Marriage and Wedding Ceremonies Among the Chechens

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Abstract. In the past, all the peoples of the Caucasus considered marriage and family as the greatest human values, and marriage as a moral duty of every person. Only marriage made it possible to attract the necessary working hands to an ordinary peasant family, and in the future - to increase its production potential at the expense of grown-up daughters and especially sons. Only this made it possible to conduct a full-fledged economy also because in a traditional society there was a strictly regulated inter-sex division of labor between a man who earns a living and a woman who serves him with her housework. Not the last role was played by the fact that in the conditions of such a society with its regorical patriarchal foundations, only marriage could ensure normal communication between a man and a woman, not to mention procreation. Finally, the traditions of paramilitary patriarchal-feudal life, characteristic of most peoples of the Caucasus, added another one to the main motives for marriage - to expand the circle of family ties in order to provide themselves with additional support and protection.

1 Introduction

“Marriage,” wrote B.K. Dalgat, is considered necessary for every decent person, because it is desirable for everyone to have offspring, both to continue their kind and to increase it [3].

Celibacy was rare. As a rule, it was forced. Only people with physical or mental defects remained unmarried or unmarried.

In addition to celibacy due to monastic vows, there were also cases (for example, among Armenians) of voluntary celibacy of girls who remained in the family and took a religious vow, which was also encouraged by the church. Both among Christians and Muslims, it also happened that a girl stayed up and did not get married, waiting for her older brother or sister to marry earlier. The people treated this without condemnation, and sometimes with respect [1]. But in principle, the attitude towards celibacy was dismissive.

Remarriages were allowed not only for men, but also for women. However, they were practiced much more often by the former than by the latter. There were several reasons for this, including a number of local customs. At the same time, the prospects for marriages, especially remarriages for men and women, were determined not only by customs, but also

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by the general situation in the “marriage market”, and it depended on the sex and age structure of the population [4].

Until the end of the XIX century, in the Caucasus, men predominated numerically. This, first of all, applied to the Muslim peoples, who, according to the Caucasian Statistical Committee, had a very high mortality rate, both for little girls and women aged 13 to 17, from early marriage, in general, from exhausting labor and too much light clothing [5].

Among the Chechens and Ingush, marriage was strictly exogamous, the failure to comply with which caused condemnation. Marriages were forbidden between members of family-related groups. The framework of exogamy was completely extended to family members, prevailing on relatives of the second, third and fourth weeding up to the seventh degree of kinship, and the highest degree of nobility was considered to be the veneration of kinship in terms of exogamy between men and women of an ethnic unit, like the Chechen taip.

In the main time we are describing, the Chechens, in terms of exogamy, strove to follow the norms of Sharia, their customs prohibiting marriages within kinship were overwhelmingly similar to the customs of other peoples who profess Islam.

There were also many marriage restrictions of confessional, national and other nature [8].

Sharia forbade the marriage of a Muslim woman with non-Muslims. The Russian Orthodox Church allowed the marriages of Christians only with Christians [11].

It was reported about some peoples (Azerbaijanis, Chechens, etc.) that the marriage of sisters must necessarily have been preceded by the marriage of an older brother, although the age limits of marriage were still taken into account. Violation of all these prohibitions and restrictions entailed certain sanctions [9].

2 Research Methodology

In the post-October period, the fate of marriage prohibitions and restrictions developed in different ways. Socio-economic, political and cultural-educational changes in the life of the peoples of the Caucasus, as well as intensive migration processes characteristic of many of them, gradually expanded the range of marriage choices.

Marriage was not a matter of a single individual, but of a whole team of kindred families. It should be noted that the Chechens, preparing to intermarry with another surname, sought to see worthy relatives in their person. Of great importance in matchmaking was the religious affiliation of the bride and groom. Chechens, when entering into a marriage, sought to intermarry with a family where there were many men, which can be attributed to an echo of the past.

The beauty of a man was not taken into account. Even injuries (for example, received in battle or during horse riding) were considered honorable. Men’s beauty was given less importance than women’s, but still a handsome figure, a clean face, good hair were also valued in the groom.

The important qualities that were required of the girl were moral purity and diligence. Along with this, the bride was required to have “purity of blood” and “a rich dowry.”

The ability to give healthy offspring, both physically and in its moral, ethical and psychological terms, was also taken into account, for the purpose of which the hetalogical tree of the bride’s surname was thoroughly studied [2].

General changes in the family and social life of the peoples of the Caucasus led to changes in these motives for marriage choice. With the loss or significant reduction in the production functions of the family, attention began to turn not so much to housekeeping, to the type of activity and professional advancement of the bride and groom, although the former motives for choosing did not lose their significance among the peasantry.
In deciding the question of marriage, the main importance belonged to the parents, who did not bypass the members of the patronomia when deciding. Among the Ingush, the father acted as the sovereign arbiter of the fate of his children, while among the Chechens, the mother to some extent took part in deciding the fate of her children, although marriages in most cases were made by mutual consent of the young. The Chechens used to say: “Bezamtsa tsa kholli dezalin - irs khir dats” (A family without love will not be happy). However, in this way the Chechens differed from all the peoples of the North Caucasus [6].

3 Results and Discussions

A wedding (Chech. “Lovzar” - a game) is a complex set of customs and rituals, and at the same time one of the most striking elements of traditional and modern Chechen culture. Marriage made it possible to acquire a new status, create a family, new relationships between spouses. Naturally, all this together created an integral, beautiful spectacle that had an extremely emotional impact on all those present.

The Chechens, as rightly noted by S.-M.A. Khasiev, the wedding cycle included four stages. “The first of these, of course, is the period from the achievement of puberty by young people to the departure (or in a different way) of the girl from the parental home. Here, attention should be paid, first of all, to the rights and standards generally accepted at a particular time and in a given society, designed to promote or prevent young people in their acquaintance, in further communication and, most importantly, in choosing a future spouse as a girl, and a future wife as a boyfriend. This most important stage is conditionally called by us the “institution of courtship” [10].

A wedding in the life of Chechens was a great and joyful event. Young people not only had fun here, but it was also a place for brides and grooms, a place for choosing brides and grooms. The wedding was a holiday not only for the family and relatives, but also for the village youth. The latter was preparing for this event in advance, the girls embroidered handkerchiefs, sewed holiday dresses, young people came up with witty puzzles and riddles.

A Chechen wedding required large material costs, so the owner, who arranged it, prepared for it in advance. The average family, no matter how well it was financially provided, could not bear all the expenses for arranging a wedding. In addition to fellow villagers, numerous guests from other villages came to the wedding.

Chechens paid great attention to the preparation of various dishes served at the wedding table. The best culinary specialists of the village were invited to prepare wedding dishes. Many men were considered skillful masters of meat dishes. They were also invited to the wedding as cooks.

The family of the newlywed, if she was financially secure, slaughtered several bulls, rams, etc.

A feast designed for several days and for a large number of people. Could arrange only wealthy families. The majority of the rural population did not have such an opportunity. Most of the material wedding expenses fell on the share of close relatives of the newlyweds.

The Chechens had such a tradition. At wedding celebrations and funerals, all the inhabitants of the village provided each other with material assistance. By the day of the wedding, relatives, neighbors and acquaintances brought various dishes to the house of the newlywed. The gifts were usually carried by the woman, but they were seen as a gift from the family. This tradition continues to this day.

The host announced the wedding day in advance. On his behalf, young relatives reported on the upcoming wedding. If it was supposed to arrange horse races at a wedding, then long before the festival this was reported to other auls. If on the eve of the wedding a
relative of the newlyweds or a resident of the village died, the wedding celebration was postponed.

Almost all adults in the village came to the wedding. Women from other villages were taken on a cart. It happened that a relative brought the girl to the festival on horseback. Relatives living in other villages invited their neighbors and acquaintances to the wedding. “Today they also invite their neighbors, and especially they bring young girls” [9]. Men and women themselves went to the festival. The girl came to the wedding only if she had an official invitation.

They brought the girl to the wedding and escorted home the relatives of the newlywed - usually a young man and a girl. There were cases when girls were kidnapped at a wedding. In addition, in general, according to custom, a girl was not supposed to go to the celebration alone.

At the end of the XIX century, early 20th century in Chechnya, the main forms of marriage were: a) matchmaking marriages; b) runaway marriages; c) marriages by kidnapping. The last two varieties can be combined into a “marriage by withdrawal.”

Any of these forms of marriage consisted of several stages: a) the choice of the bride; b) matchmaking (runaway, withdrawal); c) a wedding d) post-wedding ceremonies.

Like many peoples of the North Caucasus, the Chechens had a marriageable age of 17–20 for men and 15–16 for women [1]. But young men got married, as a rule, at the age of 23-25 and more. Early marriages for Chechens were insignificant.

According to our materials, a Chechen has forced marriages, i.e. marriages by abduction were rare, and such marriages were viewed negatively. There was such an expression: “Konakh yadina, ekna itch yalor yats” (a young man who respects himself does not marry, having kidnapped or betrothed). There were other forms of marriage as well.

Weddings were mostly held in autumn and winter. It was considered undesirable to marry in April (the month of the cuckoo), citing the fact that the cuckoo does not have its own nest [7].

Usually a guy, after several meetings with a girl, makes her an offer, and if she agrees, she sets the time for getting married and gives something as a sign, that is, a ritual takes place (literally, “give something in hand”) [10].

Young, i.e. The groom does not take part in the wedding. The groom for a few days left the house to his best friend. Family relations were established with the owners of this house, the groom stayed at a friend’s house for 3-4 days or a week [9].

Of the relatives who came to the wedding, some were appointed responsible for the solemn part, others for refreshments, lighting, heating and the trip for the bride, etc.

Chechens considered Thursdays to be happy days for a wedding.

From the very beginning of the wedding celebration, music played in the groom’s courtyard. In the morning, guests began to arrive, bringing gifts. Before, people went for the bride, they were treated, the participants in the wedding procession were determined.

Travelers are sent for the bride, including the groom’s friend - the best man. On the way to the bride and back, the wedding procession has fun, the accordion plays, when they return, they shoot from guns, and earlier horsemen showed their art in shooting, fencing and horse riding [9].

The folk wedding among the Chechens has always been full of music, songs, dances, colorful rituals. The culminating act of the wedding celebration was the bride’s move to the groom’s house, which was preceded by the marriage union being sealed with a religious rite performed by the mullah, if possible secretly [10]. The bride usually went in the first half of the day.

The wedding procession consisted of relatives (sometimes he also participated), 30-40 young people, a group of horsemen, sometimes with a flag. They sent with the youth and a woman, brisk in the language (relative of the groom)
For the bride, a special cart was prepared, different from the others, better decorated with carpets, etc., and a woman, a relative of the groom, rode in it. The wedding procession also included the groom’s relatives (to regulate order, etc.).

At this time, relatives (including the groom’s relatives) usually gathered in the bride’s house and waited for the wedding procession. A meal was prepared for the guests. Taking the bride to the groom’s house had the character of a violent act, as it were. there was a comic struggle for the bride [9].

When the wedding train leaves, relatives or fellow villagers of the bride can delay the train with a cloak or a rope pulled across the street and take a ransom. A ransom is also taken when the bride is taken out of her parental home.

Relatives and friends dressed the bride. The richness of clothes and decorations depended on the wealth of the family [11]. The Chechens put on a white chiffon scarf on the head of the bride, and gave the wedding dress and pinned an unused needle.

As already noted, the Sharia registration of marriage among the Vainakhs took place secretly and took place either in the bride’s house or in the house where she was left before the wedding with the groom’s relatives. After that, the eldest of the daughters-in-law or a friend reported that the bride was dressed up.

A friend of the groom or a relative approached her, took her by the right hand, said something like this: from today, be my daughter-in-law, sister. At the moment when the bride crossed the threshold of the house, a shot was supposed to be heard, supposedly to scare away hostile spirits. After paying for the opening of the door, the bride was put into a cart prepared for her. Her dowry was also taken away. Next to the bride sat a woman who had come for her, and another from the side of the bride herself. They were mutually presented with gifts.

Then the bride is given a child (usually the son of the firstborn) of honorary relatives in her arms with the wish that the bride has only sons. After caressing the boy, the bride gives him some gift or money.

Sharia registration was completed on the wedding day in the groom’s house, when the mullah “secretly” asked him certain questions, and, as it were, sealed their marriage.

An elected general is the manager and toastmaster at the wedding. The wedding is accompanied by dances, accordionists, drummers or zurna players are invited.

It should be noted that among Chechens, on the wedding day, close relatives of the groom examined the clothes of the bride, which was brought by her daughter-in-law from her parental home on that day. The Ingush looked at the clothes of the bride along with her dowry and gifts. Chechens brought gifts to relatives and a dowry after she returned from her parental home after a certain time [9].

Understanding the importance of folk customs and rituals, as well as their emotional and psychological impact, any ceremony could not do without the participation of the mullah. Rites rituals were now accompanied by reading excerpts from the Koran. We also point out that Islam consecrated the bride price and much more.

The Chechen wedding, like other folk rituals, includes a variety of elements: singing, dancing, music, pantomime and words. Taken together, all this creates a whole beautiful spectacle.

Of course, even today for Chechens, marriage and family remain the greatest human values, marriage is the moral duty of every person, it is gratifying when this sacred ceremony takes place within the framework of the moral and ethical norms of the behavior of the people, which fully comply with generally accepted norms and the behavior and morality of all civilized humanity.

4 Conclusions
The twentieth century brought various innovations to the fate of marriage prohibitions and restrictions. Socio-economic and cultural changes in the life of the peoples of the Caucasus, as well as intensive migration processes characteristic of many of them, gradually expanded the circle of marriage choice, in terms of related exogamy, there was a gradual restriction and mitigation of traditional prohibitions: along the line of artificial kinship, kinship along the female line. To a lesser extent, the restrictions associated with the order of marriage, with religious national and class motivations, have been preserved.

In our time, marriage choice has given rise to a new understanding of social status. When choosing grooms and brides, their social and professional affiliation acquired considerable importance, because common interests and tastes are important for living together.

The Chechen wedding is a whole institution of wedding, before and after wedding rites and customs, which required great material, physical, moral and ethical efforts and costs from the perpetrators and hosts of the celebration. Since, along with funerals, a wedding is considered a recreational rite, the Chechens have always had a tradition of providing material assistance to each other, in accordance with the great importance of this event in the life of not only an individual family, but the whole society. The wedding festivities of the Chechens are endowed with many epithets, a lot has been said about it in prose, poetry, on our own behalf we will add once again that everything connected with this celebration is worthy of a separate study.

Any rituals and customs have a motivated basis and disappear when motivation disappears for their existence: a reasonable only motive should prevail - this is the desire to revive the native land.

The head of the Chechen Republic Kadyrov Ramzan Akhmatovich pays great attention to the revival of the traditions of the Chechen people in general, wedding ceremonies in particular, i.e. spiritual culture.

Today, more than ever, it is necessary to return to our cultural and historical roots, language and religion, so that we can endure the harsh realities of life and adequately get out of any difficult situation, as our ancestors were able to wisely do. We must raise the cultural and educational level of our people in every possible way in order to realize peace through education and enlightenment. In other words, we should all strive to do noble deeds for the sake of the prosperity and well-being of our country.

References

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