

## The Character of the Dibra Traditional Wedding Ritual Songs in Various Stages of Development



### Ethnoculture

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### Abstract

The wedding songs are widely spread, they are sung in all the regions of Dibra (inside and outside of the political region). Even though they are relatively short, each of them contains a piece of life; each of them has a message or an advice for the bride (mostly), but even for the groom and other family members. Although these songs are sung differently in various regions, it depends on the region and its social-economical development; they have a common denominator in the wedding ritual. This ritual develops since from the girl's engagement, which is a kind of a "sign" till the end of the wedding, which closes all these ritual. The purpose of this paper is to depict how the Dibra traditional wedding ritual songs appear in many defined forms and are irreplaceable in conveying the ritual. This happens in different stages of wedding development. Considering the fact that the ritual is a defined "rule", it can create the idea of the uniformity in all the regions. This is true only for the regularity of ritual application, but it is even another factor, which makes the difference, the subjectivity, which emphasizes one element, by separating another one. It depends on the conditions, but also in the knowledge and the skill of the singer. The topics that most frequently affect wedding songs are quite interesting and wide. If we analyse all the songs used during the development of the wedding, they convey in it the best congratulations, blessings and prayers so that the couple will have a good life, good luck and prosperity. Especially in songs that demonstrate the left-out of the bride from parental home, are depicted the advice given to the girl how to behave in her new home by giving the shades of life.

### Introduction

The wedding songs are widely spread, they are sung in all the regions of Dibra (inside and outside of the political region). Even though they are relatively short, each of them contains a piece of life; each of them has a message or an advice for the bride (mostly), but even for the groom and other family members. Although these songs are sung differently in various regions, it depends on the region and its social-economical development; they have a common denominator in the wedding ritual. This ritual develops since from the girl's engagement, which is a kind of a "sign" till the end of the wedding, which closes all these ritual.

The purpose of this paper is to depict how the Dibra traditional wedding ritual songs appear in many defined forms and are irreplaceable in conveying the ritual. This happens in different stages of wedding development. Considering the fact that the ritual is a defined "rule", it can create the idea of the uniformity in all the regions. This is true only for the regularity of ritual application, but it is even another factor, which makes the difference, the subjectivity, which emphasizes one element, by separating another one. It depends on the conditions, but also in the knowledge and the skill of the singer.

Considering the fact that there are many "observers" in the weddings of this region, I have noticed that the same song is displayed in different ways from one wedding to another, where the singer changes the description, for instance, about the beauty and charm of the bride or her position. Perhaps it is this element that makes the wedding songs diverse, thus avoiding the mechanical repetition.

### Ritual songs of engagement

The topics that most frequently affect wedding songs are quite interesting and wide. If we analyse all the songs used during the development of the wedding, they convey in it the best congratulations, blessings and prayers so that the couple will have a good life, good luck and prosperity.<sup>82</sup> Since from the beginning the songs are used as a transmitter of the actions, including the facilitator (the person who presented the families), who will be acknowledged for his work.

*Koka – koka bie shiu/ shkusit tonë i lumtë syu/ të lumtë syu që e cëllove/ të lumtë goja që e kërkove.*<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Shaban Sinani: *Bridge and the castle*. Tirane 2006, pg 397

<sup>83</sup> Songs registered from the study author

There are not said only good word. He will be the main concern of the songs to forecast if the bride will be good or bad:

*Në paç ba nusen e mirë/ t'u bafitë rruga vizëllimë/ në paç ba nusen e keqe/ t'u bafitë rruga lak e leqe.*<sup>84</sup>  
The engaged girl will be presented in songs as wise, hard-working, beautiful, educated, the same as the wanted.

Beside the bride, part of the songs are the groom and the parents, etc. All of these 'prepare' the ground for the application of other rites that accompany the development of the wedding.

### The ritual songs that convey the beauty of the bride

Wedding songs are related to certain moments of different rituals, but there are two main protagonists, the bride and the groom. Actually, there are a great amount of songs dedicated to the bride. In these songs the bride is compared with everything which is beautiful. It is reveals the taste of the Dibra people for the beauty as an aesthetic category. Considering the fact that the bride is in the center of the concentration, her appearance, the way she stands and respects the guests, it is understandable that the songs would be about her beauty and charm.

The bride will be compared with anything beautiful, whether it is an earthly beauty or above in the universe. *"The bride is compared with the floral world: with the flower in general; with different birds and animals, with the summer bird, partidge, peacock, butterfly etc; with special trees, vine, apple, pear, cherry, almonds, orange etc; with valuable objects, gold, ring, pearl, silver, etc; with the space objects, star, moon, sun etc."*<sup>85</sup>

Even anonymous Dibra singer has worn wedding songs, the classical beauty of women, and the qualities of objects which contain external beauty. Referring to the prof. Agron Xhagolli, there is a song which introduces all the above elements:

*Ky dullaku lugje – lugje/ Dilni e shifni mollën e kuqe/ Mollë e kuqe, mollë me erë/ Po i hyn lalës në derë/ Lulja e allit si vjen arës/ Asht e reja e N.N ages/ Hajde zogë, eja zogë/ N.N aga t'pret në odë.*<sup>86</sup>

The main parts of the body, especially the face with all her senses, is a 'crude material' with which are filled the wedding songs. Eyes, mouth, teeth, cheeks, forehead, gills etc. Here we find the way to rephrase Father Gjergj Fishta, who in the introduction of the Lek Dukagjini Kanuni, stressed the importance, the beauty and the diversity of the Albanian folk verse. Separating a fragment of the Kreshniks Epic, from the 'Halili marriage', the verses describe Tanusha's King, he says: *"Ku e ka Petrarka – mbreti i vjershës së bukuris e të dashnis – nji përshkrim të hijeshis së grues ma të bukur se ky. Petrarka, mshilë prej mbramjet n'odë t'vet, hupë – t'thuesh – krejt ndër libra e karta t'vjetra, ... vërehet e përshkruen në poezi idealin e vet t'bukuris – Laurën, tue peshue çdo mendim, tue matë çdo fjalë, tue limue çdo germë..."*<sup>87</sup>. The same thing can be said for the wedding songs, in which each verse comes from Anonymous people, polished and discharged from excessive words, but above all it defines the charm of the bride:

*Moj e mira te dera e odës/ sytë e shkruem si sahati i hoxhës/ hunda e drejtë si pipi i mollës goja e vogël si mihiri i dorës.*<sup>88</sup>

Wedding songs maintain a rule, like the rites of practice. In the evolution of wedding development, the rituals follow one - another and song often becomes the 'calling' of rites.<sup>89</sup>

Not only is the physical beauty of the bride the main subject of the songs dedicated to her. A main important element is the dress too. By watching the verses which illustrate the dresses, it seems like the

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Agron Xhagolli: *The wedding songs- the place of wedding songs in Presheva in the Albanian wedding songs*. A commentary in the science conference: *The wedding in Presheva, now and before*. Presheve 2012, pg 16

<sup>86</sup> Naim Plaku: *Krojet e Zanave*. Tirane 2010, pg 205

<sup>87</sup> *Lek Dukagjini Kanun*. Tirane 1999, pg 21.

<sup>88</sup> Naim Plaku: *Krojet e Zanave*. Tirane 2010, pg 229

<sup>89</sup> Shaban Sinani: *The bridge and the castle* Tirane 2006, pg 398

anonymous people are making a check-up of it. This is to highlight mainly the family of the boy, which has fulfilled the requirements of the girl's family, but also to praise the bride as hard-worker and handyman.

*O moj nuse dil ke prruja/ dil e priti petkat tuja/ petkat tuaj s'i mban kali/ prej sfungjeri e teritali petkat tuja s'i mban makina/ plot sedefka e me temina.*<sup>90</sup>

Especially in songs that demonstrate the left-out of the bride from parental home, are depicted the advice given to the girl how to behave in her new home by giving the shades of life.

*O moj nuse, lulja e qershisë/ t'i lash hujet e cucnisë/ kur t'i lash t'i lash tek dera/ e të bajsh qish të thotë vjehrra/ se me s'ba si thotë vjehrra/ kris shamata e kris poterja.*<sup>91</sup>

This song except the advice brings the potential punishment if the bride does not know how to be smart and hard-working. In these songs that describe the beauty and qualities of the bride, the popular singer wants to bring as many figures of contrast that resemble the beauty as an aesthetic category.

### The boy wedding songs

The dynamics of songs dedicated to son's wedding with all the rites that follow it, is much more intensive than the songs used for the wedding of girl. This is because there prevails more the melancholy; the girls living the parent's home, to which she will return only with permission, and nothing will be like before where:

*Çikënia ka lezet/ krejt pa halle e krejt pa dert.*<sup>92</sup>

At the boy's house, the practice of the rituals are more numerous, thus the songs are more diverse. Since from the preparation of the boy dressing the groom suit, the whole ritual practiced in these moments, it is the most emotional moment of the wedding, till the arrival of the bride. Every moment is accompanied with songs and tears. It looks like a paradox, but this is the moment that gives a great emotion to the ritual. Likewise, the song that carries a high emotional charge.

*Hajt ta lidhim besën – o/ me një fije kashtë/ a ta dësh nanën – o/ sikur e ke dashtë/ Sa ta marr lulien mrenda/ nana n' derë e jashtë/ Nana n' derë e jashtë moj/ ta mbulojmë me kashtë.*<sup>93</sup>

Even the songs used at the time of the arrival of the couple at home, besides the emotional burden they carries tips, suggestions, orders, desire, always with the intention and desire of the continuity of the happy life of the couple in their new life.

### Humorous songs in traditional wedding of Dibra

Application of humorous in traditional wedding of Dibra is so early. The main objective of the songs are the protagonists of the wedding, the bride and bridegroom, where although not previously known, their relationship appears sweet and humor brings their psychological thoughts. Humor true saying that none of the protagonists can not say, but that actually felt. Humorous songs serve to liberate the emotions which accompanied by observing various wedding to relaxed tense situations such as: closing the groom in bedroom, in this psychological situation created by being separated from family, humor does his work to ease the pain of separation. The report that is created between the wedding party and humorous verses sung, is very interesting and close, as includes all the "whirlwind" of pleasure and entertainment. Sympathetic strings of humor did not leave man "without taking by mouth".

<sup>90</sup> Songs taken from the personal file, field work 20.08.2014, in the village of Trepca.

<sup>91</sup> Songs registered from the study author in 1995, in the village of Shtushaj.

<sup>92</sup> Naim Plaku: *Krojet e Zanave*. Tirane 2010, pg 192

<sup>93</sup> Songs registered from the study author.

It should be highlighted that in weddings in other areas, generally humorous songs usually sung at the end of the wedding, these songs accompany each stage of its development in traditional wedding of Dibra. This is due to the fact that the wedding as a strict construction compositional frames required to practice the rites, create opportunities and space for humor in all stages of its development.

Marriage requires a relatively long preparation, starting with the "demarcation" of the two protagonists to be related to marriage, it is in charge of rites and actions, which necessarily will require the situation of humor to download psychological tension. Wedding songs, verses humorous touch from the beginning "creator" wedding, matchmakers. He enters the optics of humor of Dibra and early engagement of sung with humor:

*Na e gjesh nusen e mire/ do të varim një zinxhir/ na e gjesh nusen e keqe/ do të varim një teneqe.*

Through humorous verses, he will either be praised for the work done, or to be issued "black hundred".

Likewise, further developments in the wedding preparations, we find humorous song in Çerep day, where the object of humor begin to become parents of the bride:

*Dilni n'shesh e merrni vesh/ asht ba nusja sa një qep'/ Baba i nuses lyp sebeb/ mos me ba dasmën sivjet/ për çdo ditë qet një sebeb/ mos t'na lajë me ba çerep<sup>94</sup>.*

Or when separated wedding day:

*Nana e nuses një miskojë/ na daj dit' ajo lyp bojë/ Baba i nuses një llavesh/ na daj dit' ai lyp lesh<sup>95</sup>.*

With these verses them "give irony" bride's people like us do not want to give the bride. Of humor they are doing at this time of sharing wedding day monetary obligations of the bridegroom's family had to give it to the bride.

*Baba i nuses ai papuneci/ kërkoi njëqinmijë po nuk i heci/ kërkoi njëqinmijë e na ia dhamë,/ nusen tonë atij s'ia lamë.<sup>96</sup>*

With the start of the wedding rituals added intensity, also further developments have increased the wedding spectacular character and add even more to create humorous situations. On the night of uncles, daughters of the house "decry" the song uncles who are late nephew's wedding.

*Ku je dajë që s'dukesh-o/ a je pulë e s'qukesh-o*

Intermarry wedding day when going to the bride, dominate the songs that highlight the physical beauty, the values of the bride, etc., until it enters into the house of her husband. After the joy of the wedding has peaked and humor captures peaks. Witty songs not escape all members of the bride's family.

*Po të jem si vllau i nuses/ them me hanxhar/ un' ta rriti motrën teme/ tjetërkush ta marrë<sup>97</sup>*

It is understood that these are friendly jokes to entertain. Having such improvised satirical verses they give more joy wedding. But they praise the bride as well as solicit the words:

*Mos e mbaj kryet për tërma/ se nuk je ma e mirë se na ...*

Humour gives elegance wedding dinner, as well as after-dinner, especially the moment when the bride with the groom in the room closed. These humorous songs come to the aid of psychological opinions of young

<sup>94</sup> Naim Plaku: *Krojet e Zanave*. Tirane 2010, pg 203

<sup>95</sup> Songs registered from the study author

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

people who are starting a new life, but also the relatives of the couple, who today "are separated" from their children, as they are gaining another social status:

*O dhandër ku i lae shokët/ në livadh tuj kullot lopët.  
Vjen akshami tuj u errë/ ftyra e nuses tuj u zverdhë.  
Fryni era u çel dera/ hyn muzati ke mushqerra.<sup>98</sup>*

Yes, even after her marriage rites, it leaves room for funny situations. Bedroom of the couple "asked" to show what "first".

*Oj oda me tavan / Na kallzo ça ke pa mramë*

and that "answers":

*Pa nigjoni o mori gra/ Ka fillu nusja tu qa/ Kërkon nusja pe e gjylpanë/ Ishin kputun kopsat mramë.<sup>99</sup>*

However these sung for humor and there are ominous. Normally all the songs that create wonderful situations humor, mean the opposite of what is said in verse. Like other wedding songs even these have their originality and are used quite often in traditional weddings of Dibra.

### Character wedding songs after 90s

It must be said that wedding songs Dibra, especially after the 90s in areas where they still apply, there is a phenomenon in fact not new, but the renewed after almost a hundred years, where besides songs and feast that is known, also sung songs which are based on the blight of emigration, exodus of Albanians in the early years of democracy, this wound that has its roots in the early days of Skanderbeg. These songs bring to mind the lack of any family loved person, who is in emigration and could not take part in the joy of the wedding.

*Çon N.N një porosi/ Jam n'Greqi moj/ e nuk mun vij<sup>100</sup>*

These songs express the hope that in these moments do not miss the joy of their beloved man, he also becomes part of the joy of the wedding.

*Çova letër postë më postë/ Thuj N.N të vijë teposhtë/ Kur të vijë të vijë nga mali/ Se dhe ne na mori malli<sup>101</sup>*

The desire to have at their closest man (especially brother) and enjoy with causes prompted to return as soon as possible:

*kur të vish të vish tuj vrapu/ Vllaun tan me e martu*

This wound was reopened after 90s and did not spare the marriage ceremony. The song once again became worthy delivery of reality that did not spare the region of Debar. Since wedding songs are quite early, it was already known. Their antiquity is seen in the preservation of some elements that were present in the wedding rites and practices. So in the song:

*O ju gra o qi përcëlloni/ Marshalla o nuses t'i thoni/ Thoni nuses o marshalla / Asht e re ene asht gjynah<sup>102</sup>*

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Ibid

<sup>100</sup> Songs registered from the study author in 1993, in the village of Bllate.

<sup>101</sup> Songs registered from the study author in 1993, in the village of Bllate.

<sup>102</sup> Songs registered from the study author in 1994, in the village of Shtushaj.

It noted the effort through arrays to store the bride from the evil eye. In fact, even in other development stages of wedding is this effort, whether in rituals, whether in practice where “among other waste mention pathetic magic rites, which were aimed at disorientation of evil forces”.<sup>103</sup> These songs even after '90 weddings store density use that again we had earlier. It is interesting that the purpose to sing these songs (keeping the evil eye) continues to be present and reliable in these areas.

Songs at weddings continue again today to retain many elements of their past, the beauty of the bride, the desire to bear as many children, the desire to go well with the new family etc. These are rooted in tradition, yet even today have not lost their physiognomy.

### Conclusions

Wedding song has a "mission" key; the purpose of the new couple's heritage, consisting of family reproduction request, the addition of the family, (possibly as much as boys).

*O mor dhandërr ashtu më rrofsh/ Ti me nuse u trashigofsh*<sup>104</sup>

It is important to affirm that these wedding song today (where they still apply), noted that are undergoing many changes, both in form and in content. This is understandable, because every society is in constant evolution, so has happened before and so will continue. In this regard the song of this region can not escape change. But the problem is that the new songs are being created which, if not selected will succeed, be collected with care and precision, will lose the true value of the original version.

It can be taken as a reference and many other songs, which are borrowed from neighboring cultures and beyond. Are ever replicas that include developments wedding rites (if we can still call it such) that are infiltrated mass and thus included in wedding songs, as the latter often are "calling" the rite.

Songs are artistic evidence of life of a people. It had to spend a lot of time, for centuries to come today, so alive and meaningful. It is pertinent here to recall the statement of the Scottish scholar, Andre Fletcher: “Give me songs creativity of a nation and do not want to know who writes its laws.”

With the "globalization" of weddings nowadays, unfortunately many of them are left in limbo, as the element of modernity has affected even those, but in several different areas of Dibra encountered today, with all the changes that have suffered, yet retain power and any satisfaction to all party goers, adding to the joy of the wedding.

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<sup>103</sup> Agron Xhagolli: *The wedding songs- the place of wedding songs in Presheva in the Albanian wedding songs*. A commentary in the science conference: *The wedding in Presheva, now and before*. Presheve 2012, pg 18

<sup>104</sup> Songs registered from the study author in 1994, in the village of Shtushaj.