

The Traditional Evolution of Style and Especially of Color of Bridal Dresses in Different Cultures during the Centuries

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Abstract: *The wedding is celebrated with the most formalized ceremonies. The bridal dress is a particularly important and symbolic object during modern wedding ceremonies that communicates so much about the customs of marriage, but also the personality, the femininity and the sexuality of the wearer as well as the social conventions. Many people consider the cultural traditions unchanged from generation to generation, but those concerning the wedding dress are not static, or unchanged. The styles and colors of the bridal dress have changed depending on the fashions of the era, the cultural influences and circumstances of the marriage.*

The "Traditional" white wedding dress as we know it today in Europe and North America is not very old, as it was worn just 150 years ago during the mid of 18th century. The first one was worn by Queen Victoria in 1940. Before the white gown, the bridal dress followed the concurrent silhouettes and colors of day dresses and the whites of the time were probably in cream or ivory shades.

The brides of royal families wore heavy brocaded gowns and the red color was a very popular one in Western Europe. During the interwar years a gradual shift towards the style of the evening wear and the pure white bridal dress was established. After 1934, when the church had allowed the celebration of weddings during the afternoon, the opportunity for evening receptions was given, influencing the style and colors of wedding dresses. Hollywood movies also had a major impact in the formation of the style and the change of its color..

Keywords: Traditional, cultural, wedding, costume, colorful, marriage

I. INTRODUCTION

People celebrate the transition from one life stage to the next. The wedding is celebrated with the most formalized ceremonies. The bridal dress is a particularly important and symbolic object during modern wedding ceremonies that communicates so much about the customs of marriage, but also the personality, the femininity and the sexuality of the wearer as well as the social conventions. Many people consider the cultural traditions unchanged from generation to generation, but those concerning the wedding dress are not static, or unchanged.

The styles and colors of the bridal dress have changed depending on the fashions of the era, the cultural influences and circumstances of the marriage. The "Traditional" white wedding dress as we know it today in Europe and North America is not very old, as it was worn just 150 years ago during the mid of 18th century. The first one was worn by Queen Victoria in 1940. Before the white gown, the bridal dress followed the concurrent silhouettes and colors of day dresses and the whites of the time were probably in cream or ivory shades.

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major impact in the formation of the style and the change of its color. A certain color has different meanings in different cultures. So, in Asian countries red is considered the color of happiness and is dominant in wedding dresses while white is the color of mourning for the followers of Confucianism. When Japan brides wore white kimono at their weddings, it symbolized the separation from their birth family. In other countries other colors are dominant like green in Hungary, which is excluded in Britain, particularly in Scotland testifying that everything is based on the cultural context.

Symbolic meanings of bridal dress and its colors

The socially constructed ritual of marriage is charged with the prevailing cultural concepts and conventions and the bridal dress is a highly symbolic object on this show and on the presentation of the femininity and the sexuality of the bride. Marriage as a rite of passage marks the separation of the bride from her parental family and the formation of a new one and the validation (social approval) of the couple's sexual relationships on the condition that they will create descendants.

The style and the color of the wedding dress are determined by the contextual factors of each wedding, the social conventions and the cultural context. It contains obvious and latent symbolisms which are communicated between the bride and the wedding attendees (Walsh, 2005).

Many women reveal today that they are almost ashamed because they succumb to the standard model and in reality they do not want to wear a traditional white wedding dress. With this statement they reveal a latent internal conflict related to the connotations of the white color as a symbol of virginity as most of them are no longer virgins when they get married. Especially feminists feel that there is a conflict between tradition and their feministic beliefs (McBride-Mellinger, 1993).

The role of the bride in the creation of her wedding dress

The bride is the main character of the wedding ceremony and assumes this role from the day that her wedding dress is created as she decides what to wear, constituting a means of negotiation and compromise with her immediate social environment, which is actively involved in the design of her wedding gown (Walsh, 2005).

The contemporary evolution of the style and the color of the wedding dress

There are many "sayings" about the customs of marriage and perhaps the most notorious for the wedding dress is the one that it must contain: "something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue" (Walsh, 2005). Similarly the following poem advises brides for the appropriate colors of their bridal dresses and which they should avoid:

The colors of wedding dress in non-western cultures

For many non-Western cultures, red is the traditional color of the wedding dresses. They are worn by Hindu and Muslim brides, as well as Chinese and Vietnamese for whom this is the color of good luck. It is used in many Asian countries as well as in Indonesia, where unlike the West; the traditional white represents mourning and death. The traditional Korean wedding dress imitated the costume of princesses and consisted of a red skirt and yellow jacket, over long pants. Above them, brides wore a red robe with wide sleeves with stripes in various colors. Since the 1980s the western bridal styles have prevailed, but nowadays brides use both styles (Historic Costume & Textiles Collection, 1998). In Japan, before the Second World War, the usual wedding dress was a black long-sleeved kimono. Since 1960, it was replaced by a white uchikake, elaborately decorated, that was worn over a plain white kimono which symbolized the mourning for her separation from the paternal family. Since 1980 the white western style wedding dress prevailed in these countries also (Suga, 2003).

II. CONCLUSIONS

Today, 200 years since the media and entertainment began to promote the white wedding dresses, most women prefer to accept and continue a tradition that celebrates the romantic love and the fairytale beauty of the bride, although it has its roots in the materialistic and empirical world of advertising. There is of course skepticism, the independence of



women has increased, the moral attitudes are changing, but the preference in a traditional white wedding dress has increased. The white wedding dress is a relatively recent tradition in the West and its deviations from the rule are few and

powerful declarative. But and within the narrow confines of the typical "white wedding", there is room for the bride to show her personality and showcase her femininity. The white wedding dress prevailed almost throughout the world and especially where there is a strong influence from Europeans and North Americans. There are attempts to revive traditional styles of wedding dresses but usually in these cases there is a mixture of local traditional with western elements.

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