



Characteristics of the matchmaking ceremony of the Tsakhurs

Sahiba MUSAYEVA¹

Institute of Archeology, Ethnography and Anthropology Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences

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ABSTRACT

In the article, the matchmaking ceremony of the Tsakhurs, who live in the Sheki-Zagatala region of Azerbaijan and are distinguished by the uniqueness of their ethnic-national traditions, was investigated from an ethnographic point of view. Here, in the process of matchmaking, the arrival of matchmakers with gifts to the girl’s house, their respectful reception, “chorakkasdi” (dividing bread), “shirin chay ichme” (drinking sweet tea) ceremonies after “sozaldi” (getting word) and “aldim-verdim” (bought and gave) and preparations for engagement were also involved in the study. In the article, the author analyzed the specific ethnographic features of the Tsakhur matchmaking ceremony in the past and modern times using historical determinism, comparative-historical, descriptive, and systematic methods.

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Особенности церемонии сватовства у цахуров

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

Шеки-Загатала,
цахуры, сватовство,
«ширин чай»,
церемония.

В статье с этнографической точки зрения был исследован обряд сватовства цахуров, проживающих в Шеки-Загатальском районе Азербайджана и отличающихся уникальностью своих этнонациональных традиций. Здесь в процессе сватовства описываются традиционные обычаи и церемонии. В дом девушки приходят сваты с подарками, которые принимают почтительно. После этого проходят церемонии «чораккаси» (дележ хлеба) и «ширин чай ичме» (распитие сладкого чая) во время «созалды» (получения слова) и «алдым-вердим» (согласования договоренности). В статье также рассматривается подготовка к взаимодействию

¹ PhD candidate, Institute of Archeology, Ethnography and Anthropology Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.
E-mail: aliyarbeyova.s@mail.ru

между будущими семьями, что также было задействовано в исследовании. В статье автор проанализировал специфические этнографические особенности цахурской церемонии сватовства в прошлом и современности, используя исторический детерминизм, сравнительно-исторический, описательный и системный методы.

INTRODUCTION

As it is known, in tsakhurs the matching ceremony is performed after approval of the girl's choice. Matchmaking is already considered a logical consequence of the fact that both girl's and boy's side have taken a new step towards marriage, and coming to an agreement. Considering these aspects, Professor Sh. Bunyadova writes: "Marching can be considered the key to the family life to be established. Having a progressive character, it is the harbinger of the way to the wedding ceremony, it is an occasion, the necessary starting stage of the way to family happiness" [2, 34-35]. As can be seen, matchmaking is the custom that is executed as a result of a joint decision established between both girl's and boy's side. As it was also said, "the family is built on a foundation that starts with the matchmaking. Although many centuries have passed, the time has not changed the content and essence of these customs" [2,45]. The first stage of matchmaking is also called "sozalma" (getting word) and "he alma" (yes taking). The second stage of it is called extended matchmaking. These stages of the mission are identical in tsakhur and many Turkic peoples.

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF MATCHMAKING OF THE TSAKHURS

As with other peoples living in the Sheki-Zagatala region, among the Tsakhurs, according to custom, after the girl was chosen, the boy's mother and sister would go to the girl's house as official messengers. If the girl's family agrees, "the word buy and sell ("aldım-verdim") must be spoken between these two mothers, and when they leave the house, they give the girl a promise that the men will come here to talk. If the relativeness fails, the girl does not take the ring and tells the matchmakers that she cannot promise on her own, she will talk to her husband and send you a message" [1,407]. Going to the girl's house before the matchmaking was also called "agız aramaq" (trying to get the opinion of the girl's family) [5].

Sometimes the opinions of the parents coincided with the decision of the son. "For the first time, the boy's mother and aunt (father's sister) visited the girl's mother and relatives, and then other relatives of the young man went to the girl's house. They, as a rule, talk about the authoritative position of their descendants and the family as a whole, about the personal qualities of the future son-in-law, in which they would avoid all the sharp issues. By their return visits, the relatives laid the foundation for the engagement of the young, and provided full instructions to the groups of men on both sides as to the terms and results of negotiations with future relatives. After the family gathering, the boy's parents invite two of the eldest relatives from their side. A matchmaking of three or four people (from the relatives of the boy's father's side) would be organized, received the necessary information, and send news to the bride's parents about the purpose of visiting the bride's house" [9, 252]. It was necessary to prepare a table for the incoming matchmakers. Before the proper meal, the oldest matchmaker would first tell the girl's father the purpose of the visit and ask him to consent to his daughter's betrothal. Sometimes the matchmakers expressed the purpose of their arrival

with symbolic expressions. In the Shaki-Zagatala region, including in the tsakhurs, the elders, who usually came as messengers, began their speech with the phrase “hand is mine, the skirt is yours” (in tsakhur “Khil yizin, etek yigin”). This already meant wanting a girl [8, 87]. Usually, the other side did not respond quickly to this proposal. Even if the girl’s relatives considered the issue positively resolved within themselves, they behaved very restrained, as if they did not know about anything. If the girl’s father was determined about not giving his own daughter, the messengers would leave without eating. Etiquette would not allow for an outright rejection of an offer, meaning a very polite refusal. Because they would not insult him because he was a guest in the house. It had the following forms: “We haven’t thought about getting our daughter married yet”, “it’s not time yet” or they would promise to “contact their relatives and let them know the result”. The boy’s man would come back several times with different excuses, “hands longer than his skirts” (əli ətəyindən uzun) as the people say. Among the Azerbaijanis of Georgia, “if the conversation was not to her mother’s heart, she would pass the mediator through the door, saying: ‘Don’t open your request, don’t make it clear, for this purpose, don’t even knock on my door’” [3,43]. If there is agreement, the girl’s mother would inform that person to send the matchmakers to the boy’s house. After that, the boy’s mother, aunt, and uncle went to matchmaking. However, in the first and second women’s matchmaking, they would not give the “yes” to the girl. The elder of the boy’s side explained the reason for their visit like this: “You have a girl, we have a boy. A girl belonged to a boy. By God’s command, with the prophet’s permission, we have come to ask for your daughter for our son”. The people of the girl’s side said in unison, “May God bless them, let them be live in together and be the lucky ones”. After that, the girl’s aunts brought sweet tea to the table. The matchmakers drank sweet tea and returned home. With this, the matchmaking stage ends, and those who heard congratulated the parents of the girl and the boy” [3,43]. In Tsakhur, the groom’s side would prepare for the next visit of the matchmaking to that address. This time, the circle of those invited from both sides would have expanded. The girl’s side would welcome them. At the same time, much attention would be paid to the elders of the matchmakers. Paternal and maternal uncles, their wives, eldest sons (girl’s brothers), closest relatives, and family members were the main people who have the right to speak in this case. After 5-10 minutes of communication, the oldest of the matchmakers from the father’s side of the young man opened the conversation with these words: “We want your daughter to marry our young man according to the command of God and the law of the Prophet. We hope that it will be good for both sides and we are sure that the result will be desirable” [9, 252]. After the issue was resolved positively, the members of the delegation would also talk about the generosity and nobility of the two future relatives. Even before the arrival of the matchmakers, the eldest member of the generation or the closest family member, the girl’s uncle, would praise the generation and family of the future relatives. He would speak not only for the family but also for the generation. “Thank you for paying attention to us, be blessed, congratulations on giving your daughter. Let this hour and the next life be more successful for everyone!” [9, 253]. Only after that the table would be set. Whoever participated in this ceremony as a mediator would take on the function of protecting the honor of the bride’s family, take an oath with his hat, and this person would remain faithful to that moment until the end and try to mutually resolve all acute issues and relations between families. The hat was considered a symbol of honor and self-esteem among the tshakhurs as well as among Azerbaijanis. “The engagement ceremony ended with the presentation of silver coins, the coins were wrapped in a small

handkerchief and handed over to one of the youngest members of the bride's side. If the members of the bride side were older than the matchmakers, the folded coin was placed under the corner of the carpet, and this was called a "promise" [9, 253].

"In the tsakhurs, along with men, the boy's aunt had to participate in this ceremony" [6, 115]. M. Pashayeva explains this with the remains of ancient matriarchal traditions among the tsakhurs.

In some of the villages of tsakhurs, in addition to handing over coins, there was also a custom: bread was divided in half. It meant loyalty in the moment. M. Pashayeva, speaking about the custom of matchmaking among the tsakhurs living in the Zagatala region, writes: "According to the ethnographic field materials we collected in Mukhakh village of Zagatala region, if the matchmakers reach an agreement with the girl's house, the elder from the boy's house and the elder from the girl's house take a loaf of bread from the table and divide it into two parts. One part of the bread remains in the girl's house, and the other part is taken home by the boy's and eaten together with his family [6, 124–125]. This ancient ceremony of turkic origin, which is widespread in the Sheki-Zagatala region of Azerbaijan, also exists among the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan [10, 325]. At the time of the matchmaking, the custom of dividing bread (in tsakhur language – Qiney qasodquniy) existed among the Azerbaijani turks and avars, who were the majority in the region, as was the case with the tsakhurs. "During the matchmaking ceremony, it was typical for the matchmakers to divide bread as a symbol of agreement for the region. According to our informants from Mukhakh village of Zagatala district, the meaning of this custom is that none of the parties could take back their word after dividing the bread. It is known that according to ancient Azerbaijani traditions, dividing bread means becoming friends with a person for life" [6, 70-71]. Therefore, "on the evening of the matchmaking, the both sides sit at the table and eat together is a ritual related to marriage" [4,166]. G. Hajiyeva, this symbolic eating custom existed not only among the tsakhurs, but also among most Dagestan [7,170] and all turkic peoples. After "chorekkasdi" (dividing bread) as a sign of agreement, "shirin chay" (sweet tea) is drunk, this custom exists among the tsakhurs as well as azerbaijanis and turkic peoples.

Although the main ring is worn on the engagement, a thin gold ring is worn in the matchmaking as the sign of it. The ring must have been bought new [13].

According to the matchmaking, they would go near the end of the day, after the village people had finished their work. In general, before the marriage, engagement or wedding, rasad (in tsakhur language rasad) was necessarily taken from the boy's house to the girl's house for help, which is apparent in the ceremony of the marriage [14].

In the course of the field research, the differences between the villages living in the tsakhurs were also found, and here we will touch on one different point, which is not found in other villages. So, because they know the girl's opinion in advance, there were no matchmakers to go 2-3 times in Gozbarakh village of Zagatala region. From the first time, consent would either have been obtained or not. They would prepare sweet dishes, cut chicken, cook qaxac plov which is a special dish of the tsakhurs, and cook rice with pumpkin [12].

After the agreement, the barracks (khonchas) are taken to the girl's house. 7-8 khonchas are brought. They also talk and decide the time of the wedding there, for example, if the wedding will be in one or two months, then the preparations should have started in advance [11].

The answer would be given when the conversation ended. The agreed sides were called “relatives” among themselves. After that, preparations would be made for the next stage-engagement.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the matchmaking ceremony is performed in tsakhurs after the approval of the choice and the consent of both sides. In ancient times, the matchmaking begins with the “elchi dashi” (a relatively large stone laid in the courtyard of the girl’s house when an unmarried girl reaches the age of marriage), and in modern times, the matchmakers, consisting of special relatives and influential representatives, come to the girl’s house with gifts. The matchmakers are treated with hospitality and respect. After “sozaldi” and “aldım-verdim”, “chorekkasdi” and “shirin chay ichme” ceremonies are performed and engagement preparations are made.

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