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Review on the Macedonian Wedding Singing

Abstract

The wedding as a rite of passage in Macedonia is a living tradition that preserves numerous and various evidence either on the social relations of the traditional community or the changes of this complex family-customs and ritual cycle. The characteristic of this complex is that it abounds with many ritual-magical actions, the basis of which is the apotropaic character.

The most significant signs, according to which it is possible to determine the boundaries of the local singing style, include: the constancy of the traditional wedding scenario, the commonality of the wedding repertoire and the types of musical-poetic structures.

Remains of the former characteristics of social life are deposited in the entire wedding complex: the former rights and duties of the woman and her position in the village community, as well as the old beliefs of magical and religious character.

The main characters in the wedding ceremony, apart from the bride and the groom, are: the father-in-law, the mother-in-law, the best man, the groomsman, the bride's brother, the brother-in-law and other participants, who are called wedding guests or in-laws. For them, during the entire wedding ritual, songs are sung, related to the entire ritual process and have a precisely determined ritual place and performance time. Their performance is related to four time-space segments of the wedding.

Keywords: Macedonia, village wedding, rites of passage, wedding repertoire, wedding singing

The wedding, which is included in the rites of the life cycle, is not only an exceptional rite, but also the most complex in its structure. The wedding is considered to be one of the so-called rites of passage¹, because it ensures the transition of the groom and the bride into another age group, establishing their social roles in the family. It also enables the two families to be brought together and become related. It has an initiation, social and communicative function.

¹ The transition of an individual from one gender-age group to another, from one social status to another, like any other transition, is dangerous and uncertain. Ёлијаде 1986: 153.



The initiation function of the wedding, for the young couple getting married, is connected to the beginning of a new stage of life, which means entering into adulthood. The initiation moment, in the highest degree, is connected to the bride, because according to the popular understanding of morality, her transition to the status of a woman was possible only after the wedding, even in the case when the two young people already had sexual relations before the marriage. Checking the honour of the young woman even at the beginning of the 20th century was obligatory in many villages.²

The social function of the wedding was and continues to be very important. Only family members were recognized as valued members of society: men had the right to participate in the village assembly, where they had the right to vote, while women were obliged to take care of the household. The family was considered by the community as the economic and moral basis for the proper way of life, while the unmarried way of life was considered as violation of the norms, which means deviation.³

The initiation and social function of the wedding coincide in many ways in relation to the wedding dramaturgy, which is outlined in the course of certain stages of the rites:

- a phase of separation of the group of unmarried from their family;
- a stage representing entrance – leaving the parental home and the previous status and passing through a series of magical rituals to enter a new status or a liminal phase;
- unification phase – joining the group of legitimate members of the community, uniting with the new family and establishing the new status.⁴

The communicative function of the wedding allows to choose actions of verbal and musical texts from the point of agreement and approchement between two families - the community of the groom and the community of the bride. Bayburin and Lewington determined that „the basic antithesis in the wedding is the opposition of parties of the groom and parties of the bride that are realized in determining the spatial and temporal boundaries between the „own” and „other's” worlds and overcoming these boundaries during the wedding as rites of passage.”⁵

From a practical point of view, the wedding also performs the following functions: *magical, aesthetic, educational and entertaining*.

² Байбурин 1993: 62.

³ Громыко 1991: 74.

⁴ Сысоева 2011: 46.

⁵ Байбурин–Левингтон 1978: 89–105.

The wedding as a rite of passage in Macedonia⁶ is a living tradition that preserves numerous and various evidence either on the social relations of the traditional community or the changes of this complex family-customs and ritual cycle. The characteristic of this complex is that it abounds with a large number of ritual-magical actions, the basis of which is the apotropaic character.⁷

The most significant signs, according to which it is possible to determine the boundaries of the local singing style, include: the constancy of the traditional wedding scenario, the commonality of the wedding repertoire and the types of musical-poetic structures.

During the actual act of the wedding, the newlyweds were taken care not to fall under the influence of „evil eyes” and various spells with negative consequences. It functions as a complex system of signs in which they complement each other and thus form its semantics.⁸

Remains of the former characteristics of social life are deposited in the entire wedding complex: the former rights and duties of the woman and her position in the village community, as well as the old beliefs of magical and religious character.

The main characters in the wedding ceremony, apart from the bride and the groom, are: the father-in-law, the mother-in-law, the best man, the groomsman, the bride's brother, the brother-in-law and other participants, who are called wedding guests or in-laws. For them, during the entire wedding ritual, songs are sung, related to the entire ritual process and have a precisely determined ritual place and performance time.

Their performance is related to four time-space segments of the wedding.

1. in the house of the groom and the bride:

– *when the ritual bread is kneaded.*

On Thursday, women and girls gather; a ritual bread - a round unleavened loaf of bread with sugar (called „pogacha“ or „svakja“) is kneaded by a girl who has living parents, as in the song:

Брашно се септ, ој мило маце,
Сваќа се месит јунакова куќа.
Месит је, месит јунакова друшка,
јунакова друшка таткова -
мајкина

The flour is sown, oh dear mother,
bread is kneaded in the young man's house.
The bread is kneaded by the young man's
friend
who has a father and a mother.

⁶ For more details about the wedding and the wedding rites of passage of the Brsjatsi, look at Петреска 2002.

⁷ Величковска 2008: 55.

⁸ Иванова 1998, <http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bg/folklor/index.php>

and that ritual bread is eaten by the girls who weave the wreaths - one for the bride and the other to decorate the door of the house. (See example number 1.)

– *when the wreaths are woven.*

It was sung on Thursday when the wreath was woven:

Плела мома три зелени венца,	The girl is knitting three green wreaths
први венец од ран бел босилок,	the first wreath of early white basil
втори венец од бела пченица,	second wreath of white wheat
трети венец од винова лоза.	the third wreath of vines

(Sung by Rusa Boshkova from the village of Gorobinci, Sveti Nikole)

or the song: „A maid wove three green wreaths”. (See example number 2.)

2. in the groom's house:

– *while the groom is being shaved.*

Ritual shaving is done on Saturday night or early on Sunday morning. The shaving is done by the brothers of the groom, the best man or the groomsman; during that time the girls sing: „The young groom is being shaved”. (See example number 3.)

– *on Saturday evening when the groom's family go to the bride's home to take her.*

The song is sung: „Hey, mother-in-law, you white dove”. (See example number 4.)

3. in the bride's house:

– *when the in-laws arrive at the bride's house.*

On that occasion, the song „Welcome decorated wedding guests” is sung. (See example number 5.)

– *when they bring out the bride to the brother-in-law.*

The song is sung: „The Morning Star has risen” (See example number 6.)

Јорпеја свезда Деница,	The Morning Star has risen“,
та не је свезда Деница,	she is not a star Denica,
туку је мома токме́на,	but she is a ready girl,
токме́на мома даде́на.	ready to get married.

– *when the bride is brought out to the wedding guests to kiss their hand and when the bride gifts them.*

The song is sung: „Bring out the young bride”. (See example number 7.)

4. in the groom's house:

– *at the moment when the bride enters the groom's courtyard etc.*

They welcome their family, relatives, neighbors and friends with the greeting song: „Welcome, decorated wedding guests!/One hundred you came, one hundred and one you leave” (See example number 8).

The arrival of the bride in the new home represents the perfection and climax of the wedding ceremony. At that moment, the groom's mother plays a major role in the rites. The meeting of the bride with her mother-in-law is followed by numerous customs and ritual actions, which are in function of her future happy life, as well as the birth of a healthy generation.

In addition to ritual singing, women in modern conditions also add a dose of humor, in order to draw the attention of some participants in the wedding ceremony, who can be carriers of negative energy, which means, to neutralize their possibly harmful influence on the newlyweds. Such songs are sung when the wedding guests arrive at the bride's home and are intended for the brother-in-law, mother-in-law and father-in-law, etc., and use melodies borrowed from the old ritual singing. Moreover, the songs related to the rites performed on the second day of the wedding are also important, such as: the ritual awakening of the bride, the ritual going to fetch water, and other obligatory songs during the wedding, which are sung on Monday, for example, the song „Bride, oh bride, you were brought last night” (See example number 9.).

Today's village wedding in Macedonia, at first sight, has a different physiognomy. Basically, its form has been preserved almost to the smallest detail. The economic development of the whole society has led to changes that are easily noticeable. For example, today the bride is not picked up by horses, but by private cars or a car is rented for the young couple, and only the oldest and the youngest participants in the wedding ceremony can dress up in traditional costumes. Many rites, such as: the gathering of the wedding guests, going to take the bride, kneading the ritual bread, etc., are still performed in the traditional order.

As far as the ritual singing is concerned, formally and functionally it still keeps its place in the wedding ritual and if it was maintained, it would represent the continuity of the traditional musical culture of Macedonia, and the new forms of traditional singing expression, which is built on the basis of a very old genetic core, pave the way for changes in terms of enriching the musical material.

From this, as well as from the other moments mentioned earlier, the role of the woman in the traditional wedding singing is of great importance because the woman, with her own memory and the skill of transmitting the songs from generation to generation, established her status as the main guardian, participant and transmitter of tradition. Her exceptional ability to memorize and interpret the contents of folk singing allowed her to leave a large part of that

tradition as a heritage for the following generations. As the bearer of the singing tradition, the woman, through her interpretation, simultaneously recreates, and through this complex process extends the life of the songs.⁹

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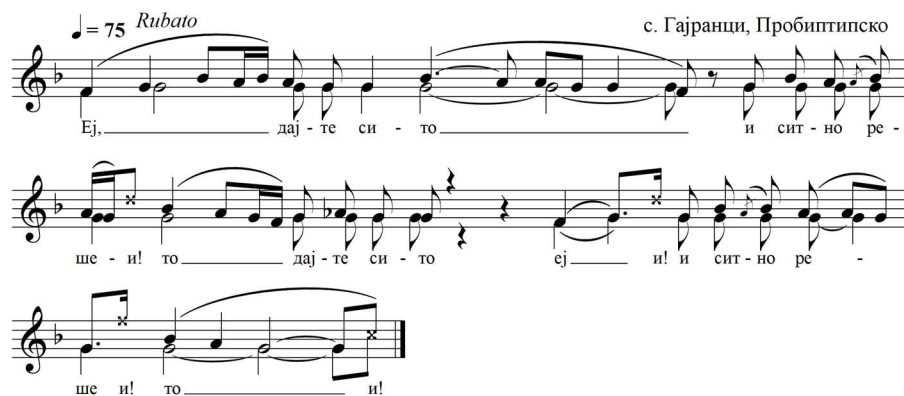
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⁹ Величковска 2008: 57.

Songs and poetry texts

1. Bring sieve and fine colander

♩ = 75 Rubato с. Гајранци, Пробиштипско



Еј, дај - те си - то и сит - но ре -

ше - и! то дај - те си - то еј и! и сит - но ре -

ше и! то и!

Е, дајте ситто и ситно реше и! то,
дајте ситоеј, и! и ситно реше и! то, и!

Да пресееме јунаково брашно,
да најдеме јунакови прстен,
да фрлиме јунаково поле,
за да поле биде берикетно.

AIF (Archive of the Institute of Folklore), tape nr 1012, village Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded in 1969. Singer: Stojna Michkova, Stanka Ristova and Zaga Mishova from the village Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded by Pero Anastasov. Transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung on Thursday, when the ritual bread is kneaded („on zamesok”).¹⁰

¹⁰ Computer music notation made by Prof. Dr. Gorancho Angelov.

2. A maid wove three green wreaths

$\text{♩} = 80$ *Rubato* с. Драчево, Скопско

Јој и! ју - ба - и! ва и!, ју - ба - ва

де - вој и! (ој) и! - ко, јо, - јо, јо.

Јој и! убаи!ва, и!, убава девој и!
(ој)- ко, и!- ко, јо, јо, јо!

Вила мома три зелени венца.
Први венац од винена лоза,
други венац од ситен босилок,
треќи венац од бела пченица.
Први венец од винена лоза,
врлете го у винена лоза,
Втори венац од ситен босилок,
врлете го у бача-градина.
Треќи венац од бела пченица,
врлете го у бела пченица.

AIF, cassette nr 4030, village Stajkovci, Skopje region. Recorded in 2004.
Singer: Mitra Sokolovska sings, born in 1926, in the village Drachevo Skopje region. Recorded, transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.
It is sung on Thursday, when the wreath is woven.

3. The young groom is being shaved

$\text{♩} = 116$ *Rubato* с. Шупљи Камен, Кумановско

Ој у - ба - ва ју - ба - ва де - вој - ко

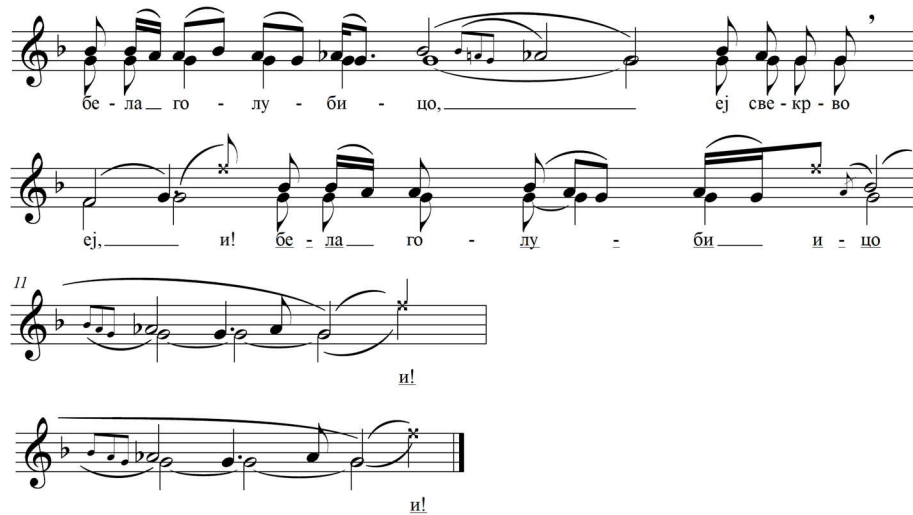
ој у - ба - ва ју - ба - ва де - вој - ко.

*Ој, убава, јубава девојко,
ој, убава, јубава девојко!*

Бричи ми се млади младожења,
Први бричи, други пребричује,
Ја треќи му перчин поткинује.
Три му сестре марамицу држив,
Да не падне од тој руса коса,
Да не украдне прва читанйца,
Ќе гу врљи дек' се вода врти,
Да се врти оно око њума.

AIF, tape nr 2126, village Stracin Kratovo region. Recorded in 1973. Singer Dobrila Josifovska from the village Shuplji Kamen, Kumanovo region. Recorded and transcription by Dushko Dimitrovski. Musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung on Saturday night or Sunday morning when, the groom is being shaved.

4. Hey, mother-in-law, you white dove



Еј, свекрво бела голубицо,
Еј, свекрво, и !, бела голубицо, и!

Што си дошла ју туј град на пазар.
Дал си дошла свила да купуеш,
дал си дошол снаа да си гледам!
- Девојчиња, снаини другачки,
не сам дошла свила да купувам,
ја сам дошла снаа да си гледам!

AIF, tape nr 1012, village Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded in 1969.
Singer: Stojna Michkova, Stanka Ristova and Zaga Mishova from the village
Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded and transcription by Pero Anastasov.
Musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung on Saturday evening when
the bride is taken.

5. Welcome decorated wedding guests

$\text{♩} = 120$ *Rubato* с. Годивје, Охридско

(и) Доб - ре дош - ле, ој и!

(и) ки - те - ни сва - то ој, и!

(о) - и доб - ре дош и!

До каде е зора јодзорила,
до каде је сонце јогрејало,
до каде је постар девер пошло.
Постар девер калеш бел трендафил,
до каде је полмад девер пошло,
помлад девер калешо цунцуле,
зетешине китка босилкова.

AIF, tape nr 2020, village Vrbjani, Ohrid region. Recorded in 1969. Singer: Gjurdja Veljanoska at 62 years old, Krstanka Despotoska at 60 years old. and Pera Nikoloska at 50 years old. (Both born in the village of Godivje, Ohrid region.) Recorded by Naum Tselakoski. Transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.

6. The Morning Star (Denica) has risen

♩ = 96 Rubato с. Дедино, Радовишко

Jo - гре - ја свез и! да де - ни и!
ца, та не је
свез и! да де - ни - ца и!

Јогреја свезда Деница,
Та не је свезда Деница, и!

Туку је мома токме́на,
токме́на мома даде́на.

AIF, tape nr 2706, village Dedino, Radovich region. Recorded in 1979. Singer: a female singing group. Recorded by Gjorgji Gjorgiev. Transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung when the bride presented in front of the brother-in-law.

7. Bring out the young bride

с. Цера, Кочанско

$\text{♩} = 100$ *Rubato*

Из - ве - де - те мла - да - та не -
- ве - (о) - ста,
из - ве - де - те мла - да - та не -
вес - та.

Изведете младата невеста,
изведете младата невеста.

Да цалива рака по трпеза,
- Редом гледај ти млада невесто,
Редом гледај по старите луѓе,
немој некој снао да одминеш,
гевота је снао стамоте је!

AIF, cassette nr 3918, village Kamenica, Pijanec region. Recorded in 2002.
Singer: Cvetanka Hristova, Stojka Atanasovska and Lefa Simonovska. Recorded,
transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.

8. Welcome decorated wedding guests

$\text{♩} = 100$ *Rubato* с. Лески, Кочанско

(и) — Доб - ре — дош - ле — — — — — ки - те - ни сва - то -

(о) — ви — — — — — до - бре дош - ле — — — — — ки - те - ни

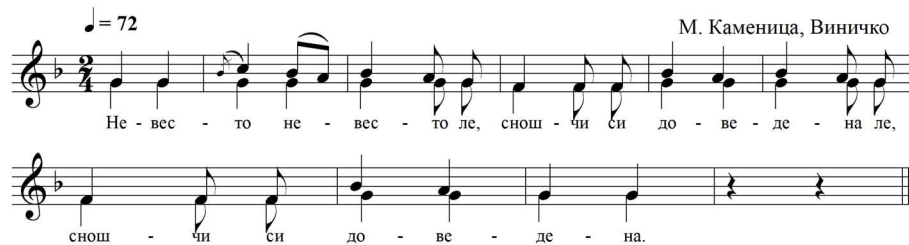
сва - то - ве.

(и) Добредошле китени свато (о) ви,
Добредошле китени сватове.

Сто дојдџте, сто еден ојдџте.
- Слегни Маро од враната коња!
Ја другарки велат и говџрат:
- Не слегнувај, Маро, не слегнувај,
додека ти свекоро не такса,
свекор такса крава со телџнце.

AIF, cassette nr 3329, village Vinica, Kochani region. Recorded in 1988.
Singer: Lozena Eftimova (42), Elena Mitevska (44) and Mira Simeonova from Leski, Kochansko. Recorded by Trpko Bicevski, transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.

9. Bride, oh bride, you were brought last night



Невѐсто, невѐсто ле, сншпчи си доведена, ле,
сншпчи си доведена!

од утре стануваш, презимйња тураш:
гиди на свекоро, гиди кожувару,
гиди на свекрва, гиди караснаја.
гиди на золвите, гиди маалцики.
гиди на јатрва, гиди кавгацйко,
гиди на девѐро, гиди визитаро.
гиди на момчѐто, гиди трошни кошот.

AIF, cassette nr 3918, village M. Kamenica, Vinica region. Recorded in 2002.
Singer: Stojka Milchevska was born in the village of Cera, Kochansko, Tanaska Ilcova, born in the village Cera, Kochansko and Cvetanka Hristova, born in the village of Sasa, Pijanechko. Recorded, transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. Dancing song.

Illustrations



Pic. Nr. 1. *Kneading the ritual bread - „svarja“*. v. Galichnik, Gostivarsko. AIF Inv. №. 339. 1948.



Pic. Nr. 2. *A ritual bread „svakja“*. v. Galichnik, Gostivarsko. AIF Inv. №. 3336. 1980.



Pic. Nr. 3. *Groom's Shaving*, v. Galichnik, Gostivarsko.
AIF Inv. №. 339. 1948.



Pic. Nr. 4. *Wedding: „Breaking” the ritual cake.*
V. Rilevo, Prilep. AIF Inv. №. 821, August 1972.



Pic. Nr. 5. *Wedding: the bride approaches her mother-in-law to bow to her.*
V. Rilevo, Prilep region. AIF Inv. №. 822. August 1972.



Pic. Nr. 6. „*Prviche*” - 40 days after the wedding.
(*The first visit of the young people to the house of the bride's parents.*)
V. Gorobinci, Ovche Pole region. 1941.