



FIRE CULT RITUALS IN UZBEK WEDDING CEREMONIES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF SAMARKAND REGION TERRITORIES)

Sh.S. Turayeva

*Samarkand State University named after Sharof Rashidov
3rd year student of the Faculty of History*

ANNOTATION This article examines the manifestation of ancient beliefs, customs, and rituals associated with the fire cult within the system of traditional Uzbek family and domestic ceremonies, specifically in wedding rituals. The historical and mythological roots of these ceremonies are analyzed in connection with the concepts found in the "Avesta", the sacred text of Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, the paper highlights the local variants and symbolic-semantic meanings of rituals that have survived to this day in the villages of Bulungur, Jomboy, Ishtixon, Toyloq, and Urgut districts of the Samarkand region, such as "o't-o'choq" (fire-hearth), "yog' soldi" (pouring oil), rotating a lamp around the bridal curtain (chimildiq) and the newlyweds, and lighting a bonfire at the entrance gate.

Keywords: Avesta, fire cult, wedding ceremony, Samarkand region, o't-o'choq, lamp rotation, rituals, yanga, chimildiq, mythological concept.

Introduction. It is well known that the core of the mythology of the "Avesta", which is considered one of our magnificent spiritual values, was formed by ancient religious beliefs associated with the sanctification of earth, water, and fire, as well as the ideas of wishing for fertility, abundance, and prosperity. This source, which served as an important stage in the historical evolution of our ancestors' thinking, urged people to believe in the great power of goodness, to be honest, pure, compassionate, to value labor, to preserve the pristine beauty of nature like the apple of one's eye, and to glorify creativity and constructiveness.

The blessings and legends that make up the structural parts of the "Avesta", which emerged as the product of the immensely vast intellectual potential and creative talent of our ancestors who lived in the distant past, were initially created orally and performed by specially trained priests during the ceremonies and rituals of Zoroastrianism. For this reason, the traditions related to the creation and popularization of this great spiritual value, particularly the ancient concepts and customs associated with the belief in the fire cult, played a crucial role in the formation of the family and domestic ritual system of the Central Asian peoples, including the Uzbeks.



The ethnological observations conducted by us and the analysis of materials recorded in various sources have shown that numerous customs created under the influence of ancient concepts related to the fire cult have been preserved in Uzbek rituals.

The main part. The interpretation of the fire cult within rituals is clearly manifested in the "o't-o'choq" (fire-hearth) custom—one of the ancient traditions within the structure of the Uzbek wedding ceremony—where the bride, on the day after her arrival, goes to the hearth together with her mother-in-law and pours oil into the burning hearth. According to information provided by the prominent scholar H. Zarifov, a custom named "yog'-o'choq" (oil-hearth) existed in Mugol village of the Bulungur district in the Samarkand region. On the day after the wedding, when the fire in the family hearth blazed up, the bride was made to bow (salom) to the hearth. During this, the bride threw a piece of tail-fat (quyruq yog'i) into the burning hearth. This very custom was called "yog'-o'choq". [1.1.]

According to Rahmatilla Yusuf ogli, in Kildon village of the Bulungur district, the mother-in-law holds the hand of the newly arrived bride, dips her pinky finger into clarified butter (sarimoy), and makes a wish saying: "May the bride be gentle and mild!". [2.123.]

In the Jomboy district, the ceremony held on the day after the wedding is called "yog' soldi" or "yog' solish" (pouring oil). In this, the mother-in-law dips her daughter-in-law's hand into clarified butter or pours oil onto her hand. In the "o'tga chaqirdi" (called to the fire) custom, which is practiced in the Yangiobod village, on the day after the wedding, the bride pours oil into the hearth in the presence of neighboring and relative women with the intention that the bride and groom may always live an abundant and prosperous life and never face poverty. The essence of the "o'choq oldi" (before the hearth) custom recorded in the Jomboy district—where on the day after the wedding, the mother-in-law presents a gift, saying, "My daughter-in-law has become the owner of the hearth"—also signifies holding the family hearth sacred and wishing for a prosperous life for the new family. [3.200-201.]

In some areas of the Toyloq district of the Samarkand region, the custom of "yog' to'kdi" (pouring oil), i.e., the newly arrived bride pouring oil into the hearth, is performed on the day of the "bet ochar" (revealing the bride's face) ceremony. The "mother" (kayvoni/designated wedding matron) who steps forward to guide the bride brings her "daughter"—the bride—to the hearthside and makes her pour a spoonful of oil into the burning fire. As K. Shoniyozov, who studied the wedding ceremonies



of the Karluks, writes, during the "bosh bog'lash" (tying the headscarf) ceremony held on the day after the wedding, one of the elderly matrons handed a ladle containing a little oil to the bride and led her to the hearth. Then, saying "May your hand be greasy (blessed with wealth)," she made the bride pour the oil from the ladle into the hearth. [4.151-152.] This custom signified that the bride had transformed into a member of the new family and brought blessings, prosperity, and abundance to the groom's household.

Since ancient times, the hearth has been considered highly sacred. It was forbidden to extinguish the fire in the hearth by sprinkling water over it, as people believed that the fire should die out on its own. The reason was that they feared if the fire in the hearth was intentionally extinguished, some calamity would occur in that family. The curse "May water be poured into your hearth" also originated from this belief. According to popular views, the spirits of the ancestors of that household appeared in the fire of the hearth. Extinguishing the fire in the hearth meant losing the symbolic support and spiritual patronage of the ancestors' spirits. [5.191-192.] In some places, a newly arrived bride swept the hearth and the clay oven (*tandir*) before beginning the household chores. It was hoped that if she did so, the bride's first child would be a boy.

In the Ishtixon district, the newly arrived bride sweeps the hearth and the *tandir* before commencing household chores. It is believed that if she does so, her first child will be a boy.

The historical roots of the custom of rotating a lamp around the bride and groom on the wedding night are also traced back to the fire cult. In the Ishtixon district, similar to the weddings in the Qashqadaryo region, after the bride is carried on a carpet to the groom's side, a lamp is rotated around the bride and the *yangas* (the bride's aunts/matrons of honor) who came with her. According to information provided by the ethnographer G. Tosheva, in Qarshi and some districts of Samarkand, a lamp was shown to the groom and bride on the wedding night with the aim that their life together might be bright. As Iso Ernazar o'g'li identified, the people of Bulungur show a lamp to them at the wedding saying, "May the groom and the girl both be warm-faced (have mutual affection and attraction)." [6.78.]

In the Urgut district of the Samarkand region, the lamp is rotated around the bride-groom and the *chimildiq* (wedding curtain). In the districts of the Khorezm region, as well as in Urgut, the lamp that is lit in the bride's house and rotated around the bride and groom is carried by the *yangas* to the groom's house without being



extinguished. They make this good wish believing that if done so, the lamp of the bride and groom's family will never go out.

In Ishtixon, on the day of "kelintushdi" (the arrival of the bride), the future bride does not wait in her own home, but rather stands "hidden" with her friends in the house of one of the neighbors.

The *yangas* bring the bride, and after entering through the door, they seat the bride on a small mattress (*ko'rpacha*), place a baby in her arms, and lift her on the mattress to bring her before the groom. After the groom lifts and helps the bride down, one of the *yangas* rotates the lamp around the *chimildiq*, reciting the following ritual verses:

*May the lamp rotate from the lamp,
May the lamp rotate from the chimildiq,
If he does not give the pair of coins,
May the groom rotate around the girl.
If he gives the pair of coins,
May the groom rotate from the girl! [7.9806.]*

Another specimen of this traditional song performed while rotating a lamp around the bride and groom was recorded by the folklorist B. Sarimsog'ov from Buvishoy Turdimova, a resident of Qo'shtamg'ali village in the Qo'shrobood district:

*May the lamp rotate from the lamp,
May the chimildiq rotate from the patchwork quilt,
If the groom pays the expenses,
May his yanga rotate around the groom.
If the bride pays the expenses,
May her yanga rotate around the bride.
May their lives be long,
May their affections be warm,
May their paths be bright,
May their sustenance be plentiful,
May their children be numerous. [8.9806.]*

Conclusion. Furthermore, the custom of rotating the bride and groom around a fire or passing them through it in the Uzbek wedding ceremony, with the aim of protecting them from the onslaught of evil forces and symbolically purifying them, also emerged on the basis of these ancient concepts. The custom where the groom's relatives and friends light a fire at the gate when the bride is being brought in is called "o't yoqdi" (lighting the fire). As noted by the linguist A. Jo'raboyev, this custom expresses the noble intention that "the bride and groom may always live in



harmony and peace." Among the Uzbeks belonging to the "Saroy" tribe, this custom, called "alamazak", is very ancient and is connected with the tradition of sanctifying fire. [9.179.]

In Khorezm, during the wedding, bonfires were lit on both sides of the path where the bride would arrive, and the "bo'lish arava" (wedding carriage) carrying the bride traveled toward the groom's house only after passing through the middle of that fire. G.P. Snesev emphasizes that this custom "originated on the basis of the fire purification ritual of the peoples of Central Asia". [10.82.]

Consequently, the historical foundations of such traditional customs and rituals within the system of Uzbek family and domestic ceremonies are directly linked to the system of religious beliefs expressed in Zoroastrian rituals and the mythology of the "Avesto" regarding the fire cult. This demonstrates that the "Avesto", which is one of our great spiritual values that played an important role in the development of the artistic-aesthetic thinking of the Eastern peoples, also exerted a major influence on the development of Uzbek oral poetic creativity.

REFERENCES:

1. Juraev, M., & Sattorov, U. (compilers, preface and commentary authors). Narratives Inherited from Ancestors. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House, 1998, p. 123.
2. Juraboev, A. Names of Wedding Ceremonies in the Uzbek Language (Based on the Materials of Andijan Group Dialects). Dissertation for the Degree of Candidate of Philological Sciences. Tashkent, 1971, pp. 200–201.
3. Shaniyazov, K. The Karluk Uzbeks. Tashkent, 1964, pp. 151–152.
4. Snesev, G. P. Relics of Pre-Islamic Beliefs and Rituals among the Uzbeks of Khorezm. Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1969, pp. 191–192.
5. Tosheva, G. S. Wedding Ceremonies of the Uzbeks of the Kashkadarya Oasis in the 20th Century. Dissertation for the Degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences. Tashkent, 2002, p. 78.