

## WEDDING CEREMONIES, TRADITIONS IN PROVINCES OF UZBEKISTAN.

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**Abstract:** *Weddings in Uzbekistan are deeply rooted in tradition and vary across different provinces, reflecting regional customs, cultural influences, and historical heritage. Although key elements such as nikah, fotiha toy, and kelin salom are observed nationwide, regional variations emerge due to historical, cultural, and social influences.*

*Samarkand and Bukhara incorporate Persian influences, Khorezm features lively music and dance, and the Fergana Valley emphasizes community celebrations. Karakalpakstan, with its nomadic heritage, showcases distinct attire and symbolic rituals. Despite modernization, these traditions continue to preserve Uzbekistan's cultural identity.*

**Keywords:** *Traditions, Uzbekistan, provincial customs, Uzbek culture, nikah, fotiha toy, "Kelin salom", modernization, community celebrations, sarpo ko'rar, Introduction.*

Uzbek wedding ceremonies follow national traditions but vary by region due to historical, cultural, and social differences. This study examines wedding traditions across Uzbekistan, from the Persian elegance of Samarkand and Bukhara to Khorezm's lively dances, Fergana's communal spirit, and Karakalpakstan's nomadic influences. These customs reflect the nation's rich heritage and evolving identity. This thesis explores how these regional variations not only preserve historical traditions but also adapt to modernization, demonstrating the resilience of Uzbekistan's cultural identity in the face of changing social dynamics. As a vital cultural institution, Uzbek weddings reflect both national traditions and regional identities, shaped by historical and social dynamics. While the fundamental elements of Uzbek wedding ceremonies, such as nikah (Islamic marriage), fotiha toy

(engagement), and kelin salom (bride's greeting), remain consistent, each region incorporates unique customs influenced by historical, cultural, and social factors. This study explores how these variations contribute to the preservation of Uzbekistan's cultural identity while adapting to modern influences. The scientific relevance of this research lies in its examination of the interplay between tradition and modernization in contemporary Uzbek weddings. Due to globalization and economic changes, weddings sometimes shift from cultural traditions to displays of wealth. This study aims to analyze these developments, comparing traditional customs with modern adaptations, and

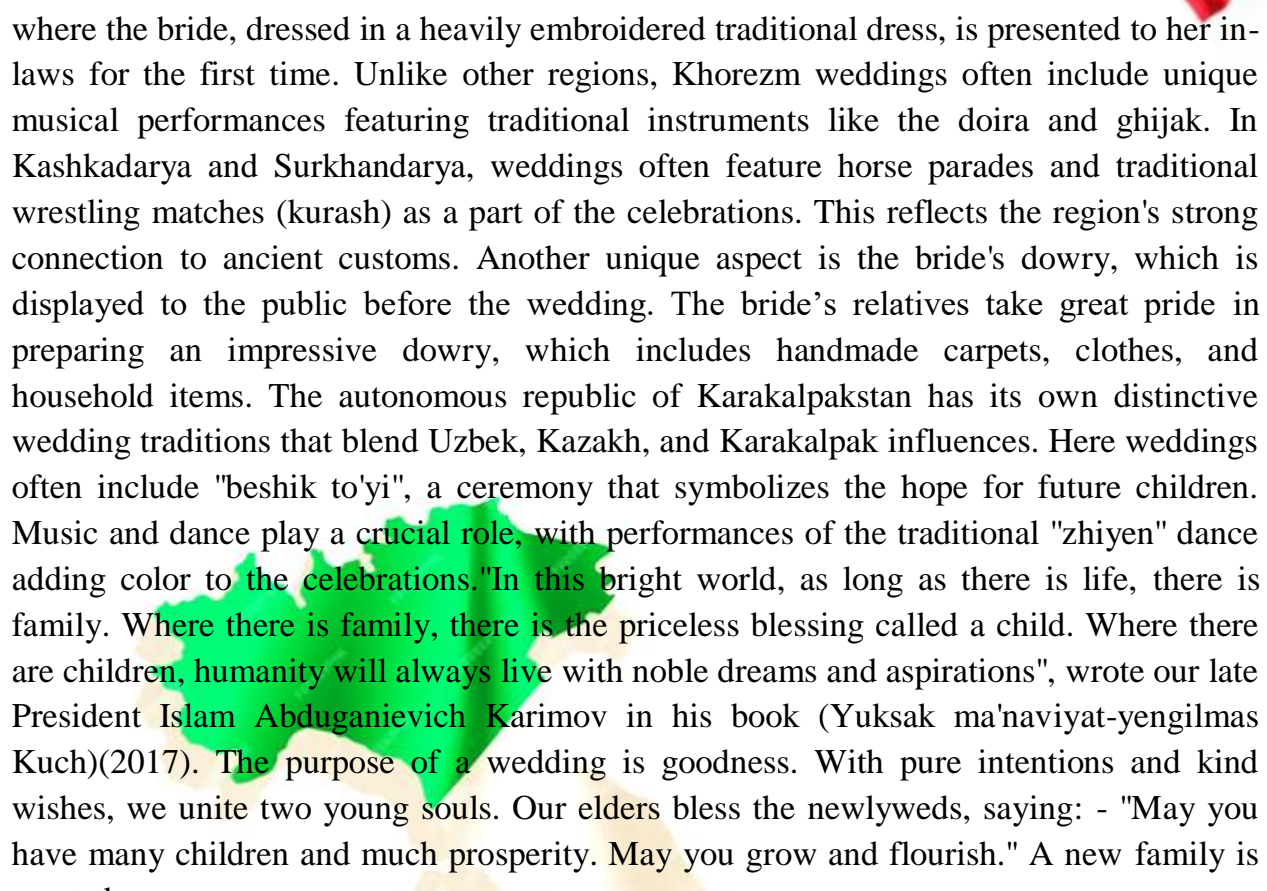
assessing their impact on Uzbek society. By understanding these changes, the research provides insights into the broader cultural dynamics of Uzbekistan and highlights the importance of preserving the essence of national traditions in an era of rapid social transformation.

#### Core elements of Uzbek weddings.

Uzbek wedding ceremonies are deeply rooted in traditions and follow a structured sequence of events that reflect the cultural values of family, community, and hospitality. While customs may vary by region, the core elements of Uzbek weddings remain consistent across the country. Fotiha to'y (engagement ceremony). The wedding process begins with the fotiha to'y, a formal engagement ceremony where the families of the bride and groom come together to bless the union. This event is often accompanied by prayers, exchange of symbolic gifts, and a celebratory meal. For instance, the audiobook 'O'zbek xalqi urf-odatlar: Fotiha to'yi', published on "Ziyo.net" (2015), provides details of this ceremony. This audiobook discusses the procedure for holding a Fotiha toys, its traditions, and the spiritual significance of the ceremony. The Fotiha wedding ends with the appointment of the date of the marriage and the wedding. Each of the matchmakers is given a table with two loaves of bread and sweets, and the girl also gives mother with many children. All those visitants enjoy pastries and sweets brought from the bride's house. Starting from the Fotiha wedding and until the wedding itself, the parents of the young people solve the issues of the dowry and organizational issues related to the wedding ceremony. A few days before the wedding, a "girl's group" ceremony is held at the girl's house, to which the girl invites her relatives and friends. (Meros.uz). Marriage and family formation are some of the sacred laws established by Allah Almighty among humanity, and serve beneficial purposes for humanity, such as the continuation of lineage, kinship, and the perfection of love and affection among people. (2000-2005).

#### Modernity, Culture, and Community traditions.

As a capital city, Tashkent showcases a mix of traditional and modern wedding customs. Families often host large feasts in banquet halls, blending ancient rituals with contemporary elements. While Fotiha to'yi remains a significant tradition, modern influences appear in Western-style wedding gowns and music. This contrast highlights how urban weddings have evolved, incorporating global trends while still maintaining traditional foundations. In contrast, regions such as Samarkand and Bukhara remain more deeply rooted in historical customs. Weddings here often last several days, starting with the Nikoh to'yi (Islamic wedding ceremony) and followed by lavish feasts. Unlike in Tashkent, where modernity is evident, these cities emphasize Persian-influenced elegance and ancient traditions. Khorezm: The influence of Khivan Culture. The Khorezm region, home to the ancient city of Khiva, has wedding traditions that reflect its unique cultural identity. One of the most prominent customs is the "Kelin ko'rish" (bride's introduction ),



where the bride, dressed in a heavily embroidered traditional dress, is presented to her in-laws for the first time. Unlike other regions, Khorezm weddings often include unique musical performances featuring traditional instruments like the doira and ghijak. In Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya, weddings often feature horse parades and traditional wrestling matches (kurash) as a part of the celebrations. This reflects the region's strong connection to ancient customs. Another unique aspect is the bride's dowry, which is displayed to the public before the wedding. The bride's relatives take great pride in preparing an impressive dowry, which includes handmade carpets, clothes, and household items. The autonomous republic of Karakalpakstan has its own distinctive wedding traditions that blend Uzbek, Kazakh, and Karakalpak influences. Here weddings often include "beshik to'yi", a ceremony that symbolizes the hope for future children. Music and dance play a crucial role, with performances of the traditional "zhiyen" dance adding color to the celebrations. "In this bright world, as long as there is life, there is family. Where there is family, there is the priceless blessing called a child. Where there are children, humanity will always live with noble dreams and aspirations", wrote our late President Islam Abduganievich Karimov in his book (Yuksak ma'naviyat-yengilmas Kuch)(2017). The purpose of a wedding is goodness. With pure intentions and kind wishes, we unite two young souls. Our elders bless the newlyweds, saying: - "May you have many children and much prosperity. May you grow and flourish." A new family is created.

The financial emphasis placed on wedding ceremonies surpasses considerations for the couple's long-term financial stability. In some cases, families allocate significant financial resources for lavish wedding celebrations, sometimes exceeding their financial capacity, which raises concerns about social expectations and economic sustainability. Due to societal expectations, certain families allocate substantial financial resources to weddings, potentially leading to economic strain. Such instances of lavish wedding celebrations have been widely observed in Uzbek society, raising discussions on their cultural and economic implications. The bride and groom enter the wedding hall in traditional white attire, symbolizing purity and new beginnings. As the bride bows slightly for the traditional kelin salom (greeting), the elders, out of embarrassment, avert their gazes to the floor. There are societal discussions regarding the appropriate attire and behavior of brides during wedding ceremonies, reflecting evolving cultural norms and values in Uzbek society. Weddings hold a central place in Uzbek culture, serving as a reflection of familial aspirations and social values. They are often perceived as milestones that symbolize not only personal happiness but also communal success. Uzbekistan is characterized by social stability and economic development, which influence the way wedding traditions evolve.



The frequency of wedding celebrations is often perceived as an indicator of social prosperity and familial success. Parents universally aspire to raise well-rounded, healthy children who attain personal and social success. In pursuit of this cultural ideal, families often allocate substantial financial resources to wedding ceremonies, viewing them as investments in social recognition and familial honor. In recent years, the increasing emphasis on grandeur in wedding ceremonies has led to concerns regarding commercialization and the potential loss of their cultural and social significance. Extravagant weddings raise socio-economic concerns, as studies link financial burdens to marital instability. Some aspects of modern Uzbek weddings exhibit characteristics of consumer-oriented cultural displays, which aligns with certain definitions of mass culture and kitsch aesthetics (Polyakov, 2013). Kitsch (German: kitsch – hack, bad taste, "cheap") is one of the earliest standardized manifestations of mass culture, characterized by mass production and status value. Focused on the needs of everyday consciousness (Polyakov, 2012.) Kitsch manifests through extravagant displays and excessive ornamentation, transforming these ceremonies into spectacles of opulence. This phenomenon reflects a shift from traditional, culturally significant practices to mass-produced, status-driven displays, aligning with the characteristics of kitsch culture. (2013. Polyakov). Under the new conditions of independence, wedding ceremonies in Uzbekistan have increasingly diversified along growing social and economic divides. Recent state measures to curb ritual expenditures follow the furrow of a long tradition of criticism against ritual prodigality which, however, falls short of its self-set target of enforcing more 'rational' rituals. Based on fieldwork conducted in the Ferghana Valley, This paper sheds a new light on the controversy around 'excessive ritual expenditures' by discussing tensions in local practices arising from changing livelihoods and consumption patterns, on the one hand, and, on the other, from an ambivalent state policy that aims at containing ritual expenditures and social polarization, while also promoting an ideal of modern wedding that undermines the very aim of the policy. (Tommaso Trevisani, 2016.) For the people of Central Asia a family is such an institution where the people of different sexes unite and make up a union and they depend on each other by the common way of life and responsibility for each other. In every country it is of great significance to bring up our youth morally healthy, spiritually complete, educated providing them with plentiful life especially in respect of valuing the national wedding ceremonies. In this matter the peoples of the world brought up their youth according to their own customs and traditions and they always paid attention and taught their future generations all way to keep in their minds and consciousness their national personalities. As for our country in this matter first and for a most the role and influence of the family, of the preschool offices, schools mahalla communities are incomparable. That's why the family abundance problem was being paid special attention

to from long ago. It is worthy of mentioning that nowadays informing the right family relations the parents' interrelations play the main role. The relations between the father and the mother are a good example to imitate the parents in taking care of in respecting in being polite to one another, in supporting each other which help to bring up the younger generation.(RR Komilov, 2017.) Due to the fact that Uzbek society consists only of families, disputes among its members and divorces are an important topic. Despite the increase in the number of family divorces in Uzbek society, this nation is considered to be family-loving and child-caring. According to the State Statistics Committee, in 2017, the number of marriages was 306,200 and the number of divorces was 31,900, while in 2018, 311,300 marriages were registered and the number of divorces was 32,300 1.

This number excludes polygamic marriages and divorces, which means in fact the annual figures much higher. Polygamy is legally banned in Uzbekistan, nevertheless there has been an increase in polygamy and divorce.(Akmal Jalilov, 2022.) Marriage is one of the striking features of Uzbek society, more precisely, their number. Most families in this country has at least three to four weddings. However, latest statistics illustrate Uzbekistan as not only a country of weddings but also a land of growing divorces. This situation, which is of serious public concern, requires careful examination in the context of the premises and consequences. Why divorce increases in traditional society, where creating family is a collective decision, rather than of two young people? Personal observation and preliminary studies give the assumption, that collectively created family often can divorce under the influence of the same people involved in its foundation.(Jalilov Aktam Tashnazarovich, 2021). Today the Uzbek wedding reflects the traditions taken from the ancestors and mixed with an Islamic influence, Soviet traditions and modern adaptations as well.

Furthermore, every region of Uzbekistan and even communities have their distinctive marriage traditions.(2025).

#### Conclusion.

Wedding ceremonies across different regions of Uzbekistan reflect both the preservation of national traditions and the influence of modern societal changes. While Samarkand and Bukhara showcase Persian cultural elements, Khorezm stands out with its lively music and dances, and the Fergana Valley emphasizes communal celebrations. Meanwhile, Karakalpak weddings retain the distinctive features of their nomadic heritage.

Globalization and economic shifts have influenced Uzbek wedding traditions, introducing both modernization and heightened social expectations. The increasing financial investment in weddings has raised concerns about their sustainability, as cultural significance sometimes gives way to competitive displays of wealth. This trend highlights the challenge of maintaining the core values of Uzbek weddings, including

family unity, cultural heritage, and communal traditions. To maintain the balance between tradition and modernity, it is essential to encourage more meaningful and sustainable wedding practices. This can be achieved through raising awareness about the cultural and social significance of weddings, promoting responsible financial planning, and fostering a greater appreciation for the authentic customs that define Uzbekistan's rich heritage.

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