



## UZBEK “MOTAM YOR-YOR” SONGS

*Uraeva Darmon Saidakhmedovna,*

*Doctor of Philology*

*Bukhara State University*

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### ABSTRACT

The article deals with lament tradition of Uzbek people and the rituals performed in them. Place and time, motif of “Yor-yor” songs are analysed as well

### Keyword:

ceremony, “Yor-yor” songs, “Chimildik Tutdi”, “Sallabandon”, “Ton Kiydirish”, “Kultaposhak”, “yangalar”.

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\* **Corresponding author:** Darmon Saidakhmedovna

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## INTRODUCTION

“Motam yor-yorlari” (“Lament yor-yors”) have a special place among the folklore samples of the Uzbek lament traditions. “Motam yor-yorlari” emerged due to the fact that “to`y yor-yorlari” (“Wedding yor-yors”) began to be performed in mourning ceremonies.

“Motam yor-yorlari” is performed for the virgin girls who died young before getting married. “Motam yor-yorlari” is ritual songs performed when girls and boys died young before getting married and as one of genres of lament tradition they are dissimilar with their (genre) nature and specific features.

“Motam yor-yorlari” are performed on the day of the burial for the girls, “Chimildik Tutdi” and “Salla Orash” ceremonies, and for the boys “Ton Kiydirish” ceremonies.

The girl died before getting married will be dressed in a new multi-colored bridal dress, lozim (women`s pyjama-style drawers), fine-white kerchief (headscarf) on her head and mahsi (sole- and heelless leather boots worn with overshoes) on her feet.

Then chimildiq is hung and the deceased is laid under the chimildik (chimildik is a white tent that is set up at the corner of a house for the bride and groom in wedding ceremonies) with open face. Four or five women flap chimildik and perform their “motam yor-yorlari” in a sad and low voice. These laments are performed by the professional mourners and then the relatives repeat the refrain.

Due to the Islamic doctrine (studies), person is created by God and his life is given to him temporarily. The life of a person is separated into two parts. First part is his life in a transitive world whereas the second one is in an eternal world.

Transitive world is the world of alive while the other one is for the deceased and their spirits. So, “Yor-yor” songs are usually performed for people who are passing from one step of the life into another, that`s to say the girls who are getting married pass from the world of virginity into the world of femininity. There is a persuasion about God`s being satellite and together with his servants in both worlds. That`s why “Yor-yor” songs are considered the songs of marriage which are in the spirit of parting.

Parting is always spiritually hard for a humanbeing which leads to cry. So, it is quite natural and usual if the girl who is getting married and her relatives weep during the performance of “yor-yor” songs.

As a matter of fact the main function of “Yor-yor” songs is to console and persuade the girl to obey the rules of life. “Yor-yor” wedding songs with an appeal “Yig`lama qiz, yig`lama” which means “don`t

weep the girl, don`t weep” have a special place and attract everyone.

In general, weeping has a magic function with its definite social need though it comes out with the help of outer influence and shows spiritual mood in an emotional situation.

As ancient sources inform there is a primitive concept that weeping gives life to a person. (“Among Turkic people, there is a belief that crying will spare a life for the sake of the dead”) Due to this notion girls` weeping in the moment of a loss of their viriginity is urgent for their becoming alive in the world of femininity. So, this situation is formed in definite layers of life as a certain ritual.

Primitive notion became a basis for lamentation for the deceased as well. For instance, Karelian people call special mourners (weeper) called “itkettaja” a week before the wedding ceremony. She had to make the girl (who is getting married) cry. The closest woman relative of the bride had to do it in northern Karelia. Besides, the other unknown mouners could be called as well.\*

According to our tradition it is considered shame if girl doesn`t cry when she is getting married. She must weep even she is getting married to a person whom she loves and close relatives agree with their wedding.

Mostly girls start weeping when “Yor-yor” songs are performed. The tune of song, spirit of departure and parting cause the girl and her relatives` cry. But it is less and different from “yigi” (weeping) of the funeral tradition. Though “Yor-yor” songs are usually performed for consoling and persuading girls that every girl has such a destiny they can not endure trepidation and start weeping.

Rituals held while parting with girls who are getting married are close with the funeral traditions parting with deceased in some features. The girl has to take a shower before getting married. She is dressed in a white close as a symbol of purity. The bride dressed from head to feet is handed to matchmakers (yanga). It is natural to wash up and clean the deceased before burial. The dead is also wrapped up in a white cloth “shroud”.

Almost the same rituals are held in two ceremonies: ceremony of girls` parting with their virginity and passing into the world of femininity and the deceased passing from the transitive world to the eternal one, which indicate passing through one step of the life into the other. Both of these ceremonies

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\* Конка У.С. Карельская свадебная причитальщица «itkettaja»- возбудительница плача // Folklore and Ethnography. Rituals and folklore of rituals. – L.: Nauka, 1974.- P. 236-243.

interpret the same idea: idea of starting other life style which is compared to death and resurrection.

According to traditions of our nation, leader matchmakers called “yangalar” are assigned before the wedding. They try to evoke and adapt the spirit of virginity to a spirit of femininity.

Due to a view of a great folklorist A.Musakulov who had a special investigation on historical basis and artistic merit of national Uzbek music “Yanga (matchmaker) leads the girl as a shaman into the other world and magically defends her from invisible demons”.<sup>†</sup>

“Yangalar” are usually chosen among the close women relatives of the bride. Mostly, “matchmakers” are the wife of an uncle or a brother. They are perceived as the representative of another world as they join other families.

“Yangalar” inform and teach the girl about forthcoming events. “Yor-yor” songs are also performed by them.

In general, “yor-yor” wedding songs performed for soothing the girl who is parting her family coincide the functions of “mourning yor-yors” (motam yor-yorlari). “Motam yor-yorlari” are performed to console the girl’s regretful spirit who has not been a bride and become a mother and died before all of these events. It is natural to perform these songs with “yigi” (weep). They are listened to in the same way, that’s to say people listen to them crying.

In Bukhara after performing “Chimildik yor-yors” for the deceased girl, “susanna” (beautiful embroidered sheets of material<sup>‡</sup>) of chimildik is raised. Then the ceremony of “Sallabandon” (Salla orash) is arranged.

Originally this ceremony was performed when a newly-wed woman gave a birth. “Salla orash” means “tying salla”. This ceremony is believed to be an indicator for a woman to become the lady of her house and a mother. Motam yor-yorlari are performed in this ceremony, while the close relatives dress the dead and wrap the head with a gauze.

A woman who has already had the ceremony of “Sallabandon” has an equal right to join other women of “mahalla” in both wedding ceremonies and lament traditions. Before this ceremony is held their participation is free.

It is not approved if women don’t take part in the wedding and funerals after having “Sallabandon” ceremony. The ceremony of “Sallabandon” is arranged when the girls who have faded (died) before becoming a woman or a mother and untimely death

causes a lot of pain and sorrow of closest people. It is usually held by the relatives of the deceased in order to calm the restless spirit of her and be pleased with them. Nation always believes that spirit is immortal and everlasting.

The ceremony and rituals of “Sallabandon” in funerals are performed by a professional mourner. She holds this ceremony singing songs connected with the situation.

First the deceased girl’s hair is let down and worn “kultaposhak” in “Sallabandon”. “Kultaposhak” is a national head gear which keeps and hides hair from the forehead to the shoulders. It has two parts and these two parts are sewn together. Upper part of it is circular in the shape of skullcap whereas the lower part where hair is worn, is narrow and in the form of short sleeves.

First the lower part then upper part of the gear is put on. “Salla” made of gauze which is 1,5 meter long is wrapped over “kultaposhak”.

“Yor-yor” songs are performed in the process of lament “Sallabandon” ceremony too. The main motifs of these songs are to show sorrow and sufferings of the girl who couldn’t have enjoyed such important events as the “Sallabandon” ceremony, maternity, and the experience of raising a child:

Salla-salla is a head gear, oh my darling,  
yor-yor

You left without wearing it, oh my child,  
yor-yor.

You left so young, your head is not as  
hard as stone, yor-yor,

Without wrapping your salla you have  
faded, yor-yor. (B.u.g., p. 88.)

While “go’yanda” – a professional mourner wraps “salla” (turban) this “yor-yor” is also repeated by a mother and aunts of the deceased. Mourner puts flour in a big plate at the head of her and sticks candles into it. Then candles are lit.

During this ritual a woman mourner performs the following song in a sad, weeping voice:

They lit the candle, it has already faded,

They want it to burn, but you don’t have daily  
bread.

Let no garden be as you, and no gardener as me,

Let a person like you never be born. (B.u.g., p.  
88.)

Thus the ceremony of “sallabandon” ends in this way.

The following song is performed when kerchiefs and materials from the trousseau of the girl are laid on her:

There is left a stalk from my stacks, yor-  
yor,

A lot of effort is put to gather it, yor-yor.

How it all happened, yor-yor,

My bud has faded yor-yor.

<sup>†</sup> Musakulov Abiyr. Historical bases and merit of Uzbek national lyrics.- D for Ph.D. T., 1995.- p.22.

<sup>‡</sup> Marylin Petersen. A Treasury of Uzbek Legends and Lore. – T.: Katortol-kamolot, 2000. – p.116

She has torn my heart, yor-yor. (B.u.g., p. 89.)

Mythological imaginations of primitive men about the property of the deceased, the world of ghosts, resurrection, and eternity of the spirit became bases of these traditions. The same rituals are still traditionally held as they are formed due to the peoples' spiritual worldview, socio-ethnographic mode of life.

This ritual is held in many places of our republic, but it is called differently everywhere. For instance, it is called "Lachakbandon" in Khorezm. "Lachak" means a head gear or kerchief made of muslin or calico.

The lament traditions of the girl who died before getting married are always performed with a great care.

L.S.Kavtaskin states about the lament traditions of the virgin. According to his information in ancient times Mordvinian people arranged wedding imitation at the lament and performed various funeral songs. §

The closest girlfriend and boyfriend of a deceased played a role of a bride and a groom. If the deceased loved someone or she was betrothed to someone the same fellow became a groom in that "fake wedding".

"Fake bride and groom" were dressed in wedding clothes. They followed others for taking the bier to the cemetery. It was mother of the deceased who did not follow them. A girl and fellow who were playing the roles of a bride and groom did not enter when they reached the cemetery.

They had to wait for others in the street. Others had quickly buried the deceased and returned to her house. On the way home people followed "Fake bride and groom" singing joyful songs and dancing as it is in the wedding ceremony.

The relatives of the deceased met them with the same delighted songs. Mother of the deceased had asked "organizers of fake wedding" where her daughter had gone.

Participants of the fake wedding told to a mother of the deceased that her daughter got married and went to other abundant place where people were very kind and became a daughter-in-law of another rich family.

Besides, they introduced "fake bride and groom" as her daughter and son-in-law and others as their relatives.

Everyone had entered the house after all of that. Joyful mood was exchanged with sorrow inside the room. All sit quietly around dasturkhan specially laid to remember the deceased.

Mother and relatives of the deceased started funerals and cried too much. "Fake bride and groom" had already been sent to their own houses to change their clothes. It was up to them whether they returned and took part in the funeral traditions or not.

In general, the lament traditions of virgin girls were imitated to the weddings in almost all nations. They were different with peculiar songs performed in them.

Concluding all, it can be said that such traditions originate from primitive concepts and mythological knowledge of our ancestors about the property of the deceased, the world of spirits, resurrection and eternity of the spirit.

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