

Uzbek National Traditions in Weddings

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Annotation: This article talks about the meaning and analysis of weddings in the national rituals of the Uzbeks using the example of the Surkhan oasis. At the same time, it is analyzed that the traditions associated with wedding ceremonies, characteristic of the oasis, preserved from ancient times and not losing their meaning to this day, are based on certain rules and norms, depending on the ethnolocal family.

The article also reflects that among the inhabitants of the oasis, family customs and rituals at the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th century were more clearly manifested in the lifestyle of the sedentary population compared to the semi-sedentary one.

Keywords: country, oasis, territory, clan, tribe, family, nation, value, ritual, ethnography, wedding, custom, tradition, custom, national consciousness, image, faith.



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The beginning of the family, which is the most important small unit and link of society, is marriage. Therefore, from the early stages of humanity, marriage ceremonies have been carried out as a measure aimed at ensuring the unity and stability of the family through a special system of customs. This event has been celebrated by the community, and initially, a tradition later took on the form of a formalized ceremony.

The wedding ceremony can be divided into three stages: the customs before the wedding, the customs during the wedding, and the rituals conducted after the wedding.

In the Surkhandarya region, there are forms of marriage such as "bel quda" and "etak yirtish." In the "bel quda" tradition, the relatives of the bride and groom, during their wives' pregnancy, would arrange a future marriage between their unborn children. Once these children grew up, they would marry each other. In the "etak yirtish" ritual, the engagement of a boy and a girl was arranged by the parents during infancy, based on mutual agreement and consent. This tradition of engagement during infancy is also present in other Central Asian peoples, where it is known as

"quloq tishlash," "beshikdagi unashtirish" and "beshik kertish"¹. Furthermore, the Hazara people living in Afghanistan also pierce their children's ears at a young age. They call this practice "qand ushatish"².

In the Surkhandarya region, alongside the levirate and sororate marriage forms, there were also types of marriages such as "qarshi quda", "kuch kuyov", "ich kuyov", and "voy-voy nikoh." Levirate and sororate marriages are among the oldest forms of marriage³. In the region, according to the levirate custom, the widow of a deceased person from villages such as Dashtegaz, Kofirun, and Pulhokim would marry one of her brother-in-laws or unmarried brothers, referred to as "jesir." The relatives of the deceased did not give the widow to a foreign clan, calling her "jesir." If none of the brothers married the widow, the relatives would gather and, saying "If she remains on earth, it belongs to the nephew," they would forcibly marry her off to one of the deceased's nephews⁴.

The sororate custom also existed during the period being studied in the region, where the widower of a deceased wife would marry the deceased's sister or younger sister. Forms of marriage like levirate and sororate were often introduced due to economic and family life necessities. Additionally, the "qarshi quda" custom is still maintained in the region. According to this custom, two families would exchange daughters in marriage. In the "qarshi quda" tradition, economically disadvantaged families in the region would mutually agree and arrange the bride's dowry, taking their conditions and opportunities into account. However, they did not exchange a bride price. The "qarshi quda" custom was also present in other regions of Uzbekistan. For example, in Fergana, it was referred to as "qaychi quda"⁵.

In the "Kuch kuyov" tradition, poor, orphaned young men who could not afford to pay the bride price and had no home would live with their mother-in-law's family and work for the bride price. In the "Ich-kuyov" tradition, when a family without a male heir gave their daughter in marriage, they suggested that the groom live with his mother-in-law. Only if the groom agreed, would the young man live in his mother-in-law's house as the "ich-kuyov."

In the domestic life of the people of the Surkhandarya region, there were also cases where girls were forced into marriage. This was known as the "voy-voy nikoh" custom. In some cases, when the mullah asked the girl for her consent to the marriage (Ijoba), the girl's closest relative would secretly push her in the back without saying anything. At that moment, if the girl said "voy" (meaning a refusal), it was considered as if the girl had agreed, and her consent was registered. This practice ensured that young people followed Islamic and moral laws, and the community would reprimand them for their "sin" in front of everyone.

Like other Central Asian peoples, in the Surkhandarya region, marriage begins with matchmaking. In the region, this custom was known as "kovush yirtar," "qolni so'rash," "qol solish," "qiz ko'rish," and "qiz tanlash." The matchmakers were typically divided into "small" and "large" matchmakers. Small matchmakers, also called "makiyan sovchilar," were usually women, such as the boy's mother and one of the closest women, who would go together. According to custom, matchmaking was done three times. Typically, matchmakers would say things like "We have come to sweep your door," or "We have come to do servitude for your door" before proceeding with the proposal. If the girl agreed, the matchmakers would be offered fatty, exquisite foods, and responses like "Let us consult with relatives" or "We will come again" were given. If responses

¹Sattor M. O'zbek udumlari. –Toshkent: Cho'lpon, 2007. –B.23-25.

²Шомансурова О. Хазоралар. –Тошкент: Фан, 1972. –Б. 35.

³Қаранг: Косвен М.О. Ибтидоий маданият тарихидан очерклар. –Тошкент, 1960. –Б. 128; Антропова В.В. Культура и быт кояков. –Л., 1971. –С. 106.

⁴Дала ёзувлари. Бойсун тумани, Пулхоким, Даштиғоз, Кофирун кишлоклари. 2021 йил.

⁵Қаранг: Наливкин В.П., Наливкина М. Очерк быта женщин туземного оседлого населения Ферганской области. –Казань, 1886. –С. 20.

like "Our girl is too young," "Our girl is already promised," or "Look at other families" were given, this was a sign of rejection.

After the small matchmakers had received the girl's consent, the "large matchmakers" — the boy's maternal uncle, along with an esteemed elder from the village — would go together. Once the girl's consent was obtained, they would set a day for the breaking of bread ceremony.

The "Fotiha To'y" ceremony in the region is also known as the "non sindirish" (breaking the bread), "non ushatish" (offering the bread), or "yalok qizartar" (redening the cheeks) ceremony. During this, four layers of cloth, four types of bread, four clothes, and two white scarves tied around the necks of the sheep, along with fruits, sweets, and sesame halva, were all essential. The bread would be broken by the groom's maternal uncle or the closest relatives, who were legally married, and it would be divided among the participants. This ceremony signified that the couple had been betrothed in front of the community and had entered the "fotiha khondasi" (blessing of the house). During the ceremony, the dowry was agreed upon between the families. The dowry in the ethnographic groups of the Kunghirots people in the region included sheep, cows, or their equivalent market value, as well as items such as 20 sheep, one bull, 20 coats, and other goods. This tradition is also present in other Central Asian cultures⁶.

In this context, after the marriage ceremony, the dowry of the bride was determined by the groom. If the groom was wealthy, a part of his property or livestock, or valuable jewelry (gold, silver) would be assigned as the bride's (life partner's) dowry. The agreed-upon dowry (property) could not be used for any need without the wife's consent, even in difficult economic conditions.

After this ceremony, in the Surkhandarya region, customs such as the "kelin qochuv" (bride's escape) and "kuyov qochuv" (groom's escape) were practiced, in which the bride would try to avoid being seen by the groom's close relatives, and the groom would do the same with the bride's relatives out of respect. From this point on, the parents of both young people would call each other "kuda" (father-in-law) and "kudagay" (mother-in-law). These ceremonies symbolized mutual recognition and the strengthening of family bonds.

In Surkhandarya, there were also certain restrictions associated with marriage ceremonies. For example, among the Uzbek and Tajik populations of the region, as well as among the "Yuzlar" and "Qatag'on" clans, it was forbidden to exchange brides. Additionally, certain groups, such as the *eshons* (religious leaders), *khojas* (landowners), and *sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad), considered themselves "white bones" and would not give their daughters in marriage to others they considered "black bones." This was because they saw themselves as socially superior, and endogamous marriages (within the same group) had become a strict tradition. With this, they believed they were preserving the "purity of their lineage." However, in some cases, it was observed that their sons married "black bones."

These marriage practices among the *khojas* persisted until the 1950s. It has been noted in some historical and ethnographic literature that this custom also existed in other regions of Uzbekistan⁷. Naturally, in the present day, the restrictions in marriage relationships between these clans are gradually losing their significance.

In conclusion, the customs and traditions related to marriage ceremonies specific to the Surkhandarya region have been preserved since ancient times and have not lost their relevance to this day. This is because the ethnological characteristics of the region are based on specific rules and customs that are rooted in family, community, and neighborly relations.

⁶Қаранг: Андреев М.С. Материалы по этнографии Ягноба (записи 1927-1928 гг.). —Душанбе, 1970. —С. 125; Абрамзон С.А. Кўрсатилган асар. —Б. 31.

⁷Қаранг: Шониёзов К. Ўзбек халқининг шаклланиш жараёни. —Тошкент, 2001. —Б. 260; Бўриев О. ва бошқалар. Ўзбек оиласи тарихидан. —Тошкент, 1995. —Б. 85; Лобачева Н.П. Брак // Семейный быт народов СССР. —М., 1991. —С. 448.

