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Majsarat K. Musaeva,
PhD (in History), Leading Researcher
Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the
Daghestan Scientific Centre of RAS, Makhachkala, Russia
majsarat@yandex.ru

Saida M. Garunova,
Junior Researcher,
G. Tsadasa Institute of Language, Literature and Art of the
Daghestan Scientific Centre of RAS, Makhachkala, Russia
saida-mag@yandex.ru

Robert Chenciner,
Honorary Researcher, Prof.,
St. Antony's College,
University of Oxford, United Kingdom
chenciner@clara.net

CITY WEDDINGS IN DAGHESTAN: A NEW VERSION OF OLD TRADITION, OR ADAPTATION TO GLOBAL TRENDS OF URBANIZATION?

Abstract. Daghestan's urban culture, in its Russian–European variety, is a relatively new phenomenon. Until the 1970's, weddings in cities have been celebrated only by hereditary citizens, i.e. Russians, Armenians, Jews, Azerbaijanis, Kumyks, occasionally, while the rest of the city residents preferred to go to their home villages and play weddings there, after which bride and groom would return if they were going to live in the city. Since the 1990's, with the growth of the urban population due to the influx of the rural population, this tradition has disappeared in Daghestan, as rural residents often have to come to the city to celebrate the wedding.

This article is based on ethnographic materials identified through field observation included. The authors focus on the presentation of the preserved traditional elements of urban wedding rituals and the new ritual and other components that have appeared in recent decades. The analysis of the modern family and public holiday, which the wedding has always been for the peoples of Daghestan, demonstrates the close connection between local traditions and Russian-European innovations, under the influence of various factors. Modern city weddings in Daghestan find in different cities a different ratio between the secular and Islamic components in wedding ceremonies. The authors consider the modern wedding in the cities of Daghestan as a multicomponent ceremony, consisting traditionally of preliminary preparations, the wedding itself and the ceremonies after the wedding.

The innovations used in urban wedding rituals are an expression of value orientations, ethnic, ethical, aesthetic, and ethnocultural preferences of modern Daghestan citizens.

Under the conditions of ethnocultural dynamics influenced by the intensive migration of the population from the mountains to the plain, where all the modern Daghestan cities are located, the “urban culture” radically transforms not only the marriage traditions, but also the very perception of these traditions. A look at the ratio of the traditional and the modern in the urban wedding rituals is now in each generation its own. And perhaps it is partly subjective and needs to be discussed.

Keywords: Daghestan; Daghestanis; urbanization; urban ethnography; city weddings; marriage customs; marital relations.

ГОРОДСКИЕ СВАДЬБЫ В ДАГЕСТАНЕ: НОВАЯ ВЕРСИЯ СТАРЫХ ТРАДИЦИЙ ИЛИ АДАПТАЦИЯ К ГЛОБАЛЬНЫМ ТЕНДЕНЦИЯМ УРБАНИЗАЦИИ?

Мусаева Майсарат Камиловна,
к.и.н., ведущий научный сотрудник
Института истории, археологии и этнографии
Дагестанского научного центра РАН, Махачкала, Россия
majsarat@yandex.ru

Гарунова Саида Магомедхановна,
младший научный сотрудник
Института языка, литературы и искусства им. Г. Цадасы
Дагестанского научного центра РАН, Махачкала, Россия
saida-mag@yandex.ru

Роберт Ченсинер,
почетный научный сотрудник, проф.,
Колледж Св. Антония,
Оксфордский университет, Великобритания
chenciner@clara.net

Аннотация. Городская культура Дагестана в своем российско-европейском разнообразии является относительно новым явлением. До 1970-х годов в городах, свадьбы отмечались только потомственными горожанами: русскими, армянами, евреями, азербайджанцами, кумыками, а остальные жители городов предпочитали отправляться в родные села и играть свадьбы там, после чего жених и невеста возвращались, если они собирались жить в городе. С 1990-х годов с ростом городского населения из-за притока сельского населения, эта традиция в Дагестане исчезла, сельские жители часто вынуждены приезжать в город, чтобы отпраздновать свадьбу.

Статья основана на этнографических материалах, выявленных путем включенного наблюдения на местах. Акцент сделан на презентации сохранившихся традиционных элементов городской свадебной обрядности и появившихся в последние десятилетия новых обрядовых и иных компонентов. Анализ современного семейно-общественного праздника, каковой всегда являлась для народов Дагестана свадьба, демонстрирует тесную связь между местными традициями и российско-европейскими инновациями, под влиянием разнообразных факторов. Современные городские свадьбы в Дагестане обнаруживают в различных городах разное соотношение между светским и исламским компонентами в свадебных церемониях. Авторы рассматривают современную свадьбу в городах Дагестана как многокомпонентный обряд, состоящий традиционно из предварительных приготовлений, самой свадьбы и церемоний после свадьбы.

Используемые в городской свадебной обрядности новшества – это выражение ценностных ориентаций, этических, эстетических и этнокультурных предпочтений современных горожан Дагестана.

В условиях этнокультурной динамики под влиянием интенсивной миграции населения с гор на равнину, где расположены все современные дагестанские города, «городская культура» кардинально трансформирует не только брачные традиции, но и само восприятие этих традиций. Взгляд на соотношение традиционного и современного в городской свадебной обрядности в настоящее время у каждого поколения свой. И возможно он отчасти субъективен и нуждается в обсуждении.

Ключевые слова: Дагестан; урбанизация; городская этнография; городские свадьбы; брачные обычаи; брачные отношения.

Introduction

In the minds of Dagestanis, a wedding and virtually everything related to it is not only a rite, but also an indicator of the social and property status of the married people, and the way they express themselves in society. It should be noted that the attitudes of Dagestanis towards the marriage traditions, as well as the topic of wedding rituals, are examined in the ethnographic literature quite

well. However, most of the publications on family issues cover the period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [1, с. 1–32; 2, с. 197–240; 3, с.; 4, с. 21–38; 5, с.; 6, с. 96–111].

S.Sh. Gadzhieva and Ya.S. Smirnova made a great contribution to the ethnographic study of family-marriage relations, including the traditional wedding rites of the peoples of Daghestan and the North Caucasus [7–12].

Of course, there is a huge literature on how Daghestan women, like all their sisters from the Muslim East, received, thanks for Soviet power, unprecedented freedom, how they freed themselves from the backward traditions. There are extremely few studies that would have comprehended analyses of the evolution of marriage traditions and wedding ceremonies in a reforming society. These processes still remain poorly understood [13; 14].

Meanwhile, ethnocultural dynamics in the conditions when supermassive migration from rural (mountainous and high-mountainous) regions and “urban culture” [15]. Cardinaly transform not only marriage traditions but also the very perception of these traditions, when the whole palette of value orientations changes towards religious and ethnically neutral (global) components of culture, – all these and other trends of modernity require serious analysis. However, this analysis should be preceded by ordinary field work, an elementary description of what is subject to generalization.

If the desire to marry is motivated by the mutual feelings of the young, the manifestation of these feelings, especially the girls, must be restrained. First, it means that for the marriage proposal, the girl should say that she’s got parents and they will decide, so be it. For the future couple, a walk in the park, sitting in cafes and other sorts of dates in the European sense are all excluded. Secondly, young people in order to avoid unnecessary rumours and disappointments shall promptly via a close relative or directly pass-on the serious intentions of their parents. In most cases, this is the way it happens. But there are many examples of blatant disregard by urban youth of traditional.

In practice, the initiative of the parents in the choice of their son’s bride means that they already have a kind of “dossier” on the girl, the preparation of which is not difficult in Daghestan. However, the conventional anonymity of urban life and, typical of our time, and the erosion of traditional moral foundations of the motivation of the marriage initiative may lead to the implementation of the basest of interests. It is expressed in the desire to attract the “ignoramus”/ the rich bride, to provide as help for the young family a temporary dwelling, the property of her father, brother, uncle, or other relatives. In short, the welfare of the newly created family consists of many factors, including the degree of familiarity of the spouses, although that is not necessarily determinative. The requirements that are imposed on the bride and groom depend on the social environment in which they grew up. Examples of ruined women’s lives as a result of marriage with religious extremists, drug addicts, drug traffickers, sex maniacs, etc., make parents and relatives extremely cautious in determining the fate of their children, especially daughters. By all possible means, they dig out information regarding drug addiction, contagious diseases, mental characteristics, or extremist moods. They do everything to protect the marriage of their children from dramatic consequences.

Parents and their young man in the search for a future wife are guided by several principles: the girl and her family should have a good reputation, the mother should be a highly moral, hard-working, hospitable mistress of the home. (It means that the daughter is the same: as the popular Daghestan proverb says, “a rose will never blossom on the nettles.”). “The rating” of a girl is enhanced if she has brothers and sisters who have shown themselves well in society and are well organized. It is quite good if the family of the future bride is financially secure, but this is not so important if the groom’s family does not have financial problems.

In recent years, wealthy young men are looking for potential brides who, after marriage, must wear “hijab” and pray. Therefore, few people are surprised when, after the wedding, a girl who looked quite European yesterday comes to work in a wide tunic long dress with sleeves covering her wrists, and a kerchief tied so that she covers not only her neck and head but also the forehead and part of the chin. Similar metamorphoses have become a widespread phenomenon in all strata of society, including in very wealthy and high-status families.

Before sending his people whom they chose to talk about marriage to the girl’s representatives,

the man, if he has not met her, collects information about the girl through friends, neighbours, co-workers or at her place of study. He sometimes even arranges a kind of verification of her moral qualities, usually with the help of friends. If each other's relatives are not known, it is possible that fellow villagers, as was customary and is now preferable, will find out the other family's pedigree. This is very important for many families.

Pre-weddings entourage and fuss

As soon as the wedding day is determined, the bride and groom go to the registrar's office. At the same time, many prefer to sign i.e. register a few days before the wedding, so as not to create unnecessary trouble in a complex and already busy day of ceremonies.

The new millennium banquet hall is almost a palace complex, designed for weddings, concerts and other events. All the rooms are decorated in European or Oriental styles. It is almost impossible to detect something Daghestani in the design or names of these halls. The most prestigious, popular and expensive are designed for 850 and more people, and their rent will be from 150 to 250 thousand rubles a day. Slightly more modest banquet halls, designed for 500–650 people, rent for 100 to 150 thousand rubles a day. The rental price includes the provision of dishes, and in good rooms, it is expensive and beautiful. For breakages in the so-called after-war battle of utensils, you pay in advance an agreed amount (7–10 thousand rubles). Thus, the price of renting a banquet hall depends on its magnificence, capacity and additional services.

In the cities there also appeared other beautiful halls, in which only religious weddings are held, the so-called "Wedding mawlid." At weddings of this type, there are strict restrictions on alcohol, the menu of serving tables is the same as at ordinary weddings, only dishes must be cooked by Muslim cooks, observing religious canons, with "halal" (allowed) food. At such weddings, there are no traditional dances, but they listen to the beautiful preaching of the presenter, and hymns of religious content. Women, girls, including the bride, and girls over the age of seven, must cover their hair, hands to the wrist, and feet to the ankle. In addition, men at the table should be served by male waiters and women by waitresses.

The wedding day is determined, in a decision made without special ceremony, taking into account all sorts of mutual circumstances – someone from close relatives is ill, the groom needs to leave, etc., in parallel by the groom and the bride, allowing for her necessary preparations.

Preparations for the wedding of the bride and groom are different. It is enough to bring the bride to the house or apartment as required. Nowadays before the wedding, Daghestani grooms have adopted the European tradition of a "bachelor party" (farewell to bachelor life i.e. stag-night) in cafes or restaurants. In addition, they must take care of their wedding dress and shoes. According to tradition, which is still preserved, the groom acquires wedding clothes from money donated by the bride's parents.

The bride, on the other hand, needs to buy clothes for the "suitcase" with the money given to her by the groom's parents. In addition, parents should be helped to buy a dowry, which includes everything from furniture (bedroom, kitchen, living room with a chest of drawers) and everything else necessary for an apartment or a house intended for the groom. Some people adopted the convention that the groom's parents buy furniture for the bedroom, others – furniture for the hall and a carpet, thirdly – kitchen furniture and a TV. This includes bedding, washing machine, dishes, kitchen appliances and equipment, chandeliers, all sorts of household goods, starting with needles and thread, sewing machine, washing powder, and ending with chandeliers and carpets.

As soon as the bride and mother finish the purchase of clothes for the "suitcase", they pass it to the groom's parents and wait for them to be invited to display the wardrobe. A week before the wedding, usually on Thursday or Friday, guests are called: mostly women, young girls, two or three women (usually close relatives) and the groom come. Everyone surrounds the women with the suitcase, for the showing of its contents. At the same time, the gifts of the nearest groomsmen are also shown – often a gold item or an envelope with money. In the past, the status of a bride in a new family was determined by the number of gold items donated by her. Today, the yardstick is the amount of money donated by her to matchmaking, and later, during the wedding ceremony. After the showing of gifts, the bride is treated to exquisite dishes. Then, several relatives of the bride, young and old, deliver the bride's dowry to the groom's house on a truck-transporter. Here

they are met by the groom's relatives. The furniture and household appliances (washing machine, refrigerator, microwave oven and other attributes of modern life) are already sent to the groom's house. On this day, carpets, dishes, and textiles arrive. All is neatly arranged, the apartment is put in order, and the wedding-bed is made. After tea drinking, all the girls and women who came with the dowry are presented with small kerchiefs or scarves.

City weddings rituals and pleasures

The waiters arrive at the hall at seven o'clock in the morning, set the tables and begin serving. From noon (at the bride's house) and from 2 pm (at the groom's house) visitors start to gather. The exception is the Derbent wedding, which starts in the evening, from 6 pm, a tradition that apparently survived from the time when the main population in this city was Mountain Jews and Azeris who celebrated evening weddings.

At the appointed time, the perfectly prepared tables are ready: they are filled with vases of fruit, pastries, various salads, beautifully decorated cut vegetables, cold appetizers such as fish, meat, cheese, with rare exception, red caviar in small rosettes of short pastry, on chips or crackers. All this splendour is complemented by all sorts of juices, drinks, both non-alcoholic and alcoholic (if the wedding is with alcohol), necessarily in beautiful bottles and of good quality.

When the guests sit down at the tables, they start serving hot dishes. In the wedding menu, in addition to the obligatory Daghestan national dishes such as chudu and kurze (a sort of dumpling filled with meat or cottage cheese) corn and wheat flour khinkal with dried sausage, dried or fresh lamb and beef, dishes of Caucasian cuisine dolma (minced meat wrapped in grape leaves) stuffed with minced Bulgarian pepper; and eggplant stuffed by minced meat, shish kebab of all varieties, and sweet pilaf. They must prepare various dishes of European cuisine (pancakes with meat, "French meat" (grilled meat with potatoes, cheese, tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, garlic, mayonnaise, olive oil, pepper, spices, herbs, etc., cooked according to French recipes) chicken medallions in foil, chicken in a nut crust, sturgeon in batter, salmon in a royal way, etc.). Waiters periodically distribute trays with tea. Surprisingly the traditional division of the room into male and female halves is preserved in the banquet halls. Men sit down on the right, women on the left. Some tables, where men and women sit together, are occupied by work colleagues, neighbours, family friends, classmates, etc.

By 11 o'clock in the morning, the groom arrives for the bride (he is usually accompanied by an adult relative-mentor and friends). If they do not need to go to the registry office, he takes the bride with a female mentor ("big friend", *yengue*, "a woman next", etc.) and girlfriends. Before leaving the house of the bride, today the mother gives her a vessel (vase, porcelain jug, etc.), filled with sweets or sugar, for luck. (It then has to be kept in a conspicuous but untouched place for a whole year.) As soon as the wedding procession departs, a bucket of water splashes out behind the car in which the bride and groom are sitting. They say that the bride does not return home, i.e. will not be divorced. The cortege, circling the city, goes to the "photo session", which lasts about an hour, and then to the banquet hall, where the bride's wedding began. The *Tamada* (toastmaster) announces the arrival of the bride and groom. They are met standing with songs and dances. They seat him at a decorated table. And the wedding begins, led by the toastmaster. In recent years, people often preferred a professional toastmaster. The cost of his services varies from 15 to 30 thousand rubles. If the toastmaster at the wedding is a relative or a fellow villager who is known as a man who can conduct weddings, his services are not paid with money. He usually receives a gift. A list of people who will speak at the wedding celebration is agreed in advance. Music is playing. Young people dance a variety of dances. The bride's wedding lasts a maximum of three hours. As soon as the bride and groom dance, everyone understands that they are going to the main wedding – to the groom.

The bride and groom with their friends, the bride and their relatives go to another room, where the groom's mother meets her with a cup of honey (so her words will always be sweet) at the entrance. The bridegroom's wedding lasts longer.

Next, we focus separately on the musical accompaniment of the wedding celebration. In Daghestan there are well-known singers and singers who sing songs to dance tunes. The ethnicity of the singers does not matter, the main thing is that they are popular and know how to "light-up" the wedding. Everyone knows that singers, with rare exception, sing to

the DVD, nevertheless they are paid 15 thousand rubles each in an hour. Try to invite two or four singers! In addition to singers, in recent years it has become popular to invite dance groups in national costumes, especially to greet the bride and groom entering the hall.

Two or three years ago it was fashionable to invite belly dancer girls to weddings, but such exotic fare did not take root. The usual musical accompaniment for the traditional wedding – zurna, agach-kumuz, chungur, chagana or clarinet – almost disappeared from urban weddings. Modern musical preferences of different generations, thus, divide the wedding participants into two age groups, which was not typical for traditional weddings. Now weddings resound with modern rhythms that do not unite the age groups but separate them. Parents consider the marriage of their children as an important family event, and so try to invite all relatives, including the elderly. However, the entertainment part of the wedding is addressed to mostly young people, as it should be. Senior relatives, accustomed to the traditionally high respect for themselves, at weddings are at best marginalized as passive observers.

The dance circle is filled mostly by dancing collective dances. When the bridegroom invites the bride to dance, his friends surround them and throw money at her. One of the girlfriends collects the money and gives it to the female official collector, who puts it in a bag and then transfers it to the bride. Near the end of the celebration, the toastmaster invites all the close relatives of the groom to the dance floor, politely invites the bride to stand and start the dancing. He also talks about some of the traditions of the family in which she lives, wishes them to be a young family of happiness and announces the farewell dance of the bride and groom. They are escorted out through the standing audience.

Newlyweds and their friends

The bride's closest friend, the groom's friend and the female mentor go with the bride and groom. In the apartment of the newlyweds there a set table is readied by two or three close relatives, sent there with food from the wedding. The bride and groom 'disguise' themselves changing into their home clothes, drink tea with friends, who for a time chat and then leave. The bride and groom remain alone and only they know what happened on the wedding night. Early in the morning, the bridegroom must meet a female mentor, her future actions will depend on his mood. If the groom is satisfied, she should notify the mother of the bride and receive a gift (usually a good scarf) for the good news. No one makes a "show" of the chastity of the bride, although it is still important today for the young people's future life. Modern young men in Daghestan are still very serious about the issues of the integrity of the girl. Some, if she honestly confesses, can cover her perceived sin for a certain time (up to six months, a year), so as not to disgrace her parents' position in society, but she will still divorce.

Post-wedding activities

Traditional post-wedding activities: the way out for water, introduction to the household, the hearth, etc. – naturally, urban dwellers do not do, because there is no need for them. But the first visit of the newlyweds together with close relatives to the parents of the bride the next day after the wedding, as well as the invitation of the newlyweds to the groom's relatives in the following days and weeks, remain. Each time, the bride is given small gifts. On her first visit to her parents, she receives from her mother, as a rule, an expensive gift: a TV set, a microwave oven for the kitchen, a carpet, a service, etc. Visits to relatives can take many months because they are invited when they are ready to accept.

Conclusion

Urban culture of Daghestan developed in specific geographic areas of highlands, foothills, coastal plain, steppe, located on one of the busiest intersections of the Eurasian economic and cultural space. In spite of long-term external cultural and linguistic influences, introduction and development of the Russian- European model of urban architecture and urban culture, Daghestan continues to preserve its ethnocultural particularities and identities [16; 17].

As for the question posed by the title of the article, we leave it for further discussion but note that Daghestan in some cultural and domestic aspects is quite Europeanized, but in general it is quite traditional.

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