

Example of the similarities and differences between chinese and american weddings...

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Around the world, the wedding is one of the most important events in a culture. There are so many elements of the human experience that are wrapped up in weddings: making a decision to start a family together is one of the central events in one's life, leading to children and future generations to come. In America and China, weddings are an occasion for celebration and for the gathering of family members. However, the differences between the two cultures are vast, and those differences are reflected in the customs surrounding weddings (as well as many others).

In the United States, it is customary for a bride to wear a white dress, particularly if it is her first wedding. White is a symbol of purity, and it was once an expectation that a bride maintain virginity until marriage in order to wear white, but that has become more of an anachronism today ("American Weddings"). In China, some brides will wear white, particularly if they are in large cities, because of the influences of American culture. However, a traditional bridal gown in China is red; when brides wear white for their weddings, they will put on a red dress after the ceremony has ended to wear to the reception. Chinese brides also generally have a red accompaniment to their outfit, which is their counterpart to the "something blue" that is part of American tradition. As the evening goes along, no matter what color gown she wears in her wedding, a Chinese bride will change into several dresses as the evening goes by, keeping the red accompaniment constant.

Wedding venues have a lot of variety in the United States. While traditional weddings take place in houses of worship, it is just as common to have the wedding at a country club, hotel ballroom or even outside. In China, the tradition is to rent a banquet hall within a larger restaurant, although

Chinese couples are now beginning to use picturesque sites for their ceremonies as well.

In the United States, there is a superstition that it is bad luck for the groom to see the bride on the wedding day before the ceremony (“ American Weddings”). The ceremony is the central part of the day, featuring the exchange of vows promising love and the exchanging of rings. In China, the bride and groom are permitted to see one another at all times on their wedding day, with a much more relaxed atmosphere leading up to the ceremony. The most significant element of the day is the reception, featuring wishes for future prosperity and a feast. While American weddings generally move from one event space to another between the ceremony and the reception, in China, the whole event occurs in one area. Both American and Chinese reception banquets use formal arrangements for seating, placing the tables with the most important people up front, if not on an elevated stage. The Chinese banquet features an elegant meal, as elaborate as a ten-course meal. Each dish has its own symbolism, and guests will often bring some leftovers away to show their gratitude.

With regard to gifts, many American couples fill out a registry so that their friends can shop for them. However, Chinese wedding gifts all come in small red envelopes; in other words, the only gift at a Chinese wedding is cash (Trundley). Once the reception is over, in the United States, the couple generally hops in a limousine or other hired car to head away and start their honeymoon. Even if the couple ends up getting together with family and friends afterward, the sendoff is still a tradition. In China, the groom and bride are the last ones to go home from the party, and honeymoons are not

nearly as common as they are in the United States. Instead of heading off for a lavish trip, frequently the couple will go back to one of their parents' homes to spend time relaxing with friends and family (Trundley).

The differences between the Chinese and American cultures are vast, but one commonality is the importance that people attach to weddings. They represent the shift from one generation to the next, as the next generation's children grow up to form lasting relationships with one another, to ensure that there will be generation after generation of children. It is no surprise, then, that there are significant differences in the ways that Chinese and American people celebrate those weddings. Another commonality, though, is the importance that family members and friends attach to the weddings of their friends. In both cultures, weddings involve gatherings that can last a couple of days and end up being quite lavish. Parents view this as a worthwhile custom, because they want to send their children off on a lifetime of success and prosperity. The traditions that go into a wedding day pass from generation to generation, because of the important emotional connections among family members.

Works Cited

" American Wedding." <http://www.world-wedding-traditions.net/home/american-wedding>

Trundley, Alan Paul. " Chinese Marriage Through a Foreigner's Eyes."

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