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Azerbaijani Wedding Traditions as Carriers of National Values

Abstract

The Azerbaijani people, in addition to possessing a rich and deep-rooted cultural heritage, have developed profound spiritual values related to family and marital relations. One of the most vivid reflections of these values can be seen in wedding ceremonies. This article examines traditional Azerbaijani wedding customs within a historical and ethnographic context, addressing the religious, social, and ideological factors that have influenced their formation. The study analyzes the stages of the wedding ceremony—including matchmaking, engagement, the henna night, religious marriage (kebin), the wedding day, and post-wedding rituals—in a chronological sequence. Particular attention is given to the impact of Soviet ideology on wedding practices, the synthesis of pre-Islamic and Islamic beliefs in these ceremonies, and the transformations they have undergone in the modern era. In addition, the article interprets the symbolic elements, folkloric motifs, and musical and dance traditions present in wedding rituals from an ethnographic perspective. Through the cultural codes, aesthetic perceptions, and ritual dramaturgy embodied in these ceremonies, valuable insights can be gained into the worldview, religious mentality, and social relations of the people. Moreover, the study evaluates the social function of the family institution and



<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/atdd>

its role in preserving national identity. The analysis shows that wedding ceremonies are not merely social events but serve as vital instruments for maintaining the collective memory, spiritual world, and national identity of the people.

Keywords: *Wedding Ceremony, National Values, Tradition, Ethnography, Ritual Folklore*

Milli Değerlerin Taşıyıcısı Olarak Azerbaycan Düğün Gelenekleri

Öz

Azerbaycan halkı, zengin ve köklü bir kültürel mirasa sahip olmanın yanı sıra, aile ve evlilik ilişkileriyle ilgili derin manevi değerler geliştirmiştir. Bu değerlerin en canlı yansımalarından birini düğün törenlerinde görmek mümkündür. Bu makale, geleneksel Azerbaycan düğün adetlerini tarihsel ve etnografik bağlamda incelemekte ve bu adetlerin oluşumunda etkili olan dini, sosyal ve ideolojik faktörleri ele almaktadır. Çalışma, çöpçatanlık, nişan, kına gecesi, dini nikah (kebin), düğün günü ve düğün sonrası ritüelleri içeren düğün töreninin aşamalarını kronolojik bir sırayla analiz etmektedir. Sovyet ideolojisinin düğün pratikleri üzerindeki etkisine, bu törenlerdeki İslam öncesi ve İslami inançların sentezine ve modern dönemde geçirdikleri dönüşümlere özellikle dikkat çekilmektedir. Makale ayrıca, düğün ritüellerinde yer alan sembolik unsurları, folklorik motifleri, müzik ve dans geleneklerini etnografik bir bakış açısıyla yorumlamaktadır. Bu törenlerde somutlaşan kültürel kodlar, estetik algılar ve ritüel dramaturji aracılığıyla halkın dünya görüşü, dini zihniyeti ve sosyal ilişkileri hakkında değerli bilgiler edinilebilir. Çalışma ayrıca aile kurumunun toplumsal işlevini ve ulusal kimliğin korunmasındaki rolünü değerlendirmektedir. Analiz, düğün törenlerinin yalnızca sosyal olaylar olmadığını, halkın kolektif hafızasını, manevi dünyasını ve ulusal kimliğini korumak için hayati araçlar olarak hizmet ettiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Düğün Töreni, Milli Değerler, Gelenek, Etnografya, Ritüel Folklor*

Introduction

The Azerbaijani people are distinguished by their rich cultural heritage, profound spiritual traditions, and deep-rooted reverence for the institution of family. Within this value system, wedding ceremonies occupy a central role. A wedding is not merely a formal act of matrimonial union but represents a complex set of rituals that reflect the society's moral values, religious worldview, and aesthetic sensibilities. Through such ceremonies, the core carriers of national identity are transmitted from one generation to the next. Moreover, weddings play a vital role in regulating social relations, establishing family structures, and ensuring the continuity and stability of the community. During the Soviet era, as with other national and spiritual values, Azerbaijan's traditional wedding ceremonies underwent significant transformations. With the establishment of the USSR, a policy of creating a unified Soviet culture was implemented across all republics. Under this policy, diverse ethnic and religious cultural expressions were

systematically subordinated to a universal Soviet cultural code. The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, despite considerable changes in form and content, Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies still preserve their symbolic, religious, and social layers of meaning in contemporary society. Although state ideology in the Soviet period intervened in these traditions, their deep-rooted foundations were never fully eradicated and have remained preserved in the collective memory of the people. The historical development of Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies and their formation within an ethnographic context have been examined using key ethnological sources such as B. Abdulla's *"Azerbaijani Ritual Folklore"* (2005), H. Guliyev and A. Baxtiyarov's *"Ancient Religious Rituals in Azerbaijan and Their Domestic Remnants"* (1962), and the comprehensive three-volume collection *"Azerbaijani Ethnography"* (2007). To explore the policies and impacts of the Soviet regime on wedding practices, the study draws upon M. Sattarov's *"The Formation of Atheistic Worldview Among the Azerbaijani People During the Period of Socialist Construction"* (1964), relevant research by Sh. Nuruzade's *"Ethno-confessional context in Azerbaijan in the 1920s–1930s."* (2010), archived issues of the *"Bakinskiy Rabochiy"* newspaper (1925, 1935), and official legal documents of the Azerbaijan SSR (1927). Transformations and new elements introduced into wedding ceremonies in the modern era have been analyzed based on the works of M. Allahmanli's *"Spiritual Culture of the Western Region of Azerbaijan"* (2011), B. Abdulla (2005), N. Guliyeva's *"Family and Domestic Life of Baku's Population in the 19th–20th Centuries"* (2011), S. Maharramova's *"A historical and ethnographic study of the south-eastern region of the Lesser Caucasus in the 19th and early 20th centuries"*, and the aforementioned *"Azerbaijani Ethnography"* (2007). The role and functions of traditional games, dances, and musical elements in wedding ceremonies have been primarily examined through ethnographic descriptions provided in *"Azerbaijani Ethnography"* (2007). Post-wedding ritual have been analyzed mainly based on the research of N. Guliyeva (2011).

1. The Historical Roots, Symbolic Structure, Family and Ethnographic Features of Azerbaijani Wedding Ceremonies

The structure of the Azerbaijani family has historically been shaped by both social and economic factors. Contemporary households in Azerbaijan still reflect diverse economic activities with deep historical roots. For centuries, agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, gardening, sericulture, beekeeping, and artisanal crafts have played significant roles in the subsistence

economy. Favorable climatic conditions, fertile soil, and abundant natural resources enabled economic self-sufficiency among families, thereby reinforcing intergenerational labor division and kinship structures.

Until the 1930s, the predominant family model in rural Azerbaijan was the multigenerational extended family (often referred to as the "big family"), based on agnatic kinship. These families typically comprised three to four generations living together under one roof, managing joint economic activities and holding collective property. The patriarch ("ata") assumed responsibility for the family's social and economic affairs, and following his death, this role would typically be transferred to the eldest son. Simultaneously, the matriarch or "great mother" maintained authority over domestic work and child-rearing practices. This familial structure ensured internal continuity and collective accountability (Quliyeva, 2011). With the advent of capitalist relations, land reforms, and collectivization policies of the Soviet period, extended families gradually disintegrated into nuclear units. Nevertheless, in rural contexts, patronymic lineage names such as "kök" (root), "ushağı" (offspring), "ocag" (hearth), "tayfa" (clan), and "tire" (lineage) continued to function as social identifiers. Within this familial framework, wedding ceremonies were not merely a union of two individuals but a symbolic affirmation of interfamily alliances, kinship continuity, and communal responsibility. As such, weddings were perceived as both personal and public events.

The formation of Azerbaijani wedding traditions has been influenced by both pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic cultural systems. Simultaneously, their deeper roots lie in pre-Islamic mythological and religious belief structures. For example, rituals such as passing the bride under the Qur'an or a loaf of bread, circling her around a lit lamp, tying a red ribbon around her waist, presenting her with mirrors and candles, and "burning rue" (uzerlik) are still practiced today. These actions symbolically reference ancient cults of fire and fertility (Abdulla, 2005).

In the Zangezur region, the bride's father would lead her in circles around the hearth, declaring, *"We brought you here to serve this home for the rest of your life."* In the Lankaran region, a similar rite was accompanied by the saying: *"The ashes of the father's house are sweet."* Other protective and fertility-related rituals include circling the bride with salt and barley, throwing water after her, and rotating her around the hearth three times - each gesture symbolizing protection from the evil eye and the wish for prosperity (Azərbaycan etnoqrafiyası, 2007).

The red ribbon tied around the bride's waist has symbolic associations with fire and the Sun in Turkic cosmology, and is believed to possess protective power. It was often wrapped around the

bride's body three or seven times while traditional "bayatılar" (folk quatrains) were recited. In Turkic mythology, the color red is seen as a potent defense against malevolent forces (Quliyev & Bəxtiyarov, 1962).

Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies are traditionally structured in three main stages:

1. "Pre-wedding rituals" (matchmaking, engagement, dowry preparation, "paltarbiçmə" – cloth cutting, "xınayaxdı" – henna night, "kebin" – Islamic marriage contract);
2. "Main wedding events" (bringing the bride, formal and informal banquets);
3. "Post-wedding ceremonies".

Early marriage practices such as "göbəkəsmə" (navel cutting) and "bəşikkəsmə" (cradle vow) are documented in classical texts like the Kitabi-Dede Gorqud": *"If God gives me a daughter, I shall give her to Baybura Bey's son"* (Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud, 1962, p. 150). Couples were often introduced or chosen during community events such as weddings, funerals, or at village water sources. These matches were frequently based on social parity and ethnic proximity. In affluent families, weddings could last for 40 days and 40 nights, including music ensembles, "horse races" ("cıdıraxıma"), wrestling competitions, and communal dances such as the "Bey yallisi" (the groom's yalli). In contrast, weddings among lower-income families were simpler but retained essential symbolic structures. Placing a copper tray under the bride's feet, showering her with apples and coins all aimed to ensure prosperity and success in her new home. Traditional music and dance have always played a central role in Azerbaijani weddings. Melodies and dances such as "Vağzalı" (a traditional Azerbaijani wedding march)), "Tarakama", "Uzundere", "Yallı", and "Heyratı" function not only as entertainment but also as carriers of national identity. Ashiq performances, "mugham" recitations, and "bayatılar" continue to embody the living oral culture of the nation through these ceremonies.

2. State Interventions and Transformations in Wedding Ceremonies During the Soviet Period

During the Soviet era, the adaptation of national customs and traditions - particularly those rooted in religion - to state ideology was a key component of the USSR's broader ideological strategy. In this context, wedding ceremonies were perceived by the Soviet ideological apparatus as both a social and ideological threat. The Soviet government aimed to weaken religious beliefs and the traditional family model, replacing them with a new domestic paradigm based on atheistic and class-based principles.

Soviet ideology entirely abolished the legal basis of religious marriage (known as “kebin”). According to a decree issued in 1923, marriages performed under Sharia law were no longer recognized as legally valid. Families formed through such marriages were even denied the right to civil legal claims (Nuruzade, 2010). Nevertheless, the “kebin” retained significant spiritual and social value among the population and thus continued to be practiced in secret. In some families, weddings were only permitted after the “kebin” had been performed. In certain cases, the groom’s father would secretly contact a “molla” (Islamic cleric) to arrange a covert religious ceremony (Səttarov, 1964). New forms of weddings were also introduced under Soviet ideology - most notably the “red weddings” and “Komsomol weddings.” These ceremonies excluded religious elements and emphasized official state registration, ideological speeches, and collective festivities. One such example took place in 1935 at the club of the factory named after Lieutenant Schmidt, where following the marriage registration, an ideological film was screened (Nuruzade, 2010; Bakinskiy Rabochiy, 1925; Bakinskiy Rabochiy, 1935). The purpose of such practices was to eliminate the participation of religious figures in domestic affairs and to establish a standardized wedding model for all Soviet peoples. These “red weddings” or “Komsomol weddings” were mostly held in urban areas. However, due to the prevailing Azerbaijani national mentality, such formats failed to achieve widespread popularity in the republic (Səttarov, 1964). Even Communist Party members and Komsomol youth often preferred traditional wedding ceremonies.

In 1927, the Central Executive Committee of the Azerbaijan SSR issued a special resolution criminalizing the giving of money or other gifts in relation to wedding ceremonies. This decision aimed to prohibit traditional socio-economic practices such as “sud pulu” (bride price to the mother), “heri” (agreement gift), dowry support, and the shared coverage of wedding expenses. Nevertheless, these practices were widely accepted across nearly all regions of Azerbaijan as forms of social support and as symbolic confirmations of inter-family agreements. For example, “süd pulu” was money given by the groom’s family to the bride’s mother as a sign of consent (the “heri”) (Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Government of the Azerbaijan SSR, 1927). The term referred specifically to money offered in exchange for the bride’s consent and the costs of organizing the wedding. This custom was practiced throughout the country. The amount of “süd pulu” was determined through mutual agreement between the two families, taking into account the bride’s family’s social status, level of education, and the groom’s family’s financial situation.

The scale of weddings also changed during the Soviet period. Whereas traditional ceremonies could last for forty days and forty nights, or at least seven days and nights, this duration was reduced to a few days under Soviet rule. This shift was influenced not only by ideological restrictions but also by economic factors, especially the deterioration of living standards following World War II. Nevertheless, in some regions, wedding ceremonies lasting three to four days continued up to the 1960s.

Despite all the measures taken during the Soviet period, wedding ceremonies were preserved to some extent thanks to the traditional worldview and social experience of the people. These ceremonies also served as a cultural form of national resistance. Practices such as the “kebin”, “uzechixdi” (public unveiling), “heftehamami” (week-after bath), and others remained intact in terms of content, even if their forms were modified. The durability of these traditions demonstrates that Azerbaijani weddings are not merely mechanisms for forming families but also serve as stable carriers of cultural identity.

3. Modern Transformations and Emerging Elements in Azerbaijani Wedding Ceremonies

In the contemporary period, wedding ceremonies in Azerbaijani society have undergone significant transformations in both form and content. These changes are influenced by a complex set of factors, including socio-economic conditions, globalization, urbanization, migration, and technological modernization. Whereas weddings were traditionally held in family courtyards, “mağar” (tent-like structures), or open-air settings, they are now predominantly organized in banquet halls and restaurants. Nonetheless, in certain rural areas, the traditional “mağar” format still persists (Allahmanlı, 2011). One of the core pre-wedding stages, known as “paltarbichme” (cloth-cutting), continues to be practiced in some regions. Historically, luxurious fabrics such as “zerxara”, “gumash”, and “pombarxit” were purchased for the bride; today, synthetic and ready-made textiles dominate. Despite this, the ritual dramaturgy and symbolic significance remain intact: fabrics, sewing kits, and gifts are presented in “xoncha” (decorative trays), and women accompany the ceremony with folk poetry and “bayati” (traditional quatrains):

*“I threw the scissors on the shelf,
Let it jingle, my dear hey,
Call the groom’s sister now,
Let her dance and sing, my dear hey”* (Abdulla, 2005, p. 129).

The “xınayaxdı” (henna night) ritual has also been transformed in its organizational form while preserving its symbolic content. Previously held in domestic settings among women, the ceremony is now arranged in specially decorated salons. Intricate henna designs are applied to the bride’s fingers, often accompanied by choreographed performances and Turkish or Arabic pop music (Azərbaycan etnoqrafiyası, 2007; Allahmanlı, 2011). The traditional “ayagachdı” ritual - originally organized solely by the groom’s family has now evolved into a reciprocal custom in many families. Both sides hold formal presentations and gift exchanges aligned with their respective social statuses. This reflects a broader societal trend toward balanced and egalitarian family relations (Quliyeva, 2011).

Folkloric components such as “Vağzalı”, “Terekeme”, “Yalli”, “Uzundere”, and “Cengi” remain integral parts of wedding celebrations. Although traditions such as “aşiq” music, “mugham”, and “xanendelik” (vocal art) are still preserved to varying degrees, other ritual elements – “şabash” (cash reward during performances), “bey terifi” (praise of the groom), and “gelin terifi” (praise of the bride) - have either become merely symbolic or entirely disappeared in urban settings (Abdulla, 2005). The decline of such practices is attributed to commercialization, time constraints, the dominance of modern entertainment formats, and intergenerational differences.

Shifts in wedding structure also mirror changes in approaches to marriage itself. While marriages were previously arranged by families, today individual choice and romantic relationships are the primary drivers. In particular, young people who moved to urban centers for education during the 1960s and 1970s increasingly began marrying without parental approval (Quliyeva, 2011). This development has significantly influenced the organization and content of wedding ceremonies over time. Technological innovations - such as video recording, livestreaming on social media, and drone footage - have introduced new dimensions to the documentation and public sharing of weddings. In the diaspora context, weddings serve as both a vehicle for preserving Azerbaijani cultural elements and a platform for adaptation to external influences. As such, diaspora weddings emerge as important phenomena for both identity maintenance and the negotiation of hybrid cultural codes.

4. Traditional Games, Dances, and Musical Elements in Azerbaijani Wedding Ceremonies

One of the key components that shape the artistic and aesthetic character of Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies is the inclusion of traditional folk games, music, and dances. These

ceremonies are not merely acts of legal union but also offer broad opportunities for the cultural self-expression of the people. The dances performed during weddings—such as Yallı, Terekeme, Uzundere, Vağzalı, Cengi, Qazağı, Halay, Mirzeyi, Heyratı, Sultanı, Qeshengi, and others - serve both aesthetic and social functions.

The performance of dances varies by region. For example, in Nakhchivan, a special dance known as Bey Yallısı (“the groom’s yallı”) plays a ceremonial role in concluding the wedding festivities. In the southeastern regions of Azerbaijan (Astara, Lankaran, Masalli), women would traditionally gather in circles to perform Halay dances. Men also participated in Halay rituals, and the performance integrated a wide range of verbal art forms, from bayatı (quatrains) to various types of ashig poetry. These dances featured sung duels between men facing one another, often accompanied by qıfılbend and cengi melodies. It appears that this game symbolized the readiness for battle among ancient tribes, their bravery, and their communal joy in the aftermath of victory (Azərbaycan etnoqrafiyası, 2007).

Musical accompaniment in weddings prominently features instruments such as the “gara zurna” (double-reed woodwind), “saz” (string instrument), and “goşanağara” (paired drums). In the 19th century and early 20th century, zurna players would climb onto the roofs of wedding homes and announce the start of the ceremony by performing traditional pieces like Cengi and Koroğlu.

Wedding celebrations across Azerbaijan differ in terms of their content and musical repertoire depending on the region. Typically, entertainment was given special emphasis at the bride’s wedding event. These festivities included games, songs, and dances. Traditional weddings often featured national wrestling, horse races (cıdıraxıma), and equestrian shows (atoynatma), accompanied by special songs and mugham performances. Traditional wedding celebrations were typically accompanied by live “saz”, “zurna”, and “goshanağara” performances. Regrettably, it must be noted that the content and form of traditional wedding ceremonies have gradually changed. Most of the folk games and festive activities once integral to weddings have now disappeared from daily life and survive only as folkloric remnants.

5. Post-Wedding Rituals: “Heftehamami”, “Uzechixdi”, and “Ayagachdi”

Wedding rituals in Azerbaijani culture do not conclude with the act of marriage. Rather, a sequence of post-wedding ceremonies – “Heftehamami”, “Uzechixdi”, and “Ayagachdi” - serve as integral extensions of the wedding dramaturgy, functioning to regulate intra-family relationships,

reinforce kinship harmony, and facilitate broader social integration. These ceremonies complete the structural and symbolic arc of the marriage process. “Heftehamami” (“week bath”) is performed approximately one week after the wedding. In this exclusively female-centered ritual, the bride is taken to a communal bathhouse where she is ceremonially washed by female relatives and friends. During the ceremony, both the bride and the groom receive gifts such as clothing, jewelry, and household items. The ritual embodies symbolic notions of purification and renewal, and is intended to mark the bride’s adaptation to her new role and her formal acceptance by the husband’s family (Quliyeva, 2011). “Uzechixdi” (lit. “coming out [into society]”) follows “Heftehamami”, and symbolizes the bride’s public presentation. In this event, the bride is formally introduced as a full member of her new family and community. Relatives and guests present valuable gifts such as rings, gold, carpets, or other significant items. This ceremony not only marks a social transition but also serves as a public demonstration of the family’s status and the formal recognition of the new marital union. “Ayagachdi” (“foot-stepping” or “foot-visit”) is a series of mutual family visits held several weeks after the wedding. Initially, the groom’s family invites the bride’s family for a formal gathering, which is later reciprocated by the bride’s family. These visits include traditional meals featuring sweets, rice pilaf, tea, and the exchange of gifts such as carpets, household items, and symbolic tokens of goodwill. “Ayagachdi” functions as a key mechanism for social adaptation and the establishment of lasting harmony between the two families (Quliyeva, 2011). In contemporary contexts, the ceremony is often conducted by both families, reflecting growing trends of gender balance and mutual responsibility within the family structure.

6. Rituals, Magical Symbolism, and Mythological Beliefs in Azerbaijani Wedding Ceremonies

The rituals and beliefs preserved in Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies reflect deep traces of ancient religious and magical worldviews. These practices originate in prehistoric conceptions of nature, fertility, protection, and communal order, rooted in systems such as totemism, animism, and various cults. According to G. Geybullayev, “*The essential characteristic of wedding customs is their religious-magical structure. They are aimed at ensuring the success of the marriage and thus belong to different types of magic*” (Qeybullayev, 2006, p. 240). Functionally, the rituals associated with weddings can be categorized into several core types: fertility and generative magic, protection against malevolent spirits, blessing for abundance and prosperity, and social cohesion and family harmony. Regional rituals such as “Shakh bezemek” (tree branch decoration) are

practiced in some areas, in which tree branches are adorned for both the bride and groom, symbolizing the wish for a fruitful marriage and many children. This custom is linked to the “World Tree” and tree cults. Hanging apples on the branches invokes symbols of fertility. The act of the groom throwing an apple at the bride upon her arrival at his home is also interpreted as a fertility charm. In Azerbaijani mythological texts - such as folktales and epics - the apple is depicted as a fruit that grants children, healing, and rejuvenation. Placing bread under the bride’s veil, breaking and scattering bread above her head, or laying bread at the threshold as she enters the house - each of these rituals represents a wish for prosperity and is considered part of abundance magic. During engagement ceremonies, symbolic “binding” rituals were also performed. Items such as a wool knot soaked in the blood of a sacrificial ram, a locked padlock, or a folded pocketknife were used. It was believed that these rituals would ensure a successful wedding night and protect the couple from evil forces. Such symbolic acts are manifestations of protective and affective magic embedded in traditional magical thinking.

The widespread use of the color red - red dresses, red veils, red sashes tied around the bride’s waist - derives from Turkic mythological associations with fire and the Sun. Red was regarded as a symbol of life energy and protective power. In ancient beliefs, evil spirits were thought to fear fire, light, and the Sun. Applying sacrificial blood to the bride’s forehead and seating her behind a “red curtain” (“Gyrmuzu gerdek”) are also part of this symbolic protection system.

As B. Abdullayev notes, “Evil spirits fear the Sun and light. It is no coincidence that dusk is called ‘the time of evil.’ The presence of horses leading the bridal procession is a continuation of this symbolic system” (Abdullayev, 2004). Other rituals metaphorically reinforced the bride’s permanence and integration into the family structure. For example, placing copper, iron, or other metal objects under the bride’s feet as she entered the household symbolized her strength and stability in her new home. In some cases, the bride and groom would try to step on each other’s feet an act believed to indicate who would hold authority in the marriage (Məhərrəmov, 2020).

While many of these rituals were still actively practiced in the early 20th century, the Soviet era and urbanization processes contributed to the erosion of several of them. Nevertheless, some elements such as the apple, red ribbon, veil, bread, mirror, and fire have survived in either transformed or purely symbolic forms. Collectively, these rituals confirm that Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies are not merely social events but are also “*living carriers of mythological and cultural memory*”.

Conclusion

In the context of accelerating globalization, technological transformation, and the pervasive influence of mass culture, the preservation of national and cultural identity has become a matter of strategic importance in Azerbaijani society, as in many other cultures. Within this framework, wedding ceremonies function not only as reflections of the family institution but also as carriers of national values, religious-mythological perceptions, and collective cultural memory. Research indicates that Azerbaijani weddings have historically served not merely as the formalization of a marital bond, but also as regulators of social relations, expressions of religious and mythological beliefs, and as performative spaces for music, dance, folklore, and ritual practices. The persistence of magical rituals - featuring symbolic elements such as bread, salt, red ribbon, mirrors, fire, and apples - demonstrates that these ceremonies fulfill not only ritualistic but also symbolic-cultural functions. Although the religious functions of these elements may have diminished over time, they continue to survive as folkloric codes in contemporary wedding practices. Despite structural and spatial transformations such as weddings now being held in urban banquet halls the essential semantic layers of the ceremony remain intact: the affirmation of family formation, collective participation, and the expression of cultural identity. Musical and choreographic elements such as “Yalli”, “Terekeme”, and “Heyrati” serve not only as entertainment but also as rhythmic manifestations of collective memory. Through these forms, weddings become a medium for the reproduction of social and cultural codes. For Azerbaijanis living abroad in diaspora contexts wedding ceremonies serve as an important means of reconnecting with national values and traditions. These rituals become tools for reconstructing and preserving identity in new cultural environments. In this way, weddings also function as a site of cultural resistance and memory restoration. In conclusion, Azerbaijani wedding ceremonies represent a *“complex system that ensures historical-cultural continuity, operates as a social institution, and encodes national identity through rituals and symbolic codes”*. Through these ceremonies, collective memory is preserved and transmitted to future generations at symbolic, functional, and emotional levels. Weddings, therefore, are not merely private events but mechanisms for the survival and reproduction of collective identity.

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