



JAŽN-Ā JAMĀ'ĪYA

JAŽN-Ā JAMĀ'ĪYA (Feast of the Assembly), the great communal festival of the Yazidis. The feast is also called *'aydā mazin* (great feast), and is celebrated at the main sanctuary of Yazidis at Lāleš valley, located in a mountain area, 62 km northeast of Mosul in Iraqī Kurdistan. The feast lasts for seven days, from twenty-third of September to the first of October, according to the Eastern calendar, which is thirteen days behind the Gregorian one. It is thus an autumn festival, most rituals of which (e.g., the bull, *semāt*, the “tree stump,” *samā'*, *bar-ē šebākē*, etc.) are directly connected with Yazidi mythology, especially with the cosmogony. The range of customs and rituals performed at Jažn-ā Jamā'īya make this one of the richest Yazidi observances. Special rites that are conducted in the course of the festival include:

Samā'. *Samā'* is a sacred dance that is performed every evening in the courtyard of the sanctuary of Shaikh 'Adi b. Mosāfer Hakkāri (d. ca 1162), to the accompaniment of the sacred music of tambourine (*daf*) and flute (*šabāb*) and by the singing of religious hymns called *qawl* (q.v.) and *bayt* by members of a hereditary group of hymn reciters (*qawwāl*). Representatives of all three Yazidi castes (Shaikhs, *pirs* “elders,” and *morids* “disciples”) take part in this observance.

Qapāḡ. This is a rite that is carried out on a Wednesday under the supervision of the Yazidi prince (*mir*). During the rite, members of the Qā'yidi, Māmusi and Terk tribes take a male calf or young bull from the shrine of Shaikh 'Adi to that of Shaikh Šams (one of the Holy Seven), while many pilgrims are watching along the route. At the shrine of Shaikh Šams the animal is sacrificed in the



name of the Lord of the Sun (Ḳodān-ē rojē). Sacred food, known as *semāt*, is prepared from the meat of the sacrificial animal and ground wheat, and is divided among the believers.

Bar-ē šebākē. It is an observance centering around a bier which is said to have been that of Shaikh 'Adi, and which is also called 'Arš-ē Ēzi (Throne of Ēzi) or Taḳt-ē Šayḳ 'Adi (Throne of Shaikh 'Adi). On the Thursday after *Qapāḡ*, the bier is carried on the shoulders of prominent Yazidis from the shrine of Shaikh 'Adi to a spring called Āvā Kālokē (Water of Kālokē) and is immersed in it. After that the bier is restored in its original place inside the shrine.

Pari sewārkeren (Carrying of the Fabric). On Friday, a piece of colored fabric (which may not be blue), called *pari*, is carried on the head of a Yazidi and is “baptized” in the Qāni-ā Sepi (White Spring), then it is brought to the shrine of Shaikh 'Adi to the accompaniment of a sacred flute (*šabāb*) and is put on the coffin of Shaikh 'Adi or Shaikh Ḥasan.

Semāt. *Semāt* is the name of the sacred food prepared during the seven days of the festival by the custodian of Lāleš and those of the other shrines in the valley of Lāleš.

Mor keren (lit. sealing, i.e., approximately “baptism”). During the feast all Yazidis, adults and children, males and females, should undergo the rite of *mor keren* in the water of either the Qāni-ā Sepi or the Zamzam spring (a spring in a subterranean cave under Shaikh 'Adi's shrine). For those undergoing this rite for the first time it is regarded as their initiation into the religion.

Qorm-ē dārē (Tree Stump). On September 23rd a tree stump is put into the water of the Qāni-ā Sepi. It is taken out again on the first of October, which is the day of the actual feast.

Ziāratibun (Pilgrimage). As this is a festival of gathering (*jamā'īya*) and mutual contact, Yazidis make pilgrimage to the various holy places and shrines in the Valley of Lāleš.

Throughout the feast of *Jamā'īya*, the participants dance and make merry with great enthusiasm, as this is a central part of Yazidi religious life. They believe that, during the festival, a Yazidi's soul feels close to God, Ṭāwus-ē Malak (the foremost among the *Haft sorr* “seven archangels”), and other sacred beings, while on the social side, all Yazidis gather together, interact, and reaffirm their



religious identity.

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