

SCRIPT: "Egyptian Weddings: Happily Ever After?"

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This documentary aims to shed the light on the differences that occurred in the Egyptian wedding ceremonies since the 1960s until now, and how this reflects the differences in both generations in terms of the traditions and norms. This is reflected through the stories of the bride-to-be Noha Marei and her grandmother Khadiga Barrada about their weddings.

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Laila Mourad- Alby Dalily (27 seconds from the start of the song)*

Weddings have a special importance to Egyptians. They consider them as the most important event in their lives because it means a moral way of psychological and biological satisfaction. The bride is wearing a white eye-catching bridal dress and the groom is wearing a black suit or a tuxedo. The ceremony starts with a car parade. The wedding car, which is always as prestigious as possible is decorated with flowers and ribbons. Cars of both families move together in a noisy parade of continuous sounding of car horns to a wedding hall most often in a hotel.

*ADD: nat sound: car horns (:04)*

*ADD: nat sound: zaghrouta (:06)*

This is a zaghrouta, which Egyptian women always use in wedding ceremonies; it is a form of ululation that shows immense happiness.

*ADD: nat sound: folkloric wedding procession (: 13)*

When the bride and groom reach the hotel, they are received by a Zaffa or a folkloric procession. The procession is another human parade of belly dancers and drummers surrounding the bride and groom, singing happy songs.

It is when the groom takes the bride from her father; it is almost the same as walking down the aisle in western weddings.

*MUSIC: FADE IN: John Legend- All of me (: 14)*

When the couple takes their seats, the party program starts with a drink called "Sharpat", a rose water juice.

*ADD: Sound effect: glass toast (:02)*

The attendants spray flowers over the couple and then the fun begins!

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Bismillah el Rahman el Rahim (: 11)*

This is a typical image of what Egyptian wedding ceremonies look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but do you know what Egyptian weddings used to look like in the 1960s.

*ADD: sound effect: rewind (:02)*

*KHADIGA BARRADA (KB): "Everything is done at home and in a very very amicable situation, everybody loves the bride, everybody loves the um groom." (:08)*

This is Khadiga Barrada, the grandmother of the 22-year old bride to be Noha Marei. She thinks that today's weddings have lost their real value, compared to her wedding, which was held in 1960.

*KB: "It was like a family gathering, extended; an extended family gathering with some music and entertainment where everybody is happy." (: 14)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Laila Mourad- Alby Dalily (27 seconds from the start of the song)*

Egyptian marriage customs in the past or in the present generally reflect the cooperative and brotherly spirit of the community. So let's see what Professor Madiha El Safty, professor of

sociology at the American University in Cairo thinks about today's weddings compared to the past.

*MADIHA EL SAFTY (MS): "Well it's a part of the status symbol for the upper classes, that they want to, not brag, but make a show of their wealth and so on." (: 14)*

*NOHA MAREI: "I would like to have a huge wedding and invite everyone I know to celebrate with us." (:05)*

This is Noha Marei.

*NM: "I would like to have a luxurious for example macaroons and chocolate fountain in the entrance." (:08)*

An AUC graduate

*NM: "And the bride-to-be." (:02)*

Yes and our bride-to-be has some very extravagant standards for her wedding.

*NM: "I am thinking of Semiramis Intercontinental, it is in the heart of Cairo, it is a five-star hotel, it has a very very huge hall that can accommodate everyone I want to invite." (: 10)*

*MS: "It was very common to attend a wedding on the top of the roof and sometimes at home even." (:08)*

*NM: "What OH MY GOD." (:03)*

But maybe her grandma has a different opinion.

*NM GRANDMA (DS): "Of course the weddings were held at home at home, never outside, and the houses could accommodate, could accommodate, but you invite cousins and cousins of your father and cousins of your mother and your friends and your neighbors and the house could accommodate and if it didn't accommodate the neighbors would send some chairs from their house." (:21)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Wedding March- Etmakhtary Ya Helwa (11 seconds from the start of the song)*

In the Middle East, the bride and groom enter in style, with a traditional arabic zaffa or bridal procession. Dancers and musicians go before the bridal party to make sure everyone knows about the happy occasion. They are followed by the happy couple and their bridal party who carry tall white candles to light the way.

*KB: "We didn't have a zaffa "procession"; because it was usually at home, so we didn't have a zaffa, but sometimes like in my wedding we got somebody to sing a few songs and some houses used to get a dancer but in my case we didn't." (: 18)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Magda el Roumy- Nashid el zafaf (38 seconds from the start of the song)*

One of the main aspects that have also changed in today's weddings compared to before is the kind of music being used, which is better now I guess- or- umm.

*KB: "These days I don't like the music at all." (:04)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Saad El Soghayar- Hatgawez (13 seconds from the middle of the song)*

*NM GRANDMA: "First of all it is not live, it is always recorded and the singer, sometimes live and sometimes what they have what they call DJ and this DJ puts some music, very very very loud and of course the beating is too much, sometimes I have to put cotton in my ears because sometimes it is too much." (: 21)*

*NM: "I would not focus, like I would not do any of old music." (:05)*

Ok Noha, so we knew what kind of music you are NOT planning to have BUT what kind of music you are planning to have at your wedding ceremony?

*NM: "Oriental and western music and music that like helps people dance." (:06)*

*ADD: sound effect: buzzer (:02)*

*KB: "In our days, the bride was not supposed to dance, but now I see the bride dances, dances baladi, very normal, and her friends would dance, no in our time she was not supposed to dance, she was supposed to look lets say innocent." (: 22)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Laila Mourad- Alby Dalily (27 seconds from the start of the song)*

Although the style and appearance of the bridal dress has experienced immense changes throughout the years, it was, is and will always be of very special importance to girls all around the world.

*KB: “the wedding dress didn’t cost that much, look at my wedding dress, very simple and I got a sewing woman or whatever you call it and she did my dress at home, at that time there was a magazine called ‘borda’ and we took the design from it and she just made it at home. But now they have to take it to a designer or they have to buy it I don’t know from where or import it from Turkey or the United States or do it here for 30 or 40 thousand. I had the veil, as you see and this very simple crown, now they have to have a very long veil, maybe 2 or 3 meters long.” (: 43)*

*NM: “I want it with a very long veil.” (:02)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: John Legend- All of Me (: 14)*

*NM: “I would go to a fashion designer, she is going to understand what designs we want and the details that I want in my dress and she’s going to design my dress as I want.” (: 10)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Laila Mourad- Alby Dalily (27 seconds from the start of the song)*

To every community its own special rituals and customs, and since Egyptians have always been so spiritual by nature, they used to have some special rituals that I bet you wouldn’t find elsewhere.

*KB: “Usually the girl doesn’t appear, it’s the father and the bride’s groom and the girl is inside and they give her a piece of sugar and after she takes a bit of it or sucks a bit of it, they take it, put it in a cup and give it to the husband, the future husband, so that everything she says will be like sugar to him, and she puts a loaf of bread under her arm so that she gives him good livelihood and she puts her feet in some water with some green to bring him blessings.” (: 42)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Farid El Atrash- Do’o el mazaher (34 seconds from the beginning of the song)*

Neither the luxury of the wedding, the location nor the number of attendees could ever make a couple live happily ever after. So whether in the 1960s or in 2015, it doesn’t matter what a wedding looks like or how fancy it is, what really matters the most is that the couple live happily ...ever after!

PS: If you visit Egypt, always keep an eye out for weddings. In many seasons, there will be weddings almost every night in hotels all around Cairo. Do not hesitate to ask permission to join the wedding. I guarantee you that you will be welcomed to sing dance and enjoy the real culture of Egypt.

Credits: This audio documentary was produced by Nahla El Gendy for the audio production course at The American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in spring 2015. Special thanks to Dr Madiha El Safty, Noha Marei and her grandmother Khadiga Barrada for their interviews. Music credits are: *Alby Dalily* by *Laila Mourad*, *All of Me* by *John Legend*, *Do 'o el mazaher* by *Fareed El atrash*, *Hatgawez* by *Saad el Soghayar*, *Boshret kheir* by *Hussein el jasmy*, *Nasheed el zafaf* by *Magda el Roumy*, *habiby ya 3einy* by *Maya Yazbak* and a folkloric *Egyptian wedding song*. All natural sounds and sound effects are collected by me and from you tube.