Phenomenon of Deconstruction of Traditional Javanese Bridal Makeup Standards by Cross-Customary Practices in Modern Marriage

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Abstract—*This study examines the phenomenon of deconstruction of traditional Javanese bridal makeup standards through cross-customary practices in modern marriage ceremonies. The term deconstruction in this research does not solely follow the Derridean philosophical tradition but is employed as an analytical framework to understand how traditional aesthetic systems are disrupted, reinterpreted, and hybridized in contemporary contexts. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores the visual, symbolic, and cultural transformations occurring when Javanese bridal makeup incorporates elements from other ethnic traditions and global beauty trends. Findings reveal that these practices represent a cultural negotiation rather than a complete abandonment of tradition, resulting in a hybrid aesthetic that reflects the dynamic interaction between modernity and heritage. The process of deconstruction thus highlights how meaning and identity are continuously reconstructed within the evolving landscape of Javanese wedding culture.*

Keywords— Bridal Makeup; Cultural Hybridization; Sundanese Siger

I.   INTRODUCTION

Marriage, in the context of Indonesian culture, is not merely a sacred procession between two individuals, but also a social institution that serves as a vehicle for the representation of cultural values, ethnic identity, and customary order that has been formed over generations [1]. One of the most obvious expressions of this is seen in the ceremonial procedures and traditional bridal makeup, which symbolically contain philosophical, cosmological, and socio-political meanings. Among the diverse wedding cultures that thrive in Indonesia, Javanese traditions, particularly those developed in Yogyakarta, occupy a unique position due to the depth of their symbolic value, the strict structure of their rules, and their historical status as the center of Javanese culture [2]. Yogyakarta-style bridal makeup is not only considered a form of beauty art but also a system of social identity markers. Bridal makeup, such as the paes ageng, cannot be worn freely. The layout of the paes, makeup colors, and hair accessories have structured rules based on traditional values and Javanese philosophy of life [3]. In addition, Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity underscores the fluid and performative nature of identity formation. From this perspective, bridal makeup acts as a discursive space through which individuals construct and display multiple, sometimes contradictory, identities. The adoption of cross-customary styles, for instance, reveals an ongoing negotiation

between heritage-based authenticity and modern cosmopolitan aesthetics. This dynamic aligns with postcolonial discussions of hybridity. However, in the last two decades, a phenomenon has emerged that indicates a significant shift in bridal makeup practices, particularly among urban Yogyakartans [4].

One striking phenomenon is the use of Sundanese Siger makeup, generally derived from Sundanese traditional wedding traditions, by Javanese brides and grooms who continue to perform in Yogyakartan traditional ceremonies [5]. Such events are not isolated incidents, but have become a widespread trend with the increasing presence of social media, the transformation of the wedding industry, and the shift in values among the younger generation in understanding culture [6]. This phenomenon raises various critical questions: is this practice a healthy form of cultural acculturation or does it signal a deconstruction of traditional norms? Is this integration of cross-traditional elements rooted in a deep cultural awareness, or simply an aesthetic response to the demands of contemporary wedding visualization? At this point, it is important to examine in depth how the phenomenon of symbolic hybridization in contemporary weddings in Yogyakarta has changed the way society interprets tradition [7]. This change cannot be separated from the central role of bridal makeup artists as cultural actors and service industry players. In traditional societies, make-up artists act as guardians of the sacred values of marriage, responsible for the authenticity of the make-up, the symbolism of the accessories, and the order of the procedures.

However, in the modern service economy, the role of makeup artists has shifted to that of aesthetic service providers, adapting to market demands. Makeup artists no longer merely maintain traditional customs but also act as visual creators, expected to meet client expectations, particularly in the context of digital visual imaging, which significantly influences the bride's personal and social image. The commercialization of culture is a key driver of this shift. The Indonesian wedding industry has become a highly competitive market, with makeup, documentation, and decoration services becoming key segments. Within this competitive landscape, visual aesthetics, perceived as unique, luxurious, and Instagrammable, have become key selling points. Sundanese Siger bridal makeup, with its large, gold-encrusted siger and lavish ornamentation, is often considered more appealing than the classic, conservative paes ageng (traditional Sundanese wedding headdress). Consequently, brides from outside the Sundanese culture have begun to adopt the siger style without considering its symbolic value and the accompanying processional structure. This reflects a disjunction between form and meaning. Cultural symbols are used outside their original context, based solely on their visual value, without understanding their philosophical and ethical values. This phenomenon reflects a symbolic disjunction between form and meaning.

Cultural symbols, once embedded within coherent systems of belief and ritual ethics, are now recontextualized primarily for their visual and aesthetic value, often detached from their original philosophical foundations. To interpret this transformation, the study draws upon theories of cultural semiotics and symbolic representation, which explain how signs and rituals acquire new meanings when displaced from their native contexts. Within this framework, the appropriation of traditional symbols in Javanese bridal makeup can be understood as part of a broader process of post-traditional aesthetics, where visual elements are selectively maintained while their moral or cosmological underpinnings are redefined, or even neglected. Such disjunction illustrates how modern aesthetic practices both preserve and transform cultural heritage, turning symbols into flexible visual resources that express contemporary ideals of beauty and identity. By situating this analysis within established theoretical debates, the study strengthens its examination of how form and meaning are renegotiated in the evolving visual culture of modern Javanese weddings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many anthropologists and cultural researchers have studied Indonesian wedding culture. Geertz (1960) noted that Javanese wedding ceremonies are complex representations of cosmological values, spirituality, and social status. Meanwhile, Koentjaraningrat (1984) emphasized that customary structures are not rigid but maintain traditional values as a form of local identity. In the contemporary context, Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of cultural hybridity serves as an important framework for understanding changes in traditional practices. Hybridity explains how two or more cultural identities intersect to form new forms [8]. In wedding practices, these new forms emerge through the combination of different traditional elements, such as Sundanese adornment in Javanese wedding ceremonies.

A. Javanese Bridal Makeup Traditions

Bridal makeup in Javanese culture is not merely a visual aesthetic aspect, but rather a concrete manifestation of a value system deeply rooted in the social structure and cosmological views of Javanese society. Bridal makeup represents a person's status, maturity, and spiritual transition from singlehood to married life. In various anthropological literature, the Yogyakarta-style paes ageng is the highest form of makeup in the Javanese aesthetic structure, which is permitted only by the nobility or those who have obtained customary permission. Structurally, paes ageng consists of several important elements, black paes on the forehead, cundhuk mentul on the bun, centhung, and jasmine flower decorations as symbols of purity and harmony. The gold color used in accessories depicts nobility and stability [9]. This makeup is not created haphazardly, but rather follows the "pakem" (standard rules) that have been passed down through generations by traditional makeup artists. Javanese bridal makeup is not only an aesthetic product but also steeped in philosophical meaning [10]. The "paes" (headdress), for example,

symbolizes sincerity in accepting God's destiny. The high, upward-pointing bun signifies hope for a life of ever-improving and prayerful obedience. Meanwhile, jasmine flowers draped around the neck and shoulders symbolize purity and devotion.

These meanings demonstrate that makeup is inseparable from profound transformative and spiritual rituals. In traditional Javanese society, bridal makeup artists hold a distinct social status [11]. They are considered not only artists but also guardians of cultural values. This profession is not inherited haphazardly, but through a process of apprenticeship, the transmission of knowledge, and active involvement in traditional ceremonies. Therefore, makeup artists who master the "pakem" (traditional rules) are considered to have the moral authority to maintain the purity of the makeup and the bridal procession. However, in the last two decades, there has been a shift in the perception and implementation of Javanese bridal makeup. The phenomena of globalization and digitalization have driven a hybridization of styles. Young brides tend to choose makeup that is considered more "modern," "glamorous," or "viral" on social media. Traditional makeup styles such as the paes ageng are slowly being abandoned as they are considered too conservative and unphotogenic in today's digital visual context.

However, some groups still maintain the paes tradition by adapting techniques and colors to appear more contemporary. This adaptation has sparked a debate between preserving values and the need to adapt to the times. Some academics believe that modifications that respect the basic structure and symbolic meaning are still acceptable as a form of cultural dynamism. However, if changes are made completely without considering the underlying philosophy, the makeup loses its essence as part of the Javanese cultural rite of passage [12]. In this context, it is important to emphasize that Javanese bridal makeup is an integral part of a value system that must be read within the broader cultural framework. Without a deep understanding of its symbolic meaning, makeup will become merely an aesthetic commodity that lacks identity. Therefore, the study of Javanese bridal makeup needs to involve an interdisciplinary approach, including visual anthropology, cultural aesthetics, and performative ethnography.

B. Cross-Customary Practices in Modern Marriage

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in intercultural wedding practices in Indonesia, particularly in urban areas like Yogyakarta. This practice refers to the combination of cultural elements from various regions or ethnicities applied within a single wedding ceremony, including attire, makeup, and the procession. This phenomenon reflects a shift in societal orientation toward cultural identity and aesthetic preferences influenced by globalization, social media, and the commercialization of the wedding industry. This phenomenon does not occur in a vacuum [13]. Intercultural wedding practices are a response to social dynamics, including the rise in interethnic marriages, cultural migration, and the development of collective visual tastes formed through online media. Popular culture studies have noted a tendency for local cultural elements to be commodified for dynamic, flexible, and customizable visual needs. This is where bridal makeup and traditional ceremonies shift from sacred forms to personal and performative expression. In modern wedding practices, a mismatch between makeup and the ceremony is often found. For example, the use of the Sundanese siger by brides undergoing the Yogyakarta-style panggih procession.

The use of the siger in the Sundanese cultural context symbolizes the greatness, majesty of women, and their spiritual position within the social structure. However, when worn in a procession that refers to Javanese values such as temu manten, balangan gantal, and wijikan, a clash of symbolic meanings occurs that is disharmonious. Some brides and grooms and makeup artists argue that this inter-traditional fusion is a form of appreciation for Indonesia's cultural diversity [14]. However, anthropological studies show that fusion that does not pay attention to the continuity of values and meanings actually results in cultural fragmentation. The combination of incongruous elements can create a blurring of identity, rather than respect for plurality. This practice also demonstrates the shift in the position of bridal makeup artists from cultural actors to service providers [15]. In the traditional system, makeup artists had a moral responsibility to uphold norms. However, today, makeup artists tend to follow market demand without providing cultural education to clients. These changing relationships have weakened the cultural control function of marriage practices. Studies by several visual culture experts indicate that modern marriage has become a platform for expressing social class, lifestyle, and visual aspirations [16].

In this context, traditional elements are merely used as symbolic ornaments to create a narrative of beauty without considering their historical context and spiritual value [17]. This marks a shift in marriage from a sacred rite to a visually curated performative event for public consumption. It should be noted that not all inter-traditional practices are problematic. In some cases, the fusion is carried out consciously and respects both cultural value systems involved. For example, in inter-ethnic weddings, two traditional processions are combined sequentially or in parallel, with clear symbolic explanations and the active role of traditional leaders from both parties. This reflects a healthy and inclusive cultural dialogue. Therefore, the main challenge in inter-traditional practices lies in how bridal makeup artists, families, and wedding industry players understand and mediate symbolic meanings so that they are not reduced to mere empty visualizations. In the context of Yogyakarta, a city with a reputation as a center of Javanese culture, this phenomenon requires careful attention. Yogyakarta is not only a center of aesthetics, but also a guardian of traditional values that must be preserved authentically. If hybridization practices continue without a clear value framework, it is not impossible that there will be an erosion of cultural meaning that will impact future generations.

III. METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach through a case study in the Yogyakarta region. Information was collected through in-depth interviews with bridal makeup artists, brides, and local cultural observers. Direct observations of several wedding ceremonies were also conducted. Data analysis was conducted inductively, drawing on theories of cultural hybridity and symbolic deconstruction. The primary objective was to identify the thought patterns and rationale behind makeup choices that did not conform to traditional norms.

A. Algorithm/Pseudocode

In qualitative case study-based research, data analysis is conducted systematically through a series of interrelated steps. Although the term "algorithm" is more commonly used in computer science or data science studies, in this context it is used metaphorically to describe the logical, sequential, and structured workflow that underlies the qualitative analysis process. The goal is to ensure that the data interpretation process is conducted objectively, transparently, and replicable. The initial step in the data analysis algorithm begins with the data collection stage. At this stage, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with several key informants, namely bridal makeup artists, brides, and local cultural practitioners. The interviews were conducted semi-structured to allow informants to provide exploratory answers while remaining within the research questions. In addition, participant observation was conducted at two traditional wedding ceremonies in Yogyakarta to capture the visual, symbolic, and performative dimensions of bridal makeup practices. These observations were recorded in the form of field notes and visual documentation (photos and videos), which were then analyzed contextually.

After the data is collected, the algorithm enters the second stage, namely data categorization. This stage is carried out using coding techniques, namely the process of labeling data units in the form of interview quotes, visual observations, or field narratives. The coding process is carried out openly initially, where the researcher does not assign categories from the beginning, but allows themes to emerge from the data inductively. For example, a quote containing the reasons for choosing a Sundanese siger by a Javanese bride is coded "Aesthetic Preference," while a quote revealing the bride's minimal understanding of symbolic meaning is coded "Lack of Cultural Literacy." After open coding is carried out, the next stage is grouping themes or axial coding. In this stage, the researcher begins to organize the codes that have been created into several main themes that are broader and interrelated. In the context of this research, three major themes emerged: (1) visual aesthetic preferences as the main motivation, (2) inconsistencies between makeup symbols and the structure of the procession, and (3) the weakening of the educational function of bridal makeup. The fourth step in the algorithm is thematic and interpretative analysis. This approach is important to demonstrate that qualitative research also demands logical and procedural rigor and cannot be conducted purely intuitively or speculatively. When presented in pseudocode format, the analytical framework can be written as follows (as a systematic illustration):
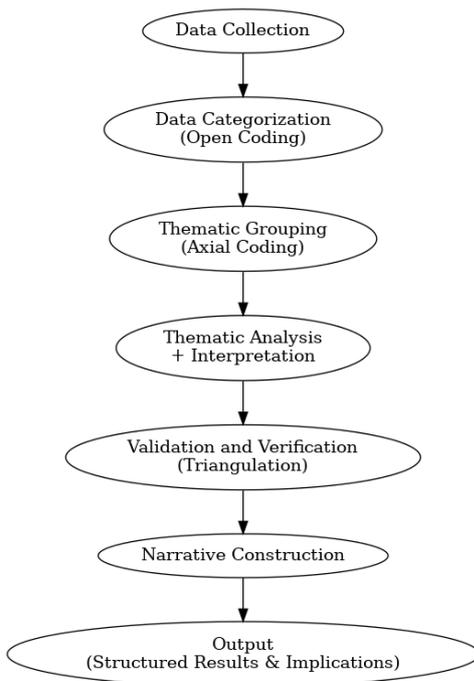
IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Aesthetic Preferences in Makeup Choices

Aesthetic preferences have become a key determinant in the visual decisions made by today's brides in planning their wedding day, including in choosing makeup [18]. In the context of Yogyakarta, a city deeply rooted

in Javanese culture this phenomenon gains particular significance when brides from Javanese backgrounds opt for bridal makeup elements from other traditions, such as the Sundanese siger [19]. Field data indicate that this choice is not solely driven by ethnic identification but rather by aesthetic and social considerations, especially the desire to appear elegant, distinctive, and visually captivating in photographic and digital representations. Interviews with three professional bridal makeup artists in Yogyakarta reveal a sharp increase in demand for non-Javanese styles over the past five years. The siger, with its grand silhouette and crown-like structure, is perceived as "majestic," "elegant," and "classy," resonating strongly with social media aesthetics that prioritize spectacle and visual prominence. From a deconstructive theoretical perspective, this shift reflects more than a change in fashion preference it represents a cultural negotiation that destabilizes traditional binaries such as traditional versus modern, local versus external, and philosophical versus aesthetic. Within Derridean terms, these oppositions are not merely reversed but unraveled, revealing the instability of what is considered "authentic" Javanese identity in the contemporary wedding arena. The preference for the siger over the paes ageng thus exemplifies a deconstruction of essentialist cultural meanings, where traditional symbols are re-signified through new visual logics and mediated performances. Furthermore, the changing role of makeup artists, from cultural custodians who once upheld ritual aesthetics to service providers who respond to clients' aesthetic demands, highlights how cultural authority is redistributed within the modern wedding economy. The commodification of aesthetic symbols and their reinterpretation through digital visibility contribute to what can be seen as the deconstruction of cultural authenticity, where meaning is continually negotiated between heritage, personal expression, and social media visibility. In this sense, the study reveals how everyday aesthetic choices function as sites of cultural critique, transforming Javanese bridal makeup from a fixed traditional code into a dynamic field of symbolic experimentation and hybrid identity construction.

In contrast, the Yogyakarta-style paes ageng, despite its rich philosophical value and deep roots in palace traditions, is considered "less flexible," "too stiff," and "not photogenic" by some young brides. Its conservative makeup, tight curved lines, and more muted accessories make it visually uncompetitive in the digital pop culture landscape [20]. As a result, this makeup style has been marginalized, even among communities with genealogically Javanese cultural roots. Bridal makeup artists, on the other hand, acknowledge that they often act as facilitators rather than directors. In a service economy, they no longer occupy the position of guardians of cultural values, but rather as service providers who must be flexible to client requests. When asked about cultural considerations in Javanese brides' selection of siger, most makeup artists stated that this is no longer their responsibility. They simply apply makeup according to requests, without assessing whether the makeup is philosophically or symbolically aligned with the customary structure they observe. This situation indicates an epistemic shift in how society understands bridal makeup. Therefore, the preference for siger is not a betrayal of local culture, but an expression of a new paradigm for viewing the body, beauty, and self-image in a contemporary social context. Aesthetic preferences based on popular values and media images are not without risks. In the long term, if this trend continues uncritically, the paes (traditional Javanese traditional costume) and its philosophical meanings could be displaced.

B. Analysis of Symbolic Inconsistencies between Makeup and Customary Structure

The phenomenon of the use of Sundanese bridal makeup in Javanese wedding ceremonies, particularly in the Yogyakarta style, presents a significant symbolic incongruity. Makeup and ceremony in Javanese culture are essentially a unified whole that mutually reinforce each other's symbolic value. When makeup does not originate from the same tradition as the procession, a dislocation of meaning occurs, resulting in a blurring of the cultural representation itself [8]. The panggih procession in Yogyakarta tradition, for example, is the culmination of a series of sacred ceremonies rich in symbolic meaning, from the siraman (prayers), midodareni (gathering), to temu manten (bridal shower). Each element of this procession is designed to reflect one's spiritual and social transition into married life. Within this structure, the paes ageng (traditional bridal makeup) is more than just cosmetic. It embodies purity, submission to the cosmic order, and affirmation of the noble values of the Javanese family. However, when this structure is carried out by a bride wearing a Sundanese siger (traditional bridal makeup), an unavoidable symbolic clash occurs. The siger in Sundanese culture does not stand within the same system of meaning as the Javanese paes. This culture has its own historical, geographical, and philosophical context, which does not directly intersect with the structure of Javanese traditional ceremonies. Therefore, when the siger is worn in the panggih ceremony, these cultural symbols do not reinforce each other, but rather overlap, even negating each other's meaning.

This dislocation occurs due to the separation between form and function. In traditional culture, visual forms are always linked to social functions and symbolic meanings. Paes ageng (traditional wedding attire) is only used in certain situations and by those who meet customary criteria. However, in the context of contemporary weddings, forms are used without considering their symbolic function. Makeup is chosen solely based on visual taste, not because of its connection to the values or structure of the ceremony. From a symbolic anthropology perspective (Geertz, 1973), this incongruity signifies a crisis of cultural representation, in which ritual symbols lose their anchoring within shared systems of meaning. When symbols are detached from their original ceremonial and philosophical contexts, their signification becomes fluid, contingent, and no longer culturally accountable. Drawing

from cultural semiotics (Barthes, 1967), such displacement reflects a shift from symbol to sign from carriers of communal value to aesthetic commodities consumed for visual pleasure. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a form of cultural deconstruction in the Derridean sense, where the structural relationship between signifier and signified is unraveled.

Traditional value systems, once embedded within ritual aesthetics, are fragmented into visual surfaces, producing what Baudrillard (1983) describes as simulacra, representations that imitate cultural depth without retaining its ethical or philosophical grounding. Symbols that once unified collective identity thus become decorative ornaments, stripped of their moral reference and transformed into displays of taste and prestige. However, this analysis does not seek to reject cultural hybridization per se. Following Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity, cultural fusion can generate new spaces of negotiation and creativity. Yet, when hybridization occurs without reflective dialogue or philosophical awareness, it risks producing rootless pseudo-cultural forms aesthetic amalgamations detached from the historical consciousness that once gave them coherence. When bridal makeup and ceremonial meaning are no longer symbolically aligned, the wedding ceases to function as a transformative rite of passage (Turner, 1969) and instead becomes a performative spectacle, a visually appealing event that lacks the ritual depth once central to Javanese matrimonial identity.

C. Socio-Cultural Implications and Challenges of Preserving Customs

The inconsistency between bridal makeup and the structure of traditional ceremonies is not merely an aesthetic or symbolic issue, but also directly impacts social life and the preservation of local culture. On the one hand, this phenomenon demonstrates cultural flexibility in facing the dynamics of the times. On the other hand, it signals a weakening of the binding power of traditional values within the community itself [21]. Socially, this phenomenon reflects a transformation in how society views tradition. Tradition is no longer seen as a sacred norm that must be obeyed, but rather as a cultural resource that can be customized. The concept of "pakem," which has been closely guarded by traditional communities, especially in Yogyakarta, is beginning to shift in meaning. In the long term, this has the potential to erode local cultural authority, including customary institutions, traditional makeup communities, and cultural education institutions. When communities no longer feel the need to follow paes, the sustainability of the values embodied in them is threatened. This undoubtedly poses a major challenge to cultural preservation, particularly in the context of regeneration. Many young makeup artists, for example, are no longer equipped with philosophical knowledge regarding paes ageng or the symbolic structure of Javanese makeup. They prioritize technical makeup skills that align with market trends. As a result, cultural knowledge that should be passed down from generation to generation is no longer part of professional practice. This is exacerbated by the lack of institutional support for cultural education in traditional makeup [22].

On the other hand, the consumer society is increasingly disconnected from its cultural roots. Cultural literacy regarding the symbolic meaning of makeup, the philosophy of ceremonies, and customary structures is no longer part of family or social education. As a result, important decisions regarding weddings are determined more by market tastes than by cultural awareness. Weddings, which should be spaces for affirming cultural identity, have become spaces for visual expression shaped by the logic of consumption. Facing this challenge requires strategic efforts from various parties. Local governments, cultural institutions, makeup communities, and educational institutions need to collaborate in developing adaptive cultural preservation strategies. Preservation can no longer rely on a conservative approach that emphasizes prohibitions or bans. What is needed is an educational and collaborative approach that can explain cultural values contextually and relevantly to the times. It is also crucial to develop a more inclusive cultural narrative that embraces social dynamics without sacrificing the substance of values.

Cultural hybridization is indeed an inevitable process in modern society, as interactions between global and local cultures continuously generate new aesthetic and symbolic forms. However, hybridity is not a simple mixture of traditions, but a "third space" where cultural meanings are negotiated and rearticulated through tension and difference. In this sense, hybridization must be guided by a conscious awareness of values, ensuring that the blending of elements becomes a dialogical process rather than a superficial fusion. Similarly, emphasizes that hybrid cultural expressions can either enrich or dilute collective meaning depending on the power dynamics and cultural agency involved. When hybridization occurs through reflective reinterpretation, it can revitalize tradition and make it relevant to contemporary sensibilities. Conversely, when it is driven purely by commercial or aesthetic motives, it risks producing empty cultural symbols disconnected from their ethical or communal foundations. Within this framework, traditional weddings can serve as creative arenas for adaptive cultural preservation, spaces where innovation and authenticity coexist. By integrating traditional values with contemporary aesthetics in a reflexive and ethical manner, such practices can represent culture not as a static relic but as a living, evolving expression that remains both authentic and contemporary.

V. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of the deconstruction of Javanese bridal makeup traditions through cross-traditional practices reflects the complex cultural dynamics in contemporary society. This practice represents a form of cultural hybridity

that arises from the interaction between traditional values and modern aesthetic demands. The mismatch between makeup and the processional procedures not only impacts the visual appearance but also influences the interpretation of tradition. In the long term, this phenomenon has the potential to erode philosophical understanding of local cultural values. It is crucial for cultural stakeholders, traditional institutions, and wedding service providers to work together to educate the public about the importance of consistency between symbols and meaning in traditional ceremonies. Aesthetic innovation should still pay attention to the roots of cultural values, so that transformation does not turn into disorientation. Through critical understanding and cross-sector collaboration, cultural preservation can coexist with the times, without sacrificing the cultural identity that is our shared heritage.

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