
INHERITED CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH POPULAR WEDDINGS IN THE VILLAGES OF AL- MATAANA IN THE CITY OF ESNA

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with one of the elements of the popular heritage in the villages of the Mata'na tribe in the Esna Center, which are the customs and traditions associated with popular weddings and all related traditional rituals. Popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na in the Esna Center include several traditional rituals, the most important of which are the Henna night and the traditional customs and rituals held for the bride and groom, and the wedding night and the traditional rituals held for the bride and groom.

The popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na also include the popular palm, the local flute, and listening to popular songs associated with weddings. Popular songs were also dedicated to the bride and groom, which are still sung today in the popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na.

Therefore, this research examines the most important customs and traditions related to weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na and how to integrate them within as an intangible cultural heritage and documenting them scientifically. To achieve this a descriptive documentary comparative methodology is employed.

KEYWORDS: Weddings, Henna night, Wedding night, Al-Mata'na tribe.

INTRODUCTION

The Al-Muta'na tribe is considered one of Arab tribes. It is a tribe that includes a group of villages that belong to the center of Esna in Luxor Governorate. It was called the Al-Mata'na tribe, named after Muhammad bin Suleiman, nicknamed "*Mutaa*". (مطاع) It is a tribe that belongs to "the Bakri dynasty", and their lineage ends with Abdullah bin Abi Bakr Al-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him.¹

The Al-Mata'na tribe includes a group of villages, of which are the following: (Asfoun Al-Mata'na village, Tafnis Al-Mata'na village, Kiman Al-Mata'na village, Al-Gharira village, and Wabourat Al-Mata'na village). It is said "Asfoun Al-Mata'na", or "Kiman Al-Mata'na", and the "Taftish Al-Mata'na" is affiliated with them. All of these villages are adjacent to each other in a longitudinal shape extending tens of kilometers, and they are all located west of the Nile, north of the city of Esna.²

Based on the observation of the researcher residing in the villages of Al-Mata'na, popular weddings have a great status among the people of the villages of Al-Mata'na, as they remind them of the lives of their fathers and grandfathers. Popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na are more widespread than the current weddings that are based on festivals and trivialities. Everything said in popular weddings, from songs and ballads, has a meaning and expresses the fragrance of history.

DEFINITION OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Intangible heritage has been defined as those aspects of heritage that, unlike places or objects, are ephemeral these include oral traditions, languages, traditional performing arts, knowledge systems, values, and know-how. Intangible heritage consists of oral traditions, memories, languages, traditional performing arts or rituals, knowledge systems, values, and know-how that we want to safeguard

¹<https://www.hekayetwatan.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%A9-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%A8%D8%B5%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1/>

المطاعنة قبيلة الالف قاض بصعيد مصر, جريدة حكاية وطن, الخميس 27 ابريل 2023 - 12:58م.
² الطنبشاي, علي. عيسى. (2015). صفحات ذات معنى في الكلام عن المطاعنة, 9 سبتمبر, التصنيف
انساب تاريخ, ص3.

and pass on to future generations Intangible heritage can be found all over the world.³

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to:

- 1- Acknowledge the rituals that take place in popular weddings in the villages of the Mata'na tribe.
- 2- Seeking the origins of some of the traditions followed in weddings.
- 3- Document traditional wedding ceremonies.
- 4- Employ wedding traditions as an intangible heritage to promote heritage tourism to the village.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive documentary approach is used to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. This approach was found to be suitable for the current study to describe and document the customs and traditions related to popular weddings in one of the most important villages in the city of Esna, which is "Al-Mata'na tribe villages".

To document these customs and sustain their existence as an intangible heritage the UNESCO seven steps were followed:

1. Identification of the element which is the popular wedding in Al-Mata'na tribe villages.
2. Characteristics of the element: ceremonies of the pre-wedding and wedding ceremonies were pointed out with details.
3. Individuals, groups and organizations involved with the element: a number of interviews were conducted with elderly people.
4. State of the element: viability. This is explored through real weddings.
5. Data gathering/documentation and preparation of inventory entries: this was done through detailing the ceremonies in order.
6. Modalities for updating the information contained in the inventory entry: done through comparing with some modern ceremonies.
7. References to literature, discography, audiovisual materials or archives: documenting the ceremonies through photos from real life ceremonies.

³ Dondolo, M. L. (2004). *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage*, Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage, HSRC Publishers, p. 1,7.

Interviews were conducted with the elderly from the villages of Al-Mata'na participating in enriching information on customs and traditions that were performed in popular weddings. Their ages range from 50 to 80 Interviews from 16 to January 20.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A group of references assisted this study tremendously through studying customs and traditions related to wedding ceremonies. This includes the followings:

غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *افراح الغلابة والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الاسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية.

This reference discusses the customs and traditions associated with the henna night and all the ceremonies that take place during it for the bride and groom.

بلحسن, الدكتور الحسين, ريوش. (2020), *التراث الشعبي وأهميته التاريخية من خلال نماذج من الأمثال والعادات والطقوس والمرددات الشعبية*, الناشر: شركة دار الاكاديميون للنشر والتوزيع.

This study referred to the ceremonies associated with the groom on the *Henna* night and the clothes he wears to celebrate the *Henna* night.

رشيد, بهيجة, صدقي. (14 ابريل 2007), *اغانى مصرية شعبية*, جمعت الفاظها ودونت موسيقاها وترجمتها الى الانجليزية, 1958

This book discusses the most important folk songs that are said on the *henna* night and wedding night at popular weddings.

This book discusses the wedding night ceremony in different cultures, which is usually on a Thursday, the bride's dowry, and everything it includes.

Packard, M. (2012), *Henna Sourcebook*, October, Over 1,000 Traditional Designs and Modern Interpretations for Body Decorating, Race Point Publishing

This study referred to *henna* night rituals for the bride and the benefits of henna in purifying the body from fungi and as a means of blessing.

MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS

The ancient Egyptians were the first civilization to regard marriage as a Legal relationship. Marriage in ancient Egypt was a religious imposition. The laws organized the marriage relationship and indicated all rights and duties for the couples. The laws gave the right of divorce to women as well as men, and the wife had great respect and a high degree of prestige.⁴

First marriage was a pivotal moment in the lifecourse of men and women in ancient historical societies. Marriage was the realm of legitimate reproduction, and involved the wealth and aspirations of both the marrying couple and their close kin, particularly their respective parents. During all periods of Egyptian history, terminology around marriage envisioned husbands and fathers in law 'giving' and 'making' wives. Most Egyptian women appear to have married for the first time while their fathers were alive, and fathers were expected to provide (most of) their daughters' marriage endowment. In New Kingdom Deir el-Medina, a practice of ('carrying a bundle') is attested, in which a man 'carried a bundle' to the father of a woman he desired to marry. The semiliterary early Demotic petition of Pediese contains a passage in which a father arranges the marriage of his daughter with a priest who asked for her hand.⁵

Ideally, it would appear that the ancient Egyptians expected to have a monogamous and lifelong marriage that produced children.⁶

Marriage formed a central social construct of ancient Egyptian culture. It provided the normative framework for producing children, who would act as one's rightful heirs. The latter were responsible for performing one's funerary cult, thereby securing one's eternal life. The economic effects of marriage were also notable. The husband, wife, and children were all perceived as having equal rights to the conjugal joint-property consisting of a 1/3 share each. In addition to this, the spouses might own private property of their own. As marriage modified many aspects of daily life such as social status, domicile, and the intricate network of interpersonal rights and

⁴ Capo, A. L.(2013), *Wedding Traditions from Around the World*, November 15, AuthorHouse, p.63.

⁵ Loktionov, A. (2023), *Compulsion and Control in Ancient Egypt*, Proceedings of the Third Lady Wallis Budge Egyptology Symposium, Archaeopress Publishing Limited, p. 205, 206.

⁶ SABBAHY, LISA K. (2019), *All Things Ancient Egypt*, An Encyclopedia of the Ancient Egyptian World, Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 37.

obligations, it was not a relationship entered into at random. A sequence consisting of a choice of partner followed by an exchange of gifts and assets preceded the actual marrying. Once the marital status was a fact, both parties were expected to abstain from relationships. However, it was possible for men to have several wives.⁷

Ideally, it would appear that the ancient Egyptians expected to have a monogamous and lifelong marriage that produced children. The unit of a husband and wife with children seems to have been an expectation of ancient Egyptian society. Life spans were not long, 25-30 years, and maternal mortality was high. This meant that people married young, and many men must have lost their wives in childbirth and probably remarried. A study based on ancient Egyptian texts and representations concluded that "affection and love were an integral part of the ideals of marriage in ancient Egypt".⁸

Though no wedding scenes were known from ancient Egypt but marriage went through a set of steps that were identified through the contracts that were found and explain at the beginning: the engagement or acquaintance stage. Many contracts and literary texts revealed what is known as the engagement stage, as many love letters contained in their meanings chaste flirting between the fiancé and his fiancée.⁹

Then comes the stage of documenting the contract after agreeing on the marriage. In order for this contract to be legal, it must be documented by a government temple employee in the presence of a number of witnesses. The oldest marriage document dates back to the late era, specifically the era of the 26th Dynasty, because marriage is an announcement and a declaration. Writing the contract is followed by completing the marriage ceremony by holding a wedding party, the goal of which is to announce the bond between the spouses. Finally, the marriage ceremony is concluded by going to the marital home, which includes many tips for treating the wife. *Ptahhotep* says in his teachings, "Make her heart happy as long as she lives, for she

⁷ Viitala, T, J.(2013), Marriage and Divorce. In Elizabeth Froom and Willeke Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles. <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem>. P.2.

⁸ SABBAHY, LISA K. (2019), *All Things Ancient Egypt*, An Encyclopedia of the Ancient Egyptian World, Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 37.

⁹ عيسى مجدي تامر. (2012)، *الموروثات المصرية القديمة وتأثيرها على المجتمع المصري الحديث* (عادات وتقاليد الزواج حتي العصر الحديث). ص 3.

is a fertile field for her guardian, and do not accuse her out of bad faith.”¹⁰ (fig.1)

During the interview with the elders of the villages of Al-Mata’na, one of the women said: One of the most important customs and traditions associated with marriage in the villages of Al-Mata’na is the groom going with his parents to the bride’s house to meet her father to ask for her hand in marriage according to the Sunnah of God and His Messenger. Then after that, they negotiate with him on the dowry with which the groom buys the bride’s belongings, which consist of: gold, nightgowns, furnishings, bed covers, a clay jug, and everything related to household utensils.



Fig.1 Marriage in Ancient Egypt.

(Source: https://historylink101.com/n/egypt_1/a-marriage.htm, Tuesday, 11/19/2024)



Fig.2 Marriage in the **villages** of Al-Mata'na,

(Source: photography by Mahmoud El-Desouki Ramadan, Wednesday 3/11/1998 pm)

¹⁰ عيسى مجدي تامر. (2012), *الموروثات المصرية القديمة وتأثيرها على المجتمع المصري الحديث* (ص 3,4). عادات وتقاليد الزواج حتي العصر الحديث).

The father had a major role in approving his daughter's marriage, as he had authority over his daughter in this regard, and if this indicates anything, it indicates the importance and control of the father in building the family. This is evident in what was included in the petition of the priest "Bady-Ez" that in the fourteenth year of the reign of king "Psamtik I", he met the priest "Har-Waj" and invited him, his wife and daughters to dinner, and while they were eating dinner, "Har-Waj" saw one of the daughters of the priest "Bay-Ez" called "Nit-M-Hat", who was accepted by him, and he asked her father to become his wife, but he replied to him saying that the time for her marriage had not come.¹¹ (fig.2)

Weddings, like all ceremonies, are complex events, composed of multiple parts. They incorporate a variety of codes (liturgy, music, food, clothing, and objects) and related events (in addition to the ceremony proper, participants may conduct multiple pre ceremony rituals, such as showers, bachelor parties, and per wedding dinners, premarital counseling or some other sort of wedding classes, and various post ceremony rituals, such as receptions, opening presents, and honeymoons).¹²

The wedding usually starts on a Thursday, includes viewing of the girl's dowry. If you are on the bride's side (especially a woman) you go and view the finery that is displayed. It was the tradition for the bride sowed and embroidered all her dowry. In nowadays it is mostly bought at the finest stores that the family can afford. The dowry would consist of gifts to the groom's family, such as nightgowns, lingerie, linens and bedcovers, jewelry anything else the bride will need to start her new home. The Custom comes from earlier times when the dowry was all that the bride was allowed in her husband's house and her wealth was displayed in golden coins necklaces and belts.¹³

According to the responses of the interviews; in the past, the dowry in popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na was estimated at a small price of 25 pounds, the dowry consisted of: underwear,

دورية كان التاريخية.(2012). ترتيبات ما قبل الزواج في مصر القديمة، الناشر مؤسسة كان التاريخية، ص11.

<http://search.manduman.com/Record/454605>

¹² Hurwitz, W. L. (2002), *Wedding as text Communicating Cultural Identities Through Ritua* , December 18, Taylor & Francis, p. 8.

¹³ Capo, A. L. (2013), *Wedding Traditions from Around the World*, November 15, AuthorHouse, p. 2.

nightgowns, furnishings, bed covers, a clay jug, a Gas stove, and everything related to household items.

The wedding party is usually surrounded by music either live or recorded which is highly amplified, making it almost impossible for guests to converse. However, this is considered a good thing because Egyptians feel that it is quite Egyptian to have loud music playing in the background at a party. It is also quite Egyptian to have a good time at a wedding.¹⁴

Based on participant observation residing in the villages of Al-Mata'na, weddings are considered to be one of the elements of intangible heritage, as these weddings are characterized by special ceremonies, some of which are still widely circulated until now. Follows are some of the main ceremonies practiced till nowadays:

HENNA NIGHT CEREMONY

Henna has been used for over 5000 years all over the world including Africa and the Middle East mainly to cool people down and then with different designs it replaced jewellery and its use extended to celebrations and cermonied.¹⁵

The Henna ritual usually preceeded the wedding night. The use of *Henna* in marriage most likely came from simple origins. It could have come from women trying to cool themselves or a ceremony of coloring their hair or nails with *Henna*. One has to remember *Henna* was extremely expensive in ancient times, especially if you did not live in an area that produced it. So weddings could have been the few times in a woman's life to use it at all. *Henna* was probably used as kohl and rouge was, to add beauty to the nails.¹⁶

¹⁴ Asante, M. K. (2002) *Culture and Customs of Egypt*, December 30, ABC-CLIO, P.106.

¹⁵ [Henna-Folklife-Project.pdf](#) accessed 4-12-2024.

¹⁶ Miczak, A. M. (2001), *Henna's Secret History*, The History, Mystery & Folklore of Henna, Writers Club Press, p.221.

Some have attempted to say the "*Night of the Henna*" traditions started in ancient Egypt, but there is of course no proof of that. Others point to a mysterious 7th century BCE Assyrian text as stating girls used *Henna* on their hands prior to marriage. It would however make sense that where ever the traditions started, it did so in an affluent, modernized area with an extremely high regard for virginity and recognized marital union. This would somewhat discount Morocco and Berber women specifically as being the inventors of the *Night of the Henna*.¹⁷ In other cultures Henna night is a ritual of lamentation where the bride is sad for leaving her family; or that with Henna rituals the bride and groom are sacrificed to each other.¹⁸



Fig.3 The groom celebrates the *Henna* night
(Source: Photographed by Mohamed, Thursday, 12/1/2023)

The Henna night takes place in the groom's house, the groom used to meet at his house with his friends before the wedding day.¹⁹ Henna is a dark, reddish-orange plant dye derived from the shoots and leaves of the Egyptian privet, used as a cosmetic and for decorative purposes. Although some medicinal properties have been claimed for the day, it has not traditionally been used in healing. The leaves are crushed into a green powder, and water is added to make the paste. It is applied to the body as a paste and left for, usually, up

¹⁷ Miczak, A. M. (2001), *Henna's Secret History*, The History, Mystery & Folklore of Henna, Writers Club Press, p. 222.

¹⁸ Ozgen et al.(2020). *Henna Ritual Clothing in Anatolia from Past to Present: An Evaluation on Bindalli*’ Proceedings of the Textile Society of America 17th Biennial Symposium, p.4

¹⁹ غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *إفراح الغلابية والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الاسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية, ص.15

to two hours today the skin a deep orange color. This fades over two to three weeks. It is also used for dyeing hair.)²⁰

And they would perform the ceremonies related to the Henna night, some of them would sing, some would dance, and some would play well, all in return for showing friendliness, happiness, and appreciation to their friend, the groom. On the day of the henna night, the groom holds a dinner party for his unmarried friends, and after the dinner is finished, the groom decorates and wears a white dress that includes loose traditional pants whose length exceeds the knees and does not reach the shoulders, then a long-sleeved shirt worn by men under the robes, then a white robe and white shoes.²¹

Every friend of the groom's friends on the night of henna was keen to present a valuable gift befitting his status to the groom, and the women used to gather at the bride's house on the night of Henna. At first, the bride was keen to bow her hands and feet with Henna then this habit developed and became inscriptions and drawings on the back or palm of the hands or only one hand.²²

According to interviews Henna night is one of the most important wedding ceremonies in the villages of Al-Mata'na, and this ceremony is still practiced to this day in popular weddings, as it is a night in which the bride and groom seek blessings. Henna purifies the body from fungi, protects against envy, and erases sins. According to the interviewees the groom would wear a white robe to express joy and happiness, and then his friends would smear him with henna to celebrate with him and express joy, happiness, love and friendship between them. (fig.3)

One of the interviewed elderly women stated that the traditional rituals of the Henna night in the villages of Al-Mata'na are still practiced by some of the locals who like to revive this traditional custom, but others have turned to modern rituals, which is celebrated with colors, a custom practiced by the Indians. Pouring Henna on the groom's body on the Henna day is a traditional custom that aims to rid the body of bacteria and fungi. Henna is a natural herb that is used to bless the groom on his wedding night and ward off envy. (fig.4)

The ceremonies separation of the bride and groom begins with the first *Henna*- ceremonies and is continued during *Henna*-night and

²⁰Monger, G. P. (2013), *Marriage Customs of the World*, An Encyclopedia of Dating Customs and Wedding Traditions Bloomsbury Publishing.

²¹بلحسن, الدكتور الحسين, ريوش. (2020), *التراث الشعبي وأهميته التاريخية من خلال نماذج من الأمثال والعادات والطقوس والمرددات الشعبية*, الناشر: شركة دار الأكاديميون للنشر والتوزيع, ص 151, 150.

²²غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *إفراح الغلابة والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الأسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية, ص 15, 16.

wedding.²³ During these ceremonies events, the groom and bride are much restricted in their movements. Thus, when the henna is applied in fine patterns to her hands and feet, a work which may last several hours, the bride sits on a bench neither speaking nor moving. Formerly, her face would be veiled by a non-transparent cloth, underlining her separation from the guests.²⁴



Fig.4 Smearing the groom completely with *Henna*
(Source: photography by Mohamed Nasser, Thursday, 12/1/2023)

Also the groom takes a modest posture when he undergoes his *Henna*- ceremonies; this ritual however lasts much shorter than the ritual for the bride. The symbolic separation between the bride and groom and their guests is maintained during the festivities of the *Henna*-night and wedding. During the wedding performances especially the bride is, again, much restricted in her movements. Dressed in her heavy, ceremonial costume, she is assisted by *the neggafa* when presented to the guests.²⁵

Where the family, loved ones, and neighbors gather after three in the afternoon in front of the groom's house to celebrate it by smearing it completely with henna or the young people gather around the *Henna*

²³ Crul, M. Lindo, F. Pang, C. L. (1999), *Culture, Structure and Beyond, Changing Identities and Siocial Positions of Immigrants and Their Children*, Transaction Publishers, p. 19.

²⁴ Crul, M. Lindo, F. Pang, C. L. (1999), *Culture, Structure and Beyond, Changing Identities and Siocial Positions of Immigrants and Their Children*, Transaction Publishers, p. 19.

²⁵ Crul, M. Lindo, F. Pang, C. L. (1999), *Culture, Structure and Beyond, Changing Identities and Siocial Positions of Immigrants and Their Children*, Transaction Publishers, p. 19.

tray, and during the singing, the groom's friends and his male relatives gather around the groom. And dye his hands and feet with henna in an atmosphere of love and joy, mostly, these celebrations are preceded by the night of the Holy Quran, so that the blessing spreads over the night of *Henna* and the wedding.²⁶

According to traditions the *Henna* night for the groom is a blessed night, as the groom smears his entire body with *Henna* because it is a Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to seek blessings from it, and henna, also purifies the body from fungi.

One of the interviewed female villager mentioned that the method of making *Henna* was mixing it with water in a large bowl, putting rose water and some perfumes, and stirring it well until it matched and became coherent, then we leave it for about an hour to ferment, then it is packed in a bucket and the groom is smeared with it.

The Night of the Henna has been a tradition since 1000 BCE, at least. In the Night of the Henna, a girl is purified, dressed and bejeweled for her wedding, and marked with henna. The markings are done at a party held by the bride and groom's families, and the guests are often marked as well. The girl's mother or the groom's mother marks the bride with Henna, unless there is a local professional Henna artist for hire. The party includes traditional songs, dancing, and feasting.²⁷



Fig.5 *Henna* night in the village of Wabourat Al-Mataana, Esna, Luxor Governorate

(Source: Photography by Mahmoud El-Desouki Ramadan, Wednesday 3/11/1998)

²⁶ لطفي, مني. (2018), *رواية كبير العيلة*, 30 يونيو, الناشر: مني لطفي, ص 850

²⁷ Packard, M. (2012), *Henna Sourcebook Over 1,000 Traditional Designs, and Modern Interpretations for Body Decorating*, Race Point Publishing., p. 11.

From interviews it can be deduced that the bride would wear a red dress on *the Henna* night and invite the family and neighbors, women and girls, to celebrate with her on *the Henna* night. A *Henna* tray would be made in the bride's family's house with candles on it, and people would be in a state of joy, singing and dancing with the bride in celebration of *the Henna* night.

The *Henna* night, during this night, the bride is decorated in a yellow outfit, with flower jewelry. The ceremony can take place in the house or any party hall. If at home, then the decorations are ordered to come in the house and decorate the stage in which the bride is sated with food such as sweets, cake, fruits. Family members decorate the fruits in any way they like. The relatives coming from the groom's side, the relatives of the bride, friends come for the ritual.²⁸

Henna has a major role in blocking envy so that it does not reach the newlyweds, and in our popular beliefs a certain devil works actively on these occasions and does not limit its influence except Henna.²⁹ (fig.5)



Fig.6 Popular palm on the groom's henna night in Al-Mata'na villages (**Source:** Photography by Mahmoud El-Desouki Ramadan, Wednesday 3/11/1 9 9 8)

²⁸ Mazumder, T. (2010), Companion, April 28, Xlibris US, p. 58.

²⁹ مستجاب, محمد. (2021), *نبش الغراب في واحة العربي*, الجزء الاول- الانسان, الكرامة للنشر, ص117

And for this reason, the rituals required after that the woman who performs the *Henna* of the bride does not approach her by wrapping her limbs with henna in order to facilitate the taming of the devil who accompanies her, then, immediately after that, the process of mixing it with *Henna* takes place. (fig.5)

On the groom's *Henna* night in the villages of Al-Mata'na, the groom invites relatives and neighbors to celebrate by lighting candles on the *Henna* in an atmosphere filled with happiness and singing. The invitees present a point of joy to the groom, and then food is served to the invitees. After finishing eating, the night of the popular palm and the local flute begins in a state of joy and happiness.

POPULAR TUNES SUNG IN THE HENNA NIGHT:

Folk singing is an adventure of imagination, crossing direct meanings, standing on bridges that span places and times, to celebrate human contradictions, while at the same time trying to possess its own distinctive voice in the world of singing. Folk song creates its lyrical tremor by arousing the listener's desire to change the old rules of melody, words and performance, and it refines its appeal in ways that are closer to the spirit of the street and life in popular and sometimes random areas.³⁰

This song may turn into a series of gaps and fragments, and some may see it as a contradictory form of self-pride or lament. Or a countdown to more carefree times, so it can be said that the folk song is complete, and at the same time it seeks completion, in its quest to establish a reference that it will never be able to achieve. This is the point of the folk song's appeal and perhaps its main point of weakness at the same time.³¹

Based on participant observation of the researcher, there are many popular songs that are said on the *Henna* night in the villages of Al-Mata'na, which have taken on a special character among the people of Al-Mata'na, the most important of which are the following:

. ya *Henna* ya *henna* ya *At-ril-Na-da* ya *shib-bak ha-beebi* ya *einy gal-lab il-hawa*

(يا حنة يا حنة يا قطر الندي, يا شباك حبيبي يا عيني جلاب الهوي)

ثابت, د. ياسر. (2023), تاريخ الغناء الشعبي من الموال الي الرباب, داوين للنشر, ص 307

ثابت, د. ياسر. (2023), تاريخ الغناء الشعبي من الموال الي الرباب, داوين للنشر, ص 317

. ya kho-fi min om-mak tis-alni a-lake La-hot-tak fi einy ya rohi
wat-kah-hala-lake

(يا خوفي من امك تسألني عليك, لأحطك في عيني يا روعي واتكل عليك)

. ya kho-fi min okh-tak ti-daw-war a-lake La-hot-tak fi sha-ry ya
einy wad-daf-far a-lake

. ³² (يا خوفي من اختك تدور عليك, لأحطك في شعري يا عيني وأضفر عليك)

Win gat-nil a-aw-zil tis-alni a-lake La-hot-tak fi sadry ya ro-hy
wil-looly a-lake

(وان جتني العوازل تسألني عليك, لأحطك في صدري يا روعي واللولي عليك)

THE WEDDING NIGHT CEREMONY

Weddings are the social introduction of the new couple. Although the parties have a wedding identity and clear characteristics linked to that kind of event, customs are to identify the family of the bride and the family of the groom and or the couple. Small touches in the food and the music remind the guests of the often diverse family make-up, and some traditions put down roots beyond specific communities.³³

One of the most important rituals of the wedding party in popular weddings is shaving the hair of the groom, and after that, he goes to the house to shower and prepare for the wedding party. One of the most important wedding rituals in popular weddings was to invite neighbors and friends to the groom to take a shower with them at home, and after he finished showering and putting on his wedding clothes, his friends carried him on their shoulders and greeted him in appreciation of him on his wedding day.³⁴

رشيد, بهيجة, صدقي. (2007), اغانى مصرية شعبية, جمعت الفاظها ودونت موسيقاها وترجمتها الى الانجليزية, 1958, ص8.

³³ Capo, A. L. (2013), *Wedding Traditions from Around the World*, November 15, AuthorHouse, p. 8.

غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *إفراح الغالية والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الاسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية, ص21.

During the interview with the elderly people of the villages of Al-Mata'na, one of the women said: On the wedding night, the barber was brought to the house to shave the groom and prepare him for his wedding day, and his sisters would continue singing and ululating to express their joy on their brother's wedding day. Then, the cars would come and the groom, along with the invited neighbors and friends, would move to the bride's house, take pictures, and their wedding night would begin.



Fig.7 Wedding night in one of the villages of Al-Mata'na
(Source: Photography by Mahmoud El-Desouki Ramadan,
Wednesday 3/11/1998)

One of the traditional habits is that on the wedding night, the girls would massage the bride, clean her, decorate her, and prepare her for the wedding night. After that, the bride would sit on the dais made of palm fronds, and they would beat the drums and dance until the groom came and celebrated with her in her white dress. (fig.7)

Weddings are a universal celebration of love and union, marked by rituals, ceremonies, and of course, sumptuous feasts.³⁵

Traditional wedding cuisine varies widely across different cultures and regions, reflecting historical, social, and religious influences. In many cultures, wedding are seen as an opportunity to showcase the best of culinary traditions, with elaborate menus featuring a mix of traditional dishes, family recipes, and festive delicacies. These dishes

³⁵ Chahal, R. S. (2024), *From Haldi to Honeymoon: A Journey through Indian Wedding Traditions*, Rana Book Uk, p. 9.

often hold deep cultural significance, symbolizing fertility, prosperity, and blessings for the newlyweds.³⁶

On the wedding night, the groom would invite his relatives, neighbors, and friends to dinner, which consisted of: meat, beans, potatoes, rice, molokhia, and meat-filled flatbreads. In the morning, the bride's family would send the groom's family lamb and pigeons, as well as trays of sweets such as basbousa and cake. The groom, in the midst of his party, is keen to pass through as many streets and squares as possible, and here one of the dignitaries or one of the bullies Swears on his father's head that they should go to him in order to eat anything and show his joy to them.³⁷



Fig.8 Wedding night in one of the villages of Al-Mata'na
(Source: Photography by Mahmoud El-Desouki Ramadan,
Wednesday 3/11/1 9 9 8)

The man who owns the place may not be satisfied with providing the duty of hospitality, but rather he is engaged in presenting the dance of the bullies, More than one man who happens to be in the same place may participate in this dance, They show the magnanimity of the children of the country to present their duty to the groom.³⁸

³⁶ Chahal, R. S. (2024), *From Haldi to Honeymoon: A Journey through Indian Wedding Traditions*, Rana Book Uk, p. 9.

³⁷ غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *إفراح الغلاية والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الاسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية, ص21

³⁸ غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *إفراح الغلاية والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الاسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية, ص21

On the morning of the wedding night, the bride used to go to the hairdresser for massage and grooming to prepare for the night of her life, which is the wedding night, and the joy of this day does not leave her face, Then you go to take a shower and get ready to wear the wedding dress (the wedding dress). After putting on the wedding dress, the women sing to her one of the famous folk songs that say (It-makh-tary ya hil-wa ya zena ya warda min guwa gnena يا اتمخطري يا حلو يا زينة يا وردة من جوا جنينة), this popular song expresses the beauty and grace of the bride.³⁹

Based on the observation of the researcher residing in the villages of Al-Mata'na, The bride's dress on the wedding night is white, as an expression of joy and to give her a royal appearance. The custom of the white dress goes back to Queen Victoria of Britain, who wore a light-colored satin dress on her wedding day, which prompted the girls to imitate her. (fig.8)

One of the most important traditional customs related to marriage was that the groom, during his wedding procession, was subjected to painless beatings of single young men believing that doing so would make them marry quickly. And the beating of the groom during his wedding procession by his friends did not represent his abuse or humiliation in front of the people, but rather the joy of his friends with him and with the aim of bringing blessings to them for marriage.⁴⁰

The ceremony of the marriage ceremony took place on a specific date, so that all relative would participate in the celebration of the marriage of the two, and the wedding night would be on Thursday, and everything that preceded that would be determined according to a traditional defined system.⁴¹

The shape of the wedding *koshah* in the past differed from the wedding *koshah* today the wedding *koshah* in the past was primitive and was very different from the wedding *koshah* at the present time .The wedding *koshah* was long ago prepared by placing two chairs on which the newlyweds sit, or a large table, or a sofa on which two chairs are placed on which the newlyweds sit, then the *koshah* is decorated with palm branches as an aesthetic view of the *koshah*. After they sit on the wedding *koshah*, music and dancing begins on

رياض، محمد. و عبدالرسول، كوثر. (2022)، *رحلة في زمان النوبة، دراسة للنوبة القديمة ومؤشرات التنمية المستقبلية*، الناشر الهنداوي، ص217.

رياض، محمد. و عبدالرسول، كوثر. (2022)، *رحلة في زمان النوبة، دراسة للنوبة القديمة ومؤشرات التنمية المستقبلية*، الناشر الهنداوي، ص217.

سنجر، أصلي. (2013)، *المرأة العثمانية بين الحقائق والاكاذيب*، الناشر دار النيل، ص68.

the municipal drum and folk songs that have a special character, then the mother of the groom and the mother of the bride sprinkle salt on the invitees in order to prevent the envious eye from harming the newlyweds because the eye causes many crises for the newlyweds, including the occurrence of non-reconciliation between them.⁴²

During the interview with the elderly from the villages of Al-Mata'na, one of the men said: On the wedding night, the groom would hold several nights on the occasion of his wedding day, such as the night of the popular palm, the local flute, and dancing to the tunes of the *rababa*.

The bride is carried to her husband's house in a wedding procession led by pipers and torchbearers, as we see now in our Egyptian countryside and our popular neighborhoods. At the door of the house, the bride pretends to refuse to enter the house, her husband represents the kidnapping process with her, and she screams and cries for help, so her family and friends pretend to defend her, and a mock battle takes place before her husband lifts her in his arms to bring her into his house.⁴³



Fig.9 Wedding koshah 1998, (Source: Photography by Mahmoud El-Desouki Ramadan, Wednesday 3/11/1998)

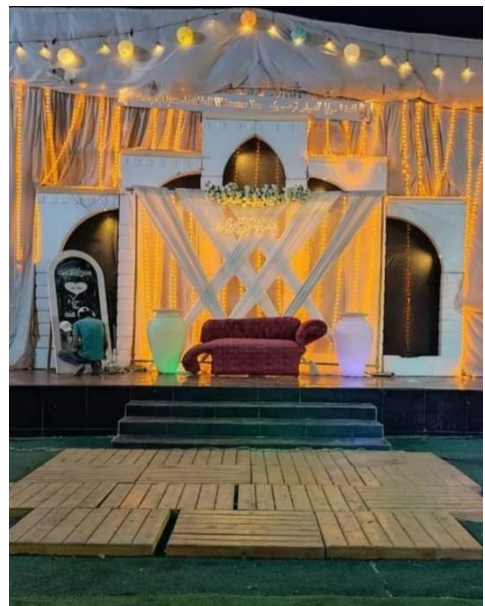


Fig.10 Wedding koshah at the moment, (Source: by researcher, 11/16/2024)

غانم, د/ محمد, حسن. (2007), *إفراح الغلابة والاكابر*, محاولة نفسية اجتماعية لرصد دافع الأسرة المصرية العربية المعاصرة, الناشر: مكتبة الأنجلو المصرية, ص22.

سركيس, عادل, احمد. (2021), *الزواج وتطور المجتمع*, الناشر وكالة الصحافة العربية, ص81

2.1. POPULAR TUNES IN THE WEDDING NIGHT:

. *It-makh-tary ya hil-wa ya zena ya warda min guwa gna*

(اتمخطري يا حلوة يا زينة, يا وردة من جوا جنينة)

. *ya ood oronfil ya aroosa will-ward(i) dal –lel a –lena*

(يا عود قرنفل يا عروسة, والورد ضلل علينا)

. *It-makh-tary wi-taali ganbi ya hil-wa fil-bad-lal-bambi*⁴⁴

(اتمخطري وتعالى جنبى يا حلوة فى البدة البمبى)

. *ya ood oronfil ya la fandi wil-wardi dal-lel a-lena*⁴⁵

(يا عود قرنفل يا لفندي والورد ضلل علينا)

In the end, we can say that the ceremonies celebrating popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na played a major role in making the people happy. They are ceremonies of a great heritage that remind us of the beautiful time that expresses the meaning of life.

The customs and traditions related to wedding ceremonies in the villages of Al-Mata'na are important as they represent part of the identity of its inhabitants. There are many changes occurring as a result of the desire of young people to modernize. Not all the old traditions in wedding ceremonies may be compatible with the current era, but some of them must be preserved to maintain the distinctive identity of the villages of Al-Mata'na.

This may come about by reviving these traditions as an intangible heritage and seeking to register them with UNESCO. This may be similar to what was done on Sohail Island in Nubia, where the old Nubian houses were revived with their bright colours and drawings, as well as the distinctive Nubian clothes and foods, and presented to tourists as a tourist product.

رشيد, بهيجة, صدقي. (2007), اغانى مصرية شعبية, جمعت الفاظها ودونت موسيقاها وترجمتها الى الانجليزية, 1958, ص8.

رشيد, بهيجة, صدقي. (2007), اغانى مصرية شعبية, جمعت الفاظها ودونت موسيقاها وترجمتها الى الانجليزية, 1958, ص8.

CONCLUSION

Through the study, the ceremonies celebrating popular weddings in one of the most important villages in the city of Esna, namely the villages of Al-Mata'na, were described and documented. These ceremonies include several nights, the most important of which is the henna night and the rituals that take place in it, and the nights that precede the wedding night, such as the popular palm and the local flute.

The popular celebrations in the villages of Al-Mata'na also included popular songs that are said on the henna night and the wedding night for the bride and groom. They represent a source of joy and happiness for them and their families. They are popular songs that have historical meaning and value and express the fragrance of history and memories of the good old days.

Marriage ceremonies are a custom acquired from the days of the ancient Egyptians. As we mentioned, marriage among the ancient Egyptians was a religious obligation, and there was a law regulating the marital relationship that outlined all the rights and duties of the spouses. Also, all the stages of marriage that are still in circulation today were acquired from our ancient Egyptian ancestors.

If the customs and traditions related to the wedding ceremonies in the villages of Al-Mata'na represent an important part of the identity of its inhabitants, and despite the many changes that have occurred as a result of the youth's desire for modernization, the traditional customs and traditions related to the wedding ceremonies are still stuck in the conscience of the people of the villages of Al-Mata'na and are still in circulation to this day.

Although these customs and traditions associated with the wedding ceremonies in the villages of Al-Mata'na are not compatible with the current era that depends on modernization, we must preserve some of them to adhere to the distinctive identity of the villages of Al-Mata'na. This may come about by reviving these traditions as an intangible heritage and seeking to register them with UNESCO.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- Seeking the documentation of the traditional wedding ceremony as an intangible heritage in UNESCO through addressing concerned association to initiate a project
- 2- Revive the traditional wedding as a tourist product following the Nubian Model in Suhail. This can include creating a museum or a

corner in one of the old houses in the villages of Al-Mata'na, including albums of photos of traditional ceremonies associated with weddings, such as the bride's clothes, the wedding *koshah*, and traditional wedding food and photos of the henna night ceremonies, the popular palm night, and the local flute. This can also include creating such ceremonies and practicing them for the tourist to feel an authentic experience.

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Appendix I

Interview Form

- 1- What are the most important ceremonies and customs associated with popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mataana in the city of Esna?
- 2- What are the most important ceremonies and customs performed on the henna night at popular weddings?
- 3- What are the most important rituals and customs that take place on the wedding night in popular weddings?
- 4- What was the shape of the wedding *kosha* in the weddings?
- 5- Why is henna poured all over the groom's body on the *Henna* night?
- 6- What is the style of the bride and groom's clothes in the popular weddings in the villages of Al-Mata'na?
- 7- What are the most important folk songs that are said in folk weddings?