

**Susanne Al-Eryani: *Yemeni Wedding: General Conditions of a Transition Ritual in Ṣan‘ā’* (Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 2014)**

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## Conclusions

This study describes and analyses the course of the Yemeni wedding celebrations as well as its general conditions, with particular emphasis on wedding festivities among the middle upper class and the upper class in the capital Ṣan‘ā’.

In the Islamic Yemen, marriage is the essential requirement for a man and a woman for having a sexual relationship, and it is primarily intended to start a family. Only by celebrating the wedding in public the marriage will be accepted socially and is therefore of high significance in a Yemeni’s life. After presenting sociological aspects of the ritual and giving a short survey of Yemen’s history, the study discusses – against the background of the rapid social change since the second half of the twentieth century – as to what extent the creation of a matrimonial relationship and the celebratory culture of weddings are dependent on the changing general conditions.

After the dissolution of the Zaydi Imamate, and after a gradual change of the rural subsistence farming into a market economy integrated in the global network, prosperity and consumption are increasingly considered as status markers within the Yemeni society. The dichotomisation between rich and poor causes a blurring of social boundaries. As can be seen from the study, origin and reputation are important criteria when it comes to selecting a spouse, but nevertheless, his or her financial situation and the level of education gain importance. Modern views are broadening the scope of traditional models describing an ideal partner and partnership. The form of the arranged marriage is common, but emotional motifs are increasingly relevant when choosing a partner.

By comparing accounts of Yemen travellers from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries to recent observations, this study shows that the action complex of wedding ceremonies follows an inherent pattern, but the cultural performance of this transition ritual differs in detail regionally and in a historical perspective nevertheless.

On the one hand, this expensive feast, celebrated over several days, serves to demonstrate the marriage in public. On the other hand, it is a medium for representing the social position of the bride and the groom, and of their families. An innovative market provides all products required for organising a wedding celebration. It has developed notably since the 1990s and embraces not only traditional concepts of spatial use and decoration, but also new ones.

In summary, it can be said that political, economic and social changes have initiated a shift of the criteria and strategies concerning a marriage as well as a modification of the Yemeni celebratory culture. At the same time, the Yemeni wedding reflects the socio-political and socio-economic changes of the country.