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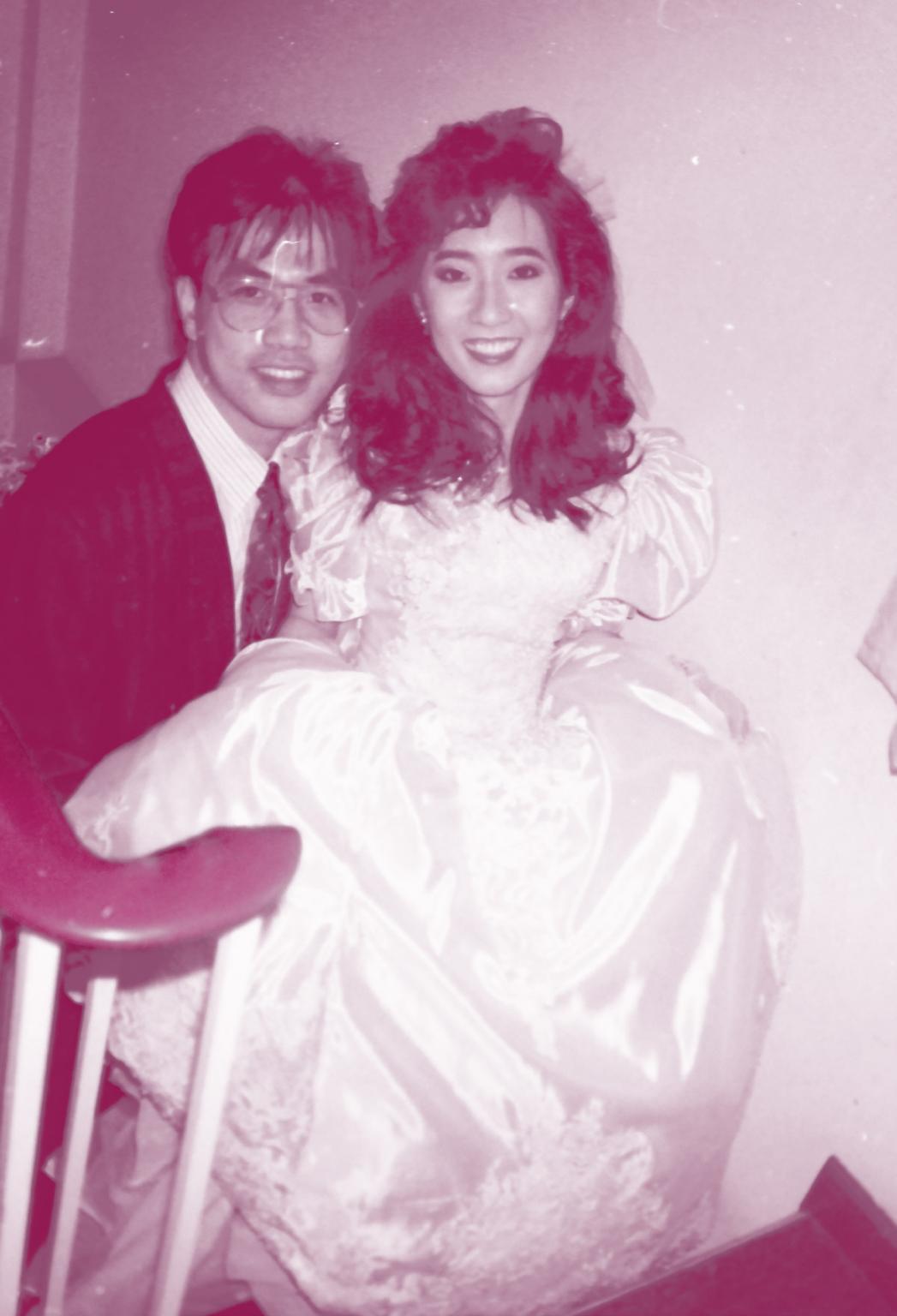
*Chinese and
Thai Wedding
Traditions*

中式婚禮
การแต่งงานแบบไทย

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Introduction

Wedding traditions have played a significant role in many cultures for centuries. They serve as a way to celebrate the union of two people and often reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the community. This zine is an individual project that developed from my interest in Chinese and Thai wedding traditions and cultures. As someone with Chinese and Thai heritage, I have always been fascinated by the symbolism and meaning that each tradition represents. Both of these countries have a rich history of practices that have developed over many years, with each culture having its own unique symbolism and customs.



img. Wallace & Sangnapa 1960: my parents' wedding in Thailand



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the exchange of gift at my parents' wedding in Thailand



img. Wallace & Sangnapa 1960: at my mother's family house in Thailand

Historical Background

Both the Chinese and Thai cultures have long-standing practices and customs related to marriage that go back multiple centuries. Every aspect of the wedding ceremony has changed over time and carries profound cultural significance. These cultures have progressed and changed over time from the historical context of these traditions and practices. This section will look at the origins, evolution, and cultural importance of Chinese and Thai weddings in a historical context.

歷史背景

Chinese wedding traditions have a rich historical background that dates back thousands of years. These traditions have evolved over time, with some practices remaining the same while others have changed to reflect modern times.

The origins of Chinese wedding traditions can be traced back to the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), where marriages were arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. The parents would consult with a matchmaker to find a suitable partner for their child based on factors such as social status, wealth, and astrological compatibility.

During the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), it is said that marriages were typically arranged by parents and matchmakers, multiple rituals were performed to ensure a successful union, and more emphasis was placed on the concept of "three letters and six rites" (三書六禮). The "three letters" referred to the proposal letter, gift letter, and wedding letter, while the "six rites" included the proposal, betrothal gifts, wedding gifts, setting the wedding date, welcoming the bride, and the wedding ceremony.

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), weddings became more extravagant, with more emphasis on customs and rituals. The bride and groom would wear elaborate clothing — the bride often wore a phoenix crown, and the groom would sport a dragon robe — and the wedding ceremony would involve several tradition-

al customs such as the bride's hair combing ceremony, the groom's capping ceremony, and the bride's procession to the groom's house.

In modern times, many Chinese wedding traditions have been adapted to reflect changing social norms and values. For example, while arranged marriages were once the norm, more Chinese couples are now choosing their partners through courtship and dating. Despite these changes, many Chinese wedding traditions still hold great cultural significance. Weddings are seen as a way of honoring and continuing family lineage, and they are often seen as an important milestone in one's life.



img. Marriage ceremony, Prosperous Suzhou by XuYang, 1759



img. The Empress Dowager Cixi and attendants on the imperial barge on Zhonghai, Beijing, 1903-1905, by Xun-ling

กูริลังกา/พระอาทิตย์

Thai wedding traditions have their roots in the country's rich cultural and religious history, with influences from Buddhism and Brahmanism. The earliest known Thai wedding ceremony dates back to the Sukhothai period in the 13th century, when it was a simple affair consisting of a water-pouring ritual and a community feast. Thai wedding traditions have been influenced by various cultural practices, including Hindu and Chinese customs.

Historically, marriages were arranged by the families of the bride and groom, with little input from the couple themselves, and matchmakers, and often involved a series of rituals and ceremonies that were spread over several days. Over time, Thai weddings have evolved to become more modern and less traditional, with more emphasis on the couple's personal preferences and desires. One significant change has been the rise of the concept of "love marriages", where couples choose to marry based on their feelings for each other rather than just familial arrangements. Despite these changes, many traditional elements remain in Thai wedding ceremonies.

In addition, Thai weddings are not just about the ceremony itself, but also about the customs and rituals that surround it. These ceremonies are designed to bring good luck, happiness, and prosperity to

the couple and their families, and also to honor their ancestors and the Buddhist beliefs that underpin their way of life. Culturally, Thai weddings are significant as they serve as a way to reinforce family and community ties, with the marriage union seen as bringing together not just two individuals, but two families. The ceremonies are also imbued with spiritual meaning, with the involvement of monks and religious rituals serving to bless the couple and ensure a harmonious union. From the pre-wedding ceremonies to the post-wedding celebrations, Thai weddings are a joyous occasion filled with love, laughter, and happiness.



img. Thai wedding ceremony: water pouring v

Cultural Symbols & Traditions

Symbols and traditions are an integral part of Chinese and Thai weddings, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of these countries. Each symbol and tradition carries significant meaning, representing values such as prosperity, luck, happiness, and good fortune. Understanding these symbols and their meanings is key to appreciating the depth of Chinese and Thai wedding ceremonies. In this section, we will explore some of the most commonly used symbols in Chinese and Thai weddings, from the use of red color to the significance of various ritual objects.

The selection of an auspicious wedding date is a crucial aspect of the planning process in Chinese wedding traditions. This practice is deeply rooted in Chinese culture, which places great importance on the influence of astrological signs and the lunar calendar on one's life. The couple and their families will consult a Chinese calendar to identify a date that is considered to be the most auspicious for their union. Factors such as the couple's birth dates, the alignment of the stars, and the Chinese zodiac signs of the couple are taken into consideration when selecting the wedding date. The chosen date is believed to bring good luck, happiness, and prosperity to the couple and their future together. It is not uncommon for couples to consult with a fortune-teller or astrologer to help with the selection of the most auspicious wedding date. This tradition reflects the deep-seated belief in the power of fortune and destiny in Chinese culture, and the importance of starting a new chapter in one's life with a positive and prosperous start.

To help you choose an auspicious date for your wedding, you can ask your parents or elders to select an auspicious date for you using a Chinese calendar or a Chinese almanac if they are superstitious. A typical Chinese calendar has the date printed in Gregorian and underneath it

is the date in Chinese. The bottom is a section for Feng Shui and astrology that state the good ("宜" or "yi"), favorable activities, and bad ("忌" or "ji") activities you should avoid on that particular day. Check the corresponding term for the following wedding events under "宜" or "忌":

"嫁娶" (wedding day)

"结婚纳采" (betrothal)

"安床" (matrimonial bed ceremony)

For the unfavorable day, the "忌" section will also list 吉事 (or "joyous event"), meaning that you should avoid all types of events that bring joy on that date. It is also important to note that "不宜諸吉事" (or "unfavorable time for all joyous events") under the "宜" section means that that specific day is not favorable for all joyous events.



img. Chinese Almanac Calendar



img. Chinese Almanac Calendar

The Double Happiness symbol is one of the most recognizable symbols associated with Chinese weddings. This symbol is comprised of two characters for happiness (囍) arranged side-by-side, representing the joyous union of two people. The double happiness symbol, “囍” (pronounced 雙喜) in Chinese is comprised of 喜喜 – two copies of the Chinese character 喜, which means joy and happiness. It's commonly used as a Chinese wedding symbol to represent double the joy and happiness for the newlyweds as they begin their marriage. The symbol has a long history and has been used in Chinese culture for centuries to represent good fortune, happiness, and harmony.

The most common places to incorporate the double happiness symbol into your wedding is in the wedding decor, invitations (especially if you're sending Chinese wedding invitations), and wedding favors. Since red and gold are the most popular and lucky colors in a Chinese wedding, many of the double happiness symbols are also decorated in red and gold to symbolize good fortune.



img. The double happiness symbol at a display of a Chinese wedding

The lotus flower holds significant cultural and spiritual symbolism in Chinese weddings. Known for its purity, beauty, and resilience, the lotus flower is a popular decorative element used in Chinese wedding ceremonies. It is often incorporated into the bride's bouquet or used as a centerpiece in the reception hall. The lotus flower's significance also extends to the bridal attire. It is not uncommon for the bride to wear a lotus-shaped hairpin or adorn her dress with embroidered lotus patterns to symbolize her purity and beauty.

The lotus (蓮花, 荷花) is known as the gentleman's flower because it grows out from the mud, pure and unstained. The “he” in a man's name indicates he is either a Buddhist or connected to Buddhism. The “he” in a woman's name is a wish that she be pure and respected. 蓮 sounds similar to 聯 (to bind, connect as in marriage); 戀 means to “love” while 廉 means “modesty”; 荷 sounds similar to 和 (also, one after another, uninterrupted). A lotus bloom with a leaf and bud symbolizes a complete union. Two lotus blooms or a lotus and a blossom on one stem represent a wish for a shared heart and harmony.



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the double happiness symbol at my parents' wedding in Hong Kong



img. Chinese wedding flowers: Lotus



img. Thai wedding flowers: Phuang Malai (พวงมาลัย)

In Thai wedding culture, the lotus flower (ເລືດສ) holds significant meaning beyond its aesthetic beauty. The flower is believed to represent the purity and enlightenment that the bride and groom will strive for in their married life. Known as ‘บัว’ or ‘buā’ in Thai, the lotus is among the most common native flowers of Thailand, playing an important role in everyday life, given its historic, cultural and religious significance. The lotus also symbolizes new beginnings, as the flower rises from muddy waters to bloom in its full beauty. During a Thai wedding ceremony, the lotus flower is often used as a decoration in various forms, such as a lotus-shaped floral arrangement or as part of the wedding garland, known as “Phuang Malai” (ພວງມາລ້າຍ). The bride and groom exchange Phuang Malai as a symbol of their union and commitment to each other.



img. Thai wedding flowers: Lotus (ເລືດສ)

The lotus flower is also incorporated into traditional Thai wedding rituals. In one particular ritual, known as the “Rod Nam Sang” ceremony, the couple pours scented water over the hands of their parents as a gesture of respect and gratitude. During this ceremony, a lotus flower is often placed in the water to represent the purity of the couple’s love and gratitude towards their parents. The lotus flower is an important symbol in Thai wedding culture that represents purity, enlightenment, new beginnings, and highlights the importance of spirituality and respect for tradition in Thai culture.

In Thai wedding culture, the use of white and gold colors is deeply rooted in tradition and symbolism. The color white represents purity, clarity, and innocence, which are important qualities in Thai culture. It is also associated with Buddhism, the predominant religion in Thailand, where white is often worn during religious ceremonies as a symbol of reverence and respect.

The color gold, on the other hand, represents wealth, prosperity, and good fortune. It is often used in Thai weddings to symbolize hope for a prosperous and abundant future for the couple. Additionally, gold is associated with the royal family in Thailand, as it was once used exclusively for royal garments and objects. Using gold in the wedding ceremony is thus considered a nod to Thai royalty and tradition.

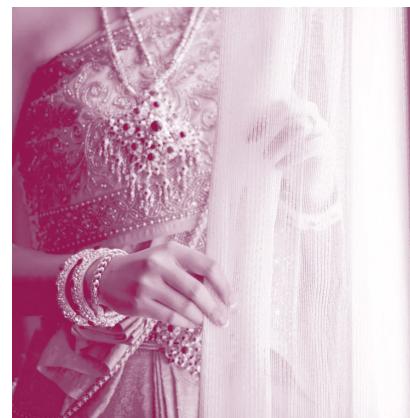


img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the flower display at my parents' wedding in Thailand



These colors are often incorporated into various elements of Thai wedding ceremonies, such as the bride's wedding dress, which is typically white or off-white, and the groom's traditional Thai wedding attire, which often features gold embroidery or accents. The wedding invitations, decorations, and even the food served at the wedding reception may also incorporate these colors.

Overall, the use of white and gold colors in Thai wedding symbols and traditions reflects the country's rich cultural heritage, beliefs, and values, and adds to the beauty and symbolism of this special occasion.



img. Use of white and gold colors on the bride's wedding dress



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the use of gold-colored decorations at my parents' wedding reception table in Thailand



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: tea ceremony (serving tea to my father's parents)

Wedding Ceremonies & Rituals

Weddings hold great importance in both Chinese and Thai cultures and are celebrated with age-old traditions and rituals. From the betrothal gifts to the exchange of vows, each ceremony is steeped in cultural symbolism and meaning. Over centuries, these ceremonies have evolved, and while some practices have adapted to modern sensibilities, they remain an essential aspect of these cultures. In this section, we will explore some of the unique ceremonies and rituals associated with Chinese and Thai weddings, shedding light on the rich cultural heritage and symbolism behind each practice.

The tea ceremony is a significant tradition in Chinese weddings, used to honor the parents and elders. This practice involves the newlyweds serving tea to their parents to express gratitude and respect and symbolizes the newlyweds' entrance into the family and their acceptance of their new roles as son-in-law and daughter-in-law. The order in which the tea is served is significant, with the groom's parents being served first, followed by the bride's parents. In turn, the parents offer the couple gifts and blessings, expressing their acceptance of the new union. The tea ceremony is a way for the couple to show respect and ask for blessings from their elders and is considered an important part of the wedding ceremony in Chinese culture. Additionally, the tea used in the ceremony is often a special blend of tea leaves, such as longjing (龍井) or pu'er (普洱), which are chosen for their auspicious meanings, such as long life, good health, and fertility. The tea ceremony is usually held before the wedding reception and can be performed in either the bride or groom's family home or at the wedding venue. It is considered a formal and intimate part of the wedding celebration and is often accompanied by traditional music or chanting.



img. Chinese tea ceremony



img. Modern Chinese tea ceremony

The exchange of betrothal gifts (過大禮) is an essential part of many traditional Chinese weddings. This practice involves the groom's family presenting gifts to the bride's family as a gesture of respect and appreciation, as well as to show the groom's sincerity in marrying the bride. Moreover, the bride's family receives the bride price (聘金) in red envelopes. The bride's family also returns (回禮) a set of gifts to the groom's side. Additionally, the bride's parents bestow a dowry (嫁妝) to the bride.

The selection of betrothal gifts varies by the ancestral regions of the bride and groom. In cases of intermarriage between various Chinese dialect speakers, brides typically follow the groom's ancestral traditions, not the other way around. The gifts are often in even numbers for the meaning of in couple and in pairs. Food items given to the bride include wine, oranges, and tea; while jewelry for the bride includes gold earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings. The betrothal gifts serve as a symbol of the groom's ability to provide for the bride and her family. The exchange of betrothal and dowry gifts symbolizes the merging of two families and the joining of two individuals in marriage and is considered an important step in the engagement process and serves as a way for the families to establish a relationship of trust and mutual respect.



img. Examples of modern betrothal gifts that are available for purchase online

The wedding procession is one of the most important rituals in Chinese wedding ceremonies. It represents the groom's formal request to the bride's family for her hand in marriage. The groom and his family arrive at the bride's family's home to pick her up and bring her to the groom's family's home. This tradition has been followed for centuries and is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture.

During the procession, the groom's family members carry red lanterns, which are considered to be symbols of good luck and happiness. The color red is highly significant in Chinese culture and is believed to bring good fortune and ward off evil spirits. The lanterns add a vibrant touch to the procession and are a sight to behold as they make their way through the streets.

The bride is typically accompanied by her bridesmaids and will often wear a red veil to hide her face until the groom removes it during the ceremony. This is con-



img. My father's family presentation of gifts to my mother's family

sidered to be a moment of great significance, as it symbolizes the groom's acceptance of the bride as his own. The act of removing the veil represents the groom's commitment to protect and care for his bride.

Overall, the wedding procession is an important and highly symbolic ritual in Chinese wedding ceremonies. It represents the coming together of two families and the start of a new chapter in the lives of the bride and groom.

In Chinese wedding ceremonies, the exchange of vows and rings is a modern addition that has been influenced by Western customs. During the ceremony, the bride and groom will exchange vows and rings in front of their family and friends as a symbol of their commitment to each other.



img. Traditional Chinese wedding procession



img. Modern Chinese wedding procession

The rings that are typically used in Chinese weddings are made of gold and feature intricate designs that are believed to bring good luck and fortune to the couple. In some cases, the rings may also be engraved with Chinese characters that have special meanings for the couple.

The exchange of rings is usually accompanied by the recitation of vows, which may be traditional or personalized to reflect the couple's unique relationship. The vows often include promises to love, honor, and cherish each other for the rest of their lives.

In some cases, the exchange of rings and vows may be preceded by the presentation of a gift or dowry from the groom's family to the bride's family. This gift is a symbol of the groom's commitment to providing for and supporting his new family.

The exchange of vows and rings is a significant moment in Chinese wedding ceremonies, representing the couple's commitment to each other and their shared future. The use of gold rings with intricate designs also reflects the importance of good fortune and prosperity in Chinese culture.



img. Exchange of vows at Chinese wedding

The Sai Monkhon ceremony is a significant part of the traditional Thai wedding rituals. It is an engagement ceremony that usually takes place before the wedding day, and it involves the couple exchanging engagement rings and receiving blessings from their parents and elders. During the ceremony, the couple sits on a stage, and the groom presents the engagement tray, known as "Khan

Maak" to the bride's family, which contains gold, jewelry, money, and gifts. The bride's family will then examine and bless the engagement gifts before placing the engagement ring on the bride's finger. The couple then receives blessings and well wishes from their parents and guests before officially becoming engaged. The Sai Monkhon ceremony is an essential step towards the wedding day, and it signifies the couple's commitment to each other and their families.

The wedding procession, known as the "Khan Maak" ceremony, is an integral part of Thai wedding rituals. It involves the groom and his family members walking to the bride's house bearing gifts and offerings. The ceremony is usually held early in the morning, and the groom and his family dress in traditional Thai attire.

The procession is led by the groom, who carries a small container filled with flowers and betel nuts. The betel nuts symbolize the groom's readiness to face any challenges that may come his way in married life. The rest of the groom's family members follow him, carrying trays of gifts and offerings for the bride's family.

As the groom and his family approach the bride's house, they are met by a group of young women who dance and sing to welcome them. This is known as the "Sai Monkhon" ceremony and is a symbol of good luck and prosperity. Once the groom and his family have arrived at the bride's house, they present the gifts and offerings to the bride's family. The bride then appears, and the groom offers her a garland of flowers as a symbol of his love and commitment to her. The Khan Maak ceremony is an essential and highly symbolic ritual in Thai wedding ceremonies. It symbolizes the groom's readiness to take on the responsibilities of married life and his respect for the bride's family. The ceremony also emphasizes the importance of family and community in Thai culture, with both families coming together to celebrate the union of the bride and groom.



img. My father ready for the "Khan Maak" ceremony at my mother's house



img. My father and his family with the gifts for my mother's family



img. My mother's family welcoming my father and his family



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: engagement ceremony in Thailand



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: receiving blessings from my mother's parents

In Thai wedding ceremonies, the exchange of vows and rings is a modern addition that has been influenced by Western customs. The exchange of rings is an important moment in the ceremony, as it symbolizes the couple's commitment to each other.

The rings that are typically used in Thai weddings are made of silver and feature intricate designs that are believed to bring good luck and fortune to the couple. The designs may include floral or geometric patterns, as well as traditional Thai motifs.

During the exchange of rings, the couple will typically recite vows that express their love and commitment to each other. The vows may be traditional or personalized to reflect the couple's unique relationship.

In some cases, the exchange of rings may be preceded by the "Rod Nam Sang" ceremony, in which the couple's parents pour water over their hands as a symbol of their blessings and good wishes for the couple's future. This ceremony is a traditional Thai custom that is still commonly practiced in modern weddings.

The exchange of rings and vows is a significant moment in Thai wedding ceremonies, representing the couple's commitment to each other and their shared future. The use of silver rings with intricate designs also reflects the importance of good fortune and prosperity in Thai culture.

The water pouring is the most important part of the Thai wedding ceremony as during this part the couple officially become husband (สามี) and wife (ภรรยา). Traditionally, this was all that was required to validate the marriage, but nowadays the couple is also required to obtain a marriage certificate (ทะเบียนสมรส) from the Amper or local registration office.

Before the water pouring can take place the couple must seat themselves at the traditional water pouring tables (ตักน้ำ), with the bride to the left of the

groom. They will each have a ceremonial headdress (มงกุฎ), made from one piece of cotton to signify the joining of the couple, placed upon their heads. The Mong Kol will have previously been blessed by the Buddhist monks earlier in the wedding. The couple will be fully prepared for the water pouring to commence once they place both hands (palms together), overhanging the water pouring table and positioned above flowers that have been arranged in a water tray, to capture the water that runs off.

This practice is believed to symbolize the couple's union and their commitment to each other. After the couple has completed this ritual, their parents and elders will pour water over the couple's hands and give them blessings for their future together. The water used in this ceremony is often scented with flowers and herbs to create a more pleasant and meaningful experience. The Water Pouring Ceremony is an important part of Thai wedding ceremonies and is a beautiful way to honor the couple's commitment and the importance of family and community.



img. Water pouring as part of a Thai wedding ceremony

The tying of strings, also known as Sai Sin, is a significant tradition in Thai wedding ceremonies. The elders of the family will tie white cotton strings around the wrists of the bride and groom in a figure-eight pattern. The strings are believed to symbolize the couple's union and connection, and they are worn by the couple for several days after the wedding as a reminder of their commitment to each other.



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: exchanging rings at my parents' engagement in Thailand

er. The Sai Sin is considered a sacred thread and is believed to bring good luck and fortune to the couple. The sai sin threads are usually blessed by monks or other respected figures before they are tied around the couple's wrists. The thread is believed to have protective and auspicious qualities that will bring good luck and ward off evil spirits. The thread is typically worn by the couple for a few days after the wedding, and then it is either untied or allowed to fall off naturally. Some couples may choose to keep the thread as a keepsake of their wedding day. The sai sin tying ceremony is an essential and symbolic part of Thai wedding traditions and is often performed alongside other cultural customs and rituals.



img-38. The tying of strings (Sai Sin) at a Thai wedding ceremony

The 'Rod Nam Sang' ceremony is a beautiful and significant tradition in Thai weddings. It is often held after the exchange of vows and rings, and before the reception. The ceremony involves the couple pouring water from a conch shell or a special vessel over the hands of their parents as a sign of respect and gratitude for their upbringing and support. The water is usually scented with flowers and herbs and sometimes includes gold or silver leaves. The parents will then offer their blessings to the couple, and the couple will receive gifts or money from their parents in return. The 'Rod Nam Sang' ceremony is a way for the couple to show their appreciation for their parent's love and guidance and to ask for their bless-

ings for their new life together. In some variations of the Rod Nam Sang ceremony, the water used is scented with flowers or mixed with holy water. This adds a spiritual element to the ceremony and is believed to bring additional blessings and good fortune to the couple and their families. The ceremony can also be accompanied by traditional Thai music and dance performances to add to the festive atmosphere.



img. The tying of strings (Sai Sin) at a Thai wedding ceremony



img. Wallace & Sangnapa : photograph of my mother wearing longfenggua and my father wearing a suit with my father's family (wedding in Hong Kong)



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: Photograph of my mother wearing a Western-style wedding dress and my father wearing a suit with my mother's family (wedding in Thailand)

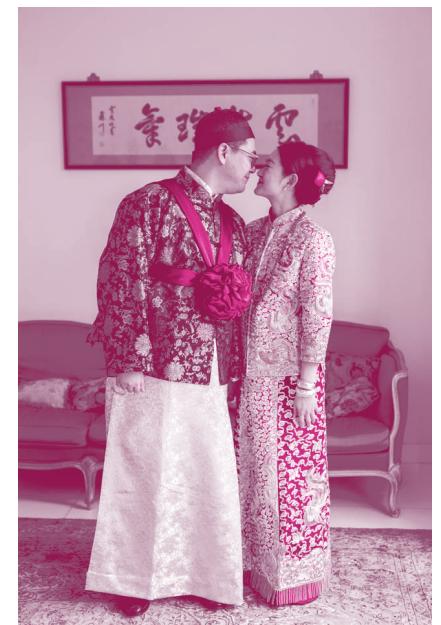
Traditional Attire

Traditional attire is an integral part of weddings in many cultures, and Chinese and Thai weddings are no exception. Both cultures have unique and rich traditions when it comes to wedding attire, with each garment carrying significant symbolism and cultural significance. In this section, we will explore the traditional attire worn by brides and grooms at Chinese and Thai weddings.

The traditional attire worn by the bride and groom in Chinese weddings is not only deeply symbolic but also significant in representing traditional beliefs and customs. The colors and designs of the garments play an important role in the wedding ceremony.

The traditional attire for Chinese weddings varies depending on the region and ethnic group, but some common elements exist. The bride typically wears a red qipao (旗袍) or cheongsam (長衫), which is a form-fitting dress with a high collar and side slits. The qungua (裙褂), also commonly known as longfenggua (龍鳳褂), is one type of two-piece ceremonial traditional Chinese wedding set of attire, which is composed of a jacket called gua (褂) and of a long Chinese skirt called qun (裙). The qungua is a type of Hanfu worn by Han Chinese brides and originated in the 18th century during the Qing dynasty. It eventually became the traditional wedding attire of Cantonese brides in the Guangdong regions. It is traditionally handmade and is decorated with dragons and phoenixes embroideries. Nowadays, the qungua is still popular as a wedding dress in China, including in Hong Kong and Macau. The color red is considered auspicious and symbolizes good luck and prosperity.

The groom usually wears a black or blue silk coat with auspicious symbols embroidery, along with black pants and shoes. The attire may also include accessories such as a jade pendant or a silk sash. In some regions, the bride may change into several different outfits throughout the wedding day, each representing a different stage of the ceremony.



img. The bride wears qungua (裙褂) and the groom wears a black silk coat with gold pants and black shoes

Another crucial aspect of Chinese wedding attire is the use of the phoenix and dragon symbols. The phoenix represents the bride and is often embroidered on her dress, while the groom's outfit may feature a dragon, symbolizing strength and power. The use of these symbols is believed to bring good luck and blessings to the couple.



img. The symbols of dragon and lotus flowers are embroidered onto the bride's dress

The attire of the wedding party and guests also play an important role in Chinese weddings. The parents of the bride and groom traditionally wear outfits that match the wedding color scheme, and the groom's family may also wear traditional clothing from their region of origin. Guests are expected to dress formally and avoid wearing white, which is a color associated with funerals.

It's important to note that in modern Chinese weddings, many couples choose to blend both traditional and modern el-

ements into their attire. For instance, the bride may wear a white wedding dress during the western-style ceremony and then change into a red qipao for the tea ceremony or reception.

In Thai weddings, traditional attire is a significant and symbolic aspect of the wedding ceremony. The attire reflects the country's rich culture and heritage, and the colors and designs hold deep meaning. Being that Thai people tend to be highly superstitious, it's also highly recommended to avoid wearing the color black at a wedding with the exception of a black jacket, black shoes, or black trousers.

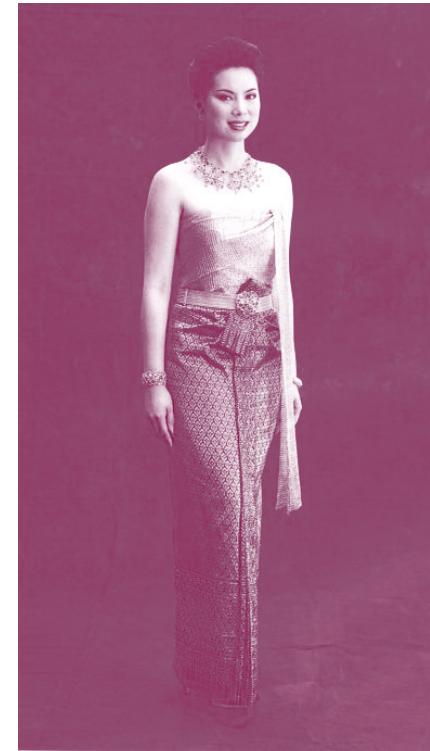
The traditional Thai wedding dress for the bride is called the "Pha-Thai", which is a long, form-fitting dress with a high collar and long sleeves. The dress is typically made of silk and is often embellished with gold or silver threads, sequins, or beadwork. The Pha-Thai is often paired with a "Sabai", a type of shawl that is draped over one shoulder and hangs down to the waist. There are several types of traditional chut Thai wedding dress styles for women, each comprised of different ensembles of various garments, jewelry, and accessories rooted in the past.

The traditional dress for the groom is called the "Chut Thai Phra Ratcha Niyom", which is a jacket and trousers made of silk or cotton, often in a matching color with the bride's dress. The jacket has a Mandarin collar and is typically worn over a white shirt. The outfit may also include a "Sabai", which is worn over the shoulder like a sash.

In addition to the traditional attire, many Thai couples also choose to incorporate elements of modern Western-style wedding attire, such as white wedding dresses for the bride and suits for the groom.



img. Thai Jakapati Style: this is a Royal Palace design in a 2 piece style with separate sabai which is extremely long



img. Siwalai style Thai wedding dress: a one-piece gown sewn together with two separate pieces of clothing using the tube skirt design and accompanying articles of clothing



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the seating arrangement at my parents' wedding in Hong Kong



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the reception at my parents' wedding in Hong Kong

Wedding Banquets & Feast

Wedding banquets and feasts are an important part of both Chinese and Thai wedding celebrations. They serve as an opportunity for families and friends to come together and share a meal in honor of the newlyweds. The food, decorations, and customs surrounding the banquet and feast often reflect the cultural traditions and values of the respective countries. In the following section, we will explore the significance and customs of wedding banquets and feasts at Chinese and Thai weddings.

座位安排

In Chinese weddings, the seating arrangement is highly important and often follows strict rules of hierarchy and seniority. The couple's parents and grandparents are typically seated at the center table, with the most important guests seated nearest to them. The number of tables can vary depending on the size of the wedding, with each table seating eight to twelve guests.

There is often a designated host or emcee who will guide the guests through the banquet, making introductions and leading toasts. The seating arrangement is carefully planned to ensure that each guest is seated with others of a similar age, status, or relationship to the couple.

In some Chinese weddings, the couple may also choose to have a "sweetheart table" where they are seated alone or with a small group of close friends. However, this is less common in traditional Chinese weddings, where the focus is on bringing families and communities together through the celebration of the couple's union.

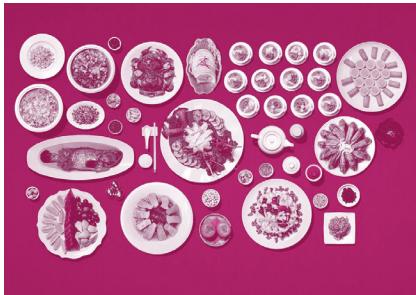
食品

A traditional Chinese wedding banquet features a multi-course meal that includes a mix of meat, seafood, and vegetable dishes. The menu often includes roasted pig, lobster, and shark fin soup, which are considered luxurious and symbolize prosperity and good luck. In addition, dishes like whole fish are often served, representing abundance, and dumplings are served to represent wealth, while noodles symbolize longevity.

Typically, Chinese wedding banquets include eight or nine dishes. The Chinese word for eight, 八, sounds like the word for good luck, while the word for nine, 九, sounds like the word for long. Serving eight or nine dishes is a way to invoke good luck and longevity for the newlyweds.

Toasting with alcohol is also common during Chinese weddings, and baijiu, a strong Chinese liquor, is a popular choice. Tea is also commonly served and is seen as a symbol of respect and hospitality.

Sweet treats such as red bean soup, sesame balls, and mooncakes are commonly served as desserts. Red bean soup is believed to bring good luck and happiness, while sesame balls represent wealth and prosperity.



img. Chinese wedding banquets

祝酒詞

Toasts is an important part of Chinese wedding banquets, with the bride and groom leading the way and guests joining in to offer their congratulations and well wishes. Typically, the first toast is made by the emcee or the couple's parents, followed by the bride and groom toasting each other. Then, the newlyweds will go from table to table, toasting with their guests and thanking them for attending. During the toasts, guests may offer words of advice, and blessings, or share anecdotes about the couple. It is common to toast with baijiu, a strong Chinese liquor, but tea can also be used as a non-alcoholic option. Toasts may be repeated several times throughout the meal, as a way to celebrate the occasion and show appreciation for the guests' presence.

婚禮禮物

In Chinese weddings, it is customary to give guests a small gift or favor as a gesture of appreciation for attending the wedding. These wedding favors are typically presented in small, decorative boxes or bags and may contain various items such as candy, tea, or small trinkets. The color red is often used in the packaging of these wedding favors, as it is considered a lucky color in Chinese culture.

The type of gift given as a wedding favor may vary depending on the couple's preferences and budget. For example,

some couples may choose to give traditional Chinese items such as fortune cookies or tea sets, while others may opt for more modern items such as personalized keychains or wine bottle openers. In some cases, couples may also choose to give charitable donations as wedding favors, as a way to give back to their community, or to a cause that is important to them.

การจัดที่นั่ง

Traditionally, the most important guests, such as the parents of the bride and groom and other elders are seated at the head table, while other guests are seated at round tables throughout the reception hall. In addition, it is common for guests to be seated with their respective families or social groups. The bride and groom usually have a separate table where they can sit together and receive guests. The seating arrangement is often carefully planned to ensure that guests feel comfortable and that everyone has a good view of the wedding ceremony and performances. The seating arrangement at Thai weddings plays a vital role in ensuring that guests feel welcomed and valued.

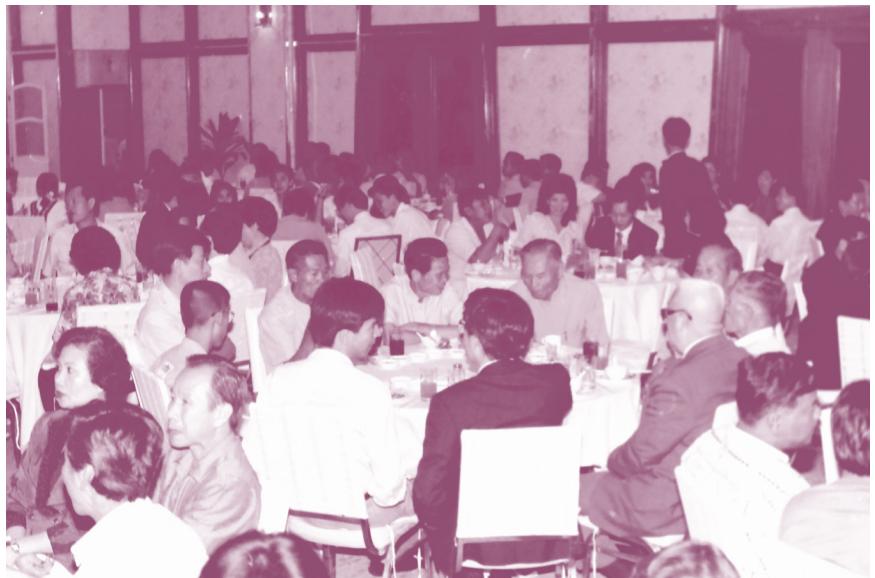
อาหาร

Thai weddings are known for their flavorful and spicy feasts that feature a variety of dishes served family-style. The focus is on creating a balance of flavors and incorporating traditional Thai dishes and regional specialties.

Traditional Thai dishes such as Tom Yum soup, Pad Thai, and green curry may be served, as well as regional specialties. Along with these dishes, traditional Thai drinks such as Cha Yen (Thai iced tea) and Nam Manao (lime juice) are served, as well as alcohol such as beer and whisky. A variety of Thai desserts may be served, such as sticky rice with mango, coconut custard, and Kanom krok (coconut cakes).



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: toasts at my parents' wedding in Hong Kong



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: toasts at my parents' wedding in Hong Kong

Thai wedding feasts do not typically feature symbolic foods, but instead, focus on creating a flavorful and balanced dining experience for guests. From traditional dishes to sweet treats, Thai wedding feasts are a true celebration of the country's culinary heritage.



img. Thai wedding feasts

คำอวยพร

In Thai weddings, the toasts are usually led by the parents or elders, and they are typically made to congratulate the couple and wish them happiness, prosperity, and longevity. The guests may participate in a tradition called "kaao tom mud". This tradition involves raising a cup of rice soup to toast the newlyweds. Guests will often make a speech and offer their congratulations during this time. In addition to rice soup, traditional Thai drinks such as ChaYen (Thai iced tea) and Nam Manao (lime juice) are served, as well as alcohol such as beer and whisky. It's worth noting that in Thai culture, excessive drinking is frowned upon, so the toasts are usually kept to a minimum.

ของขวัญแต่งงาน

In Thai weddings, it is customary to give guests a small gift or favor as a token of gratitude for their attendance. These wedding favors may range from decorative items such as candles or figurines to more practical items such as utensils or toiletries. One common Thai wedding favor is a small, intricately designed box or con-

tainer filled with traditional Thai sweets or candies. Another popular favor is a small bottle of fragrant Thai essential oils, which can be used for aromatherapy or as a natural air freshener. The presentation of these favors is often seen as an important aspect, with attention paid to the wrapping or packaging to ensure they look beautiful and elegant.



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: the reception at my parents' wedding in Hong Kong



img. Wallace & Sangnapa: my parents with their guest at the wedding in Thailand

Modern Adaptations & Changes

As with many cultural traditions, Chinese and Thai weddings have undergone changes and adaptations over time. With the influence of globalization and modernization, some couples have opted to incorporate more contemporary elements into their wedding ceremonies and celebrations. In this section, we will explore some of the modern adaptations and changes that have emerged in Chinese and Thai weddings. From creative venue choices to personalized touches, these changes reflect the evolving tastes and preferences of today's couples while still honoring the rich cultural heritage of these weddings.

Chinese and Thai weddings have evolved and adapted over time to reflect changing social, cultural, and economic realities. In modern times, there has been a shift towards more individualized and personalized weddings that reflect the personalities and preferences of the couple. This can be seen in various aspects of the wedding, such as the choice of venue, wedding attire, and ceremony elements. Additionally, there has been a trend toward simplification of the wedding process and a move away from more traditional and elaborate customs.

One significant change is the increasing popularity of Western-style weddings, which incorporate elements such as wearing a white wedding dress and exchanging rings. Many young couples also prefer to have a smaller and more intimate wedding ceremony and reception, as opposed to the large and extravagant ones that were once more common. Some couples in Thai culture would be choosing to have a Western-style wedding ceremony followed by a traditional Thai wedding reception.

Technology has also played a significant role in modern Chinese weddings. There has also been a growing emphasis on incorporating technology into weddings, such as using social media and digital platforms to share photos and updates

with friends and family. Social media platforms are commonly used to invite guests, share photos, and provide updates on wedding preparations. Some couples also use virtual reality technology to create 3D wedding invitations or to broadcast their wedding ceremony to friends and family who cannot attend in person.



img. Arlene & Bosco - Grand Hyatt Pool House and Four Seasons Hotel



img. Kerrie & Marcus - Bauhinia Garden, Kowloon Tsai Park

Destination weddings have become increasingly popular in both cultures. Many couples opt to hold their weddings in exotic locations and resorts, allowing them to combine their wedding with a vacation for themselves and their guests. This trend has given rise to the wedding tourism industry, with many hotels and resorts offering wedding packages and services to cater to this growing demand. There is also an increasing trend of destination weddings in Thailand, where couples from around the world choose to get married on the country's beautiful beaches or scenic locations. Regardless of these changes, both cultures still hold on to traditional customs and values that make their weddings unique and meaningful.

In addition to the changes mentioned earlier, the inclusion of same-sex weddings is a modern adaptation that has gained acceptance in both Chinese and Thai cultures in recent years. Same-sex weddings have become legal in some countries, and while they may not be ful-

ly accepted in some communities, it is gradually becoming more celebrated and acknowledged. While same-sex marriage is not yet legal in either country, some regions and cities have taken steps toward recognizing and accepting same-sex unions. Despite social and cultural stigmas, same-sex weddings are becoming more accepted and celebrated in both cultures, with many LGBTQ couples choosing to have their own unique ceremonies and celebrations. This shift towards inclusivity and acceptance represents a significant modern adaptation and change in both Chinese and Thai wedding cultures.



img. Farung & Andy in Bangkok, Thailand



img. Sevgi & Deniz chose Northern Thailand for their destination wedding





*an exchange of vows,
the start of a life together*