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Wedding in the History and Culture of the Tatars

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Abstract

The historical period and the associated cultural structure experienced by the nation in the past leave its more or less discernible imprint in the national mentality, which is, in fact, a series of successively overlapping cultural and historical layers. An integral part of the mentality is a set of values in general and each of its elements separately. To determine the semantic meaning contained in any of the values of the concepts of the era, it is necessary to consider not only the circumstance of this particular epoch, but also the historically preceding evolution of this value in the culture of the people. Proceeding from the above, in this article we have described the history of *tuy* (the wedding) and related social, legal, economic, religious, magical rites, its role, functions in the social life of the Tatar people. In the Tatar linguistic culture, the wedding expresses not only the universal idea of the transition of people marrying to another age and social status, but also is part of the family-household ritual that fixes the transitional stages of the person's life cycle: birth, marriage, death – *gumernen uch tuye* (three weddings of life). Many ritual acts performed at the time of marriage have deep historical roots, are repeated from time to time, change their content and meaning, but, nevertheless, despite the loss of their integrity, the tendency to wither away, the simplification of some ritual forms, traditional household rituals, being the most conservative sphere, connected with the field of traditional outlook and psychology, have preserved specific ethnic features.

Keywords: Traditional rituals, Ethnocultural information, Wedding rituals, Tatar linguistic culture, Spiritual culture, Tuy (wedding), Nikakh, Yaychi, Tuy ashi (foods), Kalim.

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Introduction

Interest in ritual forms of culture is due to their informative opportunities and functional significance. Traditional ritual, like any cultural form, performs certain communicative functions that are of particular importance for ethnos, as they provide for the existence of special information connections – a specific mode of transmission of ethnocultural information, promote the continuity of the ethnos and ensure its stability over time.

Marriage and wedding ceremonies are a combination of diverse in content and origin of actions, an ethnically colored complex of customs and rituals with a certain symbolism, which is performed when the persons involved in marriage, and even more broadly, a complex reflecting the life of the people in all the complexity of its manifestations. Being a special component of the ritual culture, the wedding ceremony also serves as a cultural transmission, that is, preserves and transmits the social and cultural experience of the ethnos to succeeding generations, ensures the reproduction of the ethnic characteristics of the people, and serves as a channel for the transfer of cultural heritage.

In this regard, it seems very relevant to study the wedding ritual, which is the most stable element of the ethnos culture. **The purpose** of this study is to characterize the history of the wedding and describe the social, legal, economic, religious, magical rites associated with the wedding, its role and functions in the social life of the Tatar people.

The methodological basis of the study was compiled by the works of A.P. Kovalevskiy, (1954), F.S. Bayazitova (1995), R.K. Urazmanova (2001), M.Kh. Bakirov (2007), E.A. Islamova (2014), R.M. Bolgarova (2014), R.S. Nurmukhametova (2015), A.Sh. Yusupova (2016), F.R. Sibgaeva (2016).

Methods

This work assumes a systematic approach to the study of wedding rituals, that is, the integrated application of methods of structural, functional, historical analysis. We consider wedding rituals as a kind of integral system, which in turn is itself a component of the “metasystem” – wide system of family-household rites.

The system approach in this study is realized in combination with the method of typologization. By typologization, we mean the essential systematics (systematization), that is, the most effective ways used to order and generalize the study material.

Results

Wedding rituals, having arisen at the early stages of the history of human societies, have gone a long way of development, the phase of growth of individual ritual elements, ritual creativity has entered into its own right the phase of deviation from the traditional unfolded rite, preferring simplified compressed forms.

This happened gradually, stage after stage the wedding developed, it was transformed from simple forms to more complex ones, from complex ones to simple ones. Today, this is a kind of polyelement structure. Despite the rejection of a number of ritual forms, simplification of the whole ritual cycle, still preserved most of the layers, archaic elements.

Wedding ceremonies of the Tatars are characterized by a noticeable unity while preserving the diversity of terms of identical ceremonies, wedding rites, treats, etc. The main differences are related to the specific form of the religious rite of marriage, which was the paramount, integral part of the wedding ritual of the Muslim Tatars and Orthodox Christian Kryashens. A certain originality is made by rich

wedding folklore from Tatars-mishars and especially Kryashens. In the traditional way of life of the Kazan Tatars (19th century) it was practically absent.

For the end of the 19 – the beginning of the 20th century, the marriage of matchmaking was predominant. This form of marriage predetermined the appropriate wedding ritual.

The main feature of it was the strict implementation of a single set of rites that were peculiar to a specific locality. The existing differences were due only to social reasons and consisted of different numbers of guests, the duration of wedding feasts, visits, the wealth of gifts, etc.

Discussion

It is difficult to determine the specific time for the beginning of the ritual registration of marriage in the Tatars. But, nevertheless, we share the opinion of the historian Hamirzan Davletshin, who thinks that it begins with the transition of societies to monogamy and the patriarchal-clan community. “The wedding was given great importance, since it served to strengthen the family and the clan. Weddings were considered the holiday of the whole village, and no one should evade this event. According to Ibn Fadlan’s stories, those who celebrated the wedding should give the khan a horse with a harness, as well as his share of food, depending on the size of the feast. Maybe, this was a reflection of the ancient custom: the mandatory participation in each wedding of the elders of the tribe, and later – the khan” (Davletshin, 1999). From simple to a complex cycle, the wedding grows in the era of feudal relations.

In the pre-wedding period, during the matchmaking (*yaychi, bashkoda kily*), the parties agreed on the quantity and quality of the gifts (*kalym, kalym mali*) by which the groom's party was to bestow the bride's side. This included clothes, shoes, hats for the bride, two featherbeds: a large one – *tushek* and a slightly smaller size – *yastik*. In addition, the groom's party was to pay the agreed amount of money – *bash akcha, tartu*, which was used to make dowry, and also bring a certain amount of food – honey, oil, flour, tea, meat – for the wedding.

It should be noted that during the negotiations, the Tatar Muslims discussed the obligations of the groom, while the amount of the bride's dowry was not specified specifically.

Upon reaching mutual consent, the parents of the bride invited the matchmakers and the groom's parents to a conspiracy – the engagement – *aklashy, ak biry, kiz kileshy, kyzny suzge salu, kyz yarishy* etc. Despite the variety of terms, the essence of the rite was unified: as a sign of final agreement, the parties exchanged certain things. As a rule, from the side of the bride they gave a towel, a tablecloth, the part of the groom gave an agreed amount of money. The rite for which the bride's relatives were invited was completed with a feast.

The main wedding (*tuy, nikakh tuy*) at the Tatar Muslims was held in the house of the bride. The main invited were the parents of the groom – *tup kodalar*. They carried with them *kalim* (sometimes it was brought on the eve of the wedding or a few days before it) and treats: a pair of geese, two or four or more gingerbread breads (*kalach, kumech*), a certain amount of *yuacha, kalcha, zeime* – a kind of thin cakes, sweet cakes and a special wedding treat – *chekchek, bavysak*. All these were put in a special dower chest (*ash sandygy, kughtenech sandygy*) and carried on a special cart (*ash chanasy, ash arbasy*).

The party of the bride must be represented by her relatives, who helped in the wedding. Some of them brought with them a treat (*ash belin kily, sawim*), others invited to their home, it was called “wedding support” (*tuy kytery, tuy aly*).

The wedding began with a religious ritual of marriage (*nikakh, keben*) according to the ritual that developed in the Tatars. Mullah in the marriage registration book wrote down *mekher* – the conditions of marriage.

These included *kalim*, the products or their value, etc., which had already been given to the side of the bride. Particularly fixed a certain amount of money, which in case of divorce on the initiative of the husband he had to pay to his wife. Then the mullah asked about agreement of the young people. Since the young people themselves were not present at this wedding, father answered for the groom, two witnesses answered for the bride (the bride was behind the curtain or in the other half of the house). After listening to the affirmative answer, the mullah read out excerpts from the Koran, dedicated to the marriage. After the *nikakh*, a treat began.

After the guests were leaving, they began to prepare for the meeting of groom in the house of bride: they carefully prepared a special room for the young, which was decorated with the most elegant things from the dowry. In it they were in the first days. In the morning the young were sent to the bathhouse (*kiyaw mynchasi*). From there the young husband returned in new clothes, sewn by the bride. He gave her a valuable gift.

The first visit of the bridegroom was accompanied by the payment of a large number of ransoms: for the opportunity to enter the courtyard, to enter the room to a young couple, for theme who had made a wedding bed, heated a bath, village children who came to the house specially for a gift. Therefore, the groom was carrying a suitcase with gifts and food.

At his first visit, the young man stayed there for two to four or six days, after which he was taken back. Later he came on Thursdays, in the evening, and in the morning he left back. This period – *kiyawlep yery* – by duration was and, as a rule, depended on family circumstances.

Moving the young to the house of the husband in all the Tatars was called the *kilen tushery, archi*, and was held, as a rule, in the summer.

Many fellow-villagers also gathered to meet the newlyweds. Parents waited the young. The mother put down her fur coat or pillow under her daughter-in-law's feet, saying: "Tukle ayagyn belen, kilen".

Entering the house, the young woman was hanging a towel. This custom was called *elep kery* – "to enter hanging a towel". Then the young people were sat at the table. The bride had to eat a bucket of bread, anointed with oil and honey, to be as soft as butter, sweet as honey, that is, comfortable, complaisant. And had to drink a couple of cups of tea.

Universal rituals were *uy kiendery* ("house decorations": were removed the curtains hanging in the house, wall-cloths and hung new from the dowry of the bride) and *sy yuli kurshety* ("show the road to water": she was led to a spring from which she was to carry water).

Moving young was accompanied by a number of feasts in the house of parents of her husband, and his relatives. Guest etiquette of all Tatars was the same. After the departure of matchmakers for a treat, which called *kilen tukmachi, kilen salmasi* (noodles of a daughter-in-law), they collected elderly relatives, neighbors. In the house of the bride was held *Kazan kaitaru* (the return of the boiler) with the invitation of the newlyweds, and the parents of the daughter-in-law were invited to the house of the groom. Only after carrying out these feasts the parties freely, at their discretion could visit each other.

At the beginning of marriage the bride avoided contact with relatives of her husband, especially with a father-in-law (*tel yashery*).

The profound changes that took place in the life of the people in the post-revolutionary years, the material difficulties associated with the wars of the beginning of the 20th century, influenced the form of wedding ceremonies.

In the 1930-1960 years there was a sharp reduction in traditional wedding ceremonies, new ones were emerging. Thus, during this period, in all Tatar villages marriage without the knowledge of the parents became widespread (*yabyshyp chygu*).

By the end of the 20th century, a type of wedding ritual was formed in which organically combined preserved (sometimes revived) traditional rites and new ones. And the variety of weddings is obtained due to a different combination of these or other elements. A characteristic feature of them is the free choice of rituals.

Occurrence of wedding clothes of single use – a white dress of the extended cut, a veil, white shoes – for the girl, a dark suit, a white shirt – for the young man, wedding rings are a new phenomenon for Tatars. Its universal distribution as an attribute of the newlyweds began from the end of the sixties, when the ritual of its solemn registration entered the practice of state institutions registering marriage.

Today, in general, the process of unification and reduction of wedding rituals is continuing. Many common international features appeared in it. And this process is obviously irreversible. But despite this, Tatar young couples are increasingly turning to traditional rituals.

Conclusions

Summarizing, it can be noted that the wedding is an inseparable element of the culture of the Tatar people. It embodied the syncretic perception of the surrounding world, echoes of superstitions and pagan rituals, reflections about a person, family, children, the continuity of generations and the meaning of life. It performs the following functions that determine its basic cultural values:

1. *Communicative function.* The wedding is a unique form of communication. A special atmosphere is created at the general table, and at this time there is always an exchange of certain information and human feelings;
2. *The integrating function.* The wedding ceremony is essentially one of the special forms of collective behavior. The collective takes part not only in its sanction and participation in marriage ceremonies, but also in material assistance: at a generic system, help the groom in paying the *kalym*, in the later stage – different types of gifting, labor assistance in preparations for the wedding. In the wedding ceremonies, the role of each participant is regulated to the smallest detail by centuries of established customs;
3. *Legal and economic function* – legal consolidation of the reached agreement and connection of two families;
4. *Religious and magical function.* In the wedding ritual, preventive acts are carried out, the purpose of which is to protect the person from evil forces, and the actions associated with producing magic that should provide any positive values and the well-being of marriage;
5. *Entertaining-game function*, creating a positive high emotional atmosphere, a holiday state;
6. *The function of continuity of the spiritual culture of society.* This function is understood as continuity of outlook or spiritual values through certain wedding signs and symbolic behavior. Wedding ceremony is an expressive way of transferring spiritual values from generation to

generation. It teaches a man to behave correctly not only during the wedding, but also during the rest of the time, i.e. can regulate the actions of people even outside the ritual.

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