

## **SESSION 14 (Papers)**

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### **Theoretical Aspects of the Preservation and Reduction of Traditional Wedding Rituals of the Volga German Ethnic Minority in the Russian Federation**

The paper presents the author's new theoretical ideas based on the wedding rituals of the Volga German ethnic minority in Russia (1764-present). New conclusions about these rituals at various stages and changes provide a clue to better comprehension of the life of Volga Germans in all their musical and ethnographic complexity.

The genre-functional structural models of Volga German wedding rituals developed by the author in their historical development reveal their peculiarities in comparison with the structures of German and Austrian rituals. The results of this research led to the following conclusions: 1) the preservation of the main stages of the German wedding ritual, which indicates the ethnic identity of this minority in Russia; 2) its cultural transformation due to the two types of reduction first identified and analyzed by the author.

The first type is slow reduction, which is caused by the gradual nature of the transmission of traditions. The cultural transformations of the rituals of this period are the Ukrainian and Russian influences with a manifestation of hybridity (1764-1941).

The second type is rapid reduction, where forgetting occurs when the gradualness of transmission is forcibly interrupted, when the native language is banned by the state, when traditional places of residence and compactness of residence are deprived (1941-present). During this period, the Volga Germans lost much of their traditional culture, including their wedding rituals. They have been partially preserved in settlements in Siberia and Kazakhstan (author's expeditions, 1992-2016). The author defines the Volga German wedding rituals as a hybrid multicultural system of migrant tradition of secondary formation.

#### **Bio**

**Elena Shishkina** is an ethnomusicologist, since 1978 Associate Professor of the Astrakhan Conservatory and artistic director of the folklore and ethnographic ensemble Astrakhan Song. She is also director of the State Folklore Center Astrakhan Song. Her books include *Music of the Lower Volga Russian Wedding* (Moscow 1989) and *Traditional Musical Heritage of the Volga Germans in the Past and Present* (Saratov 2011).