CULTURAL CEREMONIES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

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Abstract. *Wedding ceremonies are more than mere rituals for both uzbek and English speaking countries—they are vivid expressions of a culture's values, social structure, and shared identity. This article explores and compares traditional wedding customs in Uzbekistan with those in English-speaking countries, focusing on events that occurs before and after the main ceremony. While Uzbek weddings emphasize deep familial bonds and celebrations that span several days, weddings in English-speaking nations typically focus on the couple's personal intentions, formal ceremony format, and a single-day reception. Through this contrast, we uncover universal human aspirations—unity, joy, and blessing—while also seeing how history, religion, and regional heritage shape distinct ways of marking marriage.*

Keywords. *Uzbek wedding, Nikoh to`yi, British wedding traditions, ceremony comparison, cultural rituals, marriage customs.*

Introduction. Around the world, wedding ceremonies offer a window into a society's beliefs, expectations, and cultural depth. Though the core purpose remains unchanged—the union of two people—each culture shapes it in its own unique way.In Uzbekistan, weddings, known as Nikoh to`yi, are

grand, joyful events that unfold over several days and bring together entire communities. These celebrations weave together pre-wedding preparations, religious rites, symbolic acts, and festive gatherings into a vibrant tapestry of tradition.

Analysis. ***Pre-Wedding and Engagement.*** In Uzbekistan,even though, law does not require parental permission for marriage, in practice, the approval of the parents carries considerable cultural weight and strongly influences the marriage decision. That`s why potential broom`s parents go to bride`s house to ask for her parents allowance, which is called as sovchilik (or qulchilik) among people. If both sides agree, they hold the **non sindirish** ceremony—breaking two loaves of uzbek flatbread together to symbolize the union. The groom's family then presents sarpo, a dowry including traditional clothing and practical household goods. During this gathering, an imam is often invited to religiously announce or bless the couple's future marriage, marking the beginning of their formal commitment. **Tavoq oshi** is a historical Uzbek tradition in which the groom's family sent pilaf to the bride's household every week before the wedding This practice symbolized respect, generosity, and strong relations between the two families.

Wedding Day Rituals. The day starts with **nahor oshi**, a morning pilaf feast attended by many guests, representing abundance and respect for heritage. At the same time, another ceremony also take place. The group of friends who go to the wedding with the groom is referred to as "**Kuyov navkar**[1]." On the wedding day, the navkars proceed to the bride's house, accompanied by the lively sounds of karnay-surnay (traditional Uzbek wind instruments). The groom is dressed in a ton, the traditional national garb, and they are greeted as

[1] Historical uzbek tradition related to zooroastraizm where groom`s friend carry heart shaped fire

honored guests upon arrival. As they enter the bride's house, the navkars carry a heart-shaped fire on the tip of a stick. When a special representative from the bride's side sings music expressing greeting, the groom's friends reply with "**Hazor Alik,**" which translates to "a thousand greetings. "Before leaving her family home, the bride takes part in a heartfelt farewell ritual filled with songs and blessings from her parents. She then departs with friends, heading to the groom's house.About 20 years ago, the wedding night traditionally took place at the **bride's house**, with symbolic preparations, blessings, and **ritual foods**. Guests would enjoy a lavish feast featuring **plov, shashlik, samsa, salads, desserts, and drinks**, reflecting the family's hospitality and generosity. Today, many weddings are held in **restaurants or banquet halls,** but the night still marks the couple's first time together as husband and wife and retains its **cultural and symbolic significance**.

Post-Ceremony Celebrations.The Nikoh to`yi reception is the heart of the celebration, bursting with music, dancing, and lavish food. The bride, usually veiled, is led into the festivities by her yanga, a trusted female companion.Other meaningful moments include sharing honey for a sweet future, gazing into a mirror together as a sign of unity. Then,in **Challandi (Chorladi)** ritual they invite close relatives from both sides to the bride's house. It serves as a way for the bride to **become familiar with the groom's family**, exchange greetings, and build relationships that will be important in her married life. Gifts are often exchanged, further strengthening family bonds.

Wedding ceremonies in English speaking countries. In many English-speaking countries, weddings traditionally begin with a **marriage proposal**, often a romantic gesture where the groom (or partner) asks for the bride's hand in marriage, sometimes on one knee and with an engagement ring. This marks

the formal beginning of the couple's journey toward marriage and is often celebrated with family and friends.

Pre-Wedding and Arrival: The wedding ceremony itself typically begins with the **procession down the aisle**. The groom waits at the altar, often with his best man, while guests are seated. The bride arrives in style, sometimes by luxury car or horse-drawn carriage, accompanied by her bridesmaids. Traditionally, she may walk down the aisle with her father, though modern weddings sometimes vary the order, with bridesmaids entering first. The music played is often the iconic **"Here Comes the Bride"** or the Wedding March, and the bride commonly wears a **white, ivory, or cream dress** with a veil. **Ceremony:**The ceremony is presided over by a priest, minister, or registrar, and includes several key moments:**Exchange of vows:** The bride and groom promise to support and love each other.**Exchange of rings:** This symbolizes their commitment, often accompanied by lighthearted moments as the rings are placed.**Objections:** Traditionally, guests may be asked if there is any legal reason the couple cannot marry, though objections are rare today.**Signing the register:** This legal step officially records the marriage.Once these steps are completed, the couple is pronounced married and may share their first kiss. Guests often celebrate as the couple exits, sometimes with **confetti or petals**.

Reception: The reception is a central part of the celebration, starting with the **wedding breakfast**—a formal meal for guests, with the bride and groom seated at the top table. Key traditions include: **Speeches:** Usually given by the father of the bride, the groom, and the best man. Other family members may also speak. **Cake cutting:** The couple cuts the wedding cake together, symbolizing their first shared meal. **First dance:** The bride and groom share a special dance, sometimes choreographed, before guests join the dance floor.

Keepsakes and guest books: Guests often leave messages or signatures to create a memento of the day.

***Post-Ceremony*:**Following the reception, the couple traditionally departs for a **honeymoon**, marking the beginning of their married life together. While traditional rituals are widely practiced, modern weddings increasingly reflect personal style and creativity, allowing couples to tailor celebrations to their preferences and relationships.

As Uzbekistan is developing rapidly, weddings are also no exception. Not far ago, it was very difficult to hold a wedding ceremony. As I said earlier, all the events were held at houses, with somehow ordinary food products on tables and the names of bride and groom used to be written by claying cotton at carpets. In contrast, nowadays we are capable of receiving even 500 guests in our weeding day.Although this is waste of money and natural products, in uzbek people`s mind it is fixed idea that if you do not host a luxurious event you are a topic for for gossips. That is government of Uzbekistan is noe taking action against such wasteful events, copying from developed countries. In contrast, weddings in English-speaking countries have developed in a different direction. While Uzbek weddings have become larger and more community-oriented, weddings in countries such as the UK, the US, or Australia tend to focus more on the couple rather than the extended family. Guest lists are usually much smaller, often limited to close relatives and friends, reflecting the individualistic nature of these societies.

	Longevity	expense	guests	traditions
Uzbekistan	At least 3 days	High (large celebrations)	300-500+	Sovchilik, non sindirish, sarpo, tavoq oshi, nahor

				oshi, kuyov navkar, Challandi
UK	1 day	moderate	40-120(relatives, friends)	Aisle procession, vows, ring exchange, signing register, speeches, cake cutting
US	1 day	Moderate to high	100-150	Proposal, aisle walk, vows, ring exchange, first dance, honeymoon
Australia	1 day	cheap	80-120	Western-style ceremony, vows, rings, multicultural influences

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