

Edge of Humanity Magazine

Chad's Traditional 'No Bride' Wedding Celebration

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The bride's mother accepts the guests' monetary gifts and everyone cheers when a donation is presented.

Travel Photographer [Holger Hoffmann](#) and Travel Writer [Sylvia Furrer](#) are the Edge of Humanity Magazine contributors of this documentary photography. From the project , 'The Perfumed Groom and the Hidden Bride' . To see [Chad: Migration of the Nomades Arabes](#), click on any photograph.

Little is known about the 'Nomades Arabes' living in Chad, and least of all about their festivals and customs. During the dry season they stay near the rivers for a longer period of time, giving them the time to celebrate.

As custom dictates, the bride is not present during an entire wedding celebration.

Over the past month this bride has not left her hut, and will only be brought to the marriage bed by the groom under the cover of night.

Directed by the bride's mother, a colorful group of women, build the future home for the newlyweds in a matter of hours.



All the components have been constructed in months of preparatory work leading up to the wedding, and are now spread out on the floor: wooden poles for the supporting structure, curved wood for the roof, huge braided mats for the walls and the roof, red fabric panels for the interior decoration, mattresses, pillows, mosquito nets, and dozens of yellow and red bowls attached to the long wall or hung in leather nets.



For more images see [Chad: Building up a Wedding Tent](#)

At the same time, another group of women is taking care of the catering for the wedding party. An approximately 10-meter long channel is dug into the ground, firewood is burned to charcoal and huge pots are placed on it. In these, millet porridge – called *boule* – and the meat of a freshly slaughtered cow are being cooked.



The wedding guests are arriving continuously, on foot, by horse, donkey or camel, and even whole groups on horse carts, while the young men dash into the crowd on their horses.



Even before everyone finishes lunch, there is new movement again into the camp. The groom, dressed in light blue, wearing sunglasses and proudly waving his

shining sword, rides into the camp on horseback, accompanied by his friends, who are also mounted. He is flanked on one side by his sister and on the other by a group of clapping girls and young women.



The women, wearing their most beautiful clothes, dance continuously and clap rhythmically. Young men join them, the rhythm become faster, and the braids of the girls fly higher. The youth continues to dance until dark.



Together they circle the future home several times, which is now immersed in warm evening light. Then, they arrange in a semicircle in front of it in order to pay homage to the groom.



The young riders pay homage to the future husband by repeatedly posing in front of him with a drawn dagger or a waving whip, or by dousing him and the dancing women in perfume.



In the meantime, the sun has set. The close relatives celebrate the groom by lifting him off the horse and tossing him into the air three times, in front of the entrance of his future home. He then sits in front of his hut and accepts congratulations and gifts.



Horse races are a part of every wedding.



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By Holger Hoffmann and Sylvia Furrer



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