



Article

# Marriage Issues in the Family Ties of Kungirat Uzbeks

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**Abstract:** This study examines the family dynamics among the Kungirat Uzbeks in the northern mountainous regions of Surxondarya, specifically in Boysun and Sherobod districts. Focusing on traditions related to marriage, the research explores the unique customs passed down through generations of the Qong'iro't clan, including the preparation of daughters for family life, expectations of brides in household responsibilities, and pre-marital relationships between girls and boys. Despite previous studies on Uzbek family traditions, little research has focused on these specific regional practices. Using ethnographic methods, the study reveals that traditional values still shape marital expectations and household roles, highlighting the persistence of clan-based customs in modern family structures. The findings have implications for understanding the cultural preservation of marriage customs in Uzbek society.

**Keywords:** Kungiro't, Clan marriage, Bride-groom, Bride price, Engagement, Father-in-law, Mother-in-law.

## 1. Introduction

The issue of marriage undoubtedly holds great significance for social development, especially considering its crucial role in laying the foundation of primary family relationships. In all branches of the Uzbek nation, serious attention is given to marriage issues, including in the Qong'iro't tribe, where marital relationships are regarded as a value. If we pay attention to the diversity of weddings and marriage ceremonies in different regions of Uzbekistan, this variety distinguishes the unique aspects of each lineage's marriage ceremonies that have developed over the centuries. This article discusses some thoughts and reflections on marriage and related issues in the context of family relationships among the representatives of the Kungiro't tribe residing in the northern mountainous part of Surkhondarya region, Boysun district, and the sub-mountain areas, as well as in the Sherobod district.

## 2. Materials and Methods

In Kungiro't tribe among Uzbeks, girls are engaged at the age of nine but sometimes they are betrothed starting from the age of one. The bride and groom spent their childhood playing together until they turned 13-14 years old, but starting from the time the girl reaches maturity, their parents prohibit them from seeing each other. [1] From the age of 14-15, parents have started to agree on a bride price and begin to pay it. Real family relationships begin later for well-off families, after a year or two, while for the poor, they often start three to sometimes five years later, that is, after economic opportunities arise.

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To establish a household and manage domestic affairs, it was necessary to build a *utov* (separate shelter) and acquire household items. As a rule, quite a bit of time passes from the day the bride price payment process begins until the bride arrives at the groom's house. According to the people of Kungiro, it is considered unusual for the bride and groom to engage in sexual relations at this time. The special ceremony known as "cutting the hem" (tearing the lower edge of clothing) is significant in recording the forms of marriage between Kungiro people.[3]

The essence of this wedding ceremony is as follows: if there are children of different genders from families that have a close relationship, they will marry with the agreement and consent of their parents. Usually, fathers communicate their decisions to their partners after reaching an agreement among themselves. If they have children of different genders at the time of marriage, they are considered the bride and groom. The mother of the newly born bride brings her to the mother of the newly born groom. The future mother-in-law of the groom tears the hem of the bride's dress and, while saying "now this is my daughter," ties a new scarf around her head. [4] After that, a feast will be held. After some time, the groom's mother goes to meet the future groom and bride. The bride's mother puts a cap on the future groom and organizes a feast.

In the mountains, another form of marriage is considered to be the exchange of relatives. They call it "the opposing in-law." In this case, the bride's price will not be given. The tradition of the groom paying the bride's price by working for the father-in-law is no longer practiced in the villages. It has been allowed to be paid in installments. Sometimes there were cases where a father-in-law liked his son-in-law, leading to the abandonment of the arranged marriage. There is interesting information about this in the sources. In particular, he mentioned that he became an orphan during his adolescence and lived with his uncle. For 11 years, he worked diligently at his uncle's place and earned his respect – his uncle recounted how he helped him build a shelter and restore his household, and without hesitation, gave his daughter to him.

Another one of the stories lamented how a young man loved a girl and paid a large part of the bride's price for her, but she married someone else. The girl's father has also received the bride's price from the second candidate he deemed worthy. The unfortunate lover has lost not only the girl but also the bride's price. The father of the girl is refusing to return the bride's price [5]. The boy has not dared to take him to court because he is afraid of the consequences. As the bride's price is prohibited by the current legislation. It happens that the groom, especially a poor young man, moves into his father-in-law's house. Such a son-in-law is called "ich kuyov"(when the groom lives in the father-in-law's house). They don't have a bad relationship. Polygamy is still active in Kungirots. Economic opportunities have rarely allowed for having more than one wife.

In Kungiro region, there is a concept known as "psychological prohibitions" when it comes to entering into marriage relationships. The analysis of the collected data ensured the division of "psychological prohibitions" into two groups. The terms "escape" (the essence of this prohibition is that individuals subject to it avoid each other) [6] and "shame" (the violation of these prohibitions is interpreted as a lack of decency, proper upbringing, and other shortcomings) were used to express "spiritual prohibitions. "Escape" primarily applies to the bride and groom before the payment of the bride price begins; this prohibition is applicable to individuals who have reached adulthood. The bride avoids not only her future husband but also his older and younger male relatives.

This separation will continue until the wedding. The bride avoids only those female relatives of her husband who are older than him; she often becomes friends with her husband's younger female relatives. From the age of 11-12, brides and grooms do not call each other by their names, and this continues for their entire lives. The bride does not call her husband's relatives by their names, whether they are older or younger. When a bride addresses an older male relative, she uses the term "brother," and for younger relatives,

she uses the term "brother boy." The same applies to the female relatives of the husband; the elder is addressed as "sister," and the younger as "sister girl" but the speaker's familial characteristics are also expressed with other terms. [7].

### 3. Results and Discussion

Before the bride arrives at the groom's house, she should avoid meeting her father-in-law and her husband's close relatives. After that, the ban on avoiding people was officially abolished, but for a year or more (according to the elders, depending on his upbringing), it will be observed out of decency and respect. This ban was abolished during the "bride showing" ceremony. The wedding ceremony takes place on the day the bride goes to the groom's house, and in the morning, there is also the tradition of "bringing the bride." After the sun sets, in the evening, the father-in-law gathers all the men of the village in his "utov" (shelter) and invites the bride as well [8].

The father of the bride and male relatives attend this feast (women will sit separately in another room or area). The ram is slaughtered, and its skin is spread by the fire at the threshold. Face covered bride enters the room where her father-in-law is sitting, accompanied by an older woman. The bride approaches the open door, bows to the men four or five times, and sits down on the sheep skin by the fire. A wooden spoon with vegetable oil are provided. One of the men stands up and pulls back the cloth that is covering his face with a thin stick. After that, the young bride pours oil into the fire. Father-in-law: "I will give you some livestock (a cow or a sheep) and ask her relatives what gift they should give to the groom." Everyone says about their options. After the bride leaves, a feast begins for both men and women. After this ceremony, the bride can meet with her father-in-law and her husband's close relatives with her face uncovered. However, shame and up-bringing of the bride do not allow for immediate use of this right.

The strict adherence to "spiritual restrictions," especially in relation to the father-in-law and daughter-in-law, often depends on whether the father has the opportunity to provide a separate dwelling for his married son. They emphasized to us that adhering to such restrictions is linked to the economic well-being of the household. Often, these prohibitions are violated in poor families. For example, in families where a separate room is allocated for the married son, it has been well preserved that the bride is prohibited from avoiding her father-in-law. A daughter-in-law can only be in the same room with her mother-in-law when no one else is present; otherwise, it is not allowed. In poor families, due to the lack of a separate home for the groom, the bride often has to sleep in the same room as her father-in-law [9].

Generally, there are customary prohibitions for those who marry based on moral standards. The bride cannot cross the path of her mother-in-law and all the older male relatives of her husband. It is not acceptable for a daughter-in-law to be in front of her father-in-law with her open chest and hair. If he is next to his father-in-law, he tries to turn his back on him. When the father-in-law enters the room, she should stand up; if she stays with him, she won't sit down until the father-in-law has taken a seat [10]. The bride cannot eat from the same dishes and tablecloth with him. If she comes from a well-mannered family, she would never miss her father-in-law's shirt and pants, not even while doing laundry. When washing the laundry of all family members, the father-in-law's clothes should be washed first. The bride is not allowed to sit in the place where the father-in-law sits during the day. When sitting in front of the groom's father, the bride's legs should not be visible, meaning they should be covered by the hem of her dress. A bride is prohibited from riding a horse with her father-in-law. It is prohibited for the bride to give anything by hand to her father-in-law and her husband's older male relatives [11]. If there is a need to give something to any of them, it must first be placed on the ground.

The bride tries to hang laundry in a place where it does not fall into the eyes of the mother-in-law. In turn, the father-in-law, if he sees that the bride's dress is falling, will not

lift it himself, but instead make someone else do it. The groom's father can enter the bride's house, but they do not shake hands or greet each other. They do not joke around or speak loudly to each other. A bride should not laugh or speak loudly in front of her father-in-law. A bride should not smile or speak loudly in front of her father-in-law. The bride calls her father-in-law "grandfather," and even referring to her deceased father-in-law by name is prohibited. In exceptional cases, that is, when there is no one left to mention the mother-in-law's name, the bride may refer to the father-in-law by name.

It is considered embarrassing for younger relatives to call the bride by her name. The wife of the man cannot call the children by the name of her husband's brother. The big sister's wife can call her husband's brother's children by their names [12]. The groom also does not mention the names of his wife's close relatives. He refers to his wife's sister as "sister-in-law" and marries her after his wife's death. The son-in-law does not call his father-in-law and all of his wife's male relatives by their names; instead, he uses terms: he refers to the elders as "father-in-law," the younger ones as "brother-in-law," and calls his father-in-law "grandfather." The groom should avoid meeting his wife's older male and female relatives until he brings her to his home, as long as he "respects" her relatives. After that, the father-in-law organizes the "groom presentation" ceremony.

The groom is invited to this feast. Before entering the father-in-law's house, the groom bows three times, then moves to the right and sits down. At the end of the feast, one of the guests says, "The groom didn't eat anything," and then the father-in-law stands up and dresses his son-in-law in a new robe as a gift. Some father-in-law can also give a horse or a ram as a present. If there is no any present, the father-in-law jokingly says, "I will give you the mountains and hills around." After that, the ban on the son-in-law avoiding his father-in-law and mother-in-law is lifted, but he adheres to it for a while. The duration of this ceremony depends on the level of "the groom's upbringing."

The prohibition for the groom to avoid his father-in-law and mother-in-law among Uzbeks is explained by the high demand for strict adherence to moral and ethical standards within Uzbek society [13]. The son-in-law does not call his father-in-law and mother-in-law by their names. Until the "showing of the groom" ceremony, even if the groom secretly visits the bride's parents' house, he completely avoids meeting them. The groom should not walk on the right side of the bride's parents' shelter, and it is prohibited for him to sit in the part of the place where the bride's parents lie down. The groom can talk to his mother-in-law, but he won't sit next to her. When the father-in-law enters, the groom always stands up, even escorting her to her seat, and she might even shoulder him when they meet, but they do not shake hands. Sitting on his mother-in-law's bed, he cannot sit in front of her with his head uncovered, meaning he cannot remove his scarf, but he can take off his "salla" (national head cap). In turn, a mother-in-law cannot be bareheaded, with an open chest, or barefoot next to her son-in-law [14].

The wife strictly adheres to the ban on mentioning her husband's relatives' names. She can only call her husband's newborn relatives by their names after getting married. The wife does not call her husband by his name or mention items with the same name as her husband. For example, if her husband's name is "Bolta (axe)," she refers to this item as "sickle" (a different form of an axe), and so on. After a woman gets married, she stops calling her close relatives by their names and instead refers to them by her children's names, for example, "father"[15].

#### 4. Conclusion

In short, throughout various periods of our distant and recent history, family and marriage matters have been considered sacred among the majority of Uzbek tribes. In this article, we aimed to highlight some unique aspects of marriage relationships among the representatives of the Kungirod tribe of Uzbeks. An important aspect is that in the last hundred years of our history, we have once again witnessed that marriage relationships

are a great and sacred value for the Uzbek nation. In today's era of globalization, the stability of the family is a shared value that is related to the upbringing of children, the education of children contributes to the development of society, and the development of society, in turn, is connected to the prosperity of the people.

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