

**HISTORICAL ROOTS OF PRE-WEDDING RITUALS IN THE  
KASHKADARYA OASIS**

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**Abstract:** *This study is dedicated to the history and ethnography of marriage and family rituals among the Uzbek population of the Kashkadarya oasis, focusing specifically on Koson and Karshi city. The research systematically examines the formation of local customs, inter-ethnic variations, and the remnants of ancient beliefs preserved within them. Based on field ethnographic materials, the processes of modern transformation in these rituals are highlighted. The article serves as an important scientific source for preserving the cultural heritage and national identity of the region.*

**Keywords:** *Kashkadarya, family customs, marriage ritual, transformation, Koson, Karshi, cultural heritage.*

In today's era, when globalization processes are rapidly taking place and cultures are becoming more homogeneous, the awareness of the identity of each nation and the preservation of its national values are not only an urgent and scientific task, but also an important task at the level of national security. The Kashkadarya oasis, with its ancient history, diverse ethnographic appearance, and traditions that have been honed over the centuries, occupies a special place in the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan.

In a context of increasing external cultural influences, the unique rituals, customs, and traditional lifestyle of the oasis are the main means of preserving the "genetic code" of the people. Kashkadarya is one of the few regions where the synthesis of ancient traditions of various ethnic groups (Kung'irat, Yuz, Kirq, Barlos, Qovchin, Kerait, Mangit, Kipchak, Saray) that participated in the formation of the Uzbek people has been preserved.

Marriage is the foundation of the family, which is considered the most important unit of society. Therefore, since primitive times, humanity has been holding a wedding ceremony as an event aimed at strengthening the family through a system of rituals and customs.

The wedding ceremonies of the Uzbeks of the Kashkadarya oasis are distinguished by their antiquity, ethnic diversity, and unique local characteristics. A wedding in the oasis is not only a union of two young people, but also a complex system of rituals involving the wider community, kinship, neighborhood, and local music.

Indeed, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev stated that "Our state policy will henceforth give priority to preserving and developing the national identity,

native language and culture, religion, customs and traditions of all nations and ethnic groups”<sup>1</sup>[1, p. 464].

The traveler Herman Vamberi, amazed by the mutual kindness of the Uzbeks, their customs, rituals, traditions, customs and customs, which are rooted in goodness, and which are passed down from their ancestors to their descendants, wrote: “The most praiseworthy aspect of the customs of the peoples of Central Asia is that they steadfastly preserve the wonderful qualities that make up their national character”<sup>2</sup>[ 2, p. 296].

of the Kashkadarya oasis, especially the Kosan district and the cities of Karshi, are distinguished by their ancient roots and specific local characteristics. The synthesis of sedentary peasant and pastoralist-steppe cultures played an important role in the ethnogenesis of these regions.

“marriage” ( نكاح ) is derived from the Arabic verb “nakahah” ( نكاح ), which means to marry, to get married, to legally formalize a young man and a girl according to Sharia law, and to form a family union. In the Karshi and Kashan regions of the Kashkadarya region, the rituals and names of the marriage system have their own local characteristics, including “nikoh to'yi”, “ijob to'yi”, and “kelin duşirar to'yi”.

There are several rituals in the wedding ceremony system, such as the house-warming ceremony (kiz korar ), the wedding feast, the dowry ceremony, the nine-piece ceremony (tok'iz tavaq), the girls' meal (kizlar majlisi), the bride's descent, the opening of the eyes, the bride's greeting, and the related rituals and customs, which are still preserved and practiced today.

and spiritual culture of the Uzbek people, as well as the processes of family and collective life, is great.<sup>3</sup>[ 3 , pp. 45-52].

The ethnic group located in the Kashkadarya oasis, the origin of ethnic clans, the specific ethno-local characteristics of semi-nomadic and semi-nomadic clans, their lifestyle, social, economic, political, cultural and neighborly relations with neighboring communities are widely covered in O. Boriyev's research. A number of articles and monographs by O. Boriyev, who conducted research on the ethnic history of the population of the South Uzbekistan region, provide important information on the topic under study.

In the Koson district, one of the oldest cities in the region, marriage ceremonies are more conservative and loyal to clan traditions. For example, the role of clan elders in the "sovchilik" process is still high.

Being an administrative and commercial center, rituals in the city of Karshi have become somewhat universal, and "luxurious" elements characteristic of the city's culture have entered more quickly. However, the "lineage" inquiry and "kuda-anda" etiquette have a very delicate and complex system in Karshi.

The bride's wedding ceremony initially begins with the house- to-house (girl-to-girl) ceremony. It is known that in the past, the wedding was held only on the recommendation and opinion of the parents . This custom is still preserved in some places. The mother, aunt,

<sup>1</sup> **Mirziyoyev Sh.M.** Strategy of the New Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: Publishing House “Uzbekistan”, 2021. – 464 p.

<sup>2</sup> **Vamberi H.** Traveling through Central Asia . – Tashkent: Science, 2011. – 296 p.

<sup>3</sup> **Boriyev O.** Traditional wedding ceremonies of the Uzbeks of the Kashkadarya oasis // Current problems of the ethnology of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent, 2004. – P. 45–52.

or one of the aunts of the groom would visit the house of the intended girl and, under the pretext of "coming as a guest," would greet the girl, inspect the cleanliness of the yard, and the orderliness of the house; whichever girl he liked, they would send a matchmaker to her.

In Uzbeks, matchmakers are divided into small and large matchmakers. After the "small matchmakers" (mostly women) returned from their work, the "large matchmakers" determined the wedding expenses and, in some places, the amount of the dowry. In many places, the groom's uncle and the respected "aksakol" of the people went to the matchmaking. The girl's side expressed disapproval to the matchmakers with various symbolic gestures (putting her shoes in order), while she also expressed consent with fatty, refined dishes placed before the matchmakers.

Marriage in the Kashkadarya oasis consists of several stages <sup>4</sup>[ 4 , p. 142].

Fatiha wedding ( Breaking of bread ) – Formalization of the agreement between the two parties. In Koson, there is a strong tradition of showing special respect ("giving sarpo") to the bride's uncles and aunts during this ceremony. Kalin and milk dowry While the tradition of giving kalin money or livestock has been preserved in the steppe regions of Kashkadarya (the villages of Tulga and Toshli in Koson), in the city of Karshi this has shifted more to the form of furniture and household items (sep). Kelintushdi: When bringing the bride to the groom's house, archaic customs such as "turning her around the fire" (a symbol of purification) and "showing a mirror" have been preserved.



One of the ceremonies in the marriage ceremony system was the fatiha wedding (small wedding). The fatiha day was set during the last procession of the grooms. The respected elders of the community and the elder were also invited to the fatiha wedding, which was held at the future bride's house, and the "bread-breaking" ceremony was held on this day. At the end of the fatiha wedding, the wedding and marriage date were set by mutual agreement between the two parties. During the period from the fatiha wedding to the big

<sup>4</sup> Boriyev O. Family and family rituals of the Uzbek people (historical and ethnographic observations). – Tashkent: Fan, 2005. – 142 p.

wedding, the grooms held ceremonies such as returning the plate, "laying the blanket", "nine", and "girl's party (girl's party )" . The groom's side used to send gifts to the bride during the holidays.

On the day of the wedding or the day before, a large feast is sent to the bride's house for the wedding meal. The girl's family serves osh to the group. On the same day, osh is often served at the groom's house as well. On the day of the wedding or the day before the wedding, the wedding ceremony is held at the girl's father's house. The groom, accompanied by his close friend and uncle, goes to the bride's house. After the imam explains the duties and rights of marriage to the groom -to-be , he obtains permission from the girl's relatives, and then the "Khutbai Nikoh" is read.

A number of rituals were performed before the bride was taken to the groom's house, such as "the bride hides", "the dog barks", "the lamp turns", "the hair is arranged", "the mirror is shown", "the hand is cut", "the bed is filled", and some of them are still preserved. At the groom's house, when the bride was taken inside by being circled around the fire three times , the customs of "turning the threshold" and "greeting the wedding guests" were performed. The next day after the wedding, rituals such as "opening the eyes" and "greeting the bride" were performed.

From the point of view of the principle of historicism, after the "red weddings" of the Soviet era, the process of returning to Islamic values (wedding education) and national identity intensified in the years of independence. Today, while the older generation emphasizes the grace and spiritual side of weddings, the younger generation is more inclined to external effects and modern restaurant weddings. Previously, weddings lasted several days , now, due to economic and time factors, they have become one day (restaurant ceremony). Although the wedding ceremonies of the city of Karshi and the Koson district are within the framework of one oasis culture, one reflects the urban subintelligence and trade culture, and the other - strong ethnic- tribal and rural traditions.

Field-ethnographic observations and analysis of historical sources conducted on the topic "Historical and ethnographic foundations of the Kashkadarya Uzbek wedding ceremony" showed the unique evolution of the wedding ceremonies of the Kashkadarya oasis, in particular the Karshi and Koson regions. The results of the study show that in the Koson district, ethnic traditions and clan-family ties are more preserved in wedding ceremonies. Here, the participation of relatives and clans in the "sovchilik" and "fatiha" stages is a mandatory social norm. In the city of Karshi, the adaptation of ceremonies to urban culture, that is, the urbanization process is stronger. In the city, the demonstrative nature of the ceremonies is high , which is reflected in the abundance of restaurant weddings and modern show elements.

Ethnographic observations have revealed that in rural areas of Koson, archaic customs such as slaughtering a sheep or goat under the bride's feet (bleeding) or circling her around a fire are still common. Although these practices are now considered more of a "custom" than a religious belief, they are rooted in a desire to protect the new family from external evil forces.



The accompaniment of horsemen during the "bride-return" ceremony of the Chorvador, Kanatli, and Tashli Arabs in the Kosan region, which is close to the steppe culture, and the organization of goat-hunting competitions express ethno-local identity. In the city of Karshi, the culinary culture characteristic of the "settler" population, the unique procedures for "nahor oshi" (dinner soup), and the complex traditional system (etiquette) of "kelin salom" (bride greeting) prevail.

Today, Kashkadarya weddings are a synthesis of "global" and "local" cultures. The traditional "bride's greeting" is now held on modern restaurant stages, with special lighting and musical groups. This is a modernization of the form of the ceremony, while preserving its content (the bride's greeting). Also, the introduction of the European "bride's dress" in parallel with the custom of "white wrapping" (dressing the bride in a white dress) is a result of cultural diffusion. Wedding ceremonies in Karshi and Koson still remain a means of social cohesion. The "consultation oshlari" held before the wedding regulate hierarchical relations between the neighborhood and relatives. In this process, young people learn the procedures for conducting the ceremony from adults, which ensures the transmission of cultural heritage from generation to generation.

The marriage ceremonies of the Uzbeks of Kashkadarya, without losing their historical and ethnographic foundations, are adapting to modern social requirements. The ethno-traditional environment of Kosan and the urbanized culture of Karshi interact, forming a holistic but diverse marriage culture of the oasis. A historical and ethnographic study of the marriage ceremonies of the Uzbeks of the Kashkadarya oasis, in particular the city of Karshi and the Kosan district, allows us to draw the following important conclusions.

and constantly developing system that is actively used in the daily life of the people today. Despite the processes of globalization, these traditions serve as a key factor in

strengthening family relationships and forming a spirit of respect for the heritage of ancestors.

The study revealed subtle differences between the urbanized culture of Karshi and the strong ethnic- tribal traditions of the Koson district . While in Karshi, rituals are more based on social status and modern etiquette, in Koson they are more based on ethnic cohesion and intra-tribal procedures. This indicates how diverse and rich the cultural heritage of the Uzbek people is.

The rapid transformation of rituals today requires their urgent scientific documentation. Recording the unique details in the memories of the older generation, the content of the rituals, prayers and vows, and creating photo and video archives is the only way to convey our national heritage to future generations in its original form.

Marriage ceremonies are the main mechanism ensuring the cohesion of the mahalla and the family institution in Kashkadarya. Through them, collective control, mutual assistance (toyona, hashar) , and spiritual education are implemented. Scientific research of these ceremonies is of great importance not only in history, but also in solving today's social problems (prevention of waste, restoration of national values).

The marriage ceremonies of the Uzbeks of Kashkadarya are a spiritual treasure of our people, formed over the centuries. The in-depth ethnographic study and systematic recording of this heritage remains an urgent task in preserving our national identity and ensuring our cultural security.

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