**«English and Russian weddings: similarities and differences»**

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**Introduction**

Every nation has its own traditions and customs. Marriage always has been and will be an important event in a person's life, because it involves a lot of changes in the destiny of a person. There are many distinctive features of the wedding ritual in England and Russia.

**The relevance of the study**: studying English and Russian wedding traditions, learn about its culture and history.

**The problem of the study:** differences between English and Russian wedding traditions.

**The object of study:** the national wedding rituals of Russia and England.

**Subject of research:** peculiarities of the national wedding rituals of Russia and England.

**Objective:** identify the characteristics of the national wedding rituals of Russia and England.

**Hypothesis:** Every nation has its own culture, its own customs and traditions. Russian wedding traditions and England held on to their national cultural traditions.

To achieve this goal, we made:

1) read literature on the research topic;

2) identify distinctive features of the wedding traditions in Russia and England.

**Research methods:**

- analysis of materials from different sources on the research topic;

- comparison of peculiarities of wedding traditions in Russia and England;

- generalization of the material in the course of work.

**The structure of this study:** the work consists of introduction, main body, conclusion and bibliography.

**1. British wedding traditions**

**1.1. History of British traditions**

In the 17th century the judge have ruled that marriage between people could not be valid, if at least one of them was less than 7 years old. When children were elder, they could become a married couple – needed just to embrace and name each other wife and husband for this. Children have been continued living with their parents till they have become adults. At the same time kids have been already married. Often young people in love run away from home and got married in secret, if their parents did not give them consent to the marriage. It was a protest against parental despotism and lack of freedom in choosing future spouse.

In 1653 the civil statute was adopted. According to this law a civil wedding ceremony was a compulsory formality for getting an official status of marriage. A Justice of the Peace had to carry out this procedure. In addition, the newlyweds had to furnish a certificate of a public wedding given by the parish church. In case if someone from the newlyweds was less than 21 years old, a certificate given by his or her parents was necessary, too. An exchange of rings was forbidden during the civil wedding ceremony.

Since 1753 the marriages contracted in English church having a special registration, have been recognized lawful only. Down to 1990 one could marry in that church only, which belonged to the county where he or his future spouses lived. Consequently, it became impossible to marry in secret on foreign soil, because the marriage might be considered invalid in such case.

From long ago weddings in England have been held from a reaping time till Christmas. The reason was simple – food abundance. There is a proverb there: in accordance with it September is the best time to get married if you want your coupledom to be good and rich.

A bride received as a gift decorative horseshoes which she wore on her wrist. It was thought that they could bring her good luck.When the bride entered the church she was showered with wheat. Such wedding traditions existed anteriorly among many nations and have remained till nowadays. In present-day England bride is showered with grain, too. However, during this ritual bride doesn’t stand alone, but with her groom. The rite takes place not at entrance, but when the newlyweds leave the church after wedding ceremony. They are usually overstrewed with colored rise, ticker tapes, rose petals, etc.

On the North of England the bride flung up not a bunch of flowers but sliced bread from the plate. Guests tried to catch a slice of bread because it was considered to be a good sign and boded great luck. There was a tradition in some regions of England to mammock a wedding cake right above the bride’s and groom’s heads. Somewhere newlyweds were showered with barley while sitting at the festive table.

The popular expression of “honeymoon” came to us from England too. How did it appear? There was a tradition to brew a beverage from honey for newlyweds. This drink was given to them before wedding night. It was believed that it could increase probability of fathering a child (in particular – a boy).

**1.2. English wedding day**

During marriage preparations grooms and brides run through the wedding ceremony, first dance and other parts of forthcoming solemnity. Certainly, stag parties and bachelorette parties take place a couple of days before wedding.

Traditionally weddings are held at noonday. Then guests are usually invited to the lunch which is called «wedding breakfast».

**1.3. English wedding dresses**

English women prefer more modest wedding dresses. The most of English brides choose white or creamy gowns not to mention the fact that wedding outfits in different colors are always available at wedding boutiques.

The color of fabric should be the same for bridesmaids’ dresses, groom’s and best men’s waistcoats and neck-ties. The bride usually pays for bridesmaids’ outfits.

It is not typically for modern English brides to keep their wedding dresses for their daughters, because fashion tends to change. It is unlikely that one’s daughter will be happy about a contemplation of wearing the dress which is 25 years old. That is why bridal gown after wedding is usually sold or used in more original and soul stirring way: the fabric is used for sewing the baptismal clothes for the firstborn.

The brides are still trying to observe the old English tradition: «Something old, something new, something borrowed something blue and a silver sixpence in her shoe». «Something old» can be presented with a mother’s bracelet, «blue» – with underwear, «borrowed» – with elder sister’s garter, etc. And it is not difficult to find something new or to put a sixpence to the shoe. By the way, some modern brides wear decorative horseshoes on their wrists.

This superstition is still in favour today, although it originated in Victorian times. The sixpence in your shoe, seems to have been lost along the way.

‘Something old’ – a piece of family jewellery or accessory is often used.

‘Something new’ represents future health, happiness and success.

‘Something borrowed’ could be a small trinket borrowed from family or a friend. It must be returned to ensure good luck.

‘Something blue’ – in Israel, the bride used to wear a blue ribbon as a sign of her fidelity – these days it is usually the bride’s garter.

Good wealth was wished for by placing ‘a silver sixpence in your shoe’.

Ladies – guests cover their heads visiting the wedding. They prefer trendy flirty hats. The bridesmaids normally don’t put on a headwear.

Wedding procession makes the land to church. It usually consists of Rolls-Royces or retro mobiles, which they actually drive in ordinary life. Limousine is a rarely chosen car for these purposes.

**The Bridal Gown**

Married in: White – You’ve chosen all right.

Blue – Your love is true.

Pearl – You’ll live in a whirl.

Brown – You’ll live out of town.

Red – You will wish yourself dead.

Yellow – You’re ashamed of your fellow.

Green – Ashamed to be seen.

Pink – Your fortunes / spirits will sink.

Grey – You’ll live far away.

Black – You’ll wish yourself back the groom.

The groom, best man and male family should wear similar outfits in order to confuse the evil spirits as to the real identity of the groom. The best man also has the job of giving good luck to the groom by ensuring that:

The groom must carry a lucky mascot in his pocket.

The groom must not return home for any reason after leaving for the ceremony.

The minister should be given an odd sum of money for his fee.

A flower girl who throws about the flower petals goes before the bride while she walks down the aisle (modern brides prefer to walk alone without their fathers nearby).

Immediately after the ceremony photo-shoot with all the guests is usually held. Group photos are traditionally made near the church in which the newlyweds have married. When the weather is bad it is allowed to make photos in the church.

Up to the 17th century Sunday was the most popular wedding day as people did not have to work. However, the Puritans put a stop to this believing that it was improper to celebrate on the Sabbath. Saturday is the most popular day in present times, although more couples are choosing mid week, and either side of the weekend to save on costs. If you believed this rhyme, you would never get married on a Saturday.

Monday for health, Tuesday for wealth, Wednesday best of all,

Thursday for losses, Friday for crosses, Saturday for no luck at all.

Having got the day sorted, what about the time of the year. The old saying, ‘Marry in the month of May, and you’ll live to regret the day’ goes back to the pagans. In the Nineteenth century there was a rush to get married on April 30th because brides refused to marry during May.

Married when the year is new, he’ll be loving, kind & true,

When February birds do mate, you wed nor dread your fate.

If you wed when March winds blow, joy and sorrow both you’ll know.

Marry in April when you can, Joy for Maiden & for Man.

Marry in the month of May, and you’ll surely rue the day.

Marry when June roses grow, over land and sea you’ll go.

Those who in July do wed, must labour for their daily bread.

Whoever wed in August be, many changes is sure to see.

Marry in September’s shrine, your living will be rich and fine.

If in October you do marry, love will come but riches tarry.

If you wed in bleak November, only joys will come, remember.

When December snows fall fast, marry and true love will last.

**1.4. Wedding breakfast**

Right after the marriage ceremony a time for «wedding breakfast» comes. Newlyweds dance their first dance. There is also the tradition when bride’s father dances with his daughter and groom’s mother – with her son.

The bride throws the bunch of flowers which unmarried guests try to catch. It is not typically for English weddings to throw a garter.

As for the wedding gifts there is no special ceremony of donating. In these latter days so-called wedding registries become more and more popular. It is a kind of expected gifts list composed by bride and groom. The list passes from hand to hand among all relatives and friends: each of them can choose the gift for newlyweds from its items.

Newly wedded couples usually keep the boxes with their gifts clothed till the end of honeymoon. Then after opening the gifts, they sent gratitude postcards to the guests.

**2. Russian wedding traditions**

One tradition that seemed to be present in some form in every source - the tradition of the groom paying “ransom” for his bride before he can marry. Apparently, the family of the bride “steals” the bride and hides her before the ceremony and refuses to return her until the groom has presented money or jewelry in exchange for her return. Sometimes, they will dress a cousin of the bride (occasionally male for more comedy) up in white and cover his/her face with a veil and present him/her to the groom after he has made the first “payment.” After he has realized that the cousin is not his bride, he has to make a second payment in order for his real bride to be returned to him. Another version is said that the groom is presented with a napkin with the lipstick prints of all of the bride’s family, including the bride herself. If he can’t correctly identify his bride’s kiss, then he pays tribute.

The ceremony differs depending on the religion of the bride and groom. As in American culture, a church ceremony is not necessary for a legal union, only a civil service. However, if the couple is married in the orthodox church, the proceedings are ripe with tradition and ceremony. There are two parts to a traditional Russian Orthodox ceremony (called the venchanie): the betrothal and the crowning. The betrothal was at one point blessed at the beginning of the engagement, but it is now done in the same ceremony as the wedding itself. During the betrothal, the couple stands in the entrance to the church while the priest blesses them and gives them lit candles which they hold throughout the ceremony. The betrothal is then blessed by a prayer and scripture readings. Because the wedding is considered one of the seven sacraments in Russian orthodoxy and the sacraments are holy, the placing of crowns on the couples’ heads is more traditional than the trading of the wedding rings; hence the name of the second part of the ceremony, the crowning. The priest leads the couple to stand on a new piece of rose colored cloth, symbolizing the entrance into their new life together. The couple then each declares that they are marrying each other freely and are not promised to anyone else. The priest then places crowns on the heads of the bride and groom, where they are held in place by friends and family of the couple. After prayer and the sharing of a cup of wine by the bride and groom, the priest leads the couple three times around a lectern on which the gospel book has been set. This symbolizes the pilgrimage of wedded life. During this procession, the couple holds hands and the priest wraps his stole around their entwined hands. After more prayer, the priest announces the union of the couple and says the benediction. The tradition apparently used to be that the couple would wear the crowns for eight days following the ceremony, but now they are taking off after the benediction.

The civil ceremony takes place after or in place of the traditional ceremony. It lasts for about 15-30 minutes. This is when the exchanging of rings occurs. During or right after this ceremony, the parents offer the couple two crystal glasses, which they then break. The more shards of crystal they produce, the more years they will remain married. It is also traditional for the bride to release a balloon with her maiden name written on it, as she begins her new life with her new name.

Apart from the official civil ceremony, couples who wish to get married in church will arrange a special meeting with the priest. It is important that the meeting with the priest does not collide with the period of religious fasting as weddings are not performed on those days.

**2.1. Preparations for the wedding: wedding dress**

Bridal dress and groom's suit can be purchased or rented. Apparel and accessories-purse, veil, necklace and earrings for the bride, and tiara, tie clip and cufflinks for the groom can be obtained in a special bridal salon. Many other issues are arranged in advance, including renting a vehicle (often a limo) for the newlyweds to travel around the city on a wedding day, hiring a restaurant where the celebration will take place, and choosing a photographer and cameraman who will shoot the wedding ceremony. It is also common to hire or invite a toastmaster to manage many aspects of the wedding. A toastmaster announces performances, gives the floor to guests who want to make a toast, and holds fun contests for guests and newlyweds.

**2.2. A pair of wedding rings**

Just like in the Western world, it is a tradition in Russia for newlyweds to exchange wedding rings. Usually, the groom provides for the wedding rings, although that might vary depending on specific circumstances and material possibilities. The most popular wedding rings in Russia are made of gold and might be decorated with precious stones or platinum and silver stripes. The rings may be customized with commemorative inscriptions on the inside. In comtemporary Russia, the wedding ring is called betrothal ring or crowning ring. The distinction between these terms ceased to exist after 1755 when betrothal and crowning became a part of the same wedding ceremony. Russians traditionally wear the wedding ring on the ring finger of the right hand. Countries like Ukraine, Poland, Georgia, Germany, Spain, Austria, India and Greece have a similar tradition of wearing the wedding ring on the right hand.

It's worth noting that engagement rings are a fairly new phenomenon in Russia. The tradition of presenting an engagement ring to a bride comes from the Western world and borrows most of its traits-the gentleman unofficially presents an engagement ring to his beloved on the day he makes her an offer.

**2.3. The wedding day**

From the start of the day, the bride usually gets some help from her friends and relatives with her looks and style. The festive makeover is often delegated to professional hairdressers and make-up artists who take care of every aspect of her looks. Fast forward a few hours, the bride arrives approximately an hour and half before the official ceremony of registration.

That's about time when a comical wedding tradition takes place. The parents of the bride pretend to steal the bride and ask the groom to pay a ransom. The groom usually ends up paying some symbolic monetary value or jewellery to get his beloved back. Of course, the entire event is played out only for amusement of the guests.

After the ransom is paid and parents return the bride to the groom, the young couple heads straight to ZAGS to officially register their relationship. The next destination for the wedding ceremony is a picturesque location of any sort where newlyweds can make memorable pictures, including city parks, places of historical interest, the romantic sea coast or any other places of interest. Finally the newlyweds head to the restaurant to meet with the guests they invited.

**2.4. Russian wedding reception**

The main celebration of Russian wedding is the gala feast. Unlike wedding receptions in the West, Russian wedding receptions are very loud and they last for two days or sometimes even longer. They include a lot of Russian music, singing, dancing, long toasts, and the abundance of food and drinks to go with it. The guests love to sing Russian traditional songs to the sounds of accordion, bayan or garmoshka.

1. Bread and salt. It is offered to the newlyweds by both parents as a symbol of health, prosperity and long life. Both bride and groom must take a bite of the bread and the one that takes the largest bite will be the head of the family.
2. Wedding toasts and broken glasses. At the beginning of the reception a relative or close friend makes a wedding toast to the bride and groom. By Russian tradition everyone throws their champagne glasses on the floor and it is considered a good luck if the glasses break when they hit the ground.
3. Stealing the bride. The groom should constantly keep his eyes on the bride. If the bride gets out of the groom’s sight, she could be stolen by his friends and the groom will have to pay the ransom.
4. Guest shouts “Bitterly”. Besides if you are at a Russian wedding don’t be surprised when you’ll quite often hear here guest shouts “Bitterly!” Sometimes even too often. Don’t think it far doesn’t speak that the food isn’t tasty. In fact when guests shout “Bitterly!” that means that the groom and bride must kiss each other. By the way sometimes you can also hear “Sweet!” And this moment witnesses must kiss each other.
5. Wedding competitions. Also there is a tamada every wedding – host or toastmaster in English. The tamada is a person who leads a wedding and tries to make it cheerful and memorable. He carries competitions with the participation of the newly-married couple, witnesses, the parents of the bridegroom and the bride and other guests. Often the future of the couple is defined by the results of such competitions. For example they find out who and what duties will carry out. Also often they bear two trays. Guests are offered to put money on one of them depending on whose birth they allow from the young family – a boy or a girl. After all who wanted have voted this way tamada counts money for a boy and for a girl. It’s considered that that of them will be born for whom the assembled sum is bigger. By the way the first piece of wedding cake is also supplied from the auction. Sometimes tamada sings. Actually music is present at Russian weddings. After the dinner quests always dance.

**2.5. Day number two of Russian wedding**

Celebration goes on with no less fun than the day before. After some rest more drinking, singing, dancing, and fighting takes place. Never miss the second day of the traditional Russian wedding. There is a rule that the second day of the Russian wedding celebration is even more fun than the first day.

On the second day the party is held at the place where the newlyweds are going to live (usually at one of the parents' place - most young families live with wife's or husband's parents first). It starts in the morning or early afternoon.

Guests are not given knives, spoons or forks (sometimes no glasses are given either) - they must "buy" things if they want to eat and drink (actually, they borrow them because they don't take knives or forks home). The money goes to the newlyweds.

On the second day the couple wears different clothes but it must be something new bought specially for the occasion - a nice dress for the bride and a shirt and pants for the groom (but not jeans and a T-shirt!).

The number of guests on the second day is smaller; actually anyone from day one can attend the party but it's usually only the closest friends and family that do.

On the second day they cook a bit less food (still much more than they do for any occasion on the west), the preferred choice is national cuisine - "borsch" (beetroot soup with vegetables, potatoes and meat) or "ukha" (soup of fresh water fish with potatoes and onions). The main course is often "pelmeni" that can be also eaten with a broth.

There is no strict structure for the second day reception but it also includes lots of toasts.

After the meal the bride must "clean" the floor in the room. The fun part is that guests are allowed to mess as much as they want while she is cleaning - this is what they are actively doing, but they only can mess with money - coins or banknotes. Usually people make a special effort to get lots of change, so the bride has to work hard. The collected money belongs to the couple, and some generous guests can significantly contribute to the new family's budget.

There are may be some other competitions arranged by witnesses that are aimed to help the new couple financially - like a lottery with a live chicken as the first prize (of course guests don't know what it is!); the revenue from sold tickets goes to the newlyweds. As Russians marry early money from the wedding (gifts and other ventures) is often the only cash they can start their married life with.

The atmosphere on the second day of the wedding is more quiet and relaxed though still cheerful and fun.

**Conclusion**

We have found differences of wedding ceremonies in the UK and Russia, which most of our people do not even suspect, but the differences in wedding ceremonies are quite significant.

1. English brides wear a more modest wedding dress.
2. The outfits of the bridesmaids.
3. Women are invited to the wedding, come in hats.
4. Wedding gifts, the couple do not unpack until the end of the honeymoon.
5. Holding honey Russian newlyweds taken from British traditions.

The tradition of throwing the bride's bouquet came to us from the UK.

Russian wedding except the bride and the wedding came to us from time immemorial, have these traditions:

1. The garter toss his beloved fiancé.

2. The dance of the young.

3. Bride's dance with her father.

4. Breaking glasses for good luck.

5. The release of white doves.

6. The tradition of celebrating gold and silver wedding.

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