Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

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Table of Contents

Introduction
Preparation for Welcoming the Nowruz
  Sabzeh and Khane Tekani
  Kharid-i Nowruz
  Khwajah Piruz (Haji Firuz)
  Charshanbe Souri
  Qashoq zani
  Falgush
  Tup-i Morvari
  Gereh Gushai
Pishvaz-i Nowruz
  Shab-i Jom'e
  Sofreh-i Nowruz
  Haft shin, haft chin, other clusters of seven
The Haft Sin
The Sofreh Arrangement
  Sa'at-i tahlil
  Beliefs attached to Sa'at-i tahlil
Sizdah Bedar
  Alak Dolak
Eydi, Hediye or Kado (gifts)
Selected Bibliography

НАВРУЗ: ОБЫЧАИ И РИТУАЛЫ
Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

Introduction

The oldest of Iranian traditions, Nowruz (also referred to as eyd-i sar-i sal and eyd-i sal-i now) recalls the cosmological and mythological times of Iran. Its founder is a deputy of Ahura Mazda on earth, a position that imparts to him and the celebration a spiritual dimension and a particular sense of secular authority. The celebration is organized according to the dynamics of love between the Creator and his creation, the material world. The annual return of the spirits of the departed to their homes is celebrated by their offspring according to primordial rites of which only a faint trace remains among the Persians and the Parsees of today. That, however, in no way diminishes the importance of the bond that is refreshed at every Nowruz.

The word "Nowruz" is a compound of two Persian words, "now," which has the same etymology as the English word "new" and means new, and the word "ruz," which means both "day" and "time." Literally meaning the "new day," nowruz is usually translated as "new year." The Persian Nowruz begins on the first day of spring (usually the 21st of March). The 21st of March, therefore, is equal to the 1st day of Farvardin of the Islamic solar calendar.

In the mind of Iranians, the word nowruz invokes colorful images that are sumptuous, elegant, and opulent as well as delightfully simple, refreshing, and cordial. Although colored with vestiges of Iran's Mazdian and Zoroastrian past, the Nowruz celebration is neither religious nor national in nature, nor is it an ethnic celebration. Jewish, Zoroastrian, Armenian, and Turkish Iranians and Central Asians celebrate the Nowruz with the same enthusiasm and sense of belonging. Perhaps it is this very universal nature of the message of Nowruz that speaks to its wealth of rites and customs as well as to its being identified as the unique fount of continuity of the Iranian culture. These rituals were particularly important at the court of the King of Kings.

On the occasion of the Nowruz, the Chief Priest becomes the first from among the people not directly related to the court to greet the King of Kings. Once in the Great Hall, he approaches the throne with a golden goblet full of red wine in one hand and a fistful of green sprouts in the other. Accompanying him are servants carrying an enormous amount of gifts including a gold ring, gold coins, a sword, a bow and arrows, and a pen and inkpot, a horse, an eagle, and a beautiful youth. When he reaches the royal space, he stands at a prescribed distance and performs the Nowruz ritual of wishing the King and the Kingdom long life and prosperity. He then tastes the wine, approaches the King with slow steps, stretches his arm and respectfully hands the goblet over to the King. Then, slowly, with his other hand, he places in the King’s other hand, the green sprouts. All the time reciting a benediction and wishing the King happiness, gladness, and joy for the coming year. When the benediction is over, he steps aside, walks back in slow motion and bids the servants to place the items that they have brought as gifts in their prescribed places before the King. Then, following the priest’s example, princes, governors, nobles, and dignitaries shower the King with their gifts. Each king, prince, and nobleman at court repeats the priest’s last act of homage and wishes for the King happiness in the coming year. Throughout the day, then, a never-ending line parades before the King.
Preparation for Welcoming the Nowruz

Sabzeh and Khane Tekani

Preparation for the Nowruz begins early in March with sprouting of sabzeh (lentil, wheat, or barley seeds) and a thorough khane tekani (house cleaning). The former harks back to the agrarian background of the Iranian tribes that celebrated the main transitions in the climate that dictated the dynamics of their lives. The latter, that entails washing carpets, painting the house, and cleaning the yard and the attic, stems from the Zoroastrians' preoccupation with cleanliness as a measure for keeping Evil away from the kingdom of Good.\[11\]

Symbolically, khane tekani signals to the spirits of the ancestors that their kinfolk are ready and willing to entertain them. In other words, they are invited to descend on their previous homes to help them nourish the growth of the sabzeh, the main source of their sustenance that has been depleted during the long and cold days of winter.

Kharid-i Nowruz

The sprouting of seeds and house cleaning are followed by kharid-i Nowruz (New Year shopping). Nowruz shopping, a family affair performed mostly to engage the children in the celebration, must include all the members. Everyone must be measured and outfitted with new clothes, shoes, hats, and the like. In addition, as we shall see below, the sofreh (Nowruz display cloth) requires certain items—sweetmeats, confectioneries, candles, fruits, and nuts—which also are bought at this time. In addition to what is bought, women of the household bake various types of sweet breads and sew special clothes for the little ones. At the end, a trip must be made to the bank for acquiring shiny, new coins and crisp, fresh banknotes to give out as eydi (gift) and for the sofreh.

Khwajah Piruz (Haji Firuz)

The month during which Nowruz celebrations are held is an extraordinary time in the life of the community. In ancient times, this aspect of Nowruz was so prominent that the mayors of towns were literally displaced by the most victorious person in carrying out the commands of Ahura Mazda and his six Spentas (holy immortal). This victorious (piruz) khwaja, or lord, was given the rule of the realm for the period. As a part of his duties, Khwaja Piruz saw to it that all the people of the realm were provided with the amenities and joy that were due them. In time, especially after the fall of Iran to the Arabs, who would not relinquish rule to defeated foes, the office of Khwaja Piruz deteriorated into its Arabized form, Haji Firuz. Only the duty of stimulating laughter and providing a good time has remained of what must have been a complex set of social affairs. Today, Haji Firuz is no more than a spectacle that occurs during the last few weeks before Nowruz. He and his troupe of musicians appear on the streets and alleyways all over the country.
Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

Known as the traditional herald of the Nowruz, Haji Firuz is a black-faced character clad in bright red clothes and a felt hat playing a tambourine and singing, "haji firuze, sali ye ruze." (It is Haji Firuz time. It happens one day a year!). People of all ages gather around him and his troupe of musicians and listen to them play the drum, saz or kamancheh, and dance. Those who are impressed with the troupe's performance shower it with coins and paper money.

Often, well-to-do Iranians invite Haji Firuz to their homes to perform for their wives and daughters who would otherwise never see Haji Firuz in action on the street. Here, the group plays popular folk music, performs a variety of comic routines, and tells jokes. At the end of the performance, the members are invited to a nice Nowruz meal and are handsomely compensated for their contribution with an eydi (Nowruz gift).

Charshanbe Souri

The actual Nowruz ceremonies begin on the eve of the last Wednesday of the out-going year. Early in the evening of that day, referred to as charshanbe souri or "Red Wednesday," several rather large bonfires are made. Every member of the family jumps over the fire and says, "sorkhi-e to az man, zardi-e man az to," which literally means "Give me your redness and take away my wintry sallow complexion". The jumping over the fire is followed by a get together in which nuts and fruits are served. This party is mostly for the benefit of the children of the family who are entertained, long into the night, with stories that they will remember with joy throughout their lives.[12]

While the party goes on, the fire dies out. The ashes are gathered and, as the symbol of the bad luck imposed by winter, are taken out of the house and buried in the fields. When the person in charge of burying the ashes returns and knocks on the door, those who are in the house ask, "Who is it?"
"It is I," says the person returning.
"Where are you coming from?"
"From a wedding," is the response.
"What are you bringing with you?" is the last question.
"Happiness and mirth," is the response.

Only then the door is opened and the herald of the new life, who has warded off the bad omen and the evil eye, is ushered in.

Fire is of particular significance in ancient Iranian cultures. The charshanbe souri fire might have been related to the signals sent to the spirits of the departed to guide them to their previous abodes to enjoy the prayers that their descendants perform for their benefit. The fact that traditionally the fires were lit on the roofs of houses speaks directly to the necessity of the fire to be distinct and visible.

Qashoq zani

As part of the charshanbe souri festivities, and very much like Halloween, children—sometimes accompanied by adults—visit their neighbors' houses in disguise. The disguise is usually something like a veil (chador) covering the entire body. Each member of the party carries an empty metal bowl and a metal spoon. At the neighbor's door, they create a chorus with banging the spoons on the bowl and on the door. The neighbor opens the door and places a treat in each visitor's bowl. The party then proceeds to the next house. As a rule, the members of the party must remain silent and anonymous throughout the process. Often boys and girls, who otherwise would have no occasion to see each other, meet across the threshold. 

Falgush

A more culturally interesting aspect of the charshanbe souri celebration is the falgush performed by girls in their teens and young unmarried women. For this, the teenagers, or the unmarried women, huddle in the corners of dark alleys and listen to the conversations of passersby. The contents of the first sentence of a conversation exchanged is regarded as an omen (fal) or portent for the future. For instance, if a young girl, who hopes to get married sometime during the next year, hears the following, "There is no way that any sane person would say no to such an offer..." she would be elated. Conversely, if she hears something like, "Do you think we didn't try? It's like talking to a brick wall,..." she would be utterly disappointed.

Tup-i Morvari

Tup-i Morvari, or pearl cannon, was a large cannon kept at the Arg (citadel) of Tehran. Studded with pearls, the cannon was rolled out on charshanbe souri night. Tehrani women, wishing to get married in the coming year, climbed on the cannon and walked under it hoping that their wish would come true.
Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

Gereh Gushai

Those who have encountered problems for which there have been no solution often stop the first passerby crossing their path and ask him or her to undo a knot they have tied in a shirt tale. The willingness or unwillingness of the strange passerby to undo the knot is an omen for the resolution of the problem in the coming year.

Pishvaz-i Nowruz

Still as a part of the charshanbe souri festivities the family places several low-denomination coins (pul-i siyah), a piece of charcoal, seeds of the wild rue, and a piece of rock salt in a new earthen water jar. Then, the jar is taken up to the roof and from the edge of the roof the contents of the jar are tossed into the street. While filling the jar the person says, "My pains and misfortunes into the jar!" and when tossing the contents, says, "My pains and misfortunes onto the street!" Serving as a preventative measure, the items in the jar have the power to foil any attempt by Evil at harming the family during the coming year. Often, water is also added to the contents to aid the absorption of evil and to make it sink deeper into the ground.

Shab-i Jom'e

The dinner for the Thursday before Nowruz must include pilau and chicken. Fulfilling this ritual assures one that there will be a similar dinner at least once a week during the coming year.

Sofreh-i Nowruz

A few days before the arrival of Nowruz, a rather large tablecloth is spread on the floor of the main room of the house and the following items are placed on it:
Lighted candles, which represent the goodness and warmth that enters life with the coming of spring and the dissipation of evil that has had the world in its cold grip, are placed on the sofreh. In a large setting, an open fire would replace the candles. The number of the candles must be the same as the number of the offspring in the household. Often an egg accompanies each candle. It should be mentioned that the candles on displays must be allowed to burn themselves out. It is bad luck to blow out a candle.

A copy of al-Qur'an (holy book of the Muslims) or the Avesta (holy book of the Zoroastrians) or the Bible or the Torah (depending on the faith to which the family belongs) is placed in a prominent place on the sofreh. The holy scripture refreshes the bond between the faithful and the source of good emanating from the light.

Haftsin or seven edible things the names of which in Persian begin with the letter "sin" or "s" are placed in a tray or otherwise placed next to each other on the sofreh. Sib (apple), somaq (sumac), sir (garlic), samanu (a paste made with wheat sprouts), senjed (jujube fruit), sohan (a candy made with honey and nuts), siyahdane (sesame seeds), serke (vinegar), and sangak (bread baked on a bed of rocks) are the usual edible items from among which seven are chosen.[16] Since the edible items on the haft-sin are not to be eaten until after the change of seasons, often non-edibles such as sekke (coins), sonbol (hyacinth), spand (the wild rue), sepestan (sebestens), samovar (samovar), sa'at (clock), or sabzeh (wheat or lentil sprouts) are substituted. The seven "sin"s symbolically
recall Ahura Mazda and the six Amesha Spentas who help him regulate the affairs of man according to the "din" or order prescribed by Ahura Mazda's Ahuric Order. It should be added that today the seven "sin"s are interpreted rather differently, as the following example illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samanu</td>
<td>sweetness, fertility, having many children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senjed</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir</td>
<td>medicine for recovering from evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sib</td>
<td>health, natural beauty, fragrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somaq</td>
<td>color of the sun at sunrise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serkeh</td>
<td>age and patience; wards off bitterness in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabzeh</td>
<td>purity, opulence, and good fortune</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though no particular authority has sanctioned these items, and they are not based on any overall analysis of the theological and/or cosmological values that ancient Iranians might have had for them, more often than not, the general public follows these interpretations. What else could an apt interpretation of sekke (coin) in this context be but affluence, wealth, and prosperity? Ironically, this is one of the "s's" that comes into fruition right after the tahvil-i sal. Coins equalling the number of family members are distributed among the members by the family patriarch (grandfather or father). [18]

Additionally, it is said that in pre-Islamic times, haft-sin could have been haft-shin—shir (milk), shekar (sugar), shahd (nectar), sharbat (compote), shahd (comb), sharab (wine), and sham' (candle). "Shin" has been changed to "sin" to accommodate Islam's disapproval of sharab or wine. Why that one item could not have been replaced with a different item beginning with "shin" is not known. [19]

Other traditions relate haft-sin or haft-shin to seven trays (sini) filled with seven delicious food items or seven different growing seeds, or seven varieties of nuts offered to the king. Others consider the seven "s's" to have been Life, Health, Happiness, Prosperity, Joy, and Beauty, all forming the seventh "s" which, according to Zoroastrian traditions, represents Truth.

Still others contend that while the first tray to Ahura Mazda was empty (Truth is a combination of things with no substance of its own), the other six trays were filled with flowers, sugar, milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, cream, eggs, water, mirrors, candelabra, burning coal, silver, and gold. These items, according to this belief, represent Truth, Good thought, Dominion, Piety, Prosperity, Immortality, and Obedience. [20]

Those who are more serious about Nowruz will not choose any of the following for their haft sin display:

Sonbol (hyacinth), sekkeh (coin), samovar (device for boiling water in preparation for tea), sikh (skewer), sepayeh (tripod), sarv (cypress), santur (a type of musical instrument), sangak (a type of bread roasted on hot rocks), sohan (a kind of sweets), sa'at (clock), etc. There are a number of reasons why these items often appear on the sofreh as a part of the haft sin. They are chosen because one or other of the ingredients is not readily available. Therefore, traditionally these items have been, unwillingly, accepted as replacements for
items that are hard to come by. This is more the case when Nowruz is celebrated outside of its original home, Iran, where all the haft sin items discussed below are found in abundance.

**The Haft Sin**

The items enumerated above are not chosen by those who take Nowruz seriously because those items do not meet the five requirements for acceptance of the "sin"s for the haft sin. The requirements are:

1. The item should begin with the letter "sin"
   This is the easiest requirement and it is the first thing that people know about the haft sin. In fact, this is the criterion that all the items listed above meet.
2. The item chosen should be a part of the Persian culture. For instance, sonbol is Arabic, samovar is Russian, etc. They do not meet requirement #2
3. The item should be edible
4. The item should be of plant origin
   For instance, sarv (cypress) is of plant origin but it does not meet requirement #3
5. The item should not be a compound noun, such as sibzamini (potato) or sabzi polo (cooked rice with vegetables)

These restrictions, however, are overt requirements. The covert requirements are more fundamental. They are cultural constraints imposed by the ancient religion. In fact, those are the main reasons for which ancient Persians created the haft sin in the first place and made it the centerpiece of their most important annual celebration. It was with the help of these primordial symbols that, on that auspicious day, they welcomed the seven "sin"s into their homes. In the following poem, Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi speaks about the seven "sin"s:

_Row sine ra chun "sin"ha_
_Haft ab shui as kinha_
_Vangah sharab-i ishq ra_
_Peymane show peymane show_

Cleanse your heart from vengeance,
Like the "sin"s, with seven waters.
Then, for the wine of love,
Become a cup, become a cup!

The seven "sin"s that Rumi speaks about are the seven Spentas (holy immortals). Actually, they are Ahura Mazda, the wise Lord, and his six archangels worshiped by ancient Iranians. On the occasion of the Nowruz, Ahura Mazda and his Spentas were invoked by ancient Iranians. On their welcoming display, they were given the most prominent spot. This is how ancient Iranians understood their haft sin.
Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

1. **Ahura Mazda**, the chief deity encompassing the sky, the defender against *Ahriman* (evil). He is represented by *sir* (garlic), a plant the roots of which contain cures for many ailments. In the placement of the "s"s, *sir* is placed in the center.

2. **Vohu Manah**, representative of water, the second element in the order of creation after the sky, and of rain. Water is also that which erodes and flattens. Its representative on the display is *sumagh* (sumac).

3. **Spenta Armaiti**, the female representative of earth and symbol of humility and benevolence. She is represented by *sib* (apple).


5. **Khshathra Vairya**, or choice dominion, is when the building blocks of life are put in place. It is the time of germination of life, plant, and animal. A sweet dessert, *samanu*, is made of wheat germ and placed among the *haft sin*.

6. **Haurvatat** represents struggle for wholeness, health, and perfection. *Senjed*, a most wholesome fruit, represents *Haurvatat* on the display.

7. **Ameretat** represents the goal of creation, immortality. Its representative on the display is *serke* (vinegar), the immortal soulmate of wine extracted from grapes.[21]

These seven "sin"s that have passed the test of the five requirements for being placed on the *soforeh* cannot have an eighth because, besides Lord Mazda and his six *Spentas*, there are no other archangels, or angels, in the pantheon that are acceptable.

**Haft shin, Haft chin, other Clusters of Seven**

It was mentioned above that in some circles, it is believed that after the Arab conquest the letter "shin" replaced the letter "sin". It should be explained that after the demise of Zoroastrianism in Iranian domains, a policy went into effect that required all Iran's cultural legacy be deemphasized. This policy was also intended to relegate Iran's cherished celebrations to oblivion. As a result of this policy, references to Iran's cultural heritage were explained by Muslim overlords, especially prominent religious figures, with appropriate and logical explanations, but not with the correct and true explanation. The explanations were contextualized in a way that they were understandable and acceptable to the general public. Often pamphlets were written to explain involved subjects and, on occasions, a sonnet or a quatrain such as the following did the trick:
Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

Jashn-i nowruz az zaman-i kiyan
Minahadand mardom-i Iran
Sham' u shir u sharab u shirini
Shikar u shahd u shaye andar khan

From the time of the Kiyanian, Iranians celebrated the Nowruz. On the display they placed sham', shir, sharab, shirini, shikar, shahd, and shaye.

This poem explains that, originally, haft sin had been haft shin. Because Islam frowns upon drinking wine, after the Muslim conquest, the seven "shin"s have been changed to seven "sin"s. Logically, this makes a lot of sense. The only problem is that, in addition to the fact that these seven elements do not represent the ancient Iranian deities discussed above and their relation to the "s"s in the haft sin, the words used in the poem are not ancient Iranian words. For instance, the ancient Iranian word for wine is not sharab, it is badeh. Similarly, the ancient Iranian word for candle is not sham', it is spandar. The very etymology of the words used indicates that the explanation is a post-Islamic attempt at explaining a complex Iranian phenomenon. It also indicates that, unlike Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi, who knew about the exact nature of the "sin"s, this poet did not have a clue as to the origin of either the haft sin or the Nowruz display.

The Sofreh Arrangement

A mirror placed on the sofreh face up with a plain hard-boiled egg placed on the middle of it.

A bowl of clear water with an orange and a leaf of a rose bush floating in it.

Live goldfish in a bowl of clear water.
The barley, lentil, or wheat sprouts that had been growing since early March decorated with a red ribbon around the outside and an orange seated in the center.

In addition to these, there are representatives of the other kingdoms sustaining life on earth, i.e., products from the animal kingdom in the form of cheese and yogurt, the plant kingdom in the form of flour, vegetables, rice, and of the water kingdom in the form of the goldfish are also placed on the sofreh. Pomegranates and pussy willows also are sometimes seen. The latter is especially important as it blossoms at this very time of the year. \[25\]

An upright mirror and plenty of colored eggs, cookies, and various types of fruits and sweets, candies, and nuts are added to decorate the sofreh.

**Sa'at-i tahvil**

*Sa'at-i tahvil* means the hour during which the old year ends and the new year begins. In an Iranian house, during the *Nowruz* celebration, *sa'at-i tahvil* is a most crucial moment in the life of the family, especially with regard to forgiving past failings, putting away petty frictions that would otherwise fester into conflicts, and looking forward to more constructive relations. And, of course, this is the moment when the egg rolls on the mirror and the orange flips over in the bowl of water. The moment is announced by the resounding boom of cannons fired in the square, by a brief speech delivered by the leader of the nation, and by the debut of a popular song contributed by a popular favorite artist.

Just before the change of the year, all members of the family, in their new clothes and holding a new coin in their hand for good luck, gather around the *haft-sin* display and, quietly and patiently, watch the solitary white egg on the mirror. Each one imagines a huge bullfish in the ocean of time carrying the world on one of its horns. Any moment now, the bullfish will toss the world over to the other horn, resulting in a tremor that will dislodge the egg and send it rolling to the side of the mirror.

As soon as the egg rolls, the members of the family, rejoicing, kiss each other, exchange *Nowruz* greetings, *eid-i shoma mobarak!* (May you have an auspicious new year!), exchange gifts, and proceed, especially in the case of children, to make the rounds of the elders of the family first and of the neighborhood. \[26\] Adults, too, have a set schedule of visits and of receiving visitors.

As a rule, the patriarch of the house stays home until all those younger, and lower in rank, than him come and pay their respects, then he would return those visits. Visits are short. Sweets and tea are the most often served items. The rounds of visitations might last as long as thirteen days.
Beliefs attached to *Sa'at-i tahvil*

Several beliefs related to *sa'at-i tahvil* are interesting. The first thing to eat, for instance, should be an egg because it is believed that eggs ensure good fortune. In fact, in some traditions, the patriarch of the family must eat all the eggs that have accompanied the candles placed for each offspring on the *sofreh*! The first person entering the house after *sa'at-i tahvil* might decide the good or bad fortune that would visit the house in the next year. Often, a member of the family known to be blessed with good fortune is sent out to become the first visitor. Things brought into the house, especially their color, have the potential of influencing the course of the future of the family. The color white is regarded to be auspicious. Black is believed to be associated with grief and strife. Even the place where the individual is at *sa'at-i tahvil* is significant in that he or she might be stuck to that or a similar location for the entire duration of the coming year. In this context, therefore, one tends not to be anywhere near schools, offices, or the bazaar.

**Sizdah Bedar**

The *Nowruz* ceremonies end on the thirteenth day of the first month of the New Year. On that day almost all the people (except thieves!) leave the towns and villages and spend a day in the countryside enjoying the beautiful weather that accompanies the change of seasons. With them they bring the the *sabzeh* that had been displayed and throw it into running water. They hope that along with it, the *sabzeh* will take all the sins, worries, and concerns of the past year. The New Year then begins with a fresh slate on the 14th day of the month.\[27\]

With regard to the *sabzeh*, it should be noted that some rural folk might plant the *sabzeh* rather than throw it into running water. It should also be noted that one should not touch other peoples' *sabzeh* on that day. Before the *sabzeh* is thrown, girls at the age of being married, and unmarried women, often tie the blades of the *sabzeh* saying, "*sal-i digar, khane-i showhar, bachcheh dar baghal!*" (Let next year find me in my husband's house with a baby in my arms!)
Alak Dolak is a children’s game versions of which are also played by grownups. The number of players can be anywhere from two to ten. The game described below is played by two players.

Items needed:
1. Two pieces of wood.
   a. alak is a piece of wood about eight inches long and half an inch thick
   b. dolak is a piece of straight wood about two and a half feet long and about an inch thick
   c. two bricks or similar rocks

Players:
1. batter, uses the dolak and hits the alak
2. catcher, tries to catch the alak and then throw it at the dolak

How to play:
1. The two bricks are placed parallel on the ground. They should be high enough for the tip of the dolak to comfortably fit under the alak and lift it.
2. The alak is placed across the bricks
3. With the tip of the dolak, the batter flips the alak into the air.
4. As the alak twirls, the batter hits it very hard
5. On the other side, the catcher tries to catch the alak as it approaches him
6. The batter places the dolak alongside the bricks so that the tip of the dolak touches the end of one of the bricks on the side he is standing
7. The catcher throws the alak and tries to hit the dolak, which is on the ground by the bricks

Possibilities
1. The catcher fails to catch the alak in the air
2. The catcher catches the alak in the air but fails to strike the dolak by the bricks
3. The catcher catches the alak in the air and strikes the dolak by the bricks

Reward and penalty
In the case of (1), the play is repeated
In the case of (2), the catcher and the batter change places

14
In the case of (3), the batter pays a penalty
The batter has to carry the catcher on his back from the bricks to the place where
the *alak* was caught.

The game goes on with the catcher as batter.

Varieties of this game are played during *sizdah bedar* with members of different families
participating in the competition.

**Eydi, Hediye or Kado (gifts)**

*Nowruz* visits may include exchange of gifts. Exchange of gifts, however, should not
be confused with *eydi* (New-Year gift), which can take a number of forms depending on
circumstances. Within the family, the head of the household may give either coins or new
bank notes of certain value to the members of his family or to visitors as *eydi*. The coins
may be gold, silver or of some special make. On *Nowruz* day, the family may stage a small
"money-hunting" game. This is very much like finding Easter eggs in the grass. The money,
however, is usually placed under the edges of carpets in various rooms in the house.

*Nowruz* visitors during the early days of the celebration are children and young adults.
They visit the older members as a sign of respect. Similarly, employees visit their bosses
and directors at this time. The reason for the lack of such a visit is usually interpreted as
the existence of some deep-rooted hostility or hatred on the part of a young family member
or an employee. The visitors do not bring any gifts but may receive a gift. During the latter
part of the twelve-day *Nowruz* celebration, the older members of the family visit the
younger members. This visit may include gifts, usually larger gifts like carpets and cars, as
*eydi*. Bosses and directors often delay a promotion to be given as an *eydi* to a deserving
employee on the occasion of the *Nowruz*.

In modern times, *Nowruz* visits have expanded into parties. Some of these parties are
communal in nature. Members of the Iranian society organize them. They charge a fee for
food and drinks. Other similar parties welcome the guests as "members" of the family. In
the latter situation, it is appropriate to bring a gift. The gifts given usually include, but are
not restricted to, confectioneries, especially *gaz* made in Isfahan or *sohan* made in the holy
city of Qom. Although, even in Iran, these sweets are not made at home, they are available
from Iranian specialty shops in most major cities. Other types of sweets, pistachio nuts,
dried nuts and fruits, books, flowers, and liquor (outside Iran) are also appropriate gifts for
the occasion.
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Навруз: обычай и ритуалы

Навруз-самый почитаемый праздник иранских народов и народов Ближнего и Среднего Востока. В дни празднования Навруза люди встречали со своими приближенными, друг друга дарили новогодних даров.

В установлении характерных особенностей новогодного ритуала особое значение имеют каждому оказывать милость в той мере, в которой они заслуживали, и получали сполна подобающие ему подарки. Кто праздновал встречал Навруза с почетом, особенно веселится в дни праздника, тот будет радостно проводить жизнь до следующего Навруза.

С наступлением праздника люди гасили неугасимый огонь, совершали различные ритуалы, устраивали зрелищные представления, делали друг другу подарки. Устраивали пиршество, выезжая целыми кварталями за город, и большую роль здесь играли представители поэтическо-музыкального искусства. Люди готовили различные праздничные пищцы, пели поздравительные песни и т.д.

В статье на основе письменные источники рассматриваются характерных черт праздничные ритуалы, в особенности сферы народного функционирования.

For the relation between Nowruz and Rapithwin, see Hinnells, 1973, p. 36.
[3] Parsees are Iranians who left Iran for India after the Arab and, later, Mongol invasions.
[5] Among others, Iranians have borrowed two cultural points from the Arabs: their alphabet and their starting point for history (mabda’-i tarikh). For the former, they modified the Arabic alphabet by adding four letters while retaining a number of sounds that are not used in Persian. The alphabet thus created is referred to as the Arabic-based Persian alphabet. For the latter, they have accepted the hijrah of the Prophet as the starting point for their history, abandoning centuries of real history as well as a wealth of mythic time (cf., the Christian calendar that begins with the birth of Christ). Thus, both the solar and the lunar calendars used in Iran are Islamic, albeit of different modes. During the rule of the Pahlavis, an attempt was made to replace the year 1355 with 2535 but, due to mismanagement and lack of stability of the regime, the effort failed. This calendar would have been an Iranian calendar since its starting point coincided with the coronation of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire.
Nowruz: Origins and Rituals

[15] Using the floor is the traditional way. As the displays have become larger and moved into public spaces, table tops are replacing the floor. Sometimes several tables of various sizes are used for the display to cascade from the higher one to the others below.
[16] The list provided in this section is a popular list from among which people choose the seven items to be placed on their sofreh. Haft sin's ancient past, however, dictates that seven specific items be used for the purpose. See below for more details.
[17] These popular explanations are mere guesses. See further below for a more correct explanation of the haft sin and the meaning of the items placed on the display.
[19] For the reason why shin could not have been an appropriate letter for the haft sin, see further below.
[20] For the reason why these other interpretations are not acceptable, see further below. Some of these interpretations could have belonged to some of the other celebrations, such as Mehregan, held by ancient Iranians.
[22] Khan is the short form for dasturkhan (also pronounced dastarkhan), the prevalent word used for the display in present-day Tajikistan.
[23] Kiyan or Kiyanian is a mythological dynasty of ancient Iran. Its mention testifies to the ancient history of the Nowruz celebration. For further details, see Bashiri 2012, pp. 11-45.
[24] See above for the meanings of the seven "shin"s.
[25] Note that some of the items that should not used for the haft sin can be placed on the sofreh proper.