

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WEDDING CEREMONIES DURING THE TIMURID PERIOD

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Anvar Ismoilovich Turaev

*Senior Lecturer, Department of Archaeology and History of Bukhara
Bukhara State University*

Shakhina Khazratova

*4th Year Student, History Faculty
Bukhara State University*

Abstract:

This article thoroughly explores the social and political significance of wedding ceremonies during the Timurid period. It discusses the efforts of the ruling dynasty to consolidate political power and the role of festive celebrations in demonstrating the strength of the state. The article also provides information about the places where entertainment events were held, how festive areas were decorated, and the delicious dishes served to the public, guests, and hosts. Analyzing wedding ceremonies allows us to understand the lifestyle and material and spiritual culture of the population during the Timurid era.

Keywords:

Culture, enlightenment, art, entertainment, wedding, ceremony, celebration, festivity, rope-walkers, Samarkand, Dilkusho, beklik (regional governance), punishment, executioner, village, hamlet, craftsman.

The Timurid era is distinguished in the history of Central Asia by its political stability and the flourishing of culture and art. Compared to the preceding Chagatai Ulus and other local dynasties, this period is notable for the advancement of science, architecture, and literature. The first President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, in his book "Yuksak ma'naviyat - yengilmas kuch" ("High Spirituality is an Invincible Force") describes the Timurid era as a great historical heritage of Uzbekistan. He highly praises the rise of Timurid rule and its significant role in ensuring peace in society and developing cultural life. In particular, he states: "When discussing the spiritual world of our great ancestors, it is only natural to pay special attention to Sahibqiran Amir Temur. This exemplary figure, a symbol of unmatched determination, bravery, and wisdom, established a great empire and left both a practical and theoretical legacy in the field of statecraft. He opened broad paths for the development of science, culture, architecture, religion, and

spirituality,” wrote the First President of Uzbekistan, who also emphasized that the scientific achievements of the Timurid era contributed to the intellectual awakening in Western countries. This idea was also clearly expressed in his speech delivered at the opening ceremony of the exhibition “The Blossoming of Science, Culture, and Education during the Timurid Era” held in Paris in 1996. In that speech, he proudly stated: “The enlightened spirit of Movarounnahr and the flourishing of science and art during the Timurid era had a vital and life-giving impact on the Renaissance in Europe and contributed to the progress of global civilization.” [2].

The ceremonial events held by Amir Temur and his descendants-including weddings, marriage ceremonies, and state and religious holidays-were not only splendid and rich in beauty, but also served as exemplary models for societies of other regions. These celebrations reflected the deep respect for spiritual and cultural life of that era. To explore the historical context of the Timurid period and its grand ceremonies, the works of chroniclers such as Nizam al-Din Shami, Ibn Arabshah, Ruy González de Clavijo, and Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi serve as primary historical sources. In particular, Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, in his famous work *Zafarnama*, provides detailed descriptions not only of the military campaigns and political developments of the Timurid period but also of grand customs and festivities like wedding ceremonies. One such description includes the wedding (nikoh) of Amir Temur and Dilshad Agha:

Verse:

“The sovereign gave orders at that very place
To prepare the wedding openly with grace,
So that Sahibqiran may always remain glad,
And his realm with peace and fortune be clad.” [3,78].

In this verse, the author emphasizes the ruler’s command-that the wedding ceremony should be held publicly. It was organized not only for Amir Temur’s personal happiness but also with the intention of promoting peace and stability in the state. Furthermore, focusing on the post-wedding events, it is noted that after the wedding, the entourage moved on, crossing Yassi Dabon and arriving in O’zgand. The wives of Turkic beks came from Samarkand and offered their congratulations to Sahibqiran. After leaving O’zgand, they reached Khojand, where Bahrom Jaloyir’s son, Odilshoh, humbly served, presented wedding gifts, and offered horses as tribute to the ruler [3,78]. These descriptions reflect how Temur and his court approached weddings-not only as family affairs but also as opportunities to demonstrate the power of the state. The festivities were grand and carried both social and political significance. As seen in the verse, “So that Sahibqiran may always remain glad, and his realm with peace and fortune be

clad," the aim of these ceremonies was not merely personal joy, but also the consolidation of peace, stability, and the ruler's authority. The greetings and offerings from regional leaders and the public display of loyalty showed the strength and unity of Timur's state.

In addition, the Zafarnama also describes the wedding of Amir Timur to the daughter of the Khan of Moghulistan, Khizr Khwaja, as well as the marriage arrangement between Prince Iskandar and Bekisi Sultan. It is written: "And His Majesty gave orders regarding the wedding preparations. Princes and beks removed all weapons from the city and set up tents, pavilions, and royal dwellings. Their tents and white yurts were made from gold-embroidered silk fabrics. Then, the table of joy was laid, and the wine of prosperity was served. Noble princes, famous rulers, and dignified elders and notables from all sides arrived, each sitting in their designated places. Fragrant incense and ambergris were burned, perfuming the air... Devoted water bearers and charming cupbearers served with grace and elegance, while musicians and singers engaged in their performances. Among them was Khoja Abdulqadir-unique of the age and peerless in his time - who played the lute and, like David, sang melodies, reciting this prayer..."[3,189-190]. When examining the content of this account, it becomes clear that Timur's marriage to the daughter of Khizr Khwaja Khan of Moghulistan and the arrangement of Bekisi Sultan for Prince Iskandar had not only social and cultural significance but also played an important role in strengthening interstate political alliances. The details in Zafarnama about the wedding ceremony and its splendid atmosphere (such as golden silk fabrics and brilliant examples of art and culture) reflect the power and cultural level of the state and contributed to the international reputation of the Timurid Empire. At the same time, the presence of international guests at the wedding, especially high-ranking state representatives (such as noble princes and famous rulers), indicates that Timur had established firm political alliances with many states. It would not be wrong to say that Timur used such wedding ceremonies as a method of strengthening political and diplomatic relations with other nations. The marriage between Timur's eldest son, Jahangir Mirza, and Khanzada Begim during the campaign to Khwarezm was also one of the measures taken to strengthen national unity. The following details from sources shed more light on the matter: "During this campaign, while besieging Gurganj, Hussein Sufi unexpectedly passed away. His brother, Yusuf Sufi, who then took over as the ruler of Khwarezm, declared his allegiance to Amir Timur, and an agreement was made. According to the agreement, the youngest of the Sufi brothers, Aq Sufi, gave his daughter Sevinbeka in marriage to Timur's eldest son, Muhammad Jahangir. Aq Sufi was married to Shakarbeka, the daughter of Uzbek Khan of the Golden

Horde, which made their daughter Sevinbeka better known by the name Khanzada." [4,48]. From this information, we see that during Amir Temur's campaign to Gurganj, the sudden death of Hussein Sufi and the offer of allegiance by his brother Yusuf Sufi led to an agreement, which was further solidified through marriage ties.

"Amir Temur supported all social movements, arts, ceremonies, and customs aimed at uniting the tribes, cities, villages, settled and nomadic peoples of Mawarannahr and Khorasan and strengthening a centralized state. He also gave due attention to public festivals, celebrations, weddings, and ceremonies that uplifted the spirit of the people." [6,12]. These statements confirm that Amir Temur supported any kind of event - festivals, celebrations, weddings, and ceremonies - that contributed to the unity and strength of the state, and through them, he aimed to raise the people's morale and reinforce the centralized structure of his government.

Public participation in weddings also held special importance. Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, describing one such wedding, wrote the following: "At the end of the joy and celebration, an order was issued: 'Everyone may take with them whatever they desire from the place where they are sitting, and no one shall prevent them!' [3,291]. We can see that people were allowed to take whatever they wanted from their spot. Through this act, the ruler elevated his prestige among the people and succeeded in strengthening the social network of the state. The Spanish ambassador Clavijo, in his diary, describes one of these weddings: "On that ninth of October, Thursday, the king invited the ambassadors to a wedding organized for one of his grandsons. The wedding took place in an incredibly luxurious tent area with countless tents erected... On the occasion of the grand wedding, the king ordered: 'The merchants of Samarkand - the moneychangers, textile sellers, jewelers, and those trading in various goods, as well as cooks, butchers, bakers, tailors, shoemakers, and all other craftsmen of the city - should go out to the plain where the royal palace is located, set up tents, and carry out their trade. Each craftsman should roam along the palace grounds, bringing joy and entertainment to people.' It was also ordered that: 'No one should leave the area without the king's permission.' After this, the entire trade community of the city came and settled around the royal palace. Each craftsman formed separate rows and entertained the public while moving around the area. The king used this public celebration to show his generosity to some and his power to punish others. He ordered gallows to be erected in the same place where the colorful tents of the craftsmen were set up. The first sentence was issued against the chief administrator, called dina or dorugha, who had been appointed to the position nearly seven years earlier when Temurbek

left Samarkand for a campaign. It was said that during this time, the dorugha abused his position. The king summoned him, confiscated all his property, and ordered him to be hanged on the spot. Furthermore, another influential person, who had been entrusted with three thousand horses during the king's absence but failed to protect state property, was also sentenced to death. Despite the convicted man's pleas-saying, 'If given time, I will return not three thousand, but six thousand horses'-the king ignored his requests. In addition, he ordered the punishment of several butchers who had raised meat prices during his absence. He also ordered the partial confiscation of the property of shoemakers, bootmakers, and other artisans who were found guilty of selling goods at inflated prices." Wedding ceremonies in the Timurid era were not only family events but also an important part of the state's political and social life. Through this wedding event, we see that social order, economic activity, and state policy were all simultaneously displayed. The wedding was not just a celebration limited to the royal family-it served as a unifying event for statesmen, military officials, ambassadors, and different layers of the public. Moreover, the wedding was not only a joyous occasion but also a means for the king to enforce justice. By punishing wrongdoers publicly during the event, the king demonstrated his determination and urged officials and the people toward discipline. By involving merchants and craftsmen in the wedding and allowing them to showcase and sell their products, the local economy was invigorated. Punishing those who sold goods at inflated prices helped prevent price hikes in the market.

In conclusion, the wedding ceremonies during the Timurid era combined political, social, and cultural aspects, contributing to the strengthening of state authority, the preservation of social order, and the revitalization of economic activity. These ceremonies served to demonstrate the king's power, ensure justice, and solidify political alliances with other states. Moreover, wedding ceremonies played a vital role in uniting the people and served as a powerful means of effectively implementing state policies.

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