

Wedding Rituals in Oman: A Socio-Anthropological Study

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Abstract

Drawing on findings from sociological and anthropological research that highlight the significance of rituals in shaping identities, building communities, and ensuring their continuity, this socio-anthropological study focuses on marriage as a key social institution in the Sultanate of Oman. It sheds light on the principal practices, and its physical, verbal and performative symbols that characterize Omani wedding rituals. Through a field study centered on the North Al Batinah Governorate—an area known for its rich cultural tapestry encompassing urban, Bedouin, mountainous, and coastal settings, and home to diverse cultural groups including Baluchis, Ajams, and Zajali—the study aims to document and analyze local wedding rituals. It seeks to record and describe these practices, examining their components, stages, symbols, and social functions within Omani society. The research also explores how these rituals have evolved in the context of broader societal changes since the onset of Oman’s 1970s Renaissance era. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, the study relied on observation and a series of individual and group interviews conducted between 2023 and 2025. The findings reveal that wedding rituals in North Al Batinah are governed by systems, structures, and norms that ensure societal continuity and stability. These rituals regulate interpersonal interactions and manage kinship relations, facilitating social cohesion, mitigating divisions, unifying behaviors, preventing disorder, and promoting integration. Furthermore, the study highlights the symbolic dimensions of these rituals, which serve not only as expressions of family pride and social prestige but also as mechanisms for facilitating transitions and affirming newly acquired social status.

Keywords

Rites of Passage, Oman, Marriage, Cultural Diversity