

Music, Literature, Dance and Fashion | Fashion | Traditional clothing: wedding costumes and jewellery

Along with births and burials, weddings are one of the three great public occasions. Colour, style and the ceremonial importance of the gown can depend on the religion and culture of the wedding participants.

Weddings are seen socially as a universal rite of passage. The rituals and traditions of weddings vary from region to region, tribe to tribe (or ethnic group to ethnic group). Some wedding ceremonies take place over several days and involve several changes of clothing, which often represent the change of social status and also of family status in the bride's case. Wedding dresses in the Arab and Ottoman world and in Eastern European cultures were highly elaborate and regarded as a means of displaying the size of the bride's dowry and her family's status. The traditional bridal dress consisted of several layers, embroidered and decorated, and often trimmed with coins or jewellery.



Working Number: GR 015

Name: Athenian Bride

Holding Museum: Benaki Museum

Date: 1825

Materials: Lithograph

Curator Justification: European artists were keen to show different customs from other lands. Here a Greek bride waits for the groom to finish his ritual shave. The care the artist has taken in showing every detail of the bride's dress betrays his interest in it.



Working Number: RS 001

Name: Adornment Of The Bride

Holding Museum: The National Museum

Date: 1885/1886

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: This painting depicts a bride as she is being helped to dress, but actually illustrates an important moment in the woman's life as she is about to join another family and perhaps move home. It is the tension of this change that the artist depicts, seen in the bride's serious expression in contrast to that of her assistants, who joyfully prepare her for the celebration.



Working Number: IT2 096

Name: A Druze Bride from Lebanon

Holding Museum: National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography "Luigi Pigorini"

Date: c. 1881

Materials: Albumen

Curator Justification: The Druze, a religious minority from the Middle East, is distinguished by their dress. Druze brides attracted attention on account of their high headdresses, formed using a decorated metal cone or tantur. This type of costume and headdress fascinated European visitors, who documented it widely.



Working Number: UK 025

Name: Tantura

Holding Museum: The British Museum

Date: Late 18th century to mid 19th century

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The tantur is a metal cone worn on the head and covered with a veil. This type of headdress, an accessory worn exclusively by Druze women, was worn during ceremonies such as weddings.



Working Number: MC 010

Name: Traditional bridal costume and jewellery

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: 19th century

Materials: -

Curator Justification: It is the opulence and expense of wedding dresses that has seen many of them conserved over time, more than grooms' outfits. The type of headdress or jewellery and the decoration on a dress denote the size of the bride's dowry, her family status, the region she is from and/or her ethnic group. Among other garments, the outfit would have comprised a richly decorated headdress, or fez, from which coins were suspended.



Working Number: MC 004

Name: Bridal jewellery worn on the breasts (Mingjuska so vot and necklace)

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: 19th century

Materials: Klashna - thick woollen fabric, silver coins, silver alloy, decorative stones, tiny beads - monistra

Curator Justification: The jewels worn by a bride as an expression of the size of her dowry and her family's wealth could be very heavy. For this reason, jewels were sewn to pieces of fabric much as seen in this jewelled chest piece worn by brides in Belichica Gorna Reka, Macedonia.



Working Number: MC 008

Name: Bridal breast jewellery (Chaprag)

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: 19th century

Materials: Filigree, combined technique

Curator Justification: The jewellery a bride wore sometimes had a practical purpose; this necklace helped to hold up the neckline of her dress. Necklaces of this

type are typical of the Ohrid-Prespa region in Macedonia.



Working Number: TN 017

Name: Dokhla (wedding dress)

Holding Museum: Private collection

Date: 19th century

Materials: Embroidered fabric with gold-plated silver thread

Curator Justification: Certain pieces of jewellery were only worn by brides: the rihana is a long gold chain bearing another chain of perfumed paste; the dress meanwhile is typical of Nabeul, a coastal region of north-eastern Tunisia. While the gold chain denotes the importance of this ceremony for the family, the dress indicates ethnic group or regional provenance.



Working Number: TN 018

Name: Marriage shawl

Holding Museum: Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires

Date: 19th–20th century

Materials: Emroidered wool

Curator Justification: The decoration and the colour of the wedding dress reveal the bride's origin and the wealth of her family. Some of the decorative motifs have apotropaic functions, while others refer to the bride's future role as mother. In this case, some of the decorative motifs relate to fertility.



Working Number: QT 009

Name: Bisht muqassab

Holding Museum: National Museum of Qatar

Date: 19th century

Materials: Cotton

Curator Justification: The groom also wore a special costume for his wedding ceremony. Although the groom's costume tended not to be as ornate as the bride's, it did indicate his origin. This bridal coat from Qatar is an example of this.



Working Number: QT 001

Name: Ma'ara

Holding Museum: National Museum of Qatar

Date: 19th century

Materials: Gold, blue stones

Curator Justification: A bride tended to provide a large part of her dowry in the form of jewellery, which she would wear at her wedding. Jewellery worn by brides was made of gold or silver and often decorated with coloured beads or coins; precious stones for the wealthy.



Working Number: QT 002

Name: Ma'ara

Holding Museum: National Museum of Qatar

Date: 19th century

Materials: Gold, blue stones

Curator Justification: Women would wear jewellery, which often came from her trousseau and demonstrated the importance of her family, to important ceremonies and celebrations such as weddings and family reunions. The gold, pearls and precious stones of this necklace suggests how valuable some of this jewellery could be.



Working Number: TR2 019

Name: Bridal outfit (entari, long jacket and shoes)

Holding Museum: Vehbi Koç Foundation Sadberk Hanim Museum

Date: End of the 19th century

Materials: Satin, fur, silver-gilt thread

Curator Justification: This bride's outfit, which comprised a hirka (coat), entari (dress) and dress shoes, demonstrates the wedding attire of a 19th-century Ottoman bride, and points to the differences that existed from one Mediterranean region to another. A feature common among all the wedding outfits of this exhibition is the wealth of their decoration and the fine fabrics from which they are made.



Working Number: JO 001

Name: Wedding dress

Holding Museum: Jordan Museum for Costumes and Jewellery, Department of Antiquities

Date: Late 19th century – early 20th century

Materials: Linen and silk; hand woven and hand embroidered

Curator Justification: Wedding dresses reflected the wearer's family status and ethnic origin. Accordingly, they tended to be richly decorated and include many garments and items of jewellery. Some of the decorative motifs could have an apotropaic function, such as seen in the triangles on the sleeves of this garment.



Working Number: JO 003

Name: Wedding dress

Holding Museum: Jordan Museum for Costumes and Jewellery, Department of Antiquities

Date: Late 19th century – early 20th century

Materials: Linen with silk; hand weaving, hand embroidered, natural dyes

Curator Justification:

The many types of wedding dresses seen in a single geographical area demonstrate the diversity of customs and traditions. Like her jewellery, the bride's dress reflected her ethnic and religious origins.



Working Number: MC 015

Name: Bridal coat (Klashenik)

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: Late 19th – early 20th century

Materials: Thick twill-weave woollen fabric decorated with braids

Curator Justification: The differences between brides' outfits, in this case the hirka (coat), illustrate the regional diversity in specific areas. This can be explained by the historical development of the region: this item is from Macedonia, a country that was part of the Ottoman Empire, before that part of the Byzantine Empire and in the 20th century came under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.



Working Number: MC 013

Name: Bridal tunic (Veyke)

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: Late 19th – early 20th century

Materials: White canvas, embroidery with variegated threads

Curator Justification: The rich decoration on the sleeves and lower portion of this bridal tunic suggest that these were the most visible parts of her outfit. The decoration is embroidered and appliquéd in wool and silver thread.



Working Number: MC 014

Name: Bridal coat (Klashenik)

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: Late 19th – early 20th century

Materials: Thick woollen fabric, twill-weave, embroidery with silver and decoration with wool braids

Curator Justification: This bridal coat is decorated with motifs typical of the Debar Drimkol region in Macedonia.



Working Number: MC 023

Name: Horse adornment used in wedding ceremonies (Gushnik)

Holding Museum: Museum of Macedonia

Date: Beginning of the 20th century

Materials: Canvas, tiny beads – monistra

Curator Justification: It was not only the bride, groom and guests who were expected to dress in their best attire at weddings; animals were richly adorned and decorated for the occasion too. This horse bridle, decorated with

bead-pendants, gives an idea of how spectacular the ceremonies could be.



Working Number: TN 020

Name: Keswa kabbous (wedding outfit)

Holding Museum: Office de l'Artisanat de Tunis

Date: 19th–20th century

Materials: Emroidered satin

Curator
Justification: Some wedding outfits were made from reams of cloth and richly decorated with thread and appliqué. The breeches and short-sleeved bodice seen here weigh more than 10 kg; the breeches are more than four meters long and embroidered with silver thread and appliquéd silver sequins, providing an indication of the importance of the ceremony. Given the size and weight of the outfit, the bride would have been seated during the wedding ceremony.
