted as an era without decision and spirituality.”\(^{545}\)

Tawusi Melek ge: Ya Şemsê Ezdîn
Ew Bedî bedîke bê girar e . . .
Şemsê Ezdîn ge: Ya Tawusi Melek
Ew bedîke bê batin e . . .\(^{546}\)

Tawusi Melek said: “O Shemsê Ezdîn,
This epoch is an epoch without
decision” . . .
Shemsê Ezdîn answered: “Oh Tawusi
Melek,
This epoch is without hidden
(spirituality)” . . .

Moreover, a part of Qawî Lawî Përan (the Hymn of Lawî Piran) refers to some aspects of this Tofan. Sultan Ezîd is the saviour of the Yezidis and there will be fire in front of them:

Ew e njî li pê pir e
Pêşya me ağı r e
Me bi Sultan Ezîd xo mefer e.\(^{547}\)

On that day [we] follow many
There will be fire in front of us
Sultan Ezîd 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 lâwîkî Piranu:
Ewê njî bêzîm dibê
Qazî bîçu kørî dibê
Ne ses xoçma bêrê ruhê derwîn dibê.

O Lawîkî Piranu:
That day will be destroyed
The judge will be generous
Not wishing for the soul of a liar.

Hey lâwîkî Piranu:
Ewê njî ayametê, ke sek bî kêrê kesî
netê

O Lawîkî Piranu:
That day is doomsday, and no one can help the other

\(^{544}\) Beşû Nîra (The Beyt of Nisra), seb. 11, 33, 40, 41, 42, in Heci 2007: 73, 76, 77.

\(^{545}\) Omarkhali and Rezania 2009: 348.


\(^{547}\) Qawî Lawî Përan (The Hymn of Lawî Piran), seb. 73, in Xelef 2006: 189.
2 Nature in the Future Stage of the World

Some sêbeqês confirm that azêr 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ewan zani} & \quad \text{They knew} \\
\text{Ex diniya dê weba bê} & \quad \text{The world will be like this} \\
\text{Èpiq dê azêr zeman rabi} & \quad \text{The end of time is inevitable.}
\end{align*}
\]

This is also expressed in the lines of the following sêbeqê: “Rojêkê lie azêr zeman ê” (One day will come the end of time, QBBBO)\(^{550}\) and “Rojêkê ji rojân dibê” (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 \textbf{Tergên li ‘erşan dibê (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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Rojêkê ji rojân dibê} & \quad \text{There will be one day} \\
\text{Tergên li ‘erşan dibê} & \quad \text{There will be an explosion in the sky}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{548}\) \textit{Qewê Lawê Piran} (The Hymn of Lawê Piran), seb. 57, 60, 61, 62, in Xelêf 2006: 186-187.

\(^{549}\) \textit{Qewê Ji Hindar de Come Bani} (The Hymn of I Rose to the Top), seb. 11, in Kêpto 2007: 137.


\(^{551}\) \textit{Qewê Terol} (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 18, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 367.
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*Kurisya Pešşayi li xvar dibê*  
Hakim bico Pešşay dibê.  

The seat of King (i.e., God) will come down  
The judge will be King himself.

As well as:

*Ewê rojê ne kesi kesa dibê*  
Ne babê pisa dibê  
Terqin li ’erşa dibê.

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:

*Rojêkê bive azêr zeman e,*  
*Qırêna erşa ne,*  
*Zêmîné erda ne.*

One day will come the end of time.  
[There will be] the creaking of the thrones,  
Parts of the earth.

2.2 Xebare li čiyán dibê (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, Lawêki Pirano:*  
*Rojêkê terqin li ’erşan debê*  
*Xebare li čiyân debê,*  
*Ne kesi kesa dibê*  
*Ne babê pisan debê*  
*Ne sed xezma bi wê ruha unqan dibê.*

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 *Qewët Qiyamêt* (the Hymn of the End of the World, QQI) that says: “*Xebare li čiyân dibê*” (The dust storm will rise on the mountains).

2.3 Suniye li bebran dibê (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.

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552 *Qewêt Teraft* (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 18, in Kreyenbroek and Roshow 2005: 367.
556 *Qewêt Lawê Piran* (The Hymn of Lawê Piran), seb. 54, in Xelef 2006: 186.
557 He is a Yezidi Xas (holy men) and is from the caste of Piras.
558 *Qewêt Qiyamêt* (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 1, in Siûman and Cindî 1979: 64.
This ‘sign’, as well as the two ‘signs’ discussed above, is reflected in the following *sebege*. It is also noticeable that this is a *sebege* 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:

- **Rojek ji rojan dibî**, There will one day be
- **Terqin li ’erçan dibî** An explosion in the sky
- **Xêbare li çıjan dibî**, A dust storm on the mountains
- **Sunîye** An earthquake in the oceans.\(^{560}\)

Regarding this ‘sign’, (i.e., phenomenon), there are some *sebeges* that refer to the water of the oceans drying up and the blessings on earth being reduced. The second part of the following *sebege* indicates that Sîltan Ezi will shut off the water of springs and streams leading to oceans:

- **Hacîcê û Macîcê ûra**, Gog and Magog of the times
- **Eawê çêk ken avê bebra** Will dry up the water of oceans
- **Dê kêm kay berêkêtê xwarê.** They will reduce the blessings down below (i.e., on earth).

- **Sîltan Ézi li xafîla i bi xecêb e**, Sultan Ezi is wrathful to the ignorant
- **Ji wan bebra derînût kanî û xelbe** (i.e., the unbelievers.)
- **We’de bātiye Sîltan Ézi vê dînayê** He shuts off the water of springs and streams to oceans
- **Biket êk mezeb e.**
- **Sultan Ezi will unite this world**
- **Under a single religion.**

### 2.4 Xîbar wê keve ‘erde na (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:

- **Hey, Lawêki Piranê**, O Lawêki Piranê
- **Rojêkê terqin wê keve ‘erç na**, One day there will be an explosion\(^{563}\) in
- **Xîbar wê keve ‘erde na**, the sky
- **Hezêmeke mezîn wê keve gerisîtan e,** There will be a dust storm on the earth
- **Bîra lañ dike bîra ne** There will be mass destruction in the
- **Hûn werin bikên xêra ne,** cemetery,
- **Berî rojêke bûn diñ ji vira ne** Brothers call each other,
- **Covankar sokîni li ûrî ûrû ne.**
- **You should give alms,**

\(^{559}\) It is a Kurdish word derived from the word *Sûnîd*, which means wave.

\(^{560}\) *Qawûl Lîyameti* (The Hymn of the End of the World), sb. 1, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 64.

\(^{561}\) *Qawûl Tercat* (The Hymn of the False Saviour), sb. 16, 23, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367, 368.

\(^{562}\) *Qawûl Lawê Piran* (The Hymn of Lawê Piran), sb. 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 xerbe ve de etin 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.\(^{564}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
Ji \text{ xerbe ve de etin roj e} & \quad \text{The sun will rise from the west} \\
Ewé rojé dé qalpit bebiṣt ì đoj è & \quad \text{On that day heaven and hell will turn over} \\
Ne sed x昭ja wí méri imaun è li koṣ & \quad \text{Woe the unbeliever.}
\end{align*}
\]

2.6 Ne dest diminit ne čiya ye (There will be no plains and no mountains)
A part of Qewlé Bedila 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Rengk jë serfa din è} & \quad \text{There is a religious rule} \\
\text{Hincjë bëjít qiyanet nine} & \quad \text{Whoever says there is no end of the world} \\
Șëx Fecoře Adiya jë yë bi gazoñ è. & \quad \text{Sheikh Fexir Adiye has blame on him.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tegdir hati débita wefa ye} & \quad \text{It is fated, and will faithfully take place} \\
\text{Ne bøjér diminit ne cóma ye} & \quad \text{There will be no cities nor gathering} \\
\text{Ne dest diminit ne čiya ye.} & \quad \text{There will be no plains and mountains.}
\end{align*}
\]

2.7 Heziz dë kevit gebristan 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 \textit{sebeqes} emphasize this belief:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Dë këm ken bereketét ’erda ne} & \quad \text{They (Gog and Magog) will reduce the blessings on earth} \\
\text{Heziz dë kevit gebristan e} & \quad \text{There will be an earthquake in the graveyard} \\
\text{Bira dë gazoñ ken bira ne} & \quad \text{Brothers will call their brothers} \\
\text{Da ji so ra bukeyn xara ne} & \quad \text{To do offer alms for them} \\
\text{Ègëni lë lë me acir zeman e.} & \quad \text{Surely the end of time has come to us.}
\end{align*}
\]

---

\(^{564}\) See above under this topic “Earth and sky, paradise and hell”, in chapter III, part I.

\(^{565}\) \textit{Qewlé Qiyanet} (The Hymn of the End of the World), seb. 25, in Heci 1994b: 43.

\(^{566}\) \textit{Qewlé Bedila Si’net Kamil} (The Hymn of the Completing Period), seb. 5, 6, in Şemsani 2011: 32.

\(^{567}\) \textit{Qewlé Tereq} (The Hymn of the False Saviour), seb. 17, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 367.
Hey, Lawikê Piranê:  
Rojêkê terqin wê kevê 'erçe ne  
Xîbûr wê kevê 'erda ne  
Hezêmeke mezin wê kevê gôrisitan e.\(^{568}\)

Oh, Lawikê Piranê:  
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.

'Esey axir zeman dibate,  
Gava bate ser gîyanê we micat e,  
Ew axir zeman bi xote.\(^{569}\)

Surely the end of time comes  
When it comes to your soul, they will rest in peace\(^{570}\)  
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 \(\textit{Dur}\) 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 \(\textit{Tofans}\) (a storm or a flood) describes how nature, and notably the four natural elements, play a central role in the event by causing these \(\textit{Tofans}\) 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 \(\textit{Tofana ba}\). The second is a flood of water, \(\textit{Tofana avê}\), then the world brings renewal again and ultimately life continues. The last one is the future \(\textit{Tofana agir}\), 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.

\(^{568}\) \textit{Qaulê lawê piranê} (The Hymn of Lawê Piran), seb. 53, in Xelef 2006: 185-186.

\(^{569}\) \textit{Qaulê hesêdê altewrî} (The Hymn of Hesedê Altewrî), seb. 35, in Síleman and Cindi 1979: 57.

\(^{570}\) \textit{Mecat} literary means 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‘ayéén xéré (Prayers of blessing), which is also referred to just as Du‘a (prayers). The second sub-category is that of Du‘ayéén ne jéén xéré or Niṣfirîn (Imprecatory Prayers or curses). They are explained in one section because in Yezidi religious traditions usually Du‘a and Niṣfirîn 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 Çejna 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 Çejna rujiyên Ézî (The Fast of Ézi) 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'ayêka xêrê bêj (say a blessing or good prayer). Religious texts state that prayer is one of the Yezidi obligations:

- **Mor li Kanîya Sîpî ye**  
  - Baptism is by the water of the White
- **Rojî bi navê Ézê ye**  
  - Spring
- **Duha fer e û baqî ye.**
  - The fast is in the name of Ézi
  - The prayer is obligatory and truthful.

Prayers refer to the veneration of natural elements such as *Du'aya Hêvari* (the Evening Prayer):

- **Hûn bidene xatîra Dura zêr e**  
  - For the sake of the yellow Pearl,
- **As î av û aqîr e**  
  - Soil, Water, and Fire,
- **Èrd î'ezman î ber e,** ...  
  - 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 Şîjagê* (the Dawn Prayer), the *Du'a Sîhê* (the Morning Prayer), and *Du'aya Rojbetatî* (the Sunrise Prayer). At noon, there will be *Du'a Nîrô* (the Noon Prayer) and in the evening, there is *Du'aya Hêvari* (the Evening Prayer). Here are some examples of the *sehojes* which emphasize the belief that the sun should be the direction of Yezidi prayers:

- **Èhabetê bîke rojê sê cara**  
  - Worship three times a day
- **Li jecîrô û sibê û bêvara**  
  - At dawn, in the morning and in the evening
- **Li pîsherî rojê, ew quibêta êctiyare.**
  - 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:

- **Rabe ji tari bave**  
  - Wake up from the darkness (i.e., dawn)

---

571 Beyta Kanîya Sîpî (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 8, in Sîleman 2013: 41.
572 Du'aya Hêvari (The Evening Prayer), seb. 9, in Sîleman and Cindî 1979: 23.
573 Qawîlê Mersûma Cêhêre (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 70, Kîstö 2012: 128.
Chapter I: The Role of Natural Elements

Qesid bike merçêd aye  
Ciwan bike destan u çare  
Eve bo ‘edet me şîrbâve.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 sebeqes:

Raj berêba tok nêçan e  
Rist ü simêlê 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 Şibê and Du‘aya Hêvarê, 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 Şêêms and light. Prayers describe Şêêms 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 Şêjagê (the Dawn Prayer) the sun and light are regarded as holy and the symbol or manifestation of the supreme God:

Ya Xudê bîdi xatarê mêra, mîlyekêtê,  
yê didin medêba  
Ew in xaştê nîna qubêba.

O God for the sake of holy men and angels, those who give praise  
They are holy beings among cupolas.

Roniya berê zîbeba li me dabir bû.  
Borê ‘badetê siwar bû  
Sed xawezka mina bi wê rubê, li ber beqêeta xawê westiya bû.  
Ya mîrê (mirê) 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 Bejta Cindê (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 54, in Silêman and Cindi 1979: 47.
575 See Image 05 in Appendices.
576 From the interview with Baba Çawêş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see “Clothing customs, the symbolism of nature in clothing and appearance”, in chapter IV, part II.
577 Bejta Kaniya Sipé (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 9, in Silêman 2013: 42.
578 Literally Berê 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 raja u ronkeye
Ya Xadayê bilind, Xudanê sozdaye. 581
O morning of sun and light
O supreme God, the Lord of promise.

In Du'a Rağhati (the Sunrise Prayer) Yezidi face the sun and say:

Ya rebi! tu Xadayê, tu Pedşayê
Tu 'elime 'ibmayê
Tu xandkarê ser şend Pedşayê. 582
O my Lord! You are God, you are King
You are the Omniscient
You are the ruler over all kings.

In Du'a Sibê, Şexê 2 (the Morning Prayer, version 2, DSS) there is an indication of the veneration of the sun and its light and Şêşim as the manifestation of God. The light of Şêşim lit the earth and sky:

Silheye raja zertiqi
Nûr ji nûrê şefiqi
Melekh Emeredin li be tiligê
Silbana ji navê te Xalijê.
The sun shone in the morning
From light brightened the light
Angel Emeredin was created from it
O Creator, praise to your name.

Silheye rağhatat
Şukria ne pé bat.
The sun rose in the morning
We were thankful for it.

Me ji navê xudayê Şêşim bêviya ne
Me yek sitde u beya u iman e
Silhe ye ronsiya Şêşim dîhê beyan e
Nav u dikarê Şêşim dikêm sellar e
Ronaliyê Şêşim dabhû çarde têbeqê erd u ezman e.
We are hopeful of the name of the Lord Şêşim
We have truth, respect and faith in [Him]
The light of Şêşim shone in the morning
Greetings to the name and remembrance of Şêşim
The light of Şêşim brought forth the fourteen spheres of earth and sky.

Ya Şêşim! tu yê rebman i
Xalqêki min i bi can i
Hemî yetul ti derman i
Hemî meciqa tu yê xudan i.
O Şêşim! You are compassionate
[You] are my beloved creator
For all ills you are the remedy
To all creatures you are the lord (creator).

Şêсимê min i nêrin e
Ser kuriya zêri
Kill u miştê bi destê wê ne
Wê velike derê zor xezîna, ... 583
My luminous Şêşim
On the golden throne
The keys are in his hand
He opens the doors of many treasures, ...

In Du'a Ferekê (the Dawn Prayer) reference is made to worshipping light and the sun:

581 Du'a Şifâ (The Dawn Prayer), seb. 1, 2, 4, in Reşo 2004 II: 970.
582 Du'a Rağhati (The Sunrise Prayer), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II: 980.
583 Du'a Sibê, Şexê 2 (The Morning Prayer, Version 2), seb. 1, 3,14, 18 in Reşo 2004 II: 975, 976-977.
Chapter I: The Role of Natural Elements

\[\text{Mêr û meleka den medehe} \]
\[\text{Ü sasët naïu qabêna} \]
\[\text{Ronahi dabi ûêribiï sibehe.} \]

We praise holy men and angels
And the holy beings among Qubis,
[They gave] light to the dawn (before morning).

\[\text{Ronabça ûêribiï dibë dibari ëbë} \]
\[\text{Borê 'badetër siwar ëbë} \]
\[\text{Sêd xezîma wi mirë, bi heqî rawista ëbë.} \]\n
The light of the early morning (the dawn)
shone
People started worshipping\(^{585}\)
Great wishes to that man who supports the truth.

\textit{In the noon part.} In Du‘a Nîro (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:

\[\text{Ya Rebi! Tu bo me û sunetçanë virêkey rizgêki} \]
\[\text{ji xezîna xe ya qûdretê.} \]

O my Lord (i.e., God)! Send a sustenance to us and the Yezidis
From your treasure on high.

\[\text{Ya Rebi! Tu bideye xatîra siwarê siwar} \]
\[\text{bûyi nîvêka rojê} \]
\[\text{Hattê ji ûêpê ûyû bo xerbê} \]
\[\text{Ya Rebi! Tu gunebêt me xefê biki û} \]
\[\text{ëndê sunetê.} \]

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'.

\[\text{Ya Rebi! Tu me û sunetê bizcane dîwana} \]
\[\text{xar û qumênê jor ê} \]
\[\text{Ya Rebi! Her tu yê, her tu yê, her tu} \]
\[\text{yê.} \]\n
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.

\textit{In the evening part.} Du‘aya Hêvarî (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 Şêjîms to come in answer to the Yezidis' shouts and cries:

\[\text{Ya siwarê rojêlatê, rojâvayê} \]
\[\text{Hûn bi dene xatîra dotê û dayê} \]
\[\text{Hûn me xilas ken ji qedayê ji belayê} \]
\[\text{xelayê,} \]
\[\text{Hûn bi dene xatîra kaniya sipê ‘çyn li} \]
\[\text{beqayê} \]

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 Forê (The Dawn Prayer), Sch. 1, 2, in Gindî 1993: 68.

\(^{585}\) Literally, ‘ride on the steed Bor of the worship.’

\(^{586}\) Du‘a Nîro (The Noon Prayer), sch. 5, 8, 10, in Reço 2004 II: 983-984.
Ya Şëims tu balê mala xo bişirî ñı me ji vé carê. O Şëims, take care of your family and ours for this time.

Ya Şëims li dîwana Sîltan Şêcadi tu bo mala xo ñı me ji bikey bihî ye Hân bidene xatîra Dura sor e Ézûline mir e Qublet el-bidor e Ya Şëims, bang ñi bavariêd me bêt meleké jor e.587 O Şëims may the Angel on high come in answer to our shouts and cries.

In Du‘a ñ Qevêd Şëims (the Prayer and Hymn of Şëims, DQS), Şëims is the source of life and gives goodness and sustenance:

Ya Şëims, me bi te mefer e O Şëims, we take refuge in you
Ya Şëims, tu mefer i O Şëims, you are [our] refuge
Ya Rêbî, tu xalîqêki min i berîber i O Lord, you are my creator forever
Tu rîçqa didi, tu rîçqa dîberi. You give sustenance and you take it away.

Ji rujava beta rojibilat e From West to East
Çîqas ‘aşîq beyne, Şëims bënîyâ ditiket To all lovers that exist, Şëims gives a gift xelat e of honour
Maş ñı debir ji ba Şëims dîbate.590 Our sustenance comes from Şëims.

Du‘aya Çirayê (The Prayer of the Lamp, DC)

Based on the veneration of the fire and light, there is a prayer called Du‘aya Çirayê which consists of seven sebêqes. A Mišûr 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:

Çîra çira The lamp, the lamp
Jî mîrî ra danî Lit for holy men
Jî nişna rehmâni From the light of the Merciful One’s
Jî tegbîra rehmâni (God)
From the greatness of the Merciful One.

588 On this figure see Kreynbroek 1995: 38.
589 Qublet el-bidor means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer, see Roşe 2004 II: 573, n. 2.
591 Ce‘fo and Silo 2013: 57.
From the pristine greatness and God’s greatness

Melik Şêx Sin, truly beloved friend of God

Greeting to Meqlub and Mergeh.

Our greetings to Meqlub and Mergeh

In the place of mebê bini mebê (not understood)

The Lalish of the cupola (Lalish is the owner of the Qub).

In that place

Where Yezidis make pilgrimage to Sheikh Adi

They worship and pray.

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 ’Adawinya in the east and the west are always generous in giving [alms]

May they live forever through time.

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.

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 Da’eya Čirayê (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 çirgay Xudanê malê (the lamp of the protector of the home) in their house:

Ew Xudanê malê xoş û rebim li dill kirin
Me hêv ji Xudanê malê beye, mom û çira û ber vekirin
Em ji diwanzê bezar bela dêr kirin.94

The protector of the home94 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’asya Morkirinê (The prayer of baptism)

In the religious literature, Du’asya Morkirinê consists of seven selbes 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 Sîpê (the White Spring). This is done by sprinkling the water of that spring three times on the head of a person to be baptized.95 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 destori Xudê
In the name of God
Mor mora mîran e.
Kaniya Sîpê xoş nişan e
Pêşay jê dibû beyan e
Çêvê Ezìdine Mîr û ber çar biran e.

The baptism is [the practice] of holy men.
Kaniya Sîpê is the sacred symbol
King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear)
It is the place of Ezìdine Mîr and four brothers.

Mora Kaniya Sîpê ye
Mêr bûtin û melehi jê daye
Ew ciyê Pêşê min bi xo ye.

The baptism of Kaniya Sîpê
The holy men came and praised it
It is the place of my King himself.

Berî ne ‘erd bebû ne ‘ezman e
Ne bebir bebû ne bûnîyan e
Ne çîya bebû ne sikan e.

Before there was neither earth nor sky
Neither seas nor lands
Neither mountain nor population.

93 Du’a Xudanê Malê (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 6, in Reşo 2004 II:1017.
94 Literally ‘householder’.
95 From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
Rë bebû me’rifet e
Îman bebû teriğet e
Ezwê rîjê kaniya sipî bo mira kirbi qiîbet e.

Desta ji teriğetê bermeden
Melik Şex Sin îmanê xo ken
Xo li kaniya sipî Mor ken.

ji ‘ezmana beta bi ‘erde
ji ‘erda beta bi ser de
Arî Kaniya Sipî derman e li ser çıqas derde.

Te Mor kir li Kaniya Sipî ye
Nav li te dana bercê Ezî ye
Şehde î ‘imanê te bûne bi navê Tawusî
Melek î Sîltan Ezî ye
Em dikêmin Xudê yi temam e.596

Du’a Êmanî (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 ‘erîd û ezmane
ji berî ‘erîd û binyan e
ji berî çiya û sikan e
Da medîha jê bi deyn bi nîsan e
[*nîsan 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 Sifrê/Xwarînê (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 Şêçade ve
Hirênê ji kaniya sipê ve.599

The bread (sustenance) is from Sheikh ‘Adî’s treasure
The leaven is from the Kaniya Sipî.

596 ‘This is the whole text of Du’âya Morkînî (The Prayer of the Baptism), in Bâqsîrî 2003: 407-408.
597 Literally, ‘You are called the lamb of Ezî’.
598 Du’a İmanî (The prayer of the Faith), seb. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 1013.
1.1.3 Earth and soil

*Du‘aya Teslima‘ Erdé* (the Prayer of Commitment to the Earth)

In religious texts, there is a prayer about the veneration of the earth, named *Du‘aya Teslima‘ Erdé* (the prayer of Commitment to the Earth).

Derwēšē Erdé is the lord (protector) of the earth. During burial customs, religious men recite that prayer and say that the deceased is handed over to Derwēšē Erdé. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testament</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Teslima‘ teslimat e,</em></td>
<td>[We] commit to you [to earth],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teslima‘ Derwoq‘e rd,</em></td>
<td>[We] commit you to the lord of the Earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ya, Derwoq‘ e rd,</em></td>
<td>O lord of the Earth,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Avi evli berge jin e, berge mēr e,</em></td>
<td>This being, whether a man or a woman,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bicefriteni, bicefriteni.</em></td>
<td>Protect and conciliate [him/her],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sabibeké rubé wé biké</em></td>
<td>Take care of his soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Berezi Ézdida</em></td>
<td>[He/she] is a lamb of Ezdida,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Toqa Yawás-Melek stiyé wé dane.</em></td>
<td>The <em>Tık</em> of the Tawusi Melek is on his/her neck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Béné Ađem, wé bêne ser te Néke ú Mënkin e,</em></td>
<td>O Sons of Adam, you will be visited by Naka and Mank,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pirskin: “Xwedé te kí ye’ë”</em></td>
<td>They will ask [you]: Who is your God?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bë: “Xwedéyë min ezda xwedé”</em></td>
<td>Say: My God is Ezda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Xwedéyë bìyap ú mestan e,</em></td>
<td>The God of the waking and the sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Xwedéyë sol ú bestan e,</em></td>
<td>The God of wilderness and orchards,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Xwedéyë bëme’ë xuedan e,</em></td>
<td>The God of all lords,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ewë ú bëni nizan e.</em></td>
<td>The slave and servant (man) does not know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ew xadigé mewl ú mani ye,</em></td>
<td>He is the Creator of people and things,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bë çander e, bë gana ye;</em></td>
<td>Non-living creatures, without sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ew ne bën e, ne jë ba ye,</em></td>
<td>He [has] no smell, no breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ew ne ewsi ye, ne nesi ye.</em></td>
<td>He [has] no passion, no body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Heft xwewida min vi nefsi,</em></td>
<td>Seven times wishes to that person (i.e., the dead one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ewë reb’ëm lë pirsi,</em></td>
<td>Who is given mercy (i.e., God blesses his soul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Weke emmelë te reb’më xwedé li te be.</em></td>
<td>The mercy of God be equal to your acts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

600 Asatian and Arakelova 2004: 260.
601 This is the whole text of *Du‘aya Teslima‘ Teslima‘ Erdé* (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 Derwēş, i.e., he has control over everything connected to the earth:

- *Ev diniya erde derwēş e,*
- *Tele digerin cimle eş e*
- *Keuk bi nefis kibar naçite pës e.*

This world is the land of the Darwish, All people roam on it, No one gets ahead with an arrogant mind.

*Du’aya Ozniri* (the prayer of the fortunate) refers to the major role of Derwēş Ėrdē which is to safeguard people from being hidden and awful things in life:

- *Ya Derwēşê li ‘erê! bi saxê ez êmanêti te me*
- *Bi destirê Şouâdi ú Melîk Şêc Sin ú Xefûrê Rêye.*

O Derwēşê li ‘erê! I am dependent on you for safety while I am alive
In the name of Sheikh ‘Adî and Angel Sheik Sin and Xefûrê Rêye (the Protector of Roads).

Another task of Derwēş Ėrdē 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 Derwēşê Érdê ez êmanet e taslimî 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 Şêc Mûsê Sor, bidey bayakê zor, dé bo te péjin sawket 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*.

- *Ya Şêc Mûsê Sor,*
- *Bidey bayakê zor,*
- *Dé bo te péjin sawket sor.*

O Red Sheykh mûs,
Give a great deal of wind,
Then we shall prepare for you baked [=red] loaves.

About the veneration of air, there is the use of *Bizurîhîkîrîn* (Burning incense).606, i.e., burning a scented substance that is made of a grass.607 According to Yezidi traditions, *Bizurîhîkîrîn* 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,

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603 *Qudü Miskûnas Jaere* (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 7, in Sîlêman and Cindî 1979: 67.
604 *Du’aya Ozniri* (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 8, in Cindî 1994:147.
605 From the interview with Tariq Xidir Ezidin, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
606 Kreyenbroek 1995: 106.
607 The term *Bizurîhîkîrîn* in the Kurdish language consists of two syllables. *Bizor* meaning incense, and the verb *bûkên*, 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.
609 See Image 06 in Appendices.
on every eve of feasts and religious events, at the *Tinwaf* (local festivals), during the
sessions of *Tawusýfan* ceremony, in the *Semâ* ceremony and in the funerary customs.\(^609\)

Regarding the role of air in *Bicarhilkirin*, some religious men emphasize that the
purpose of *Bicarhilkirin* 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 *Bicar* predominantly for its pleasant smells, such as the
smell of musk and ambergris:

\[
\text{Mor ji kesik à sor à sipi à rech à ber} \\
\text{fà té béhina xoq, bicur à misik à 'enber.}\(^512\)
\]

\[
\text{The baptism has colours: green, red,} \\
\text{white and black} \\
\text{It smells of incense, musk and ambergris.}
\]

\[
\text{Jëc go: } \text{Aqubol pira selatè a zer e} \\
\text{Bén misik à bicur à 'enber e} \\
\text{Dëwana Silën Jëcadè a bi mal à ser e.}
\]

\[
\text{The Sheikh said: O Jacob! Pira Selatè is} \\
\text{yellow} \\
\text{It smells of incense, musk and ambergris} \\
\text{Sultan Sheikh ‘Adî’s assembly has wealth} \\
\text{and a leader.}
\]

\[
\text{Jëc go: } \text{Aqubol pira selatè a kesk e} \\
\text{Te bén bicur e à 'enber e à misik e} \\
\text{Dëwana Silën Jëcadè, a bi ser à mal à} \\
\text{rizq e.}\(^513\)
\]

\[
\text{The Sheikh said: O Jacob! Pira Selatè is} \\
\text{green} \\
\text{It smells of incense, ambergris and musk} \\
\text{Sultan Sheikh ‘Adî’s assembly has head} \\
\text{(leader), wealth and sustenance.}
\]

### 1.2 *Du'ayên ne yên xêrê* or *Nîfîrîn* (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 *Nîfîrîn*, i.e., imprecatory (cursing or vengeance) prayers. Also, it does not have
a specific form, category or ‘genre’, but separate *selêges* 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 *Sêqim* to set fire to those who let good people
down:

\(^609\) From the interview with Fuqira Êrô Heci (Incense holder in Lalish), 05.10.2016, Lalish, Iraqi
Kurdistan.

\(^610\) From the interviews with Baba Çavış Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Fuqira Êrô
Heci (Incense holder in Lalish), 05.10.2016, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\(^611\) From the interview with religious Fuqira Êrô Heci (Incense holder in Lalish), 05.10.2016, Lalish, Iraqi
Kurdistan.

\(^612\) *Qurâlê di Êmërkê da Mânê* (The Hymn of I Remained in an Age), seb. 33, in Reço 2004 I: 373.

\(^613\) *Qurâlê Sêc î Aqubê Mûsa* (The Hymn of Sheikh and Jacob Moses), seb. 80, 81, in Reço 2004 I: 526-527.
Chapter I: The Role of Natural Elements

Heke ębî dîvêt te bişkênîne
Tu xilmena Şêims dikey xo metîcîne
Bela dizavin Şêims dê jê ra îne.

If someone wants to let you down
You serve Şêims and do not be afraid
There are a lot of misfortunes, Şêims will bring to them.

Bela dizavin Şêims dê li wan kar ket
Navê wan dê dinav kuşîya ket
Ağîr heye dê li wan bela ket.614

There are a lot of misfortunes, Şêims 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:

Ew in bêgyêtê kifîri
Melîk Fexredîn le kêr nişîri
Bi rîngîlê wan girît û havête nav gerkâ ağıri.615

They are the irreligious false accusers
Melîk 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 ağır bi mala te, wî, wê, … kêtî.” (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, “birî û bairiyên Xudê li mala dervêni bîkevin” (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:

Çöme kaniye dém dibî
Çöme avê dém dibî
Gebl ê mêle bêgya nîk Şêc Fexîrê
Adîya kem 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 Fexîrê
Adîya.

As a flood, water is used for cursing bad people, e.g., “Hey mala te, wî, wê, … li her avê şîyo” (O let your/his/her, … house be flooded flow by water). They also say, “Hey Tefan li mala te, wî, wê, … rabû yo.” (O may a storm (flood) arise over your /his/her… house).

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615 Qewê Bêgîya (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 12, in Reço 2004 II: 581-582.
616 Qewê Bêgîya (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 20, in Reço 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 xoldi bi ser! hey xoldi bi eyg” 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 xanjë te li ber tusë goya” literally (may your house go to dust). A sebege refers to cursing false accusers by wishing that a dust storm may hit them:

Bëgo gôma ser bin
Hâvinê persso ser bin
Töz ù basêra 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:

Ewr in yê xêna xelê mevên
Bayê por, hestî ù xanîyet wan bikezin
Çawa ji ber mehdûra şê Fêcîrê Adiya direvin.

Bëgo! mila tu li banî
Ne şîkefî dextî bikevit, â xuîlî
Min bi Şicadî û Melîk Şêc Sin bûîye,
êw dipêcînas bin ji biniyant. 618

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?
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:

Îhîye! we şevê befîr û ba bê
Sîka sayka Kanunê û dabe
Da bëgo li wêderê bi hoq û rîza 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 çîyo” (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:

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617 Qewê Bêgya (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 11, in Reşo 2004 II: 581.
618 Qewê Bêgya (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 7, 8, in Reşo 2004 II: 581.
619 Qewê Bêgya (The Hymn of the False Accuser), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 582.
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:

- May the false accusers be dumb and be deaf,
- Barefoot in summer,
- Naked in winter.
- I hope to Sheikh ‘Adi and angel Sheikh Sin that they may 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 Cîmâyê* (the Festival of the Gathering).

#### 2.1 Rites of pilgrimage at ordinary times

Lalish is the place of religious pilgrimage and it is a religious duty for Yezidis to make pilgrimage to Lalish. Religious texts also refer to that:

My King (i.e., God) was hidden in his own throne

---

520 *Qawdê Bêguya* (*The Hymn of the False Accuser*), sch. 14, in *Reşo* 2004 II: 582.
521 *Qawdê Bêguya* (*The Hymn of the False Accuser*), sch. 5, 6, in *Reşo* 2004 II: 580, 581.
522 See Image 07 in Appendices.
Part II: Nature and Religious Practices

Heça me lálisha nárani bû. All holy men and prophets talk about Him
Our pilgrimage is the luminous Lâlish.

Laliş zîyaret e Lalish is the place of pilgrimage
Kaniya Šîpî qublet e Kaniya Šîpî is the direction of prayer
Qubleta dinê û axîret e The direction of prayer of the world and the Hereafter.

Furthermore, religious texts emphasize that Lâlish, with its natural features, through the springs of Zimezîm and Kaniya Šîpî, and its cave and cavern, is the place of pilgrimage:

Sîbekê ji yêt 'Edewiya In an ‘Adawiyya morning
Birme dîwana Ṣeçê 'Edî ye I was taken to Sheikh ‘Adî’s assembly
Heça me: Zimezîm e û Qubet li Bîdor e Our Pilgrimage is: Zimezîm, Qubet Libidor
û Kaniya Šîpî ye. (Sun) and Kaniya Šîpî.

Kaniya Šîpî mura min e Kaniya Šîpî is my baptism,
Kañî u nîzår û zîmezîm beca min e The cave, the cavern and the Zimzim spring are my pilgrimage.
Qublet el-bidor qubleta min e Qublet el-bidor is my direction of prayer.

There are various religious rites and duties performed during the rites of pilgrimage in Lâlish that relate to the veneration of nature, as in the following:

First of all, as a religious duty the pilgrims must be barefoot in Lâlish because the earth in Lâlish is holy and they should respect it:

Forzêt zo bitelke û derbas be Perform your obligations and pass
Beri mirinê here Lâlishê pêçîwas be Before death, visit Lâlish with bare feet
Da li axêretê xêra te ye nas be. So that your alms will be known in the last day.

Next, pilgrims must wash their faces and hands with the water of Kaniya Šîpî 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.

Feqîra û jê xeber da The feqîras talk about this:
Jî ‘ismîma nêta bi ‘erda From the sky down to the earth,

624 Qawûlê Kaniya Mars (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seh. 37, in Kreynbroek and Rashow 2005: 397.
625 Qawûlê Sîbekê ji yêt ‘Edewiya (The Hymn of a Morning from the ‘Adawiyya), seh. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 573.
626 Qublet el-bidor means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer, see Reşo 2004 II: 573, n. 2.
628 Qawûlê Merûmûna Cebêrî (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seh. 82, in Kişo 2012: 130.
629 From the interview with Esmêr Esmall Mirad (the custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lâlish temple, Iraqi Kurdistan.
Also, during pilgrimage, some pilgrims take their children to Kaniya Siṭā for Morkirin, i.e., performing the baptism ritual during pilgrimage days:

- **Morā Kaniya Siṭā ṣer e**
- **Jī bo ıntāni meder e**
- **Fiwort jī melke ekbere e.**

The baptism of the Kaniya Siṭā is obligatory.

- **Eve firtara Peṭsā ye**
- **Morā Kaniya Siṭā rewa ye**
- **Fer e ȃ atqata Ězīdī ye.**

This command is from King (i.e., God).

Then, pilgrims have to perform the *Selakirin* (holy greeting) ritual by sprinkling water of the *Zimzim* spring during pilgrimage days.

- **Zimzim ȃ qubet ȃ bidor in**
- **Kursiyeṭ dî batın da ḥi mor in**
- **Mekānē Ėzīdī min i sor in.**

They are the thrones (i.e., place) of spiritual baptism.

Also, in:

- **Kaniya Siṭā mora min e**
- **Kāf ȃ niscar ȃ zimzim beca min e**
- **Qublet el-bidor qubleta min e.**

Also, sometimes, pilgrims light lamps in some places in Lalish and usually by the names of holy men, like *Dergeb Mir* (the gate of Mir) which are seven lamps and also in the cave of *Zimzim*, and some other lamps next to the *Xerqē* of *Sēxūbekir*. Moreover, custodian lights lamps in religious places throughout the pilgrimage days. *Xeboqe* refers to lighting lamps in these places by the names of holy men and religious men:

From the earth upward,
The water of the Kaniya Siṭā is a healing for so many ills.

**Verse 1**

*Ji ʾerda bēta bi ser da*
*Ava Kaniya Siṭā sīfēta [Ṣīfēta] bi ser ṣī qas derda.*

**Verse 2**

Also, during pilgrimage, some pilgrims take their children to Kaniya Siṭā for Morkirin, i.e., performing the baptism ritual during pilgrimage days:

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- **Verse 1**
- **Verse 2**
- **Verse 3**
- **Verse 4**

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530 *Qudū Śêxūbekir* (The Hymn of Sheikh Ībēkēr), sch. 24, in Silēman 1985: 100.
531 *Beytā Kaniya Siṭā* (Beytā of the White Spring), sch. 4, in Sileymān 2013: 41.
532 According to the textual meaning the name *Peṭsāy* is misspelled, the correct spelling is *Peṭṣaye* (King, i.e., God).
533 *Beytā Kaniya Siṭā* (Beytā of the White Spring), sch. 5, in Sileymān 2013: 41.
534 About this ritual see “Selakirin (Holy Greeting) with the water of the Zimzim spring”, in chapter II, part II.
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, Gəwenda 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 Zîrmîn as leaven for their production for their agricultural wealth. Religious texts refer to the water of Kaniya Sîpî as the leaven of food:

\[ \text{Nan ji xezîna Xudê bê} \]
\[ \text{Hêvên ji Kaniya Sîpî bê.} \]

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:

\[ \text{Kerma Çîyê Mîyetê} \]
\[ \text{Çîyê Hîzrêtê, Çîyê Êreçatê} \]
\[ \text{Dar ü berêl Gêlêyê Lalîqê.} \]

The mystical power of Mount Mîjet
Mount Hizret, Mount Êreçat
[The mystical power of] Trees and stones of the Lalish Valley.

2.2 Rites of pilgrimage in Cejna Cîmayê (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 Cîma feast in Lalish:

637 Du’nya Cîmayê (The Prayer of the Lamp), seb. 6, in Ce’fo and Silo 2013: 58.
638 For further details see “Gəwenda Dêrî Kaniya Sîpî (the religious dance in front of the Kaniya Sîpî),” in chapter II, part II.
640 Edmonds1967: 11.
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 Cîma is derived from the Arabic word Cema’, which means gathering. Moreover, there is another view about it which says the name is derived from the ancient word Com/Comîd in Avesta, Yeme in Sanskrit, Comek/Yemek in Pahlavi, it became Com in Islamic areas. The meaning behind this is sacrificing the bull by Com/Comîd. Likewise, Yezidis sacrifice the bull Qêbax during this feast. For further reading in this regard, (see Nêrway, ‘E. T. (2000), “Mitira Perêšî Mêjî ú Bir ú Bawer” (Mithraism Worship: History and Beliefs), Lalîq, 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 Qêbax ritual
Me ji Adiya besq e
Bi né qubé kem seri li ‘ery e
Cimaya mëra wa li Lalïsh e.\textsuperscript{644}

We are thankful to the Adiya
I swear by that Qub whose top is on
throne (in the sky)
The Cîma festival of holy men is in Lalish.

The rituals of the feast that relate to the veneration of the natural elements and their symbolisms 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 Siwarkirin (Inaugurating Peris)

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 Perîyên Sindrukef Xasa (Perîs of graves of holy men) inside their shrines in Lalish.\textsuperscript{645} There are seven of them and their names are: Perîyên Ezê, Perîyên Şêşims, Perîyên Sheikh Fexîr, Perîyên Siyî Şês,\textsuperscript{646} Perîyên Sheikh ‘Adî, Perîyên Sheikh Hesen and Perîyên Sheikh Übekîr.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{648}

2.2.2 Qebasqîrên (sacrificial bull) ritual

On the fifth day of the feast (11\textsuperscript{th} October) the ritual of Qebasx 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 “Çejna Cimayê (The Festival of the Gathering)” in chapter three of part two.

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\textsuperscript{644} Quoted Adiya Šêşê Mine (The Qesida of Adiya is my Sheikh), seb. 5, in Reço 2004 II: 668. Cf., this is another variant of that sebege.

Me ji Adiya besq e
Wi qubê bi kem seri li ‘ery e
Cimaya mëra Lališ e.

\textsuperscript{(QD, v 3, seb. 8, in Reço 2004 I: 411).}

We are thankful to the Adiya
I swear by that Qub whose top is on throne (in the sky)
The Cîma festival of holy men is in Lalish.

\textsuperscript{645} See Image 09 in Appendices.

\textsuperscript{646} She is Sheikh ‘Adî’s mother, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 40, n. 14

\textsuperscript{647} From the interview with Baba Çavîş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{648} From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çavîş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
2.2.3 Berê Şibakê (Throne of Netting)

Berê Şibakê is also called Tectî 有序 (the throne of 有序). 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 ceremony is attended by the prince, Babe Şex and his entourage, the Çeqeltu (plentiful light) holder and the incense holder; Qewals recite the *Qewalî Tecta* (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. Religious texts mention the name of Berê Şibakê:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Li diwana Berê Şibakê</th>
<th>At the gathering of Berê Şibakê</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xastê ber Şêcadi, li  şiqer  şi qinet biki</td>
<td>You should honour and value the holy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ya Şêcadi ‘elêk il-selam.’</td>
<td>men around Sheikh ‘Adî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O Sheikh ‘Adî, greetings to you!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Şibakê (i.e., sunrise). In this regard, the Iraqi historian G. Habîb says, “I believe this throne represents the circle of the sun which we see crossing the sky every day from east to west.” 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 *sebêçe* below draws a similarity between Şêçims as the lord of the sun and Berê Şibakê; it refers to the kissing of Şêçims’ pillar instead of Berê Şibakê.

| Ez wê dinalim, birîna min wa li melakê | I am crying, my wound is in the liver |
| Wê dikalîm wekê berêcê li pé makê | I am bleating like the sheep looking for |
| Dê min tuwaq kiriba stîna Şêçim li gel | its mother |
| stîna Berê Şibakê. | I should have kissed Şêçims’s pillar |

The content of *Qewalî Tecta* (the hymn of thrones) 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

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649 See Image 10 in Appendices.
652 From the interview with Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
654 *Qewalî SiyaêÊ* (The Hymn of SiyaêÊ), seh. 24, in Xelef 1996: 12.
655 For the whole text of *Qewalî Tecta* (The hymn of throne) see Baqarî 2003: 259-265.
symbol of the throne of Ėzîd, i.e., God’s throne. That this could possibly mean here, it throne is the symbol of light or the throne of light that is the place of God in Yezidi belief:

My King (i.e., God) created the luminous throne or the throne of light
[He] made his place in it
[He] gazed on and wandered in it.
My King is the greatest on his throne
From him comes light and brightness.
My King is apparent everywhere.

My King is the angel in his throne
The throne of light and moon, and the shining sun
My King took His place in Lalish.
We need a visionary
Those doors open for him
The throne of light, my King (i.e., God) sat on it.

Thus, Berê Sêbakê can be thought to be connected with nature and to represent sunrise and sunset.

On the seventh day, the other general ceremonies of the Cîma 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 Zimezîn 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 Cîma Rojîyên Ėzî (The Fast of Ėzî) and Rojîyên Xûdana (Fasts for the Lords), here the focus is on the Fasting for Xûdans of the natural elements and their manifestations, both types of fasts are explained in the following.

656 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîtro Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
657 Qoxtê Texta (The hymn of throne), seb. 1, 8, 16, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 259, 260, 261.
658 Literally, vision.
659 Qoxtê Nadr (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 Rojyên Êzî* (The Fast of Êzî)

This feast\(^6\) 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.\(^6\)

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 *Çirahilkêrin* (Lighting lamps)

On the eve of the feast the custodian lights the *Çîra* (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.\(^6\) Also, *Çîra* is the symbol of the sun and its lord *Şênums*.\(^6\) Moreover, there is *Çirayê Şêsim* (*Şêsim* lamp) inside *Şêsimê Qub*.

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Şêcê Şems ji Ézîzidya ra çîra ye li diwanê} \\
\text{Ya Êzî tu li me biki xudanê} \\
\end{align*} \]

For Yezidis, *Şêsim* is a lamp in the 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 *Şêsim*, in order to give them light and sustenance.\(^6\) Moreover, this feast is celebrated to commemorate the birth of the Holy Being Ezid.\(^6\) The 25\(^{th}\) is the day of the birth of Yazid. He is (Al-Ezit, Mîhr [Mithras]) the lord of the sun. In other words, the date is reminiscent of the birth of Mithras in Mithraism on 25\(^{th}\) December.\(^6\) Some sources state that this feast originally goes back to Mithra’s (the Lord of sun) birthday in Mithraism.\(^6\) 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.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) For further explanation see Çîndî 1998: 99; Baqasîrî 2003: 155.

\(^6\) See Rejo 2004 I: 266.

\(^6\) From the interviews with Baba Çavuş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Adinan Xêravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

\(^6\) See “The symbolism of Çîra in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.

\(^6\) *Dêyê Ezîyêyetê* (Prayer of Yezidism), sect. 13, in Rejo 2004 II: 1003.

\(^6\) From the interviews with Baba Çavuş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Adinan Xêravay, 26.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.

\(^6\) Kreyenbroeck 2009: 23.

\(^6\) Dilkâvân 1999: 47.

\(^6\) Ibid.

Chapter I: The Role of Natural Elements

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:

Li axiret xo rîşî ke
Li dinê 'ebadê bîke û xo bi rîyî ke
Sê rôjya bigire û ferzê xó bîçê.571

In the last day you should purify yourself
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 sêheqes of religious texts emphasizing some aspects of this belief:

Réka me när e zerbav e
Ew ronah ye, ew tav e
Jî tari, tav dav.674

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

The Yezidis worship during daytime as a symbol of good acts:

Sîpi när e jî hîâyêt e
Renqê roq û bi zîlmat e
Şûkîr şev dîçu, roq dibate
Xûdê xêfûrê qesar e.675

White is the light of guidance
The black colour is darkness
Thankfully, the night went, and the day came
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

571 Qevê Mersûma Cêbêre (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 81, in Kisto 2012: 130.
673 From the interview with Baba Çawiş Hesen Sileman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Îraşi Kurdistan. Also, see Bâqasîrî 2003: 155-156.
674 Qevê Mîr Mehmêdê Kurdi (The Hymn of Mir Mehmêdê Kurdî), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 555.
675 Beşta Dinî (The Bêt of the world), seb. 33, in Reşo 2004 II: 750.
disappearance of the freezing cold and the coming of light and warmth. Moreover, there is a Qewl called Qewlé 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:

Hatime nav kaf ú kan  e I came into kaf ú kan (not understood)
Weki têt ú dhibì Zivistan e When it comes and winter starts
Zândan e ser çi qas mecdüqê bi gîyan e. It is a prison for all living creatures.

January said: I am the weather of the earth
I am freezing from my cold
I am in a hurry because of my prince’s command.

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 Rajjiên Xudana (Fasts for the Lords). They start in the beginning of December and continue until Çeına Rajjiya (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 Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Bâqasîrî 2003: 155-156.


Chapter I: The Role of Natural Elements

3.2.1 Fire and its manifestations

Yezidis, and especially Şemsanî Sheikhsh and their Mirids (followers), fast on one day which is Wednesday for Şêşims, the lord of the sun, light and fire. Moreover, one week before the fasting feast there are three days named Rapor Şêşims (Şêşims fasts).

_Beyta Sibê or Beyta Şêşims_ (the _Bey_ of the morning or the _Bey_ of Şêşims) refers to the three times of the day: morning, afternoon and evening with the veneration of sun and its lord Şêşims:

- **Raj bate têşta ne**  
  The sun has come to morning  
- **Şêşims bestî diávan e**  
  Şêşims is present at the assembly  
- **Maşça wê dide te méran e.**  
  He gives the holy men their wages.

- **Raj bate nîvru ye**  
  The sun has come to midday  
- **Mança sipê jë dêçoje**  
  The white moonlight has fled from it  
- **Şêşims yî bi misk e yî bi mo ye.**  
  Şêşims smells of musk and scent.  
- **Raj hat ú avâ bû**  
  The sun has come and gone down  
- **Şêşims li ‘erz rawesta bû**  
  Şêşims has taken his place in the sky  
- **Aşïqä selawet le vedê bû.**  
  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:

- **Şenís gemer**  
  Sun and moon,  
- **Dawdî bin Derman, Pirî Tercimân, Şêc:**  
  Dawdî bin Derman, Pirî Tercimân Sheikh  
- **Hevrusz, …**  
  Hevrusz, …

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 eternality.

- **Miskê go: bo min bêje bi nrnmanî**  
  Moses said: Tell me by the Merciful one  
- **Tu ki či dikê li derê derryanî**  
  Who are you and what do you do in the sea?  
- **Bi sëtrê Xudê î zaxêt rihani.**  
  For the sake of God and the holy beings of the world.

- **Xidir go: ez Xidirê Zindî me**  
  Xidir said: I am Xidir Zindî (immortal Xidir)  
- **Jî ’enzêl afront Xudê me**  
  I am a creature of God from eternity

---

180 Cf., Şêşims is a historical figure and the son of Êzîdînê Mir, and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî sheikhs, see Kreyenbrock 1995: 97-100; Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 26-27.

181 _Beyta Sibê yar Beyta Şêşims_ (The _Bey_ of the Morning or The _Bey_ of Şêşims), sch. 8, 10, 19, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 211-212.

According to religious texts, there is a Kas (cup) of eternal water with the name Xidir Liyas. Its water is the symbol of eternal life and the symbol of Xidir Liyas. Whoever drinks from it will always be young and will have immortal life. In the Xidir Liyas shrine in the village of Ba’adra, there is a big cup called Jamkā-Jam or kas.\footnote{For more details see “Xidir Liyas and Kas (the cup of water)”, in chapter III, part II.} Whoever drinks from it will always be young and will have immortal life.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cindo} & \text{y tu yé rénas} \\
\text{Me şerab dâvêt ji Kasîd xas} \\
\text{Li wê berêde ye le bramôn} & \text{milê Xidî it liyas.}\footnote{According to the textual meaning the word brauna includes a spelling mistake, it should be brauno (O. brothers).}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{O, young man, you are a guide} \\
\text{We want to drink from the special cups.} \\
\text{Come, brothers, to this pond, the property of Xidr-liyas.}
\end{align*}
\]

Yezidis fast on one day for the lord of the rain, Mehmed Reşan, and there is a Qesiê in the religious literature called Qesiê Mehmed Reşan which is about venerating rain and its lord.\footnote{See the whole text of Qesiê Mehmed Reşan (The Qesiê of Mehmed Reşan), in Heci 1996: 70-71.}

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 Bîka 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.\footnote{See Image 11 in Appendices.} The following under-scores this tradition:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mehmed Reşan baranê birêşine} & \text{Mehmed Reşan, let rain pour} \\
\text{Tîkê kayê birêşine} & \text{Let it provide hay for us.}
\end{align*}
\]

Also, Yezidis say:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mehmed Reşan bireşine} & \text{Mehmed Reşan, let rain pour} \\
\text{Baranê bi veça barine.}\footnote{Text details are unknown, in Gindi 1998: 27.}
\end{align*}
\]

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 Pira Fat, the lord against floods, storms and natural disasters/blights to protect agricultural production:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ya Sîlân Eziêl perda te li ber me bit} & \text{O Sultan Eziêl! You save us} \\
\text{O Pira Fat! You protect us.}
\end{align*}
\]
Some Yezidis fast one day for the lord of the clouds, Pirê Ewra. They sometimes swear an oath by the clouds and say: ‘Bi van ewra’ (I swear an oath by these clouds). The religious literature refers to venerating clouds as the source of rain and snow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pîrê Pyâzêkê li min da</td>
<td>Late autumn passed over me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi ser me da hatî zîvistanekê bi hêbêlê e</td>
<td>Winter came to me in full blast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pêlektê ‘ewrä girê pavanê jori</td>
<td>A small cloud Surrounds the heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jê diharin xirînêt behrê, neççêt barantê, ...</td>
<td>Snowflakes and raindrops fell from it, ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.3 Earth and its manifestations

Yezidis fast on one day for Derwêşê Erdê, the lord (protector) of the earth. sebeges refer to him and his role:

| Ev diniya erdê derwis e                       | This world is the earth of the     |
| Têda digerin cimle çêç e                      | Darwish,                          |
| Kasek bi nefsa kihar nagite pêş e             | All people roam in it,            |
|                                              | No one gets ahead with an arrogant |
|                                              | mind.                             |

| Ya Derwêşê li ‘erdê bi szêçê ez êmanetê te me | O Derwêşê li ‘erdê I am dependent on |
| Bi destêrî Şîcadî û Melîk Şêc Sin û Xefûrê  | you for safety while I am alive    |
| Réye.                                       | In the name of Sheikh ‘Adî and    |
|                                            | Angel Sheikh Sin and Xefûrê Réye  |
|                                            | (the Protector of Roads).         |

Also, Yezidis fast for the lord of the mountains, hills and caves, who is Sêxîrî Cin, who is thought to have mystical powers and to have control over them:206

| Kemna Çiyayê Mişêtê                          | The mystical power of Mount Mişêt  |
| Çiyayê Hizzetê, Çiyayê ‘Erêfatê             | Mount Hizret, Mount ‘Erêfat        |
| Dar û berêê Geliyê Laliyê.                  | [The mystical power of] Trees and  |
|                                            | stones of the Lalish Valley.       |

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693 From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesen Reşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqi Kurdistan.
694 Qevelê Miskinê Jum (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 7, in Sîlêman and Gîndî 1979: 67.
695 Du‘âra Ocûri (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seb. 8, in Gîndî 1994: 147.
696 Gîndî 2010: 60.
Hân bidene xatira behişte û darê
Kafê û meçarê, … 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 Sît Neşîsa, who is the personification of a sacred tree.699

Heke ʻerdekê dibîni, ʻişaret ke
Derwîşêki dibîni, ʻibadet ke
Dârêki dibîni, ʻziyarat ke.700
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).

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:

Peñê min li ber bukmê xo yî rawa ye
Ewî deştî çekir, rukîrande ser ûyî ye
Kewna vê dînyayê ba ye.701
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 erê aşişê pîrîq” (I swear by this holy fire); “bi erê aça pîrîq” (I swear by this holy solî), and “bi erê avu pîrîq” (I swear by this holy water). Moreover, an oath is also sworn by Şêşims and the light of the sun. Yezidis say, “Şê gavi Şêşims yan rojî bihe” (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 têva” (I swear by the God who gives air and rain). Sometimes Yezidis will swear an oath by a cloud by saying: “bi wî ʻevarî” (I swear an oath by these clouds).

Another form of venerating nature is by kissing the holy natural elements. The words Ziyaretêsrîn or Ziyaretêbewû are used for it, such as kissing the soil of holy places in

701 “I.e., a structure intended to remind believers of God’s power”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 107, n. 233.
Lalish and in Xas’ Qub and also kissing the holy soil by kissing Berat. This sebeqe indicates that belief:

- **Heke te moomink dît, ‘ibadet ke**
  - When you see a believer, venerate him
- **Heke te derek dît, ziyaret ke**
  - When you see a tree, make pilgrimage to it (kiss it)
- **Heke te erdekk dît, işaret ke.**
  - 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 evi rojê” (for the sake of this sun), “bi deye xatira evi ağiğê” (for the sake of this fire), “bi deye xatira evi avê” (for the sake of this water), “bi deye xatira evi axê/evi ‘erdî” (for the sake of this earth/land), “bi deye xatira evi ba ‘û baranê” (for the sake of this wind and rain), etc. There are also some sebeques on this:

- **Hîn bideyn xataira Dûra zer e**
  - For the sake of the yellow Pearl,
- **Ax ā av ā ağîr e**
  - Soil, water, and fire,
- **Erd ā ezman ā ber e, …**
  - Earth, sky, and stone, …

Also, in:

- **Ya Melik Şerfedînê min yî berûber i**
  - O, my eternal Melik Şerfedin
- **Tu bidey xatira ‘erd ā ’ezman ā dar ā berî**
  - For the sake of the earth and the sky, tree and stone
- **Tu li me nekêye tengarî zû li banga me werî.**
  - 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. There is also a ritual, performed during sessions of *Tawusêran*, where people drink water from a Şerhik (jar) for the purpose of fulfilling wishes for a good chance of marriage. Sometimes, Yezidis ask for fulfilling wishes by praying in front of trees, such as Dûra 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 fulfill 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 *Stûnê Miraçê* (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:

- **Şêçêti mirazê e**
  - To be Sheikh is a wish
- **Xudê rêya bûşêji ji me ra dîçawazê**
  - God wishes a true path for us
- **O God! You fulfil our wishes through the Stone of Wishes.**

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704 *Du’îça Hêwarê* (The Evening Prayer), sb. 9, in Šileman and Cindâ 1979: 23.
705 See “Drinking water and a chance of marriage”, in the Xidir Liyas feast, in chapter III, part II.
706 *Q relief Cargemîhêyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), sb. 39, in Kîtro 2004: 212.
707 Details are given in “Tawusêran (The wandering of the Tawus)”, in chapter III, part II.
Ya Xudê! tu miraza me hikî li ber berê
mirazê.\textsuperscript{708}

Lalish is the place of wishes because the pillar of wishes is there:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Birme usif naza} \quad I was taken to describe attractive girls
  \item \textit{Wan derya, wan derwaça} \quad Those doors and those entrances
  \item \textit{Lalîş heye cîyê mirazaga.}\textsuperscript{709} \quad There is the place of wishing (Wishing pillar) in Lalish.
\end{itemize}

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, \textit{Melbera Boşa}, Żewa Memê Şivan, \textit{Qubs}, etc.

Regarding the veneration nature, the following \textit{sebeşe} describes how, when Sheikh Adi came to the Hakkari area, i.e., when he came to Lalish, he venerated stones and trees there:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Şêcadî bate Hekar e} \quad Sheikh Adi came to Hakkari\textsuperscript{711}
  \item \textit{Şêçide bi li ber î dare} \quad Sheikh Adi bowed to stones and trees.
  \item \textit{Şêcadî li nav mëra serdar e.}\textsuperscript{710} \quad Sheikh Adi is the leader among (holy) men.
\end{itemize}

To keep trees clean and protected, there is a ceremony named \textit{Kêçana Qola} (Bring tree trunk) that takes place in Lalish at the beginning of April of every year.\textsuperscript{709} Yezidi religious men such as the Baba Sheikh and Baba Çawiş, 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 \textit{Du'a Çiraahîkiri

\textsuperscript{708} \textit{Du'a Şicité} (The Prayer of Sheikhs), seb. 7, in Rejo 2004 II: 1005.

\textsuperscript{709} \textit{Qwarê Xewrê} (The Hymn of Xewrê), seb. 3, in Heci 2006: 38.

\textsuperscript{710} \textit{Qwarê Qondilla} (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights), seb. 16, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 92.

\textsuperscript{711} An area next to Lalish.

\textsuperscript{712} See Image 12 in Appendices.
(the prayer of lighting lamps), water in Du‘aya Morkiriné (the prayer of baptism) and earth in Du‘aya Temill ‘Erdé (the prayer of Commitment to the earth). There are also many Nifrîn (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 Sîpî for blessing; Selakirin with the water of Zimzîm, where pilgrims have to take home some water of the white spring and Zimzîm, and also a small branch of a tree which symbolizes grace, holiness and participation in the pilgrimage. In the rites of pilgrimage in the Cezna Cimayé (the Festival of the Gathering), nature and its symbolism play a major role, for example, Perî Siwarkirin (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 Cezna Rajyên Ezê (The Fast of Ezê), 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. 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 places 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, Cimitura Boza (the assembly of Boza), Zew (courtyard), Mezar/Zehman (cemetery), Qub à Avahyê Xata (cupola and mausoleum), Nîshangêb (shrine), Silangêb (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

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714 From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesen Reşkani, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqi 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.\textsuperscript{715} It is the centre of religious and devotional life for the Yezidi community. It plays an important role in religious beliefs\textsuperscript{716} and also in religious life in general.\textsuperscript{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 Lalish\textsuperscript{718} 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{xerbe} describes it as a famous place by its landscape and the place of worship:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Gelihê Lalîşê bi nav e} & The Lalish valley is famous \\
\textit{Wê péda dêtin av e} & It flows with water \\
\textit{Zar mède zor silav e,~}\textsuperscript{720} & You have to be quiet there (i.e., worship).
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{715} Lalish is located about 58 km north of Mosul, 12 km north of Sheikhan district (Ain Safni).

\textsuperscript{716} According to Yezidi religious texts, Lalish was recognized by early Holy Beings as \textit{Hek war} (the site of Truth). At the time of creation, the earth was motionless until Lalish had come down from heaven and it is the haven of solarity 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 \textit{Afrandina Kevdê} (the Yezidi Myth of Cosmogony and Cosmology)”, chapter II, part II.

\textsuperscript{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 ones (see Şivan, Rézan (2012b), \textit{Pemjokes ji bo Rêkêzitna Karîbarên Ezzidîyan û Periçeş Lalîş} (A Project for Organizing Yezidis Affairs and Lalish Temple), Duho: 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 \textit{Qubû}, 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.


\textsuperscript{719} Luke 1925: 134.

\textsuperscript{720} \textit{Qanîê Sîyê Êî} (The Hymn of Siyên Êî), 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.”

There are several holy springs in Lalish. Their names are Kaniya Şipî (white spring), Kaniya Zimţim (Zimţim spring), Kaniya Gulava (Gulava spring), Kaniya Horîya (the spring of Houriya), Kaniya Şîvama (the spring of shepherds), Kaniya Berbâyê (the spring of Berbâyê) and Kaniya Barbîlî (Barbîlî spring). Şêbêqa refer to some of them, such as Horîya and Kulava: 

Come ser kaniya horîya  
Min neyê kirîbû li wan sîya li wan  
Ew bû meskenê wan sîya,²²³ 

I went to the spring of the Houriya  
I stared at those mountains and high  
places  
Those were the residence of those ladies.

Bî qedê Meîk Şêx Hesen  
Kaniya Kulava, Pîr Şêrefî  
Mêranî, …²²⁴ 

For the sake of the power of angel  
Sheikh Hesen  
[For the sake of] the Kulava spring, Pîr  
Şêrefî Mêranî, …²²⁵

In Yezidi mythology, the Kaniya Şipî,²²⁶ 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.²²⁷ It is highly venerated, being the place of Yezidi baptism. Zimţim is a holy spring.²²⁸ Yezidis perform the Selakirîn (holy greeting) ritual there by washing their faces with that water and sprinkling it, and asking God to keep all their dear people safe.²²⁹ There are also two ponds: Hewda Kewtele or Kelokê (the pond of Kewte) and Bûrô Nasîrîn (the pond of Nasîrîn).

Hêrên ji bewûd li Kewte/e  
Şêx babîk wê li ser e, …²³⁰ 
The Leaven of the pond of Kewte  
Sheikh Babik stands on it, …

The following are the trees found in Lalish:²³¹ Dara Zengîla (the Tree of Bells), Dara Qelêndera (the Tree of Qelender), Dara Nêzêrê (the Tree of [against] the evil eye), Dara Xewî (the Tree of sleep), and Dara Singa (the Tree of the stakes). Additionally, there are many other trees named after Xaw or holy figures, such as Dara Leyê (the Tree of Leyê),

²²³ See Image 13 and Image 20 in Appendices.
²²⁴ Qewde Mişet (The Hymn of Mişet), seb. 11, in Xelêf 2002: 234-235.
²²⁶ He is one of the Yezidi Holy Men, see Silêman and Cindî 1979: 103-104; Kreyenbroek 1995: 121.
²²⁷ 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 Qewde Kaniya Şipî. 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.
²²⁸ See “Natural Elements in the Emergence of Life on Earth”, in chapter I, part I.
²²⁹ It is inside a rock tunnel in the cave of Zimţim and is located at the bottom of Ezefat mount; its depth is about 100 cm and width about 300 cm.
²³⁰ For further details see “Selakirîn (Holy Greeting) with the water of the Zimţim spring”, in chapter II, part II.
²³¹ Qewde Şêx Babîk (The Qewde of Sheikh Babik), seb. 3, in Heel 1996: 66.
Dara Baba ıso (the Tree of Baba ıso), Dara İbrahim lík (the Tree of İbrahim lík), and Dara Hesen Kýyar (the Tree of Hesen Kýyar). These trees have particular properties: for example, Yezidis take a branch of Dara Xervé for those who cannot sleep. A Dara Negroí branch is used against the evil eye. Visitors also cut off a branch of the Dara Sínga 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: Enfat in the north, Mişet in the south and Hízret in the west. Religious texts confirm their holiness:

- Kerema Çiyayé Mişeté
- Çiyayé Hízreté, Çiyayé ‘Enfaté
- Dar à beré Géliyé Lalişé.

The mystical power of Mount Mişet Mount Hízret, Mount ‘Enfat [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: 33 Şikefta Berata (the Cave of Berati), Şikefta Zimzim (the Cave of Zimzim), Şikefta Sitona Miraqa (the Cave of the Pillar of Wishes), Çilexane (the Cave of Çilexane), Şikefta Cina (the Cave of the Jinn), Moxara Mara (the Cave of snakes), Şikefta Şex Mend (the Cave of Sheikh Mend), Şikefta Seyd Ne’üm (the Cave of Seyd Ne’üm), Şikefta Qerqori (the Cave of Qerqori), Şikefta Mehmed Reben 34 (the Cave of Mehmed Reben), Şikefta Hesen Çinari (the Cave of Hesen Çinari), Şikefta Pir Omerxala (the Cave of Pir Omerxala), Şikefta Mam ıso (the Cave of Mam ıso), Şikefta Mir İbrahim (the Cave of Mir İbrahim), and Şikefta Şerfedin (the Cave of Şerfedin). Moreover, in this context, Krekenbrok states that “[i]n the system of caves beneath the Sanctuary of Sheikh Adi at Lalish, and particularly the two spaces here called the Cave (kaft) and the Cavern (mixarı), are regarded as very holy. In the Cavern, the water of the Zinjiz Spring (q.v.) springs from the rock.”35 This selêqe refers to the veneration of caves and caverns:

- Kaniya Sipî mora min e
- Kaf û mixar û zimzim beca min e
- Qublet el-bidor qubletà min e.36

Particular uses are made of some of these caves, such as Şikefta Berata, which is for making Berat. Şikefta Sitona Miraqa is for fulfilling wishes, while Şikefta Zimzim is for the Selâkérin (holy greeting) ritual.37 Lalish is the place of wishes because the pillar of wishes is in Şikefta Sitona Miraqa:

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34 See Image 16 and Image 17 in Appendices.
35 His shrine is at Lalish temple, see Krekenbrok 1995: 122.
36 Krekenbrok and Rashow 2005: 37.
38 About Selâkérin see “Selâkérin (Holy Greeting) with the water of the Zinjiz spring”, in chapter II, part II.
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 Sîpî 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Element</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Êçidiyatî şifa‘et e</td>
<td>Yezidism is intercession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaniya Sîpî kir qublet e</td>
<td>Kaniya Sîpî is the direction of prayer (qibla)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kir qubleta dinê ê aciret e.</td>
<td>The direction of prayer of the world and the Hereafter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Zimzîm spring and the White Spring, it became the place of Yezidi religious pilgrimage, as in this seleq (also see a prvious seleq):740

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Element</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sîkejî ji yêt ‘Edêwiya</td>
<td>In an ‘Adawiyya morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birne dîwana Şêxê ‘Edî ye</td>
<td>I was taken to Sheikh ‘Adî’s assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heva me: Zimzîm e ê Qubet li Bidor e î Kaniya Sîpî ye.</td>
<td>Our pilgrimage is: Zimzîm, Qubet Lîbidor (Sun)742 and Kaniya Sîpî.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalîq ziyaaret e</td>
<td>Lalish is the place of pilgrimage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaniya Sîpî qublet e</td>
<td>Kaniya Sîpî is the direction of prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qubleta dinê î aciret e.</td>
<td>The direction of prayer of the world and the Hereafter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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738 Qawlê Xewrê (The Hymn of Xewrê), seb. 3, in Heci 2006: 38.
739 Du‘a ‘Esêniya (Prayer of Yezidism), seb. 7, in Reço 2004 II: 1002.
740 Details are given in “Natural Elements in the Rites of Pilgrimage”, in chapter I, part II.
741 Qawlê Sîkejî ji yêt ‘Edêwiya (The Hymn of a Morning from the ‘Adawiyya), seb. 1, in Reço 2004 II: 573.
742 Cf., Qublet el-bidôr means the sun is the direction of Yezidi prayer, see Reço 2004 II: 573, n. 2.
743 Qawlê Kaniya Mara (The Hymn of the Laughter of Snakes), seb. 37, in Kreytenbrock and Rasbow 2005: 397.
1.2.3 Lalish, including Kaniya Sipî, 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.\[744\]

*Hinciye deerde le dibaye
Bi Lalisiqesit likin zige ye
erda, derman li we dibaye.*\[745\]

Anyone who has an illness
Should pilgrimage to Lalish as soon as possible
The remedy of illness is there.

The water of Kaniya Sipî is the remedy for ill and diseases:

*ji `estama beta bi `erde
ji `erde beta bi ser de
Ava Kaniya Sipî derman li i ser cigas
derde.*\[746\]

From the sky to the earth,
From the earth upward,
The water of the Kaniya Sipî is a cure for so many ills.

1.2.4 Lalish, including Kaniya Sipî, 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.


\[746\] *Daýe Morkirin* (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 6, in Bâqışrî 2003: 408.

\[747\] A historical reference of *Morkirin* Walhby writes, “[i]t seems probable that this cave and its spring (White Spring) was a place of worship to the god Mhîn and the goddess Anaihia (later Nahîd, Nahî), who was the goddess of flowing springs and running fertile waters [sic], and that a fire temple was built over it” (Walhby 1962: 13). He adds, “Baptism: Amongst the other rites that the Yezidis may have inherited from Mithraism” (Walhby 1962: 36). Additionally, Gündüz refers to it thus “Kaniya Sipî is the place of worship of the lord of the sun ‘Mîhîn’ and ‘Ahihidah’ or ‘Nahî’ is the goddess of springs and streaming/running water” (Gündüz 1998: 28). The religious texts refer to “Mûna Şêşînî” (stamp or baptism of Şêşînî the lord of sun) and “Mûna Mîhîni” (stamp or baptism of Mîhîn/holy men) are associated with baptism. As these lines of *silêqê:* “Mûna Şêşînî goyîqalî li nîvê” (The *Mor* of Şêşîms has circulated), (from DQS, seb. 8, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 202). Also, “Mûna mûna mûnûn x, Kaniya Sipî xog nîvan ê” (The baptism is of mûnûn (the holy men) Kaniya Sipî is the sacred symbol), (from DMQ, seb. 1, in Bâqışrî 2003: 407). Also, this line “Ewê nê Xîlên Xêlî Kaniya Sipî xin goyîqalî mûnûn ê” (That day Xîlên Xêlî made Kaniya Sipî the direction of prayer of mûnûn), (from QI, seb. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 83). Moreover, the name Mîn (prince) is one of God’s names in Yezidism (see Kreyenbroek 1995: 91-99; Omartkhali 2009: 13-24). Consequently, here the name Mûnûn may be derived from Xîlên and Xêlî, i.e., Mînûn, in this regard Walhby writes, “Mînûn is the Kurdish pronunciation of the name Mîhîn which is derived from Mîhîn. For Mîhîn was pronounced (Mîhîn) from the first century CE onwards”, (Walhby 1962: 42). As a result, it is possible for this above reason, *Morkirin* is performed near to Şêşînî’ shrines in Lalish. Also, possibly *mor* is derived from Mîhîn (Mîhîn) 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 verbs *kîrîn*, which means “done”, and together they become *Morkirin*. In English, it is often translated as ‘Baptism.’
Chapter II: The Role of Natural Elements in Significant Religious Places

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 \textit{Morkirin} is carried out on the hands of \textit{Mizewir} (the custodian) of the \textit{Kaniya Sipî} shrine in Lalish by sprinkling water three times by the head of the person to be baptized\(^{750}\) and reciting the \textit{Du’a\textsuperscript{a} Morkirin\textsuperscript{e}}\(^{751}\) (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 \textit{Morkirin} is \textit{Kaniya Sipî} at Lalish:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Te Mor kir li Kaniya Sipî ye}: You were baptized in the White Spring
  \item \textit{Nav li te dana bercê Eçi ye}: You are called a believer\(^{753}\) of \textit{Eçi}
  \item \textit{Şêde ú îmanet te boîne bi navê Tawusî}: Your declaration and faith are in the name of Tawusî Melek and \textit{Sultan Eçi}.
  \item \textit{Melek ú Sîlan Eçi ye.}\(^{754}\)
\end{itemize}

According to religious men, \textit{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, \textit{Morkirin} means giving a promise, being truthful and being faithful to this belief (Yezidi religion).\(^{755}\)

The role and holiness of the water of \textit{Kaniya Sipî} are explained and proved in the points that follow.

\textit{Morkirin} is a religious obligation for all Yezidis; therefore, every Yezidi must practise \textit{Morkirin} during his/her lifetime:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Ewe firwara Petşya ye}: This command is from King (i.e., God)
  \item \textit{Mora Kaniya Sipî rewya ye}: The baptism of \textit{Kaniya Sipî} is a confession.
  \item \textit{Fer e û atqata Eçi û ye.}\(^{756}\): It is an obligation and faith for our Yezidis.
\end{itemize}

\textit{Morkirin} is an obligation from \textit{Şêjins} and \textit{Mêran} (Holy Men):

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Mor mûna meran e}: The baptism is [the practice] of holy men
  \item \textit{Kaniya Sipî xoş nîşan e}: \textit{Kaniya Sipî} is the sacred symbol
  \item \textit{Petşya jî dabû beyan e}: King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear)
  \item \textit{Cîyê Eçidine Mir ú her çar biran e.}\(^{757}\): It is the place of \textit{Eçidine Mir} and four brothers.
\end{itemize}

\(^{749}\) From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The Custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\(^{750}\) See Image 18 in Appendices.
\(^{751}\) From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\(^{752}\) For the whole text of the \textit{Du’a\textsuperscript{a} Morkirin\textsuperscript{e}} (The Prayer of the Baptism) see Bâqasîrî 2003: 408.
\(^{753}\) \textit{Du’a\textsuperscript{a} Morkirin\textsuperscript{e}} (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 7, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 408.
\(^{754}\) Literally, ‘You are called the lamb of \textit{Eçi}’.
\(^{755}\) From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\(^{756}\) \textit{Beyta Kaniya Sipî} (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 5, in Sileymân 2013: 41.
\(^{757}\) \textit{Du’a\textsuperscript{a} Morkirin\textsuperscript{e}} (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 1, in Bâqasîrî 2003: 407.
Ji čaví beta devi  
Mora Şeşims lì dekevi  
Meydana meza germa nabêlîn binêv.\textsuperscript{538}  

Mora Kaniya Sişî ye  
Mêr batin û medeh jê daye  
Ew cîyê Peşê min bi xol ye.\textsuperscript{539}

From eye to mouth (face)  
The baptism of Şeşims has circulated  
The great ones are active, they do not allow you to sleep.

The baptism of Kaniya Sişî  
The holy men came and praised it  
It is the place of my King (i.e., God) himself.

\textit{Markirin} is a spiritual washing and baptising, therefore Yezidis should be baptized before death to have their soul purified.\textsuperscript{760} Thus, the custodian of the Kaniya Sişî, Esmer says, “\textit{Markirin} is spiritual washing.”\textsuperscript{761} In this regard, Alweni states that it becomes clear from \textit{Markirin} that the water in Yezidism is a holy element and has the ability to forgive humans’ sins and make them pure and clean.\textsuperscript{762} Also, its leave is from God. The following \textit{sebeqes} refer to that belief:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Mora Kaniya Sişî ûe & The baptism of the White Spring is obligatory  
Ji bo ûnsani meherë & It is an intercession for the man  
Firvar ji melêkê ekkerë.\textsuperscript{763} & That is the command of the greatest angels.
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Forz e ji bo nêr û mê ye & It is a religious obligation for male and female.  
Tuvaya xufaqtê erdê ye & All the creatures on earth  
Hêvêné wê ji Xwedê ye.\textsuperscript{764} & Its leave is from God.
\end{tabular}

\textit{Markirin} as a healthy washing of the body to give good health to a Yezidi person for longevity (i.e., lifetime):\textsuperscript{765} Yezidis are baptized by the water of Kaniya Sişî because they believe that Kaniya Sişî is the remedy for ills:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{ji ‘esmana beta bi ‘erde} & From the sky to the earth,  
\textit{ji ‘erda beta bi ser de} & From the earth upward,  
\textit{Ava Kaniya Sişî derman e li seri çiças} & The water of the Kaniya Sişî is a cure for so many ills.
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{538} \textit{Dî'ûna Silêyê} (The Morning Prayer), seb. 7, in Sîlêman and Cindî 1979: 21.
\textsuperscript{539} \textit{Dî'ûna Markirinê} (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 2, in Bûqasîfîr 2003: 407.
\textsuperscript{540} Cindî 1998: 118.
\textsuperscript{761} From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\textsuperscript{762} Alweni, n. (1999), \textit{Aşêkê Ezidê de Newan Cend Comerê û Birney Yekateperîdê de} (Yezidi Religion between Polytheism and Monotheism), 1st ed., Erbil: Salahaddin University Press, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{763} \textit{Bêyta Kaniya Sişî} (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 4, in Sîleman 2013: 41.
\textsuperscript{764} \textit{Bêyta Kaniya Sişî} (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 3, in Sîleman 2013: 40.
\textsuperscript{765} From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan
\textsuperscript{766} \textit{Dî'ûna Markirinê} (The Prayer of the Baptism), seb. 6, in Bûqasîfîr 2003: 408.
The Faqırs talk about this:

From the sky down to the earth,

From the earth upward,

The water of the Kaniya Sipî is a healing for so many ills.

Yezidis baptize some religious objects with the water of Kaniya Sipî for blessing, such as the Sineq, bread and yoghurt, the Xerqê, the Perîs of Hîlîl on top of the Qub during Tiwaf festivals, and also Perîs of tombs of Yezidi Xas during Perî Siwurêkin (inaugurating Perîs) in Cêjna Cimeyê. This sêpé refers to Baptising Perîs of tombs and Xerqê.

Here are the green and red graves of holy men

Among them, there are elegant black Xerqes, baptized with holy water

The Faqırs will abolish laments and injustice from this world.

1.2.5 Gowenda 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 Şihbû (flute) in front of the door of Kaniya Sipî in Lâlish, during and mostly at the end of all religious festivals and occasions, for instance, at Sersa and Cêjna Cimeyê.

Regarding the nature symbolism in Gowenda derê Kaniya Sipî, different sources, such as interviews with religious men in Lâlish 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:

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567 Lîwî Şêxîhêkîr (The Hymn of Sheikh Übekir), seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 100.

568 On these religious objects see “The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals”, chapter III, part II.

569 Lîwî Şêrñêdîn (The Hymn of Şerfedên), seb. 8, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 369-370.

570 This refers to whoever is part of a pious group of Yezidi people, some of them wear a Xerqê as the dress of the mystics.

571 “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.

572 They are special musical instruments for religious observances played only by Qewals.

573 See Image 19 in Appendices.
Heka tú piyana hêwêne Kaniya Sîpî ji
min dike?
Hêwêne Kaniya Sîpî ji beribber e.\textsuperscript{774}

If you ask me about the rennet of Kaniya Sîpî
The rennet of Kaniya Sîpî has existed
from pre-ernity.

Lalisê ber sikan e
Kaniya Sîpî nîşan e
Nîşana 'erd î ezman a [e].\textsuperscript{775}

Lalish lies at the centre
Kaniya Sîpî is the sacred symbol
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 Sîpî as the symbol of the first movement and first sound of the water that flowed out of the \textit{Dur} (after it exploded) at the time of Creation.\textsuperscript{776} A \textit{sebeqe} refers to this feature of the \textit{Dur}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Av ji Durê berikê}
  \item \textit{Bà behira bè seri bè bini}
  \item \textit{Bê ré î bè deri}
  \item \textit{Êzdanê me ser behirê gerî.}\textsuperscript{777}
\end{itemize}

Water flowed from the \textit{Dur}
It became an ocean\textsuperscript{778} with neither
beginning nor end
With neither beginning nor end\textsuperscript{779}
My God moved around over the ocean.

Regarding this belief, Ġindî 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.”\textsuperscript{780}

\textsuperscript{774} \textit{Qawûlê Qere Fêrûçan} (The Hymn of the Black Fûrûçan), seb. 16, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 97.
\textsuperscript{775} \textit{Qawûlê Zebûnê Mekûrî} (The Hymn of the Weak Broken One), seb. 20, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 60. Cf., this is another variant of that \textit{sebeqe}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Lalisê rikan e
  \item Kaniya Sîpî ser nîşan e
  \item Nîşana 'erd î ezman e. (QKM, seb. 38, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 397).
\end{itemize}

* Perhaps it means Lalish is the centre of the Yezidi religion.
\textsuperscript{776} From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Siêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\textsuperscript{777} \textit{Qawûlê Aşîrûnê Dinçayê} (The Hymn of the Creation of the World), seb. 13, in Bâçasîrî 2003: 237.
\textsuperscript{778} Literally, ‘a sea has neither beginning nor end.’
\textsuperscript{779} Literally, ‘with neither way nor door.’
\textsuperscript{780} Ġindî 1998: 106.
1.2.6 Selakîn (Holy Greeting) with the water of the Zîmzîm spring

Selakîn\textsuperscript{781} is one of the Yezidi obligatory rituals when they visit Lalish at ordinary times and during religious occasions.\textsuperscript{782} In this ritual, they wash their hands and faces first and then sprinkle the water of Zîmzîm 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 Selakîn. This sprinkling will continue until all the names have been remembered.\textsuperscript{783} Here, 
sebeqes refer to Zîmzîm as the place of Selakîn and pilgrimage for Yezidis:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Zîmzîm ù qublet li bîdor in & Zîmzîm and \textit{Qublet el-bidor} (the sun is the direction of prayer) \\
Kursîyê di batin da bî nûr in & They are the thrones (i.e., place) of spiritual baptism (i.e., Selakîn) \\
Mekanê Êzídê min i xor in.\textsuperscript{784} & They are the place of my red Êzîd (i.e., God). \\
Kaniya Sîpê mûra min e & Kaniya Sîpê is my baptism, \\
Kaf û mizar û zîmzîm beca min e & The cave, the cavern and the Zîmzîm spring are my pilgrimage. \\
\textit{Qublet el-bidor} qûlêta min e.\textsuperscript{785} & \textit{Qublet el-bidor} (sun) is my direction of prayer. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The sprinkling of water in Selakîn 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.\textsuperscript{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 Şerîk in the \textit{Tawusêrê} festival,\textsuperscript{787} the custom of drinking water in a dream in the Xîdir Eliyas feast, which symbolizes having a good chance of marriage.\textsuperscript{788} Moreover, as a Yezidi marriage custom, the bride and groom are

\textsuperscript{781} Selakîn 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 Selakîn ritual. Moreover, the essential difference between Markentin and Selakîn is that Yezidis are baptized by the water of the Kaniya Sîpê only once in their lives, but Selakîn is by the water of the Zîmzîm spring and can be performed at any time when Yezidis visit Lalish, i.e., more than once.

\textsuperscript{782} See Image 20 in Appendices.

\textsuperscript{783} From the interview with Himê Berekat Hesen (The custodian of Zîmzîm Spring), 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{784} \textit{Qewâlê Sîhokê ji yêt Êdawîya} (The Hymn of a Morning from the ‘Adawîya), seb. 2, in Reço 2004 II: 573.

\textsuperscript{785} \textit{Çehdê Dînê} (The Declaration of Faith), seb. 5, in Sîlêman and Cindî 1979: 26.

\textsuperscript{786} From the interview with Himê Berekat Hesen, 07.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{787} About it see “\textit{Tawusêrê} (The wandering of the Tawun)”, in chapter III, part II.

\textsuperscript{788} For additional information see “Çejnc Xidîr Liyas (the Xidîr 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 Semagîran (the Religious Dance)

Sema790 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 Dêf (tambourine) and the Şihab (flute). Religious men (exclusively) go around the flames of the sacred Çeçelîn (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

Bêçîne ser çêyayê Mêşêtê  Let us go up the Mêşêtê mount  
Bikêçîn sê gerêd Semyêzê.796 [We] perform Sema three times.  
Xôzî runîştâne li cêsa 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, Wabûlı writes, “in Arabic (Sema) that is (hearing). In Kurdish (Sema) means (dance) it may have been borrowed from the Darwish orders of remote times” (Wabûlı 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 (Semye), which is originally from the word ‘somet’ or ‘some’ 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-Mîrîyûnî Tarîh us Mu’taqî’dîn (Mithraism: History and Beliefs), trans. Kh. Sulamanc, Duhok: Xarî, p. 26). CE, since ancient times, the ‘Homê’ plant had been burnt and was called ‘somet’ or ‘some.’ 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 ‘Sema, Sema.' (Bêkassîr 2003: 145). Also, in Yezidism, religious men rotate around the flames of a fire.
791 Semagîr (the person who performs the Sema ceremony) are the members of the spiritual council of Yezidis, they are Pêçîmîr, Mir Hecc, Şêxê Wezir, Baba Şex, Koçêk, Baba Çavîş and Babê Gavan.
792 Bêkassîr 2003: 144.
793 See Image 03 in Appendices.
794 Which are Êçî, Qamiînî, Şîqûmî, Şerfellîn, Bilînd, Zerqa and Sertîbî (Bêkassîr 2003: 144; Reço 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 Reço 2004 I: 51-52; Omârkhalî 2011-2012: 187-188.
795 I.e., in Çejna Cîmiyê (the festival of the gathering), Çejna Cîlî Zevîstênî (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter), Çejna Seraîdî (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year). The places of performing Sema, as it is clear in religious texts, Sema are Çelûs Mîr (the assembly of Mir) and on the top of the Mêşêt mount at Lalish. Moreover, one, Sema is performed exclusively at graves and is called Sema Mîrîya (Sema of the deceased people) (Omârkhalî 2011-2012: 185). It has another name, Sema Sertîbî (Sema of the cemetery).
796 Bejîê Łavîjî Pîrê (the Bejî of Łavîjî Pîrê), nêh. 4, in X. Şîlêman and X. Gîndî 1979: 128.
Cibê Sema lê dikêşin feqîr e.\(^{797}\)
The place where Faqir perform Sema.

*The role of nature and nature symbolism in Semagêran.* The Çegeltn 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 Çegeltn is that the distinctive one in the middle represents Tawusi Melek and the other six angels of the *Heft Sure*.\(^{798}\) 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 Çegeltn, 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, Omarkhalî 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:

\[ Xerqê sitar e, derwişya li pé wî xelalî kîr teşîş e \]
Moleka li ezmana Sema Qanûni
\[ kéşa, ... \] \(^{804}\)
Bawîrî serê bemû xêra
Moleka sema qanûni li ‘ezmana digêra
Momîn bi wê bawîrîyê gebiştin diwana
\[ Cebêr a [o]. \] \(^{806}\)

\[ Xerqê is a tunic, Darwish looked for that gift \]
\[ The angels performed Sema Qanûni in the sky \]

Faith is above all good things
\[ The angels performed the ritual Sema Qanûni in the sky \]

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\(^{797}\) *Qemî Siyê Îêzi* (The Hymn of Siya Ês), sbh. 17, in Xêlef 1996: 12.
\(^{799}\) From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xûrtb Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
\(^{802}\) Wahby 1962: 28.
\(^{803}\) Omarkhalî 2011-2012: 185.
\(^{804}\) Du‘û Xerqê (The Prayer of the Xerqê), sbh. 14, in Reço 2004 II: 1033.
\(^{805}\) Literally, 'inspection'.
\(^{806}\) Du‘û Bawîrîyê (The Prayer of Belief), sbh. 16, in Kreyenbrock 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 *Sersalek* (the Feast of the Yezidi New Year), *Cejna Çilê Iławêne* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Summer), *Cejna Çilê Zivistate* (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter), *Cejna Cimaýê* (the Festival of the Gathering), *Sefera Nan â Mast* (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) and the ceremony of Baptising the *Tawus Sînteq* before *Tawusgêran*.

### 2 Civata Boza (the assembly of Boza)

This is the second holiest place in Yezidism after Lalish, which is why it is called *Kâjik Lalish* (Small Lalish). It is believed that *Civata Boza* was the place of assembly of Yezidis’ *Xar*:

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Bi qedë Civata Boza
Riwale Kevin ù Şahsiwar deșta Bîbanê
key, …
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For the sake of the assembly of *Boza*

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Riwale Kevin and Şahsiwar in the plain of Beban, …
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Moreover, it is named *Mebedra Boza* (the Presence of Boza), which may be connected with the belief that Sheikh ʿAdî was present there in the past. According to some sources, its history dates back to Sheikh Adî’s era.

#### 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),

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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 ʿAdî’s era (1073/8-1162), when Sheikh ʿAdî 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 (*Reço 2004 II: 963; Xetari, E. n. (2011), “Kîjik Lalîş” (Small Lalish), *Mehâl*, No. 5, p. 69*).

808 See Image 21 in Appendices.


810 About Şahsiwar figure see Kreyenbroek 1995: 115-116.

811 Riwâle Kevin and Şahsiwar are holy men and their sanctuaries are located in the village of Bèban.

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 Sheykan, some thirty kilometres east of Ain Sîmi. 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 Şirî (the Tree of Milk), also there are two ‘holy’ stones named Berê Ñirara and Berê Lakîm.\footnote{From the interview with Tariq Xidîr Ézîdin (the custodian of Cîvatà Boza), 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.}

### 2.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed in Cîvatà Boza

Because of the veneration of Cîvatà 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 Kantîya Boza (the spring of Boza) if they could not go to Lalish for any reason.\footnote{Babesîx, E. (2011), “Carkê din… Kicêk Lalîş” (Again… Small Lalish), Mehîfî, No. 6, p. 25.} 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 Cîvatà 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.\footnote{From the interview with Tariq Xidîr Ézîdin, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.}

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.\footnote{See Reć 2004 II: 963-964.}

### 3 Zëw (Courtyard)

Zëw means ‘courtyard’. As a general term in Yezidism it is used for cemeteries, temples and religious places.\footnote{See Image 22 and Image 23 in Appendices.} 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 Zëws in different Yezidi areas\footnote{Pir Esîbiya is the eponym of a subdivision of the Pîrs of Cîrwan, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 110.} such as Zëwa Mehmud Reşan on Mêquilûb, Zëwa Pirê Esîbîya,\footnote{Pir Esîbiya is the eponym of a family of Pîrs and the head of the forty families of Pîrs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 108-109; Omarmali 2008: 116.} about 6 km north of the town of Ain Sîfnî, and about 4 km south-east of Lalish; Zëwa Îspînê (Zëwa Mendê Mal Ate) in Ain Sîfnî; Zëwa Pir Cîrwan in the village of Cîrwan, about 11 km to the east of Ain Sîfnî; Zëwa Pirê Fatî in the village of Kîs Qelê, about 3 km to the south of Ain Sîfnî; and Zëwa Soceê Batê in the village of Babirê. All of them are in the Sheikhani district. There is also a Zëw named Zëwa Başîk û Belgeän, in Ba’siqê; and Zëwa Pir Hîsîn Meman\footnote{He is the eponym of a family of Pîrs and the head of the forty families of Pîrs, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 108-109; Omarmali 2008: 116.} in the Herîr plain in Erbil province. Among all of them, there is a famous Zëwa in the collective village of Khânke in Duhok province, called Zëwa Memê Şîrân. Yezidis...
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 Hesêyê Memê Şivan.

Religious texts refer to the names and holiness of some of these Zêwa, as land and courtyard in Yezidism:

The Zêw of Memê Şivan:

Bi qedre mér ũ mergeba Śîxadi
Memê Şîva, Gavanê Zerza, … 821

For the sake of the holy men and the sanctuary of Sheikh ‘Adî
[For the sake of] Memê Şîva, Gavan Zerza, … 822

Ew qubā li dîban e
Dû şîr li ser rawatân e
Yek memen yek ‘Ebdîl 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 Ėsîbiya:824

Zêwa deryêyê Lalisê
Hey Şêro yî ji Lalisê
Īsîbiya bi te nesê825

The Zêw (courtyard) at the front of Lalish valley
O, lion in Lalish
May (the Zêw of) Ėsîbiya be ‘peasant’826 to you.

The Zêw of Hesin Činari:

Bi qedre divâna Omêrxala
Zêwa Hesin Činari, … 827

For the sake of the assembly of Omêrxala828
The courtyard of Hesin Činari, …

The Zêw of Pîr Cerwan:

Distêrm fêçîre
Zêwa nava zîr e
Wi têda lawê pêr e.829

I am talking about Feqîrs
Zêw is in the moor830
Lawê Pîr is inside it.

821 Dînegê, 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 Şîvan (Qeside 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 (Qesida of Îsîbiya), seb. 7, in Hecî 1996: 72.
826 The meaning of the word nesê is not clear.
827 Dînegê, 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 (Qesida of Pîrê Cerwan), seb. 1, in Reço 2004 II: 695.
830 This is an indication of 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 Zêws
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 Zêw, 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/Zebman (Cemetery)
The word Mezar means ‘a (holy) place to visit’. In English, it is mostly translated as ‘cemetery’ or ‘shrine’. The Yezidi writer, H. Şinkâr, 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 Xar. They are named after Yezidi Xar and other holy beings. Sometimes the name of one Mezar is found in different Yezidi areas, for example, the Mezar of Şêims in the village of Cifêriye and also in Kiroc valley in Shingal. There is another one in the village of Gîrêpan 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 Sîlêman Youssif (the custodian of the Zêw of Memê Şîvan), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqi Kurdistan.
832 From the interview with Xezal Sîlêman Youssif (the custodian of the Zêw of Memê Şîvan), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqi Kurdistan.
834 See Image 24 and Image 25 in Appendices.
835 Yezidis’Mezar in the Shingal mountain are: Amadinin the Eastern part, Sheikh Sin, Sheikh Mend, Siwarê Girukê, Deçê Mêra, Amadin (another one) and Pirê Ewra are in the Northeast, Fexredin in the Western part, Sheikh Abdulqadir in the Southwest, Çîmênan in the top of it, Mam Rêjû i Rêjûka on the edge of a mount, Şêîms and Pîra Fat both in Cifêriye village, Sheikh Mend (another one) in Hîlêqî area, Şêîlaqsim and Sheik ‘Yadi, both near to Kersê valley, Hacêlî and Şêrêfêrîn both near to Rajid village, Şêîms (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 Mezár,\textsuperscript{836} in general, have holy water, springs, gardens, trees, stones, caves, etc. About Mezár, 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.”\textsuperscript{837} Luke also refers to this: “Beside each shrine, there was generally a sacred tree enclosed by a wall.”\textsuperscript{838}

Most Mezár have holy water and springs, for instance, Sheikh Mend and Sit Nefisah in the village of Bahzani. In Mezár of Evdê Reş, there is Kaniîa Evdê Reş (the Spring of Evdê Reş) in the village of Dêrebûn, in Duhok province. Also, at the Mezár of Piraxay, in Shingal there is Kaniîa Piraxay (the spring of Piraxayê), with a holy stream and trees. There is a spring called Kaniîa Kedrî (the Spring of Kedrî), which is located in the village of Solax in Shingal, and there are holy trees there.

The majority of Mezár have holy trees, for example, sacred trees in the Mezárê Sit Nefis (the Mezár of Sit Nefis) in Ba’śliq. Also, there are a fig tree and a spring in the Mezár of Sheikh Beko in Bahzani.\textsuperscript{839} Moreover, such places often have holy stones; at the Mezár 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

Mezár 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 Mezár are largely the same as those of the Zîw, such as Yezidis kiss its natural elements, like trees and stones. People pray there in front of its trees and lamps.\textsuperscript{840} Further, Yezidis use Mezár 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 Mezár.\textsuperscript{841} In addition to that, cleaning the nature of Mezár is good and gracious, in contrast to deteriorating and polluting it, which is forbidden.

\textsuperscript{837} Drower 1941: 28.
\textsuperscript{838} Luke 1925: 133.
\textsuperscript{839} See, Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.
\textsuperscript{840} From the interview with Taqir Xidir Ézîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
\textsuperscript{841} For additional information see “The Four Elements of Nature in Religious Healing Practices”, in chapter IV, part II.
5 Qub ũ Avahiyê 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 Şêxims 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 Pîrâxâyê (the spring of Pîrâxâyê) with a stream in the Qub of Pîrâxâyê, 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 Topê Xas (the orb of Xas) on the corner of Qubs and inside them, like Qub of Çavê 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 Tiwats, 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.

\[\text{Hey, Adîyê Şêcê min e Xudanê quba}\]
\[\text{mezin e}\]
\[\text{Ziyanê ti diçine}\]
\[\text{Dê twaf ken babê Melik Şêcê Sin e.}^{844}\]

O Adî is my sheikh, the lord of the great Qub
Pilgrims visit it
They will kiss the gate of [the Qub of] Melik Sheikh Sin.

During religious occasions and on Wednesdays, the custodian light lamps in those places. Yezidis may swear oaths by a Qub:

\[\text{Bi wê qubê kem ser li erê e}\]
\[\text{We di bin da diyêyn fiind û şemalêt geş e,} ...^{845}\]

I swear by the Qub whose top is in the sky
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.

\(^{844}\) Qesida Adîya Şêcê Mine (The Qesida of Adiya is my Sheikh), seb.1, in Reşo 2004 II: 668.

\(^{845}\) Qewê Şêcê Henêti Sultan (The Hymn of Sheikh Hesen is the Sultan), seb. 10, in Heci 2002: 322.
Yezidis stand beside *Qub* and pray towards the sun and ask *Şeşirms* to fulfil their wishes:

- *Mestim ji qedebê*  
  I am intoxicated from the cup
- *Lalîşê xudanê qubebê*  
  O Lalish is the owner of the *Qub*
- *Da em bi Şeşims bideyn medebê.*  
  Let us give praise to *Şeşims.*
- *Fericên li wan qubêt bi när*  
  I gazed on luminous *Qubs*
- *Xarê li ber bestî mebdar ilî mişûr*  
  The holy men gathered around *Qub* [as the place of] for good deeds and consolation
- *Bebişt ewe wê li gelynê kûr*  
  Paradise is the one in the deep valley

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 *Qubê bi Nûr* (luminous *Qubs*) as in the above *sebege*. *Şebeqêş* stress the connection between *Qub* and light when they refer to *Qub* as the light that brightens from the light:

- *Şecêk wê li ber bar de*  
  A holy man is in the assembly
- *Bêy qubê kem bi gelynê kûr de*  
  I swear by that *Qub* in the deep valley
- *Şenqa närê ji när de.*  
  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 Nişangeb (Shrine)

The word *Nişangeb* 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 *Nişangebs* 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 *Nişangeb*. They symbolize *Xas* or holy beings and are mostly named after them. The name *Nişangeb* may be used for more than one holy place in different Yezidi areas. There are many *Nişangeb* in Lalish, *Civata Boza* and in *Meçars* and they are also found alone in different Yezidi holy places.

### 6.1 The natural elements in the structure of *Nişangebs*

Some *Nişangebs* consist of natural phenomena, such as springs, garden, cave, stones or piles of stones, and trees.

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848 *Li*, Lalish valley.
850 There are no data about their number but only in Civata Boza there are almost one hundred *Nişangi*, from the interview with Tariq Xidir Ezidin, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
As to springs, there are the Kaniya Şıvana in Lalish, Kaniya Eşê Reş in the village of Dērehbûn, Kaniya Şexcê Zeri in the village of Bêtnar in Sheikhman, Kaniya Piraxâyê in the village of Kulkan on Shingal Mountain and Kaniya Bekîra is located near to the village of Zoraa on Shingal Mountain and Tawngêran ceremony should be held at the Bekîra spring, before the Qeşwâls go touring the Shingal area. The following sebeşe refers to the point that Kaniya Sipî is nişan:

| Mor mora mîran e | The baptism is [the practice] of holy men |
| Kaniya Sipî xoş nişan e | Kaniya Sipî is pleasant nişan (i.e., Nişangel) |
| Peşayi jê dabi bêyan e | King (i.e., God) created it (made it appear) |
| Ciyê Ezidine Mir ü her çar biran e. | It is the place of Ezidîne Mir and four brothers. |

There are many trees in Lalish that are regarded as Nişangel and are mostly named after Xas, such as Dara Baça Îso, Dara İbrâhim Îk, and Dara Hesen Kejar. In other Yezidi areas, Neb Dar (Nine trees) in the North of the Ain Safîn town, Dara Şexcê Batê (the tree of Şexsê Batê) is a mulberry tree in the village of xorza in Sheikhman district, Dara Haci Alî is also a mulberry tree, located in the east of the village of Pêbizînê, and Dara Sîxîrî Cîn is an oak tree in Helêqiya district in Shingal. Dara Minçâ (the Tree of Wishes) is in the west of the village of Bar‘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 Mehrikan, near the Çilmêran shrine. This sebeşe emphasizes the veneration of trees in general, but when it comes to the word Zîaret, it can be translated as pilgrimage and kissing. Yezidis pilgrimage only to those trees that are identified as being Nişangel (i.e., make it a religious symbol):

| Hekê ‘erdekê bîbînî, şaret ke | When you see earth, mark it (i.e., make it a religious symbol) |
| Derûşêkî bîbînî, ‘ibadet ke | When you see a Darwish, venerate him |
| D˘arêkî bîbînî, zîyaret ke. | 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 Nişangel in Lalish, such as Şikefta Omersala, Şikefta Hesen Çimari, Şikefta Mam Îso and Şikefta Mehmed Reben. In other Yezidi areas, Şikefta Dûlêvana is located near the village of Zêrwa on the Shingal Mountain. There are many sacred caves in the Şîlo valley, near the village of Bara in Shingal, named Şikeftên Geliyê Şîlo (the caves of Şîlo valley). Religious texts emphasize the holiness of the caves:

| Hûn bide ne xatîra bebiştê û darê | For the sake of the paradise and the tree, |
| Kafê û mxarihê, … | [For the sake of] The cave and the cavern, … |

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851 See Image 27 and Image 28 in Appendices.
853 See Image 29 and also see Image 14, Image 15 Image and 56 in Appendices.
About a stone or a pile of stones, for this type there are many Nişangeb named by Xas in Lalish, like Nişangeba Zebênyê, Nişangeba Melek Zeyn, Nişangeba Pîr Bîlar, etc. In other Yezidi areas, there are Nişangeba Mam Xinuq, about 1 km west of Mezari Şerfedin in Shingal, and Nişangeba Gavanê Zerza in the village of Keberto in the Duhok province. This xêne refers to the veneration of stones:

Şêxîti mirazê xêne
Xudê rêya beşêyê ji me ra diswarê
Yê Xudêî tu miraçê me hêkê li ber bere miraçê.\(^{57} \) To be Sheikh is a wish
God wishes a true path for us
O God! You fulfil our wishes through the
Stone of Wishes.

6.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed beside Nişangebs

There are some religious observances based on the veneration of nature in Nişangeb, 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 Nişangeb 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.\(^{58} \)

Yezidis often believe in healing practices through natural elements found at Nişangeb. 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.\(^{59} \)

7 Silavgeb (Place of Greeting)

Silangeb is a Kurdish word that literally means “place of greeting”\(^{660} \), 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 Silargeb is named.\(^{862} \) Perhaps the name of Silangeb is used for other holy places in different Yezidis places.\(^{863} \) A great number of Silangeb are in Lalish, Melbera Boqa and Mezar, and they are also located individually in different places.

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\(^{56}\) Gavanê Zerza is the protector of cattle in Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 112; Asatryan and Arakelova 2004: 256-259.

\(^{57}\) Du’u Şêxîtiê (The Prayer of Sheiks), sees. 7, in Reço 2004 II: 1005.

\(^{58}\) From the interview with Esmer Emûn Mirad (the custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) As a name, Silageb is a compound word consisting of two parts, the first Sîlar, i.e., glorification and greeting, and the second Geb is a suffix that refers to a place, the term means “the place of greetings”.

\(^{61}\) See Image 30 in Appendices.

\(^{62}\) From the interview with Heci Şêmo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\(^{63}\) The number of Silangeb is not specified. From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzidin, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
Chapter II: The Role of Natural Elements in Significant Religious Places

7.1 The natural elements in the structure of Silâveghs

As previously mentioned, Silâvegh consists of natural elements, such as one stone or a pile of stones.

7.2 The natural elements in religious observances performed at Silâveghs

People who visit a Silâvegh and pass by it should put a small stone on it, indicating greeting to the Xas and kissing the Qub facing that Silâvegh. There is a Silâvegh in Lalish, on the top of Mt Mişet, which know as simply Silâvegh, or Silâvegha Lalish (Silâvegh 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. Silâvegha Pir Haci Ali/Haciyal is near Baadir; when people from Niserye visited Ba’adra, they first saw the Qub of Haci Ali and kissed a stone and put it on that pile. Silâvegha Memê Şivan in the village of Zeynya faces Memê Şivan Mezar in Khanke, Silâvegha Pirê Haciyal faces Pirê Haciyal Mezar in Shingal, Silâvegha Sheikh Mend faces Sheikh Mend Qub in the village of Cedalê and Silâvegha Çınçınkogê in the village of Osîfsa is located in East of Sinun town. Additionally, it is a religious duty to keep it clean from anything not suitable, like spitting and decay.

şiveqes refer to the same belief as mentioned above about Silâvegh as the point or place where people can see the Qubs at a distance:

Çome silâveghë I went to the Silâvegh
Ferëc me li qubebë I gazed on the Qubs,
Pîrê Lîbanan grano.866 O, beloved Pirê Libnan.

Çome silâveghë I went to the Silâvegh
Ferëc me li qubebë, …867 Our duty is towards the Qub, …

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 Nîğangeh (shrine) which consists of a sacred spring, a tree or a cave. The Silâvegh (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 Sheik Hersen Rêşkanî, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqi Kurdistan.
865 From the interviews with Heç Şêmê Mîrad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xidê Berekat Kesô, 05.07.2015, Sêcê village, Iraqi Kurdistan.
866 Beysi Cindê (The Beyt of the Commander), seh. 45, in Silêman and Cindê 1979:50.
867 Qevê Sêcê Hesênê Silêman (The Hymn of Sheikh Hesen is the Sultan), seh. 20, in Kreyenhroek 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: Ĉejna Sersalé (the Feast of the Yezidi New Year). In summer: Ĉejna Çilé Haviné (the Feast of the Forty Days of Summer). In autumn: Ĉejna Çimayé (the Festival of the Gathering). In winter: Ĉejna Çilé Zuwistané (the Feast of the Forty Days of the Winter), Ĉejna rağyan Éziz (the Fast of Éziz), Ĉejna Bélindo (Bélindo Feast) and Ĉejna Xudir Lýas (Xudir Lýas 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.668 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.”669 What is more, on the veneration of the four seasons, the second point

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669 Kreyenbroek 1995: 150.
of part four of Kitēba Cēlua (the Book of Revelation) states that “the four elements, the four seasons and the four bases were presented to meet the needs of creatures.”

1 In Spring

1.1 Čejna Sersalē (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)

This feast has different names: Sersal (Yezidi’s New Year feast), Ida Hēka (the eggs feast), and Çarşema Sor (red Wednesday). As a term, this feast occurs on the first Wednesday of Nisan (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 ofreviving and renewing all creatures; plants, trees and all animals.” The sources refer to the point that it has an ancient history.

1.1.1 Nature and the time of the feast

According to Yezidi tradition, on the first Wednesday of Nisan in every year, Tawusi 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:

- Çarşema seré nisanê, On the first Wednesday of April
- Gul ği çîşek batin meydânê, Flowers grow on earth
- Tawusi Melek rêşê îmanê, Tawusi Melek is the leader of faith
- Nîsan le kir e, [He] created April
- Bihar pê dîxemîle, Spring has been adorned by him
- Kezik ú sor ú spê û zer e. 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:

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870 Bitmer 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 Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawiş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi 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 Boýik 2013: 21.
874 Literally, ‘come to field.’
Li çarşamba xəq bə jiyan
Kesik bən düşə ü çiya ü şevə ü xoqan
Hənni bi kərəma Pəxə min i Yezdan.

Hat çarşembəvasor e
Nisani xəmilənd bə bi xo re
Jı batın da ye bi mor e.875

Nisani is the month during which grass appears and starts to grow on earth. It is also the month of fruit production:

Nisani wa didet xebėr
Heke qəz bebara xo baxəmlinim ji kesik
üburi xapə ü zer e
Jı xedə her yazda məba li gel min biden xebər 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 Nisani. 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 Tiwafi that are held during Nisani 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 Çıtalikdərin (lighting lamps) during the feast
It is a religious obligation to light lamps on the eve of the feast in the houses and Xaz 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 Səkə Me'rifeti (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 xebəq refers to that number with the eternal light:

877 Details are given in “Tiwafi (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 illuminated 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 Səkə Me'rifeti 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.
Sureke ji surët batîné
Sê sel ù şëst ù şëş 'alim têda dikin
zundîné
Lî sê sekînîye Sîltan Ézi, núrî baqî,
Ékî bî tinê.881

A mystery of the mysteries of the esoterly
Three hundred and sixty-six wises men are
studying
The head of all is only Sîltan Ézi (i.e.,
God), the eternal light.

Also, this sebege refers to that number with the name of Tawusi Melek:

366 sê sed ù şëst ù şëş silav ë ye, bê bê
Toxanî mileti Ézi xîlas kîrîye ji tavanê,
bej mala malê
Navê wi ye, mala min, mala min, mala
bâbê min e, Tawusi Meleke, bej
malê, ...882

Three hundred and sixty-six greetings to
him oh oh
He rescued the seed of the Yezidi nation
from the flood, oh oh
His name is Tawusi Melek, oh, ...

Some religious men refer to it as the symbol of the descending light of Tawusi Melek
on earth and the coming of goodness and blessings on earth.883 Hence, the common
point between Tawusi 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
Tawusi 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:

Hat çarşembawû sor ù zêr e
Behar xemîland bî ji kesîk ù sor ù sipî
ù zêr e
Me pé xemîland sererê e.

Came the red and yellow Wednesday
It adorned the Spring with green, red,
white and yellow
We adorned the house-door with it.

Hintîyê serederê bîcêmînê
Bîla pişiyar bîket evi ji ber çîne

Whoever adorns the house-door?
They should ask what this is for

881 Órawî Şirinû (The hymn of Shirina), seb. 4, in Reşo 2004 I: 375.
883 From the interviews with Baba Çawî Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Deşî Şêx
Zeydîn, 02.04.2018, Pforzheim, Germany.
884 See Image 33 in Appendices.
885 Silêman 1985: 10.
Chapter III: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals

Eve xolatât Tawusî Melek û Sîltan
Ezîn û. 888

This is the gift (symbol) of Tawusî Melek and Sîltan Ezî (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, activity 889 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 colouring 891 and its breaking, have a special significance in this feast and that is why this feast is sometimes called İda Hêka (the feast of eggs). Yezidis have a ritual of playing by eggs in a competition. Moreover, Yezidis spread egghulls 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:

\[ \begin{align*}
Li \text{ mehîkerê } & \text{ deng bîke} \\
Li \text{ çarîmbûnûva } & \text{ serê nisanê reng bîke} \\
\text{E mêlê xo safî bîke.} & \text{893}
\end{align*} \]

Pray for intercession
Adorn it [the egg] on the first Wednesday of April with colours
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

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888 Qarîlî Çarîmbû [The Hymn of Wednesday], seb. 20, 21, in Kişto 2004: 209.
889 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xirto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çavîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Bâqûsiîrî 2003: 134, 137; Hâlî, M. H. (2013), al-Ayyîdîlyut (Yezidisim), Dubak: Hawar, p. 157.
891 See Image 34 and and Image 57 in Appendices.
893 Qarîlî Çarîmbû [The Hymn of Wednesday], seb. 17, in Kişto 2004: 208.
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 festivals and feasts, i.e., they are not exclusive to the Serfāl 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 Sîhal (flute), dancing, and communal meals.900

1.2.1 Çımbıl Kilirin (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 Eli, 03.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq; Merwan Xelîl Bahîrî, 25.11.2017, Oldenburg, Germany.


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 Şerpîdîn and Cema Şebîl Qasîm. About them see Reço, A. S. (2013), “Cemaîc Şengalî” (Local Annual Festivals in Sinîr), in E. Boyîk (ed.), Cenîm Ezîdîyân (Yezidîan Feasts), Erbil: Çapxana Rewşenbi, pp. 243-251.

899 A historical reference of Tiwaf, Sileman states, “I asked many elders about the history of Tiwaf. They said our Tiwaf date back before Sheikh ‘Adî’s [1073/8-1162] era” (Sîleman 1985: 25). Moreover, some religious men believe that Tiwaf relate to Serfāl (the Feast of the Yezidi New Year), therefore their history is also linked with the Serfāl history. It is not clear, but it is before Sheikh ‘Adî’s era in the 12th century, (From the interviews with Bala Çavîsh Hesen Sîleman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Şero Ibrahim Kișo, 07.07.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqi Kurdistan).

900 See Image 35 in Appendices.

901 See “The symbolism of Çîn in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.
1.2.2 Markirina Perya (Baptising Perîş)

Perîş are pieces of colourful fabric, originally seven in number, with seven different colours, tied to the top of the Qub. On the day before Tiwaş, the Mişînî (the custodian) of the Qub replaces the old Perîş with the new ones902 after baptising them with the water of the White Spring in Lalish for blessing. This sebeşe refers to the colourfulness of the Perîş on the top of the Qub.

Me ji Adiya deng e
Bi we qubê kem seri bi reng e
Ji bawîrê şara tênê veng e.903

We call for Adî
I swear by that Qub with the colour on top (i.e. the colourfulness of the Perîş)
They gather904 from all cities.

As regards renewing the Perîş, 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 Şêkadî (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 Qesida Adiya Şêked Mîne (The Qesida of Adiya is my Sheikh), seb. 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 668. The same sebeşe is in Qewdê Dîstrêmê, Şêket 3 (The hymn of Dîstrêmê, Version 3), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 I: 411.
904 It seems the use of the word enge (literally, “war”) seems to be for the purpose of rhyme.
905 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xarto Haci Ismail, 03. 07. 2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
906 From the interview with Baba Çawîş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Halû 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 Markirina (Baptism)”, in chapter II, part II.
number of religious men emphasize that Yezidis, by baptising their bread and yoghurt in the water of Kaniya Sîpê, 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 Dua Sîfê / Xiwarinê (the prayer of the meal), they say, “bread is from God’s treasure and its leaven is from Kaniya Sîpê”:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nan ji xêcîna Xudê bê} & \quad \text{The bread (sustenance) is from God’s} \\
\text{Hîvên ji Kaniya Sîpê bê} & \quad \text{treasure} \\
\text{The leaven is from the White Spring.} \\
\text{The leaven is from the White Spring, …}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{Nanê ji xêcîna Şêcîdî ve} \]

\[\text{Hîvênê ji kaniya şîpî ve, …}^{914}\]

Bringing oil for Cirabilkêri (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 Sinaj\(^{917}\) (the image of Tawus) from its place in Xezêna 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 Sinaj in Yezidi areas\(^{919}\) and conduct special ceremonies. Qewals recite the holy hymns and play the holy music of the Def and the Şîhâb.

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\(^{912}\) From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîrto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çâviş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Bâqasîrî 2003: 168.


\(^{914}\) Dua a Sîfê (=Xiwarinê), ‘The Prayer of the Meal’, seb. 4, in Cellî and Cellî 1978a: 435.

\(^{915}\) See “The symbolism of Cirî 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 Tawusi Melek and Gêran as contextual meaning ‘wandering’ and together they become Tawusgêran (the wandering of Tawus). Also, Yezidi use the word Sinaj for Tawus in Tawusgêran. As a historical brief, some sources refer to that, because the veneration of Tawusgêran is connected with Sinaj (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.

\(^{917}\) 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 Sanajaq of the Yazidis a corrupted form of the Mithraic standard of Hatra”, Wahby 1962: 39.

\(^{918}\) Sinaj, 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 Tawusi Melek, see Image 04 in Appendices. For more information see Silêman 1985: 29-30; Gindî 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,

\(^{919}\) 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. Kreyenbroek 2009: 22-23.

\(^{919}\) Traditionally, Yezidis have seven Sinajq (Sinajq), 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’šîqa and Bahzani, Shingal
1.4.1 Tawus Ciwankirin (baptising the Siqeq)

In the seasons of Tawusgeran, the Siqeq is brought to Lalish to be baptized by sprinkling it with the water of Kaniya Sipt. Moreover, Empson states that the “Siqeq” when put into holy (Sheikh ‘Adi) water, had curative power. Here we have a reason for the cult. This sehçe refers to bringing the Siqeq out of Lalish, perhaps it is after baptising them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ew siqeq sor u sipi ye</th>
<th>That red and white Siqeq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wé ji Laliqé deranîye</td>
<td>Brought them out of Lalish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siqeq, siqeq Şêcê Edê ye.</td>
<td>The siqeq belongs to Sheikh ‘Adi.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4.2 Şerhik (the jar of water)

During Tawusgeran, there is a jar which is filled with the water of Kaniya Sipt. 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 sehçe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yê bidête min aroke</th>
<th>Whoever gives me a cup of water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xudê bidête bejîn ziravekê Xudan</td>
<td>God gives him a slim and faithful girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imanvêkê</td>
<td>That is the water of Kaniya Sipt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava kaniya sipî ye</td>
<td>In the jar of Sheikh ‘Adi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şirpiêkê Şêxadî ye</td>
<td>Drink from it, money is useless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jê vecon mifêêt anêkê ûye.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, Yezidis use the water of the Şerhik (jar) for baptism if the child cannot come to Lalish for any reason. This ritual is based on the water of Şerhik from Kaniya Sipt as the place of baptism.

1.4.3 Çîrayên Me’rifêêt (the lamps of knowledge)

Seven lamps are lit beside the siqeq on the eve of Tawusgeran, and people gather around them. They are called Çîrayên Me’rifêêt. These sehçe refer to lighting lamps for knowledge:

---

Tawus is dedicated to the Shingal area; Aleppo Tawus is dedicated to the Aleppo area; Xalat Tawus is dedicated to the Xalat area; Zozan Tawus is dedicated to the Hakkari area; Maqif Tawus is dedicated to Georgia and Armenia and the Torin Tawus is dedicated to the Torin area in Iran, (Halî 2013: 94). On the other hand, these provinces were Sheikhan, Shingal, Aleppo, Khota (around Marden), Zozan (Şirnak and Batman), Haweri (Hazira) and Transcaucasia (Kars, Van, Yerevan and Tabilisi), (see Ağıyıldız 2010: 80; Çe’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 Qevêlê Dîvîrên, Şacê 3 (The Hymn of I am Singing, Version 3), seb. 20, in Reço 2004 I: 412.
923 Text details are unknown, in ’Amar 2008: 137.
924 Krejzenbroek and Rashow 2005: 18.
1.4.4 Taking Berat

During Tawugên, 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 Zivistânê

This feast and Cejna Çilê Zivistânê (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 Zivistânê, religious men such as Babe Şex, Baba Çawiş, koçeks, Xerçepoş 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, 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. There are religious texts that refer to the holiness of both feasts:

Çileşin neşine ew ji bi batinê hîvî ne
Havînê û zivistânê bi roji ne û bi wekaç
û tizhê ne
Pênc cara bi ‘ebadetin û cindîfê Sîltin
e.

Do not hurt Çileşin; they also have hope for the hidden (spiritual world)
They fast in summer and winter, and they fast and have beads and sticks.

925 Da‘û Mu‘âsîd (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 1, in Reço 2004 II: 1019.
927 See Gindî 1998: 97; Al-Yûsîf, M. (1999), Dûmîrîf (Tûnûf Malak); Bûhî & Çûfûr al-Dîshûn al-Kûrîyû al-
Quûtûnî (Dûmîrîf (Tûnûf Malak) Searching in the Roots of the Kurdish Ancient Religion(s), s.l., s.n.
928 Cf., a reference to that, as in Zoroastrianism, the Summer and Winter feasts exist in Yezidism (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 17).
929 Quêlê Meşûma Cëhêr (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 43, in Kişo 2012: 124.
930 Çîlêşî 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 qêdê silê Kanîya Spê
Êzdîne mir, qubleta bidor, …  

Five times they worship [God] and they are the worshippers of Sultan (i.e., God).\textsuperscript{932}

For the sake of the forty days of the White Spring\textsuperscript{934}

[For the sake of] Ezdina Mir, the sun circle is the direction of prayer (qubleta bidor), … \textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{936} Sebeqes (22, 23, 25 and 28) from Qewê Meba (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:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hatime nav kuf ü kan e
  \item Wêki tet ü dibit Zîristan e
  \item Zîndan e ser ci qas meclîqê bi giyan e.
\end{itemize}

I came into kuf ü kani\textsuperscript{938}

When it comes and winter starts It is a prison for all living creatures.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kanûn te maîk nebit wêran
  \item Heke dom key sayân ü hesira ü bygğêran
  \item Dé dî bîya da zêbûn key şêran.
\end{itemize}

O January, how hard you are If you keep on clear weather and heavy snow and wind The lions (i.e., living creatures) cannot live in their places.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kanûn dibê seqaya ’erda ez im
  \item Ü ji sarya xo wa ditezim
  \item Ez ji li ber firmara mirê xo ye bi hez im.
\end{itemize}

January said: I am the weather of the earth I am freezing from my cold I am in a hurry because of my prince’s command.

\textsuperscript{932} Literally, ‘Many times they worship and soldiers as Monarch’.

\textsuperscript{933} Dîngê, sch. 7, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 283.

\textsuperscript{934} “In KHR’s opinion the reference must be to one of the traditional forty-day fasts”, Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 17.

\textsuperscript{935} “I.e., Lalish”, Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 283, n. 48.

\textsuperscript{936} From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîro Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çawîş Hesen Şîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see al-Yûsif 1999: 132.

\textsuperscript{938} Not understood.
Kanûn dibêjit:
Em dû melûn Peçâyî kirîn xelat
Li me dikêvin Çîle îr erbe'înût
Jî 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:

Xîzîran we deng dibîltinî
Ez mehek in ye bê beharre, ye bê xin i
Li min ûyda dîbin bêderê bingidi.î

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

There are some religious sayings about the hot weather in the feast, such as: “Xîzîran
xêngê, jiya li mejra xwarê tîşêk xwa li ber neyir ji bîlî dar a ber a mejra tirî!” (Because of the
heat of June, grass in the meadow was burned, nothing resists except trees, stones and
grapevines). Another one says, “Tebaxê agir çi li ase’î”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

---

938 Qerîlî Meha (The Hymn of the Months), sch. 50, 52, in Heci 1994a: 30.
940 Heci 2002: 139-140.
941 From the interviews with Baba Sheikh Xîrto Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba
Ça'nîx Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see al-Yûsîf 1999: 132.
and Traditions), Lâsîq, No. 9, p. 81.
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The time of the forty days of summer. Some sources highlight that this is the time of harvesting wheat during the summer season. 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. The *selaçe* below indicate the period of the feast as being full of wheat and it is an indication to harvest it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gulanê te li malê bıkevıt xezên e</th>
<th>After May comes June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawlatêka bo ye gieran e</td>
<td>It (June) has a great wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ye bi decê e, ye bi dan e</td>
<td>It is full of wheat and yield.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 *Qebrasçiran* (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. 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 *Qebrasçiran* have a link with the time of the earth fertility in autumn.

In the feast, the ritual of *Qebrasçiran* is celebrated. It could be translated as “the bull sacrifice”. The tribes *Qaydi*, *Tirk* and *Mamnoś* exclusively with *Qeunwals*, *Çeqelnî* (a candelabrum with seven lights) holder and the incense holder attend a *Cèle* (session) in Lalish; during this session pilgrims carry out the popular dance with the music of *Def*.

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945 *Qatlê Meha* (The Hymn of the Months), seh. 46, in Hecî 1994a: 29.
948 There are some sources that refer to the origin of the *Qebras* ritual and its link with nature. Wahby writes, “Shams is Mîhr. Thus, it can be said that the ceremony is concerned with Mîhr and that it is a debased form of Mîhr’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 *Şemûdîn* (*Şeqînî*) or the sun during the *Cema* feast. It is a remnant of a ritual of Mithraism (see Habîb1978: 44; Nirwan 2008: 24; Farhan, M. p. (2010), “Izidy Religion Before Sheikh Ady, part I”, trans. Fadhîl H. Khudeda, *Lalish*, No. 31, p. 11).
and Şebab (flute and tambourine). Meanwhile, in Lalish they transfer the bull from its place called Gayî Kaş to the shrine of Şêsim 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 Şêsim (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 Piran954 and it is dated on the first Friday after Cejna Çilê Zêvistanê (13th of December in the Julian calendar/24th of December, Gregorian). It is celebrated only by Pir of the lineage of Pir Fat. In Yezidism, it is known that Pir Fat is the protector of agricultural blights and is associated with hail and damage to crops, inundations and storms. Yezidis celebrate this feast to ask Pir Fat to protect people and their crops from floods, cold and everything that harms agriculture in winter:955

\[
\begin{align*}
Ya \text{ Sultan Eżid perda te li ber me bit} & \quad \text{O Sultan Eżid! You save us} \\
Ya \text{ Pirà Fat čarka te ye li me werkiri bit} & \quad \text{O Pirà Fat! You protect us.}
\end{align*}
\]

949 See Image 40 in Appendices. Turban is a very old-fashioned Yezidis cloth that old women still wear.
952 From the interviews with Şe’d Aliyas Nabo, 22.09.2015, the collective villages of Shariya, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xewace Xudêla Eflî, 03.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq.
953 There are two important notes. About Cejna Çilê Zêvistanê (the Feast of the Forty Days of Winter), because of similarities between ceremonies of this feast and Cejna Çilê Harînê (the forty days of summer), they are explained together (on which see above: Cejna Çilê Harînê). Moreover, Cejna nîyên Ežî (The Fast of Ezi) is explained in the chapter one of part two in topic named “The Four Elements of Nature in Fasting”.
955 From the interview with Heci Şëmo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba’adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.
956 Dîvîya Oxêrî (The Prayer of the Fortunate), seh. 7, in Günlî 1994: 147.
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The other festival is Bêlinda An957 and it is celebrated by all Yezidi people. It is dated on the second Friday after the Cejna Çilé Züvistanê (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: “Bêlinda, ë bëdéra befrë ye bind ê” (In Bêlinda, 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 Gorka Gay (the fire-flame of the bull)

Gorka Gay is a compound word which consists of Gork (fire-flame) and Gay (the bull) and, by combining the two words, it means “the fire-flame of the bull”. Regarding this, Sîlêman 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 Bêlinda 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

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  Hạlîf 2006: 79; Dîlkûvân 1999: 44-46).
960 See al-Yûsîf 1999: 133.
961 Kreyenbroek 1995: 156.
963 See Image 41 in Appendices.
964 See Dîlkûvân 1999: 48-49.
965 al-Yûsîf 1999: 133.
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 Xewêrê

Xewêrê is a thick circular loaf of bread made of wheat. There are scratches on its surface with a raisin inside it. 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 Xewêrê is a Kurdish name that derives from Xorîrê, 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 Şêsems 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 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. The legend also talks about the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, 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. The story is very long but what is important here is that the story has a link with Ava Heyatê. The following seleqes refer to both names:

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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-Liysa 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-Khitir Al-Hay (living/eternal Xidir), while the Muslim Kurds call him Xidir Zêndî (Living Xidir), the Christians and the Jews call him the prophet Liysa, the Yezidis call him Xidir-Liysa and Xidir Nebî and the Indian Muslims call him Khawaja Khidir (Hudîda, K. (1999), “Hidir-Liysa”, Lâlî, No. 11, p. 66).
969 For information about this mythology see Omersall 2013: 46.
970 He was also named Aleksander Čar Qurnet (the Great Alexander) in Yezidism.
971 For further reading see Hudîda 1999: 76.
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Şeref deng dîkê ji esas e
Filomê min zur qiyaş e
Tu Xidir ani Leyas e

Şeref speaks of fundamentals,
My understanding is very great
Are you Xidir or Leyas?

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 Qewî called Ḥevelî Mûsâ Pêcember û Xidir Zîndî (the hymn of the prophet Moses and Xidir Zindî, QMPXZ) in the form of a dialogue between Moses and Xidir Zindî. Xidir is described as Zîndî (living and immortal) and as an eternal mystery, and his place is the sea; therefore, he symbolizes water and eternal life:

Mûsû go: bo min bûje bi rebmanî
Tu ké çidikî li derî deryani
Bî satira Xûdë û xasët tibani.

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 Xidirî Zîndî me
Ji 'ençîli afeû Xûdë me
Sûra yarî 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'rifût û sur û erkan e
Xûdê da min subban e
Diçânûm ci qeder dîr û bebnan e.

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 ëte nişî Tîcara.

There will come a cold epoch
Xidir Liyas the diver of seas
There will come a generation of merchants.

---

973 He is one of the Yezidi Holy Men, See Sîleman and Cindî 1979: 103-104; Kreyenbroek 1995: 121.
974 I.e., Şeref asks about origins of Xîdî-Liyeas.
975 Qewî Mûsû Pêcember û Xidir Zîndî (The Hymn of the Prophet Moses and Xidir Zëndê), sbh. 7, 8, 9, in Rejo 2004 I: 330.
976 Text details are unknown, recited by Merwanê Xûlû, interviewed by Omarkhali in Germany, 22.07.2007, cited in Omarkhali and Rezania 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 ú tov xilat” (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 ú Sal Xilat” (Xidir Liyas and the year is about to end), and a new year in spring starts. Also, some sebeqs emphasize the belief that Xidir is the symbol of the coming of spring, which means greenery and the renewal of nature:

- Xidirmebi, were, di nav cineté re were
  Xidirmebi, come through the paradise
- Bi pțrong, ser bișnayé re were
  With grass, come on the grass
- Were, were, eți bihar e
  Come, come, from now on it is spring
- Tu bereketé bine bi xwe re.977
  You bring grace with you.

Moreover, the author al-Yăsif states that the Xidir Liyas Feast is the feast of fertility, growth and greenness in nature.978 Also, another author, Hudîda, 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‘dra, there is a big cup called Jambê-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:

- Cindiyo tu yi rinus
  O, young man, you are a guide
- Me şerab divêt ji kaxêd sas
  We want to drink from the special cups.
- Li wê hwendê ye le bramo milê Xidir ú liyas.981
  Come, brothers, to this pond, the property of Xidir-liyas.

Xidir-Liyas gives the water of the cup to people:

- Hey Xidirin bin Xidir
  O, Xidir, son of Xidir!
- Tê kasek da min buxîr
  You gave me an unsullied (pure) Cup

---

977 Text details are unknown, recited by Eminê Evdal from Aximê Çolo in Eleçez village in 1939, cited in Omerxali 2013: 52.
979 Hudîda 1999: 76.
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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 Pêcan (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 selbeje refers to this belief through the words cup (i.e., water) and fulfilling marriage wishes:

\[
\text{Dê Çawî li gêdengeba rawestan} \quad \text{Two guards stood on the threshold}
\]
\[
\text{Êk dibêjmê Xidîr êk dibêjmê Liyas} \quad \text{One is called Xidir and the other is called Liyas}
\]
\[
\text{Ke zî querdité dolk û durekê elmas, \ldots} \quad \text{From love they distribute the cup.}
\]
\[
\text{Sultan Ezî mirazêt ne û hazîra basil biket} \quad \text{The cup of grace, the bowl of a diamond pearl, \ldots}
\]
\[
\text{Ü çê kezê miraz xiwas} \quad \text{Sultan Ezî fulfil our wishes (i.e., our marriage) and present people’s}
\]
\[
\text{And a person who wishes.}
\]

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.\(^ {987} \) Pêcan is prepared by frying seven varieties of seed, such as wheat, barley, broad bean, maize, chickpea, sunflower seeds, watermelon seeds, etc., which are called Qalatik. These grains are then ground together, and the result is a floury food called Pêcan. On the day of the feast, the farmers go to their fields to throw a quantity of Pêcan 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 Çercâis; 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 Çercâis because it will be used in the summer

\(^{982}\) Qarût Imanî (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 8, in Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 84.
\(^{983}\) “Lit., with the Name and recollection”, Kreyenbrook and Rashow 2005: 84, n. 129.
\(^{984}\) Roë 2004 I: 172.
\(^{985}\) Qarût di 'Emroûdî da Mame (The Hymn of I Remained in an Age), seb. 39, in Mirza 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. Moreover, Serek 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 Seraf feast. In Yezidi traditions, this is when Tawusi 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 Çiraklíki, the Serderi (decorating the house-doors) and colouring eggs. Some rituals of Tiwaf (local festivals) have a link with nature, for example lighting the lamps and baptising the Peris (pieces of colourful fabric) with holy water. Some informants refer to the occasion of Tiwaf as indicating the renewal of nature and the coming of spring. Furthermore, the purpose of Seferu Nam u Mast (The Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) and baptising the bread and yoghurt with the water of the Kaniya Şipi in Lalish, is for the increase of goodness, grace and reproduction of wealth through agricultural products in spring. In addition, Tawusıçran ceremony has a link with spring season and there are various rituals representing the veneration of natural elements, such as Tawus Çinankırın (Baptising Tawus Sinçaf) by sprinkling the water of the Kaniya Şipi, the Şerbi (jar of water) is filled with the water of the Kaniya Şipi, seven lamps are lit beside the Sinçaf, and sacred clay balls, known as Berat, 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 Cemna Çilê Hacên and the Cemna Çilê Zevistanê 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 Çima feast is associated with the fertility of the earth, and the ritual of sacrificing a bull in Qebaxgiran (sacrificial bull) is connected to Şêçims, 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 Gara Gav (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 Pecun. Because this season is dedicated to the fertilization of nature and earth, ploughing of earth and cutting of grass are forbidden.

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.
Markirin (baptism)
The newborn baby should be baptized with the water of Kaniya Sipi in Lalish for blessing:

Eve firwara Petça ye This command is from King (i.e., God)
Morî Kaniya Sipi rewa ye The baptism of Kaniya Sipi is a confession
For e ú atqata Ezêdi ye.989 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 Mezar 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 sebege clarifies that Lalish as a religious place gives health:

Hindêyé derdek lê dibîyê Anyone who has an illness
Bi Lalisê qesi bûkin zî yê Should pilgrimage to Lalish as soon as possible
Dërda, dêrman li wê dibîyê.990 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 sebege express Yezidis’ practice of keeping Berat with themselves:

Xet ú Beratêt Sîltan Ezê zêr in Lines (of script) and Berat of Sîltan Ézî are
da Mirîd biço991 helnin ú bi xo gold (i.e., precious)
veşêrin.992 So that Mirids993 can keep and hide them
for themselves.

Moreover, Yezidis should put their children in a cradle made of wood for blessing:

Cî wledêkî miskên e What a poor little baby it is
Danabî li nan tabûteke darîn e It was laid in a wooden cradle995
Bi şevê ú rojê bijine ú gîrînê.994 Night and day, there is rocking and wailing.

989 Beyst Kaniya Sipi (Beyst of the White Spring), seb. 5, in Sileyman 2013: 41.
990 Qasîd Xaç Malî Babu, Şarê i (The Hymn of Good Families, Version 1), seb. 28, in Reşo 2004 I: 405.
991 According to the textual meaning the phrase biço is misspelled, the correct spelling is bi xo (for themselves).
992 Qasîd lvêranê (The Hymn of Control), the number of the sebege is unknown, in Günd, S. M. (1999), “al-
Barât wa Qadîyatuha Lîdî al-Ayyaşîyat” (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 Qasîd Şermergî (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 12, in Sîlêman 1985:114.
995 Tabûteke darîn indicates a child’s cradle, Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005:155, n. 3.
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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 Şêêîms (thread of Şêêîms). This is to keep the newborn away from all evils and protect it from diseases, since the Benkê Şêêîms has spiritual power. As religious men say that it is clear from its name that the thread of Şêêîms (the lord of the sun) is the symbol of the sun circle and its light. Furthermore, Pêşolik (baby clothes) is a sheet of white fabric wrapped around the newborn. Here, the white colour is the symbol of light and pure faith:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Şûpî nûr e ji hidayet e} & \quad \text{White is the light of guidance (i.e.,}\nonumber \\text{guidance of God)} \\
\text{Rangê reğ e bi şilmat e} & \quad \text{The black colour is darkness.}
\end{align*}
\]

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:

Şîkandina Şerbîk (breaking the jar of water)

The bride breaks a Şerbîk when she enters the groom’s house. It is generally filled with water and agricultural products, such as wheat, peas, rice, and so forth. According to religious folk belief, it denotes bringing-in of sustenance to that house.

The water and Debnokê 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 Debnokê 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. 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 şêbûge refers to some aspects of that ritual:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ferê raça bûk û sunet e} & \quad \text{It is a duty in the days of wedding and}\nonumber \text{tradition} \\
\text{Zadekê čêke û biçe dawet e} & \quad \text{Make a meal [Debnokê Bûkê] and have a}\nonumber \text{party} \\
\text{Ew jèryêkê Şêêîms sunet e.} & \quad \text{This is an obligation of Sheikh’s tradition.}
\end{align*}
\]

Notes:

996 From the interviews with Şêd Awdî Rêşî, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çâwiş Hesen Sîlêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
997 Bepta Dinê (The Beyt of the world), seb. 33, in Rêşî 2004 II: 750.
998 See Image 44 in Appendices.
999 For further reading see Kreyenbroek 1995: 158.
1000 Qesê Merîşuma Cêhê (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 38, in Kişo 2012: 123.
Furthermore, in some other Yezidi religious observances, the water symbolizes the chance of marriage.\textsuperscript{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 sebqes confirms that this ritual is an obligation for Yezidis:

\begin{align*}
\text{Şêx fer e à Pîr nişan e} & \quad \text{Having Sheikh is obligatory and Having} \\
\text{Hoşte û Merebî şubbetî wan a} & \quad \text{Pîr is the symbol} \\
\text{Ferêg Yar ú Birayêt Axretê ferêki} & \quad \text{Hoste and Merebi are like them} \\
\text{giran a.\textsuperscript{1002}} & \quad \text{The obligation of having friends and} \\
\end{align*}

banners of the hereafter are a grave duty.

One of the purposes of using Berat, made of the holy water of Kaniya Sîpi and the holy soil of Lalish, is to make a promise and stay faithful for a brotherhood bond.\textsuperscript{1003}

\begin{align*}
\text{Heke te da êki bexit û Berat e} & \quad \text{If you gave someone conscience (i.e., a} \\
\text{Berat nişana 'erd ú kiniyt e} & \quad \text{promise) and Berat} \\
\text{Xudê beye ew aitqat e.\textsuperscript{1004}} & \quad \text{Berat is the symbol of the earth and the} \\
\end{align*}

universe

O God, it is faith.

Forbidding Marriage in Nişan (Julian April)

According to Yezidi tradition, in Nişan, nature is the bride of the year because of its beauty therefore it is forbidden to have any other bride in that month.\textsuperscript{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 sebqes from religious texts.

Şàştina mirî (washing the dead)
As a religious duty, the body of the deceased should be washed with pure water by religious men for blessing:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1001} See “Drinking water and a chance of marriage” in the Xidir Liyas feast; Şerbâk (the jar of water) in Tawusfedvand (The wandering of the Tawus), both are in chapter three of part two.
\item \textsuperscript{1002} Qeylê Ebâbekirê Õmera (The Hymn of Ebâbekirê Õmera), seb. 38, Mirza 1997: 121.
\item \textsuperscript{1003} See “Berat (Sacred Soil Ball)”, in chapter V, part II.
\item \textsuperscript{1004} Qeylê Merzima Cebûre (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 90, in Kişto 2012: 131.
\item \textsuperscript{1005} See “Cejna Seradî (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)”, in chapter III, part II.
\end{itemize}
Chapter IV: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Customs

It is a duty to give alms and show mercy for the dead. Shroud, washing, grave and grief. And always recite hymns and Bêt.

On the death of those who did not have the opportunity to be baptized by the water of Kaniya Sîpi, religious men, either their Sheikh or their Pîr, sprinkle normal water over their bodies by calling the name of Kaniya Sîpi and it is regarded as baptism. Alwenî refers to water in baptism in Yezidi religion has the ability to wash away humans’ sins and make them pure and clean.

Putting Bêrat on the face of the dead

After washing, Bêrat 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 Bêrat 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.

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 sebê of the Qewlé Serenê'î (The Hymn of the Moment of Death, QS) refers to some aspects of this custom:


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. It is for the purpose when the sun rises, its rays will directly shine on the dead one’s head:

When they are digging the grave
[Its direction] From the east (sunrise) to the west (sunset)

---

1007 From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
1008 Alwenî 1999: 103.
1009 From the interviews with Baba Çawiş Hesen Sîleman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Deştî Şêx Zeydîn, 02.04.2018, Pforzheim, Germany.
1010 Qewlé Serenê'î (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 45, in Sîleman 1985: 118.
1011 See Image 45 in Appendices.
1012 Qewlé Serenê'î (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 46, in Sîleman 1985: 118.
There is no one who has not drunk from this drink (cup).

On this belief, the British archaeologist, A. H. Layard, states that “the sun rises, and towards it, they turn the faces of their dead” according to Yezidi tradition, this means the life of the deceased ends and this is based on a Yezidi saying: “Roja mirî ava bi” (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 “Deryî xêra dîvekîrîne ji rîjbelat beta bi rîjwê” (the doors of alms and ‘good deeds’ are open from sunrise to sunset). This selheş emphasizes that belief:

Çarsembû rujêke bi bisab e
ji ha meleka batîye ev ce salari e
Deryî xêra dîvekîrîne ji rîjbelat beta bi rîjwê. 1015

Wednesday is an important day
This response came from the angels
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:

İleibo melik lî 'erg e
Ser singê min radexên fêrz e
Her fêrçok wekit xerqê. 1017

O God, King of the throne
They are putting rocks (boulders) on my chest
Each rock is like xerqê. 1018

After that, the tomb is filled with the soil. Clay is placed in the gaps between the stones. Moreover, two Kêlê (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 selheş refers to some aspects of that custom:

Herîjê datînin lî derçê
Aşê dînine ser min bi leçê
du kêla daren Go: Ewe fêrzê. 1019

They sealed (the tomb) up with mud
They hastily put soil over me
They put up two tombstones, saying: This is obligatory.

\[1013\] “Le., no one is exempt from death”, Krensenbroek and Rashow 2005: 346, n. 71.
\[1015\] Qurîvî Çarsembûyê (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 2 in Kêsto 2004: 206.
\[1016\] “to prevent the earth, as far as possible, from touching the corpse” (Empson 1928: 63). C.f., Krensenbroek 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”, Krensenbroek 1995: 167, n. 134.
\[1017\] Qurîvî Serermêşê (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.
\[1019\] Qurîvî Serermêşê (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 50, in Silêman 1985: 119.
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Čirahilkirin (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 selbeqe stresses lighting a lamp for the faithful soul:

*Hat çarşamba** fer e* came the significant Wednesday
*Xelat ji mlêkê fazîr e* the gift is from the glorious angel
*Bo ruha bi îman gørê diket çire* 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, “Pangê ji îmanî ye” (cleanliness is faith). They must be clean and wash themselves with water before praying and worshipping. These selbeqes emphasize this:

*Şuşîn fer e û xoş tîst e* washing is obligatory and a good thing
*Paşîja ji diêt bêhîna bêhişt e* (useful)
*Bişî seri û desît û çava û leşi û cîla gîst e* cleanliness smells like paradise
*Iman gêhû bi eşîn e* wash the head, hands, eyes (face), body, and everything.
*Êhidetê bîkê bi bêjiwîn e* faith was achieved by truth (i.e., certainty)
*Ew sunêt e û nasîn e* worship with cleanliness

Yazidis hold wash their hands and faces before worshiping and praying, Beyta Cindi (the Beyt of the commander) which is recited at dawn refers to that custom:

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1020 See “The symbolism of Čira in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.
1021 *Qewê Cargêmêjê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), rob. 33, in Kişto 2004: 211.
1022 See Image 45 in Appendices.
1023 From the interview with Baba Çawî Hesên Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
Rabe ji tari havo  
Qesid bike merzid ave  
Civan bike deştan iji cavi  
Eve bo ‘edeté me zirhavo.1025

Wake up from the darkness (i.e., dawn)  
Go to the pool of water  
Wash your hands and face  
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 Sifré/Xvariné (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:

Namê ji xezîna Şêxadî ve  
Hîvêne ji kaniya spî ve.1027

The bread (sustenance) is from Sheikh ‘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 Zimezîn in Lalish, Kaniya Efdê Reş (the spring of Efdê Reş) in the village of Dérebûn, Kaniya Piraxayê (the spring of Piraxayê) in Shingal, etc.

Yezidis often swear an oath by bread, saying: Bi evi qetê imanê sund dixwim, yê neqot be din e û be iman 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 evi nani (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 Sewîk, in the Xidîr Lîyas Feast, Qêdatik, Pêçûn and Çercus, in the Bêlîîdê Feast, as well as Xewîrê, Şîlik and Keşik.1029 Also, Yezidis prepare Simat (religious food) as the product of wheat.1030 In Lalish, there is a place called Çella Şêxadî (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:

1023 Beysa Cindî (The Beyt of the Commander), sch. 54, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 47.
1024 Drower 1941: 92.
1026 For further details see “Sefrî Nan â Mast (The Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt)”, in chapter III, part II.
1027 About these types of religious food see “The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Feasts and Festivals”, chapter III, part II.
1028 See Image 46 in Appendices.
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Bi qedré cels ù rewaqét Šëcadi
- - -
Simat ù sayêt xo dayim biki
- - -

For the sake of the sessions and halls of Sheikh ‘Adî
May you keep your Simat and Sayî (sacred food) forever

Ya Šëcadi, çirayêt te digurîbin
Simat ù sayêt te dideyimbûn.\(^{1031}\)

O Sheikh ‘Adî, may your lamps burn forever
May you keep your Simat and Sayî (sacred food) forever.

Also, in:

Simate ye sebil e
Ye bê qal e, bê qil e
Ye bê rê ye bê bertil e
Razdarêt Derwênan ù delî e.\(^{1032}\)

Simat\(^{1033}\) is path
It is not controversial
It has permission, and it is healthy\(^{1034}\)
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 Šëcimi” (O Šëcîmî) 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, Tsek (the sacred

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\(^{1032}\) Qêwiê Siîya Eê (The Hymn of Siîya Ès), 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), Pêçalîk (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 “Lêbiê îmanê spî ye” (the cloth of faith is white). Religious texts refer to that belief:

- Lêbiê îmanê spî ye
- I nazîk e, i letîk e, i qenî ye
- Hûn me bingêrinî gêli sünîye
- Ez wêr rengê dîceyîrîye.

The garment of faith is white! It is delicate, charming and strong O Ezidi people do not make it impure It is quick to change colour.

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 sebeçe confirms this:

- Sîpi nîr e ji hideyett e
- Rengê rôq e bi zîmêmat e.

White is the light of guidance (i.e., 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 sebeçe it is the symbol of the sun circle and its light is a luminous gift from God and it1038 comes from high. These sebeçe confirm this belief:

- Roj beryêka tok nîşan e
- Ristî simbêli ji erkam e
- Pê temamî dîlin îman e.

The sun is the origin1042 and Tok is its symbol Growing a moustache is an obligation The faith is completed with them.

Tok xelateki bi mor e
Hatibi ji xêzîna jor e
Daxî zer miê Ézidiya, bi qîrara Ézîkî ye sor e

Tok is a luminous gift [from God] It came from the treasure in the high1044 The Yezidis were invested with it by Red Ezid’s decision

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 Reço 2004 II: 750.
1041 Beyta Kunija spî (Beyt of the White Spring), seb. 9, in Sîlêman 2013: 42.
1042 Literally Beroq 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.
1043 I.e., here it symbolizes the sun.
Chapter IV: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Customs

Réya Tokê bi hêfû cor e. The path of the Tokê is torment and torture. 1043

Tok ji Êzîdîya ra qebûl kir He accepted the Tok for the Yezidi people
Nîr bi nêrê, teʾmid kir He baptized the light by light.
Ewîl Xødê sûra li Melek Şêx Sin â First, God greeted Angel Sheikh Sin and
Tawusî Melek kir. Tawusi 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 Tuc is a kind of hat in a conical shape and it has artificial braids. Reço writes that the “Tuc is a long hat with braids called Gali or keçî 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 Gali or keçî are symbols of the sun’s rays. These sebques refer to them as the luminous Tac and Hil:

Sultan Ezîdê min Xerqê li her kir My Sultan Ezid put on the Xerqe
Taçê reji qudrêti nûrani li ser kir He placed a luminous black crown of power on his head
Feqira li pe serê kir. The Feqirs set out on a journey to reach him.

Also, in:

Rajêkê szêbiye One day, in the morning
Min dîsîtî sûvarek boriye I saw a horseman passing by
Li berda tac â bile, xerqê nûrani ye Who wore a luminous crown, robe, and
Eve çil dal min ji berë te zani sura Şêxê Xerqe
‘Êzîl ye. I knew the mystery forty years before you: it was that of Sheikh Adî.

Kum, the Gaskî and the Kofi. 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 Gaskî, they also say, Şerfedînê gosik/goli şerê (Şerfedin had luminous braids). It is believed that Kum symbolizes the sun and Gaskî represents the sun rays during the twelve months of the year. 1053 Moreover, a Kofi is a type of turban that is white in colour. It must have a circular shape and is wrapped seven times around

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1043 De’a Tokê (The Prayer of the Tokê), seb. 10, in Reço 2004 II: 1035.
1044 De’a Tokê (The Prayer of the Tokê), seb. 8, in Reço 2004 II: 1035.
1045 See image 03 in appendices.
1046 Reço 2004 I: 120.
1047 Reço 2004 I: 120.
1048 Qewê Imandî (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 19, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 86.
1049 Qewê Rabi’sî i’ê Fêdewîyê (The Hymn of Rabi’sî i’ê Fêdewîyê), seb. 10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 197.
1050 See Image 48 in Appendices.
1051 From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesen Reşkani, 10.11.2016, Dahok, 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Dur} before the creation of the world, which later became the source of the creation of all creatures. Moreover, God’s \textit{Sur} (mystery or power) always exists in them; therefore, they are sacred in Yezidism. These \textit{selder} show this:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Av} & Water, earth, air and fire \\
\textit{Dura} & The red \textit{Dur} contains the original seeds \\
\textit{Chendi} & It created all creatures. \\
\textit{Bî} & Wind and earth, water and fire, all these \\
\textit{Covana} & Have their being through the power of \\
\textit{Bi} & Fexredin and Şêşim
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Ba} & The assembly of Fexredin and Şêşim \textsuperscript{1057} \\
\textit{Melek} & exists from the beginning till the end. \\
\textit{Bi} & By that \textit{Sur}, it rains \\
\textit{Şêşim} & By that \textit{Sur}, trees grow \\
\textit{Bi} & By that \textit{Sur}, all the springs are completed (i.e., life).
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

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.”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{1060}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1054} From the interview with Xelef Heci Hemed, 21.11.2017, Minden, Germany. \\
\textsuperscript{1055} \textit{Qeydê Dura} (The Hymn of the Pearls), seb. 21, in Xêray 2012: 63. \\
\textsuperscript{1056} \textit{Du’a û Qeydê Şêşim} (The Prayer and Hymn of Şêşim), seb. 30, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 205. \\
\textsuperscript{1057} They are Yezidi holy men, on them see Kreyenbroek 1995: 102-103. \\
\textsuperscript{1058} \textit{Qeydê Sur} (The Hymn of the Mysteries), seb. 10, in Reşo 2004 I: 248. \\
\textsuperscript{1059} Kreyenbroek 2009: 19. \\
\textsuperscript{1060} Kreyenbroek 1995: 147.
\end{flushleft}
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 Lalis:

\[
\text{Ferzit xo bitibke \u2013 derbas be} \\
\text{Berli mirin\'e bere Lali\'e p\'ezivas be} \\
\text{Da li axreti xera te ye nas be.}^{1064}
\]

Perform your obligations and pass
Before death, visit Lalis 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
1062 Ibid.
1063 For additional information see “Funerary customs”, in chapter IV, part II.
1064 Qənet Məzxənə Cəhidə (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), sb. 82, in Kiço 2012: 130.
Additionally, ploughing the earth and spoiling its nature in Nisan 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 \textit{nabges} refer to the earth adorned with plants during this month:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Li karşımbawê xos bê jîyan} & \quad \text{Life becomes pleasant on Wednesdays}^{1069} \\
\text{Kesîk bûn dêsiî û çiya û gevî û zoçan} & \quad \text{Plain, mountain, field and pasture are adorned with plants} \\
\text{Hemû bi kermû Penê min î Yezdan.} & \quad \text{All those by the mystical power of my King (i.e., God) Yezdan.}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Hat contraseña sorr û} & \quad \text{Came the red Wednesday} \\
\text{Nîsan xemîlan bû bî xo re} & \quad \text{Adorned April with itself} \\
\text{Jî lûtît da ye bî mor ê.}^{1068} & \quad \text{From the world of the Unseen it is baptized.}
\end{align*}\]

Based on the belief discussed above, and according to Yezidi beliefs in general, marriages and weddings are forbidden in Nisan 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 Nisan, and that is why it is forbidden for humans to marry.\(^ {1071}\) According to Yezidi tradition, in Nisan, Tavus Melek as a light from the sky descents to earth for the fertilization and germination of the earth.\(^ {1072}\) Moreover, according to Gündüz, 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

\(^ {1068}\) \textit{Qevê Çerêmêdêyê} (The Hymn of Wednesday), ñeb. 5, 19, in \textit{Kîsû} 2004: 206-207, 209.
\(^ {1069}\) I.e., the first Wednesday of Eastern April, which is the Yezidi New Year.
\(^ {1070}\) See Silêman 1985: 9; Gündüz and Birîkû 2003: 64.
\(^ {1072}\) For supplementary information see “\textit{Çiçû \textit{Sersên} (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)}”, in chapter III, part II.
and trees, is prohibited, especially in holy places for instance, Lalish and shrines. There is a saying in Yezidism, “Dar ji wekî nirova 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 'erdekê bînî, iṣaret ke*
*Derwêșkê bînî, 'iḥadet ke*
*Dârekê bînî, dîyaret ke.*

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 Meliêk Şerfedînî min yi bernber i*
*Tu bideye xatîra 'erd ü 'ezman ü dar ü berni*
*Tu li me nekeye têngêri zêli banga me ner.*

Oh, my eternal Melik Şerfedin
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 Xatûn Fexran and their followers do not eat lentils, Sheikhs of Fexredin 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;\(^\text{1076}\)

\(^{1074}\) *Dî'a Zîparêbînî* (The Prayer of Pilgrimage), seb. 2, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 107.

\(^{1075}\) *Qevêl Câremêbîyê* (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 39, in Kêpio 2004: 212.

\(^{1076}\) For more details see “The symbolism of the *Taawu* in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.
therefore, it is forbidden to kill it and eat its meat. Moreover, Sheikhs of Amadín\footnote{He is the son of Şâims and the eponym of a subdivision of the Şemsanî sheîks, see Kreyenbroek 1995: 102; Omarchâli 2008: 107.} 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.\footnote{For further information see “The symbolism of the Dêkî in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.} 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 Ara Hêwané/Ara Jîyané (the water of life) and immortality.\footnote{In details see “The symbolism of the Mare Roj in religious life”, in chapter V, part II.} With regard to the scorpion, it is believed that the Pîrs of the Pîr Cervon 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.”\footnote{‘The Yezidi petition to the Ottoman Government (1872),’ Kreyenbroek 1995: 7.} 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 Mishefa Roj (The Black Scripture) states that “It is forbidden […] to use blue colour.”\footnote{Bittner 1913: 32.} 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.”\footnote{Layard 1851 I: 248.} 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;\footnote{For detailed information see “Earth and sky, paradise and hell”, in chapter III, part I.} 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:

- Çandî ba ut uc ut ar ut ağıri
- Bi kerema Melek Vecredin ú Şâims dişociti

Wind and earth, water and fire, all these
Have their being through the power of
The assembly of Vecredin and Şâims
Exists from the beginning till the end.
Chapter IV: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Customs

Covana Şişims à Melik Feccedin, ji
ewith beta bi anzir.1084

4.1 Fire and its manifestations

Certain illnesses are associated with fire and are treated by Sheikhs or Pirs, for example Agirok (red spots) appear mostly on babies’ faces, and these are cured by putting the fire of Haste ă beriste (names of two pebbles) close to the infected skin of the baby, with the hands of Şişims’ sheikhs.1085 Nowadays, the fire of Şewbir (lighter) is used for the same purpose.1086 Furthermore, for the treatment of some of the skin diseases such as Bırnu (ringworm), Kelipandin (athlete’s foot), the patient should go the Sheikhs and Pirs 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/Terikē (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 Sipd and Kaniya Zimzim in Lalish, Kaniya Ezde Req in the village of Derabun, Kaniya Miёрka in the centre of Ain Sifin, Kaniya Pırazay in the village of Kulkan and Kaniya Kedre in the village of Solax in Shingal, etc. Religious texts confirm that the water of the Kaniya Sipd is a cure for many ills. Yezidis visit it for this purpose:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Feqıra à jë xebor da} & \\
\text{jë ‘esman beta bi’erda} & \\
\text{jë ‘erda beta bi ser da} & \\
\text{Ava Kaniya Sipd jıfeta [‘şıfeta] bi ser} & \\
\text{jı qas derda.1088} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The Feqırs talk about this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{From the sky down to the earth,} & \\
\text{From the earth upward,} & \\
\text{The water of the Kaniya Sipd is a healing} & \\
\text{for so many ills.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Another sehege indicates that the water of the Kaniya Sipd is a treatment for several illnesses, such as headaches, rheumatism and depression:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hege ba ye ù hege jan e ù kovan e} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

If it is air (rheumatism), and if it is headache and depression

1084 Du’a à Şeqew Şişims (The Prayer and Hymn of Şişims), seb. 30, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 205.
1085 From the interview with Tariq Xidir ‘Èzidin, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
1086 Xemo, T. Ş. (2007), Jumare (3, 7, 40) di Mittebicja Ezidjan da (Numbers (3, 7, 40) in Yezidis Mythology), Duhok: Stpčez, p. 44.
1087 From the interview with Xezal Silêman Yousif (the custodian of the Zins of Memê Şivan), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khankan, Iraqi Kurdistan.
1088 Şeqew Şêxalêhêkîr (The Hymn of Sheikh Ùbekir), seb. 24, in Silêman 1985: 100.
Asa Kaniya Sipî, mifête piqas derid û derman e. The water of the Kaniya Sipî is a remedy for all illnesses. Use it and it becomes a healing for them.

Additionally, the water of the Kaniya Sipî in a Şerîb (jar), during the Tawngêran festival, is drunk by sick people for the purpose of healing. 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.

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 Kaniî Guriş spring (the spring of itching) in Ain Safînî in the centre of the Shelkhan 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. For itching of the skin (also known as pruritus), the patient should visit Sheikh Mendî’s shrine in the village of Bahzani to wash the affected part with the water of a spring located inside the shrine. To treat warts, there is a pond near the Ain Sifin district, named Şêhaloka. 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 Kaniî bayê (the spring of air/rheumatism) near the village of Ésiyan, and the Kaniya Barheizê (the spring of air/rheumatism) in Lalish, near Xana Ézi. Also, the Kaniya Bawê (the spring of Bawê) is between the village of Bacid Kendala and the village of Kewrêni, in Duhok province. There is another spring that has the same name and same function in the village of Ribêî in the Duhok province.

About zerîk (anaemia) and jaundice, there is a spring called the Kaniî Zêrik or Kaniya Şêce Zêri (Şêce Zêri’s spring) in the village of Bênaîr in the Shelkhan 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. In fact, Yezidis use the name zerîk for both anaemia and jaundice. Here, the name of the spring comes from zerîk, the name of the illness.

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1090 From the interview with Esmer Esmail Mirad (The custodian of the White Spring), 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Kreyenbroek 1995: 75.
1091 Barwêrf 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 Xêlî Cindê Reô, 22.12.2017, Göttengen, Germany; Belekê Poqîr Heci, 10.03.2019 Oldenburg, Germany. Also see Barwêrf 2001: 79.
1093 Barwêrf 2001: 79.
1094 From the interview with Merwan Sheikh Hesen Reşkani, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqi 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.\footnote{Barwârî 2001: 79-80.}

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.\footnote{Ibid: 80.}

To remedy women’s sterility, there is a spring in the village of Kulkan, on the Shingal Mountain, called 
\textit{Kaniya Pîrnekayê}. Yezidi women visit it to conceive.\footnote{From the interview with Aliyas Mirza Derwêš, 31.10.2016, Serdeştê village-Shingal mountain, Iraq.} 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.\footnote{Barwârî 2001: 84-85.} Here, there are some \textit{seheges} that refer to the holy water of the cup with the name of Xidir Liyas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cîndîyo tu yî rînas</th>
<th>O, young man, you are a guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me şerêb dîwê ji kasêd xas</td>
<td>We need to drink from special cups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li wê berêdê ye le bramô milkê Xidir u liyas.\footnote{Beysta Çindî (The Beyt of the Commander), sch. 31, in Silêman and Cîndî 1979: 48.}</td>
<td>Come on, brother, (let us go) to this pond, the property of Xidr-liyas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hey Xidiru bin Xidir</th>
<th>O Xidir, son of Xidir!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Te kasek da min bukîr</td>
<td>You gave me an unsullied (pure) cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min xecwar bi nav u dikîr</td>
<td>I drank, pronouncing [God’s] name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dîbîrîmme ser ‘elmêkî fassîr.\footnote{Qevîl Imnû (The Hymn of the Faith), sch. 8, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 84.}</td>
<td>I was taken to superior knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the Birka/Bira Mehmed Reşan (Mehmed Reşan’s pond) in his 
\textit{Meşar} in the Meqlab 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.\footnote{From the interview with Xidir Silêman, 10.11.2016, Duhok city, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Barwârî 2001: 86.} Here is the text of the prayer:

\begin{verbatim}
Cîndîyo tu yî rînas
Me şerêb dîwê ji kasêd xas
Li wê berêdê ye le bramô milkê Xidir u liyas.

Hey Xidiru bin Xidir
Te kasek da min bukîr
Min xecwar bi nav u dikîr
Dîbîrîmme ser ‘elmêkî fassîr.

O, young man, you are a guide
We need to drink from special cups.
Come on, brother, (let us go) to this pond, the property of Xidr-liyas.
You gave me an unsullied (pure) cup
I drank, pronouncing [God’s] name
I was taken to superior knowledge.
\end{verbatim}
When it comes to ear diseases, a person infected must visit a certain place in Lalish, called Eba Guşğuş. They are treated by putting some water into the patient’s ears.105

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, Mezår 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 Kurbeqira 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 Bîrow (Ringworm), the infected person goes to Şikeňta Gaudi (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 Musë Sor shrine, located between the villages of Ba’shiqa and Bajzani. 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 Melêkê Méran shrine in Boza or Ba’shiqa, and the Mişêvir 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

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103 He is the eponym of a family of Pir’s, see Kreyenbrock 1995: 110; Omardëhli 2008:116.
104 Literally, ‘Bound reins to the head.’
105 ‘Estke 2011: 60.
106 From the interview with Tariq Xidir Ezidić, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
107 From the interview with Xezal Sêlêman Yousif (the custodian of the Zêwê of Memê Şivan), 10.07.2015, the collective villages of Khanke, Iraqi Kurdistan.
109 From the interview with Tariq Xidir Ezidić, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
malaria come to Sit Nafisah shrine, they scrape some sacred dust from the small enclosure for cure.\textsuperscript{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 Melêkê Mêran in the village of Boza for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{1111}

Zerêk (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.\textsuperscript{1112} In the Du‘a Zerkê (Prayer of Zerkê) this practice is made clear:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Ya Xudê ya Şêşims bi destê we bit, ne & O God, O Şêşims, by your hand and not 
bi yê min bit & by mine

Tu vi nexoşi sax keyî & You heal the sick one

Çi qesta we î ul malê kiriyê & Whoever visited this house

Dîvêt tu sax keyî\textsuperscript{1113} & You should heal him/her.
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Rheumatism suffers take some soil from the sanctuary of Melêkê Mêran,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{1115} This is also done for the same purpose with soil taken from the shrine of the Melêkê Mêran the village of Boza.\textsuperscript{1116}

4.3.1 Plants

Trees. There are religious texts that refer to the veneration of trees in Yezidism:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Hûn hidene xatîra behêstê û darê & For the sake of the paradise and the tree,

Kafê û mezarê, …\textsuperscript{1117} & The cave and the cavern, …
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Yezidis believe that trees have mystical powers; therefore, they are used for healing practices:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Kerma Çiyêyê Mişêå} & The mystical power of Mount Mişêå

\textit{Çiyêyê Hişretê, Çiyêyê ‘Erefatê} & Mount Hizret, Mount ‘Erefat

\textit{Dar â berêl Geûyê Lâşiê}\textsuperscript{1118} & [The mystical power of] Trees and stones of the Lalish Valley.
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

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.\textsuperscript{1119}

\textsuperscript{1110} Drower 1941: 28.
\textsuperscript{1111} From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
\textsuperscript{1112} ‘Esker 2011: 56.
\textsuperscript{1113} Du‘a Zerkê (Prayer of Zerkê), seb. 1, in ‘Esker 2011: 56.
\textsuperscript{1114} On this religious figure see Kreyenhroek 1995: 115.
\textsuperscript{1116} From the interview with Tariq Xidir Êzîdîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.
\textsuperscript{1117} Du‘a Hêvart (The Evening Prayer), seb. 5, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 22.
\textsuperscript{1118} Du‘a Hêvart, seb. 13, in Kreyenhroek and Rashow 2005: 286.
\textsuperscript{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 Şit Najıza 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 Koçe (Koçe tree), then there are also the Neb Dar (Nine trees), etc. Moreover, Zara Gahara is an orchard in the village of Gabara, near Akşuş. There are some Nerium oleander trees and people go there for recovering from several diseases.\textsuperscript{1120}

For treating fever, the Dara ta yi (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 hayê (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.\textsuperscript{1121} Moreover, for this purpose, there is also a fig-tree at the Şit Najıza shrine, in the village of Ba'shiçe\textsuperscript{1122} and a fig tree at the shrine of Sheikh Beko in the village of Bahzani.\textsuperscript{1123}

For protection from the evil eye, there is the Dara Nêzûrê (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'ê Nêzûrê, (the prayer [against] the evil eye) is recited while treatment is received.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c c}
Ya ceber, ya ceber, ya pîrî kar & O Mighty, all-powerful, Piri Kar \\
Ya Xundükare ber û behir & O Lord of the land and sea \\
A Xaliqê leyl û nebar ya Rebîl ismek & O creator of the night and day, O Lord! \\
\textit{titar,}\textsuperscript{1124} & Your name is savour. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

To treat children’s deprivation, there is tree-trunk in Lalish, in front of Kanîya Sîpî, that is named the Dara Xavê (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’shiçe also cures insomnia.\textsuperscript{1125} To restore the milk of mothers’ dry breasts, Yezidi women go to Dara Şîrê (the tree of milk) in the village of Boza; they take its branches and its soil for healing.\textsuperscript{1126} Moreover, for skin disease, a wart is treated religiously by praying on the root of the carob tree.\textsuperscript{1127}

\textit{Gravis.} Abdominal pains are treated with a bitter syrup of a herb called Heşiçek Şêşims (the herb of Şêşims).\textsuperscript{1128} To cure wounds, the ancestor of Hekim Féris\textsuperscript{1129} (Luqman and his descendants) used drugs and aromatic plants.\textsuperscript{1130} For protection from harm and

\textsuperscript{1120} Barwârî 2001: 87.

\textsuperscript{1121} See Image 14 in Appendices.

\textsuperscript{1122} Kreyenbroek 1995: 73.

\textsuperscript{1124} Du‘a Nêzûrê, Şêşims (The Prayer Against the Evil Eye, Version 1), sch. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 996.

\textsuperscript{1126} From the interview with Tariq Xidir Ezidîn, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.

\textsuperscript{1127} Barwârî 2001: 79.

\textsuperscript{1128} Kreyenbroek 1995: 113-114.

\textsuperscript{1129} Kreyenbroek 1995: 123.

\textsuperscript{1130} Kreyenbroek 1995: 123.
hardships, there is an ordinary cane in the Şahsiwar shrine in the village of Béban, 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 sebeque:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hân bidene satira Đura zër e} & \quad \text{For the sake of the yellow pearl,} \\
\text{Aş ë av ä agir e} & \quad \text{Soil, water, and fire,} \\
\text{Erd il’ezman ë ber e, …} & \quad \text{Earth, sky, and stone, …}
\end{align*}
\]

In healing practices, Yezidis venerate some stones, such as the following.

To heal backache, there is a Berê Pişê Êşê (headache stone) inside the Zimeçiım cave spring in Lalish. Another one is to be found in the Mezerê Menê Şivan (the Cemetery of Menê 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 Nazî in the village of Ba’shiqa; the patient kisses it and he takes a piece of thread with him/her to the stone of Nazî, 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 Markirin (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 Şerîk (jar), as well as the water and the Debnokêt 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

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\(^ {1131} \) De’eqa Hîwar (The Evening Prayer), seb. 9, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 23.

\(^ {1132} \) See Image 49 in Appendices.

\(^ {1133} \) Barwârf 2001: 83-84.

\(^ {1134} \) Ibi: 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 Taz and Kerî, Kom, Goaik 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, Kani Zerik (the spring of anaemia), Kani Gurîk (the spring of itching), Kaniya Barhajkê (the spring of air/rheumatism), Dara ta â bayê (the tree of fever and rheumatism), Dara Neçerê (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 Berat135 is one of the most sacred religious symbols in Yezidism.136 It is a small ball, about the size of a chickpea, and it has a bone-white colour.137 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 Tawwârî 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 Beratas (the cave of Berats) in Lalish, which is holy soil in the Yezidi religion. It is kneaded into balls with the water of Kaniya Şîpî, 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 sebûqe refers to the substance of Berat. It also refers to the point that the Berat appeared by Şêşimsî (lord of Sun) mystical power, perhaps because it is dried under the rays of the sun:

Bi ava Kaniya Şîpî Berat şêdikîn
Cêlwe bî nîça na meleq Şêc Sin
Bi qaweta Şêşims bate diyarkîn.138

Berat was made by the water of the White Spring
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

135 Regarding the name and history of the Berat, as a word, Kreyenbroek writes, “the word berat has a range of meanings, notably ‘innocence’ and ‘deceit’ (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 (Gindî 1999: 37-38). Cf, Wahby states, “it perhaps indicates the Mithraic origin of the certificate (i.e., Berat)” (Wahby 1962: 38).


137 See Image 50 in Appendices.

138 Qawêlê Celû (The Hymn of Celû), sb. 17, in Xalid 2011: 70.
it.\textsuperscript{1139} Moreover, in religious texts, such as in this \textit{sêbeqê}, the belief that \textit{Berat} symbolizes the earth, is highlighted:

\begin{quote}
\text{Heke te da êkî bezit û Berat e}
\text{Berat ûsana ërd û kiniyat e}
\text{Xudê beye ew atqat e.}\textsuperscript{1140}
\end{quote}

If you gave someone conscience and \textit{Berat}

\begin{quote}
\text{Berat is the symbol of the earth and the universe}
\text{Oh truly,\textsuperscript{1141} it is faith.}
\end{quote}

1.2 The use of the \textit{Berat} in religious life

Because the \textit{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 \textit{Berat} is carried by Yezidis, notably while travelling between countries. Moreover, Kreyenbroek states many Yezidis always carry \textit{Berat}.\textsuperscript{1142} A \textit{sêbeqê} refers to some features of this:

\begin{quote}
\text{Bexê bunê Berat}
\text{Min dêngê xo dada gelek welat}
\text{Min aşiq dikirin xelat.}\textsuperscript{1143}
\end{quote}

I was awarded with a \textit{Berat}

\begin{quote}
\text{I was wandering in many countries}
\text{I gave gifts to lovers.}
\end{quote}

Yezidis also believe that \textit{Berat} will bring them blessings, good fortune and protect them from harm and the evil eye.

It is obligatory that every Yezidi household keeps \textit{Berat} in a special sack, named the \textit{Turkiê Berata} (Sack of Berats) which is hang up in a special place in the house:

\begin{quote}
\text{Xet û Beratê Sîlêtn Ézê zîr in}
\text{Da Mirêd bico belûnin û bico vesirin.}\textsuperscript{1144}
\end{quote}

Lines (of script) and \textit{Berat} of Sîlêtn Ézê are gold (i.e., precious) So that Mirids can keep and hide them for themselves.

Yezidis believe that \textit{Berat} offers sustenance, reproduction and increase in agricultural wealth; this is why they keep it in their houses:\textsuperscript{1145} These \textit{sêbeqê}s makes a link between sustenance and the \textit{Berat}:

\begin{quote}
\text{Şêxadî maş û berata, bide Ezêdziyê şerqê û şamê}
\text{Haçîr û gudêra, ji xêzîna qudretê.}\textsuperscript{1146}
\end{quote}

O Sheikh ‘Adî, give wages and \textit{Berat} to the Yezidis of East and West Those who are present and listen, from the treasury of power.

\textsuperscript{1139} From the interviews with Baba Çawît Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Heçi Şemo Mirad, 23.07.2015, Ba'adra village, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{1140} \textit{Qevêli Mirâmûna Cêbêrê} (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 90, in Kişto 2012: 131.

\textsuperscript{1141} Literally, ‘God exists. Swear by God.’

\textsuperscript{1142} Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 372, n. 52.

\textsuperscript{1143} \textit{Qevêli Fîrûrê} (The Hymn of the Order), seb. 19, in Heçi 2002: 346.

\textsuperscript{1144} \textit{Qevêli Vêrûrê} (The Hymn of Control), the number of the \textit{sêbeqê} is unknown, in Girdî 1999: 38.

\textsuperscript{1145} From the interview with Baba Çawît Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{1146} \textit{Qevêli Imanê} (The Hymn of the Faith), seb. 45, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 89.
Em è çigaret biken wan xelata  
Sura Lalshi jì jor dibate  
Pè zyimì qias kinyat e  
Mëra jì ber bir méa û berat û xelat e.\textsuperscript{1147}

Let us kiss those Berat robes  
The mystery of Lalish 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.\textsuperscript{1148} Moreover, \textit{sebuge}s refer to the view that Sîltan Êzi is the healer and has Berat, which is perhaps an indication that the Berat has spiritual power for healing:

\begin{align*}
\text{Ya Sîltan Êzî tu 'ewil yê bi Beratî} & \quad \text{O Sîltan Êzî, you possess Berat from the beginning} \\
\text{Tu Xudanê atqatê} & \quad \text{You are the Lord of faith} \\
\text{Tu wê li ser píra xelatê.} & \quad \text{You are on the Selat bridge,}^{\text{1150}}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Ya Sîltan Êzî li me birêne bi çaveki} & \quad \text{O Sîltan Êzî, look upon us with the eye of} \\
\text{relement} & \quad \text{mercy} \\
\text{Dîlê xo li me biške şineqête} & \quad \text{By your heart, give us recovery (i.e.,} \\
\text{Ronâyekê jêce ber me û şendi xametê.}^{\text{1149}} & \quad \text{healing)} \\
\end{align*}

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 \textit{sebuge}s 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.\textsuperscript{1151} On this, Ahmed writes, “to retrieve the Berat they have once exchanged at a peace settlement, the other tribe accepts this as a declaration of war.”\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Becit û Berat} (conscience and Berat) as the synonyms of promise:

\begin{align*}
\text{Heke te da êkê becit û Berat e} & \quad \text{If you gave someone conscience and Berat} \\
\text{Berat nigaça 'erd û kinyat e} & \quad \text{Berat is the symbol of the earth and the} \\
\text{Xudê beye ew atqat e.}^{\text{1153}} & \quad \text{universe} \\
\end{align*}

Oh God, it is faith.


\textsuperscript{1148} Layard states that Berat is regarded as very useful against diseases and evil spirits. See Layard 1851 I: 235.

\textsuperscript{1149} \textit{Qewê Şerfedin} (The Hymn of Şerfedin), seb. 22, 23, in Heči 1994b: 37.


\textsuperscript{1151} See Gindt 1999: 40; Halû 2013: 100.

\textsuperscript{1152} Ahmed 1975: 290-291.

\textsuperscript{1153} \textit{Qewê Merêma Cebêrê} (The Hymn of the Decree of the Almighty Ones), seb. 90, in Kiêsî 2012: 131.
As well as:

| Peyman dan dester e | They promised legally
d |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nivisin Berat il nişur e</td>
<td>Bring Berat and a manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemit badir bizur e</td>
<td>With the presence of all (in assembly).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. Besides, the water of the Berat (i.e. water with a berat diluted in it) is used for Morkirin, instead of the water of Kaniya Sipî, for those Yezidis who cannot visit Lalish for any reason.

The Berat is a significant religious element in the observances establishing 'brother/sisterhood of the hereafter'. On the wedding day, the bride and groom must each have a 'brother or sister of the hereafter', and this bond is concluded by the act of drinking 'water of the Berat'. 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, Ḥallû, believes that giving or exchanging Berat between a couple means brotherhood. Furthermore, in funerary customs, Berat is put on the face of the dead person which is for blessing.

2 Şerbik (The Jar of Water)

Şerbik is a copper container filled with water. The role and the veneration of its water will be explained in religious observances.

---

1154 Qewê Mîr Mehmedê Kûrî (The Hymn of Mîr Mehmedê Kûrî), 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 Esmer Esmail Mirad, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
1159 For further explanation see “Wedding customs”, in chapter IV, part II.
1160 Ḥallû 2013: 100-101.
1161 For more details see “Funerary customs”, in chapter IV, part II.
1162 See Image 51 in Appendices.
2.1 Șerák symbolism in religious life

There are some beliefs about the symbolism of the Șerák, such as the following. In Yezidism, the water of the Șerák is the symbols of the eternal life (see next topic). Ğindî says that in Yezidism, the Șerák 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. Şinû, also emphasizes the same belief when he states that the Șerák is the symbol of the uterus that gives human life.1164 Here, this analogy is based on the circular shape of the Șerák 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pedâye min qêkêr cêya û deşt û berê û behirê bi temam e} & \quad \text{My King (i.e., God) created mountain, plane,} \\
\text{Sihihane ji te Xalîqî, li bedina maka} & \quad \text{wilderness and sea completely} \\
\text{heye behireka bi xênam e} & \quad \text{Glory to you, my Creator, there is a dark} \\
\text{Li we behirê qêkêr jin û zêlam e} & \quad \text{sea in the mother’s womb} \\
\end{align*}
\]

As well as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Behira heq wetini} & \quad \text{It made its home in the sea of truth} \\
\text{Nêh meha té sekini} & \quad \text{For nine months it stayed there.} \\
\text{Bi qudretê Hâhê dînekini.} & \quad \text{This was possible by God’s power.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bi qudretê kir temam e} & \quad \text{Through the power it became complete} \\
\text{Cî bêbêrekê tarê ye bi xênam e} & \quad \text{What a dark, opaque sea it is} \\
\text{Hâhyot dibûm eqsîrê te, ez dibûm} & \quad \text{O God! I am your prisoner; I became a} \\
\text{xulam e.} & \quad \text{servant [boy].}
\end{align*}
\]

2.2 The use of Șerák in religious life

Generally, the symbolism regarding the Șerák and its holy water has been used in three main religious observances, which are Tawwûsêran, Sema and wedding customs:

During Tawwûsêran, Qewals bring the Șerák and place it next to the Sineq. Șerák 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yê bidête min avêkê} & \quad \text{Whoever gives me a cup of water} \\
\text{Xudî bidête bejin ziravêkê Xudan} & \quad \text{God gives him a slim and faithful girl} \\
\text{imânekê} & \quad \text{That is the water of Kaniya Sîpî,}
\end{align*}
\]

---

1163 Ğindî 1997a: 35.
1166 Qewî Sermêrêçî (The Hymn of the Moment of Death), seb. 6, 7, in Rejo 2004: 140.
Chapter V: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Symbols and Objects

Ava kaniya sipi ye  In the jar of Sheikh ‘Adi
Şirpike Şecadi ye Drink from it, money is useless.
Jë vecon mişbetë ankë çëye.1167

There is a Şerbiye filled with the water of Kaniya Sipi that is used during the Sema ceremony. After completion of the Sema, the Şerbiye 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 Şerbiye 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 şehâje underwrites this view.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ew kasa niriin } e & \quad \text{That cup is luminous} \\
\text{Adem veziwart ji dîl } u \text{ eşiq } u \text{ eşin } e & \quad \text{The Adam drank from it with the love of} \\
\text{Lew inisetë wi geriyabë goşit } u \text{ xiwin } e & \quad \text{a faithful1170 heart} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Therefore, flesh and blood animated his body.

The Kas, containing the water, symbolizes eternal life:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ew bû kasa ji mubetë } & \quad \text{That was the cup of love} \\
\text{Hinciye Pedçaye min mectsë } ji \text{ wë kase } \text{ didetë } & \quad \text{Whoever, my King (i.e., God) gives} \\
\text{Sed xazke min } b\text{i } wë \text{ be, bë wë subbetë.} & \quad \text{him/her a drop of that cup} \\
\end{align*}
\]

I wish I were with that company.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ew bû kasa haqi } & \quad \text{That was the eternal cup} \\
\text{Pedçaye min } dë \text{ nav da bû saqi } & \quad \text{My king became the water inside it} \\
\text{Dilo tu çëndë mûstasqil.1171} & \quad \text{O heart! How much you long for that.}
\end{align*}
\]

1167 Text details are unknown, in ‘Amar 2008: 137.
1168 Başqasrî 2003: 146.
1169 Qewê Maidê Me (=Qewê 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”, Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 63, n. 27.
1171 Qewê Maidê Me (=Qewê Kasa), ‘The Hymn of our Master (=The Hymn of the Cups)’, seb. 2, 3, in Reşo 2004 II: 945.
Reço has the following to add regarding the Kas: “in Yezidism Kas is mystery, holy soul and holy leaven.” ¹⁷²

3.2 The Kas and human death

Religious texts, such as the below sebeges, 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:

Binıyadəm bel azar xewut keman  key  O man! If you live a thousand years
Miriyaqta serq beta bi xewut kаy  If you dominate from East to West¹⁷⁴
Her dé ji kasa miren tam  kev  In the end, you must taste the cup of death.

Yezidi religious literature asserts that the term Kasasi jiyane  ú Kasa miren (the cup of life and the cup of death) is connected with human life and death.

In religious sebeges, 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 Çira¹⁷⁵ 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 Qendil (lamp), or without a bowl in a specific site in religious places. The Misirir (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, Çivata Beza, Ziu, Nışanık, Qub, Mezur, etc. Based on the veneration of the lamp, there is a prayer called Du’eya Çirayê (the prayer of the lamp)¹⁷⁶ and also a hymn called Qewî Qendilla (the hymn of [the source of] the Lights, QQ).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Reço 2004 I: 152, n. 4.
¹⁷³ Qewî Miskên Jaw (The Hymn of the Poor Miserable One), seb. 33, in Reço 2004 II: 650-651.
¹⁷⁴ Literally, ‘Sham. Levant: Eastern Mediterranean Sea countries: Syria, Lebanon and Palestine’. It is located in the west of the Yezidi areas (Lalish temple area).
¹⁷⁵ 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 Batqisîrî 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 Xiro Hacl Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan).
¹⁷⁶ For the whole text of this prayer see “Du’eya Çirayê (The Prayer of the Lamp)”, in chapter I, part II.
¹⁷⁷ For the whole text of the Qewî Qendilla (The Hymn of [the source of] the Lights) see Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 90-93.
There are several types and forms of Çira, like Fitile (wicks), Coqeltu (a candelabrum with seven lights) and Qendil (lamp). Besides, Qendil 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. Furthermore, the Qendil is the source of light or the eye of the sun. Omarkhali, about the meaning of the Qendil, says:

Qendil 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 Pir Rizayê Kakê: “Qendil 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 (Nür/Nûra Xwedê ‘The Light of God’) from which everything was created.”

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:

Çira çira
Ji mëra na dani
Ji nûra rehmani
Ji teghira rehmani: From the light of the Merciful One’s (God)

From the greatness of the Merciful One.

Yezidis swear an oath by the lamp and say: “Bi evê çirayê 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:

Mirîdî bi surê girtin réçan e
Lj pêjîya wan gûribû mêm û çiran e.

Mirids know God by the mystery
Wicks and lamps are lit in their presence.

See Image 52, Image 53 and in Appendices.

Cf., there is a possibility that Qendil in Kurdish and candle in English have one origin etymologically and one meaning although with different pronunciation.

Reşo 2004 I: 210, n. 1.

Ibiê: 140, n. 1.

Omarkhali 2011-2012: 150.

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

Du’a Mirêyê (The Prayer of Mirids), seb. 13, in Reşo 2004 II: 1011.

In Yezidism, the name Réçan (literally, the path of knowledge), which could be translated as leader or scholar, is one of God’s names.
Erkanek je rasti
Pałça ji ba zæw vegubasti
Bía mom ü çirayê pêşya wann vegubasti.\textsuperscript{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 Qab of Şêşims in Lalish.

\textsuperscript{1186} \textit{Du’a Xere} (The Prayer of the Xerej), seb. 10, in Reço 2004 II: 1032.

\textsuperscript{1187} \textit{Du’a Ecziqêptê} (Prayer of Yezidis), seb. 13, in Reço 2004 II: 1003.

\textsuperscript{1188} \textit{Du’a Tîjaqê} (The Prayer of Agreement), seb. 12, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 111.

\textsuperscript{1189} “I. e. the unbelievers”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 111, n. 265.

\textsuperscript{1190} \textit{Du’a Me’rîfê} (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 4, in Reço 2004 II: 1019.

\textsuperscript{1191} I.e., the unbelievers.

\textsuperscript{1192} \textit{Qerê Çeremhéptê} (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kipto 2004: 211.

\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Tîjaq ù tehayê ji esq ù dîle
  \item ‘Erd cêkîrin, ‘ezman di ser ra mom ù çira
  \item Pałça nebû multebê rûbêt xafla.\textsuperscript{1188}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Agreement and unity come from love and from the heart
  \item They created the earth, and the sky over it as lights and lamps
  \item King (i.e., God) had no love for ‘the souls of the ignorant’.\textsuperscript{1189}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Me’rîfê esqa dîl e
  \item ‘E’îd cêkîr ‘ezman di ser re
  \item Bû mom ù çira, nebû multebê xafla.\textsuperscript{1190}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Knowledge is the love of the heart
  \item It created the earth and the sky over it
  \item It was lamp and light; it had no love for the ignorant.\textsuperscript{1191}
\end{itemize}

\textbf{The light of Çira and human soul.} Yezidis light a Çira for their dead, especially in the place where the corpse is washed:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hat çarêmhuwa fer e
  \item Xelat ji meÎskê fæzîr e
  \item Bo ruha bi ûman gorî diket çire.\textsuperscript{1192}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Came the significant Wednesday
  \item The gift is from the glorious angel
  \item Light a lamp for the faithful soul.
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Çira and spiritual knowledge.} Çira also symbolizes spiritual knowledge, and there are lamps called the Çirayê Me’rîfê (the lamps of knowledge); these are lit on the eve of Tawuçêran, when people gather around the Tawus. Religious texts refer to this as in \textit{Du’a Me’rîfê} (The Prayer of Knowledge):
Chapter V: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Symbols and Objects

Me'rifet ronabiya dīla ne
Li be ṣarībūn mūm ú ḥira ne. 1193

[Mystical] knowledge is the light of hearts
Candles and lights are lit with it (knowledge).

Me'rifet ú nasiin in
Ṣiraqet nārin in, ṣībora pe dībainiin. 1194

[Mystical] knowledge and understanding
Are brilliant lamps, one can recognize the leaders by them.

4.2 The use of Ṣira in religious life

Based on the veneration of the Ṣira and its symbolism, there are many usages of Ṣira in religious life. Lamps are lit on the eve of every Wednesday in religious places by Mīşwir, such as Lalish, Cīvata Boṣa, and Nīṣangehr. Wednesday is regarded as the day of Tawusī Melek:

Hat ṣarīm בעועועערעועערשער שושן וחתירה של שני

Xelat ji mēkkē fakir e
Bo ruha bi iman gorī dikeṭ čīrē. 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 Ṣeṣīm and in his shrine at Lalish:

Sebīr xelatekd Pedṣa ye
Ji ba xwe kir peyda ye
Bī wē sebīr li be wani ewīka ṣarībūn mūm ú ḥira 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 Lalīṣa Nārāni (the luminous Lalish); more lamps are lit there than in any other holy place. During the Ąeṣna Versalē (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 Ąeṣna xudanē malē (the lamp of the protector of the home):

1193 Du'a Me'rifet (The Prayer of Knowledge), seb. 1, in Reşo 2004 II: 1019.
1195 Qewel Carxivumû (The Hymn of Wednesday), seb. 33, in Kûto 2004: 211.
1196 Du'a Szorê (Prayer of Patience), seb. 9, in Reşo 2004 II: 1023.
1197 See “Ąeṣna Versalē (The Feast of the Yezidi New Year)”, in chapter III, part II.
Ew Xudanë malë xof ù rebim li dili kirin
Me bëni ji Xudanë malë beye, mom ù çira li ber vekekirin
Em ji diwanzde bezar bela dîr kirin. 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 Qub:

Bi wé qüber kem ser li erg e
Wé dë bin da diözëfän fën ù şemalë gå ëg e
Mîrô dîvënêt Şêçadî ye
Divan begi bi xare Şêcims 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 Şêcims.

Also, in:

Xudanë malë, xudanë quba nûrin e
Kariya wî serbanë ‘erğî ‘zayên e
Li ë ber diözëfît şimalê nûrin 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.

Çirâçé Xerqê 1201 (the lamp of Xerqê) is lit in the houses of Xerqêpos (the one who wears Xerqê) on Wednesdays for blessing, 1202 and Du’a Xerqê (the prayer of the Xerqê) refers to this:

Erkanek, jë beya ye
Pâska ji ba xare kir peyda ye
Pê şraty wân gurbi li mom ù çira ye
Em mirâza xare diçavânê ji Xudayye. 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 Xudanë Malë (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 6, in Reço 2004 II: 1017.
1199 Qâné Şëxî Hasen Sîlânë (The Hymn of Sheikh Hasen the Sultan), seb. 10, in Hecî 2002: 322.
1200 Du’a Xudanë Malë (The Prayer of the Protector of the Home), seb. 4, in Reço 2004 II: 1016.
1201 Xerqê 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 Feqir and the dress of the worshippers and mystics. The holiness of the Xerqê is widely reflected in religious oral traditions as well as in Du’a Xerqê (The Prayer of the Xerqê), see Reço 2004 II: 1031-1033; Qâné Xerqê (The Hymn of the Xerqê), see Çêfö and Sîlo 2013: 107-112.
1203 Du’a Xerqê (The Prayer of the Xerqê), seb. 12 in Reço 2004 II: 1032-1033.
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Du'aya Čirayé (the prayer of the lamp) is recited during different religious observances. The prayer takes place when lamps are lit in religious places; the Mušiur must recite it,\(^{1204}\) and here is a sebeq that mention this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Čirayé xudané me ú mîrê șéca} & \quad \text{The lamp of our lord and the prince of Sheikhs} \\
\text{Ú babê șëc ú van çiyê ú mekana} & \quad \text{And Babê Šëc and these sites and places} \\
\text{Ú bažir ú gōhdare digarîbin,}^{1205} & \quad \text{And those who are present and listen, be lit.}
\end{align*}
\]

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 Sineq in Tawugérán, which are called the Čirayén Meşfelê (the lamps of knowledge).\(^{1207}\) There are also seven lamps in the Sema ceremony, in the form of the Çeşelin (a candelabrum with seven lights).\(^{1208}\) Furthermore, there are also seven lamps beside the Xereq of Şexûbekir at Lalish, called the Heft Siwarên Malak Adiya (the seven riders of the Adiya family).\(^{1209}\) Finally, there are the seven lamps next to Dergebi Mîr (the gate of Mîr) at Lalish.\(^{1210}\) 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, Ara Hêwanê/Ara Jiyanê (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 Čirahîkirên (lighting lamps), Yezidis use olive oil in religious places. There is a sacred orchard of olive trees, called Rezê Zeytûna (olive orchard), in

\(^{1204}\) Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 57.

\(^{1205}\) Du'aya Čirayé (The Prayer of the Lamp), sub. 6, in Ce'fo and Silo 2013: 58.

\(^{1206}\) See “Heft Sur (Seven Mysteries) as Nîr and their Relation to Nature”, in chapter I, part I.

\(^{1207}\) For further information see “Tawugérân (The wandering of the Tawus)”, in chapter III, part II.

\(^{1208}\) For more details see “Şemagênîn (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 Xiro Haci Ismail, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Baba Çaviş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
Lalish, 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. 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. There is also a sacred olive tree at the Fesqir ‘Ell shrine in Ba’shique that cures insomnia. 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” In this seleq, the olive and the olive tree are treated as a good tree and a good fruit on the earth:

\[
\begin{align*}
& Ji min dibinin; gul ù ssoin \\
& Xoc ù beybûn, bû ù sêr ù gyzûn \\
& Ez ù ûser min basîl dibûn.\footnote{1217}
\end{align*}
\]

[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’ or ‘leaven’ is from the water of the White Spring:

\[
\begin{align*}
& Wa dibûhit Pekayê min û nûranî ye: \\
& Mê û zergûz e û mi ye \\
& Hêvéni her sêka ji Kaniya Spî ye.\footnote{1219}
\end{align*}
\]

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:

\[\footnote{1212}{See Image 54 in Appendices.} \]
\[\footnote{1213}{From the interview with Tariq Xidir Ézidin, 25.04.2018, Göttingen, Germany.} \]
\[\footnote{1214}{Barwär 2001: 79-80.} \]
\[\footnote{1215}{Kreyenbrock 1995: 113-114.} \]
\[\footnote{1216}{Edmonds 1967: 11.} \]
\[\footnote{1217}{Qevê ‘Enî ù ‘Eqman (The Hymn of Earth and Sky), seb. 9, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 387.} \]
\[\footnote{1218}{The word hêvên basically means ‘yeast’; for the translation ‘rennet’. It is clearly used here to mean a substance causing something or someone to take solid shape. Thus, the White Spring is here depicted as the source of material existence, see Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 101, n. 210, and p. 96, n. 195.} \]
\[\footnote{1219}{Qevê Qem Vërgan (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 39, in Kreyenbrock and Rashow 2005: 101.} \]
Chapter V: The Role of Natural Elements in Religious Symbols and Objects

Bawirî rastî ye
Xuqandîn Gay â Masi ye
Zerîz â Mi ye
Hêvûn wan çekîrîn jî Kaniya Spi ye.\textsuperscript{120}

Faith is truth
The bull and fish were created
The Zerîz tree and the sheep\textsuperscript{121}
Their leaven is produced from the White Spring.

A şehqê refers to the view that Zerîz comes from God on high down to the earth:

Pedê min zerîzî teşîl dikire
Nâzîlî ‘erda dikire
Tesîlînî Melîk Fecrédin dikire
Melîk Fecrédin tesîlînî zastê Şixadî dikire.\textsuperscript{122}

My King (i.e., God) fashioned the Zerîz
He revealed it on earth
He entrusted it to Melîk Fekhredin
Melîk Fekhredin entrusted it to the holy men of Sheikh Adî.

6.2 The use of Zerîz in religious life

The leaves of Zerîz are used for colouring Xerê black:

Pedê min zerîzî dirasît dikire
Feqîra Xerê xo pe rê dikire
Sunatcanê şêhde ü bawer pe dikire.\textsuperscript{123}

My King (i.e., God) made the Zerîz
Feqîras coloured their Xerê with it
Tradition house (Yezidi people) declared and believed in it.

Pedê dîhêjît; Fecrên nava mîbê ü zerîzî de çekem Xerê ye.\textsuperscript{124}
Feqîr de ken bercaye
Sunatçane dê pe ûnit bawerî ü şêhde ye.\textsuperscript{125}

King (i.e., God) says: Fekhr! From the sheep and the Zerîz I shall fashion Xerê
The Feqîras shall wear it
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.\textsuperscript{126}

7 Tawus (peacock)

In a variety of sources, such as in oral religious traditions, interviews and others, there are some natural symbolism connected with the peacock. They are explained below.

\textsuperscript{120} Dî’n Bawîrî (The Prayer of Belief), seb. 10, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 105.
\textsuperscript{121} “I.e. the sources of the dye and the wool for the khirqê”, Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 105.
\textsuperscript{123} Gevît Ören Versîn (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 40, in Bâgasîrî 2003: 287.
\textsuperscript{124} According to the textual meaning the name Zerîz ye contains a spelling mistake, the correct spelling is Xerê ye.
\textsuperscript{125} Gevît Ören Versîn (The Hymn of the Black Furqan), seb. 40, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 101.
\textsuperscript{126} Ce’fo and Sîlo 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 Tawusı Melek.\(^\text{1227}\)

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.\(^\text{1228}\) Moreover, Uğmán writes, “the multicoloured feathers of the peacock, plus its beauty, made the Izidies attach it to Tawoos Malak and make it His symbol.”\(^\text{1229}\)

*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.\(^\text{1230}\) Additionally, Ğindlı believes that the peacock is in one aspect the symbol of the sun and its integration.\(^\text{1231}\) Moreover, Ahmed states that “the peacock resembles the revolving of the sun, if not the sun itself.”\(^\text{1232}\) In this context, Wahby writes, “in classic Persian literature, we find the sun described as ‘Tawusi Ataşınpar’ (the fiery winged peacock) and also ‘Tawusı Uliwy Aşiyant’ (the peacock of the heavenly nest).”\(^\text{1233}\)

Regarding the belief which says that peacock feathers are the symbol of the sun rays and Tawusı 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.

Çendi teryek li ‘ezmana wé hey navé wi
Ener bi nav e
Raja’ id u ‘erfata derkeft ji Kaniya
Şlanê
Çeng â baskêt xo redivişênê
fé diçê şewiq û şemal ú nîrin ú xënav e.\(^\text{1234}\)

There is a bird in the sky, called *Ener* by name
On the day of the Feast\(^\text{1235}\) and the day of Erefat, it came out of the Spring of Şlan\(^\text{1236}\)
Spreading its feathers and wings
From it comes light, luminosity, brightness and dew.

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\(^{1228}\) Şinû (n.d.): 78.

\(^{1229}\) Uğmán 2013: 164.

\(^{1230}\) From the interviews with Baba Çawîş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan; Xewace Xudêda Ellî, 03.07.2015, Khatara village, Iraq. Also see Şinû (n.d.): 78; Bitükê, H. (2014), *Lêjîş Tawusî Malakê: A1 Aşûn al-‘ûr wa l-Şarî fi al-‘Idîyat* (Mystery of Tawus Melek, or The Origin of Good and Evil in the Yezidis), 1st ed., Damasçus: Tamoç, pp. 272-273.

\(^{1231}\) Gindlı 1997a: 34; Gindlı 1998: 36.

\(^{1232}\) Ahmed 1975: 194.

\(^{1233}\) Wahby 1962: 44.

\(^{1234}\) Xezînûk, Sênav 1 (Xezînûk, Version 1), seh. 3, in Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 399.

\(^{1235}\) It is not clarified which feast is meant here, but perhaps it is the *Sênav* 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.
Reşo states that “here, in this sebeq [previous sebeq] the bird (Enqer) is one of Tawusi Melek’s symbols”\textsuperscript{1237}. Also, according to Yezidis mythology and religious texts, Enqer is a peacock and is regarded as a symbol of Tawusi Melek and His name:

\begin{quote}
De wecte diniya tev ar bû, bé bé
Derek li orta wê arê bû, bé bé
Teyreqê engeri li ser wê darê bû, bé bé
Tiyenê mileti Ezdîyê dest bû, bé bé
Serê min qurban be, navê wî Tawusî Melek bû, bey malê,\textsuperscript{1238}
\end{quote}

When all the world was water, oh, oh
There was a tree in the middle of that water, oh, oh
The bird Enqer was on that tree, oh, oh
The seed\textsuperscript{1239} of the Yezidi nation started, oh, oh
Let my soul be sacrificed for its sake! its name (i.e. that bird’s name) is Tawusi Melek oh.

Furthermore, in Yezidi mythology, the peacock is a seven-coloured bird. At the beginning of creation, Tawusi 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.\textsuperscript{1240} Likewise, Tawusi Melek showed his blessing with the sign of the rainbow.\textsuperscript{1241} Moreover, in Yezidi religion, the angel of light is Tawusi Melek.\textsuperscript{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 Yezdi religious life. Yezidis do not hunt the peacock and do not eat its meat, because of its holiness. Yezidi 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 Dikil (Cockerel)

#### 8.1 The Symbolism of the Dikil 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

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\textsuperscript{1237} Reşo 2004 II: 1050.
\textsuperscript{1238} Xizêmk, Jaxê 2 (Xizêmk, Version 2), seh. 2, in Reşo 2004 II: 1054-1055.
\textsuperscript{1239} It could be translated as leaven, species and origin.
\textsuperscript{1240} See al-Raṣīlī 2013: 72.
\textsuperscript{1241} Aratian and Arakehova 2003: 24.
\textsuperscript{1242} See complementary information in “Huβ Sur (Seven Mysteries) as Nûr and their Relation to Nature”, in chapter 1, part 1.
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.\textsuperscript{1243}

\textit{Beyta Cind\'i} (the \textit{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 Şêşimes (the lord of the sun). Here, it emphasizes the belief that when it crows at sunrise, it does so for starting a new life:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Dîkîlê perê wi sor e}  
  \textit{Wê dêcainit li `ergê jor e}  
  \textit{Wê li ber melikê bi mor e}  
  \textit{Bang à bauwrâd me ji dîwana qublet bi dor e.}
  \end{itemize}

The cockerel, its feathers are red  
It is calling from the throne on high,  
It is with the angel that has \textit{Mor} [mihr=Mithra; Şêşime].  
Our shouts and cries for help are directed to the sun.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Dîkîlê perê wi zer e}  
  \textit{Wê dêcainit li `ergê di ser e}  
  \textit{Wê li ber melikê ekber e}  
  \textit{Bang à bauwrâd me ji Şêşimê Teter e.}
  \end{itemize}

The cockerel, its feathers are yellow  
It is calling from the throne on high,  
It is with the angel of the \textit{Mor} (i.e., Mithra and Şêşime)  
Our shouts and cries for help are directed to Şêşimê Teter.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Cindî yo rabe raju e}  
  \textit{Feqir rone ber raju e}  
  \textit{Bi xunaw kefi peykan û xerqan û bişkoj e.}\textsuperscript{1244}
  \end{itemize}

\textit{Oh, young man, get up, it is sunrise}  
\textit{The Feqirs have gone to face the sun}  
\textit{The fronts of their \textit{Seqi} and buttons have become wet with dew.}

\section*{8.2 \textit{Dîkîl} in religious life}

It is forbidden for the Sheikhs of Amadin and their followers to eat the meat of a cockerel because of its holiness. Point twenty-four of \textit{Mizbêfa Rêş} (The Black Scripture) emphasizes that “the Sheik and his disciples do not eat the flesh of the cock, […]”\textsuperscript{1245}

\section*{9 \textit{Marê Rêş} (Black Snake)}

\subsection*{9.1 The symbolism of the \textit{Marê Rêş} in religious life}

\textit{The snake and Ara Hêvanê/Ara Jîyanê (the water of life).} According to Yezidi mythology, the snake drank from Ara Hêvanê/Ara Jîyanê (the water of life or the water of eternal life),

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{Textsuperscript} From the interview with Baba Çavuş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Snam, H. A. (2004), \textit{Al-Mautur: Bahš û el Tîrîf al-Ayêdî wa al-Dîşânat al-Ayêdîyat} (The Expected: A Study in Yezidi History and Religion), Berlin: s.n., p. 231.
\bibitem{Textsuperscript} \textit{Beyta Cindî} (The Beyt of the Commander), seb. 14,15, 21, in Silêman and Cindî 1979: 46, 47.
\bibitem{Textsuperscript} Bittner 1913: 34.
\end{thebibliography}
\end{footnotesize}
and as such it never dies, so it is eternal. In Yezidism, it also plays the role of the keeper and protector of the water of springs. 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 Qupt, the entrance to the Zineğin spring. This shows that the snake relates to water and symbolizes eternal life. Moreover, Yezidis say, “Mar yé 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. 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. Here, it represents the prosperous income of produce in spring. In this regard, Yezidis use the word Kras (dress) for both the skin of the snake and the grass of the earth; therefore, when the snake changes its skin, they say: “Mar kirasé xwe gubort” (literally, the snake changes its dress). The same expression is used for Kinasgohorin (literally, ‘changing one’s shirt’, i.e. ‘rebirth’ or ‘reincarnation’). Likewise, when the new spring comes and the earth adorns itself with new grass, Yezidis say: “Erle kirasé xwe gubort” (literally, the earth changes its dress). A sebeq refers to the link between the snake and spring:

| Bi xer bêt lebar e            | Let us welcome the spring         |
| Bilbil dicûnû bi hezar e      | Nightingales sing by the thousands |
| Bi şevê vedikê deftera mar e   | At night they open the Book of Snakes |

1246 From the interview with Baba Çawş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan.
1249 From the interview with Baba Çawş Hesen Silêman, 03.07.2015, Lalish, Iraqi Kurdistan. Also see Hümt 2000: 79-80.
1250 About Kinasgohorin see “Nature and Kirasgohorin (Rebirth)”, in chapter III, part I.
1251 Beyta Bûlîha (The Beyt of Nightingales), selv. 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, such as in Lalish, in the cemetery of *Mum Şivan* in the collective village of Khankie, and also in *Qub ʿu Arahêê 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 Şerîkê Avê, in religious life, is that of the symbol of holy water and immortal life. There are many uses of Şerîkê Avê in religious life, as in *Tawuşğeran*, 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 Şerîkê, 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 *Xerqê*. What is more, lighting seven lamps for *Heft Suur* as the symbol of the seven mysteries, as Çirayên Mėrîfê in *Tawuşğeran*, Çegelhu in *Sema*, *Heft Siwarêê Mala Adîya* at Lalish, and also other seven lamps beside *Dereê Mir* 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 *Çirabikêrin*. It is also planted beside the headstone of a grave, and the olive tree is also used for healing practices. In addition, the *Zergêz* (Walnut tree) is the symbol of sacred trees and its leaves are used for colouring the *Xerqê* 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 crow at sunrise, it proclaims the coming of the light and the sun.

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125) 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 Ara Hêwanê/Ara Úyanê (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, Şerbükê 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, Tawusi Melek and Şêşîms are described in very similar ways, stressing their profound connection with light. Tawusi Melek and Şêşîms are described as manifestations of God’s light. Moreover, Tawusi 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, Şêşîms 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 Kinazgurhin (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 Qendil (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 Qendil, 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 Kantia Sipil, and also from the light of Lalish as Xerza Nûrûnû (luminous seed) and Nûra Mihebê (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 Kiransuburin, when a human is born, the soul comes down to earth from Qendil 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 Qendil (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 Tofan Ba (the Tofan of Wind). The second was by way of water, Tofan An (the Tofan of Water), then the world brings renewal again and ultimately life continues. The last one is Tofan 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 Çirahîlîrînê (the prayer of lighting lamps), water in Du’eya Morkirînê (the prayer of baptism) and earth
in Du’a Teslima’Erdé (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 Sişi for blessing; performing the Selâkîrin ritual with the water of Zınçım, the pilgrims take home some water from these springs for blessing. Another act of worship is fasting for Xudani (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 evî aqîrê piroğ (I swear by this holy fire) and bi evî aza piroğ (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 Nişangeh (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 Piraxayê (the spring of Piraxayê) in Shingal and Dara Qelindera (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 Çirahîkkîrin (lighting lamps) in all of these feasts and festivals, and performing the Gûrka Gay (the flame of the bull) ritual during the Bêlinde feast. In addition, some rituals and ceremonies are based on the holiness of the water, such as the ceremony of Sefera Nam û Mest (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) in which bread and yoghurt are ‘baptized’ with the water of the Kaniya Sişi in Lalish for blessing, the ritual of Tawus Cîwankîrin, i.e. Baptising the Sinwêq of Tawus by sprinkling it with the water of the same spring and drinking from the holy water of the Şerbik (jar of water) during the Tawusgêran ceremony. Other acts and rituals that represent this concept of veneration are Biczorhîkkîrin (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 Bêlinde 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; Morkirîn (baptism) and taking soil of religious places for a newborn baby in the custom of childbirth, in wedding customs like drinking from the Şerbik (jar) of water, as well as water with the Debnokët Bûkê (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, sullying 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, Kani Zarik (the spring of anaemia), Kani Garik (the spring of itching), Kaniya Barhdyke (the spring of air/rheumatism), Dara ta û bayê (the tree of fever and rheumatism), Dara Negerê (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, Şerîkê Ave (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 Bêlîndê feast is the symbol of the sun and light. The fire and light of the Çira on every Wednesday and the eyes 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 Şerîk (jar) in Tawusgêran 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 Sîpê 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 Şefûra Nan û Mast (the Ceremony of Bread and Yoghurt) ceremony. The water of Zimezîn in Selakîrê 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 Bîzurîlêkîrê (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 Erê, 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 Renan is the Xudan of rain, Kaniya Sîpî is the Xudan of springs and flowing water, Sherfedin 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 Pira 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 evi aqirê piroc (I swear by this holy fire); bi evi aca piroc (I swear by this holy soli), and bi evi ava piroc (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 Qendil. Moreover, the first big Tofan was by way of water and was called Tofana avê, the last one is Tofana aqir, 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 Cegetlu (a candelabrum with seven lights) in the Sema ceremony, etc. Concerning water, it is used for baptism, in the Sefera Nan â Mast ceremony, in the Şerbik (jar of water) in wedding customs, in the Taawûşeran ceremony and in the Selâkîn ritual. Pilgrims to Lalish have to take 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 line 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 
Tawugêran named Çirgyên Me'rifeté (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 Sîpî is the symbol of increase and grace for wealth and substance, 
so they baptize their bread and yoghurt in a special ceremony called Sêfêra Num à Mæst. 
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 Qewlîs 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’ê Na’irîkîriné (the 
prayer of lighting lamps), the light of the sun in all of the texts of prayers performed 
towards the sun, like Du’êa Siheykê (The Morning Prayer) and Du’êa Hêwari (The 
Evening Prayer), water in the text of Du’êa Morkîriné (the prayer of baptism) and also 
in the text of Beyta Kaniya Sîpî (Beyt of the White Spring), earth in Du’êa Tëslîma ‘Erdê (the 
prayer of commitment to the earth), in Qewlî ‘Erd ë 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 Xêrâvay

Adinan is a well-known Qasî̇tî̇j (reciter of the religious hymns) from the caste of Mîrîds (laymen). He was born in 1974 in the village of Xêrâva 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 Mîrze Derwêş

Aliyas is a Fegîr from the family called Mala Hêmo 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 Hesen was conducted on 31.10.2016, in the village of Serdeştê, Shingal Mountain, when he was displaced there.
Babê Çawiş Hesen Silêman
Hesen is from the Pir caste. He was born in 1973 in the village of Kendal in Iraq. His religious position is Babê Çawiş 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'fd Awdi Reşo was conducted on 03.07.2015, at Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Babê Şëx Xirto Haci İsmail
Xirto is from the Sheikh caste. He was born in 1931 in Iraq. His religious position is the Babê Şëx and is also called Éexiyart Mergê- the Yezidi spiritual leader which is a hereditary position in Yezidism. The interview was conducted on 03.07.2015 at Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Cirdo Ebdo Hesen
Cirdo is a Fagîr from the caste of Mirêds (laymen) and was born in 1950 in the village of Xirbê Qewala in the Shingal region. He is from a famous family called Malê Zero among the Yezidis of Shingal. He is famous for being a religious man, Xerqepus and Qevîlîwêj 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 Mirza Derwêş was conducted on 31.10.2016 in the village of Serdeştê, Shingal Mountain in Iraq, when he was displaced there.

Deşti Şëx Zeydîn
Deşti 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 Qevîlîwêj. 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 Kêçêl
Hecî is a Fagîr from the caste of Mirêds, born in 1971 in Shingal. He is a Qevîlîwêj 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 Şëmo Mirad
Hecî is a Fagîr who wears a Xerqê (black sacred woollen tunic) from the caste of Mirêds, Hecî was born in 1928 in the village of Gabara west of Ba'adra, in Iraqi 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 Qevîlîwêj 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 Iraqi Kurdistan.
Interviewees

Hesen Xudèda Garis
Pir Hesen was born in 1970 in the village of Khatara in Iraq. He is a religious man and a Qewlîbêj. 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 Qewlîbêj 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 Fâqîr from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1967 in the village of Cidalè in Shingal. He is a religious man and a Qewlîbêj. 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 Reço
Se‘îd is a Pir. He was born in 1970 in the village of Bêmar in the Sheikhan district in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is a Şîkестî (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 Birañîm Kiştô
Şero is from the caste of Mirîds and was born in 1963 in the village of Xerşenîya in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is a religious man and a Qewlîbêj. The interview with him was conducted on 07.07.2015 in the collective village of Shariya in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Xewace Xudèda Eli
A Qewlîbêj 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 Fâqîr from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1930 in Shingal Mountain, Iraq. He is famous for being a learned Xerqepoş and Qewlîbêj, 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.

Éro Hecî

Éro is from the caste of Mirids. She was born in 1959 in the village of Bahzani in the Sheikhkan district in Iraqi. She is a religious Fiqira (nun) and hícarhiq (incense holder) at the Lalish temple. The interview with her was conducted on 05.10.2016 at the Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Esmer Esmaîl Mirad

Esmer is from the Pir 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 Hesen

A Fiqir from the caste of Sheikhs, Himê was born in 1985 in the Sheikhkan district in Iraq. He is the custodian of Zimezîn Spring in Lalish and the interview with him was conducted on 07.07.2015 at Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Kovan Hesen Cindî

Kovan is a Fiqir from the caste of Sheikhs from the Şêxûbekir lineage. He was born in 1988 in the village of Mîhet in the Sheikhkan district. He is the custodian of Xerqi Şêxûbekir in Lalish. The interview with him was conducted on 07.07.2015 at the Lalish temple in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Sebah Sebîrî Sečîd

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 Heft Siwarîn 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 Ezîdîn

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 Cînata Boza (the assembly of Boza) and the Mezîr of Mêlê Mêran in Boza, Iraq. The interview with him was conducted on 25.04.2018 in Göttingen, Germany.

Xêrî Xidir Emer

Xêrî is a Fiqir 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 Pir caste. She was born in 1967 in the village of Mem Şivan in Duhok. She is the custodian of Zîwa 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 Zev. The researcher conducted an interview with her on 10.07.2015 at the Lalish temple in Iraqi 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 Faqir and from the caste of Mirîds. He was born in 1966 in the village of Bra’adra, in Iraqi 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 Hesen Reşkanî**

Sheikh Merwan was born in 1969 in the village of Zeynîya 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, Iraqi Kurdistan.

**Pir Xidir Silêman**

Pir Xidir belongs to the Cervan 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 Xell Cindi Reço, published a book in 1979 named: Ezdziyat: Li ber Roşnaya Hindek Têkstêd Aynê Ezdiyan, (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, Iraqi 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.

**Xelil Cindi Reço**

Sheikh Xellî was born in 1952 in the Sheikhan district in Iraq. He cooperated with Pir Xidir Silêman in 1979 to publish some of the formerly unpublished Yezidi religious texts in a book named: Ezdziyat: Li ber Roşnaya Hindek Têkstêd Aynê Ezdiyan, (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**

Sheikh Zayer was born in 1980 in the village of Nisériyé, Iraq. He is interested in Yezidism, and he published several articles on Yezidism in *Silengeba Lalish, Qebax* and *Sheikban* 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 jiyanê*

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 *Xidr* and *Lîyas* 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 Tawusi Melek. This probably represents the same belief that says that these lamps are the symbols of the seven planets around the sun.

*Çîrayên Me’rîfêti*

There are seven lamps called *Çîrayên Me’rîfêti*, ‘the lamps of knowledge’, which are lit beside the *Sînêq* in *Tawugêran*. 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.

**Êzidiyâtî**
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 Dorgbê Mîr (the gate of Mîr). There are also other seven other lamps near Xenî Şêcîlekerî by that name. According to Yezidi tradition, they symbolize the seven angels and Tawusi 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 Tawusi 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 QOXHC), 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 jiyanê û Kasa Mirnê”, 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 QM), 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.

Kirasguburın
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 Xai).

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 Şeşims is also believed to have the characteristics of the light (see QB, DS, DÉ 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 Çiçe (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.

Qewwwals
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 šibab (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 Tawmogran, village feasts and funerals.

Şemsani
It is a main religious lineage, but Yezidis, in general, define themselves as Şemsani, 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 DC and QSÈ).

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).

Taristan
It literally means ‘darkness’. In Yezidi cosmogony, in the beginning, i.e., before the
creation of the world, the whole of existence was Taristan 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 Tawusi Melek. In Yezidi mythology, the peacock is a seven-
coloured bird. The word Tawus is also used for Tawusi Melek. Sometimes Yazidis say
Tawus instead of Tawusi Melek, for example when they say, “bi Tawusê” which means
“I swear an oath by Tawusi 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
Tawusi Melek, it is also called Sîneyq.
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 Aré (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 Nurani
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 mibbata xerza nūrani (the luminous seed of love), was on high and plays the same role as Xerza Nurani (see QZM).

Xerzê Gulê
It is literally translated as ‘the leaven of flowers’ but in religious texts, it has the same concept of Xerza Nurani, it is the leaven of life on earth, (see Xerza Nurani).

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 Kantiya Sipî (see QQF and DB). Its leaves are also used to colour the Xeroğ black (see QQF).

Ziyaret
In Yezidi religious literature, this term is used for kissing holy objects and holy natural elements, as in case “li daré 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 Siwarên Mala Adiya (the seven riders of the Adiya family), Lalish 2015.

Image 02: Seven lamps beside Dergehê Mîr (the gate of Mir), Lalish 2015.
Image 03: Çeqeltu (a candelabrum with seven light), in Sema ceremony, Lalish 2013. Photo by Yousif Beri’s archive.

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Image 05: A Yezidi directs his face to the sun while praying. Photo by Sheikh Tariq’s archive.

Image 06: Biçoarhib kirin (Burning incense) in the Tiwaf of Kerecal, Shariya, Duhok 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 Ceğna Cimayê (the festival of the gathering), Lalish 2016.

Image 09: Periyên Sindrukên Xasa (Perîs of graves of holy men) inside their shrines, Lalish 2015.
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Image 10: Berê Şibakê (Throne of Netting) ritual, Lalish 2018.

Image 11: Bûka Baranê (Bride of the Rain), by Roj Dasuk.
Image 12: Kişana Qola (bring tree trunk), Lalish 2018. Photo by Sheikh Tariq’s archive.
Image 13: Kaniya Sipî (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: Şikefta Pir Omewzala (the cave of Pir Omewzala), Lalish 2015.
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Image 17: Şikefta Mam İşo (the cave of Mam Īso), Lalish 2015.
Image 18: Morkirin (baptism) with the water of Kaniya Sipî and wearing Tok (sacred undershirt), Lalish 2015.

Image 19: Goven Daderê Kaniya Sipî (the religious dance in front of the Kaniya Sipî) ritual, Lalish 2018.
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Image 20: Selakîrin (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.

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Image 26: Qub à Avahîê Xasa (Cupola and Mausoleum), Qub of Sheikh Mend, Khanke, Duhok 2015.
Image 27: The spring of Mezar of Piraxayê in the village of Kulkan, Mt Shingal 2016.
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III. Images


Image 33: Serderî (decorating the doors of the house) in Sersal (the Yezidi New Year), 2016.
Image 34: Colourful eggs and lit candles in Sersal (the Yezidi New Year), 2016.
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Image 36: Replaces the old Perîs of Qub with the new ones in the Tiwaf of Hekîm Fêris, Khatora, 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.
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Image 39: Den (vases, jars) for saving oil in Lalish, is used for lighting lamps there, Lalish 2015.

Image 41: Gurka Gay (the fire-flame of the bull) in Bêlindê festivals 2013, Photo by Sheikh Tariq’s archive.
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Image 45: Planting a tree beside the head of the grave in Mezar of Mem Şivan, Khanke, Duhok 2016.
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Image 48: Kum (hat) and Gosik/kezê (braid), a Shingali young man, Lalish 2016.
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Image 49: Berê Pişt Êşê (headache stone), the Cemetery of Mem Şîvan, Khanke, Dibok 2016.

Image 50: Berat (Sacred Soil Ball) the most sacred Yezidi religious symbols, 2015.
Image 51: The holy Şerbîk (The Jar of Water), Lalish 2016.

Image 52: Çirabîkîrin (lighting lamps), Lalish 2015.
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Image 53: Qendîl (lamp), Lalish 2015.

Image 54: Rezê Zeytûna (olive orchard), Lalish 2015.
Image 56: Dara Şexê Batê (the tree of Şexê Batê) in the village of Xorça in Sheikhan 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, 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 detailed descriptions of elements: fire, water, earth and air, and 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.