

Musical tradition in wedding ceremony: The role of music in masking the bride

Prof. PhD ISLAM Aida

Prof. PhD LESHKOVA Z. Stefanija

Aim of the paper/Methodology

- Traditional folk wedding music of the Yuruks through different phases of the wedding ceremony with an emphasis of its importance in the ritual of painting and covering face and body of the bride;
- This kind of masking is still present in various forms confirmed by field research in villages in the Centar Zupa, Debarsko, in the summer of 2014;
- The methodology of this *case study* includes participatory observation of many weddings, melography, data analysis process and application of visual method;
- In the research was also applied a non-directive interview, conducted individually and in groups with a higher number of informants;
- To see how aculturational processes by adapting to conditions are affecting the wedding music tradition, video recordings of weddings were analyzed filmed over a decade ago observed through historical and comparative method.

The Yuruks –secular events

- The most important are birth, wedding and death, filled with certain ceremonial activities that are performed by strict regulations and rules;
- Ceremonial activities with magical-religious character are rooted in the distant past and aim to protect or to mitigate the impact of evil forces that each person is frequently exposed to;
- The Yuruk wedding in terms of social, mythological - religious and cultural phenomenon encompasses many rituals and ceremonial activities with deep content and richly expressed form;
- It is performed in strict rules with the most complex rites of traditional Yuruk culture in which prevail religious and magical elements;
- The overall dramatic action is emphasized **by the music** which formally and functionally has an important role.



The role of music in the wedding rites

- Musical repertoire consists of instrumental performances - havasi (ezgis) and ring dances, as well as vocal and vocal-instrumental songs;
- They vary according to the function they have in the rituals i.e., when havasi are played, a priority is given to elements of ritual, and in the ring dances, a priority is given to dancing.
- Focus on the part of the rituals of masking from wedding ceremony in which selection of vocal and instrumental music has an important role.

Henna night

- The first act of masking the bride is performed at her bachelorette party - *Kına gecesi*, when fingers and feet of the bride are dyed with henna. This ritual is of great importance since it symbolizes protection from evil forces and influences. The dominant position of red color of henna, and the veil of the bride and the materials that wrap hands, is interpreted with an apotropaic and visual significance - warm, bright and full of life, color of life strength and energy;
- On Henna night, only women participate in the act of putting, called timing of henna on hands and feet, they sing songs with a sad content to symbolize sadness of the girl for leaving her father's home;
- The repertoire is usually sung with rhythmic accompaniment of one or more daires (tambourines), and the thematic content refers to the ceremony itself and to the bride,
- A characteristic of this repertoire is that melody dominates the text, pronouncing of vocals becomes unintelligible, which represents a stylistic feature of a group singing and a component of a performing moment of which the singers are not very much aware of;
- Henna night is an important ritual in contributing to continuity of female vocal music tradition of Kodzadzik, as one of the few occasions for performing and transferring of these songs from generation to generation.



Taking the Bride

- The last day of the wedding is celebrated with taking the bride on ornate horse accompanied by instrumental music with zurnas and tapan drums emphasizing the dramatic role in the act of parting from home, when the bride completely masked mounts a horse;
- Besides ring dances that are closely related to the ritual, with special sound semantics and melodic beauty, in this occasion stand out instrumental wedding performances – Havasi;
- They have a purpose-built function that symbolically marks a rite of ritual ceremonies and therefore they are with freer improvisation on the melody, ie ezgi;
- At this stage of wedding is practiced masking of the bride's face performed by trained women; This masking with colors (make-up masks) begins with the spread on the face, forehead, eyelids and throat with bleach to the extent that the face can not be recognized; Lips are accentuated with red lipstick, and on the cheeks and chin is placed intense red color in the shape of a circle; On some brides, eyebrows are highlighted by drawing and decorating with red dots; The hair is covered with a colorful scarf trimmed with gold coins on a row of glittering decorations in different colors; The act is accompanied by songs from the repertoire of Henna night.

Parting of the bride from home

- The act of bride leaving the parental home represents culmination of the whole wedding ceremony in which the masking has a significant role;
- The bride's head is covered with *duvak*, which is associated with ancient folk belief that she should not see the path that she is led on, so that she can't go back;
- Through thickly woven and decorated cloth cover, she can hardly see anything, and therefore the bride is accompanied and guided by her brother or another close relative; The bride must wear this cover from the moment of leaving her parents' home until she enters the new place of living.
- In the act of separation from home, when the bride mounts a horse, a *Bridal havasi* is played, in which music has an emphasized dramatic role. It is achieved through rhythmic tension expressed by rapidly hitting the mallet and sticks on the drums (*accelerando*); This ecstatic *furioso*, coupled with the squeaking sounds of zurnas in a free tempo, symbolically highlights the beginning of a new phase in bride's life.

Arriving at the home of the groom

- Upon arrival at the groom's house, for the bride which is completely hidden (masked) are used certain requisites as symbols of protection against spells, but also to incite traditional family expectations - for the bride to be fertile, hardworking, and smooth talking;
- When she gets off the decorated ornate horse before stepping into a new home, she has to turn over a jug with water, hold bread and broom underarms and to skip the threshold; At the same time, in the yard are played ring dances at a rapid pace which guests dance with small steps and in small jumps;
- After the bride enters her room, begins the ceremony of raising the veil by brother in law; The act of revealing the face is followed by songs sung by the mother in law and all the women present for good luck to the newlyweds; Follows the ritual of oiling her lips with candy by the closest relatives of the groom, as a symbol of kindness and glibness of the bride.

Conclusion

- Field research has shown that the wedding in Yuruk community in the western part of the Republic of Macedonia is the most significant and most massive social worldly gathering of this population;
- It is still consisted of the largest number of ritual - customary rites and ceremonies based on the apotropaic character;
- The processed material confirmed that some rituals still retain masking as a product of beliefs and lasting legacy - Masking is an element in a complex process of transformation and covering up the bride in the wedding ceremony which represents a crossing from one life stage to another one;
- The music, which is a living tradition, contributes to emphasizing the dramatic nature of these rituals;
- In terms of masking is especially specific the ritual of Henna night, given that it has its own distinctive features and it can be practiced as a separate ritual which symbolizes protection against spells.

Conclusion

- Generally, the wedding customs of Yuruks, it can be said that there is continuity in coloring, i.e., masking of the bride in the past and in the present, in regards to the importance and function, and in regards to the historical genesis;
- Masking of the bride has retained sacred, magical, worldly, utilitarian and aesthetic character that still reflects on the music tradition;
- Passing through aculturational processes, the wedding music tradition represents a vital factor in maintaining continuity in the musical heritage and it is a reflection of certain segments of the socio-cultural life.