

Azerbaijani Wedding Ceremony: Traditions and Symbols

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Abstract

The article "Azerbaijani Wedding Ceremony: Traditions and Symbols" explores the rich cultural heritage of wedding ceremonies in Azerbaijan, revealing their traditional elements and symbols. The author examines in detail various aspects of the wedding ceremony, starting with preliminary preparations and ending with subsequent customs, tracing the influence of historical, religious and cultural factors on the formation of these traditions. The article also draws attention to the symbolic significance of various elements of the wedding ceremony, such as jewelry, costumes, musical compositions and ritual actions, as well as their role in the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. The research is based on an analysis of sources, interviews with representatives of the Azerbaijani community and observations of modern wedding practices. The results of the work help to better understand the richness and depth of Azerbaijani wedding traditions and their role in shaping the cultural identity of the people.

Relevance: The study of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony is relevant in the modern context, as it will help to understand and penetrate the spirit of the local people more deeply. To identify the traditions and symbols associated with this rite is important for the preservation of the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan and its presentation to the secular community.

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to study the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony with a focus on traditions and symbols in order to identify their meaning and meaning.

Results: The study revealed the main features of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony, including traditions and symbols. A historical study was conducted based on literary and archival sources, as well as data from modern wedding ceremonies.

Conclusions: The study of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony makes it possible to understand its great importance for the local population. It is important to preserve and continue the traditions and symbols associated with this rite in order to preserve the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan and pass it on to future generations. Awareness and respect for these traditions and symbols help to strengthen national identity and unite the people.

Keywords: traditions, customs, cultural heritage, Turkic peoples, wedding ceremony

Азербайджанська весільна церемонія: традиції та символіка

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Анотація

У статті «Азербайджанська весільна церемонія: традиції та символіка» досліджується багата культурна спадщина весільних церемоній в Азербайджані, розкриваються її традиційні елементи та символіка. Автор детально розглядає різні аспекти весільного обряду, починаючи з попередньої підготовки і закінчуючи подальшими звичаями, простежуючи вплив історичних, релігійних та культурних чинників на формування цих традицій. У статті також звертається увага на символічне значення різних елементів весільного обряду, таких як прикраси, костюми, музичні композиції та ритуальні дії, а також їх роль у збереженні та передачі культурної спадщини. Дослідження базується на аналізі джерел, інтерв'ю з представниками азербайджанської громади та спостереженнях за сучасною весільною практикою. Результати роботи допомагають краще зрозуміти багатство і глибину азербайджанських весільних традицій і їх роль у формуванні культурної самосвідомості народу.

Актуальність вивчення азербайджанського весільного обряду є актуальним в сучасному контексті, так як це допоможе більш глибоко зрозуміти і проникнути в дух місцевого народу. Виявити традиції та символи, пов'язані з цим обрядом, має важливе значення для збереження культурної спадщини Азербайджану та його представлення перед світловим співтовариством.

Метою статті є вивчення азербайджанського весільного обряду з основним акцентом на традиціях і символах, щоб виявити їх значення і сенс.

Результати дослідження виявило основні особливості азербайджанського весільного обряду, включаючи традиції та символи. Було проведено історичне дослідження, засноване на літературних та архівних джерелах, а також зібрані дані з сучасних весільних церемоній.

Висновки вивчення азербайджанського весільного обряду дозволяють зрозуміти його величезне значення для місцевого населення. Важливо зберігати і продовжувати традиції і символи, пов'язані з цим обрядом, щоб зберегти культурну спадщину Азербайджану і передати його майбутнім поколінням. Усвідомлення і повага до цих традицій і символів допомагають зміцнити національну ідентичність і згуртувати народ.

Ключові слова: традиції, звичаї, культурна спадщина, тюркські народності, весільний обряд

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Introduction.

The Azerbaijani wedding ceremony is an important part of the culture and traditions of this country. For centuries, weddings in Azerbaijan have been accompanied by a variety of rituals, rituals and symbols that have played an essential role in shaping and maintaining the socio-cultural identity of the population. Nevertheless, today the study of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony and its traditions is an urgent and important topic for study.

The purpose of our research is to analyze and describe the main traditions and symbols of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony, as well as to identify their significance and evolution throughout historical development. To achieve this goal, we used a variety of research methods, including analysis of literary sources, field research with the participation of participants in the wedding ceremony and historical reconstruction.

The definition of the subject of the study is based on the study of various aspects of the wedding ceremony, including its main phases, rituals and symbols. We also consider the socio-cultural, religious and historical contexts that influence the formation and evolution of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony.

This article is an attempt to systematize and summarize the available knowledge about the traditions and symbols of the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony using new approaches and research methods. She also contributes to a broader understanding of the cultural, social and historical significance of the wedding ceremony in Azerbaijan. We hope that the results of this research will be useful both for the scientific community and for fans of Azerbaijani culture and traditions.

Analysis of preliminary studies and publications.

The national wedding rituals of Azerbaijanis have been studied in the works of various researchers, anthropologists, ethnographers and folklorists, both from Azerbaijan and from other countries.

One of the most famous researchers of Azerbaijani wedding rituals is the folklorist Ahmed Aghdamli (1897-1954). His work "Saj" described the wedding ceremony of Azerbaijanis in detail, including all its stages: matchmaking, gift exchange, wedding day rituals, dinner of the groom's family, etc. Aghdamli's relatively voluminous scientific work has become an important source of information about wedding ceremonies and traditions of Azerbaijanis.

Another well-known researcher of the national wedding rituals of Azerbaijanis is the Azerbaijani folklorist R. Zia Mahmudov. Various articles and books by Mahmudov, such as "The Azerbaijani wedding ceremony and its components" and "Traditional Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies", describe in detail the traditional rituals, clothes, musical instruments and songs that accompany the wedding ceremony of Azerbaijanis.

In addition, studies of the national wedding ceremonies of Azerbaijanis have been conducted by other scientists in ethnography and anthropology. They often

based their research on local traditions, local sources and interviews with local residents of Azerbaijan.

Research on wedding ceremonies of Azerbaijanis began in the late XIX - early XX century and continues to this day. These works made it possible to preserve and interpret the rich cultural heritage of Azerbaijan in the field of wedding customs and traditions.

The purpose of this article is to examine the main traditions and symbols that accompany the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony.

The article will describe in detail how the Azerbaijani wedding takes place, what rituals are performed, what customs are observed. The meaning of symbols such as the kerchief, which is considered a symbol of purity and chastity, as well as the ring, which is a symbol of infinity and unity, will be considered.

The importance of traditions such as matchmaking and drinking sweet tea, reading the Kelam-i-Kheyrat prayer at the wedding ceremony and the tradition of treating guests with special dishes will also be studied.

The purpose of the article is to introduce readers to the rich cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani wedding, to show the uniqueness and beauty of these traditions, as well as to identify their significance and significance for the local population.

The results of the study.

A wedding is one of the most significant events in the culture of every nation, and Azerbaijan is no exception. The Azerbaijani wedding ceremony is a rich and traditional ritual that reflects the rich heritage and cultural identity of this country.

One of the most important parts of a wedding in Azerbaijan is an engagement. An engagement usually takes place a few months before the wedding, and is the official announcement of an upcoming marriage. During the engagement, the parents of both future spouses meet to discuss the details of the wedding and the mutual terms of the deal. Traditionally, the groom offers the bride a ring and gifts that will serve as a symbol of his love (Gantskaya, 1990, pp. 172-174).

The main symbol of the Azerbaijani wedding is the wedding kerchief, known as the "kahkul". This is a patterned silk handkerchief that the bride wears on her head, then it goes to the groom and so on. The kerchief is usually richly embroidered and decorated with pearls and sequins. This traditional element of the wedding dress is a symbol of the bride's virginity and purity.

Weddings in Azerbaijan are famous for the variety of dishes on the table. The traditional wedding gastronomic wealth of Azerbaijan reflects the richness of its culture and history. Among the most famous dishes are "pilaf" – rice cooked with various meat and vegetable ingredients, and "dolma" – lamb breast, taken out from the inside, filled with rice and spices. These dishes reflect the influence of Persian and Turkish cuisine.

A number of traditional rituals are performed during the wedding. One of the most popular rituals is the

"circling of fire". The spouses must step over the fire together, which symbolizes their unity. Another common rite is the "separation of the grenade." The grenade is usually cut into pieces and the couple gets one piece of it. This ceremony symbolizes prosperity and fertility in marriage.

The Azerbaijani wedding ceremony is not only a holiday, but also a cultural event that unites families and communities. This is the time when the whole country gathers to celebrate and support a new marriage

Being an integral part of Azerbaijani culture, the process of creating a family consists of step-by-step rituals, which vary depending on the region of residence, but preserving national colorfulness.

So, the wedding ceremony begins with "Giz herme". Giz herme is one of the national wedding ceremonies traditionally followed by Azerbaijanis. This ceremony is a marriage ceremony where the newlyweds officially announce their marriage and celebrate it with relatives and close friends. Giz herme includes several stages, each of which has its own symbolic meaning (Abbasova, 2014).

The first stage is a marriage proposal. The groom and his next of kin arrive at the bride's house, where they make an official request for the girl's hand. It can be a formal announcement or a ceremony accompanied by music and singing. If the girl's parents agree to the proposal, they agree, and the wedding continues.

The second stage is the nikyah ceremony. Nikyah is the official conclusion of a marriage between newlyweds. The ceremony is usually held in a mosque or at home. An Imam (religious person) must be present to say special prayers and conduct the ceremony. After reading a prayer and exchanging rings, the couples are officially announced their consent to marriage. The third stage is the wedding celebration. After the nikyah ceremony, the newlyweds and their guests go to the wedding party. There is a lot of dancing and music at the festival, as well as traditional dishes and drinks. Wedding traditions and rituals are performed to symbolize happiness, prosperity and well-being for the young.

Giz herme is an important and wonderful national rite in Azerbaijan, which emphasizes the importance of family values and cultural traditions. This ceremony combines ancient rituals and modern customs, preserving the wealth and history of the Azerbaijani people. An Azerbaijani wedding is a special and solemn event, which is accompanied by a number of national rituals and traditions. One of these rituals is matchmaking, which precedes the celebration itself.

Matchmaking in Azerbaijan is a serious and solemn event, during which representatives of the bride and groom come together to discuss the terms of the wedding and officially submit a marriage proposal. This is especially important for the parties to make sure that the families of the future spouses agree to this union.

When the groom's relatives and close friends go to the bride's relatives, they need to come with a gift

and prepared words to announce their intentions. They usually bring sweets, fruits, money or other items that are traditional symbols of prosperity and well-being. A special role in matchmaking is associated with the "bashlyg", which is a symbolic payment as compensation for the loss of the bride's virginity. The bashlyg is paid to the bride's parents as a symbol of trust and respect for their daughter. Usually it is money or jewelry that is offered by the groom's family. The amount of the salary may vary depending on the status of the bride and groom's family, as well as on their arrangements and capabilities (Tahmasib, 2010)

After completing the matchmaking and accepting the bashlyg, the bride's parents give their gifts to the guests to express gratitude for their support. Usually it can be a fruit or candy set, as well as items that can be used in the future home of a young family. The national wedding ceremony of Azerbaijanis is distinguished by its deep symbolism and embodies mutual respect and support between the families of the bride and groom. It helps to strengthen family ties and create a warm atmosphere on the eve of the wedding. The Azerbaijani wedding is one of the most important and solemn events in the life of Azerbaijanis. This national wedding ceremony has many ancient traditions and symbols that reflect the rich culture and history of this nation. A wedding in Azerbaijan usually begins with the preparation of the bride. In the weeks leading up to the wedding, she spends time at her home with her close friends who help her prepare for this important day. During this period, the bride must be away from the eyes of strangers and therefore the windows in her room are usually closed (Suleymanova, 2010)

On the wedding day, the bride wears a wedding dress, which is usually an elegant national dress. It is also decorated with jewelry, usually gold jewelry, which symbolize wealth and prosperity. Other family members also dress up in traditional national outfits.

During the wedding, a musical and dance performance is arranged to maintain the festive atmosphere. Traditional musical instruments such as tar and kamancha play a special role in this process. The guests also participate in dances and songs to express joy and fun (Azerbaijani folklore, 2005).

After the wedding, the newlyweds' family usually organizes the ceremony of handing over the wedding gift from the groom's family to the bride's family. It consists of a ceremony of exchanging gifts and cash, which is a traditional way of confirming family ties and mutual understanding between two families.

After the wedding, the newlyweds go to their new home, where they usually wait for relatives and guests to conduct the last stage of the wedding ceremony. Which includes various rituals and traditions such as decorating the house, distributing gifts and wishes, and cooking traditional dishes.

Wedding ceremonies in Azerbaijan, as in many other cultures, have their own characteristics and differences

depending on the region. These differences may relate to aspects such as wedding preparations, ceremony, traditional customs and rituals, as well as decor and outfits (Efendiev, 1981).

Let's start with the preparations for the wedding. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, it is very important to observe traditions and customs, so the preparation process can vary greatly in different parts of the country. In some regions, newlyweds must undergo a series of tests and tasks to confirm their readiness for marriage. Such tests may include tasks to acquire new skills, prepare gifts, or show your physical strength. In other regions, the rites of gift exchange between the families of the bride and groom are held at the first stage, which may also differ depending on the area (Grishaev, 1990).

The wedding ceremony may also have its own peculiarities in different regions. In some places, large ceremonies are held, with the participation of many guests, dancing and music. One of the traditional ceremonies is the laying of crowns on the heads of the young, which symbolizes their acceptance of their new status – spouses. In other regions, modest ceremonies are held dedicated only to the newlyweds themselves and their close relatives (Abdullaev, 2005).

Traditional wedding dress may also vary from region to region. In many places, the bride wears a magnificent and bright wedding dress, openwork and decorated with luxurious embroidery and jewelry. However, in some regions, the bride may wear interesting national costumes that correspond to the traditions of local culture (Karabakh: folklore, 2012a).

In the wedding ceremonies of Azerbaijan, it is also the custom to decorate the wedding place, shopping aisles and houses of the bride and groom. Different materials and decorations are used in each region, reflecting local traditions.

In recent years, a number of changes have taken place in the national wedding ceremony of Azerbaijanis, reflecting modern trends and the influence of Western culture. Here are some major changes:

Mixing traditions: Nowadays, more and more Azerbaijani couples are trying to mix traditional wedding ceremonies with elements of Western culture. For example, fashionable wedding dresses, cakes prepared according to Western recipes, and even rental of wedding venues in the style of Western traditions have appeared (Korneeva, 2009).

Changing the role of the bride: Traditionally, the Azerbaijani bride was quite modest and did not perform in public (Karabakh: folklore, 2012b). However, recently brides have increasingly been taking an active part in the celebration and showing their individuality. They can also do performances, dance and sing to entertain the wedding guests. **Integration of new technologies:** More and more Azerbaijani weddings use the latest technologies. From projecting videos and photos onto screens to using drones to shoot wedding videos from the air. These technologies

add new dimensions to the wedding experience and allow you to create impressive and memorable events (Shchevtsova, 2019).

Changing musical preferences: Previously, traditional folk melodies and dances were common at weddings, but now young people increasingly prefer modern music, including Western hits and popular dance tracks (Magomedov, 2012)

Simplification of the wedding menu: Azerbaijani weddings used to be famous for their exquisite and plentiful menu with a variety of traditional dishes. However, now more and more Azerbaijanis prefer to simplify the menu by offering light snacks and a variety of hot dishes that meet modern tastes.

Changing the duration of the wedding celebration: In the past, Azerbaijani weddings could last for several days, with various rituals and traditions. However, now young couples increasingly prefer to hold a wedding during one day or on weekends in order to reduce the cost of the holiday (Aslanov, 2003).

In general, these changes in the national wedding ceremony of Azerbaijanis reflect the influence of globalization and modern culture on traditions. Young couples try to preserve their identity, but at the same time integrate into European culture.

The wedding elements of the Azerbaijani people are of particular importance and have a significant impact on the culture of other peoples living in Azerbaijan. This is especially noticeable in the cultures of Lezgins, Khinaligs and Tsakhurs.

Conclusions.

Wedding ceremonies and traditions in Azerbaijan are an important part of the national culture and have deep historical roots. During the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony, one can see a combination of various symbols and traditions that reflect the richness and versatility of this culture.

One of the key symbols present in the wedding ceremony is the *khanam*. *Khanam* is the main person of the wedding, usually a member of the bride's family, the wife of a matchmaker, or their close relative. She directs and organizes all the events during the wedding process. *Khanam* dresses up in a bright and luxurious costume to stand out among the guests. Traditionally, an Azerbaijani wedding consists of several stages, each of which has its own symbols. During the "request" for the bride's hand, the groom, along with relatives and close friends, visits the bride's family to request her hand in marriage.

Another important traditional symbol of the wedding ceremony is a mirror. It plays the role of a veil and guiding force that helps the newlyweds start a happy life together. The mirror is usually decorated with engraving, may have carved or ornamental stones and details. It is also customary in Azerbaijan to arrange wedding weaves, called a "wedding wreath". This is a rite that symbolizes the unification of two families into one. The families of the bride and groom weave lace from multicolored silk

threads, which is then superimposed on the heads of the newlyweds.

Bread is another important symbol of the wedding ceremony in Azerbaijan. Bread is a symbol of abundance, prosperity and well-being. During the wedding, the bride and groom tear one piece of spiritual bread to symbolize their willingness to do everything together and support each other. No Azerbaijani wedding in the past has been

held without collecting money from the invitees. This was an integral element of both the "female" wedding (the "paltar kasdi" ceremony) and the main, so-called "male" one. Thus, the Azerbaijani wedding ceremony is multifaceted and full of symbolism. It reflects deep traditions, rituals and symbols that help newlyweds start a new chapter in their lives with an understanding of the meaning of family, unification and prosperity.

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