

Bride kidnapping and marriage by capture/abduction in South Caucasus

Research semester in Georgia

During my research semester from October 2016 to mid of April 2017, I was an intern at the Tbilisi State University (TSU) at the Ethnographic department in Georgia. I participated in ethnographic courses, interdisciplinary meetings, international conferences and gave lectures and seminars.

During my internship at the TSU I was elaborating my research topic with the support of Prof. Khutsishvili. I discovered the framework and structure of bride kidnapping and marriage by capture/abduction among Christians in the South Caucasus. The situation of living together by Armenians, Georgians and other Caucasian minorities gave me a deep experience of their everyday life struggle.

Research topic

During the course of my research, I concentrated on the question how bride kidnapping in the South Caucasus (Armenia and Georgia) amongst Christians is and was established as a practice of marriage.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the following crises of the nineties, the number of marriages by bride kidnapping in this region was increasing. The cause can be attributed to the destabilized social and political situation.

Another question was, which differences in the performance of the bride kidnapping existed? The performance of bride kidnapping can be divided into two types:

1. Geor. მოტაცების - Motaseba= kidnapping without agreement of future bride
2. Geor. გაპარვა - gaparva= to run away=with agreement of the future bride

In this context, feminine virginity plays a major role, because if a girl loses her virginity by means of pre-marital sex, she concomitantly loses her honour. Virginity is frequently connected to morality, but also with the girl's and her family's honour. For this reason, these girls usually accept these marriages. Furthermore, a family feud can be triggered by a bride kidnapping, which mostly take a bloody course.

The second type of bride kidnapping usually occurs about couples who did not get permission by their families for their marriage.

Therefore a bride kidnapping is performed in order to force the families to agree to the marriage. However, the number of bride kidnapping has decreased since 2004, because of the reforms of Saakaschwili (former President of Georgia).

My main method of data collection was qualitative interviews with both men and women of different age groups in order to present how different generations perceived and evaluated this social phenomenon. It has to be noted that this topic is not publicly discussed neither in the Armenian, nor in the Georgian society

Masterthesis

In my master's thesis, I will compare my research results to the phenomena of the bride kidnapping in Central Asia. The focus will be on some of the bride kidnappings in Kyrgyzstan and South Kazakhstan, because the research object has been well documented in these regions by other researchers. In this context, the differences and similarities are to be elaborated and presented to establish a comparison between the typology of the bride kidnapping in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.