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# Some foreign ceremonies incorporate unique rituals

From Japan to Germany, many countries put their own twists on marriage traditions

By Reese Lee  
Freelance Reporter

One wedding tradition — "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" — has made its mark on many American weddings. But what about a Claddagh ring, a spozalizio or an akad nikah? Weddings can be as diverse as the traditions present in them.

A Claddagh ring is a traditional Irish wedding ring, spozalizio is Italian for wedding ceremony and an akad nikah is a Malay marriage contract.

Marriages hold different levels of importance around the world, and in certain places the wedding is often a grand affair. For example, in Malaysia the bride and groom are treated like queen and king for that day, according to <http://www.zawaj.com>. Preparations for the wedding can begin as early as one year prior; the dowry has to be determined and the bride-to-be will undergo a henna application ceremony. The wedding also involves a huge, often noisy, feast for the guests.

Similarly, a traditional wedding in Germany can last up to three

days: a civil ceremony on the first night, a wedding party on the second and a religious wedding ceremony on the third, according to <http://www.world-wedding-traditions.net>. At some point during the exchange of vows, when the bride and groom are on their knees, the groom might kneel on his future wife's wedding gown to show who's going to be "wearing the pants" in the relationship — when they stand up, the bride might step on the groom's foot to show otherwise.

There are myriad cultural wedding customs, some of which may be extraordinarily romantic or downright exotic.

"For really traditional guys, they might propose by saying, 'Would you like to be buried with my family?'" freshman Akiko Nakajima said about Japanese marriage customs.

Also, while the traditional color of a bridal gown in America is white, it is a Spanish custom to wear a black wedding dress made of silk, along with an elaborate black lace veil. A customary Northern Californian American Indian bridal gown may be woven in symbolic colors: black for north, blue for south, white for east and yellow or orange for west, according to <http://www.weddingdetails.com>.

According to <http://www.World-wedding-traditions.net>

also states that at one time in the Philippines, where engagement customs and nuptials are important, a man had to throw a spear at the front of the house of the girl he wished to marry. That represents her unavailability to other men, and it was in that way that the engagement process began.

Weddings the world over are different, but the one thing all weddings share is the coming together of people to witness the commitment of two people to each other.

Reese Lee is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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# Counselors say reality TV shows harm image of healthy marriage

Some marriage counselors claim shows like 'Newlyweds' and 'The Bachelor' exploit the institution of marriage

By Emma Juhlin  
Freelance Reporter

A series of reality television marriage shows has swept the nation in the past decade, including soul mate searches by elimination in *The Bachelor*, televised weddings on "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?" and married celebrities in MTV's "Newlyweds: Nick & Jessica," featuring pop stars Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson.

The exploitation of marriage in reality television may be profitable and a source of entertainment for many viewers, but it may have potentially negative influences, according to local marriage counselors and national surveys.

Diane Thurlow, a counselor at Healthy Marriage Counseling in Eugene, said the reality television marriage shows make the institution look like a game.

"It's just fun and smiles and sex," Thurlow said. Shows like "The Bachelor," she said, ignore important steps in developing strong relationships. "I think they minimize the vows people make to each other when they get married."

Although Thurlow said she believes the shows can be false in their portrayals of marriage and courtship, she does not believe they have a direct impact on the marriage rate.

"Most people want to get married anyway," Thurlow said. "Society doesn't do a good job of showing

people that it is difficult and how to be together successfully." She added that couples in their 30s and 40s are most likely to be influenced by the idyllic standards of reality television.

Marriage counselor Marlin Schultz said he is concerned that reality television programs don't allow enough time for the couple to get to know each other.

"One of the highest correlations in a successful relationship is friendship," Schultz said. According to the National Marriage Project's 2001 "State of Our Unions" report, "The revived enthusiasm for marriage is mostly about romantic relationships and lavish weddings."

A show like "Newlyweds," Schultz said, can have a positive or negative influence depending on the kinds of patterns the couple portrays. The couple must model effective behavior for them to be a good example for viewers, but that would not be good for ratings, he said.

"I'd like to see couples who have long-term, stable relationships (in reality television)," Schultz said.

Donald Milhauer, another local couples counselor, said some people get caught up in hope rather than love, and when it doesn't work out they move on.

"There's an enormous archetypal pool for that falling-in-love state, and people get sucked into that," he said.

Milhauer's view is concurrent with statistics from the National Marriage Project. Its 2001 survey found that 88 percent of single men and women ages 20 to 29 believe they have a soul

mate they are destined to be with, and 94 percent of never-married singles agree that when they marry, they want their spouse to be their soul mate first and foremost. The same report shows a decrease in the number of satisfied married couples.

"Marital satisfaction has declined in recent decades, despite the fact that the easy availability of divorce might be expected to reduce the number of unhappy marriages," according to the "State of Our Unions" report. A U.S. Census report released in February 2002 said nine out of 10 people marry, but 50 percent of first marriages end in divorce.

Thurlow advises couples considering marriage to know the most important qualities in their partner, to learn good conflict resolution and to develop communication skills.

"These things can be learned, and divorce is not the solution," she said.

Many couples tie the knot despite the daunting statistics, and while some are able to enjoy matrimonial reality television, others, like 23-year-old newlywed Lana Crator-Mabry, feel it's a far cry from the real thing.

"I would hope no one would believe these shows and think that is how marriage is," Crator-Mabry said. "Marriage is a strong bond between two people that love each other. Marriage is full of commitments and sacrifices that bring friendship, passion and adventure. Reality shows don't portray that."

Emma Juhlin is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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