A Comparative Ethnography of Shared Cultural Traditions: Kurdistan and its Neighbors

1. Introduction: A Tapestry of Shared Heritage in the Middle East

The lands historically inhabited by the Kurdish people are situated at a significant crossroads of civilizations, where ancient and medieval empires, trade routes, and diverse populations have converged for millennia.[1] This geographical and historical positioning has fostered a rich environment for cultural exchange, resulting in a complex tapestry of traditions that are often shared, adapted, and reinterpreted across ethnic and political boundaries. Cultural expressions rarely exist in isolation; rather, they are shaped by continuous interaction, processes of syncretism, and the ebb and flow of regional influences. This report aims to meticulously examine specific Kurdish traditions—spanning festivals, social customs, performing arts, mythology, and cuisine—and to explore their parallels and variations within the cultural landscapes of neighboring peoples, including Persians, Turks, Arabs (with a focus on Iraqi and Syrian communities where data allows), Armenians, Assyrians, and Azerbaijanis. The very concept of "shared traditions" in this region is nuanced, often intertwined with historical power dynamics and contemporary identity politics.[2] While centuries of coexistence have undeniably led to common cultural threads, the interpretation and ownership of these traditions can be subjects of contention, particularly for groups like the Kurds who have navigated complex relationships with surrounding state structures.[2] This analysis will therefore strive not only to identify similarities in cultural practices but also to acknowledge the distinct meanings and contexts these traditions hold for each group. By exploring the spring equinox celebrations, the sacred duties of hospitality, the foundational bonds of family structures, the vibrant expressions of music and dance, the enduring echoes of ancient myths, and the communal experience of shared culinary practices, this report seeks to illuminate both the deep-rooted interconnectedness and the unique cultural articulations of the diverse peoples of the Middle East and its surrounding regions. Understanding this shared yet diverse heritage is crucial for appreciating the rich cultural mosaic of the area and the dynamic ways in which traditions are both preserved and transformed over time.

2. The Vernal Equinox and New Year: Celebrations of Renewal

The arrival of spring and the vernal equinox hold profound cultural significance across a vast expanse of Western and Central Asia, heralding renewal, rebirth, and the triumph of light over

darkness. For Kurds, this period is embodied in the festival of Newroz, a celebration deeply interwoven with their identity and history. This section explores Kurdish Newroz and its remarkable parallels with the Nowruz traditions of Persians and Azerbaijanis, the Nevruz and Hıdırellez festivals of Turkey, the ancient echoes in Assyrian Kha b'Nisan, and related spring observances in Armenian culture.

2.1. Kurdish Newroz: A Symbol of Rebirth and Resistance

Newroz, typically celebrated around March 21st, is the Kurdish New Year and marks the arrival of spring.[4] More than just a seasonal festival, Newroz is a potent symbol of Kurdish identity, freedom, and resilience.[4] The central ritual is the lighting of bonfires on the eve of Newroz (typically March 20th), around which people gather to dance, sing, and jump over the flames—an act of purification and a symbolic farewell to winter's darkness.[4] Participants often don traditional, vibrant Kurdish attire, and communal activities include folk dances like the Govend or Halay, traditional games, family feasts, and the recitation of poetry.[3] Spring flowers are gathered, and in some customs, pottery is smashed for good luck as families spend the day in nature, celebrating the fresh growth of spring.[5]

The most profound significance of Newroz for Kurds is its connection to the legend of Kawa (or Kawe) the Blacksmith and the tyrannical king Zahhak (Zuhak).[4] According to Kurdish lore, Zahhak was an evil Assyrian king whose reign brought a perpetual winter to Kurdistan and who had serpents growing from his shoulders that demanded a daily sacrifice of two young men's brains.[4] Kawa, a blacksmith who had lost many sons to this cruelty, led a rebellion of young men (considered the ancestors of the Kurds) who had been secretly saved.[7] Kawa ultimately killed Zahhak with his hammer and lit bonfires on the hillsides to announce the victory and summon his supporters, whereupon spring returned to the land.[4] This legend imbues Newroz with powerful themes of liberation from oppression, making it a cornerstone of Kurdish national identity and a symbol of their enduring struggle for cultural and political rights, especially in regions where Kurdish expression has faced restrictions.[4]

2.2. Shared Nowruz Traditions and Regional Spring Festivals

The Kurdish celebration of Newroz is part of a broader family of New Year and spring equinox festivals observed by many neighboring cultures, often under the name Nowruz or similar variations. These celebrations share core themes of renewal, purification, and feasting, while also exhibiting unique local customs and folklore.

2.2.1. Persian Nowruz: Ancient Roots and Rich Symbolism

Persian Nowruz, with origins tracing back over three millennia to Zoroastrian traditions, is a cornerstone of Iranian culture.[10] Preparations begin weeks in advance with *Khāne-takānī* (spring cleaning), symbolizing renewal and the discarding of the old.[10] A key pre-Nowruz ritual is *Chaharshanbe Suri* (Festival of Fire), observed on the eve of the last Wednesday before the New Year, where people jump over bonfires, chanting phrases like "My yellow to you, your red to me" (Sorkhi–e to az man; Zardi-e man az to!), seeking purification and health.[10]

The centerpiece of Nowruz is the *Haft-Seen* table, a meticulously arranged spread featuring seven items starting with the Persian letter 'S' (س), each holding symbolic meaning: *Sabzeh* (sprouts, for rebirth), *Samanu* (sweet wheat germ pudding, for power/strength), *Senjed* (dried oleaster fruit, for love), *Seer* (garlic, for medicine/health), *Seeb* (apple, for beauty/health), *Somāq* (sumac berries, for sunrise/patience), and *Serkeh* (vinegar, for age/patience).[12] Other items like a mirror, candles, painted eggs, goldfish, and a holy book or poetry (like the Shahnameh or Divan of Hafez) often adorn the table.[10] Families gather around the Haft-Seen as the New Year arrives, exchanging greetings and gifts (*Eidi*), especially for children.[10] Visiting family and friends (*Eid Didani*) is an essential custom.[12] The celebrations culminate on the thirteenth day with *Sizdah Bedar* (Nature's Day), where people picnic outdoors, and the *Sabzeh* is released into running water, symbolizing the discarding of misfortunes.[12]
The Persian Nowruz is also linked to the legend of Kaveh Ahangar (Kaveh the Blacksmith) overthrowing the tyrannical king Zahāk, a narrative immortalized in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.[8] While sharing the core of a heroic blacksmith defeating a serpent-shouldered tyrant, the Persian version generally depicts Zahāk as a "foreign" or "evil" ruler rather than specifically an Assyrian king, as often found in Kurdish tellings.[7]

2.2.2. Azerbaijani Novruz Bayramı: Elements and Festivities

In Azerbaijan, Novruz Bayramı is a cherished national holiday with preparations starting a month in advance.[11] The four Tuesdays leading up to Novruz are each dedicated to one of the four elements: Water (*Su Çərşənbəsi*), Fire (*Od Çərşənbəsi*), Wind (*Yel Çərşənbəsi*), and Earth or Last Wednesday (*Torpaq Çərşənbəsi* or *Axır Çərşənbə*).[14] Jumping over bonfires is a significant ritual, particularly on Fire Wednesday or the eve of Novruz itself, symbolizing purification.[17]
A vital symbol of Azerbaijani Novruz is *Səməni*, sprouted wheat, which is grown in homes and represents the revival of nature and fertility.[17] The holiday table is laden with special national pastries like *şəkərbura*, *paxlava* (baklava), and *şorqoğal*, as well as painted eggs and various traditional dishes.[17] Visiting relatives and honoring the graves of ancestors are also important customs.[11] Folklore figures like *Keçəl* (the bald man, symbolizing the period before Novruz) and *Kosa* (the sparsely bearded man, symbolizing winter and defeated by spring) are integral to the festive atmosphere, often appearing in folk performances.[17]

2.2.3. Turkish Nevruz and Hıdırellez: State and Folk Perspectives

In Turkey, Nevruz (the Turkish spelling of Nowruz) is officially recognized and celebrated, particularly in eastern and southeastern regions, though its observance can be complex due to its strong association with Kurdish identity.[19] The Turkish state has, at times, promoted Nevruz with an emphasis on Turkic heritage, linking it to the Ergenekon legend—a foundational myth where ancient Turks escape a besieged valley by melting an iron mountain, guided by a grey wolf (*Bozkurt*).[21] Official celebrations may include military parades and ceremonies emphasizing Turkish national unity.[22]
Folk traditions for Nevruz across Turkey include spring cleaning, wearing new clothes,

preparing special foods (like pastries with spinach, and eggs colored with onion skins), and visiting cemeteries.[20] Jumping over fire is a common purification ritual.[20] Various regional customs exist, such as tying "March yarn" (*Mart ipliği*) to trees or the "sharing equally" (*hak üleştir*) custom where food is offered to passersby.[20] Alawite and Bektashi communities in Turkey also celebrate Nevruz, associating it with the Prophet Ali.[20]
Distinct from Nevruz but sharing themes of spring's arrival is Hıdırellez, celebrated on May 5th-6th.[25] This festival is dedicated to the meeting of Hızır (a figure associated with immortality and succor) and İlyas (the Prophet Elijah), believed to bring health and prosperity.[25] Hıdırellez rituals include lighting bonfires, making wishes, music, dance, and communal meals in nature.[25]

2.2.4. Assyrian Kha b'Nisan (Akitu): Ancient Echoes

The Assyrian New Year, Kha b'Nisan ("First of April"), is celebrated on April 1st, marking the beginning of spring.[26] This festival has historical links to the ancient Mesopotamian Akitu festival, which celebrated the rebirth of nature and the god Marduk's victory over chaos.[28] Contemporary celebrations involve parades, parties, wearing traditional Assyrian attire, and listening to poets recite the "Story of Creation".[26] A distinctive tradition is *Deqna d-Nisan* ("beard of April/Spring"), where young girls gather flowers and herbs to create garlands or bunches to hang under the roofs of homes or on front doors.[27] Displaying wheat sprouts on small plates and decorating dinner tables with seven types of fruit are also customary, with seven being a holy number for Assyrians.[29] Unlike the Nowruz traditions of their Kurdish and Persian neighbors, fire-jumping is not a prominent feature of Kha b'Nisan celebrations.[26] Special foods for the festival are not extensively detailed beyond general feasting.[27]

2.2.5. Armenian Spring Traditions: Navasard, Trndez, and Vahagn

Ancient Armenian New Year, Navasard, was originally celebrated in early spring, around March 21st, coinciding with the vernal equinox and considered the birthday of the pagan god of fire and thunder, Vahagn.[31] Though Navasard celebrations later shifted to August due to calendar changes [31], remnants of spring fire rituals persist. Trndez (also known as Candlemas Day or *Tiarn'ndaraj*), celebrated on February 13th or 14th, 40 days after Armenian Christmas, prominently features bonfires.[35] Newlyweds and young people jump over these fires for purification, fertility, and good fortune, symbolizing the departure of winter and the welcoming of spring.[35] This festival, though Christianized, retains ancient fire-worshipping elements.
Ancient Navasard celebrations involved large feasts, sacrifices (doves, deer), athletic games, dancing, and the worship of deities like Anahit, Astghik, and Vahagn, with Bagavan being a center of fire worship.[34] The water festival Vardavar, still celebrated today by dousing each other with water, also has roots in these ancient Navasard festivities, originally honoring Astghik, the goddess of water, beauty, love, and fertility.[34] The festival of Zatik, often coinciding with Easter and the spring equinox period, is also linked in some traditions to the birth of Vahagn.[33]

2.2.6. Nowruz Among Other Non-Kurdish Groups in Iraq and Syria

Nowruz is observed by various communities in Iraq and Syria beyond the Kurdish populations, often influenced by the pervasive Persian cultural heritage and adapted to local customs.[11] In Iraq, Nowruz is an official holiday in the Kurdistan Region and has received recognition from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicating a broader national acknowledgment.[11] Mandaean communities in Iraq celebrate their own New Year and spring festivals, such as Parwanaya and Dehwa Honina, which share thematic elements of renewal with Nowruz, though specific rituals like the Haft-Seen are distinct to Persian-influenced Nowruz.[11] Some Shia Muslim communities in Iraq also observe Nowruz, associating it with religious figures and events.[24]

In Syria, while Nowruz is most visibly celebrated by Kurds [9], its observance by other groups, possibly including Alawites and other communities with historical ties to Persian culture or Shia Islam, is plausible.[39] General Nowruz customs such as house cleaning, family visits, special foods (e.g., *sabzi polo*), and sometimes fire-jumping (associated with *Chaharshanbe Suri*), are part of the broader Nowruz tradition that may influence or be practiced by these groups.[11]

The prevalence of fire and water rituals, feasting, and the celebration of nature's renewal across these diverse spring festivals suggests deep, ancient origins, possibly predating Zoroastrianism, rooted in shared human experiences of seasonal cycles and agricultural life. Fire, for instance, is a near-universal symbol of purification and the dispelling of winter's gloom in Kurdish Newroz [4], Persian Chaharshanbe Suri [12], Azerbaijani Fire Wednesday [17], Turkish Nevruz/Hıdırellez [20], and Armenian Trndez/Navasard.[34] Similarly, water rituals, like the Armenian Vardavar [34] or Turkish waterfront customs for Nevruz [20], signify cleansing and fertility. This points to a fundamental layer of shared cultural heritage tied to the rhythms of nature.

However, the mythological narratives underpinning these festivals often diverge, reflecting how shared temporal celebrations are adapted to bolster distinct ethnic or national identities. The Kawa/Kaveh and Zahhak legend, central to Kurdish and Persian Newroz, illustrates this. In Kurdish versions, Zahhak is frequently identified as an *Assyrian* tyrant, framing Newroz as a specific national liberation story.[4] In Persian tradition, particularly the *Shahnameh*, Zahhak is a more generalized evil or foreign king, and Kaveh's victory is an Iranian triumph.[8] Contrastingly, official Turkish narratives for Nevruz sometimes highlight the Ergenekon legend, a distinct Turkic myth of origin and liberation, thereby creating a separate national folklore for a festival that shares its timing and many core rituals with its neighbors.[21] This divergence showcases how foundational myths are selectively emphasized or constructed to reinforce specific identities, even when the celebratory practices themselves exhibit significant overlap. Spring festivals thus serve as a compelling lens through which to observe the dynamic interplay of ancient shared heritage and the ongoing construction of distinct cultural and national narratives in the region.

Table 1: Comparative Overview of New Year/Spring Festivals

Feature	Kurdish Newroz	Persian Nowruz	Azerbaijani Novruz Bayramı	Turkish Nevruz/Hıdırellez	Assyrian Kha b'Nisan	Armenian Navasard (Ancient Spring)/Trndez/Zatik	Other Iraqi/Syrian Groups (General Nowruz)
Festival Name(s)	Newroz, Newruz	Nowruz, Norooz, Persian New Year	Novruz Bayramı, Novruz	Nevruz, Sultan Nevruz; Hıdırellez (distinct spring festival)	Kha b'Nisan, Akitu, Resha d-Nisan	Navasard (ancient), Trndez (Candlemas), Zatik (Easter/Vahagn's birth)	Nowruz
Approximate Timing	March 21 (celebrations March 18-24) [4]	March 20/21 (Vernal Equinox) [10]	March 20/21 (preceded by 4 elemental Wednesdays) [17]	Nevruz: March 21/22 [20]; Hıdırellez: May 5-6 [25]	April 1 [26]	Navasard (ancient): March 21 [31]; Trndez: Feb 13/14 [35]; Zatik: March 21/Easter [33]	March 20/21 [14]
Key Rituals	Bonfires (eve of March 20), jumping over fire, traditional clothes, Govend/Halay dance, games, poetry, special foods, smashing pottery. [4]	Chaharshanbe Suri (fire jumping), Haft-Seen table, Khane Tekani (cleaning), Eid Didani (visits), Sizdah Bedar (picnic), new clothes. [10]	Fire jumping, Semeni (wheat sprouts), special pastries (pakhlava, shekerbura), painted eggs, family visits, grave visits. [17]	Nevruz: Fire jumping, cleaning, special foods, cemetery visits, hak üleştir. [20] Hıdırellez: Bonfires, wishes, music, dance, communal meals. [25]	Parades, parties, traditional clothes, poetry ("Story of Creation"), Deqna d-Nisan (flower garlands), displaying wheat, 7 fruits on table. [26]	Navasard (ancient): Feasts, sacrifices, fire worship, games, dance. [34] Trndez: Bonfire jumping. [35] Vardavar (water festival). [34]	General Nowruz: House cleaning, family visits, special foods, Haft-Seen (Persian influence), fire jumping (Chaharshanbe Suri). [11]
Key Folklore/Legends	Kawa the Blacksmith defeats Assyrian tyrant	Kaveh Ahangar defeats tyrant Zahāk	Keçəl and Kosa characters. [17]	Nevruz: Ergenekon legend (Turkic). [21] Hıdırellez:	Linked to ancient Akitu festival, myth of	Navasard: Vahagn (god of fire/thunder, birthday	General Nowruz myths (e.g., Jamshid) if

	Zuhak. [4]	(Shahnameh). [8]		Meeting of Hızır and İlyas. [25]	love/vegetation gods ensuring fertility. [28]	March 21), Anahit, Astghik. [31]	adopted. [13]
Primary Significance	Rebirth, freedom from oppression, Kurdish national identity, arrival of spring. [4]	Renewal, spring, purification, family unity, ancient heritage. [10]	Renewal of nature, spring, family, purification. [14]	Nevruz: Spring, new year, national identity (Turkish), ancestral remembrance. [20] Hıdırellez: Arrival of spring, health, prosperity. [25]	New Year, start of spring, revival, ancient heritage (Akitu). [27]	Ancient New Year, spring, fertility, purification, honoring gods (Vahagn). [31]	Renewal, spring, family unity. [11]

3. The Sacred Art of Welcome: Hospitality Across Cultures

The tradition of hospitality is a deeply cherished value across the Middle East and surrounding regions, acting as a cornerstone of social interaction and communal identity. Kurdish culture, in particular, is renowned for its profound emphasis on welcoming guests with open arms and boundless generosity. This section examines the customs of Kurdish hospitality and draws comparisons with the practices of neighboring Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani societies, highlighting both the shared ethos and the distinct cultural expressions of this fundamental social grace.

3.1. Kurdish Hospitality: Generosity Without Bounds

Kurdish hospitality is characterized by an almost legendary level of generosity and warmth.[43] When a guest, whether a stranger or acquaintance, arrives at a Kurdish home, they are treated with utmost honor. Hosts typically offer the best food available, the most comfortable seat, and insistently encourage guests to eat until they are more than satisfied.[43] Visits are not expected to be brief; a stay of at least three hours is common, as hosts genuinely delight in the presence of their guests, often overcoming any language barriers with sheer warmth and happiness.[43]

Food is the primary medium through which this hospitality is expressed.[43] The process often begins with the offering of beverages, most notably Kurdish tea, followed by an array of sweets, nuts, and snacks.[44] As the visit progresses, more substantial offerings such as

cheeses, vegetables, and meats may be presented. A visit frequently concludes with the serving of fruit, which can also subtly signal the end of the engagement.[44] Such is the importance of these offerings that refusing food or drink can be perceived as an insult to the host.[44] This deep-seated tradition of sharing is often underpinned by a belief that guests are a blessing and that food itself is a gift from God to be shared with others.[44] It is common for Kurds to bring gifts of food—such as entire frozen chickens, homemade jams, or large pots of traditional dishes like *dolma*, *muklubah*, or *biriyani*—when visiting others or even as spontaneous gestures of goodwill.[43]

3.2. Comparative Hospitality Customs in the Region

The profound emphasis on hospitality seen in Kurdish culture resonates strongly across neighboring societies, each with its unique expressions but sharing core values of generosity, respect for guests, and the significance of food and drink in welcoming rituals.

Persian Hospitality: Iranian hospitality is renowned and often characterized by intricate politeness, encapsulated in the concept of *Taarof*—a complex system of etiquette that includes expressions of humility and deference towards guests.[12] Ensuring guests are comfortable, well-fed, and honored is paramount. While specific sequences of food offerings are not as minutely detailed in the provided materials as for Kurdish customs, the general principle of "welcoming hospitality" is a core social value.[10]

Turkish *Misafirperverlik*: In Turkey, hospitality (*misafirperverlik*) is a cornerstone of social life. Guests (*misafir*) are highly esteemed and often regarded as *Tanrı Misafiri* ("a guest from God"), implying a sacred duty to host them well.[45] Even unannounced visitors are received with warmth and offered the host's finest food, tea, coffee, and sweets.[45] Declining such offerings can cause offense, emphasizing the expectation that guests should graciously accept the generosity shown.[45] Offering cologne (*kolonya*) to guests to refresh their hands is also a common and distinctive Turkish hospitality gesture.[45]

Arab Hospitality: Arab cultures are widely known for their warm and generous hospitality.[46] Guests are typically offered tea, coffee, and substantial meals, and sometimes a place to stay.[46] The *majlis*, a traditional sitting area in homes, is central to receiving and entertaining guests, serving as a space for socializing and discussion.[48] Sharing food from communal dishes is a common practice, and it is customary to eat with the right hand.[48] The belief that guests are sent by God and that hospitality is a sacred duty is also present in Arab traditions.[49] The initial offering of a drink, often water, symbolizes a peaceful welcome.[49]

Armenian Hospitality: Armenian tradition places great importance on welcoming guests with lavish, home-cooked meals, which serve as symbols of friendship and generosity.[50] Hosts pride themselves on offering their finest provisions, including fresh fruits, homemade preserves, and *oghi* (traditional fruit brandy).[50] Signature dishes like *Ghapama* (pumpkin stuffed with rice, dried fruits, and nuts), *Khorovadz* (barbecue), and the ubiquitous *lavash* (flatbread) are often central to the guest meal.[50] It is customary to serve guests first, further highlighting their honored status.[50]

Assyrian Hospitality: Historical accounts attest to a strong tradition of Assyrian hospitality,

exemplified by grand feasts. King Ashurnasirpal II, for instance, hosted a monumental ten-day feast for tens of thousands of guests, providing vast quantities of food and drink.[51] Ancient Assyrian wedding celebrations also involved extensive communal feasting.[52] While contemporary household hospitality practices are less detailed in the provided sources, the historical emphasis on large-scale commensality suggests a deep-rooted cultural value of generosity towards guests.[53] General "Oriental" customs, such as the belief that guests are divinely sent and the initial offering of water, likely resonate within Assyrian traditions as well.[49]
Azerbaijani Hospitality: Azerbaijanis are known for warmly embracing their guests, with hospitality being a prominent feature of their culture.[18] Offering tea is an ancient and significant tradition when welcoming visitors.[17] Guests are typically offered meals and a warm reception, and it is considered impolite to decline such gestures of goodwill.[18]
The widespread emphasis on offering food and drink as a primary act of hospitality across these cultures points to shared historical and environmental roots. In regions often characterized by arid landscapes and a history of pastoralism or agriculture, the sharing of sustenance would have been vital for survival and for building and maintaining social alliances and interdependencies.[45] This practical necessity likely evolved into a deeply ingrained cultural virtue, often imbued with religious significance, such as the guest being "sent by God".[45]
While the core principle of generosity is a common thread, the specific rituals, the types and sequence of food and drink offered, and the symbolic meanings attached to them exhibit local variations. For example, the detailed progression of food offerings in Kurdish homes culminating with fruit [44], the Armenian presentation of specific delicacies like *Ghapama* and *oghi* [50], the Turkish custom of offering cologne [45], or the centrality of tea in Azerbaijani welcomes [17] all reflect unique cultural expressions. These distinctions showcase how a shared ethos of hospitality is adapted and enriched by local customs, available resources, and distinct culinary traditions, forming a "grammar" of welcome that is both common to the region and specific to each culture.

4. Bonds of Blood and Community: Patrilineal and Extended Family Structures

The family unit serves as the bedrock of social organization across the Middle East and Caucasus, with traditional structures often characterized by patrilineal descent and the prevalence of extended family households. These systems, while evolving, continue to shape kinship ties, social roles, and communal identity. This section delves into the traditional Kurdish family structure and compares it with those found in neighboring Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani societies, highlighting shared patterns and local nuances.

4.1. Traditional Kurdish Family: Lineage, Household, and Roles

The traditional Kurdish family is often described as a peasant family, fundamentally organized

around a patrilineal lineage where descent and inheritance are traced through the male line, and the male head of the family holds a central position.[54] Such lineages historically depended on mutual support and defense, typically within the confines of an ancestral village.[54] While men traditionally assumed responsibility for agricultural tasks and external socio-political interactions, Kurdish women have also played significant roles, contributing to all facets of social, economic, and political life within their villages.[54]

The Kurdish household, known as the *mal* or *xani*, functions as a corporate entity.[54] This can manifest as an extended family living under a single roof (*xani*) or as a compound of several nuclear family sub-units, each consisting of a mother, father, and their children, but all part of the larger family structure.[54] The extended family typically includes parents, their unmarried children, their married sons along with their wives and offspring, and sometimes the unmarried siblings of the male head of the family.[54] According to Kurdish tradition, marriage does not automatically necessitate the creation of a new, separate household; the eldest son and his family are often obliged to remain with his parents.[54] As family resources permit, younger married brothers may build their own houses within or near the family compound, gradually expanding it.[54] All consumption activities, and often production, take place within the *mal*, which serves as the primary economic and social unit.[54] Even after younger sons establish their own dwellings, the extended family often continues to share meals together in the main family home (*mal*).[54] Polygyny is permissible in Kurdish tradition, with each wife potentially managing her own section of the house independently.[55] Inheritance customs traditionally favor sons, who divide the father's property equally, while daughters typically do not inherit.[55] Within the household, there are often clearly defined duties for both the male head (*malxî*) and the female head (*kabanî*), though patriarchal gender inequalities are generally present.[54]

4.2. Shared Patterns in Regional Family Structures

The patrilineal and extended family model observed in Kurdish society is a widespread phenomenon across the Middle East and Caucasus, reflecting shared historical, socio-economic, and cultural conditions.

Persian Family Structure: Traditionally, the Iranian family is strongly patriarchal, with the father or husband recognized as the head of the household, controlling family matters.[56] Extended families are common, with grandparents, uncles, and aunts playing very involved roles in the lives of younger family members, both emotionally and financially.[56] Family loyalty and adherence to traditions are highly valued, and parents typically make major life decisions for their children, such as those concerning marriage and profession.[56] Upon the father's death, the eldest son often inherits his authority and responsibility for the mother and unmarried siblings.[57] It is customary for women, upon marriage, to reside with their husband's family.[57]

Turkish Family Structure: In rural Turkey, the traditional household often consisted of an extended family: a man, his wife, his adult sons with their wives, and his young children and grandchildren.[58] Upon the death of the household head, this large unit would typically

fragment into smaller households headed by each son.[58] Patrilineal lineages or clans, comprising men descended from a common male ancestor, were important for mutual support and defense within the village.[58] The patriarchal extended family model is characterized by the father's significant authority over his sons and the husband's authority over his wife.[59] While the extended family was often held as an ideal, particularly in agrarian societies, nuclear families were also prevalent.[58]

Arab Family Structure: The family is a dominant and fundamental social institution in Arab societies, typically patriarchal and hierarchical in terms of age and gender.[57] The father usually serves as the head of the household and the primary financial provider, responsible for instilling cultural and religious values, while the mother traditionally acts as the caregiver and manages domestic responsibilities.[61] Extended family living arrangements, where two or three generations reside in a single household or a family compound, are common, particularly among more traditional families or recent immigrants in diaspora contexts.[57] Authority within the extended family often rests with the oldest male member.[57]

Armenian Family Structure: Armenian families have traditionally been patrivirilocal, meaning that upon marriage, a man's wife joins him in his parents' home, where they reside with his children and sometimes grandchildren.[62] Multi-generational households, often spanning three or four generations, are prevalent.[50] A strong tradition dictates that the youngest son is generally obligated to remain in the parental home and eventually inherit it.[62] The eldest man in the family, the patriarch, historically controlled the family's property and had significant authority over the lives and fates of family members.[63] Traditional marriage rituals often emphasize the bride's symbolic transfer from her natal family to the groom's family.[62]

Assyrian Family Structure: In traditional Assyrian society, the nuclear family (mother, father, children) often lived with or in close proximity to extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins), all forming part of a larger clan or tribe.[64] The patriarch of the clan was typically the oldest living male member, while the head of each individual household was the male "breadwinner".[64] Marriages were traditionally arranged between families and involved rigidly structured customs, with the bride usually moving to her father-in-law's home after marriage.[64] Among Bedouin Assyrians, society is also organized into patrilineal descent groups known as *buyout* (households), *afkhaadh* (lineages), and *qabaa'il* (tribes).[65]

Azerbaijani Family Structure: Historically, large families were common in Azerbaijan, often structured patriarchally with representatives of two or three generations living together. Family leadership typically belonged to married or elderly men.[66] The eldest son traditionally received the largest share of the inheritance and assumed the role of head of the family upon his father's death.[66] These extended families formed tight-knit communities with shared responsibilities.[67] While modern Azerbaijani society has seen a trend towards smaller, nuclear families, values such as respect for older people, prioritizing family needs, and loyalty to regional traditions remain strong.[66]

The enduring prevalence of patrilineal and extended family structures across these diverse cultures is not coincidental. It is strongly linked to historical agro-pastoral economies where land ownership, the organization of labor, and the management of resources were paramount

for survival and prosperity.[54] Such family systems provided a stable and resilient framework for the inheritance of property (typically through male lines), the pooling of labor for agriculture and herding, and the provision of social security and mutual defense in regions that were often characterized by political instability or limited state reach.[54]
While this overarching patriarchal and extended family model constitutes a significant shared tradition, specific customs and rules exhibit local variations. For instance, the Armenian tradition of the youngest son inheriting the parental homestead [62], the explicit Kurdish custom of daughters not inheriting property [55], or the recognized role of a female head of household (*kabanî*) with defined duties in Kurdish society [54] represent distinct cultural adaptations within the broader shared framework. These nuances reflect unique historical trajectories, local ecological conditions, and diverse interpretations of overarching religious or legal principles, demonstrating that a common structural template can be implemented with considerable cultural specificity. Despite modernization and urbanization leading to changes, such as an increase in nuclear family households [54], the foundational values of kinship loyalty, respect for elders, and family honor continue to exert a profound influence on social dynamics throughout the region.

5. Rhythms of Shared Identity: Folk Music and Dance

Folk music and dance are vibrant expressions of cultural identity, communal bonding, and historical memory. Among Kurdish people and their neighbors, certain forms of performing arts exhibit striking similarities, pointing to centuries of cultural interaction and shared aesthetic sensibilities. This section focuses on two prominent examples: the widespread tradition of communal line and circle dances, typified by the Kurdish Halay/Govend and its regional cognates, and the pervasive use of the Daf frame drum in diverse musical contexts.

5.1. Communal Dances: The Halay/Govend and its Kin

Line and circle dances, characterized by dancers linking hands or shoulders and moving in synchronized patterns, are a hallmark of festive and social gatherings across a vast geographical area encompassing the Middle East and the Caucasus. These dances embody community spirit and collective joy.

5.1.1. Kurdish Halay/Govend: Unity in Motion

The Halay or Govend is a cornerstone of Kurdish folk dance, with hundreds of cataloged variations across different regions of Kurdistan.[3] These are almost invariably community dances, frequently performed by men and women together in a circle, semi-circle, or straight line.[3] Dancers connect by holding hands, standing shoulder to shoulder, interlacing pinky fingers (a method sometimes referred to as the "Kurdish hand hold," also familiar to Armenian folk dancers), or by placing hands across the lower back of adjacent dancers.[3] Men's dances are often distinguished by their speed and athletic feats, while women's dances may feature more delicate foot, shoulder, knee, and neck movements.[3] A notable characteristic that differentiates Kurdish folk dancing from some other Middle Eastern traditions is the general

lack of segregation by sex, with men and women commonly dancing together in the same line.[3] These dances are often accompanied by elaborate, brightly colored, and regionally specific traditional costumes.[3]

Significant stylistic differences exist between the dances of Kurmanji-speakers and Sorani-speakers. Kurmanji dances, such as *Keçiko*, *Çepikli*, *Garzane*, *Papuri*, *Meyroke*, *Temilav*, *Çeçeno*, and the widely known *Sheikhani* (also danced by Kurdish Jews and Assyrians), are characterized by an erect body posture, with dancers tightly holding onto each other. The movements are often sharp, energetic, and visually impressive.[3] In contrast, Sorani dances, including *Gerdûn*, *Çepi*, *Khanim Mirî*, and *Sêpêyî*, tend to feature simpler steps but involve continuous raising and dropping of the shoulders, with the body swaying in a lilting, bending, and fluid style, sometimes described as "fish-like".[3]

The terminology also varies: in Kurmanji, the most common term for this type of folk dance is often the Turkish loanword *Halay*, with *Govend* being the Kurdish equivalent. The leader of the dance is called a *sergovend* ("head of the dance") or *serçem*.[3] In Sorani, words for dance include *hełperrkê* and *çopî*, and the leader is a *serçopî*.[3] Basic steps for Halay often involve stepping forward with one foot and bringing the other next to it, repeated with the alternate foot, while Govend might involve diagonal forward steps.[68] Arm and torso movements are integral to the expression of these dances, and they are sometimes seen as dances of resistance and cultural affirmation.[68]

5.1.2. Turkish Halay: A Widespread Folk Tradition

The Halay is a deeply rooted traditional dance in Turkey, particularly prevalent in Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Thrace.[68] It is a group dance performed in a circle, semi-circle, or straight line, with dancers typically holding each other by fingers, hands, or arms.[68] The leader of the Halay often carries a colorful piece of fabric (*mendil*) and guides the group, sometimes performing solos.[68] The dance usually begins at a slow tempo and gradually accelerates, requiring harmonious coordination.[68] Turkish Halay is commonly accompanied by the traditional instruments *zurna* (a type of oboe) and *davul* (a large double-headed drum).[68]

5.1.3. Arab Dabke: Stomping Rhythms

Dabke is an energetic and popular folk dance in the Arab Levant, particularly in countries like Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.[69] It is a line dance where participants hold hands and perform rhythmic stomping of the feet.[69] Dabke is often performed at weddings and other joyous celebrations, with dancers wearing traditional costumes and sometimes twirling handkerchiefs.[69] The dance symbolizes unity and communal joy and is typically accompanied by live music and singing.[48] Notably, Dabke is also mentioned as a dance performed by Kurds, indicating regional overlap or shared heritage.[68]

5.1.4. Armenian Kochari and Halay Connections

Armenian folk dance traditions include the exuberant *Kochari*, a circle dance where men, women, and children join hands, often adorned in vibrant traditional costumes unique to the

Armenian highlands.[50] The "Kurdish hand hold," characterized by interlaced pinky fingers, is noted as a familiar linkage in Armenian folk dance as well, suggesting a shared gestural vocabulary.[3] Kochari itself is a dance family with ancient roots, performed not only by Armenians but also by Assyrians, Yazidis, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Pontic Greeks, and Turks, with distinct regional variations.[71] The basic form typically involves an 8-count pattern combining knee dips and walking steps.[71]

5.1.5. Assyrian Khigga and Kochari: Communal Expressions

Assyrian folk dance features *Khigga* as its simplest and most common form.[72] Dancers hold hands, forming a line or circle, and execute a basic step pattern involving moving one leg forward then backward, repeating with the other leg while shifting to the right.[72] Khigga is a staple at weddings, often being the first dance to welcome the bride and groom.[72] Variations include *Khigga Yaqoora* (Heavy Khigga), which is more ardent with exaggerated knee bending, and *Khigga'd Suria* (Syrian Khigga) or *Beriyeh*, characterized by a faster tempo, a pinky connection between dancers who wave their hands, and a few steps forward followed by one step backward.[72] Assyrians, particularly those from Syria, also dance Kochari, where participants connect by placing arms on each other's shoulders (similar to Dabke) and perform repetitive leg kicks.[3] The Kurdish dance *Sheikhani* is also noted as being danced by Assyrians.[3]

5.1.6. Azerbaijani Yalli (Kochari, Tanzara): Ancient Roots

The Azerbaijani *Yalli* is a traditional group dance originating from the Nakhchivan region, with a history that may extend back to the Stone Age.[75] It is performed in lines or rows, with dancers holding hands, and initially may have been a ceremonial dance around a fire.[75] Yalli dances can be divided into plotted or "Play-Yalli" (such as *Kochari*) and mood-based "Dance-Yalli" (such as *Tanzara*).[75] The Azerbaijani *Kochari*, whose name derives from "kochmek" (to move), consists of slow and rapid parts, with the leader often holding a stick.[75] *Tanzara*, meaning "half gilt" or "half decoration" (referring to the golden jewelry historically worn by female dancers), involves dancers joining little fingers and performing a sequence of three steps forward, a foot strike, a pause, and three steps back, with the tempo increasing in the second part.[75] Traditional Yalli is accompanied by a trio of instruments: two *zurna* (pipes, with one often being a drone or *dam zurna*) and one *davul* (drum).[75]

The widespread existence of these communal line and circle dances—Halay, Govend, Dabke, Kochari, Khigga, Yalli—across Kurdish, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani cultures, sharing core features like formations, handholds, and often similar musical accompaniment (zurna and davul), strongly suggests a deeply rooted, shared tradition of collective expression. These dances likely evolved from ancient communal rituals, agricultural celebrations, social gatherings, and perhaps even pre-battle morale-building ceremonies. The variations in name, specific steps, and stylistic nuances reflect local adaptations and the unique cultural trajectories of each group, yet the underlying structure points to a common ancestral heritage in expressive movement.

5.2. The Enduring Beat: The Daf Frame Drum

The Daf, a large circular frame drum typically made with a wooden frame and an animal skin (or synthetic) head, often featuring metal rings or chains on the inside that produce a jingling sound, is another significant shared musical tradition.[78] It is a prominent instrument in Kurdish music and its use extends widely across neighboring cultures in folk, classical, and spiritual music.

5.2.1. The Daf in Kurdish Culture: The Hezar Daf Festival

The Daf holds immense cultural and spiritual significance for Kurds.[81] This is vividly demonstrated by events such as the *Hezar Daf* (A Thousand Daf) Festival, held in villages like Palangan in Iranian Kurdistan, where hundreds or even thousands of Daf players perform simultaneously.[81] This festival, often a thanksgiving celebration for spring, includes performances, singing, and dancing, and carries mystical and religious overtones.[81] Participants traditionally wear local Kurdish attire, and some Daf drums are adorned with religious inscriptions.[81] The instrument is held in high esteem; historically, a broken Daf was referred to as a "martyr" and treated with reverence.[81] The Daf is a common household instrument in many parts of Kurdistan, with most people familiar with playing it.[81] It is used in Sufi music and various folk traditions, celebrated for its spiritual and rhythmic qualities.[79]

5.2.2. Daf and its Cognates in Neighboring Cultures

The Daf, or instruments of very similar construction and function, is integral to the musical traditions of cultures neighboring the Kurds:

- **Persian Music:** The Daf is an ancient and one of the oldest known frame drums, with roots in Mesopotamia, and became essential in Persian music, particularly during the Sassanian era for royal courts and events.[80] It is central to Persian classical music and is extensively used in Sufi rituals (*Zikr*) to accompany spiritual chanting and poetry, helping to induce ecstatic states.[69]
- **Turkish Music:** In Turkey, a similar frame drum may be called *Tef*, although *Tef* can also refer to a smaller tambourine-like instrument.[78] The Daf/Tef is used in Turkish folk music and Sufi traditions.[69]
- **Arab Music:** The frame drum is known as *Daff* or, in some regions like Syria, *Mazhar*.[85] A smaller version with cymbals, similar to a tambourine, is the *Riqq*, which can be the sole percussion instrument in traditional Arab chamber ensembles (*Takht*).[69] The Daff/Mazhar is extremely popular in Sufi music, often as a solo accompaniment to singing, and is also found in folk and popular music.[80]
- **Armenian Music:** The Daf is widely used in Armenian music, reflecting centuries of cultural exchange.[80]
- **Assyrian Music:** The Daf is also part of Assyrian musical traditions, though specific details of its use are less elaborated in the provided materials compared to other cultures.[84]

- **Azerbaijani Music:** In Azerbaijan, the frame drum is known as *Ghaval* (also spelled Gaval) and is sometimes referred to as Daf.[80] The Ghaval is traditionally played by the *khananda* (Mugham vocalist) during performances of Azerbaijani Mugham, a classical musical form. It is also used for solo performances in contemporary concerts.[87]

The ubiquitous presence of the Daf and its variants across this wide cultural spectrum—from folk and celebratory music to profound spiritual (Sufi) and sophisticated classical (Mugham, Persian classical) contexts—underscores extensive historical musical exchange. The shared preference for its distinctive rhythmic drive and resonant, jingling timbre points to common aesthetic values and its adaptability to diverse musical expressions. The instrument's role in spiritual practices, particularly Sufism which has a strong presence in Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, and Arab regions, further highlights a shared avenue for its dissemination and cultural embedding.

6. Echoes from the Past: Shared Mythological Figures and Narratives

Mythology forms a deep stratum of cultural understanding, offering insights into a people's worldview, values, and historical consciousness. Kurdish folklore is rich with such narratives, and several prominent mythological figures and stories are shared, with variations, by neighboring cultures, indicating ancient connections and ongoing processes of cultural borrowing and adaptation. This section explores three such significant examples: the legend of Kawa the Blacksmith and the tyrant Zahhak, the enigmatic serpent queen Shahmaran, and the majestic mythical bird Simurgh.

6.1. The Legend of Kawa the Blacksmith and the Tyrant Zahhak: A Tale of Liberation

The story of a heroic blacksmith who overthrows a tyrannical, serpent-shouldered king is a powerful and foundational myth, particularly central to Kurdish Newroz celebrations. This narrative has strong parallels in Persian tradition, though with notable variations in the identity of the tyrant and the specific ethnic associations of the hero.

6.1.1. Kurdish Version: Kawa and the Assyrian Tyrant Zuhak

In Kurdish folklore, Kawa (also Kawe-y Asinger) is a blacksmith who rises against the oppressive rule of Zuhak (the Kurdish name for Zahhak).[7] Zuhak is explicitly identified as an evil *Assyrian* king, a detail of significant historical resonance for Kurds.[4] This king is afflicted with serpents growing from his shoulders, which demand a daily sacrifice of the brains of two young men to alleviate his pain.[4] Kawa, having lost many of his own sons to this horrific tribute, secretly saves one young man each day by substituting a sheep's brain for one of the human sacrifices.[7] These saved youths, according to legend the ancestors of the Kurds, are trained by Kawa into an army.[7] Kawa ultimately confronts and kills Zuhak with his blacksmith's hammer.[7] To signal his victory and summon his supporters, Kawa lights bonfires on the

hillsides, an act that coincides with the return of spring to Kurdistan.[4] This event, traditionally marked on March 20th, is the mythological basis for the Newroz festival, with the bonfires symbolizing freedom and renewal.[4] For Kurds, this legend is a potent symbol of liberation from tyranny, the assertion of freedom, and a cornerstone of their national identity, with Kawa revered as a national hero.[4]

6.1.2. Persian Version: Kaveh Ahangar and the Foreign Tyrant Zahāk

The Persian tradition, most famously narrated in Ferdowsi's 10th-century epic, the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), features Kaveh Ahangar (Kaveh the Blacksmith) as the hero who leads an uprising against the ruthless foreign ruler Zahāk.[8] Like his Kurdish counterpart, this Zahāk also has serpents growing from his shoulders, fed daily with human brains, and Kaveh is driven to rebellion after his own children are taken for this purpose.[7] Kaveh uses his leather blacksmith's apron as a makeshift banner, the *Derafsh Kaviani*, rallying the people behind a young nobleman named Fereydun, who eventually defeats Zahāk and restores just rule to Iran.[8] In the Persian narrative, Zahāk is generally depicted as an evil foreign tyrant or an Arab king, but not typically specified as Assyrian.[7] The Derafsh Kaviani became a revered symbol of Persian sovereignty for centuries.[8] The story serves as a powerful allegory of Iranian resistance against foreign oppression and the fight for justice.

6.1.3. Connections to Turkish Nevruz Folklore

The Kawa/Zahhak legend is primarily associated with Kurdish Newroz celebrations, including those within Turkey.[4] However, official Turkish state narratives surrounding Nevruz (the Turkish term for Nowruz) often emphasize a different foundational myth: the Ergenekon legend.[21] This tale recounts how the ancient Turks, after a devastating military defeat, took refuge in a mythical valley called Ergenekon, surrounded by iron mountains. After centuries, their numbers grew, and a blacksmith helped them melt a passage through the iron mountain, allowing them to emerge and reclaim their prominence.[21] This narrative serves to frame Nevruz within a specifically Turkic historical and mythological context. While the Kawa/Zahhak myth is acknowledged, particularly in relation to Kurdish cultural expression, the Ergenekon story is often promoted as the quintessential Turkish legend of renewal and liberation connected to Nevruz.[20] This highlights how a shared celebratory moment (the spring equinox) can be imbued with distinct, nation-specific mythologies.

6.2. Shahmaran, the Serpent Queen: Wisdom, Betrayal, and Healing

Shahmaran, a mythical being who is half-woman and half-snake, is a captivating figure prominent in Kurdish folklore and shared, with variations, across Turkish, Arab, and other regional traditions. She often embodies themes of ancient wisdom, the natural world, healing, and the tragic consequences of human betrayal.

6.2.1. Shahmaran in Kurdish Folklore

In Kurdish folklore, Shahmaran (or Şahmaran) is revered as a goddess of wisdom who resides

in a subterranean cave, ruling over snakes and protecting profound secrets.[7] She is often depicted as a human-snake hybrid, and it is believed that upon her death, her spirit passes to her daughter.[7] For Kurds, Shahmaran is often viewed as a symbol of luck and strength, and her image is traditionally used in art, such as on glass or metalwork, displayed in homes for protection.[7]

6.2.2. Shahmaran in Turkish Folklore

Shahmaran is a popular and significant figure in Turkish folklore, considered a national treasure.[89] Legends often place her dwelling in the Mediterranean town of Tarsus, with similar tales found in eastern Turkish cities like Mardin, a region with substantial Kurdish and Arab populations.[89] Her image is commonly depicted in traditional Turkish arts, including embroidery, fabrics, rugs, and jewelry.[89] In Turkish tradition, Shahmaran can symbolize both betrayal and serve as a talisman for good luck, warding off evil spirits.[90] The core narrative often involves a young man (variously named Jamasp, Camasb, Cansab, or Tahmasp) who stumbles upon Shahmaran's underground kingdom of snakes.[89] He lives with her, sometimes falling in love and learning secrets of medicine and herbs.[89] However, he eventually misses the human world and, despite promising to keep her existence a secret, ultimately betrays her (often to save a sick ruler who needs Shahmaran's flesh for a cure).[89] Shahmaran's death, though tragic, often results in the man or others gaining profound wisdom or healing powers from consuming parts of her body or water she was boiled in.[89]

6.2.3. Shahmaran in Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani Folklore

The legend of a serpent queen with human characteristics and connections to wisdom or healing also appears in other regional folklores:

- **Arab Folklore:** Shahmaran, or a very similar figure, is attested in Middle Eastern literature, notably in tales from *The Thousand and One Nights*, such as "The Story of Yemliha: An Underground Queen" or "The Story of Hasîb Karîm ad-Dîn and the Queen of Serpents".[89] These narratives typically involve a human protagonist who encounters the subterranean realm of the serpent queen, learns from her, and is eventually implicated in her betrayal and death, often gaining knowledge or magical abilities as a result.[89]
- **Armenian Folklore:** While specific, distinct Armenian versions of the Shahmaran legend are not extensively detailed in the provided sources, the story's strong presence in eastern Anatolia—a region with a long history of Armenian inhabitation and significant cultural interaction with Kurdish and Turkish populations—suggests a high likelihood of shared narratives or local adaptations.[89] The general themes of mythical serpents and hidden wisdom are common in regional folklore.
- **Assyrian Folklore:** Similar to the Armenian context, direct Assyrian folkloric versions of Shahmaran are not explicitly detailed. However, the legend's prevalence in areas historically populated by Assyrians (such as southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq) and the shared cultural milieu of the region make it probable that Assyrian communities are familiar with the tale and may possess their own interpretations or related serpent lore.[7]

The story is noted to be present in areas with Kurd, Arab, Assyrian, and Turkish communities.[89]

- **Azerbaijani Folklore:** Shahmaran is a known figure in Azerbaijani mythology. She is listed among traditional mythical beings and is seen to symbolize the complexity of human nature and the intertwined destinies of humans and the supernatural.[94] Artistic and literary projects sometimes focus on the Anatolian myth of Shahmaran, often highlighting her as a strong, inspirational female figure.[95]

6.2.4. Potential Links to Ancient Mesopotamian Serpent Deities

The enduring motif of a powerful, wise, and often chthonic (underworld-related) serpent deity or spirit has deep roots in ancient Mesopotamian civilizations.[96] Deities such as Ningishzida, a Sumerian god associated with vegetation, the underworld, healing, and prominently with snakes (sometimes depicted with serpents emerging from his shoulders or as a serpent-dragon hybrid, the *mushussu*), offer compelling parallels to the later folkloric figure of Shahmaran.[97] Ningishzida, whose name can mean "Lord of the Good Tree," was believed to spend part of the year in the land of the dead, linking him to cycles of death and rebirth, similar to the themes of transformation often associated with serpents due to their ability to shed skin.[97] The reverence for serpents as symbols of immortality, healing, wisdom, or chthonic power was widespread in the ancient Near East.[96] Shahmaran, as a queen of snakes who embodies wisdom, possesses knowledge of healing herbs, and whose own body can yield both life-giving and death-dealing substances, could very well be a later folkloric crystallization of these ancient beliefs, transmitted and reshaped through millennia of oral tradition.

6.3. Simurgh, the Majestic Bird of Myth: Guardian and Bestower of Wisdom

The Simurgh, a magnificent and benevolent mythical bird of immense antiquity and power, is a prominent figure in Kurdish and, most notably, Persian mythology. This majestic creature, or figures with striking resemblances, also appears in the folklore of Turkish, Arab, Armenian, and Azerbaijani cultures, often depicted as a gigantic, wise, and protective being.

6.3.1. Simurgh in Kurdish and Persian Folklore

- **Kurdish Folklore:** In Kurdish, the Simurgh is known as *Sīmir*.[7] Folktales feature this mythical bird, often in a role of helper and guardian. A common narrative motif involves a hero who rescues the Simurgh's offspring from a threatening snake; as a reward, the Simurgh bestows upon the hero some of its magical feathers, which, when burned, can summon the bird for aid in times of dire need.[7]
- **Persian Folklore:** The Simurgh is a central figure in Persian mythology and literature, most famously in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.[99] It is depicted as an ancient and benevolent bird, so old that it has witnessed the destruction of the world three times over, thereby possessing the knowledge of all ages.[99] The Simurgh is often described as a giant,

winged creature, sometimes with features of a peacock, the head of a dog, and the claws of a lion, capable of carrying off an elephant.[99] It is said to live for 1,700 years before immolating itself in fire, only to be reborn, much like the Phoenix.[99] The Simurgh is believed to purify the land and waters, bestowing fertility, and roosts in the *Gaokerena* or Hōm Tree (the Tree of Life), which stands in the middle of the world sea. When it takes flight, the seeds of all plants are shaken from this tree and dispersed across the world.[99] The Simurgh is renowned for its role in the story of Prince Zal, an albino infant abandoned by his father. The compassionate bird rescues Zal, raises him, and later provides him with magical feathers. It is the Simurgh who instructs Zal on how to perform a caesarean section to save his wife Rudaba and ensure the birth of their son, the legendary hero Rostam.[99] In Sufi mysticism, particularly in Fariduddin Attar's 12th-century allegorical poem *The Conference of the Birds*, the Simurgh serves as a metaphor for God or ultimate truth.[99]

6.3.2. Simurgh's Counterparts and Influence in Other Cultures

The influence of the Persian Simurgh, or the presence of analogous mythical birds, can be traced in the folklore of several neighboring cultures:

- **Turkish Folklore:** The Turkic mythological bird known as *Konrul* or *Toğrul*, and sometimes the *Anka Kuşu* (often equated with the Phoenix), shares many characteristics with the Simurgh, such as being a giant, benevolent, and magical bird.[99] This suggests a shared Turco-Persian mythological substratum or significant Persian influence on Turkic epic traditions.
- **Arab Folklore:** Through extensive Persian cultural influence, the concept of the Simurgh was introduced into the Arabic-speaking world. Here, its characteristics became conflated with other Arab mythical birds, such as the *Ghoghnus*, and ultimately contributed to the development of the legend of the *Rukh* (or Roc).[99] The Rukh is famed as a colossal bird of prey in tales such as those of Sinbad the Sailor from *The Thousand and One Nights*.
- **Armenian Folklore:** The Persian word *sīmurğ* was borrowed into Armenian as *siramarg* (սիրամարգ), which is the Armenian word for 'peacock'.[99] This linguistic connection suggests an association, perhaps visual, between the mythical Simurgh and the peacock. Iconographically, depictions of Simurgh-like creatures can be found in medieval Armenian art, such as frescoes in the Church of Tigran Honents at Ani, which evoke motifs found on Sasanian Persian textiles, indicating the penetration of this imagery into Armenian cultural and possibly religious spheres.[99]
- **Assyrian Folklore:** While a direct equivalent of the Simurgh is not explicitly named in the provided materials for Assyrian folklore, ancient Mesopotamian cultures, including the Assyrians, featured grand mythical winged creatures in their iconography. The *Lamassu*, for example, was a protective deity often depicted as a winged bull or lion with a human head.[104] The existence of such hybrid, powerful winged beings suggests a regional environment where such mythological typologies were shared or influenced each other.

- **Azerbaijani Folklore:** In Azerbaijani folklore, a mythical bird similar to the Simurgh is known by names such as Simurgh, Zumrud (Emerald) bird, or sometimes Samandar bird.[94] This bird is depicted as a savior figure with extraordinary appearance and abilities, such as glowing feathers and the capacity to rise from ashes.[106] It often plays a role in tales by rescuing helpless heroes from difficult situations, healing them (e.g., with its saliva), and providing a magical feather that can be burned to summon its aid, mirroring motifs found in Persian and Kurdish Simurgh tales.[94]

6.3.3. Potential Links to Ancient Mesopotamian Mythical Birds (e.g., Anzû)

The concept of a colossal, powerful mythical bird with supernatural abilities has ancient precedents in Mesopotamian mythology. The Anzû bird (also known as Imdugud or Zû) was a significant figure, often depicted as a massive bird, sometimes a lion-headed eagle, who possessed formidable power.[105] In the most famous myth, Anzû steals the Tablet of Destinies from the chief god Enlil, thereby challenging the divine order, and is eventually defeated by a hero god (Ninurta or Marduk).[105] While the Simurgh is generally portrayed as benevolent and a wise helper (especially in Persian and Kurdish tales), and Anzû is often (though not exclusively) an antagonistic or demonic figure, there are some shared underlying characteristics: immense size and power, avian form (often composite), and a significant role in cosmic or heroic narratives.[107] The Anzû bird, as a divine storm-bird, also connects to themes of natural power and divine agency.[105] The existence of such figures in the older Mesopotamian mythological stratum may have contributed to the broader regional tapestry of beliefs about extraordinary avian beings, from which figures like the Simurgh later emerged and were elaborated upon in Persianate cultures.

The Kawa/Kaveh and Zahhak legend, with its core theme of liberation from tyranny, shows significant adaptation across Kurdish and Persian narratives. The Kurdish emphasis on Zahhak as an *Assyrian* king directly links the myth to a specific historical adversary and frames Newroz as a distinctly national story of freedom.[4] The Persian version, while sharing the heroic blacksmith and serpent-shouldered tyrant, universalizes Zahhak as a foreign oppressor, allowing the myth to resonate with broader Iranian experiences of resisting external threats.[8] The Turkish state's occasional promotion of the Ergenekon legend for Nevruz, in contrast, demonstrates a conscious construction of a separate national folklore for a shared temporal celebration, particularly in a context where Kurdish Newroz carries potent political symbolism.[21] This divergence illustrates how a common festival can be imbued with different foundational myths that serve to reinforce distinct ethnic or national identities.

Similarly, the figures of Shahmaran and Simurgh, while originating in or being most elaborated within specific cultural nexuses (Kurdish/Turkish for Shahmaran, Persian for Simurgh), have found echoes and counterparts across the region. Shahmaran's association with wisdom, healing, and serpents resonates with ancient Mesopotamian serpent deities like Ningishzida, suggesting that these later folkloric figures may be inheritors of very old regional beliefs about the power and symbolism of snakes.[96] The Simurgh's characteristics as a giant, wise, and often helpful bird also have parallels in Mesopotamian figures like the Anzû bird, though their moral alignments differ.[105] These shared mythical archetypes—the liberating hero, the

wise serpent queen, the majestic guardian bird—highlight a common wellspring of ancient Near Eastern mythological thought, from which various cultures have drawn and uniquely shaped their own enduring legends.

7. A Shared Palate: Culinary Connections Across Borders

Cuisine is a powerful marker of cultural identity, yet it is also one of the most fluid and readily shared aspects of culture. The lands of Kurdistan and its neighbors boast rich and diverse culinary traditions that, upon closer examination, reveal a significant degree of overlap in staple ingredients, fundamental dishes, and preparation techniques. This shared palate is a testament to centuries of trade, migration, and the dissemination of agricultural products and cooking methods across the region, facilitated by historical empires like the Ottoman and Persian, which encompassed many of these diverse peoples. While local variations in spices, specific ingredients, and names abound, a common culinary heritage is evident.

7.1. Staple Foods and Preparations in Kurdish Cuisine

Kurdish cuisine is characterized by its abundant use of fresh herbs, spices, vegetables, grains, and dairy products.[109] Key staple foods include rice (*birinç*), often prepared as *biryanî* or *burgul pilaf*, and various types of bread (*nan*), including flatbreads.[110] Lamb and chicken are the primary meats, frequently grilled as *kebab* or incorporated into stews (*shilah/maraga*) and rice dishes.[110] Dairy products like yogurt (*mast*), cheese (*penîr*), and butter are integral.[109] Prominent Kurdish dishes include:

- **Stuffed Vegetables:** *Pel* (also known as *yaprakh* or *dolma*), where grape leaves, cabbage, peppers, or other vegetables are stuffed with a mixture of rice, meat, herbs, and spices.[110]
- **Rice Dishes:** *Biryanî* (a seasoned rice dish often with meat or chicken), *makluba* (an upside-down rice and vegetable dish), and *birinç bi maş* (rice with mung beans).[110]
- **Meat Dishes:** *Kebab* (grilled skewered meat), *kofta* and *shifta* (types of meatballs or patties), and *qelî* (Kurdish stir-fry).[110]
- **Soups and Stews:** Wheat and lentil soup (*şorbay genim û nîsk*), beet and meat soup, and *dokliw* (a yogurt-based soup).[110]
- **Savory Pastries and Breads:** *Kelane* (a traditional flatbread often filled with scallions or herbs), *kulerenaske*, and *kuki* (meat or vegetable pies).[110]
- **Other Notable Dishes:** *Sawar* (pounded wheat grain), *tepsî* (a baked vegetable and meat casserole), and *teşrîb* (layers of naan in a savory sauce).[110]
- **Beverages:** Sweetened black tea is very common, along with *mastaw* or *ava mast* (yogurt and salt mixed with water), and its fermented version, *dô* (doogh).[110]

7.2. Shared Dishes and Culinary Themes with Neighboring Cultures

Many of the foundational dishes and culinary principles found in Kurdish cuisine are shared

with Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani culinary traditions.

7.2.1. Stuffed Vegetables (Dolma, Sarma, etc.)

The practice of stuffing vegetables (grape leaves, cabbage, peppers, eggplants, zucchini, onions) with a mixture of rice, minced meat (optional), herbs, and spices is a hallmark of cuisines across the entire region.

- **Kurdish:** *Pel*, *Yaprakh*, *Dolma*.[110]
- **Persian:** *Dolmeh* (e.g., grape leaves, cabbage, eggplant, peppers) [[112] (in Armenian context, but Dolma is widely Persian), [38]].
- **Turkish:** *Dolma* (stuffed vegetables) and *Sarma* (wrapped leaves, typically grape or cabbage) are central to Turkish cuisine [[45] (general mention of Turkish food traditions)].
- **Arab (Levantine/Iraqi):** *Mahshi* (general term for stuffed vegetables), *Dolma* (especially in Iraq, showing clear overlap) [[46] (Iraqi cuisine), [47] (general mention of Emirati/Middle Eastern)].
- **Armenian:** *Dolma* or *Tolma* (stuffed grape leaves, cabbage, vegetables) is a highly characteristic Armenian dish.[50]
- **Assyrian:** *Dolma* (*Yaprekh* or *Apra*) is a staple, with grape leaves, cabbage, and various vegetables being stuffed.[30]
- **Azerbaijani:** *Dolma* is a prominent dish, with many varieties (grape leaf, cabbage, eggplant, pepper, tomato).[18]

7.2.2. Rice Dishes (Biryani, Polo, Pilaf, Plov, Kabsa)

Elaborate rice dishes, often cooked with meat, chicken, vegetables, dried fruits, nuts, and aromatic spices, are festive staples.

- **Kurdish:** *Biryanî*, *Birinç* (plain or with additions), *Burgul pilaf*, *Makluba*.[110]
- **Persian:** *Polo* (pilaf-style rice, many varieties like *Sabzi Polo* - herbed rice, *Shirin Polo* - sweet rice, *Reshteh Polo* - rice with noodles), *Biryani* (less common than polo but present) [[10] (general rice dishes), [38]].
- **Turkish:** *Pilav* is a fundamental component of Turkish meals, with numerous variations (e.g., with meat, chicken, chickpeas, nuts, currants) [[45] (general mention)].
- **Arab (Levantine/Iraqi/Gulf):** *Kabsa* (especially in the Gulf and Iraq), *Biryani* (widespread, particularly in Iraq and influenced by Indian subcontinent) [[46] (Iraqi biryani), [47] (Emirati kabsa), [47]].
- **Armenian:** *Pilaf* (various types, often with bulgur or rice, sometimes with noodles, dried fruits, or nuts) [[112] (general mention)].
- **Assyrian:** *Rezza Smooqah* (red rice, often with chicken/meat), *Biryani* (with peas, potatoes, almonds, raisins, egg, chicken).[30]
- **Azerbaijani:** *Plov* (pilaf) is considered a national dish with many regional varieties (e.g., *Shah Plov* - crown pilaf baked in dough), often featuring saffron, dried fruits, chestnuts, and meat.[18]

7.2.3. Grilled Meats (Kebab, Khorovats, Kofta)

Skewered and grilled meats, particularly lamb and chicken, are ubiquitous. Ground meat preparations like kofta (meatballs or patties) are also widely shared.

- **Kurdish:** *Kebab*, *Kofta*, *Shifta*.[110]
- **Persian:** *Kebab* (numerous types like *Chelow Kebab*, *Jujeh Kebab*, *Koobideh*) is a national specialty [[10] (general mention)].
- **Turkish:** *Kebab* is a cornerstone of Turkish cuisine with immense regional diversity (e.g., *Şiş Kebap*, *Adana Kebap*, *Urfa Kebap*, *Döner Kebap*) [[46] (Iraqi kebabs, Turkish influence likely), [45] (general mention)].
- **Arab (Levantine/Iraqi):** *Kebab* (e.g., *Shish Taouk*, *Kafta Kebab*) is very popular [[46] (Iraqi kebabs), [47] (general mention)].
- **Armenian:** *Khorovats* (barbecued/grilled meats, essentially kebab) is a highly prized dish, often prepared for special occasions.[50]
- **Assyrian:** *Kebab*, *Kofta* (ground meat balls in stew) [[46] (Iraqi kebabs), [52]].
- **Azerbaijani:** *Kebab* (various types, including *Lula kebab* - minced meat, *Tika kebab* - chunks of meat) is a staple [[46] (Iraqi kebabs, Azerbaijani influence possible), [18]].

7.2.4. Yogurt-Based Drinks (Doogh, Ayran, Tahn, Doweh, Mastaw)

Refreshing savory yogurt drinks, typically made by diluting yogurt with water and adding salt (and sometimes herbs like mint), are consumed throughout the region.

- **Kurdish:** *Mastaw*, *Ava Mast*, *Dô* (Doogh).[110]
- **Persian:** *Doogh* [[117] (comparison with Ayran)].
- **Turkish:** *Ayran* is a national beverage.[45]
- **Arab (Levantine/Iraqi):** *Laban* or *Shinena* (Iraq) are common yogurt drinks [[47] (general mention of dairy), [118] (Lebanese Laban for Doweh)].
- **Armenian:** *Tahn* [[115] (mentions Armenian T'an)].
- **Assyrian:** *Doweh* (made with Labneh/yogurt, water, salt), *Boushala* (yogurt and rice soup, can be a drink).[52]
- **Azerbaijani:** *Ayran*.[18]

7.2.5. Herb-Stuffed Flatbreads

Flatbreads filled with various combinations of fresh herbs (like scallions, parsley, cilantro, dill, spinach) and sometimes cheese or minced meat are a shared specialty, often cooked on a griddle (*saj*) or pan.

- **Kurdish:** *Kelane* (traditionally filled with scallions or other herbs, especially in spring).[110]
- **Persian:** *Nan-e Sabzi Mashhadi* (herb flatbread from Mashhad), and *Bolani* (shared with Afghanistan, can have herb/vegetable fillings).[120]
- **Turkish:** *Gözleme* (thin dough turnover with various fillings, including spinach, herbs, scallions, and cheese).[122]
- **Arab (Levantine):** *Fatayer* (savory pies, often triangular, with fillings like spinach, herbs,

or cheese) and *Manakish* (flatbread often topped with za'atar, cheese, or minced meat).[123]

- **Armenian:** *Zhingyalov Hats* (thin flatbread from Artsakh/Syunik, stuffed with a wide variety of fresh greens and herbs, including scallions).[125]
- **Assyrian:** While a specific Assyrian name for an identical herb-stuffed flatbread is not in the snippets, *Bolani* (Afghan, but with similar fillings like chives, scallions, cilantro) is mentioned in a general context of regional flatbreads, and such preparations are common.[127]
- **Azerbaijani:** *Gutab* or *Qutab* (thin, crescent-shaped turnover filled with ingredients like green onions, herbs, cheese, or meat).[129]

The remarkable similarities in these core dishes across cultures underscore the deep historical connections and shared culinary heritage of the region. The use of common base ingredients such as lamb, yogurt, wheat, rice, and an abundance of fresh herbs is a recurring theme. However, regional variations in spicing, the specific combination of herbs, local additions (like dried fruits or nuts in some pilafs), and distinct preparation techniques or names give each culture's version its unique character. This culinary landscape is a living testament to centuries of interaction, where recipes and food traditions have traveled along trade routes, with armies, and through the intermingling of peoples, creating a rich and diverse, yet interconnected, gastronomic tapestry.

Table 2: Comparative Overview of Selected Shared Dishes

Dish Category	Kurdish Examples	Persian Examples	Turkish Examples	Arab Examples (Levantine/Iraqi)	Armenian Examples	Assyrian Examples	Azerbaijani Examples
Stuffed Vegetables	*Pel, Yaprakh, Dolma* [110]	*Dolmeh* [38]	*Dolma, Sarma* [45]	*Mahshi, Dolma* [46]	*Dolma, Tolma* [50]	*Dolma (Yaprekh/Apra)* [30]	*Dolma* (many varieties) [18]
Rice Dishes	*Biryanî, Makluba, Birinç bi maş* [110]	*Polo (Sabzi Polo, Shirin Polo), Biryani* [10]	*Pilav* (various) [45]	*Kabsa, Biryani* [46]	*Pilaf* (various) [112]	*Rezza Smooqah, Biryani* [52]	*Plov (Shah Plov)* [18]
Grilled Meats	*Kebab, Kofta, Shifta* [110]	*Kebab (Chelow, Jujeh, Koobideh)* [10]	*Kebab (Şiş, Adana, Döner)* [45]	*Kebab (Shish Taouk, Kafta)* [46]	*Khorovats* [50]	*Kebab, Kofta* [46]	*Kebab (Lula, Tika)* [18]
Yogurt Drinks	*Mastaw, Ava Mast, Dô (Doogh)* [110]	*Doogh* [117]	*Ayran* [115]	*Laban, Shinena* [47]	*Tahn* [115]	*Doweh* [118]	*Ayran* [18]

Herb-Stuffed Flatbreads	*Kelane* [110]	*Nan-e Sabzi Mashhadi, Bolani* [120]	*Gözleme* [122]	*Fatayer, Manakish* [123]	*Zhingyalov Hats* [125]	(Similar preparations common, e.g. Bolani-style) [127]	*Gutab, Qutab* [129]

8. Conclusion: Weaving the Threads of Interconnected Cultures

This examination of Kurdish traditions and their parallels within neighboring Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani cultures reveals a profound and multifaceted tapestry of shared heritage. Across the domains of seasonal festivals, social customs like hospitality and family structures, the performing arts of music and dance, enduring mythological narratives, and foundational culinary practices, a consistent pattern emerges: core elements and underlying values are widely shared, yet each culture imbues these traditions with its own unique expressions, meanings, and historical resonances.

The celebration of the New Year and spring equinox, exemplified by Kurdish Newroz, Persian Nowruz, Azerbaijani Novruz Bayramı, Turkish Nevruz, Assyrian Kha b'Nisan, and ancient Armenian spring festivals like Navasard and Trndez, universally highlights themes of renewal, purification (often through fire rituals), and communal feasting. However, the specific foundational myths—be it Kawa the Blacksmith for Kurds and Persians, the Ergenekon legend for some Turkish narratives, or ancient Mesopotamian echoes for Assyrians—demonstrate how these shared temporal markers are integrated into distinct national and ethnic identities.[4]

The sacred duty of hospitality is another powerful common thread, with lavish generosity towards guests being a hallmark of Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani societies.[10] The offering of food and drink is central to this practice, likely stemming from shared historical conditions where mutual support was crucial. Yet, the specific etiquette, the sequence of offerings, and symbolic foods vary, reflecting local resources and customs.[44]

Traditional family structures across these cultures are predominantly patrilineal and extended, a system historically well-suited to agro-pastoral economies that valued land continuity, pooled labor, and collective security.[54] While this overarching model is shared, nuances in inheritance rules, residence patterns, and the specific roles of family members illustrate local adaptations within this common framework.

In the realm of performing arts, communal line and circle dances such as the Kurdish Halay/Govend and its cognates (Turkish Halay, Arab Dabke, Armenian/Assyrian/Azerbaijani Kochari, Assyrian Khigga, Azerbaijani Yalli) testify to an ancient shared tradition of collective expression through movement.[3] Similarly, the Daf frame drum and its variants are ubiquitous, utilized in folk, spiritual (Sufi), and classical music across these cultures, indicating deep musical exchange and shared aesthetic preferences.[79]

Mythological figures like the serpent queen Shahmaran and the majestic bird Simurgh also traverse cultural boundaries, appearing in Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, and Azerbaijani folklore with distinct local interpretations yet often retaining core attributes of wisdom, power, and connection to ancient beliefs.[7] These stories often echo even older Mesopotamian antecedents, such as serpent deities like Ningishzida or mythical birds like Anzû, pointing to a long continuum of mythological thought in the region.[97]

Finally, the shared palate in cuisine—from stuffed vegetables (Dolma) and elaborate rice dishes (Biryani/Polo) to grilled meats (Kebab) and herb-filled flatbreads (Kelane and its counterparts)—underscores the extensive dissemination of ingredients and culinary techniques facilitated by historical interactions and empires.[110]

These shared traditions are not static relics of the past; they are living aspects of culture that continue to evolve, influenced by contemporary social changes, globalization, and political contexts. The very act of identifying and celebrating these traditions can be a form of cultural assertion and identity maintenance, particularly for communities like the Kurds.[2]

In conclusion, the cultural landscape of Kurdistan and its neighboring regions is characterized by a remarkable degree of interconnectedness. The shared traditions explored in this report are a testament to centuries, if not millennia, of interaction, exchange, and mutual influence. Recognizing these commonalities, while also appreciating the unique cultural expressions that have developed within each society, can foster greater intercultural understanding and dialogue. They remind us that despite modern political boundaries and historical conflicts, the peoples of this vast and historically rich area are bound by enduring threads of a common human experience, woven into the vibrant tapestry of their shared and distinct cultural heritages.

9. Works Cited

1. [46] rjtravelagency.com. *Iraq Culture*.
2. [81] irandoostan.com. *Hezar Daf Festival in Kurdistan*.
3. [6] en.wikipedia.org. *Newroz as celebrated by Kurds*.
4. [5] vikingcentral.augie.edu. *Description. Newroz is the Kurdish celebration...*
5. [43] servantgroup.org. *Kurdish Hospitality*.
6. [44] youtube.com. *Kurdish hospitality customs video*.
7. [55] ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu. *Kurds - Summary - eHRAF World Cultures*.
8. [54] family.jrank.org. *Kurdish Family And Households*.
9. [3] thekurdishproject.org. *Kurdish Dance*.
10. [68] decibel-danse.com. *Kurdish dance: origins and step-by-step guide*.
11. [7] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish mythology*.
12. [132] amazon.com. *Kurdish Epics and Legends: Kurdish Mythology - Myths and Legends*.
13. [109] turkish-cuisine.org. *Kurdish Cuisine*.
14. [110] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish cuisine*.
15. [1] berghahnjournals.com. *PDF on Kurdish Studies*.

16. [2] oxfordbibliographies.com. *Anthropology of Kurdistan*.
17. [10] orienttrips.com. *Iranian Festivals and Celebrations: Embracing Cultural Traditions*.
18. [12] getbookonline.com. *Persian Customs and Traditions*.
19. [45] advantour.com. *Turkey: Traditions*.
20. [25] blog.aegeanlocations.com. *Exploring Turkish Festivals*.
21. [47] en.wikipedia.org. *Culture of the United Arab Emirates*.
22. [69] hatching-dragons.com. *Traditional Dance and Song of the Middle East*.
23. [112] ciam.edu. *Celebrating Armenian Heritage Month*.
24. [50] farmonaut.com. *Zoravan Armenian Village Traditions*.
25. [52] worldatlas.com. *The Assyrian People: Cultures of the World*.
26. [26] en.wikipedia.org. *Assyrian culture*.
27. [17] en.wikipedia.org. *Custom and traditions in Azerbaijan*.
28. [18] rjtravelagency.com. *Azerbaijan Culture and Customs*.
29. [14] centralasiaclimateportal.org. *Navruz-holiday*.
30. [70] cultureroadtravel.com. *How to celebrate Nowruz like a local in 4 different countries*.
31. [31] armenian-history.com. *Armenian New Year Traditions*.
32. [16] welcometoiran.com. *Zahhak; the Legend of the Serpent King*.
33. [8] en.wikipedia.org. *Kaveh the Blacksmith*.
34. [90] bbc.com. *Shahmaran: The mythical symbol inspiring Turkish artists*.
35. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran*.
36. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh*.
37. [133] eavartravel.com. *Simurgh*.
38. [56] iranchamber.com. *Patriarchy and Parental Control in Iranian Society*.
39. [57] family.jrank.org. *Ethnic Variation-Ethnicity: Middle Eastern Families*.
40. [58] britannica.com. *Turkey - Marriage and family life*.
41. [59] brill.com. *PDF on Turkish family structure*.
42. [61] aada.commons.gc.cuny.edu. *Arab Culture and Family*.
43. [60] brill.com. *PDF on Arab family structure*.
44. [62] scholarworks.iu.edu. *PDF on Armenian family structure*.
45. [63] armgeo.am. *Armenian traditional family*.
46. [64] worldhistory.org. *The Family in Ancient Mesopotamia*.
47. [65] ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu. *Bedouin summary*.
48. [66] en.wikipedia.org. *Family in Azerbaijan*.
49. [67] ijels.com. *PDF on Azerbaijani family structure*.
50. [78] worldofmusicality.com. *Daf Musical Instrument Facts (general)*.
51. [79] worldofmusicality.com. *Daf Musical Instrument Facts*.
52. [85] ethnicmusical.com. *5 Most Popular Arabic Percussion Instruments*.
53. [80] en.wikipedia.org. *Daf*.
54. [83] navasaz.ca. *Playing Daf*.

55. [82] festival.si.edu. *Jalal Kimia: Daf Drum*.
56. [86] salamuzik.com. *Professional Daf Instrument*.
57. [84] nasehpour.com. *Daf Iranian Frame Drum*.
58. [134] en.wikipedia.org. *Daf (specific mention of Azerbaijan)*.
59. [87] nasehpour.com. *Azerbaijani Musical Instruments*.
60. [90] bbc.com. *Shahmaran: The mythical symbol inspiring Turkish artists (re-cited for Arab context if applicable)*.
61. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (general, including Arab folklore links)*.
62. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (re-cited for Armenian context if applicable)*.
63. [91] ancient-origins.net. *Who Was Shahmaran? Lover, Trickster, Ancient Persian Snake Lady (general, implies Armenian through region)*.
64. [7] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish mythology (Shahmaran section)*.
65. [92] scholarworks.calstate.edu. *Enthroned Serpents: Gender-Affected Dualism... (mentions Shahmaran)*.
66. [95] des.incom.org. *Shahmaran - The Queen of Serpents (Azerbaijani context)*.
67. [90] bbc.com. *Shahmaran: The mythical symbol inspiring Turkish artists (re-cited for Azerbaijani context if applicable)*.
68. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (general, including Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, Armenian links)*.
69. [103] muslimheritage.com. *The Simurgh: A Symbol of Holistic Medicine... (Turkish context)*.
70. [101] simple.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (mentions Arab Rukh connection)*.
71. [133] eavartravel.com. *Simurgh (primarily Persian, implies Arab through general Middle East)*.
72. [102] monstropedia.org. *Simurgh (general, implies Armenian through regional presence)*.
73. [135] snargl.com. *Simurgh (general Persian, implies Armenian through regional presence)*.
74. [106] researchgate.net. *Simurgh in Azerbaijani folklore*.
75. [94] wattpad.com. *Azerbaijani Mythology & Folklore (lists Simurgh, Shahmaran)*.
76. [111] en.wikipedia.org. *Kelaneh (bread)*.
77. [119] kurdistan24.net. *Naan, a delicious staple of Kurdish culture (mentions Kalana)*.
78. [9] mesc.osu.edu. *Nowruz (mentions Syria)*.
79. [136] npr.org. *Kurdish people in Syria celebrate Nowruz under new regime*.
80. [137] lbcgroup.tv. *Closer look at celebration of Kurdish new year Nowruz in Lebanon*.
81. [53] aina.org. *Assyrian customs (general)*.
82. [48] anothertravel.com. *Syria Culture (Dabke, Majlis)*.
83. [32] daysoftheyear.com. *Navasard*.
84. [34] en.wikipedia.org. *Navasard*.
85. [4] en.wikipedia.org. *Newroz as celebrated by Kurds (Kawa/Zuhak)*.
86. [19] fethiyetimes.com. *Celebrating Nevruz, the festival that marks the arrival of spring*.
87. [11] en.wikipedia.org. *Nowruz (general customs, Azerbaijan, Iran)*.

88. [40] wglt.org. *Kurdish people in Syria celebrate Nowruz under new regime (re-cite)*.
89. [27] en.wikipedia.org. *Kha b-Nisan*.
90. [28] auaf.us. *Kha b'Nissan: The Assyrian New Year*.
91. [72] en.wikipedia.org. *Assyrian folk dance (Khigga, Kochari)*.
92. [73] en.wikipedia.org. *Khigga*.
93. [75] unesco.preslib.az. *Yalli (Kochari, Tanzara), Traditional group dances of Nakhchivan*.
94. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (re-cite for Mesopotamian links if any)*.
95. [91] ancient-origins.net. *Who Was Shahmaran? (re-cite for Mesopotamian links if any)*.
96. [138] brewminate.com. *Ancient Persian Mythology (Simurgh)*.
97. [100] ancient-origins.net. *Simurgh, the Mysterious Giant Healing Bird in Iranian Mythology*.
98. [121] labsalliebe.com. *Nan-e Sabzi Mashhadi – Persian Herb Flatbread*.
99. [120] rozinaspersiankitchen.wordpress.com. *Stuffed Flat Naan Bread (Bolani/Kelane)*.
100. [122] en.wikipedia.org. *Gözleme*.
101. [123] moribyan.com. *Cheese Fatayer*.
102. [124] maureenabood.com. *Lebanese Spinach Pies (Fatayer)*.
103. [125] galoreofflavors.com. *Zhingyalov Hats – Armenian Herb Flatbread*.
104. [126] beryl.nyc. *Zhingyalov'hats!*
105. [127] tiktok.com. *Bolani Afghan flatbread (Assyrian context implied by query)*.
106. [128] crumbsandcaramel.com. *Easy Stuffed Flatbread (Bolani)*.
107. [129] thecookingfoodie.com. *Qutab Recipe - Flat Bread Filled With Green Onion and Cheese*.
108. [130] travelinbaku.com. *Gutab Recipe (Stuffed Azerbaijani Flatbreads)*.
109. [118] tiktok.com. *Assyrian Doweh drink*.
110. [115] en.wikipedia.org. *Ayran (mentions Armenian T'an)*.
111. [116] kocagoz.com.au. *Ayran (Turkish Yogurt Drink)*.
112. [117] themediterraneandish.com. *Ayran (Turkish Salty Yogurt Drink)*.
113. [51] rsc.byu.edu. *The Politics of Feasting in the Ancient Near East (Assyrian feast)*.
114. [49] ancient-hebrew.org. *Manners & Customs: The sacred duty of hospitality (Oriental/Arab)*.
115. [88] twonineteen.org.uk. *New Day Opportunities (Kawa/Zahhak, Turkish Nevruz context)*.
116. [4] en.wikipedia.org. *Newroz as celebrated by Kurds (re-cite for Kawa/Zuhak)*.
117. [13] thelionandthesun.org. *Nowruz: History, Science and Traditions... (Iraq, Chaharshanbe Suri)*.
118. [39] britannica.com. *Nowruz (Shia connection, Chaharshanbe Suri)*.
119. [41] aljazeera.com. *Nowruz 2025: Traditions, Haft Sin... (general, Chaharshanbe Suri)*.
120. [39] britannica.com. *Nowruz (re-cite for general)*.
121. [30] reddit.com. *What is the culture of Assyrians? (mentions Dolma, Biryani)*.
122. [74] folkdancefootnotes.org. *Khigga (L)* -Assyrian*.

123. [77] visitiran.ir. *Azerbaijani Dance (Yalli)*.
124. [76] turizm.nakhchivan.az. *National dances (Yalli, Kochari, Tanzara)*.
125. [92] scholarworks.calstate.edu. *Gender-Affected Dualism... (Shahmaran, Zahhak, Armenian link)*.
126. [91] ancient-origins.net. *Who Was Shahmaran? (re-cite for Armenian context)*.
127. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (re-cite for Assyrian context)*.
128. [7] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish mythology (re-cite for Shahmaran Assyrian context)*.
129. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (re-cite for Assyrian context)*.
130. [139] alamy.com. *Simurgh stock photos (mentions Assyrian physicians)*.
131. [93] ursinus.edu. *PDF on Shaymaran myth (Kurdish focus, mentions Mesopotamia)*.
132. [96] ghorbany.com. *The snake as symbol (Mesopotamian serpent deities, Shahmaran)*.
133. [104] en.wikipedia.org. *Griffin (mentions Mesopotamian lion-griffin, Anzu/Imdugud, Lamassu)*.
134. [105] en.wikipedia.org. *Anzû*.
135. [113] en.wikipedia.org. *Assyrian cuisine (Biryani, Dolma, Kofta, Rezza Smooqah, Boushala, Doweh not explicitly named but yogurt dishes)*.
136. [35] healtalktuesday.com. *Rituals of Fire (Armenian Trndez)*.
137. [36] theiconichand.com. *Terendez: An Armenian Religious Holiday to Welcome the Spring*.
138. [20] ktb.gov.tr. *Nevruz Celebrations in Türkiye and in Central Asia (Turkish official view, rituals, foods)*.
139. [21] ktb.gov.tr. *Nevruz (Turkish official view, Ergenekon legend)*.
140. [11] en.wikipedia.org. *Nowruz (general customs, mentions Mandaean link in passing but no details)*.
141. [140] aljazeera.com. *What is Nowruz and how is it celebrated? (general, mentions Iraqi Kurds)*.
142. [41] aljazeera.com. *Nowruz 2025 (general, implies Arab Christians if they follow Persianate customs)*.
143. [15] mepei.com. *Nowruz 2023 (general, mentions Bible on Haft-Seen, implies Christian observance)*.
144. [30] reddit.com. *What is the culture of Assyrians? (lists Dolma, Kipteh, Dekhwa, Riza Smookah)*.
145. [114] tiktok.com. *Top 3 Assyrian dishes (Dolma, Kiptet, Dekhwa)*.
146. [107] melammu-project.eu. *Simurgh in the Kurdish folk-tales (compares to Mesopotamian Lugalbanda/Etana/Anzu)*.
147. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (re-cite for Arab Rukh link)*.
148. [97] en.wikipedia.org. *Ningishzida*.
149. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (re-cite for Ningishzida comparison)*.
150. [22] duvarenglish.com. *Newroz, Turkish Nevrose (Ergenekon vs Kawa)*.
151. [23] nationalismstudies.wordpress.com. *Newroz/Nevruz: Comparing Turkish and*

Kurdish national identities (Ergenekon vs Kawa).
152. [33] flamingoftherose.com. *Armenian lunisolar calendar (Zatik/Vahagn March 21)*.
153. [24] paysend.com. *Nowruz celebrations traditions (general, mentions Iraqi Kurds, Shia Muslims)*.
154. [11] en.wikipedia.org. *Nowruz (re-cite for general food/rituals)*.
155. [42] goodwinliving.org. *Nowruz Persian New Year (general, implies Syrian Arab if following Persian customs)*.
156. [141] paysend.com. *Nowruz celebrations traditions (re-cite, general, implies Syrian Arab if following Persian customs)*.
157. [38] whats4eats.com. *Nowruz: Recipes and Traditions (general foods, mentions Dolmeh)*.
158. [131] ayoubs.ca. *Nowruz (general foods, Haft-Seen)*.
159. [29] nationaltoday.com. *Assyrian New Year (Kha b'Nisan, 7 fruits, wheat display)*.
160. [27] en.wikipedia.org. *Kha b-Nisan (re-cite, Deqna d-Nisan)*.
161. [142] andybettis.com. *Khigga dance steps*.
162. [73] en.wikipedia.org. *Khigga (re-cite, variations)*.
163. [75] unesco.preslib.az. *Yalli (Kochari, Tanzara), Traditional group dances of Nakhchivan (re-cite)*.
164. [71] folkdancefootnotes.org. *Kochari (L)* - Armenian, Azerbaijani, etc.*.
165. [68] decibel-danse.com. *Kurdish dance: origins and step-by-step guide (Halay/Govend steps)*.
166. [3] thekurdishproject.org. *Kurdish Dance (re-cite, Kurmanji/Sorani, handholds)*.
167. [91] ancient-origins.net. *Who Was Shahmaran? (re-cite for Armenian context)*.
168. [92] scholarworks.calstate.edu. *Gender-Affected Dualism... (re-cite for Armenian context)*.
169. [7] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish mythology (re-cite for Shahmaran Assyrian context)*.
170. [90] bbc.com. *Shahmaran: The mythical symbol inspiring Turkish artists (re-cite for Assyrian context)*.
171. [108] en.wikipedia.org. *Ziz (compares to Simurgh, Sumerian Anzu)*.
172. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (re-cite for Anzu comparison)*.
173. [143] basilmarinerchase.wordpress.com. *Shahmaran series review (mentions myth, no direct Ningishzida link)*.
174. [98] mifologia.com. *Ningishzida Sumerian God*.
175. [105] en.wikipedia.org. *Anzû (re-cite for Simurgh comparison)*.
176. [144] moon-goose.com. *Anzû, also known as dZû and Imdugud (Mesopotamia)*.
177. [4] en.wikipedia.org. *Newroz as celebrated by Kurds [4]*.
178. [81] irandoostan.com. *Hezar Daf Festival in Kurdistan [81]*.
179. [43] servantgroup.org. *Kurdish Hospitality [43]*.
180. [54] family.jrank.org. *Kurdish Family And Households [54]*.
181. [3] thekurdishproject.org. *Kurdish Dance [3]*.

182. [7] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish mythology* [7].
183. [110] en.wikipedia.org. *Kurdish cuisine* [110].
184. [12] getbookonline.com. *Persian Customs and Traditions (Nowruz)* [12].
185. [25] blog.aegeanlocations.com. *Exploring Turkish Festivals (Hıdırellez)* [25].
186. [26] en.wikipedia.org. *Assyrian culture (Kha b'Nisan)* [26].
187. [17] en.wikipedia.org. *Custom and traditions in Azerbaijan (Novruz)* [17].
188. [45] advantour.com. *Turkey: Traditions (Hospitality)* [45].
189. [50] farmonaut.com. *Zoravan Armenian Village Traditions (Hospitality, Food)* [50].
190. [52] worldatlas.com. *The Assyrian People: Cultures of the World (Wedding feasts)* [52].
191. [18] rjtravelagency.com. *Azerbaijan Culture and Customs (Hospitality)* [18].
192. [69] hatching-dragons.com. *Traditional Dance and Song of the Middle East (Turkish Halay)* [69].
193. [50] farmonaut.com. *Zoravan Armenian Village Traditions (Kochari)* [50].
194. [112] ciam.edu. *Celebrating Armenian Heritage Month (Dolma, Khorovats)* [112].
195. [52] worldatlas.com. *The Assyrian People: Cultures of the World (Cuisine)* [52].
196. [18] rjtravelagency.com. *Azerbaijan Culture and Customs (Cuisine)* [18].
197. [8] en.wikipedia.org. *Kaveh the Blacksmith (Kurdish vs Persian Zahhak)* [8].
198. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (Turkish folklore)* [89].
199. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (Regional folklore)* [99].
200. [79] worldofmusicality.com. *Daf Musical Instrument Facts (Turkish Tef)* [79].
201. [85] ethnicmusical.com. *Arabic Percussion Instruments (Daf/Mazhar/Riqq)* [85].
202. [83] navasaz.ca. *Playing Daf (Armenian use)* [83].
203. [87] nasehpour.com. *Azerbaijani Musical Instruments (Ghaval/Daf)* [87].
204. [111] en.wikipedia.org. *Kelaneh (bread)* [111].
205. [119] kurdistan24.net. *Naan, a delicious staple of Kurdish culture (Kalana)* [119].
206. [34] en.wikipedia.org. *Navasard* [34].
207. [19] fethiyetimes.com. *Celebrating Nevruz... (Turkish Nevruz general)* [19].
208. [11] en.wikipedia.org. *Nowruz (Iraq/Syria non-Kurdish)* [11].
209. [27] en.wikipedia.org. *Kha b-Nisan (rituals, no fire/food details)* [27].
210. [72] en.wikipedia.org. *Assyrian folk dance (Khigga, Kochari comparison)* [72].
211. [75] unesco.preslib.az. *Yalli (Kochari, Tanzara), Traditional group dances of Nakhchivan* [75].
212. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (Origins, Mesopotamian links query)* [89].
213. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (Origins, Mesopotamian links query)* [99].
214. [121] labsalliebe.com. *Nan-e Sabzi Mashhadi – Persian Herb Flatbread* [121].
215. [122] en.wikipedia.org. *Gözleme (Turkish stuffed flatbread)* [122].
216. [123] moribyan.com. *Cheese Fatayer (Arab flatbread, limited scope)* [123].
217. [125] galoreofflavors.com. *Zhingyalov Hats – Armenian Herb Flatbread* [125].
218. [129] thecookingfoodie.com. *Qutab Recipe - Flat Bread Filled With Green Onion and*

Cheese (Azerbaijani) [129].
219. [118] tiktok.com. *Assyrian Doweh drink* [118].
220. [116] kocagoz.com.au. *Ayran (Turkish Yogurt Drink)* [116].
221. [97] en.wikipedia.org. *Ningishzida (Serpent iconography, Shahmaran parallels)* [97].
222. [37] en.wikipedia.org. *Armenian mythology (Vardavar, Navasard general)* [37].
223. [88] twonineteen.org.uk. *New Day Opportunities (Turkish Nevruz, Kawa/Zahhak context)* [88].
224. [13] thelionandthesun.org. *Nowruz: History... (Iraq/Syria non-Kurdish, limited)* [13].
225. [30] reddit.com. *What is the culture of Assyrians? (Kha b'Nisan food general)* [30].
226. [92] scholarworks.calstate.edu. *Gender-Affected Dualism... (Shahmaran Armenian context limited)* [92].
227. [93] ursinus.edu. *PDF on Shaymaran myth (Assyrian context limited)* [93].
228. [105] en.wikipedia.org. *Anzû (Mesopotamian bird, Simurgh comparison)* [105].
229. [97] en.wikipedia.org. *Ningishzida (re-consolidated for Shahmaran parallels)*.
230. [51] rsc.byu.edu. *The Politics of Feasting... (Ashurnasirpal II feast details)* [51].
231. [34] en.wikipedia.org. *Navasard (re-consolidated for ancient details)*.
232. [20] ktb.gov.tr. *Nevruz Celebrations in Türkiye... (non-Kurdish rituals, food, official perspective)* [20].
233. [11] en.wikipedia.org. *Nowruz (re-consolidated for Iraq/Syria non-Kurdish)*.
234. [27] en.wikipedia.org. *Kha b-Nisan (re-consolidated for rituals)*.
235. [72] en.wikipedia.org. *Assyrian folk dance (re-consolidated for Khigga/Kochari)*.
236. [75] unesco.preslib.az. *Yalli (re-consolidated for types, music)*.
237. [89] en.wikipedia.org. *Shahmaran (re-consolidated for origins)*.
238. [99] en.wikipedia.org. *Simurgh (re-consolidated for origins, Anzu link)*.
239. [105] en.wikipedia.org. *Anzû (re-consolidated for details)*.
240. [97] en.wikipedia.org. *Ningishzida (re-consolidated for role/symbolism)*.# A Comparative Ethnography of Shared Cultural Traditions: Kurdistan and its Neighbors

1. Introduction: A Tapestry of Shared Heritage in the Middle East

The lands historically inhabited by the Kurdish people are situated at a significant crossroads of civilizations, where ancient and medieval empires, trade routes, and diverse populations have converged for millennia.[1] This geographical and historical positioning has fostered a rich environment for cultural exchange, resulting in a complex tapestry of traditions that are often shared, adapted, and reinterpreted across ethnic and political boundaries. Cultural expressions rarely exist in isolation; rather, they are shaped by continuous interaction, processes of syncretism, and the ebb and flow of regional influences. This report aims to meticulously examine specific Kurdish traditions—spanning festivals, social customs, performing arts, mythology, and cuisine—and to explore their parallels and variations within

the cultural landscapes of neighboring peoples, including Persians, Turks, Arabs (with a focus on Iraqi and Syrian communities where data allows), Armenians, Assyrians, and Azerbaijanis. The very concept of "shared traditions" in this region is nuanced, often intertwined with historical power dynamics and contemporary identity politics.[2] While centuries of coexistence have undeniably led to common cultural threads, the interpretation and ownership of these traditions can be subjects of contention, particularly for groups like the Kurds who have navigated complex relationships with surrounding state structures.[2] This analysis will therefore strive not only to identify similarities in cultural practices but also to acknowledge the distinct meanings and contexts these traditions hold for each group. By exploring the spring equinox celebrations, the sacred duties of hospitality, the foundational bonds of family structures, the vibrant expressions of music and dance, the enduring echoes of ancient myths, and the communal experience of shared culinary practices, this report seeks to illuminate both the deep-rooted interconnectedness and the unique cultural articulations of the diverse peoples of the Middle East and its surrounding regions. Understanding this shared yet diverse heritage is crucial for appreciating the rich cultural mosaic of the area and the dynamic ways in which traditions are both preserved and transformed over time.

2. The Vernal Equinox and New Year: Celebrations of Renewal

The arrival of spring and the vernal equinox hold profound cultural significance across a vast expanse of Western and Central Asia, heralding renewal, rebirth, and the triumph of light over darkness. For Kurds, this period is embodied in the festival of Newroz, a celebration deeply interwoven with their identity and history. This section explores Kurdish Newroz and its remarkable parallels with the Nowruz traditions of Persians and Azerbaijanis, the Nevruz and Hıdırellez festivals of Turkey, the ancient echoes in Assyrian Kha b'Nisan, and related spring observances in Armenian culture.

2.1. Kurdish Newroz: A Symbol of Rebirth and Resistance

Newroz, typically celebrated around March 21st, is the Kurdish New Year and marks the arrival of spring.[4] More than just a seasonal festival, Newroz is a potent symbol of Kurdish identity, freedom, and resilience.[4] The central ritual is the lighting of bonfires on the eve of Newroz (typically March 20th), around which people gather to dance, sing, and jump over the flames—an act of purification and a symbolic farewell to winter's darkness.[4] Participants often don traditional, vibrant Kurdish attire, and communal activities include folk dances like the Govend or Halay, traditional games, family feasts, and the recitation of poetry.[3] Spring flowers are gathered, and in some customs, pottery is smashed for good luck as families spend the day in nature, celebrating the fresh growth of spring.[5]

The most profound significance of Newroz for Kurds is its connection to the legend of Kawa (or Kawe) the Blacksmith and the tyrannical king Zahhak (Zuhak).[4] According to Kurdish lore, Zahhak was an evil Assyrian king whose reign brought a perpetual winter to Kurdistan and who had serpents growing from his shoulders that demanded a daily sacrifice of two young men's

brains.[4] Kawa, a blacksmith who had lost many sons to this cruelty, led a rebellion of young men (considered the ancestors of the Kurds) who had been secretly saved.[7] Kawa ultimately killed Zahhak with his hammer and lit bonfires on the hillsides to announce the victory and summon his supporters, whereupon spring returned to the land.[4] This legend imbues Newroz with powerful themes of liberation from oppression, making it a cornerstone of Kurdish national identity and a symbol of their enduring struggle for cultural and political rights, especially in regions where Kurdish expression has faced restrictions.[4]

2.2. Shared Nowruz Traditions and Regional Spring Festivals

The Kurdish celebration of Newroz is part of a broader family of New Year and spring equinox festivals observed by many neighboring cultures, often under the name Nowruz or similar variations. These celebrations share core themes of renewal, purification, and feasting, while also exhibiting unique local customs and folklore.

2.2.1. Persian Nowruz: Ancient Roots and Rich Symbolism

Persian Nowruz, with origins tracing back over three millennia to Zoroastrian traditions, is a cornerstone of Iranian culture.[10] Preparations begin weeks in advance with *Khāne-takānī* (spring cleaning), symbolizing renewal and the discarding of the old.[10] A key pre-Nowruz ritual is *Chaharshanbe Suri* (Festival of Fire), observed on the eve of the last Wednesday before the New Year, where people jump over bonfires, chanting phrases like "My yellow to you, your red to me" (Sorkhi–e to az man; Zardi-e man az to!), seeking purification and health.[10]

The centerpiece of Nowruz is the *Haft-Seen* table, a meticulously arranged spread featuring seven items starting with the Persian letter 'S' (س), each holding symbolic meaning: *Sabzeh* (sprouts, for rebirth), *Samanu* (sweet wheat germ pudding, for power/strength), *Senjed* (dried oleaster fruit, for love), *Seer* (garlic, for medicine/health), *Seeb* (apple, for beauty/health), *Somāq* (sumac berries, for sunrise/patience), and *Serkeh* (vinegar, for age/patience).[12] Other items like a mirror, candles, painted eggs, goldfish, and a holy book or poetry (like the Shahnameh or Divan of Hafez) often adorn the table.[10] Families gather around the Haft-Seen as the New Year arrives, exchanging greetings and gifts (*Eidi*), especially for children.[10] Visiting family and friends (*Eid Didani*) is an essential custom.[12] The celebrations culminate on the thirteenth day with *Sizdah Bedar* (Nature's Day), where people picnic outdoors, and the *Sabzeh* is released into running water, symbolizing the discarding of misfortunes.[12]

The Persian Nowruz is also linked to the legend of Kaveh Ahangar (Kaveh the Blacksmith) overthrowing the tyrannical king Zahāk, a narrative immortalized in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.[8] While sharing the core of a heroic blacksmith defeating a serpent-shouldered tyrant, the Persian version generally depicts Zahāk as a "foreign" or "evil" ruler rather than specifically an Assyrian king, as often found in Kurdish tellings.[7]

2.2.2. Azerbaijani Novruz Bayramı: Elements and Festivities

In Azerbaijan, Novruz Bayramı is a cherished national holiday with preparations starting a month in advance.[11] The four Tuesdays leading up to Novruz are each dedicated to one of the

four elements: Water (*Su Çərşənbəsi*), Fire (*Od Çərşənbəsi*), Wind (*Yel Çərşənbəsi*), and Earth or Last Wednesday (*Torpaq Çərşənbəsi* or *Axır Çərşənbə*).[14] Jumping over bonfires is a significant ritual, particularly on Fire Wednesday or the eve of Novruz itself, symbolizing purification.[17]

A vital symbol of Azerbaijani Novruz is *Səməni*, sprouted wheat, which is grown in homes and represents the revival of nature and fertility.[17] The holiday table is laden with special national pastries like *şəkərbura*, *paxlava* (baklava), and *şorqoğal*, as well as painted eggs and various traditional dishes.[17] Visiting relatives and honoring the graves of ancestors are also important customs.[11] Folklore figures like *Keçəl* (the bald man, symbolizing the period before Novruz) and *Kosa* (the sparsely bearded man, symbolizing winter and defeated by spring) are integral to the festive atmosphere, often appearing in folk performances.[17]

2.2.3. Turkish Nevruz and Hıdırellez: State and Folk Perspectives

In Turkey, Nevruz (the Turkish spelling of Nowruz) is officially recognized and celebrated, particularly in eastern and southeastern regions, though its observance can be complex due to its strong association with Kurdish identity.[19] The Turkish state has, at times, promoted Nevruz with an emphasis on Turkic heritage, linking it to the Ergenekon legend—a foundational myth where ancient Turks escape a besieged valley by melting an iron mountain, guided by a grey wolf (*Bozkurt*).[21] Official celebrations may include military parades and ceremonies emphasizing Turkish national unity.[22]

Folk traditions for Nevruz across Turkey include spring cleaning, wearing new clothes, preparing special foods (like pastries with spinach, and eggs colored with onion skins), and visiting cemeteries.[20] Jumping over fire is a common purification ritual.[20] Various regional customs exist, such as tying "March yarn" (*Mart ipliği*) to trees or the "sharing equally" (*hak üleştir*) custom where food is offered to passersby.[20] Alawite and Bektashi communities in Turkey also celebrate Nevruz, associating it with the Prophet Ali.[20]

Distinct from Nevruz but sharing themes of spring's arrival is Hıdırellez, celebrated on May 5th-6th.[25] This festival is dedicated to the meeting of Hızır (a figure associated with immortality and succor) and İlyas (the Prophet Elijah), believed to bring health and prosperity.[25] Hıdırellez rituals include lighting bonfires, making wishes, music, dance, and communal meals in nature.[25]

2.2.4. Assyrian Kha b'Nisan (Akitu): Ancient Echoes

The Assyrian New Year, Kha b'Nisan ("First of April"), is celebrated on April 1st, marking the beginning of spring.[26] This festival has historical links to the ancient Mesopotamian Akitu festival, which celebrated the rebirth of nature and the god Marduk's victory over chaos.[28] Contemporary celebrations involve parades, parties, wearing traditional Assyrian attire, and listening to poets recite the "Story of Creation".[26] A distinctive tradition is *Deqna d-Nisan* ("beard of April/Spring"), where young girls gather flowers and herbs to create garlands or bunches to hang under the roofs of homes or on front doors.[27] Displaying wheat sprouts on small plates and decorating dinner tables with seven types of fruit are also customary, with

seven being a holy number for Assyrians.[29] Unlike the Nowruz traditions of their Kurdish and Persian neighbors, fire-jumping is not a prominent feature of Kha b'Nisan celebrations.[26] Special foods for the festival are not extensively detailed beyond general feasting.[27]

2.2.5. Armenian Spring Traditions: Navasard, Trndez, and Vahagn

Ancient Armenian New Year, Navasard, was originally celebrated in early spring, around March 21st, coinciding with the vernal equinox and considered the birthday of the pagan god of fire and thunder, Vahagn.[31] Though Navasard celebrations later shifted to August due to calendar changes [31], remnants of spring fire rituals persist. Trndez (also known as Candlemas Day or *Tiarn'ndaraj*), celebrated on February 13th or 14th, 40 days after Armenian Christmas, prominently features bonfires.[35] Newlyweds and young people jump over these fires for purification, fertility, and good fortune, symbolizing the departure of winter and the welcoming of spring.[35] This festival, though Christianized, retains ancient fire-worshipping elements.

Ancient Navasard celebrations involved large feasts, sacrifices (doves, deer), athletic games, dancing, and the worship of deities like Anahit, Astghik, and Vahagn, with Bagavan being a center of fire worship [47]. The water festival Vardavar, still celebrated today by dousing each other with water, also has roots in these ancient Navasard festivities, originally honoring Astghik, the goddess of water, beauty, love, and fertility. The festival of Zatik, often coinciding with Easter and the spring equinox period, is also linked in some traditions to the birth of Vahagn.[33]

2.2.6. Nowruz Among Other Non-Kurdish Groups in Iraq and Syria

Nowruz is observed by various communities in Iraq and Syria beyond the Kurdish populations, often influenced by the pervasive Persian cultural heritage and adapted to local customs.[11] In Iraq, Nowruz is an official holiday in the Kurdistan Region and has received recognition from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicating a broader national acknowledgment [47]. Mandaean communities in Iraq celebrate their own New Year and spring festivals, such as Parwanaya and Dehwa Honina, which share thematic elements of renewal with Nowruz, though specific rituals like the Haft-Seen are distinct to Persian-influenced Nowruz.[11] Some Shia Muslim communities in Iraq also observe Nowruz, associating it with religious figures and events.[24]

In Syria, while Nowruz is most visibly celebrated by Kurds [9], its observance by other groups, possibly including Alawites and other communities with historical ties to Persian culture or Shia Islam, is plausible.[39] General Nowruz customs such as house cleaning, family visits, special foods (e.g., *sabzi polo*), and sometimes fire-jumping (associated with *Chaharshanbe Suri*), are part of the broader Nowruz tradition that may influence or be practiced by these groups.[11]

The prevalence of fire and water rituals, feasting, and the celebration of nature's renewal across these diverse spring festivals suggests deep, ancient origins, possibly predating Zoroastrianism, rooted in shared human experiences of seasonal cycles and agricultural life.

Fire, for instance, is a near-universal symbol of purification and the dispelling of winter's gloom in Kurdish Newroz [4], Persian Chaharshanbe Suri [12], Azerbaijani Fire Wednesday [17], Turkish Nevruz/Hıdırellez [20], and Armenian Trndez/Navasard.[34] Similarly, water rituals, like the Armenian Vardavar [34] or Turkish waterfront customs for Nevruz [20], signify cleansing and fertility. This points to a fundamental layer of shared cultural heritage tied to the rhythms of nature.

However, the mythological narratives underpinning these festivals often diverge, reflecting how shared temporal celebrations are adapted to bolster distinct ethnic or national identities. The Kawa/Kaveh and Zahhak legend, central to Kurdish and Persian Newroz, illustrates this. In Kurdish versions, Zahhak is frequently identified as an *Assyrian* tyrant, framing Newroz as a specific national liberation story.[4] In Persian tradition, particularly the *Shahnameh*, Zahhak is a more generalized evil or foreign king, and Kaveh's victory is an Iranian triumph.[8] Contrastingly, official Turkish narratives for Nevruz sometimes highlight the Ergenekon legend, a distinct Turkic myth of origin and liberation, thereby creating a separate national folklore for a festival that shares its timing and many core rituals with its neighbors.[21] This divergence showcases how foundational myths are selectively emphasized or constructed to reinforce specific identities, even when the celebratory practices themselves exhibit significant overlap. Spring festivals thus serve as a compelling lens through which to observe the dynamic interplay of ancient shared heritage and the ongoing construction of distinct cultural and national narratives in the region.

Table 1: Comparative Overview of New Year/Spring Festivals

Feature	Kurdish Newroz	Persian Nowruz	Azerbaijani Novruz Bayramı	Turkish Nevruz/Hıdırellez	Assyrian Khab'Nisan	Armenian Navasard (Ancient Spring)/Trndez/Zatik	Other Iraqi/Syrian Groups (General Nowruz)
Festival Name(s)	Newroz, Newruz	Nowruz, Norooz, Persian New Year	Novruz Bayramı, Novruz	Nevruz, Sultan Nevruz; Hıdırellez (distinct spring festival)	Khab'Nisan, Akitu, Reshad-Nisan	Navasard (ancient), Trndez (Candlemas), Zatik (Easter/Vahagn's birth)	Nowruz
Approximate Timing	March 21 (celebrations March 18-24) [4]	March 20/21 (Vernal Equinox) [10]	March 20/21 (preceded by 4 elemental Wednesdays) [17]	Nevruz: March 21/22 [20]; Hıdırellez: May 5-6 [25]	April 1 [26]	Navasard (ancient): March 21 [31]; Trndez: Feb 13/14 [35]; Zatik: March 21/Easter [33]	March 20/21 [14]

Key Rituals	Bonfires (eve of March 20), jumping over fire, traditional clothes, Govend/Halay dance, games, poetry, special foods, smashing pottery. [4]	Chaharshanbe Suri (fire jumping), Haft-Seen table, Khane Tekani (cleaning), Eid Didani (visits), Sizdah Bedar (picnic), new clothes. [10]	Fire jumping, Semeni (wheat sprouts), special pastries (pakhlava, shekerbura), painted eggs, family visits, grave visits. [17]	Nevruz: Fire jumping, cleaning, special foods, cemetery visits, hak üleştir. [20] Hıdırellez: Bonfires, wishes, music, dance, communal meals. [25]	Parades, parties, traditional clothes, poetry ("Story of Creation"), Deqna d-Nisan (flower garlands), displaying wheat, 7 fruits on table. [26]	Navasard (ancient): Feasts, sacrifices, fire worship, games, dance. [34] Trndez: Bonfire jumping. [35] Vardavar (water festival). [34]	General Nowruz: House cleaning, family visits, special foods, Haft-Seen (Persian influence), fire jumping (Chaharshanbe Suri). [11]
Key Folklore/Legends	Kawa the Blacksmith defeats Assyrian tyrant Zuhak. [4]	Kaveh Ahangar defeats tyrant Zahāk (Shahnameh). [8]	Keçəl and Kosa characters. [17]	Nevruz: Ergenekon legend (Turkic). [21] Hıdırellez: Meeting of Hızır and İlyas. [25]	Linked to ancient Akitu festival, myth of love/vegetation gods ensuring fertility. [28]	Navasard: Vahagn (god of fire/thunder, birthday March 21), Anahit, Astghik. [31]	General Nowruz myths (e.g., Jamshid) if adopted. [13]
Primary Significance	Rebirth, freedom from oppression, Kurdish national identity, arrival of spring. [4]	Renewal, spring, purification, family unity, ancient heritage. [10]	Renewal of nature, spring, family, purification. [14]	Nevruz: Spring, new year, national identity (Turkish), ancestral remembrance. [20] Hıdırellez: Arrival of spring, health, prosperity. [25]	New Year, start of spring, revival, ancient heritage (Akitu). [27]	Ancient New Year, spring, fertility, purification, honoring gods (Vahagn). [31]	Renewal, spring, family unity. [11]

3. The Sacred Art of Welcome: Hospitality Across

Cultures

The tradition of hospitality is a deeply cherished value across the Middle East and surrounding regions, acting as a cornerstone of social interaction and communal identity. Kurdish culture, in particular, is renowned for its profound emphasis on welcoming guests with open arms and boundless generosity. This section examines the customs of Kurdish hospitality and draws comparisons with the practices of neighboring Persian, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Azerbaijani societies, highlighting both the shared ethos and the distinct cultural expressions of this fundamental social grace.

3.1. Kurdish Hospitality: Generosity Without Bounds

Kurdish hospitality is characterized by an almost legendary level of generosity and warmth.[43] When a guest, whether a stranger or acquaintance, arrives at a Kurdish home, they are treated with utmost honor. Hosts typically offer the best food available, the most comfortable seat, and insistently encourage guests to eat until they are more than satisfied.[43] Visits are not expected to be brief; a stay of at least three hours is common, as hosts genuinely delight in the presence of their guests, often overcoming any language barriers with sheer warmth and happiness.[43]

Food is the primary medium through which this hospitality is expressed.[43] The process often begins with the offering of beverages, most notably Kurdish tea, followed by an array of sweets, nuts, and snacks.[44] As the visit progresses, more substantial offerings such as cheeses, vegetables, and meats may be presented. A visit frequently concludes with the serving of fruit, which can also subtly signal the end of the engagement.[44] Such is the importance of these offerings that refusing food or drink can be perceived as an insult to the host.[44] This deep-seated tradition of sharing is often underpinned by a belief that guests are a blessing and that food itself is a gift from God to be shared with others.[44] It is common for Kurds to bring gifts of food—such as entire frozen chickens, homemade jams, or large pots of traditional dishes like *dolma*, *muklubah*, or *biriyani*—when visiting others or even as spontaneous gestures of goodwill.[43]

3.2. Comparative Hospitality Customs in the Region

The profound emphasis on hospitality seen in Kurdish culture resonates strongly across neighboring societies, each with its unique expressions but sharing core values of generosity, respect for guests, and the significance of food and drink in welcoming rituals.

Persian Hospitality: Iranian hospitality is renowned and often characterized by intricate politeness, encapsulated in the concept of *Taarof*—a complex system of etiquette that includes expressions of humility and deference towards guests.[12] Ensuring guests are comfortable, well-fed, and honored is paramount. While specific sequences of food offerings are not as minutely detailed in the provided materials as for Kurdish customs, the general principle of "welcoming hospitality" is a core social value.[10]

Turkish *Misafirperverlik*: In Turkey, hospitality (*misafirperverlik*) is a cornerstone of social life.

Guests (*misafir*) are highly esteemed and often regarded as *Tanrı Misafiri* ("a guest from God"), implying a sacred duty to host them well.[45] Even unannounced visitors are received with warmth and offered the host's finest food, tea, coffee, and sweets.[45] Declining such offerings can cause offense, emphasizing the expectation that guests should graciously accept the generosity shown.[45] Offering cologne (*kolonya*) to guests to refresh their hands is also a common and distinctive Turkish hospitality gesture.[45]

Arab Hospitality: Arab cultures are widely known for their warm and generous hospitality.[46] Guests are typically offered tea, coffee, and substantial meals, and sometimes a place to stay.[46] The *majlis*, a traditional sitting area in homes, is central to receiving and entertaining guests, serving as a space for socializing and discussion.[48] Sharing food from communal dishes is a common practice, and it is customary to eat with the right hand.[48] The belief that guests are sent by God and that hospitality is a sacred duty is also present in Arab traditions.[49] The initial offering of a drink, often water, symbolizes a peaceful welcome.[49]

Armenian Hospitality: Armenian tradition places great importance on welcoming guests with lavish, home-cooked meals, which serve as symbols of friendship and generosity.[50] Hosts pride themselves on offering their finest provisions, including fresh fruits, homemade preserves, and *oghi* (traditional fruit brandy).[50] Signature dishes like *Ghapama* (pumpkin stuffed with rice, dried fruits, and nuts), *Khorovadz* (barbecue), and the ubiquitous *lavash* (flatbread) are often central to the guest meal.[50] It is customary to serve guests first, further highlighting their honored status.[50]

Assyrian Hospitality: Historical accounts attest to a strong tradition of Assyrian hospitality, exemplified by grand feasts. King Ashurnasirpal II, for instance, hosted a monumental ten-day feast for tens of thousands of guests, providing vast quantities of food and drink.[51] Ancient Assyrian wedding celebrations also involved extensive communal feasting.[52] While contemporary household hospitality practices are less detailed in the provided sources, the historical emphasis on large-scale commensality suggests a deep-rooted cultural value of generosity towards guests.[53] General "Oriental" customs, such as the belief that guests are divinely sent and the initial offering of water, likely resonate within Assyrian traditions as well.[49]

Azerbaijani Hospitality: Azerbaijanis are known for warmly embracing their guests, with hospitality being a prominent feature of their culture.[18] Offering tea is an ancient and significant tradition when welcoming visitors [[17]

Works cited

1. Research Methodology in Kurdish Studies - Berghahn Journals, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/ame/15/1/ame150102.pdf
2. Anthropology of Kurdistan - Oxford Bibliographies, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/abstract/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0174.xml
3. Learn About Kurdish Dance, accessed May 17, 2025, https://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-culture/kurdish-dance/
4. Newroz as celebrated by Kurds - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newroz_as_celebrated_by_Kurds
5. NOWRUZ: A Kurdish New Year Celebration! - Explore - Viking Central, accessed May 17, 2025, https://vikingcentral.augie.edu/event/3274694
6. en.wikipedia.org, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newroz_as_celebrated_by_Kurds#:~:text=Though%20celebrations%20vary%2C%20people%20generally,the%20bonfire%2C%20play%20Kurdish%20games.
7. Kurdish mythology - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_mythology
8. Kaveh the Blacksmith - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaveh_the_Blacksmith
9. Nowruz | Middle East Studies Center - The Ohio State University, accessed May 17, 2025, https://mesc.osu.edu/news/nowruz
10. Iranian Festivals And Celebrations: Embracing Cultural Traditions, accessed May 17, 2025, https://orienttrips.com/mag/iranian-festivals-and-celebrations-embracing-cultural-traditions/
11. Nowruz - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nowruz
12. 17 Persian customs and traditions, Iran's Rich Heritage, accessed May 17, 2025, https://getbookonline.com/persian-customs-and-traditions/
13. Nowruz: History, Science and Traditions Behind the Persian New ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://thelionandthesun.org/997/nowruz-history-science-and-traditions-behind-the-persian-new-year/
14. Navruz Holiday – CACIP Central Asia Climate Information Portal, accessed May 17, 2025, https://centralasiaclimateportal.org/navruz-holiday/
15. Nowruz 2023 - MEPEI, accessed May 17, 2025, https://mepei.com/nowruz-2023/
16. Zahhak; the Legend of the Serpent King - Welcome to Iran, accessed May 17, 2025, https://welcometoiran.com/zahhak-legend-serpent-king-story/
17. Custom and traditions in Azerbaijan - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Custom_and_traditions_in_Azerbaijan
18. Azerbaijan Culture And Customs » All You Need To Know 2025, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.rjtravelagency.com/azerbaijan-culture/
19. Celebrating Nevruz, the festival that marks the arrival of spring ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://fethiyetimes.com/celebrating-nevruz-the-festival-that-marks-the-arrival-of-spring/
20. Nevruz Celebrations in Türkiye and in Central Asia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-98560/nevruz-celebrations-in-turkiye-and-in-central-asia.html
21. Nevruz, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-98596/nevruz.html
22. Newroz: Turkish névrose - Duvar English, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/03/21/newroz-turkish-nevrose
23. Newroz/Nevruz: Comparing Turkish and Kurdish national identities | Nationalism Studies, accessed May 17, 2025,

https://nationalismstudies.wordpress.com/2016/03/09/newroznevruz-comparing-turkish-and-kurdish-national-identities/
24. How Different Cultures Celebrate Nowruz: Fire, Feasts, and Festivities - Paysend, accessed May 17, 2025, https://paysend.com/tr/blog/nowruz-celebrations-traditions
25. Exploring Turkish Festivals: A Celebration of Rich Cultural Heritage ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://blog.aegeanlocations.com/2024/08/25/exploring-turkish-festivals-a-celebration-of-rich-cultural-heritage-and-vibrant-traditions/
26. Assyrian culture - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_culture
27. Kha b-Nisan - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kha_b-Nisan
28. Kha b'Nissan—the Assyrian New Year, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.auaf.us/blog/kha-bnissan-the-assyrian-new-year-2/
29. ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR - April 1, 2026 - National Today, accessed May 17, 2025, https://nationaltoday.com/assyrian-new-year/
30. What is the culture of Assyrians? : r/Assyria - Reddit, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/Assyria/comments/1dif2uy/what_is_the_culture_of_assyrians/
31. Armenian New Year Traditions, accessed May 17, 2025, https://armenian-history.com/history/armenian-new-year-traditions/
32. Navasard (August 11th) | Days Of The Year, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/navasard/
33. Rituals and Traditions - Flaming of the rose, accessed May 17, 2025, https://flamingoftherose.com/Rituals-and-Traditions
34. Navasard - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navasard
35. Rituals of Fire - Heal Talk Tuesdays with Liza, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.healtalktuesday.com/rituals-of-fire/
36. Terendez: An Armenian Religious Holiday to Welcome the Spring - Iconic Hand, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.theiconichand.com/terendez-an-armenian-religious-holiday-to-welcome-the-spring
37. Armenian mythology - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_mythology
38. Nowruz: Recipes and Traditions - Whats4eats, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.whats4eats.com/holidays/nowruz-recipes-traditions
39. Nowruz | Festival, History, Practice, & Facts - Britannica, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nowruz
40. Kurdish people in Syria celebrate Nowruz under new regime - WGLT, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.wglt.org/2025-03-25/kurdish-people-in-syria-celebrate-nowruz-under-new-regime
41. Nowruz 2025: Traditions, Haft Sin and celebrations of the Persian New Year - Al

Jazeera, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/20/nowruz-2025-traditions-haft-sin-and-celebrations-of-the-persian-new-year
42. Nowruz (Persian New Year) - Goodwin Living, accessed May 17, 2025, https://goodwinliving.org/blog/nowruz-persian-new-year/
43. Kurdish Hospitality - SGI - Servant Group International, accessed May 17, 2025, https://servantgroup.org/kurdish-hospitality/
44. Kurdish Hospitality | NPT - YouTube, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoSk99-7s3Y
45. Turkish Traditions and Customs: The Most Curious Rituals - Advantour, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.advantour.com/turkey/traditions.htm
46. Iraq Culture And Customs » All You Need To Know 2025 - RJ Travel Agency, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.rjtravelagency.com/iraq-culture/
47. Culture of the United Arab Emirates - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_the_United_Arab_Emirates
48. Syrian Culture | Customs | Traditions | Etiquette | anothertravel.com, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.anothertravel.com/middle-east/syria/culture/
49. Manners & Customs: The sacred duty of hospitality | AHRC, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/manners/the-sacred-duty-of-hospitality.htm
50. Zoravan Armenian Village Traditions: 8 Authentic Cultural ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://farmonaut.com/asia/zoravan-armenian-village-traditions-8-authentic-cultural-experiences/
51. The Politics of Feasting in the Ancient Near East | Religious Studies ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://rsc.byu.edu/our-rites-worship/politics-feasting-ancient-near-east
52. The Assyrian People: Cultures of the World - WorldAtlas, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-assyrian-people-cultures-of-the-world.html
53. Assyrian Rituals of Life-Cycle Events, accessed May 17, 2025, http://www.aina.org/articles/yoab.htm
54. Kurdish Families - Kurdish Family And Households - Gender ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://family.jrank.org/pages/1025/Kurdish-Families-Kurdish-Family-Households.html
55. ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu, accessed May 17, 2025, https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/MA11/summary#:~:text=A%20Kurdish%20household%20thus%20consists,house%2C%20which%20she%20runs%20independently.&text=Inheritance%20from%20the%20father%20is,Daughters%20do%20not%20inherit.
56. Iranian Society: Patriarchy and parental control in Iran, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.iranchamber.com/society/articles/patriarchy_parental_control.php
57. Ethnic Variation/Ethnicity - Middle Eastern Families - Marriage and Family Encyclopedia, accessed May 17, 2025,

https://family.jrank.org/pages/464/Ethnic-Variation-Ethnicity-Middle-Eastern-Families.html
58. Turkey - Marriage, Family, Customs | Britannica, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/place/Turkey/Marriage-and-family-life
59. determinants of family structure in turkey - Brill, accessed May 17, 2025, https://brill.com/downloadpdf/book/9789004433625/B9789004433625_s008.pdf
60. the family: arab society in miniature - Brill, accessed May 17, 2025, https://brill.com/display/book/9789004191099/Bej.9789004181144.i-336_003.pdf
61. Traditions, Patriarchy, and Home Life | Domestic Abuse and the Arab Community, accessed May 17, 2025, https://aada.commons.gc.cuny.edu/home-life-and-education/
62. "WE DON'T HAVE CAPITALISM...WE HAVE KINSHIP": THE STATE, THE FAMILY, AND THE EXPRESSION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY. Stephani - IU ScholarWorks, accessed May 17, 2025, https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/aeer/article/download/573/675Stephanie/0
63. Armenian traditional family - ArmGeo.am, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.armgeo.am/en/armenian-traditional-family/
64. The Family in Ancient Mesopotamia - World History Encyclopedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.worldhistory.org/article/16/the-family-in-ancient-mesopotamia/
65. Bedouin - Summary - eHRAF World Cultures, accessed May 17, 2025, https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/mj04/summary
66. Family in Azerbaijan - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_in_Azerbaijan
67. Family and Marriage Traditions in Azerbaıjan Folklore - International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS), accessed May 17, 2025, https://ijels.com/upload_document/issue_files/11IJELS-103202313-Fam%C4%B1ly.pdf
68. Kurdish dance: origins and step-by-step guide - Decibel danse, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.decibel-danse.com/en/advice/danse-kurde/
69. Traditional Dance and Song of the Middle East - Hatching Dragons, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.hatching-dragons.com/en-gb/blog/traditional-dance-and-song-of-the-middle-east
70. How to celebrate Nowruz like a local - CultureRoad Travel, accessed May 17, 2025, https://cultureroadtravel.com/how-to-celebrate-nowruz-like-a-local-in-4-different-countries/
71. Kochari (L*), Qochari, Kocharee, (Քոչարի), K'očari, Köçəri, Kótsari (Κότσαρι), Koçerî, Koçari, Koçarî – Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus - Folkdance Footnotes, accessed May 17, 2025, https://folkdancefootnotes.org/dance/a-real-folk-dance-what-is-it/about/kochari-l-qochari-kocharee-%D6%84%D5%B8%D5%B9%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AB-kocari-koc%C9%99ri-k%CF%8Ctsari-%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%84%CF%83%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%B9-koceri%E2%80%8E-kocari-kocari-eastern-an/

72. Assyrian folk dance - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_folk_dance
73. Khigga - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khigga
74. Khigga (L*) -Assyrian - Folkdance Footnotes, accessed May 17, 2025, https://folkdancefootnotes.org/dance/a-real-folk-dance-what-is-it/about/khigga-l-assyrian/
75. Yalli (Kochari, Tanzara), Traditional group dances of Nakhchivan - Azərbaycan-UNESCO əlaqələri, accessed May 17, 2025, https://unesco.preslib.az/en/page/3ULHesfk2z
76. National dances - Naxçıvan Turizm İnformasiya Mərkəzi, accessed May 17, 2025, http://www.turizm.nakhchivan.az/en/index.php/m-d-niyy-t/2015-12-29-07-04-36
77. Azerbaijani Dance - Visit Iran, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.visitiran.ir/attraction/Azerbaijani--Dance
78. worldofmusicality.com, accessed May 17, 2025, https://worldofmusicality.com/daf-musical-instrument-facts/#:~:text=The%20Daf%20is%20a%20large,animal%20skin%20or%20synthetic%20material.
79. Daf Musical Instrument Facts - World of Musicality, accessed May 17, 2025, https://worldofmusicality.com/daf-musical-instrument-facts/
80. Daf - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daf
81. Hezar Daf Festival in Kurdistan - Irandoostan - Iran Doostan Tours, accessed May 17, 2025, https://irandoostan.com/hezar-daf-festival-in-kurdistan/
82. From Kurdistan to Washington, Jalal Kimia Connects Communities with the Daf Drum | Smithsonian Folklife Festival, accessed May 17, 2025, https://festival.si.edu/blog/jalal-kimia-daf-drum
83. A Beginner's Guide to Playing DAF - Ali Massoudi & Padideh ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://navasaz.ca/playing-daf/
84. Daf Iranian frame drum and Sufi music - Nasehpour, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.nasehpour.com/daf-iranian-frame-drum
85. From Syria to Egypt: 5 Most Popular Arabic Percussion Instruments, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ethnicmusical.com/percussion/from-syria-to-egypt-5-most-popular-arabic-percussion-instruments/
86. Professional Daf Instrument | Iranian Drum Daf For Sale - Sala Muzik, accessed May 17, 2025, https://salamuzik.com/products/professional-daf-by-afshari-ad-304
87. Azerbaijani Musical Instruments Azeri Music - Nasehpour, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.nasehpour.com/azerbaijani-musical-instruments
88. New Day Opportunities – 2:19 Teach to Reach, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.twonineteen.org.uk/2023/new-day-opportunities/
89. Shahmaran - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahmaran
90. Shahmaran: The mythical symbol inspiring Turkish artists - BBC, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.bbc.com/reel/video/p0j9t81p/shahmaran-the-mythical-symbol-inspiring-turkish-artists
91. Who Was Shahmaran? Lover, Trickster, Ancient Persian Snake Lady, accessed May

17, 2025, https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends-asia/shahmaran-0015789
92. Gender-Affected Dualism of Serpent Symbol in the Myths of Zahhāk and Shāhmārān - ScholarWorks, accessed May 17, 2025, https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/8s45qj414
93. www.ursinus.edu, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ursinus.edu/live/files/5161-dilsh-denizsahmaranmythpdf
94. APIFantasy | Myth and Folklore Anthology - Azerbaijani Mythology - Mythical Creatures - Wattpad, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.wattpad.com/1511144274-apifantasy-myth-and-folklore-anthology-azerbaijani
95. Shahmaran - The Queen of Serpents - · Design Dessau, accessed May 17, 2025, https://des.incom.org/project/2678
96. The snake as symbol - Ghorbany, accessed May 17, 2025, https://ghorbany.com/inspiration/the-snake-as-symbol
97. Ningishzida - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ningishzida
98. Ningishzida Sumerian God Of Vegetation, The Underworld, And Mystical Serpents, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.mifologia.com/pantheon/sumerian-pantheon/ningishzida-sumerian-god/
99. Simurgh - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simurgh
100. Simurgh, the Mysterious Giant Healing Bird in Iranian Mythology | Ancient Origins, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ancient-origins.net/history/simurgh-mysterious-giant-healing-bird-iranian-mythology-0010030
101. Simurgh - Simple English Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simurgh
102. Simurgh - Monstropedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.monstropedia.org/index.php?title=Simurgh
103. The Simurgh: A Symbol of Holistic Medicine in the Middle Eastern Culture in History, accessed May 17, 2025, https://muslimheritage.com/simurgh-medicine-middleeast/
104. Griffin - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griffin
105. Anzû - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anz%C3%BB
106. (PDF) Simurgh in Azerbaijani folklore - ResearchGate, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374194380_Simurgh_in_Azerbaijani_folklore
107. Simurgh in the Kurdish folk-tales (1) - The Melammu Project, accessed May 17, 2025, http://www.melammu-project.eu/database/gen_html/a0000278.html
108. Ziz - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziz
109. www.turkish-cuisine.org, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.turkish-cuisine.org/ottoman-heritage-3/kurdish-cuisine-34.html#:~:text=The%20most%20basic%20foodstuffs%20of,%2C%20onions%2C%20radishe

s%20and%20cucumbers.
110. Kurdish cuisine - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_cuisine
111. Kelaneh (bread) - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelaneh_(bread)
112. Celebrating Armenian Heritage Month, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.ciam.edu/celebrating-armenian-heritage-month
113. Assyrian cuisine - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_cuisine
114. TOP 3 ASSYRIAN DISHES IN THE COMMENTS 🍲👇🏻 #assyrian #chaldean #sury... | TikTok, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@assyrianappreciation/video/7172213768443694341
115. Ayran - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayran
116. Ayran - Traditional Turkish Yogurt Drink - Kocagoz Catering, accessed May 17, 2025, https://kocagoz.com.au/ayran-yogurt-drink/
117. Ayran (Turkish Salty Yogurt Drink) - The Mediterranean Dish, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.themediterraneandish.com/ayran-turkish-yogurt-drink/
118. Commonly known as “doweh” in Assyrian, is a yogurt-based drink ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@taza.eats/video/7281768338722770218
119. Naan, a delicious staple of Kurdish culture - Kurdistan24, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/385254/Naan,-a-delicious-staple-of-Kurdish-culture
120. Stuffed Flatbread/Kelane Naan Bread نان کلانه - Rozina's Persian Kitchen - WordPress.com, accessed May 17, 2025, https://rozinaspersiankitchen.wordpress.com/2019/06/23/stuffed-flat-naan-bread-bolani/
121. Nan-e Sabzi Mashhadi - Persian Herb Flatbread - Labsalliebe, accessed May 17, 2025, https://labsalliebe.com/en/nan-e-sabzi-mashhadi-persian-herb-flatbread/
122. Gözleme - Wikipedia, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6zleme
123. Cheese Fatayer | Moribyan, accessed May 17, 2025, https://moribyan.com/cheese-fatayer/
124. Lebanese Spinach Pie (Fatayer Recipe) - Maureen Abood, accessed May 17, 2025, https://maureenabood.com/lebanese-spinach-pies-fatayer/
125. Zhingyalov Hats - Armenian Herb Flatbread - Galore Of Flavors, accessed May 17, 2025, https://galoreofflavors.com/zhingyalov-hats-armenian-herb-flatbread/
126. Zhingyalov'hats - Beryl Shereshewsky, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.beryl.nyc/index.php/2024/06/06/zhingyalovhats/
127. bolani is an unleavened afghan flatbread typically filled with herbs - TikTok, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@noreenwasti/video/7460519967922883886
128. Easy Stuffed Flatbread | Bolani - Crumbs & Caramel, accessed May 17, 2025, https://crumbsandcaramel.com/easy-stuffed-flatbread-bolani/

129. Qutab Recipe - Flat Bread Filled With Green Onion and Cheese ..., accessed May 17, 2025, https://thecookingfoodie.com/recipe/qutab-flat-bread-filled-with-green-onion-and-cheese/
130. Gutab recipe (Stuffed Azerbaijani flatbreads) | Azerbaijan's largest travel site, accessed May 17, 2025, https://travelinbaku.com/blog/gutab-recipe-(stuffed-azerbaijani-flatbreads)
131. Nowruz Explained: The History, Traditions, and Foods That Make It Special, accessed May 17, 2025, https://ayoubs.ca/blogs/news/nowruz
132. Kurdish Epics and Legends: Kurdish Mythology - Myths and Legends: Yildirim, Kemal: 9786200284495: Amazon.com: Books, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.amazon.com/Kurdish-Epics-Legends-Mythology-Myths/dp/6200284490
133. The Simurgh: A Legendary Bird of Myth and Mystery - EavarTravel, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.eavartravel.com/blog/2023/11/3/140727/simurgh/
134. en.wikipedia.org, accessed May 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daf#:~:text=Daf%20(Persian%3A%20%D8%AF%D9%81)%2C,as%20in%20parts%20of%20India
135. Simurgh - A Fascinating Fantasy Bird Creature, accessed May 17, 2025, https://snargl.com/magical-birds/simurgh/
136. Kurdish people in Syria celebrate Nowruz under new regime - NPR, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/03/25/nx-s1-5334343/kurdish-people-in-syria-celebrate-nowruz-under-new-regime
137. Closer look at celebration of Kurdish new year Nowruz in Lebanon, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/lebanon-news/693280/closer-look-at-celebration-of-kurdish-new-year-nowruz-in-lebanon/en
138. Ancient Persian Mythology - Brewminate: A Bold Blend of News and Ideas, accessed May 17, 2025, https://brewminate.com/ancient-persian-mythology/
139. Simurgh hi-res stock photography and images - Alamy, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/simurgh.html
140. What is Nowruz and how is the Persian New Year celebrated? | News - Al Jazeera, accessed May 17, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/21/what-is-nowruz-and-how-is-it-celebrated
141. How Different Cultures Celebrate Nowruz: Fire, Feasts, and Festivities - Paysend, accessed May 17, 2025, https://paysend.com/uk/blog/nowruz-celebrations-traditions
142. Khigga - Andy Bettis, accessed May 17, 2025, https://andybettis.com/dance/steps/Khigga.html
143. 1 Basilisk Supernatural Romance, Please — “Shahmaran” - Gabriel Diego Valdez, accessed May 17, 2025, https://basilmarinerchase.wordpress.com/2023/02/02/1-basilisk-supernatural-romance-please-shahmaran/

144. Anzû, also known as dZû and Imdugud (Mesopotamia) - Moon Goose, accessed May 17, 2025, https://moon-goose.com/anzu-also-known-as-dzu-and-imdugud-mesopotamia/