



Water / Auwe / Aw

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Summary

Auwe or Aw means “water” in the Raa Haqi tradition. Water is regarded as one of the two fundamental sources of life on earth, together with earth (hard/erd). For this reason, it is understood not merely as a material substance but also as a sacred nourishment granted to living beings through the mercy of Haq and as an entity possessing the quality of sır (mystery) within religious discourse. In Raa Haqi cosmology, water is closely associated with purification, protection, abundance, healing, protection from the evil eye, the removal of bad dreams, and rituals surrounding birth and marriage. Many water sources are also regarded as jiare, that is, sacred places.

Keywords: Raa Haq, Raa Haqi, Sır, Su

Concept and Semantic Field [1]

Auwe or *Aw* means “water” in Kirmancki and Kurmanci. In the belief world of *Raa Haqi*, water is one of the primary elements that make life possible. In this respect, it is understood together with *hard/erd* (earth). Earth signifies the space in which material life unfolds, the trust through which human beings sustain themselves, and one of the fundamental elements of the cosmological order connecting *Haq* and this world. Within this same order, water represents vitality, abundance, mercy, and ritual purification. The description of water as “one of the two

sources of life on earth” demonstrates that in *Raa Haqi* it is understood not merely as a natural resource but as a being with cosmological and religious significance (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

In this context, water is perceived on the one hand as a symbol of *Haq* and, on the other, as the nourishment that *Haq* grants to living beings through divine mercy. The expression *Rama Haq*, used for rain, clearly illustrates this field of meaning. *Rama Haq* means “the mercy of *Haq*” and indicates that rain is understood not simply as a meteorological event but as the descent of sacred mercy into the world.

Water, *Sır*, and the Cosmological Order

In the belief system of *Raa Haqi*, water, like earth, is considered one of the substances possessing the quality of *sır*. Here, *sır* indicates that a substance should be understood not only through its visible physical properties but also through the wider cosmological network linking *Haq*, *Neq Dina*, *Botın*, and *Zahir*. Water is not only the source of life in this world but also a medium through which relationships with the unseen realm are established.

It is said that the *neq abu* of *Neq Dina* is *kefser*. This expression indicates that water belongs not only to this world but also carries meanings extending into the other world and sacred cosmology. For this reason, water is one of the principal elements connecting everyday life, ritual practice, and sacred geography within *Raa Haqi*.

Ritual Uses

Water is used in many different ways within the religious practices of *Raa Haqi*. Bad dreams are told to water so that their negative effects may pass away through it. During *Gaxan*, water is sprinkled throughout the house, thereby protecting the household, its inhabitants, and its animals. In the ritual known as *apsu*, blessed water or blessed salt is used as a protective means against the evil eye, illness, wild

animals, and various forms of misfortune. The expression *apsu kerdene* refers to this act of protection. *Dervishes*, *pirs*, or *milles* recite prayers over water or salt; the blessed water is then sprinkled inside or outside the house, given to a person affected by the evil eye to drink, or mixed with food (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

The ritual role of water is not limited to protection. Water is also used to bind spirits. The practice of *dervishes* placing their hands into boiling cauldrons in order to demonstrate *keramet* further illustrates how water, together with fire, appears within ritual contexts where extraordinary sacred powers are tested. During marriage ceremonies, a knife is plunged into water, a symbolic act that strengthens the sacred and binding character of the marriage contract. Likewise, when a newborn child completes the forty-day period after birth, water is sprinkled through a sieve, demonstrating the role of water in rituals of birth, purification, and incorporation into social life (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

Sacred Water Sources and *Jiares*

Within the *Raa Haqi* tradition, many water sources are regarded as sacred places. Rivers, springs, lakes, and water sources are understood not merely as natural features but also as sacred beings and places possessing the status of *jiare*. In this sense, water sources function as transitional spaces through which relationships are established between human beings and the world of *Botın* (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

One of the most important of these sacred water sites is *Munzur Baba*, the source of the Munzur River. As one of the central figures of Dersim's sacred geography, Munzur is associated with water, abundance, and protective sacred power. Water-related *jiares* within *Raa Haqi* are particularly linked to healing, fertility, and prosperity. Sacred water sources therefore serve as carriers of individual wishes, collective memory, and awareness of sacred geography.

Moral Boundaries Concerning Water

Polluting water is considered a sin within the belief system of *Raa Haqi*. This prohibition demonstrates that water is understood not merely as a natural resource available for human use but as a sacred trust. Water is therefore not an object over which human beings possess unlimited authority. Rather, it is a sacred being that requires care, respect, and responsibility (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

This understanding reflects one of the fundamental dimensions of the relationship between *Raa Haqi* and nature. Water, earth, fire, mountains, trees, rocks, and animals are all regarded as non-human beings that nevertheless actively participate in social and religious life. Protecting water is therefore understood not only as an ecological concern but also as a religious and moral obligation.

Conclusion

Auwe/Aw is one of the fundamental elements of life, mercy, protection, purification, and sacred geography within the belief world of *Raa Haqi*. Water is understood as the sacred nourishment granted by *Haq* to living beings, while rain is called *Rama Haq*-“the mercy of *Haq*.” Everyday practices such as telling bad dreams to water, using blessed water against the evil eye, sprinkling water throughout the house during *Gaxan*, and employing water in birth and marriage rituals demonstrate its central ritual significance within *Raa Haqi*. Sacred water sites such as *Munzur Baba* further reveal that water is not only a source of material life but also a carrier of sacred geography and of relationships with the world of *Botın*.

Endnotes

[1] This entry is based on the corresponding entry published in Erdal Gezik and Hüseyin Çakmak's *Raa Haqi - Riya Haqi: A Dictionary of Religious Terms in Dersim Alevism* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2010). The text has been reviewed and updated by the authors of the original publication.

References & Further Reading

Gezik, Erdal, and Hüseyin Çakmak. 2010. *Raa Haqi - Riya Haqi / Dersim Aleviliği İnanç Terimleri Sözlüğü*. Ankara: Kalan Yayınları.