Wedding Ceremony in the Outline of Tatar Prose

Nuriyeva Liliya Failevna¹, Sayfulina Flera Sagitovna², Luiza Firdusovna Zamalieva³, Zhanat Askerbekkizi Aimukhambet⁴

¹, ², ³ Kazan (Volga region) Federal University
⁴ L.N. Gumilyev Eurasian National University

Abstract

This article is devoted to the study of a folk wedding ceremony reflection in a literary text outline as the source of artistic imagery. Wedding ceremonies are one of the most striking and ancient examples of people spiritual culture, which attracted the attention of travelers, researchers, missionaries, and scientists since the 18th century. In the 19th century, the customs and rites of the Tatar people attracted the attention of such famous scholars as the German ethnographer, historian, and archaeologist Karl Fuchs, and the Tatar enlightener ethnographer Kayum Nasry. In the future, wedding ceremonies were the subject of research by the scientists of the Society of Archeology, History and Ethnography at the Imperial Kazan University named after M. P. Pinegin, G. Akhrmarov, and Y. Koblov.

In the twentieth century a lot of work was carried out concerning the collection and study of ritual folklore, including wedding ceremonies by the scientists of the Institute of Language, Literature and Art at G. Ibragimov Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan.

In this article, the object of our attention is the implementation of wedding ceremonies in the literary texts of Tatar writers.

The aim of the work is to study the function of wedding ceremony inclusion in Tatar fiction of the first half of the 20th century. The object of this study was the selected works by Tatar writers whose work dates back to the first half of the 20th century: “The fate of the Tatar dirl” by Galimjan Ibragimov, “Son-in-law” by Gayaz Iskhaki, “My Motherland is the green cradle” by Humer Bashirov, and “Ring” by F. Husni, where the wedding rites of the Tatar people are revealed most clearly and widely in the canvas of an artistic text.

Hermeneutical, comparative and cultural-historical research methods are used in the work.

The study of the issue makes it possible to draw conclusions that a significant place is given to the image of such a large-scale event as a wedding ceremony in the Tatar literature of the first half of the XX century. They give a wide opportunity to represent the life of the Tatar village, about the priorities of the people in a family development, about folk traditions, about the elements of clothing and jewelry, and other ethnographic elements.

It turns out that writers pursued a whole range of tasks in their works turning to the image of the wedding ceremony. For some writers, the description of the wedding serves as a source of artistic imagery, for others, the description of the wedding stages reveals the characters of the heroes, for third authors, the presence of a wedding in a text outline serves as an indicator of the people festive culture.

Keywords: Tatar literature; prose; folklorism in literature; wedding ceremonies
1. Introduction

Certain actions based on beliefs are at the heart of any folk rite. The rite is considered one of the models of the world ordering, which is the guarantor of prosperity and morality.

Over time, under the influence of Islam, myth-making actions are clothed in Muslim rituals, and the ideological basis takes a formal form. But the rituals associated with the wedding are still preserved and performed although they lost their original appearance.

Marriage is the most crucial step in a person’s life, which indicates that he and his chosen one have entered the path of independent life. A traditional wedding is a complex set of customs and rituals. The prevailing wedding ceremony was perceived in this complex as a purely national phenomenon, which has its own specific features. These features, to one degree or another, are considered in the works of famous Tatar folklorists, dialectologists, ethnographers such as M. Bakirov, F. Bayazitova, and R. Urazmanova [1-3].

There is often a description of the wedding rite elements in the plot of Tatar writer art works, as the reflection of rural life realities. He finds an image of all types of marriages among the Tatars of the first half of the 20th century in the literary texts selected for analysis: marriages by prior agreement and matchmaking; unauthorized departure of a girl to her husband’s house without parental permission (“yabysyp chygu” - literally: sticking, attached to him) by stealing the bride (by prior conspiracy of the young or without it).

2. Methods

A set of methods was used in this article, where the hermeneutic analysis of a literary text remains in the spotlight, since the hermeneutics method makes it possible to consider a literary text in the context of literary and cultural traditions, comparisons created during the production of images with unique aesthetic experience and, finally, to expand spiritual horizons. As was indicated in foreign sources, the hermeneutic approach assumes that the reader, by joining the diverse cultural values recorded in the literature, finds his place on their borders [4; 5]. In addition, the work uses comparative and cultural-historical methods for a literary text study.

3. Results and Discussion

Modern Tatar literary studies are interested in the study of all aspects of Tatar literature development. Many literary scholars turned to the study of the national literary process development at the beginning of the twentieth century: in some works, the object of research was children’s or religious literature [6; 7]; in some other works, the Tatar literature of this period was studied from the position of its reflection in the Russian press [8]. In recent years, the research of Tatar literature development history in the dialogue of literatures and cultures of the Turkic peoples has also remained in the focus of Tatar literary scholar scientific research [9; 10].

The mutual influence of folklore and fiction was also of interest to many scholars; for centuries, these close forms of verbal art have been in a close creative relationship and developed in line with a single national culture. Certain issues regarding the influence of folklore on the development of written literature were the subject of research by Tatar scientists: F. Akhmetova, A. Sadekova, F. Saifullina, and others [11-13].

The elements of the wedding ceremony, depicted in the literary text, perform various functions. A comprehensive analysis aimed at wedding ceremony role and place identification in the studied works allowed us to highlight some features of their use in a literary text.

A special place in the analyzed works of selected authors is given to the aesthetic function. The wedding and all the rituals associated with it were remembered as the most beautiful celebration in human life.

Pre-wedding ceremonies: preparation for the wedding, home and household decoration with numerous ethnographic details (hand-embroidered towels, scarves, etc.), preparation of national and specific dishes, matchmakers’ gifts (groom’s pancakes, groom’s wedding dress, groom’s dumplings), description of clothes, hats and jewelry of the main culprits of identity and guests, groom’s gifts, the bride’s dowry, prepared by her personally from an early age, demonstrate the aesthetic attitudes of the people (G. Ibragimov “The fate of the Tatars”, G. Iskham “Son-in-law”, G. Bashirov “My motherland is a green cradle”).

A certain place in the image of a wedding celebration is occupied by a psychological and evaluative task. As a rule, the degree of the ceremony description clarifies the author’s attitude to the character, to the events in which his image is revealed. The story of marrying Gulban takes a significant place (chapters I-XXI) in the story “The fate of the Tatars” by G. Ibragimov. During preparation for the wedding and its holding, the characters of the heroes are revealed in great detail. A special place in the work is devoted to the disclosure of the bride’s father image, Nuri. Choosing a groom, he is guided by mercantile interests; he is not interested in either the opinion of his own spouse or the fate of his sixteen-year-old daughter. Trying to stop an unpleasant conversation with his wife, the hero resolutely declares: “mutual love marriage is unfortunate. What is destined by Allah is to be.” The writer at the beginning of the work indicates the tyrannical nature of the bride’s father. The author notes with great irony that Nuri was married seven times! The author’s sympathies are on the side of his son Shaykhulla, who neglected his father’s will and married for
love. Due to the discord with his father and stepmother, he was forced to ask the bride’s hands from her father. The secret of family happiness of young people is simple: hard work and harmony between spouses.

G. Ibragimov, defending the idea of marriage for love, tells the story of another couple marriage - Usman and Gulizum (sister of one of Nuri’s daughter-in-law). The young were friends for two years and decided to get married, although the bridegroom was to serve in the Tsar’s army. Gulbanu, the main character of the work, unlike her brother, did not find the strength and determination to neglect customs and escape with her beloved. She can only reconcile herself with fate and agree with the choice of her parent.

In another famous novel “The daughter of the steppe” by G. Ibrahimov, Karlygachsvylu refuses to meet with his bridegroom Kaltay (despite the fact that they were engaged since their childhood to bond the oldest two Kazakh families), because she loves Aryslanbay.

An important role in the works is played by the historical function. All the analyzed works reflect the features of the way of life of that time, against which the main events of the story take place. So, the stories by G. Ibragimov, and G. Ishkhani tell about such a phenomenon as polygamy. Fate prepared such a test for Maftuhe, one of the heroines in the story “The fate of the Tatars” by G. Ibragimov, the wife of the elder brother of the main character. The girl sincerely fell in love with her husband, although she was not familiar with him before the wedding. However, childlessness forced them to decide to bring their second wife to the house.

The structure-forming task of a wedding ceremony depiction is realized in the analyzed stories by G. Ibragimov and G. Ishkhani, since all the main events of these stories are connected with the wedding preparation and conduct, where the characters of heroes are revealed in great detail.

For Tatars, as for other nations, marriage is connected with the act of management: the adoption of a new member in the family was considered from the point of view of additional working hands and the prospects of procreation. In this regard, attention is often paid to the bride’s family in all the works (even if they are not familiar, they tried to find out all the information about the family up to seven generations), to the quality of the girl’s upbringing in the family, since her chastity, hard work, and ability to housekeeping are the main components of her well-being in a new family. G. Ibragimov ethnographically carefully describes the preparation process for the wedding in the family of old Nuri.

The scene of future matchmaker arrival on rich horses is characterized by internal dynamism. The author seeks to emphasize the communal nature of life in the village: the whole village is involved in the action, the “swarm” element of folk life appears before the eyes of the reader. Even the purely random arrival of the eldest son Sheikhel and his wife Marfugi, who came for the blessing of their parents, is very helpful. They immediately connect to this action: Sheikhel meets the matchmaker, and Marfuga helps in the kitchen.

Describing the clothes and the interior of the village house in detail, G. Ibragimov achieves the image authenticity. The reader gets the opportunity to get acquainted with the life of prosperous Tatar family of the early twentieth century. At the same time, the author draws the reader’s attention to the social inequality of the villagers. There are also very poor people among the heroes.

A rich dowry to Gulban was the reason for her unhappy marriage. The father forbade his daughter to return to the house, since in this case all the dowry would remain in her husband’s house, and they had to return the bridegroom’s dowry.

G. Ibrahimov, trying to identify the uniqueness of the national way of life, draws attention to the strict regulation inherent in wedding rituals. The author describes the wedding in detail. He draws attention not only to the hospitality of the hosts, but considers it is important to emphasize that, according to the Muslim custom, the wedding feast takes place in the "male" half of the house for men, and in the "female" part for women. Wedding "ranks" - characters are involved in the wedding celebration (groom, bride, matchmakers, parents, mullahs, and close relatives).

The author draws attention to the mythologism inherent in villagers’ thinking. So, for example, the episode with the decoration and young people stay in Kiyak Kelta (a guest house prepared to meet the groom) indicated that the villagers fired shotguns to intimidate evil spirits that could harm young people. Thus, it should be noted that one of the author’s undoubted merits is the reproduction of Tatar life realities at the beginning of the twentieth century and the detailed fixing of traditional wedding ceremony elements, many of which have been forgotten now. The author emphasizes that all these details are important, the whole rite is subordinate to the corresponding canons, consistency, there is a certain meaning-desire in everything. In this regard, the analyzed novel "The fate of the Tatars" by G. Ibragimov clearly stands out among the works where there are the wedding ceremony descriptions. G. Ishkhani, like G. Ibrahimov, presents a wide panorama of the Tatar life at the beginning of the 20th century in his story “Son-in-law”. Describing in detail the individual links of the wedding ceremony (matchmaking, bride’s dowry preparation, the groom treating, etc.), the classic of Tatar literature ironizes his heroes. The beggar’s son-in-law enjoys their attention and respect: not only his wife’s parents, even her brother and his family working for the good of the new family, are left without money. G. Bashirov talks about the wedding of his sister Unmikamal in the novel “My Motherland Is a Green Cradle”. The story of the heroine’s marriage is similar to the fate of Gulban in the story by G. Ibragimov in many
respects: the matured daughter brings a lot of emotions to parents: knowing Ummicamal’s sympathies for the rootless Akhat, they fear that the daughter might run away from home. But the fear of a parental curse makes the heroine submit to the will of her father and mother.

The author’s parents also got married in the same way: Gumar’s mother had a beloved boyfriend, and she was married to the widower who was much older than her. At the same time, the author notes that they fell in love with each other, and were able to create a good family. But mentioning such unequal marriages by age, the writer shows that newlyweds did not have the right to choose a life partner a hundred years and more ago.

The novel also describes another love story. Their fellow villager falls in love with a Russian girl from a neighboring village. But before the revolution, nobody blessed interethnic marriage: neither parents, nor religious figures. Mullah did not agree to read them nikah (a religious rite of marriage among Muslims), and the priest refused to marry them. And they had to leave their native land.

Family rites are mentioned poorly in the works by F. Husni. The writer does not describe all the elements of the rite; one can learn from his works that the following marriage options existed at the beginning of the last century and in the 30-50-ies:

1) the option of the girl’s unauthorized departure to her husband’s house without parental permission: the main character of the story “Gyilmenis”, avoiding marriage with an old man, fled with her fiance;
2) bride theft: the main character of “The Ring” story Aydar steals the bride Vasilya on the day of her Nikah with another person;
3) acquaintance and marriage of young people by agreement. The main characters of the story “One comes, one leaves” are introduced by relatives.

A variant of the Tatar Soviet wedding can be seen in the story “A man leaves - the song remains” by M. Magdiev. In the description of the Soviet wedding, the writer points to the changes in ancient traditions: the newlyweds are sitting in the center of the celebration, alcoholic drinks are on the wedding table, they are making toasts in honor of the young.

Not only ethnographic details were changed (instead of wedding vehicles with matchmakers - a wedding procession of cars and motorcycles, with the newlyweds in the first car, there are national dishes that are served “in a new way”, “in a city like way”), but also the relationship between close people: the daughter-in-law at the wedding cheers on the mother-in-law (earlier the daughter-in-law covered her face from her husband’s relatives for several years after marriage), etc.

4. Summary

Thus, the functions of such reminiscences are the revival of the folk customs in the minds of readers that were present in the life of the Tatar village people since ancient times. Ritual elements were present not only as a poetic heritage in the works that were the research subject of this article, they also served as the reflection of the historically formed way of people life, which remained in the past over time.

5. Conclusions

The study allows us to conclude that the analyzed works by G. Ibragimov, G. Ishkaki, G. Bashirov, F. Husni, and M. Magdiev of the first half of the twentieth century are the source for studying the traditions and customs of that time.

About a hundred years have passed since their writing, many of the wedding tradition elements described by these authors are already lost, and forgotten. They are not implemented in practice. Therefore, the study of these works makes it possible to trace the national wedding tradition and lifestyle of the people of that time. They describe the forms of marriage, all the ethnographic details of the wedding custom during a certain stage of the last century. Over time, the value of these works will be increased, as they can become the only source of wedding rituals of that period.

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References


