



Symbolic meanings of white color in turkish folk ceremony

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Abstract: The concept of color is versatile in meaning. In particular, the figurative meanings and symbolic uses of colors vary from society to society and from person to person. A world without color is unimaginable and bleak. That is why there has never been a time when colors did not fascinate humanity. Every civilization has myths and associations about color. This article aims to explain with examples the symbolic meaning of white color in birth, wedding and mourning ceremonies, which are stated as transition periods of life in Turkish folklore.

Keywords: Folklore, symbol, color, ceremony, ritual, transition periods, white, birth, wedding, Dede Korkud, death.

Introduction: Life consists of a few steps, and these steps are colored with various customs, traditions and ceremonies. At these stages of life, we encounter many ceremonies related to birth, wedding and death.

Customs, just like state laws, put our lives in order and cause us to live a more meaningful life. The turning points of life, which consist of birth, wedding and death, are called the most important “transition periods” in human life. Many customs, traditions and ceremonies are clustered around these three important stages, each of which is divided into several stages within itself, and they manage the “transitions” in accordance with the expectations of the culture to which they are affiliated.

According to S.V. Örnek, customs are a number of exemplary attitudes and behaviors that are often described as strict expectations of society [1, pp.123].

There are various rituals in Turkish culture. In Turkish sources, many scholars have left their comments about the ritual, symbol, and color term. In the great Turkish dictionary, the formality is established and it has

become a custom to do it, behavior related to appearance and ostentation, road manners, rules of honor, formalities are the explanations of the term ceremony [2, pp.799].

The word symbol is defined as a sign, image, sound, letter, abbreviation, etc. that brings to mind an idea, thought, feeling, or makes one think of it [2, pp. 1081].

The fields of philosophy, physics, art, psychology and linguoculturalology are interested in colors. Each field of science looks at color from different perspectives. The field of linguo-cultural studies, along with the study of a certain culture, studies everything related to the culture, even the symbolic meaning of the colors reflected in the culture. There is no culture whose language, history, lifestyle and clothing have not been learned. Along with the languages of each nation, the signs and symbols they use in life are also learned. Although there are many types of symbols, colors are also considered a type of them. Just as the colors of the national flag have their own meaning, the colors displayed in national ceremonies also represent certain symbolic meanings.

Uluişik says that it is possible to extract the most original, intact and oldest information about the human race from color elements, and that this information shows that people's color choice are not random [3, pp. 489].

RESULTS

Turkish folk ceremonies are diverse and may differ in style across the seven regions of Turkey. Wedding, birth and mourning, which are described as transition periods of life, contain many customs and traditions. Life begins with birth and ends with death. During this process, a person goes through many stages.

In addition to the fact that a person is wrapped in a white blanket at birth, and the bride wears a white dress at the wedding, there is definitely a symbolic meaning behind the corpse being wrapped in a white shroud.

According to Ögel B, "whiteness" in Turks means cleanliness, purity and greatness. It is a symbol of the greatness, justice and strength of the state. It is a color of clothing worn by statesmen, especially in wars. Moreover, he calls the color white "the main color" [4, pp.377].

Birth, the first of three important transition periods, has always been accepted among the public as a happy event. The child who was born brought joy not only to his/her parents but also to the relatives around him/her. With birth, the woman gains respect in the family and the man begins to look to the future with confidence.

The color white has always been loved by Turks from past to present. "One of the white objects associated with birth is considered to be fabric and is related to the custom of swaddling. The fabric in which the newborn baby is wrapped is usually white and its entire body, including its head, is wrapped. In this state the baby resembles a caterpillar in a cocoon. The baby's face is hidden with a white cloth until it is forty times over," says Özpınar B [5, pp. 596-597].

In the Anatolian region, the first person who sees the baby's first tooth gives the baby various clothes as a gift. Care is taken to ensure that the clothes are white. Thus, the baby's teeth are desired to appear like white pearls [6, pp.174].

There are rituals not only related to the child, but also related to the mother who recently has a child. For example, in Kaleboğazı village, they believe that if a pregnant woman's face is spotted, she will have a girl, and if her face is white, she will have a boy.

In the past, a midwife would come to the pregnant woman's house and predict the birth date of the woman who would give birth, and when the time of birth approached, she would come home on Friday and check the white birth bundle and swaddling clothes. The white bundle would have been prepared by her mother-in-law in advance [7, pp.2].

Wedding, which is considered the second of the transition period is one of the most important ceremonies that helps to understand a people's lifestyle, a society's perspective on life, and family marriage relations. Wedding traditions, dating back to ancient times, have always had an important place in human life. By getting married, people start a new phase of life and enter a new world. Marriage is discussed under three headings: before marriage, during marriage and after marriage [8, pp.39].

Those whose fortunes were closed before marriage try to open their fortunes in various ways. According to Turkish customs, the wedding consists of many stages such as asking for a girl, engagement, tying the sash and henna night.

While marriage in the region is usually arranged, marriages are increasing, especially in the city, as a result of the spouses knowing and loving each other. After a boy and a girl see each other in the region, the boy's family goes to the girl's house.

When the bride comes to the bridegroom's house, she is made to sit on a white pumpkin so that her first child will be a boy [9, pp.456].

The dress worn by the bride at the wedding ceremony is always important and it is a matter of curiosity why it is white. Stories from Dede Korkut provide information

that Turks have been wearing white bridal gown at weddings since ancient times.

“Beyregün yavuklusuna haber oldu. Bani Çiçek ağ kaftanın çıkardı, karalar geydi. Güz alması gibi al yanağını tarttı, yırttı.”

News came Beyrek's fiancée. Bani Çiçek took off her white caftan and wore black. She weighed her cheek, red like an autumn apple, and tore it [10, pp.41]

Life begins with birth and ends with death. There are many beliefs among the Turkish people regarding death, which is the last stage, and many rituals related to before and after human death. Preliminary symptoms that make people think of death include animals, household items, food, meteorological events, dreams, and psychological or physiological changes of the patient.

After the death, a series of procedures are applied to the dead body until it is buried. This procedures consist of religious and traditional customs and beliefs. All of these are done according to a certain style and rule. First, the deceased is washed and shrouded by the imam or those who know this job.

The color of the shroud cloth is white. White color is considered a sign of faith. It is also possible to shroud with other colors instead of white. However, the white color is more good and more suitable for the sunnah [11, pp.52].

The rank of deceased, whether they are male or female, and whether they died at a young age are evident from the decorations on the coffin. The coffins of those who died at young age, especially young girls, young men and brides, are decorated. It is decorated with a wire veil in Çankırı, Çubuk, Ankara, Çorum, Afyon, Boğazlayan, Sivas, Kevenli, Kayseri, Merzifon, Maraş and Konya regions, and with flowers or a picture of the dead in Erzurum Zara and Kırşehir [11, pp.56-57].

Relatives of the dead mourn for forty days or more. Sometimes they sing laments for the dead person. Below we can see the example burned by their mothers for the girls who died after becoming a bride:

Gelinliğin beyaz yeşil duvağın

Bu renkler sana çok yakışır dağlar [12, pp.139].

[Your bridal gown is white and your green veil

These colors suit you very well, mountains].

Although death has occurred since the beginning of human beings, this is the only event that humans can not get used to.

CONCLUSION

Rituals are colorful aspects of life. People have always wanted to share their joys and sorrows with each

other. The birth of a child and the holding of a wedding ceremony in a certain household are signs of happiness, and mourning requires sympathy, help and tenderness. Regardless of the ceremony, white color means majesty, purity innocence.

From the conducted research, we can know that it is not for nothing that the white color is chosen in all three ceremonies. Wrapping a newborn baby in a white cloth, wearing a white dress of the bride and wrapping the corpse in a white shroud mean purity and greatness.

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