The Impact of Globalisation on Wedding Industry in Cairo

Eum, Ik-Ran
University of Exeter

I. Introduction
II. Globalisation and Its Consequences: Homogenisation, Particularisation and Hybridisation
III. Katb al-kitab (Registration of marriage)
   3.1. The segregated katb al-kitab
   3.2. The mixed katb al-kitab
IV. Preparations for the Farah
   4.1. Gender specificity and the preparation of the farah
   4.2. Wedding planners
   4.3. Wedding entertainment: zaffah, belly dancers, and DJs
V. The Farah: McDonaldisation of the Wedding Ceremony?
VI. Conclusion

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I. Introduction

Most weddings in Muslim society consist of two parts: the *katb al-kitab*, the ceremony at which the marriage is registered with the government, and the *farah*, the actual wedding reception, after which the couple is considered formally married through consummation. In general, the *katb al-kitab* occurs in the mosque or at the home of the bride's parents, either on the same day as the *farah*, or several months beforehand. The time gap between the *katb al-kitab* and the *farah* varies, and depends mainly on the preparedness of the couple's marital home. Official (governmental) registration of the marriage is completed once the marriage contract has been signed by the two parties under the supervision of the *maudhun*, the registrar of marriages. For the contract to be legally valid, it should be signed by five people: two representatives from each family, normally the groom from the groom's side and the bride's father from the bride's side, two witnesses from both families, and the *maudhun* himself.

As for the *farah*, unlike the past when it was usually held in the bride's house, it has now become fashionable for the middle- and upper-class in Cairo to hold the celebration in such luxurious venues as ballrooms in five-star hotels and the mess-halls in the Officers Clubs since the Sadat regime's *infithah* (Open Door) policy in the 1970s. From descriptions in Egyptian films and television programmes, weddings in Cairo seem to resemble weddings elsewhere as it incorporates a procession and the giving of a promise or vow which are normally

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2) *Maudhun* is a public officer who is authorised to register marriage. Only Azhar University graduates are eligible to execute marriage registration.

3) *Infithah* was a policy of political and economic reorientation based on Law 43 of June 1974. It aimed to open the door to the importation of foreign goods and capital, removed restrictions on Egyptian local investment, and led to the gradual withdrawal of the state from an active role in the economy (for more information, refer to Amin 2000). Its basic aim was to overcome Egypt's economic stagnation through measures that were designed to encourage foreign investment as well as to promote local private sector activity (for more information, refer to Owen and Pamuk 1998).
followed by singing and dancing. The outfits of the bride and groom are also very similar to those seen on brides and grooms in weddings elsewhere in the world. For example, the bride is dressed in a fairytale white wedding dress and veil, and carries a bouquet of flowers, while the groom wears a formal dark-coloured suit. During the procession, the father of the bride typically gives his daughter away to the groom. The couple processes to the reception hall escorted by young bridesmaids who are carrying candles. The ceremony of cutting the wedding cake is usually followed by the ritual in which the bride throws her bouquet to her unmarried friends who have attended the wedding. It would seem that weddings among middle- and upper-class Cairenes are similar in their styles and rituals to typical weddings that can be seen around the world.

These cliches of the typical western style weddings in Cairo started to grow in popularity under the earlier processes of modernisation and westernisation since several decades ago, and the local style of wedding today includes additional elements from globalised wedding ceremonies. These indicate the influence of easy Internet access and of foreign films and magazines, as well as the significant impact of Cairo's expanding wedding industry. Through these globalised communicative mechanisms, young couples learn about prevailing styles in wedding ceremonies around the world. However, as Amin argues, the growth of the wedding industry in Cairo has itself helped to change the nature of the wedding ceremony from a ritual of celebration to a commodity that can be purchased. He contends that the power to control the wedding has shifted from the families of the bride and groom to wedding managers, video-camera operators, and photographers, who direct the participants in a performance in which the bride, groom and guests play their various parts.

Certainly, from observations during my fieldwork period, the current wedding halls reminded me of a huge factory that kept on producing a newly-married couple every few minutes, especially during the weekend, according to a standardised and pre-designed wedding programme. It appears that the growth of the wedding industry depends on a
concomitant increase in the number of young couples holding extravagant, western-style wedding ceremonies. Ritzer refers to this paradigm of a social phenomenon as the McDonaldisation of a society. He argues that: the principles of the fast-food restaurants are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world. In his view, McDonaldisation, characterised by efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through technology, affects not only the restaurant business but also education, work, health care, travel, leisure, dieting, politics, the family, and virtually every other aspect of society. Taking Ritzer’s views into account, to what extent is the paradigm of McDonaldisation useful in understanding changes in rituals related to wedding ceremonies in Cairo today?

In order to response to the question raised here, as well as to examine changing patterns of wedding in Cairo, this paper investigates and compares the marriage patterns of two different generations: (a) that of the parents (i.e. those who married before infitah, Egypt’s Open Door policy under which more westernised and globalised consumption started to flourish in the 1970s) and (b) that of their children (who were currently of marriageable age or recently married). In terms of collecting data, I employed qualitative methods including participant observation, informal and unstructured interviews. Fifty four young people (23 males and 31 females) and 11 men and women from the parent’s generation (five males and six females) were interviewed during the period of my residence in Cairo from September 2001 to August 2003. For young people, the range of ages varies from the late teens, mostly students at the AUC, Cairo or ‘Ain Shams University, to people in their early thirties who are working after they finished their university education. Most men and women from the parent’s generation were married in the late 1960s or the early 1970s, and have working experience following a university education. The high levels of education and work experience of the men and women belonging to the parents’ generation can be traced to the availability of free education and the opportunity to find

work within the large public sector during the Nasser era, according to the fundamental policy of modernising Egypt and national development within the ideology of nationalism. My ethnographic approach included attending several group gatherings (both women only as well as mixed groups), the *katb al-kitabs* (wedding registration), and the *faraahs* (wedding reception). I also arranged several blind dates for the young people who sought for a potential marriage partner and accompanied several female friends, who were preparing for the weddings, to the shop where they selected their wedding dresses and to coiffeurs. It is informative to begin with consideration about various paradigms of globalisations in the following section in order to explore the impact of globalisation on wedding industry in Cairo.

II. Globalisation and Its Consequences:
   Homogenisation, Particularisation and Hybridisation

During the 1980s, the concept of globalisation was used with increasing frequency throughout various fields in the social sciences. Scholars from a range of different disciplines attempted to define the meaning of globalisation and to characterise its impacts on a given society. Giddens and Harvey, who have made significant contributions to building a theory of globalisation, refer to globalisation as time-space distanciation or time-space compression that conceives of a stretching and deepening process in the social interactions and relations of people.\(^5\) In other words, these processes refer to the conditions in which objects are separated from their original locations: thereafter distance is no longer a problem for communication between individuals.\(^6\)

As a result of time-space distanciation and time-space compression, goods, financial capital, people, knowledge, images, cultures, fashions, and beliefs from one part of the world may have significant consequences for

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individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe.\textsuperscript{7}) Consequently, globalisation is likened to a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend nation states in the contemporary era. However, my own view concurs with the opinion that globalisation is not, as many scholars have argued, a new phenomenon in terms of hybridity and interconnectedness of cultures, since cultures have intermingled and overlapped for centuries. Therefore, it is worth emphasising the point argued by Hannerz that, long-distance social and cultural interconnectedness may, indeed, have intensified and broadened its scope during the twentieth century, due in large part to new technologies of transportation and communication, but some ways it's as old as humanity itself.\textsuperscript{8)}

According to Giddens, globalisation intimately influences the life of an individual since it affects the in here in everyday life, rather than the out there, which is separated and remote from ordinary life.\textsuperscript{9)} However, globalisation has varying impacts on different individuals and groups, according to the degree of exposure to external influences, and also to the degree of willingness to accept them. This is usually determined by various factors such as class, gender, and religion. In addition, the personal preferences, norms and values that are framed within, and influenced by one’s own culture also play a significant role in what to exclude/reject and what to include/accept. In this respect, it is important to note that globalisation is not only imposed from the outside, but is also absorbed from inside.\textsuperscript{10)}

The impacts of globalisation on culture fall mainly into the three categories of homogenisation, particularisation, and hybridisation, according to the way the global and the local culture come into contact with each other.\textsuperscript{11)} First, homogenisation refers to the process of cultural

9) Giddens, 1999: 12.  
11) Even though a definition of these two terms is somewhat elusive, according to Smith (2001: 231), the global generally refers to the spatially-extensive social and cultural forces associated with globalisation (such as global consumerism,
integration within which people accept the standardised external culture and assimilate into it consciously or unconsciously. One example of homogenisation is the common tastes and lifestyles that can be observed among affluent middle- and upper-class around the world. According to this explanation, the cultural periphery or underdeveloped rest of the world will be expected to catch up with the cultural core or developed western world. On the other hand, it often appears that peripheral countries have been passive recipients of the dominant hegemonic culture imposed by cultural core countries. The homogenisation of culture is often used interchangeably with cultural imperialism, Coca-colonization, McDonaldisation, or neo-American imperialism. However, it is difficult to verify this position, considering that culturally promiscuous phenomena mix together in many areas of the world, both in the west and in less developed countries. It is not only the core culture that is globalising. The culture of the periphery has also begun to globalise, sometimes intruding into the centres of civilisation, both in terms of the movement of peoples and the movement of ideas. In this instance, distinctions between a cultural centre and periphery should be treated cautiously. Indeed, it may be even more helpful to view the exchange of cultural influences as ambiguous and fluid between the core and the peripheral.

A second approach to understanding the impacts of globalisation is particularisation. According to this perspective, individuals and groups adhere to their own cultural traditions and resist the trend of globalisation. From this point of view, individuals and groups keep their culture closed, intact, homogenous, unified within, maintaining the strongly-marked boundaries separating it from others. They seek to return to their roots or origins, thereby, romanticising their traditional values. Anti-globalism, cultural fundamentalism, and cultural

satellite communications, culture industries, and migration), while the local refers to small-scale, geographically confined traditions and ways of life (such as ethnic traditions, language, and religion).

nationalism\textsuperscript{15}) are included in this category. However, it is also difficult to grasp the meaning of tradition, since tradition is subjectively determined according to time and people’s beliefs which respond sensitively to political situations. In this outcome of globalisation, people may be striving to maintain a politically or a culturally invented notion of imagined myth of their assumed--original--culture.

Finally, the third approach to understanding outcomes from the impact of globalisation on culture is through the notion of hybridisation. Hybridisation, which refers to a process of intermingling and articulating of the global and the local culture, leads to a new third culture that is related but does not approximate to the original indigenous cultures.\textsuperscript{16}) Welsch’s transculturality concept of culture, in which he tries to define the traits of current cultural phenomena, is similar to the concept of hybridisation. He argues that, cultures of today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other; there is no longer anything absolutely foreign, accordingly, there is no longer anything exclusively own either. Cultural cosmopolitanism and the creolisation of culture, which both refer to the articulation of different cultures, are included in this category.

Taking these paradigms of globalisation into consideration, this paper aims to explore how the current Cairene wedding style can be identified: in other words, how far is the current Cairene wedding pattern homogenised with global styles of wedding ceremony? Alternatively, how much do Cairenes follow their traditional or authentic style of wedding ceremony? If characteristics of both the global and the local wedding styles are intermingling, how or to what extent do they negotiate with each other? In order to answer these questions, I examine how

\textsuperscript{15}) Unlike political nationalism, which seeks a representative state and secured citizen rights, cultural nationalism aims to regenerate the national community by creating, preserving, or strengthening a people’s cultural identity. Cultural nationalists regard the nation as the product of its unique history and culture and seek a collective solidarity. In short, cultural nationalism is concerned with the distinctiveness of a cultural community as the essence of a nation (Yoshino 1992:1).

\textsuperscript{16}) Hall 1995: 193.
traditional aspects of weddings in Cairo have evolved into more contemporary forms by comparing various processes of Cairene wedding preparation between the parents’ generation and those of the current young people. The paper therefore outlines processes of Cairene wedding ceremony, from the *katb al-kitab* to the *farah*, as well as various wedding preparation processes. My analysis, however, extends as far back as Lane’s notable book, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, first published in 1836, which describes 19th century wedding rituals in great detail.

### III. *Katb al-kitab* (Registration of marriage)

In the past, *katb al-kitab*, the formal and official registration of marriage, typically took place in the home of the bride’s parents and was mediated by a *maudhun*. It is often called ‘*aqd al-nikah* (knotting of the marriage) in the sense that the registration procedure binds the two families together.\(^{17}\) Lane describes the *katb al-kitab* of his time as follows:

> It is necessary that there be two witnesses (and those must be Muslims) to the marriage-contract, unless in a situation where witnesses cannot be procured. All persons present recite the Fat’hah, and the bridegroom then pays the money. After this the marriage-contract is performed. It is very simple. The bridegroom and the bride’s wekeel sit upon the ground, face to face, with one knee upon the ground, and grasp each other’s right hand, raising the thumbs and pressing them against each other. A fikee is generally employed to instruct them what they are to say. Having placed a handkerchief over their joint hands, he usually prefaces the words of the contract with a khutubeh, consisting of a few words of exhortation and prayer, with quotations from the Kur-’an and Traditions on the excellency and advantages of marriage. He then desires the bride’s wekeel to say, I betroth [or marry] to thee my

\(^{17}\) Antoun, 1972: 122.
daughter [or the female who has appointed me her wekeel], such a one [naming the bride], the virgin [or the adult virgin], for a dowry of such an amount. (The words for a dowry, etc., are sometimes omitted.) The bride's wekeel having said this, the bridegroom, prompted in the same manner by the fikee, says, I accept from thee her betrothal [or marriage] to myself, and take her under my care, and bind myself to afford her my protection; and ye who are present bear witness of this. The wekeel addresses the bridegroom in the same manner a second and a third time, and each time the latter replies as before. They then generally add, And blessing to be on the Apostles, and praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures. Amen after which all present again repeat the Fat'hah. It is not always the same form of khatubeh that is recited on these occasions; any form may be used, and it may be repeated by any person. It is not even necessary, and is often altogether omitted. The contract concluded, the bridegroom sometimes (but seldom, unless he be a person of the lower orders) kisses the hands of his friends and others there present; and they are presented with sherbet, and generally remain to dinner. Each of them receives an embroidered handkerchief, provided by the family of the bride, excepting the fikee, who receives a similar handkerchief, with a small gold coin tied up in it, from the bridegroom. Before the persons assembled on this occasion disperse, they settle when the leylet el-dukheh is to be. 18)

In the katb al-kitab ritual, once the contract is signed, the couple are announced as being legally husband and wife. Even so, they do not live together until they have had the farah. Today, the katb al-kitab is typically held in the mosque or clubs rather than in the home of the bride's parents. Otherwise, very little has changed over time, with respect to the current katb al-kitab. 19) If we compare Lane's description

18) Lane, 1989 [1836]: 164-5.
19) See Antoun (1972) and Prothro (1991) who describe the katb al-kitab in a Jordanian village in the 1960s and a Lebanese village in the 1970s respectively. The katb al-kitab seemed to be carried out in a similar form in the Middle East regardless of differences of time, rural/urban environment, and region,
with the current style of the katb al-kitab, the latter remains more or less the same as the one carried out almost two centuries ago.

In today’s Cairo, however, there are two ways of performing the katb al-kitab ceremony. In one type, which is more traditional, men and women are segregated during the ceremony. In the other modern/contemporary type of katb al-kitab, the sexes are mixed. Below I describe both ways of performing the katb al-kitab. Even though the form remains the same in those carried out in the past and in the present, as well as in the segregated and in the mixed types, I will briefly sketch the styles of both the segregated and the mixed katb al-kitab in order to describe what I, as a female researcher, had missed in the former, segregated, katb al-kitab.

3.1. The segregated katb al-kitab

When I arrived a mosque in Heliopolis to attend the katb al-kitab of a 25 year-old bride, I was politely asked to use the entrance for females only. The particular mosque where the katb al-kitab was being held had been chosen by the groom on the basis of his acquaintance with the sheikh. I waited outside the mosque to greet the bride and groom. After a while, the arrival of the bride and groom was announced by the women uttering the high-pitched zaghariyad (a trilling sound made by Arab women to indicate joy). The bride wore a one-piece, ankle-length white silk dress and her hair was covered by a veil. She also wore the shabkah (betrothal gift given from the groom’s side to the bride) that had been given by the groom before the katb al-kitab ceremony. The groom wore a dark-coloured formal suit. The lights of a video camera and the clicking of cameras tracked their movements. As soon as they had exchanged greetings with the waiting guests, they approached the mosque using a different entrance. I followed a group of women guests into the female-only area of the mosque.

The ceremony began once the male group had finished the ‘asr (afternoon prayers). As soon as the prayers ended, the sheikh began to
give his sermon in the men’s space and it was relayed through a microphone to the women’s space. Since the interior of the mosque was strictly divided into the men’s and women’s areas, I was prevented from knowing anything about the events taking place on the men’s side apart from the sheikh’s sermon which was transmitted through a speaker hanging on the ceiling. The sheikh spoke of the sacrament of marriage, of the duties of the wife and husband, and their mutual respect. The women in the females’ part of the mosque seemed to be more interested in chatting and gossiping than in listening to the sheikh’s speech.

While the sheikh was giving his sermon, a maudhun came over to the women’s space, accompanied by a cameraman and a video-camera man. He brought three copies of the marriage contract with him, which would go respectively to the bride’s side (the bride’s father usually keeps the contract), the groom, and the maudhun to enable him to register the marriage formally in the courts. The bride put her fingerprint on the contract where her photos were affixed, and as soon as she had completed her identification on the contract, several women made zaghariyd, and they all exchanged hugs and kisses with the newly-married bride. Bonbonnieres containing chocolates\textsuperscript{20} as well as Pepsi were distributed to the guests. Each guest also received a small bag as a gift from both the families, in which there was a cassette tape about marriage and two pocket-sized books. One book was about how to be a good Muslim, and the other was about how to make the wife happy, which went to the male guests, whereas how to make the husband happy went to the female guests. The bride’s sister indicated after the ceremony that the idea of distributing small presents to the guests had been the bride’s, and was intended to express their religious values to the guests, as well as to make a good impression of their own

\textsuperscript{20} Usually gold foil-wrapped chocolate coins are served at wedding festivals including the katb al-kitab and farah. According to Morgan (1995), this tradition relates to the evil eye beliefs. Avoiding the evil eye entails circumventing the envy of friends, relatives or neighbours, and the habit of distributing gold coins during the wedding is intended to draw the eyes and attention of the guests from the bride.
katb al-kitab on the guests. Afterwards, as I was told, the two families headed to the bride's house for dinner.

3.2. The mixed katb al-kitab

At another katb al-kitab that I attended at a mosque in Nasser City in Cairo, men and women mixed freely. Before the ceremony took place, people exchanged greetings with each other. The ceremony began when the representatives of the two families taking part in the signing of the marriage contract had taken their seats at a long table. There were the two witnesses from each family, the groom, the madhun, the bride's father, and the bride. Each took it in turn to sign the marriage contract. Once the signing was finished, the sheikh addressed the guests, stressing the holiness of the marriage. As soon as the sheikh finished his speech, and according to tradition and custom, the bride's father and the groom made an oath, with their hands clasped and their thumbs pressed together under a clean white handkerchief placed in position by the sheikh. The father and the groom repeated after the sheikh one of the important forms of marriage, the ijab (response or offer: I marry you to my daughter.) and the qbul (acceptance: I have agreed to marry her.). This exchange of vows was followed with a recitation by the sheik of verses from the Qur'an, which were repeated again by the bride's father and the groom, and then by the guests. The handkerchief was then removed by the sheikh, although sometimes, traditionally, it may be whisked away by a single man for good luck in his own marriage.21) The joyful zaghariyd by women followed, and then Pepsi and some bonbonnieres were distributed to the guests, who offered congratulations to the hosts before leaving. While the guests were leaving, the bride and the groom took photos to commemorate the day. They also exchanged kisses.

The katb al-kitab rituals performed in Cairo generally take the

following order. In the two styles of *katb al-kitab* described above, the form of oath performed between the groom and the bride's father remains the same as that practised in Lane's time in the 19th century. The only difference between the two styles is that women and men are kept separate. Today, the style of the *katb al-kitab* is chosen according to the preference of the couple or the families. The intention is to have either a traditional and religious style of registration or a modern and decent one. Apart from individual preference, what also distinguishes the ceremonies is personal taste, as shown in the former example of *katb al-kitab*. The bride came to the mosque with the idea of distributing small presents to the attending guests, in order to make her own wedding ceremony unique as well as to impress the guests. However, distributing gifts to the guests who attend on the day of *katb al-kitab* is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it is a long-standing tradition as described by Lane in his observation about the distribution of gifts of handkerchiefs to those at the *katb al-kitab* ceremony.

It is also noteworthy that, on the day of the *katb al-kitab*, although the bride's consent is essential, the presence of the bride's father is especially significant, because of the legal and religious terms on which he signs the marriage contract as a *wali* (a guardian), and also from a socio-cultural perspective, since his presence honours the bride and the family, is also an honour for the father himself. Two quotations from Morgan indicate the significance of this: It is a way for her to show her appreciation and respect for her father, and She can never, out of her love for him, deprive him of that privilege.22)

As soon as the couple has completed *katb al-kitab*, the couple and the families involved in preparation for the *farah*. *Farah* refers to the wedding reception. After the *farah* celebration, the couple is expected to consummate their marriage and *de facto* they become husband and wife. The details will be examined in the following section.

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22) ibid., 1995: 38.
IV. Preparations for the *Farah*

4.1. Gender specificity and the preparation of the *farah*

The *farah* usually starts at night and continues into the early morning of the following day. The expenses associated with the *farah* vary according to the level of venue, the food, and the employment of entertainers such as a disc jockey, a belly dancer, a singer, a comedian, ballet groups, a *zaaffah* group (musicians who play for the wedding procession), and bands. Occasionally, the organisation of the party generates heated debates between the families of the bride and groom, since these issues are related to the pride and reputation of the family, as well as offering certain topics for gossip among guests, families, neighbours, and friends. Two families may disagree over the way the party is organised, how much the family spends on the *farah*, especially in terms of the types of entertainment for the guests, the food, and where to hold the *farah*.

Interestingly, a gender–specific notion is observed during the preparation of the *farah* concerning the degree to which each family is involved in the preparation, as well as ritually–related consumption patterns. While the bride herself and the bride’s family are more concerned with the careful organisation of the *farah*, and actively participate in the preparations, the groom and his family are less active in the organising, as Dalia, a 26 year–old woman who had recently married explained: I planned everything and took all the responsibility for organising the wedding since Wael [her husband] was very busy working. I read some magazines and catalogues for the wedding dress and other stuff. This gender–specific notion of *farah* preparation may result from the idea that the wedding day itself is traditionally referred

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23) All names mentioned here are pseudonyms in order to protect my informants’ privacy.
as the bridal day. Fatima, who had married three years previously, recalled her farah: We had a big party with famous singers, a belly dancer, and a ballet group. I’m the only daughter in my family and my parents dreamt of making me a queen that day. It’s also the dream of all girls.

Men agree that the wedding day is more important for the bride. However, some men express uneasiness about having a big farah as Muhammad, a single 33 year-old man working for a multinational company admitted: I don’t want big wedding like other people have. It’s stupid. I can spend the money more constructively, for instance by going abroad for the honeymoon. But how can I stop her? If she wants it, I’d have to agree. When I organised a blind date for Husam, a 34 year-old man, his response with regard to the farah was similar to Muhammad’s view: Okay, great, but I’ve one condition for marriage and you should talk to her about this. I don’t want a big wedding. I’ll just have a small party for friends and relatives. I’m going to take a honeymoon trip abroad instead.

As a whole, it appears that while women are more likely to be concerned about having a sumptuous wedding reception and will organise for it, men are not only less involved in making decisions about the details of the farah, but they are also less interested in spending the wedding budget on a big wedding reception. Instead, they prefer to spend in a more practical way such as having a honeymoon abroad. However, this gender-specific attitude during the wedding preparations goes beyond cultural specificity and seems, rather, to be a general trend. Through their research, Lowrey and Otnes explored the different ways that middle-class American men and women engaged in ritual wedding consumption and wedding planning. The found that most grooms appeared to focus on the reception rather than the wedding ceremony for communicating fellowship at the reception, whereas brides tended to sacralise the wedding ceremony by communicating their place in the spotlight during the actual ceremony.24) Lowrey and Otnes identified

three reasons on which to base their interpretation of this phenomenon. First, the traditional point of view regards a wedding day as the bride’s day, designed mainly for displaying the bride. Lowrey and Otnes argue that brides and grooms both recognise that socialisation often leads to the wedding day being regarded as the day for the bride. Secondly, they maintain that the material goods and artifacts related to the wedding date such as music, flowers, food, a wedding dress, photographs, rings, etc. are generally typed as feminine and fall into a domestic sphere of existence since these goods are issues of more concern among women. Lastly, they explained that issues of power and control, that are tied to the source of money for the wedding, also play a significant and fundamental part. They saw that in most traditional weddings in America, the bride’s parents paid for the majority of purchases for the wedding. Even though this last point is not applicable in the case of weddings in Cairo insofar as the groom’s family, not the bride’s, is the source of money, it is important to note that in general the bride’s side is the actual party that participates in payment activity with the money given by the groom’s side during the preparation period for the farah. This partly suggests the feminised space of wedding preparations.

4.2. Wedding planners

Customarily, mothers, along with the bride’s sisters and female friends who had experience of marriage, helped to plan the farah. Today, however, young men and women discuss their wedding plans with the professional wedding planners employed by hotels and clubs. Exclusive hotels offer a range of services to couples who are getting married. These services include a buffet that can be tailored to different budgets. The price of a set buffet starts from thousands and rises to tens of thousands of Egyptian pounds per hundred people, and additional charges are made based on the number of extra guests.

Apart from catering, hotels also provide various kinds of entertainment
services for the *farah*, including a *zaffah* group, oriental dancers, comedians, a videographer, a photographer, and a DJ, as well as special equipment for the wedding party such as laser beams and smoke machines to create special effects during the wedding reception. Some hotels supply free gifts to the bride and the groom, including several nights in a luxury suite in the hotel, a *khosha* (a wreath or flower-decked chair for the groom and the bride), *sharbat* (a syrupy drink traditionally served at weddings), and floral decorations in the hotel corridors.

Magazines are also useful source of consultation for a couple planning a memorable wedding. As well as internationally-circulating magazines, nowadays there are English versions of local magazines that sometimes include special features on planning special weddings and honeymoons for a couple. Invariably, many of these emphasise how a couple can organise a glamorous reception. The articles include the addresses and telephone numbers of wedding planners, flower shops, dressmakers, invitation card producers, make-up artists, hairstylists, travel agencies, wedding photographers, videographers, and entertainers, including singers, bands, belly dancers, and DJs, as well as month-by-month ideal step guidelines to help young people to create the wedding they wish for.

In order to seek additional advice, young couples today explore wedding websites to optimise their choices for organising their wedding. These websites are typically in English only, implying that only educated middle- and upper-class couples will gain information from the websites. I met two women who were about to open a new website devoted to organising weddings. Both of them, who were students at the AUC, described their business motivation and plans in detail:

Student 1: The reason we created this website is because Dot-com companies are booming here in Egypt. You can’t imagine! I have one friend who opened a website related to recruitment and it was sold after one year, leaving him with a large fortune. The idea was very shocking to me. In addition, I love working on the computer and I wanted to use what I have learned from the AUC. I found we
did not have any websites related to the wedding-like wedding planning in Egypt. We have four wedding websites in Egypt that opened at the same time.\textsuperscript{25}) However, they are not just for planning weddings but are sites for wedding item suppliers. We also plan the wedding party within the budget that the bride and the groom propose. I can manage a wedding from E1,000 to E10,000.\textsuperscript{26})

Student 2: Marriage here in Egypt has a significant meaning in terms of keeping family and social structures intact. This influenced my decision to create a website devoted to planning weddings. The target group is people from the middle or middle and upper classes, and the targeted age is from the early 20s to 30s. They are the people who can afford to use the Internet. However, nowadays since the Internet first appeared in the early 1990s the cost of using it has become much cheaper (5Egyptian pounds per hour). Thus, a lot of people have easy access to the Internet.

She went on to describe the website:

It has several sections including information on wedding dresses for the bride, suits for the groom, information on make-up and hair, information on furnishing the new home for the couple, advice for the day of wedding, places to have the wedding ceremony such as hotels or villas, and so on. Nowadays rather than being held inside five-star hotels a wedding often takes place in the hotel garden, because people have more room to relax outside, and they can enjoy the outdoor decorations as well. The website gives advice about entertainment such as introducing singers, comedians, dancers, and DJs. However, instead of singers and dancers young people these days are fond of hiring a DJ because he can

\textsuperscript{25}) Examples of websites devoted to wedding planning include http://www.weddingegypt.com.

\textsuperscript{26}) One US dollar was equivalent with approximately 4.6 Egyptian pounds at the time of my research from September 2001 to August 2002.
choose decent songs for the wedding, both western and local.

Like magazines, websites include step-by-step guides to help the young couple in Cairo to plan the wedding. For instance, it is suggested that the couple begin preparations for the wedding at least six and up to 18 months in advance of the wedding. The many things that the couple is advised to do in that time include shopping for the wedding rings; hosting the engagement party by the bride’s family; identifying the possible wedding date; drawing up the preliminary guest list; and formulating a preliminary budget. After the date is established, they are advised to book a venue for the reception; hire the photographer and videographer; hire entertainers for the ceremony; arrange for the formal wear for the wedding; and choose the bridal accessories; make reservations for the honeymoon; and consult with the hairstylist and the make-up specialist.

Since weddings have become more commercialised as a result of the emergence of the wedding industry, it is also significant to mention that the traditional role of the mother in planning for the wedding appears to have diminished. It can also be seen that weddings have become events that showcase and accentuate class differences, since they send a clear message about a family’s status as well as the identity of individuals. Thus the growth of the wedding industry is fuelled almost entirely by the desire of middle- and upper-class Cairenes to have extravagant wedding receptions. The innumerable models provided by cinema and television have also enabled the Cairene middle- and upper-class to organise weddings in emulation of those who are perceived as better than they are. Generally speaking, therefore, it is evident that, as a result of seeking advice from wedding planners, the Internet, and internationally-circulated magazines, as well as English versions of local magazines, there is a strong shift towards a preference for weddings that are global in their style and rituals.
4.3. Wedding entertainment: zaffah, belly dancers, and DJs

Traditionally, Egyptian weddings were festive, and entertainers such as dancers, singers, and musicians would amuse the guests who attended the wedding as well as the families who hosted the occasion for several nights. Today, however, entertainment at weddings has become commercialised with the emergence of the wedding industry in Cairo, and with the expectations of the nouveaux riches who want to meet their westernised and globalised tastes. In modern Cairo, for example, wealthy families hire expensive entertainers for the farah to entertain but also to impress the guests with their wealth. Types of entertainers include bands, belly dancers, DJs, zaffah groups for the wedding procession, and comedians. Sometimes entertainment is included in the wedding packages on offer at hotels, clubs, and military defence halls. This section will look particularly at the zaffah groups who play music and sing songs for the wedding procession, and at belly dancers and DJs.

According to Lane’s description of 19th century wedding-related rituals, various processions took place before to the wedding night. These included the zaffah al-hammam (the bride’s procession to the bath), the zaffah al-ghibaz (procession of the furniture), the zaffah al-arusa (the bridal procession), and the zaffah sadaate (the gentlemen’s procession).27) Generally, however, the zaffah al-arusa seems to have been more important than the other processions. This procession saw the physical transfer of the bride to her new residence and involved an escort of dancers and musicians through the public streets from her parent’s home to the home of the groom, where the marriage was consummated.28)

The role of the zaffah was to proclaim publicly the legal union of the couple and the approval of the families for the marriage by way of loud

27) Lane, 1836: 165-72.
songs, various musical instruments, and dancing. However, under the modernisation process, the traditional ways of zaffah were regarded unfavourably by upper- and middle-class Cairenes, who considered them to be vulgar and outdated.\(^{29}\) Instead, a more modern style of zaffah was born at the beginning of the 1980s and quickly became an indispensable part of the receptions held at exclusive hotels and clubs. Just as the location of the wedding reception moved from individual houses to hotels, the zaffah procession also underwent changes. Unlike the separate processions performed for the bride and the groom in the past, today’s zaffah commonly proceeds with the bride and the groom together, from the lobby into the ballroom in the hotels in which the farah takes place.

Apart from the changed ways of the procession, the current modern style of zaffah troupes is also distinguished by newly-added western musical instruments as well as by new western lyrics incorporated into existing zaffah songs. A leader of one zaffah whom I had interview with commented:

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\text{[In the past], we only used our own musical instruments such as duff [tambourine], mazhar (a type of tambourine), tabla [drum, also called a home], and jamur baladi [local mazhar]... We later incorporated western musical instruments such as the saxophone into the zaffah. As for the songs, they remain more or less the same. But these days, some lyrics have changed. We replaced some words with modern terms [of speech]. For example, instead of saying habibi [my love], we find a replacement word for it, such as the name Juliet who is the symbol of love.}
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Most zaffah groups are exclusively male, and usually include six to eight members. Each zaffah group has different wedding songs, though all the main themes are similar. On one occasion I accompanied a zaffah group to a hotel wedding in Cairo. They began their song by welcoming everyone; introduced themselves to the guests; praised the bride’s

\(^{29}\) ibid.
beauty; paid respects to the bride’s parents; praised the groom for his
goodness and reliability; asked the couple to respect their respective
parents-in-laws; asked the parents-in-laws to respect the couple; asked
people to look at the bride and see how envious people were of the
young couple; and concluded by offering good wishes to the bride and
the groom. One of the musicians talked about how zaffah group had
changed in recent years:

In the past, such as in 1975, all of them were women. The
ones who made a zaffah were the belly dancers from
Muhammad Ali Street [a street famous for its belly dancers
and musical instrument sales]. But nowadays, university
graduates make zaffah and the job is becoming professional.
The economic situation has changed people’s activities. Also it
has to do with Islam. In Islam, we consider the sound of
women is haram [forbidden]. If she raises her voice, it is
considered as haram and it is aura [blemish or defect]. But
the sound of men is acceptable. The people making the sounds
of duff are men. It's a kind of returning to Islamic traditions.
Men are the ones who are making zaffah.

It seems that the Islamic movements that were active in the 1970s and
1980s encouraged a return to what was believed to be Islamic tradition.
Ironically, however, this phenomenon contrasted with the emergence of
belly dance performances at weddings from the 1970s. In fact the
tradition of belly dancers at festivals can be traced back to the 18th
century in Egypt. The reason for bringing entertainers, particularly
dancers, to the festivals was, according to Van Nieuwerkerk, to amuse the
spectators, and also to make them happy. At the same time, however,
entertainers were regarded with disfavour and growing resentment by
religious authorities and the 'ulama (Islamic scholars), especially in terms
of their apparently pagan or infidel image.

During Sadat’s infitah policy in the 1970s, there were many changes in

30) Van Nieuwerkerk 1990: 3.
the popular scene. The opening to the West, the rise of a new class of wealthy entrepreneurs, and growing prosperity, also produced a flourishing climate for entertainers. In particular, performances by Egyptian belly dancers at hotel weddings became a widespread phenomenon from the 1970s.31) Today, Egyptian belly dancers along with an influx of foreign belly dancers, especially from Russia and Greece, have become a familiar sight at Cairene weddings. A blonde belly dancer in a western-style costume of tight blue pants with a stick and a hat performed at a wedding reception I attended in 2001 at an exclusive five-star hotel in Cairo. She was a Russian dancer who had come to Cairo to learn belly dance.

The influx of foreign belly dancers has introduced new costumes, instruments, and dance movements that have been incorporated into traditional belly dancing. However, employing a belly dancer at a wedding was, and still is considered particularly sensitive among those who are religious, and for some people, belly dancers are viewed with great apprehension.32) The image of the pure and virgin bride in the sacred atmosphere of the wedding contrasts uncomfortably with the image of the belly dancer who is perceived as polluting the pure wedding that the families are actively seeking to cultivate at the farah. This is mainly because the sexual identity of the belly dancers symbolises a lack of honour and respect, and they are even seen to be sexually dangerous.

Employing a disc jockey at a wedding party is a new phenomenon. Apart from playing music, the DJs generally preside over the reception from beginning to the end. At the request of the bride and groom, they will often play songs, either Egyptian popular music or western songs, that are of particular sentimental significance for the couple. Otherwise DJs themselves will choose and play music and songs from their own collections. According to Mustafa, a 28 years-old man working as a DJ

31) *ibid.*, 1990: 11.
32) The controversy surrounding the presence of belly dancers at weddings and other festivals is described by Van Nieuwkerk in *A Trade like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt* (1995).
at one of the big hotels, DJing was popularised in the 1980s after an AUC student had started to DJ at wedding receptions:

As far as I remember, Hany Wahba was the first person to started working as a DJ, around twenty years ago. He was an AUC student. When he played at a wedding as a DJ, people liked what he did so they started to hire a DJ for their own weddings. Afterwards, it became a fashion. Even four or five years ago, the number of DJ was still small, but nowadays we have around 100 DJs in Egypt.

Some DJs run their own independent companies, and are equipped with all the trappings of DJing, including various items of musical equipment, laser beams, and a machine to produce smoke for special effects. DJs are also important as entertainers at birthday parties for young children, baby showers, and various anniversaries, as well as at other celebrations held at clubs or hotels.

V. The Farah: McDonaldisation of the Wedding Ceremony?

The way that the farah is celebrated is also transforming with time. The following accounts describe typical style of wedding parties that took place during the parents' generation in the 1960s and 1970s.

People spend a lot of money for their wedding these days. We arranged a simple party in her [his wife’s] house for both the engagement and the wedding parties. We went out to a casino [similar to the current cafeteria] in the Pyramid area with some of our friends and had dinner there. We spent the evening having dinner and watching a show (Abu Fatima who married in the 1960s).
I woke up in the morning and I sat with my family and relatives. We had lunch together. Around 4 o’clock in the afternoon, I went to salon to have my hair done and then came back home to get dressed in the white wedding dress and a tarah (veil). Women clapped and made zaghariyd to celebrate my marriage. We sang together and then we went off to the hall that had been prepared in our alley outside the house. Then the groom’s relatives came and the groom took his seat beside me. The guests sang and danced together and drank. We drank juice and Pepsi. In the evening we went to a casino and saw a show. When other people saw me, they clapped to congratulate me. It was around one o’clock in the morning when we came back to our house and we ate the food that my mother had stored in the refrigerator. And then we slept until the next morning (Ummu Sarah who married in the 1960s).

The big change between wedding parties in the past compared with those of today is that the location of the wedding reception has transferred from the bride’s house to five star hotels, villas, clubs, riverboats, or European-style outdoor gardens. There are several explanations for this transformation. Ummu Sarah continued:

There are no big differences between the wedding in my days and today... though some things have changed. In the past, most people had their weddings in the bride’s house because houses then were very big and spacious. A house might have five or six rooms with a big hall. But houses these days are much smaller. Therefore, people have weddings in clubs, hotels, or villas. This is the big difference. Currently, however, even people who have big houses have their weddings in a hotel in order to avoid having so much work. People want to save time and effort because when the guests leave, there’ll be a lot of work to take care of. For example, there’s always the possibility that young children will break a cup or spill
some juice on the carpet. That’s why people want to have weddings outside, because they think that it’s better not to ruin the house. It’s very tiring to clean the house. There’s another difference. In the past, women generally didn’t work outside. They didn’t go out to work. These days, though, because women work outside the home, they haven’t got time to prepare for their wedding. If they want to do so, they have to take a holiday from work, and even if they are allowed to take several days for their holiday, the time’s too short to get everything ready for a wedding. Or, in the worse case, the company would refuse to give her holiday anyway. This is another difference. In the past the number of women working was very small. Most women just stayed in the house, doing some housework and taking care of the children. However, nowadays most women work, so they don’t have time to prepare for their wedding on their own.

As Ummu Sarah’s statement suggests, the location of the wedding has changed for entirely practical reasons, including the lack of space in a house so as to save time and effort; and due to the lack of help in preparing for the wedding since so many women participate in the labour force. An additional reason for shifting the wedding from the house to an outside venue is because people nowadays regard the size of a wedding as significant. Cairenes share the opinion that this transformation originates from the competitive, imitative, and emulative nature of consumerism. This attitude has a major influence on the organising of wedding parties which, especially among the middle- and upper-strata of society, must be as sumptuous as possible.

Ummu Leila, a woman who married in the 1960s described the differences between weddings in the past and the present:

In the past, the farah was very simple. But nowadays, people want to show off and compete with their neighbours and relatives. Television has also influenced people to make the farah as luxurious as possible. For example, there is one
programme on Channel Four that shows people how to organise farah. It actually persuades people indirectly to follow the way that they are showing.

If today’s wedding style has changed in terms of style and size compared to weddings in the past, then how is the modern style of wedding reception organised nowadays and how is it different from weddings in the past? How does the bride prepare herself prior to the wedding ceremony? Dalia, who had been married two years previously, recalled her experience of preparing for the farah ritual:

On the day of the farah, I woke up early in the morning. I didn’t eat anything all day long. I didn’t have any appetite because of being nervous about my wedding. My friend and I went to a coiffeur at two o’clock in the afternoon and I started to put on my make-up at three o’clock until about five p.m. and then I had my hair done in the early part of the evening. My husband also went to the barber to have his hair trimmed. Before we left for the celebration, we took some photos to remind us of our wedding day prior to the farah.

On the occasion of a wedding reception that I attended, when the bride and groom had dressed for the wedding party, they were driven to the wedding reception hall in a car decorated with a bunch of flowers, accompanied by friends and family members in other cars. On the way to the wedding hall, they sometimes blew their car horns loudly to announce the wedding to others. On their arrival, the trilling sounds of zaghariday by women and the music of zaffah at the reception hall announced that the wedding celebrations had begun. A video camera captured all the scenes. As the zaffah played music, the bride, who was holding her father’s arm, slowly descended the stairs towards the groom who was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. As the bride and her father approached the groom, the groom took her from her father. The couple then paused for a while in front of the family and the guests, and
were serenaded with wedding songs. The *zafran* group then escorted the couple to the entrance of the ballroom. When the couple appeared in the doorway, a DJ started to play music that included the reciting of the ninety-nine names of Allah. Once the reciting was finished, western music filled the hall. The bride and the groom then walked behind the little bridesmaids toward the *khosha* (a flower-decked chair) with their arms entwined, while the women continued to trill.

When the couple reached the *khosha*, the waiters brought a yellow-coloured drink called *sharbāt* to the bride and groom, which is traditionally served at a wedding. As soon as the couple had toasted each other, the waiters began to serve drinks to the guests. Later, the couple moved onto the dance floor, where they danced in front of the guests to popular songs, such as those by the famous Egyptian singer Amr Diab and romantic western songs. When the couple had finished the first round of dancing, male and female guests came down to join them on the dance floor. Encircling the couple, the guests sang and danced. When the couple and the guests had tired of dancing, an invited singer started to sing to the background music of a band. Afterwards, it was the turn of a belly dancer. Male guests on the whole seemed to be amused by the seductive movements of the dancer, but the groom rarely looked at the dancer lest he should make his bride jealous on their wedding night.

When all the entertainers had finished their performances, a five-tiered wedding cake was processed slowly toward the groom and the bride, engulfed with smoke and highlighted by laser beams to give special effects to the cake-cutting ceremony. The bride and groom, both holding the knife, cut the cakes one by one, from the top layer to the bottom. The wedding director then cut a small piece of cake, and the bride and the groom gave each other morsels to eat on the instructions of the director. The cake-cutting ritual was followed by the opening of the buffet bar. It was around 1:00 a.m. Another round of dancing followed the dinner, and the *farah* ended around at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. After the wedding party, the newly-married couple are supposed to consummate their marriage. Reportedly they are supposed to pray for
God’s blessing on their marital life before consummation takes place.

Other wedding receptions held in hotels generally follow this order. A package wedding at a hotel means that professional wedding planners take control of organising the wedding reception in all its details. By purchasing a wedding reception package, the couple and the guests will be fitted into the pre-designed programme and will be controlled by the instructions of the technical staff, including a wedding director, a DJ, and a cameraman. It seems that pre-packaged weddings fit the paradigm outlined by Ritzer in The McDonaldisation of the Society in terms of their efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through technology. Through this, both customers and providers in the McDonaldised wedding system follow the steps of a procedure that has been pre-designed and standardised in order to produce the best and most memorable wedding, even though it serves as the same style of wedding for all the newly-married couples in Cairo. In addition to the issue of the McDonaldisation of the wedding, which results from the commercialisation of the wedding industry, the issue of globalisation should also be considered here.

The style of a wedding seems to have its own fashion trends over time. Sometimes external elements from foreign wedding styles are introduced and localised, thus creating a third new wedding culture. In some cases, traditions are re-invented or a totally new trend is created in order to suit the tastes of today’s young couples. For example, as those are described in the earlier part, global influences are evident in current Cairene weddings, such as the dress of the bride and groom; child bridesmaids who escort the bride and the groom into the hall; the cake-cutting ceremony; and the throwing of a bouquet to unmarried friends. However, within the conventional notion of the Cairene wedding as a festival, the long-standing tradition still continues of employing entertainers such as musicians, dancers, and singers at the wedding.

Apart from the introduction of global elements into the conventional concept of a wedding, the current Cairene wedding style is significantly articulated with a hybridised wedding ritual that is neither foreign nor indigenous. For example, a recent trend is that foreign, especially
western belly dancers and modernised zajjah, equipped with a mixture of western and local musical instruments and lyrics, appear at the wedding ceremony. In addition, a totally new tradition of employing a disc jockey has been invented and has become established into the mainstream of today’s wedding culture. Therefore, the distinction between what is the local and the global seems to be blurred in the contemporary Cairene wedding style, thus leading to a hybridisation of indigenous and foreign wedding cultures. Therefore, I concur with Welsch who argued that there is neither an absolutely foreign culture nor one that is exclusively one’s own, since today’s cultures are extremely interconnected and intermingled with each other. Through the hybridisation of the wedding, what seems to be ambivalent between local/indigenous and global/foreign is also becoming ambiguous.

V. Conclusion

This paper has explored how today’s wedding preparations have changed from those of the parents’ generation or even as earlier as in the 19th century, taking into account several paradigms of globalisation and its cultural impact. Marriage in Cairo today follows the traditional steps that include the katb al-kitab and the farah. The style of katb al-kitab the formal registration with the government of the couple’s union through the signing of the marriage contract remains largely unchanged: the ceremony at which the marriage contract is signed contains an ijab (response or offer) and a qbul (acceptance) of marriage between the families; the signing of a marriage contract should be witnessed and announced to the public; the mahr must be given to the bride’s side as the sign of the couple’s union; and finally, a guardian is required to act on behalf of a married woman. By completing the marriage contract through katb al-kitab, the union is legitimised. The only difference between the present katb al-kitab and those performed in

the parent's generation, or those practised even earlier (some two centuries years ago), is that men and women mix freely in today's *katb al-kitab*.

During the wedding preparation, the bride and her family are much more actively involved in the wedding preparations than are the groom and his family. While brides prefer to spend a relatively large sum of money on the wedding party, grooms prefer to spend money in more practical ways, such as on a honeymoon abroad. Today, professional wedding planners have gradually replaced the role of the bride's mother, who would in the past have co-ordinated the wedding festivities along with other female relatives.

Wedding ceremonies and receptions in Cairo today seem to be an arena in which such various dimensions as global/local, modern/traditional, western/Islamic, and foreign/authentic dynamics can be observed as well as the arena of the mixture of the main three paradigms of globalisation. For instance, as for the process of homogenisation, Cairene style of weddings resemble typical wedding rituals elsewhere as they incorporate a procession of the bride and groom; the swearing of an oath before a cleric, two witnesses and the guests; and bouquet-throwing and cake-cutting rituals followed by songs and dancing. The outfits worn by the couple also follow the clichés of typical global images of brides and grooms. However, Cairene-style weddings are distinguished from weddings in other parts of the world in the way the wedding party is celebrated with various professional wedding entertainers, including belly dancers, comedians, and DJs, as well as *zafigah* (wedding procession). Homogenised or particularised elements of wedding are emerging today, as they were exemplified in the main argument, in order to suit the tastes of today's young couples who, through television programmes, films, magazines, and the Internet, are much influenced by global wedding rituals and practices. In this context, evolving taste as well as expectation among the middle- and upper-class Cairenes result, in practice, in a hybrid form of western and global, as well as indigenous and local styles and rituals. Here, it is also significant to note that the wedding party has its own fashions and
these also change to meet the shifting tastes and expectations of people over time. In this regard, I concur with Ritzer, who argues that: the coexistence of homogenisation and heterogenisation is manifest in the idea of 'globalisation'.\textsuperscript{34} The coexistence of homogenisation and heterogenisation in contemporary weddings in Cairo, coupling tradition with outside influences, reminds me of a McFalafel sold in a central Cairo McDonald's.

A note of transliterations:
Transliteration of Arabic basically follows the ALA-LC romanization manual. However, in order to preserve the Cairene way of pronouncing Arabic, I replaced \( j \) with \( g \) and dropped the pronunciation of \( q \). I also omitted diacritics except 'ayn.

\textsuperscript{34} Ritzer, 2000: 177.
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세계화가 카이로의 결혼산업에 미치는 영향

임익란
엑스티대학교

이집트 영화, TV나 잡지등에 묘사되는 카이로의 결혼식 장면들은 일찍 보면 세계 어느어리에서나 행해지는 전형적인 결혼식 장면들을 연상시킨다. 하얀 웨딩드레스를 입은 신부와 검은 턱시도를 입은 신랑은 하객들이 지켜보는 앞에서 발광하고 키고 행진을 하고, 커피는 양가를 대표하는 결혼식 중인들과 하객들 앞에서 혼인 선탄표 한다. 그 후 결혼식은 신부의 부계 덤 자기, 카입자로가, 사진 촬영, 그리고 피로연으로 이어진다.

그러나 오늘날 카이로에서 행해지는 결혼식은 서구나 또는 다른 세계에서 행해지고 있는 결혼 형태와는 여러 면에서 구별된다. 예를 들면 결혼을 하거나 큰 측계로 생각하는 카이로 사람들은 결혼식의 흥을 돋우기 위해 벨리 댄서, 코미디언, 디제이 (DJ)등을 포함한 연예인들을 고용하며, 결혼식에 참석한 하객들은 물론이고 신랑신부와 그 가족들에게 다양한 불거리의 제공한다. 또한 오늘날 카이로의 결혼식에는 “전통의 부활”이라는 명목하에 거의 사라진 옛 전통들이 현대인들의 취향에 맞게 새롭게 변화하여 현 카이로 결혼산업의 주류문화로 등장하고 있는데, 자파행진 (전문 음악사들과 같이 하는 결혼행진)이 그 한 예이다.

이러한 점에서 오늘날 카이로 결혼식은 세계화의 다양한 패러다임 (상동화, 상이화, 혼성화)이 한곳에 어우러진 한 예를 보여준다. 이 논문은 현재 카이로의 중상류층에서 일반적으로 행해지고 있는 카이로의 결혼식 진행과정을 자세히 조명해봄으로써, 위에서 언급된 세계화의 여러 패러다임들이 결혼과정에서 어떻게 나타나는가 분석하는 것을 그 목표로 한다.

[주제어: 결혼파트, 개방정책, 악혼식, 결혼동북자, 패돌, 자파]