

# *Marriage Customs of the Pukhtoos: A Case Study of Hangu (NWFP), Pakistan*

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## **Introduction**

In Pukhtoon society marriage is a special occasion for the bridegroom and his family because for majority of the Pukhtoos this is once in a lifetime opportunity. Therefore, they try to celebrate it in a befitting manner. These celebrations vary from family to family depending on the economic position of the family and the religious and village/area considerations. The religious minded people celebrate it simply by putting buntings on the streets leading to the house as well as putting decorative lights on the house for the wedding night. However, some people bring dancing girls and the male youngsters make them dance till late at night. In yester years this was more common and open for all. However, nowadays to a severe degradation of social values on the people try to restrict it to the close friends. Even some families have started avoiding such celebrations because on such occasions the youngsters get drunk which leads to fighting.

In some of the families, in the bridegroom's house, a special place is arranged for the gamblers for two or three days. Besides, the bridegroom or his friends also indulge in arranging alcohol for the friends who desire for it. They drink it on the night before the actual day of marriage called *Zhanrio Gharidal*. On this night the bridegroom's friends celebrate the occasion and generally remain awake all nights. In the bridegroom's house the females celebrate the occasion in their own traditional way. For the marriage all the family members particularly the young girls tailor many

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dresses for different occasions in various colours and varieties. The bride's family also tailors clothes, however, the male members do not tailor new clothes as they consider it shameful to celebrate the marriage of their females but the bridegroom's male family members do tailor new clothes.<sup>1</sup> Those guests who are invited from far flung areas also come for the wedding day. They stay for a day or two in the bridegroom's house. The bride's family normally do not invite guests from far flung areas, however very close friends and relatives are invited and they come a day or two earlier and stay for the marriage. In case the marriage is in the same village or among relatives, then most of the invitees are common and they are required to attend marriage functions at both places. In such cases they go one day to the bride's house and the other day to the bridegroom's house for meals. For meals the invitations go differently. Close relatives, are now-a-days invited for four meals or two days. Other people are invited for two meals or one day. Even people are invited only for lunch or in case of *walimah*, for *walimah* (a special meal, which has become common in the last few years). A decade or two ago the people were invited even for six or eight meals depending on the closeness of relation. But now as the life is becoming busy and the food expensive, the invitations are sent for much fewer occasions.<sup>2</sup>

There are many customs/ceremonies of the marriage. The complete order of these is as following:

### **Kweezhda**

Pukhtoon's weddings are very colourful and joyous. When the boy reaches the age of marriage, his parents and sisters start searching for the bride. Seldom the boy or girl is asked about their choice, generally it is a family affair. It is the parents who select the bride and the family for the boy.<sup>3</sup> Mostly the family members agree upon a girl and then tell the boy about that particular girl. In short, mostly *kweezhda* (engagement) is a family affair. In *kweezhda* the family members of the male finalises the terms and conditions with the family of the female. All matters about dowry and *khwara* are finalised and the girl becomes the fiancee of the boy.

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1. Daughter of S. Sabit Hussain, interview by author, Hangu (NWFP), 12 March 1997.
  2. Said Ghulam, interview by author, Hangu (NWFP), 13 March 1997.
  3. Abdul Ghaffar, *Zama Zhwand au Jadojehad* (Pashto) (Kabul: Daulat Maktabah, 1942), 48.

