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Research Article

WHAT MAKES ALBANIA DIFFERENT? THEATRICAL ELEMENTS AT ALBANIAN WEDDING CEREMONY



Creative and Performing Arts

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Abstract

The institution of marriage is found in all modern and early human societies. It is one of the pillars on which these societies have raised their whole building and has been the subject of study and definition by many religious, philosophical, sociological, psychological, cultural. Despite the numerous borrowings and social changes that Albanian society has experienced, the marriage ceremony is still recognized as one of the most important events in a person's life. Even though the couple seems to choose the rites that will be followed, the guests, the expenses they will have, again each one requires that the wedding be a day that will be remembered. Marriage is organized when the protagonist individuals are in adult age and are spiritually prepared for this important step that will bring changes in their lives and social status. In this study we will concentrate on the elements that are most visible in an Albanian wedding party, ranging from the common elements of the provinces to the ones that make them special that often have brought and amazement among the participating. The writing is based on the Albanian studies so far about this event and partly on foreign author's writings, about the way this Albanian symbols are seen.

The Albanian society is in the phase of major social changes, a phenomenon that has affected the institution of marriage as well. Marriage during history has undergone evolutionary changes, from its structure to the form of organization and implementation of family planning. At our time it seems that marriages have become even more rare, as a result of social elements and the emergence of new forms of life between two people. An alternative form is the coexistence, which is similar to marriage in terms of form and fulfillment, or even relationship between the couple. But there are also economic problems. It seems that marriage is not seen as an institution that is untouchable. As a social phenomenon, it could not save the phase of modernity. Often marriages have become a problem of superficial relationships and the result of the couple's current thoughts, which do not think of the sustainable values that are the basis and the marriage stem. Here we do not want to say that there is no marriage, but there is more and more evidence of this phenomena, and there are also accusations that call marriage as a source of "mercy and distress"¹. So in this study, we will pay attention to the weddings and its elements. We will not stop on this topic on the stages that the couple passes to achieve this day, but at the period that coincides to marriage, to stop on the elements that make our country so different but also very interesting to study.

Albania and its surrounding areas make up a great mosaic of rites and traditions as far as the wedding day is concerned. Traditions and customs constitute one of the most important ethnic characteristics of any social community, according to which the life of the people in the past has developed. They are norms generated by experience, unwritten laws of the people, on the basis of which a certain society was governed and governed. These rituals and traditions are passed

¹ G. Tusho, Sfidat e qyteterimit, Tirane, Shtepia Botuese Dudaj.

through generations, up to the details, even with fanaticism. Today, we see it as a thousand years old heritage that our people have created.

The tradition of marriage and its customs vary from one province to another and sometimes from one religion to another. In many religions that prevail in our country constitutes one of the most important and sacred issues, often taboo and is protected by them with the whole arsenal of theological and philosophical arguments in order to preserve all its significance and sanctity by being also condemned by the relevant legislation in those countries where these religions prevailed during their proliferation Marriage, as in other countries, in our country constitutes one of the most desired habits, a sublime occasion. In this case, as mentioned above, many characters participate, to some extent, that resemble a scanned book scene with such precision.

Weddings ritual are very important in the Albanian families. It has been so in the past, but still in specific areas of Albania it remains as such. Everyone thinking about the wedding comes with some characteristic elements that are sure to see them. Honey, rice, expensive gifts, grooming and grooming habits, " improvised dummies" for groom and strings, drowry and bride are elements so widespread that automatically relate to this case. But there are countries that have so different customs and traditions that sometimes they have caused embarrassing situations and surprises among the brides, or the protagonists of this joy. Though now considered to be liberal people, the Albanians have not been as such before, in accepting or conceiving easily the customs that were different from that of their province.

This article will focus as I have mentioned above, in the Albanian wedding elements that make it so different from other countries as well as internally. Of course, thinking that you will catch any Albanian province to make a comparison would be lack of modesty, as it would have to be whole chapters, even books. As each city has the habits and some, I take the courage to call docks that make it different from another city. That is why we will look at some of the most characteristic elements of the area, to put it differently, we will see one with the eyes of a spectator enjoying the colors, the music, the "dramas" that is perceived and especially the emotional load.

1.1 Concept of Marriage

Although the theme of marriage is really a broad and complex topic, it can be considered as a sexual union of two grown-up individuals, known and adopted by society². Marriages take on new social roles when they give birth to children and raise their children. With the birth of children, marriage becomes a family. So in other words, we can say that the family is considered the first socialization agency³. Turning back on time, we see that marriages during history have

² Prof. Dr. Edmond Dragoti, p. 162, Psikologjia Intime.

³ Kamberi, F. 2010, Martesa mes tradicionales dhe modernes, marre nga www.gazetastart.com

undergone evolutionary changes, from its structure to the form of organization and implementation of family planning.

In primitive society, as a form of marriage we had group marriage, where a group of women entered into a marriage with a group of males. Later because of the social changes and circumstances on the ground comes polygamy that still exists in some places. From what we have said so far, we can conclude that marriage is a sexual unity accepted and adopted by society by two or more individuals. In most cultures, marriage means the commonality of individuals of opposite sex, but in some cultures, marriage of individuals of the same gender is allowed. So according to the way of regulating and preserving the relationship between married marriages can be:

1. A customary marriage-typical for traditional society⁴

Families join and traditionally surrender their daughter after performing customary rituals. Rites vary by region and tribe and is expected by the couple to live together and have successors. In many areas this type of marriage is not accepted by cult objects.

2. Ecclesiastical marriage- related to the ecclesiastical bodies and sanctioned by ecclesiastical norms

3. Civic marriage - that exists in civilized society is tied to state bodies and is sanctioned by legal norms.

4. Factual marriage -this type of marriage is also called concubine and it is about the marital union that today can be known as coexistence.

Although these forms of marriage are just some of the general ones, there are other forms. However, what matters is the fact that marriage today is a community that is sanctioned by legal norms.

1.2 Marriage in the Past

In Albania until 1929 (this is the year when the First Civil Code was established)⁵ marriages were related to customary norms. These rates differ in the provinces and areas of Albanian territories and were not applied equally. In mountainous areas they were stronger, while in the lowlands and in the cities they became quite weakened, replacing them with new rates that responded to their economic and social development. But until the 1940s marriage in Albania

⁴ Heward-Mills, D. 2002. Model Marriage, a Marriage counselling Handbook

⁵ Sinanaj, I. 2012, Çfarë thonë normat zakonore për martesat, Tiranë.

generally maintained the character of its old ties: an agreement between two families or between parents, without asking those who would marry.

At its beginnings, marriages in Albania were regulated by the Canon. The canon expression is a greek word that in this case metaphorically marks the style of unconstitutional laws that once used to regulate the life and action of the Albanian people. During the marriage ties, the nobility of the families is taken into account, so it is said " the tribe woman is like the oak tree". In the Albanian tradition young people who would marry were never asked for their opinion and as a consequence the term "marrying with love" was not known.

As mentioned above were the parents who were the main regulators of the relationship between the couple. That is why their young parents are in life, they have nothing in hand for the fate of marriage or for determining the details of the rites that will be in it. The meaning of marriage according to the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini is described in the following terms:

Article 28:

"By marriage according to the Canon it means having a home, adding a member for house working and to raise the children.

According to this article, the definition of marriage, is specifically for family creation, is primarily the creation of a small economic entity that has its biological function as well. According to the expressions used in this article, women are considered as a servant, whose right is limited on creating a new life. Women mainly deal with housework and support their children, so there are differences in the treatment of family members as a whole; and consequently families with many crowns are separated:

According to the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini, in the people there are four ways of marriage that are:

- 1.Marriage with wreath,
- 2.Marriage without wreath,
- 3.Marriage with robbery,
- 4.Marriage to Trial.

Only the first type marriage is accepted in the Canon, and the last three ways of marriage are outside the Canon. All this includes Article 29 of the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini.

2. Common Habits in Albanian Weddings

Marriage to most people is an important event. In Albania, weddings have many traditions both in the north and in the south. When a person from Dibra marriage a Korca citizen for example, you understand how many different traditions they have, even though they are both Albanians. For example, we recall the habits of getting a bride, those who go to the northern part to take the bride are only mens, and there is no such "ban" in middle Albania. However, there are some common points that north and south have. Today we will not write about the different traditions of the Albanian cities, but about the customs that are found in Albanian weddings. There are some people who refuse to go to weddings, as they find it a great fatigue, the way the weddings are organized. What are these features?

1. Throwing rice and candy when the bride got in the car to leave the parents' home
2. Painting the door with honey when the bride goes to the wife's Mouse
3. Bride's party

2.1 Throwing rice

The word tradition has its roots in Ancient Rome, where guests were throwing the wheat to the couple as a symbol of fertility. Over time wheat was replaced by rice, which also personifies the fertility rite, but all of this causes a great mess and gives the idea of useless food consumption. Another version is that this practice might have arisen from the belief that food calmed down evil spirits and did not harm the groom and the bride. Also, rice has long had mystical connection to fertility, happiness, and longevity. However, this rhythm is very common in Albania. At the moment when the bride comes out of her parents' home, usually her relatives throw rice to congratulate how much rice is so big their tribe become. Beside the wedding day, the throwing of rice is also on the day of the Drowry, in the clothes that the bride sends to the man's house. Along with rice, other elements like pink, candy and coins are now added. All these elements have their meaning. Rice is part of the symbol of fertility, candy as a symbol of sweetness or happiness, and finally, coins as a symbol of prosperity in marriage.



2.2 Honey at the Door of the Spouse

In the bridegroom's house, the bride is expected by the mother in law, who stands at home and waits for the wedding guests. At the moment the bride enters the new home, she needs to moisten the door with honey, which symbolizes good writing between the parties, especially the bride and mother-in-law. Then with the hand of the honey she put a bit on the edge of her mother-in-law and herself. In some other areas, the bride also take a plum and gives it to other house members, always as a symbol of good relationships. These members should be those who live in the same house with her. While in the tradition of Tirana the plum broken between bride and mother in law. After the end of this ritual, the bride had to pour a bottle of brandy, as a symbol of cleanliness and removal of the evil.

2.2.1 The Bride's Party

As a rule, the bride brings the Drowry to her husband's home. Drowry is not money but contains gifts for all bridegroom relatives, various types of embroidery, pillows, blankets, carpets, and even bedroom furniture. But this tradition varies from region to region. At the time of her daughter' birth, her mother cared for everything she was looking for, for drowry, covers, tablecloths, towels and so on. For the mother was "bragging" to prepare the best and most elegantly-equipped for the drowry, with the finest materials and gold threading, this showed the position and socio-economic conditions. More importantly in drowry is dedicated to handicrafts, items that require a lot of time to be ready. So the house women begin to think too much about the items the girls will bring to the man's house.

On the other hand, the groom must send money and gifts to the bride's family. There are special gifts for the bride like: clothes for all seasons, gold jewelry, expensive watches etc. Bridesmaid has a very ancient origin and over the years this habit is more visible in the deep areas of Albania, where women prepare their shawl by embroidering or crocheting every detail, thus achieving wonderful works. Drowry usually taken on Thursday.

If the wedding is Sunday and Sunday if the wedding is on Thursday. Weddings do not become Tuesday or Friday because they are considered as bad days. Proverbs teach that "during Venus and Mars you should not marry and start": so avoid Tuesday and Friday for the wedding ceremony. Mars was a god of war and was therefore considered a bad sign for a young couple, while Friday is an unfortunate day by tradition.

On Wednesdays, many areas have the money-holding day. The bride opens up the Drowry for neighbors and friends who come to the easel and in many areas, this tradition is accompanied by the giving of gifts by the participants. While Thursday, a delegation from the nearest bridegroom people comes to get the bridesmaids. In some areas like Korca and the area of Dibra, Tropoja, the wedding guests who go to get the equipment are only male and the number should be at. While in other areas like the middle part of Albania go also female relative. When it comes to

being, it is always up to the male. The traditions show that this ritual is only the first family successor to be male.

The wedding ceremony is unforgettable moment for the couple, but also for their relatives. Of course, every country has particular customs and traditions for the ceremony. After seeing some of the common aspects of Albanian weddings, below we will get to know more closely how the "bride's week" is celebrated, in some areas of Albania like Tirana and Dibra. We will talk about rites and costumes.

3.1 Tironse's Wedding

In Tirana city the custom is that the wedding begins on Thursday, when the doors are opened and they're all waiting for the visitors, with cake, sweets and you can hear good music too. In this area, the bridegroom does not wear suits until the day he goes and takes the bride. Then, Friday is the day that they begin to take the brides Drowry to her future house, or the best way to say the groom house. Women come to see what present will they do; and the women from the bridegroom watch what the bride has brought. Many families have their own small traditions that pass through generations. It is a habit that in every suitcase of the Drowry, the bride cast some candy, little rice and two flower buds, to show a new beginning and sweetness. Saturday day, for "tironse" is called the bride's day. This is the fact that on that day the bride celebrates the end of celibacy, as the last time she is "free" and does her wedding without the groom.

The bride's party usually takes place at dinner. The husband family arrive only after midnight and is composed of close relative of the groom's family, but unaccompanied by the groom. They do not stay for more than an hour and are obliged to dance in honor of the family according to the tradition. But on Sunday, the bride prepares to leave her mother's house and usually around 11 am her bridegroom comes with his uncle and a small baby, that is a close relative, who gives flowers to the bride, while she needs to give him money (not necessary). When the bridegroom enters the room, he meets everyone and the that he meets is bride's brother, or if the bride has no brother, her cousin, who then hunts with a slap the bridegroom. The costum wants that One of the bridegroom's groom have to be deceitful and dearer than the people of the bride's house, to steal an object or anything before they go out and then give it to the householder, telling him that "we are the best. We jumped ...!"

As the bride is crossing the threshold of the house they throw at feet brandy (raki). This habit has remained, to keep away the Satan and the bad eye. As soon as the bride comes out, she sets up dancing with relatives and neighbors. After that, the fancy bride enters in the car, and they put a tapestry on top. Meanwhile, the bride should throw an egg back. As they approach the bride's home, they see their mother-in-law waiting at the door with a plunger half that she eats and half gives it to the bride as well as a honey plate in which the bride tones two fingers and wipes them to the threshold of the door. When the bride enters on her room, she goes to the bed, where a relative boy of a man comes to her, whom she has to give money. At that moment the bridegroom enters on the room and takes his bride's shoes off and starts filling them with gold.

The characteristic songs of Tirana that are sung especially in the groom's house are like:

"Goodbye, goodbye to Aga (is commonly used as a term for the house owner)
Do you have any bread, did you have any food for us,
how much is the sea water, the riverside,
all the burial ground, all the peatlands of the area, I area ...

The women and girls of the tribe, full of joy for this wedding party, devoted their songs to the new bride of the house:

"O beautiful red rape-o
come quickly when I will call you
o say they have to wait-o
I have to wear xanphesis-o"

Today's weddings are full, there are someone's who tries to make something special to surprise the guests with luxury, elegance, classic, romantic, modern, endless comparisons and there's just a moment when the fun is so loosely massive, when the melody, dance and ceremony sit crossroads in tradition.

3.2 Dibrane's Wedding

The wedding preparations begin on the day where the wedding date is set. This decision is very important for both families and is decided by the meeting of the father of the bride, groom's father, and the messenger who intervened in the connection of this friendship. Traditional weddings lasted three days and nights and were organized to get the bride on Monday or Thursday. On Tuesday is the day that a widows get married. From the grooms relative, three of them should be very prepared or as the people say "beaten with oil and vinegar". One of them needed to be very wise and with great experience, the other one had to have the pockets full of money, as they could "be fined" by the bride's relatives. While the third major of the groom's bride had to be chosen "strong and courageous" so that if the uncle of the bride exaggerate with the bride's bazaar (which might require much money) he would act by threatening them. All who went form the husband's family to get the bride were men. The bride was covered with duvak (traditional wearing) and the national flag. She was accompanied by brothers and sisters or godfathers.

Certainly we can not forget two main features of the dialect weddings at this rite. First is: The bride's unclce bazaar: The confrontation between the two uncles, the game of wit, the swords exchange and a wonderful rhetoric and the alive allegory in such cases, and perhaps even in these days, but significantly reduced to the disappearance of this habit. There was a match of thought, intellect, and often associated with a race for bravery and fortune. What was this ritual? In the

chatter, the uncle of the girl who had her rights began; He would be asked about the girl, but he would also ask. The bride's groom started by asking for a large amount of money. Then their friends started, "No, not that much, we are friends! We will be soon a family. Therefore he lower his value. " Further, another bride's uncle friend said, "You still have ask for much, we'll take the bride in there, so do a little bit." In these moments, was unfolded the wisdom between the characters and the highly discerning phrases that they exchanged with one another, wanting to lower the price that the groom's uncle should pay to bride's uncle

Second: "supposed abduction of the bride". The bride's kidnapping as a tradition comes from the state of Romania and is one of the most enjoyable habits. At the wedding celebration, the simulated abduction of the bride takes place by "masked" persons. After that, the bridegroom must pay a reward to receive the bride back, which gives the party a lot of vitality and emotion. This traditions may seem strange, but are still practiced and brides are excited before this tradition. Such a rite occurs especially on Sunday. If the groom is late, and does not come at the hour appointed for the bride, the cousins, as mentioned above, "snatch" the bride and start shopping with the bridegroom to turn the bride back.

Further, the bride entered the groom's house where weddings were celebrated. Three were the main tools of music; Chiptelia, toys and cula (a gadget similar to the spit), and much later a violin was introduced. Meanwhile, the groom went out and shot three times on a hill with a rifle. The meaning was disadvantageous; The groom is alive, and now the bride and her relatives are in his defense. The bride during that day remained silent. Throwing rice, wheat and putting the loaves in the hands of the bride were not very noticeable phenomena but nevertheless carried out. To the bride also puts brandy to pour it, which is to remove evil together with rakia (alcoholic brandy in Albania), which is considered to separate evil. A common element with the wedding in Tirana. Along with the rakia they pour a glass of water to remove the bad eye and bring the luck to the couple. But the pouring of raki where the bride broke, was also done to preserve the bride from the black magic. In conclusion, we can say that the great social changes that Albania is facing recently on the road to modernization has also influenced the marriage institution. The Albanian family still sees with great responsibility the wedding ceremony, to maintain the level of the family, but also to create sustainability in the lives of young people who took this step. As mentioned in the past, marital relations were defined by laws and canons and wedding protagonists, were only spectators, because everything was decided by the greats of the tribe. Some of the traditional wedding elements are still preserved in our country such as the Drowry, the songs sung to the bride, the honey that is cut off the threshold. Although they have become dim or have begun to be replaced by other elements. On the other hand, we focused more closely on two typical weddings in the country such as Tirana and Dibra. The common elements are not missing, but the different element make it more beautiful: the laying of the egg back from the bride after she left dad's house, or "supposed abduction of the bride in the area of Dibra. These beautiful and unique traditions are just a few of the many cultural diversity that Albania has and which is never enough to fascinate the scholars.

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