

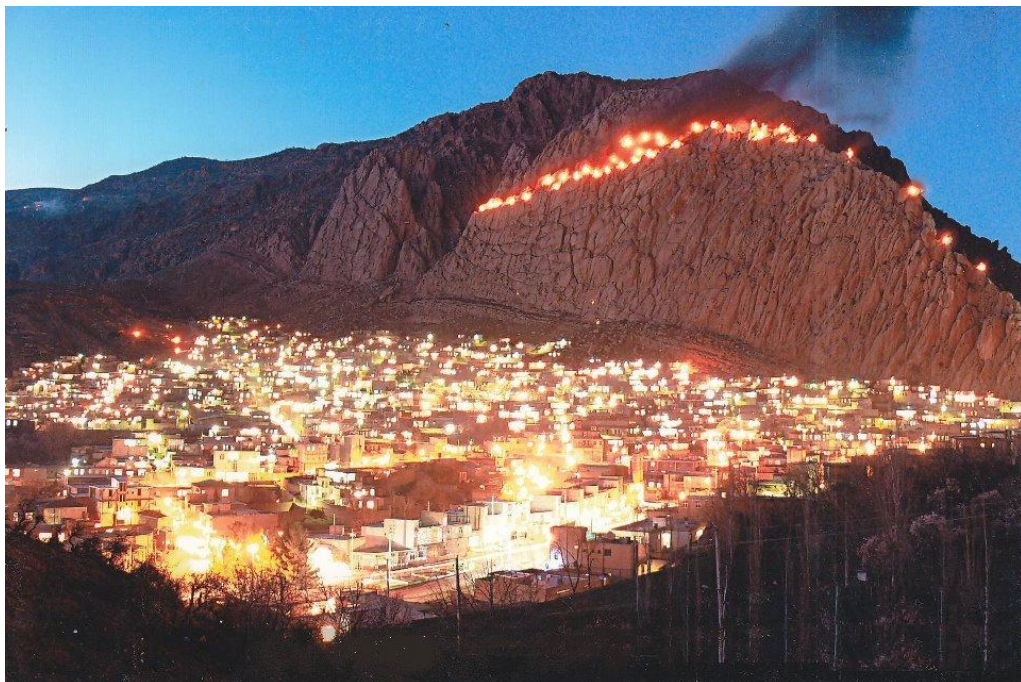
Newroz and the legend of Kawa



Happy Newroz

Source: <https://kurdistanland.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/newroz-piroz-be.jpg>

All Kurds, as well as Persians and Afghanis, celebrate Newroz (New Year) on 21 March, the Spring equinox, although celebrating Newroz was banned in Turkey and Syria for decades. In south Kurdistan (north Iraq) and east Kurdistan (north west Iran) people light fires in the mountains and on rooves of houses, and dance around the fire or jump over it to celebrate New Year's Eve on 20 March. Kurds in eastern Kurdistan also give boiled painted eggs to children on New Year's Day, when all Kurdish families like to go to the countryside to picnic and dance.



Newroz in Rojhilat - east Kurdistan (north west Iran)

Source: <https://i2.wp.com/www.nnsroj.com/userfiles/image/userfiles/CMS/files/Upload/Users/Masud/Rojhelat/Newroz2012/Newroz-kerend.jpg>



Newroz in Bashur – south Kurdistan (north Iraq)

Source: http://media5.trover.com/T/56d069c3d090013c4e00bf86/fixdw_large_4x.jpg

The tradition of the Newroz fire comes from the value placed on fire by the followers of the Yezidi and Zoroastrian religions, as well as the legend of Kawa, the blacksmith. Zoroastrian beliefs are integral to the Persian version of the legend.

The Kurds tell of a blacksmith called Kawa, who lived in the time of a ruthless tyrant, called Zohag, (who Persians call Zahak or Azhdehak). To increase his power over land and people, Zohag made a pact with Evil, called *Ahriman* in Persian literature. From that day, a serpent grew out of each of Zohag's shoulders. Zohag was terrified of these serpents, which caused him great pain. Only by feeding each serpent the brain of a child every day could his pain be alleviated. The Kurdish legend relates that the cook took pity on the suffering people and replaced one child's brain with a sheep's brain, mixing these in a bucket before feeding them to the serpents. He did this on condition that the children he spared would go to the mountains and look after sheep. These children are said to be the ancestors of the Kurds (in all versions of the legend). One day, the butcher of children visited Kawa, who had already lost seven sons to Zohag's monsters. Kawa resisted handing over his last child, a daughter in some versions of the legend, secretly telling people, 'I will go to the palace and kill Zohag with my hammer. When I succeed I will light a fire on the mountain, to signal that people must come and kill the soldiers'. Another version is that Kawa stormed the palace with an army of thousands and, as well as lighting a fire, waved his blacksmith's apron in victory.

The Persian poet, Firdawsi, wrote a version of this legend in his epic poem, *Shahnameh*, written between 977 and 1010 AD. In this version, the evil king, Zahak, overthrew the god-king Jamshid, and it was Kawa who replaced a child's brain with a sheep's brain. To kill Zahak, Kawa sought the help of Prince Faridoon (or Fereydun), a member of the royal dynasty of Kayani, who came with his army. It was Faridoon who made Zahak prisoner and waved Kawa's apron in victory.

In all versions of the legend, Kawa refuses to become king. Some say Kawa was from the wrong family. According to Firdawsi, Prince Faridoon became king. Some think Zohag was an Assyrian king. In the *Shahnameh*, Firdawsi, calls Zahak an Arab. In truth, the legend is timeless. For those who know the legend and celebrate Newroz with fire, fire is a symbol of freedom from tyranny.



Newroz in Istanbul Turkey

Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/73/Newroz_Istanbul\(4\).jpg/250px-Newroz_Istanbul\(4\).jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/73/Newroz_Istanbul(4).jpg/250px-Newroz_Istanbul(4).jpg)



Newroz in Bakur - north Kurdistan (eastern Turkey)

Source: <http://previews.123rf.com/images/homeros/homeros1303/homeros130300020/18739086-DIYARBAKIR-TURKEY-MARCH-21-Kurds-celebrating-their-traditional-feast-Newroz-that-means-new-dav-in-ku-Stock-Photo.jpg>



Newroz in Rojhilat – east Kurdistan (north west Iran)

Source: <http://rojhelat.info/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Newroz.jpg>



Newroz Rojhilat – east Kurdistan (north west Iran)

Source: <http://kurdistantribune.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/newroz.jpg>



Newroz in Bashur – south Kurdistan (north Iraq)

Source: <http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2014/3/state7850b.jpg>



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