

Both celebration of
the new year but
more



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Both the Iranian and American cultures celebrate the beginning of their new year by a relatively fixed set of costumes and traditions. The Persian festival called "Nowruz" نو روزه; literally "new day" is held on the 1st of Farvardin which is the first month of the Persian calendar.

While it is mixed with the Islamic culture of the region, its roots date back to the ancient pre-Islamic era of the Persia kingdom and the Achaemenid dynasty. The American festival of New Year celebration has more of a religious root to it. It is held on December 25 which in Christian culture is marked the birthday of Jesus Christ, hence the name: the mass of Christ. The first vivid distinction that might fetch one's attention is the time that the main event of celebration occurs. The Persian festival called "Nowruz" نو روزه; literally "new day" is held on the 1st of Farvardin which is the first month of the Persian calendar.

To compare with the western calendar, it is held on March 21 which fairly correlates with the beginning of spring. It seems that either by chance or more probable by design, the festival's origin was set to be not only a celebration of the New Year but more importantly a celebration of nature's rebirth. In global human culture, spring usually indicates an awakening for the earth, which from it; nature is woken from the cold winter nap. The American New Year, however, is marked in December which is the first month of winter. This is the result of Christmas's religious origin, for the birthday of Jesus Christ is believed to be in December. But it seems that spring celebration found its way into the Christian culture after all.

Americans celebrate the beginning of spring in a festival called Easter. The

actual reason for celebrating this festival, however, seems to be the resurrection of Jesus (Trawicky, Gregory 2000).

While being an excuse to celebrate the beginning of the New Year; both holidays are expressed in a religious fashion, Abrahamic to be more precise. The reason behind this was explored however it is worth noting that Islam in Nowruz is not as innate as Christianity in Christmas. Because Nowruz is more aged and Islam didn't exist for nearly a thousand year, Islam found its way through Nowruz and embedded itself within the festival while of course making some alterations to it. In case of Christmas however, the religion was responsible for the holiday.

In the third century, the church decided to determine the birthday of Jesus Christ and they decided to choose December 25 for it. It is worth mentioning that this day in the Roman calendar marked the winter solstice aka the shortest day of the year (Bradt, Hale, 2004). According to an early Christmas sermon by Augustine, " Hence it is that He was born on the day which is the shortest in our earthly reckoning and from which subsequent days begin to increase in length. He, therefore, who bent low and lifted us up, chose the shortest day, yet the one whence light begins to increase.

" (Augustine, Sermon 192). The exact origin of Nowruz is unknown due to its old age but it is claimed that its roots date back to 538 BC; around the time when Cyrus invaded Babylonia. Whilst this festival is celebrated among different nationalities many people from different faces of faiths engage the celebration including Muslims, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews and even Bahaai-ists. This is mostly the result of geographical changes throughout

history and the constitution of Nowruz itself. When Nowruz was in its earlier days, the dynasty of Achaemenid ruled the Middle East and even some parts of Africa and Mediterranean countries and this made the festival to be widespread across the region. Later on, when territories changed due to regional conflicts throughout time, Nowruz remained in the new cultures and managed to hold its place in upcoming faiths in the area. The other reason Nowruz survived in the clash of cultures is that of its neutrality concerning religious beliefs. This celebration is not demanding, meaning that it doesn't require for personal beliefs to be altered in order of participation.

This has made the festival really elastic so it could be adopted to fit one's faith without the threat of messing with their belief or religion. The nature of Nowruz is more naturalistic than religious; it is not however in any form atheistic. At its core, Nowruz glorifies nature and its rebirth. This cultural flexibility is not evident in Christmas. As the paper mentioned earlier on, Christianity is the cultural and historical origin of Christmas.

This made the celebration to be a bit more ethnocentric than nowruz, especially in the eyes of American Christians. It should not be left out that many cultures today also celebrate this event but this is more due to the cultural changes and interactions. In this case the American culture is exported through media and art and with it brings the cultural item to new borders. Costumes, rituals and the way it is held: Nowruz To go through this segment we have no choice but to ignore an important part which is "celebration by ethnicity".

Even when analyzing the festival within one border- Iran in this case - we still have to deal with multiple ethnicities and the how each performs the festival. Iran is a multicultural country and also the opposite of a melting pot where each ethnicity tries? to preserve their culture, therefore the national rituals happen differently within different ethnic groups. This is not a very notable issue with Christmas, for the United States is a very strong melting pot.

So in this segment we examine the main-stream celebration of Nowruz. Keep in mind that despite the cultural differences most of the items explored below are relatively common in most Iranian ethnic groups. Probably one of the earliest festive activities before the Nowruz day is shopping for new clothing.

In Iranian culture having brand new clothes is very important because in peoples belief with a new year, a new look is essential. So a few months (usually two) near to the Nowruz day, the markets which sell three clothing shirt, trousers and shoes are the heavily crowded with people who are getting ready for new-years. The tailors are also extremely busy because a notable chunk population prefers to tailor their new clothing. While mentioned that this marathon is the result of a culturally based belief, there is also another ritual of Nowruz that pushes this shopping spree named “ di-do-baaz-did”. This ritual will be explored.

The next item is the growing of grass or any form of fast growing greens. As mentioned earlier, the essence of Nowruz mostly revolves around nature and its rebirth. So to fulfill that spirit one very important and probably the most symbolic ritual of Nowruz is growing some sort of fast growing greens which

in a short time turn to green and fresh stems. There is no hard hitting rule or taboo on what you should grow but most of the time Wheat, lentils, and cress are used in this ritual. It is important to mention that you should plant these seeds in a plate or some portable container with a red strip holding the stems together because this bundle of greens is to be placed in the middle of Nowruz tablecloth. The reason will be explained going on.

Getting closer to the beginning of the New Year comes another cleansing custom of Nowruz. While Housecleaning might seem a very common thing to do in an everyday life, for those who celebrate Nowruz it is a necessity of the season. In Iranians belief when the year is turned new so must the soul, mind, and physics. Doing a complete housecleaning near the festival is a part of that.

Usually at this time even if the house seems relatively clean, a new and thorough wash-up is inescapable. In some cases, the owner decides to throw a new shade of color on the walls to renew the appearance of the house for the New Year to come. The seven S? s tablecloth " ??? ??? ": at the time of new-year when the countdown is happening every family unrolls a tablecloth (not necessarily on a table) and on this cloth, they put some items including the seven S? s. These are seven things that their name begins with an " S" in Persian and each act as a symbol for the festival. The seven S? s are as followed: 1- sumac (a sour reddish powder) 2- samanoo (kind of dish with juice of germinating wheat or malt mixed with flour) 3- sin-jid (sea-buckthorn) 4- seeb (apple) 5- sab-zeh (the greens) 6- ser-keh (vinegar) 7- seer or sir (garlic).

The reason that there are seven S? s at the table dates back to the ancient Persia. The one god of Ahura-Mazda had six assistances and thus there were seven holy bodies (moshiri, 2016). Of course, the number seven is universally used in both religion and myth. For example the seven kingdoms, seven sins, seven earth/sky.