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Chinese Bridal Makeup and Fashion: A Blend of Modernity and Tradition on The Sangjit Day

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Chinese bridal makeup and attire in the Sangjit procession as a fusion of modern and traditional elements. Sangjit, which is a proposal tradition in Chinese culture, is not only symbolic of the commitment between families, but also rich in visual symbolism through bridal makeup and attire. This study uses a literature review method, referring to various academic articles from Google Scholar to analyze the philosophy, techniques, and dynamics of aesthetic transformation in the Sangjit procession. The results of the discussion show that both makeup and clothing have undergone significant developments: traditional makeup, which used to be colorful, is now more adaptive to global trends, while clothing such as cheongsam retains classic motifs but is processed with modern cuts and materials. This study also reveals that this combination reflects the cultural strategy of the Chinese community to maintain the continuity of tradition amid the tide of modernization. This research contributes to broadening our understanding of cross-cultural aesthetic practices and offers new insights into how cultural identity is articulated through makeup and fashion. However, this study has limitations due to the lack of primary data, so further research using a field approach is highly recommended.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji seni rias dan busana pengantin Tionghoa dalam prosesi Sangjit sebagai bentuk perpaduan antara unsur modern dan tradisional. Sangjit, yang merupakan tradisi lamaran dalam budaya Tionghoa, tidak hanya bermakna sebagai simbol komitmen antar keluarga, tetapi juga sarat dengan simbolisme visual melalui riasan dan busana pengantin. Kajian ini menggunakan metode studi literatur dengan merujuk pada berbagai artikel akademik dari Google Scholar untuk menganalisis filosofi, teknik, serta dinamika transformasi estetika dalam prosesi Sangjit. Hasil pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa baik seni rias maupun busana mengalami perkembangan signifikan: riasan tradisional yang dahulu penuh warna kini lebih adaptif terhadap tren global, sementara busana seperti cheongsam tetap mempertahankan motif klasik namun diolah dengan potongan dan material modern. Kajian ini juga mengungkap bahwa perpaduan tersebut mencerminkan strategi budaya masyarakat Tionghoa untuk menjaga keberlanjutan tradisi di tengah arus modernisasi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperluas wawasan tentang praktik estetika lintas budaya dan

menawarkan pemahaman baru mengenai bagaimana identitas budaya diartikulasikan melalui seni rias dan busana. Namun, penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan pada minimnya data primer, sehingga penelitian lanjutan dengan pendekatan lapangan sangat disarankan.

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INTRODUCTION

Sangjit is a significant Chinese ceremony that symbolizes a formal proposal between two families before marriage [1]. This tradition, with deep historical roots, is passed down through generations to honor ancestors and strengthen family ties. The procession is not only a formal event but also carries philosophical meaning about commitment, blessings, and hopes for a harmonious married life [2]. A key feature of *Sangjit* is the exchange of gifts, often in red and gold, colors believed to bring luck and prosperity [3]. Each gift has a symbolic meaning, such as sweet cakes for happiness and wealth, or jewelry for financial prosperity.

In practice, *Sangjit* cannot be separated from the times. In the modern era, many couples have modified the form and duration of the procession to make it more practical for urban life. However, its cultural essence and symbolic value remain strictly preserved. This suggests that the Indonesian Chinese community has strong cultural awareness, maintaining ancestral identity while adapting to contemporary life [1].

Chinese bridal makeup and attire play a crucial role in *Sangjit*, serving both as an aesthetic complement and a representation of deeply rooted cultural values [4]. Bridal makeup is not only meant to beautify, but also symbolizes the bride's readiness for a new phase of life. Traditional techniques emphasize bright, smooth skin for purity and good fortune; strong yet soft eyes for wisdom; and red lips for cheerfulness and positive energy [3]. These details reveal that every aspect of makeup holds a deeper meaning beyond visual appearance.

The wedding attire in the *Sangjit* procession is also rich in symbolic meaning [5]. *Cheongsam* and *Kua* are two of the most commonly used clothing options, each with distinctive cuts and embroidered decorations that depict the philosophy of yin and yang through dragon motifs (symbolizing male strength) and phoenix motifs (symbolizing female beauty and elegance). Red still dominates as a symbol of good luck, while gold accents not only beautify but also reinforce the message of prosperity and social status of the bride and groom's families [6]. Accessories such as gold hairpins, jade, and small crowns are not merely decorations, but symbols that reinforce the status and cultural values upheld in Chinese society (*Tionghoa*) [7].

Globalization and social media have introduced new trends in Chinese bridal makeup and fashion, including during *Sangjit* [1]. Young couples now incorporate modern touches, such as airbrushing, contouring, international cosmetics, and minimalist clothing that preserves cultural ornamentation [1]. Modern cheongsams, for example, are slimmer and lighter, offering greater mobility while still maintaining elegance. [6]. Makeup is increasingly personalized. Artists consider clients' facial features, not only traditional standards, to create authentic, competitive looks [8].

This trend shows a dynamic blend of heritage preservation and adaptation to global styles. Indonesian Chinese society does not view tradition rigidly. Instead, old and new elements mix flexibly into a meaningful whole [7]. Bridal makeup and fashion are more than wedding rituals; they are evolving cultural expressions.

This study aims to examine in depth how Chinese bridal makeup and fashion combine in the *Sangjit* procession. It focuses on balancing tradition and modernity in beauty practices and fashion design. The study will also assess how this combination affects public perceptions of cultural identity and marriage values within the Indonesian Chinese

community. By examining the technical and aesthetic aspects of makeup and clothing, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how Chinese culture evolves.

This research aims to provide new insights for academics in the fields of beauty, anthropology, and fashion design. It targets those interested in the connection between aesthetics and culture. Practically, the results may serve as a guide for makeup artists and designers who want to create works that are both visually stunning and culturally significant. Thus, this research supports adaptive preservation of Chinese culture amid rapid globalization. culture amid rapid globalization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Sangjit tradition is a significant aspect of Chinese wedding ceremonies, which are rich in symbolism and cultural significance. This ceremony not only features the exchange of gifts but also showcases strong visual aspects through makeup and bridal attire. According to Simamora and Shi, makeup in Chinese culture holds deep significance, as it represents symbols of good luck, purity, and respect for ancestors [2]. The same applies to the clothes worn, which typically combine red and gold to reinforce the impression of good luck and prosperity [7].

The same applies to the attire worn, which typically features a combination of red and gold colors. A study conducted by Insiyah reveals that globalization has had a significant impact on changes in Chinese bridal makeup and attire, including those observed during the *Sangjit* procession. Brides and grooms are now more flexible in combining traditional elements with contemporary fashion trends, for example, by choosing cheongsam dresses paired with modern design touches, such as minimalist cuts and the use of new materials, to reinforce the impression of good luck and prosperity [3]. In the context of makeup, Wu and Lim (2022) explain that Chinese bridal makeup now draws inspiration from international trends, such as the use of shading techniques to accentuate facial contours and the selection of softer color palettes, while still retaining classic elements, including the use of red lipstick.

Sari et al. studied the development of kebaya in Indonesia. While not focused on Sangjit, they show that cultural fusion shapes wedding attire aesthetics while valuing tradition [6]. This confirms that global culture and aesthetics influence wedding attire, including in Indonesia's Chinese community.

Yanti's ethnographic study found families still prioritize clothing and makeup selection during Sangjit. These represent family honor [2]. This proves that even as customs evolve, tradition is respected.

Fadilah studied cultural fusion in Javanese-Chinese bridal makeup. This blend of tradition and modernity creates a new look that is appealing and culturally rich [8]. Many studies have shown that modernization has changed Sangjit's makeup and fashion, but efforts to maintain tradition remain strong.

This transformation is not just a visual style change. It is a form of cultural adaptation that mirrors social changes in the Chinese community. Hypothesis Development: Based on the background and review, this study develops these hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a significant relationship between the selection of makeup and Chinese wedding attire in the *Sangjit* tradition and efforts to preserve traditional cultural values.

- Hypothesis 2 (H2): The combination of modern and traditional elements in Chinese bridal makeup and fashion can increase aesthetic appreciation and cultural relevance among the younger Chinese generation.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): The influence of globalization encourages technical and aesthetic transformations in Chinese bridal makeup and fashion without eliminating the philosophical meaning of the *Sangjit* procession.

These hypotheses were formulated to examine how tradition and modernization influence makeup and fashion practices in *Sangjit* processions by analyzing their specific contributions to cultural preservation and social acceptance in contemporary contexts.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature review approach, aiming to examine in depth the meaning and symbolism of makeup and clothing in the *Sangjit* tradition within Chinese culture [9]. Data collection was carried out through several systematic stages. First, the researcher identified the topic and focus of the study, namely the *Sangjit* tradition and the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of bridal makeup and clothing. Second, the researcher conducted a literature search across various credible sources, including scientific journals, ethnographic books, cultural articles, relevant theses/dissertations, and online publications from Chinese cultural institutions. The search was conducted through scientific databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda Ristekbrin, and university digital libraries. Next, the researcher compiled a set of literature selection criteria, including relevance to the topic, accuracy of sources, and timeliness of information.

After gathering relevant literature, researchers read and noted important points from each source, such as descriptions of the *Sangjit* procession, the symbolism of colors and clothing styles, and the cultural significance of makeup elements. The collected data were then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively to identify key themes that support a deeper understanding of the *Sangjit* tradition. This process enabled the researcher to draw interpretive and contextual conclusions based on a synthesis of various perspectives in the reviewed literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Philosophy and Meaning of the *Sangjit* Tradition

The *Sangjit* tradition is one of a series of ceremonies in Chinese wedding customs that is rich in meaning and symbolism [2]. *Sangjit*, also known as “pinang balik,” is the stage where the groom's family gives gifts to the bride's family as an official symbol of engagement. This procession is not merely a traditional ceremony, but reflects deep philosophical values, both in terms of interfamily relationships and the socio-cultural values embraced by the Chinese community [5]. In the *Sangjit* ceremony, there are strong symbols of hope, prayers, and ethics that must be upheld in married life. Each gift has a specific meaning related to hopes for good fortune, prosperity, fertility, and harmony for the couple who are about to get married. For example, gifts such as red envelopes or money symbolize sustenance, sugar cane symbolizes a sweet and long life, and gold jewelry symbolizes prosperity [10].

According to the results of a cultural semiotic study in Bangka Belitung, Sangjit has a layered meaning structure. First, at the denotative level, Sangjit is a procession of gift-giving by the groom's family [2]. However, on a connotative level, *Sangjit* represents the man's sincerity in taking responsibility for his future wife and respecting her family. This procession also affirms public recognition of the couple's status as they enter the engagement phase [5]. The items presented during *Sangjit* have deep semiotic meanings. For example, the gift of two pairs of red candles not only serves as a symbol of illumination in household life, but also as a symbol of the balanced dualism of men and women united in harmony.

Red candles are also believed to ward off evil spirits and symbolize good luck. The article "Traditional Chinese Wedding Ceremonies in Malang" explains that the philosophy of *Sangjit* is closely related to the concept of *guanxi*, or strong social networks. *Sangjit* strengthens the relationship between the two families, fosters mutual understanding, and helps avoid potential conflicts that may arise in the future. Additionally, the Confucian philosophy, which emphasizes family and social harmony, is clearly reflected in this tradition. *Sangjit* also conveys an important message about economic value. In the accounting ethnography examined in the third study, *Sangjit* is seen not only as a cultural procession but also as a form of social transaction with significant economic dimensions. The dowry money given reflects respect, but also serves as a symbol of the man's sincerity in providing for his future wife's needs.

Interestingly, *Sangjit* also represents the process of intergenerational communication within extended families. Parents and family elders are actively involved in planning and carrying out this procession, which also serves as a medium for instilling Chinese cultural values in the younger generation [1]. This aligns with the concept of cultural transmission, whereby culture is passed down from one generation to the next through actual practice and experience.

The *Sangjit* procession not only provides an opportunity for families to get to know each other better, but also creates a space for dialogue that includes hopes and agreements regarding the couple's life after marriage [10]. This is evident from the ceremonial stages, which involve formal discussions about the wedding date, as well as the symbolic blessing given through gifts. In contemporary practice, several elements of *Sangjit* have been adjusted to remain relevant to modern social conditions. For example, the number of gifts, which used to be very large, has now been adjusted to avoid burdening the family.

However, the core philosophy of *Sangjit* remains intact, namely as a symbol of commitment, honor, and the blessing of both families for a better future. Overall, *Sangjit* is a reflection of the complexity of Chinese culture, which is rich in symbols and philosophy. This procession not only showcases the richness of customs but also serves as a medium for expressing noble values that are highly respected, such as respect for parents, social responsibility, and family harmony. In the context of Indonesian Chinese society, the *Sangjit* tradition is also a form of cultural identity preservation that is crucial to maintain, as it risks becoming extinct amid the tide of globalization [4].

Thus, *Sangjit* is not merely a formal traditional procession, but a cultural ritual with deep philosophical value. It serves as a bridge connecting traditional values with contemporary reality, as well as a means of symbolic communication between two families united through marriage.

Aesthetic and Technical Aspects of Makeup and Fashion

Bridal makeup and fashion have two main aspects that determine their quality: aesthetics and technique [8]. These two aspects cannot be separated because they complement each other in creating a harmonious appearance that aligns with cultural values and current trends. In the context of Chinese-Indonesian weddings and also in various global trends, aesthetic and technical aspects have undergone dynamic developments. Aesthetics: Visual Harmony and Symbolism in Bridal Makeup and Fashion. Aesthetics in bridal makeup and fashion refer to the visual beauty created by the selection of appropriate colors, textures, patterns, and shapes.

In Indonesia, especially among the Chinese community, the dominant use of red remains a symbol of happiness and good fortune, although it has begun to be combined with more modern pastel colors and white [5]. This shows an aesthetic adaptation between traditional values and more minimalist Western trends.

In addition, clothing designs such as wedding kebayas have also undergone a transformation. Whereas kebayas used to be synonymous with intricate embroidery and ornate details, today's designs tend to be simpler yet still elegant. According to Soelistyowati, Chinese wedding kebayas for Generation Z, for example, tend to use more organza fabric with cleaner patterns and accents on the sleeves and neckline [6]. This is evidence that fashion aesthetics are continually evolving in line with the changing tastes of the times.

In terms of makeup, aesthetics are achieved through the harmony of makeup colors with skin tones and the highlighting of the bride's natural features [8]. The Korean influence, which tends to feature natural makeup with a focus on glowing skin, is now widely adopted in Indonesian bridal makeup, especially among the younger generation who want to look elegant without looking overdone [11].

Skills and Details of Workmanship The technical aspects of makeup and fashion refer to the skills needed to apply makeup and design clothes with precision. Bridal makeup techniques are not only about polishing the skin but also about creating makeup that will remain perfect throughout the long procession. Foundation layering techniques, the use of setting spray, and waterproof makeup are now standard techniques in modern bridal makeup [11].

On the other hand, the technical aspects of wedding attire include strong sewing techniques, the right choice of materials, and cuts that suit the bride's posture. A kebaya with an A-line silhouette, for example, requires special techniques to ensure that the fabric falls perfectly and remains comfortable to wear for hours on end [6]. A study by Stefanie states that the younger generation now prefers clothing that is lightweight yet still looks grand, so tailors are required to have adaptive pattern modification techniques [1].

A blend of aesthetics and technical skill. The brilliance of bridal makeup and fashion can only be achieved when aesthetic and technical aspects are synergistically combined [8]. For example, a kebaya with a meaningful golden dragon motif will not look perfect if the embroidery technique is poor. Similarly, dramatic eye makeup will look excessive if it is not balanced with a natural complexion. In Indonesia, many makeup artists (MUAs) are beginning to combine Western and Eastern techniques, such as Western contouring techniques with Asian-style soft makeup philosophy.

In terms of fashion, the combination of European draping techniques with classic kebaya cuts yields clothing that is not only visually stunning but also ergonomically designed for the bride to wear [6]. **The Impact of Globalization and Local Adaptation.** Globalization has brought many changes in the aesthetic and technical aspects of bridal makeup and fashion. Natural makeup trends from Korea and Japan, as well as Western-style bridal fashion trends such as ball gowns, are gaining popularity [12].

However, local adaptations continue to play an important role. In Indonesia, especially in Chinese weddings, even though Western-style dresses are becoming increasingly popular, traditional elements such as sequins, dragon motifs, and the use of *songket* fabric are still retained to preserve cultural identity [6]. This shows that despite global aesthetic adaptations, technical values rooted in local culture are still preserved. For example, in Chinese wedding kebaya, hand embroidery techniques are still prioritized even though the designs have been simplified to follow modern trends.

The Combination of Modern and Traditional Elements in the Sangjit Tradition

The *Sangjit* tradition, as an integral part of pre-wedding ceremonies in Chinese culture, is a moment rich in symbolic and aesthetic meaning. In this context, makeup and clothing play a significant role in representing cultural values while responding to the changing dynamics of the times. In Semarang, a unique form of acculturation exists, where modern and traditional elements intertwine harmoniously in the practice of *Sangjit* [8]. This is not only reflected in clothing choices, but also in makeup techniques that have evolved with the times while still maintaining their traditional roots [13].

In the field of makeup, traditional Chinese makeup features red and gold colors, which symbolize good luck and prosperity [14]. Women's makeup in the *Sangjit* tradition tends to be soft, with defined eyebrows, elegant eye makeup, and red lips, which are a classic icon.

However, with the influence of globalization and changing aesthetic tastes, these traditional makeup techniques have now undergone many transformations. Makeup artists in Semarang, for example, have begun to combine facial contouring techniques and more modern foundation application to create a look that is not only photogenic but also long-lasting [8]. The use of high-tech cosmetic products such as airbrush foundation and waterproof makeup is characteristic of the modern techniques adopted in *Sangjit* makeup. In addition to the techniques, modern elements are also evident in the more flexible colors and styles of makeup.

Whereas red used to dominate without compromise, now there are adaptations of derivative colors such as maroon, burgundy, and peach, which give a fresher impression and suit the bride's personality. However, traditional values are still maintained by incorporating symbolic elements, such as dragon- and phoenix-shaped hairpins, which remain mandatory components of the overall look [15]. In terms of fashion, the blend of modern and traditional styles is evident in the cheongsam and qipao designs recreated by local designers.

In terms of fashion, the combination of modern and traditional styles is more evident in the cheongsam and qipao designs recreated by local designers. *Sangjit* clothing, which was once stiff with classic high-necked and full-length cuts, has now been modified through the addition of off-shoulder cuts, mermaid cuts, and the application of sequins and lace, adding a touch of glamour. The materials used are not limited to Chinese silk or satin, but also utilize contemporary materials such as tulle, brocade, and organza, which are artistically combined to produce elegant and modern clothing. One clear example of this acculturation is the use of modern embroidery techniques to depict traditional motifs such as peonies and dragons. With advanced embroidery machines, these motifs are not only more detailed but also have a more vivid texture. In addition, the use of Swarovski crystals

or other crystals on Sangjit dresses is now commonplace, giving them a luxurious look characteristic of modern clothing.

From a cultural perspective, this fusion is not merely a matter of aesthetics but also reflects the flexibility of Chinese culture in responding to changing times without losing its identity. The adaptations made in the makeup and clothing techniques used in Sangjit are clear evidence of how traditions can survive by transforming themselves [12]. This also shows how the Chinese community upholds the principle of balance between respecting their ancestors and remaining relevant to contemporary aesthetic demands. From a social perspective, this adaptation has broadened the participation of non-Chinese communities, who are now also beginning to adopt elements of *Sangjit* in their engagement ceremonies [15]. Local designers and makeup artists also saw this opportunity as a space for creativity to continue innovating. The result was the birth of a new visual identity unique to Semarang: *Sangjit* clothing and makeup that remained rooted in tradition but had a strong contemporary touch.

In the future, this trend of combining modern and traditional elements is expected to continue growing stronger, particularly with the influence of social media, which accelerates the dissemination of beauty and fashion trends. On the other hand, this also poses a challenge to ensure that the philosophical values contained in *Sangjit* are not eroded solely by aesthetic aspects.

Therefore, in-depth cultural education for those involved in the makeup and costume industry remains an important aspect in order to properly preserve the tradition. Thus, the combination of modern and traditional elements in the makeup and costume techniques of the *Sangjit* tradition in Semarang is a positive process of acculturation. This process not only enriches the aesthetics of the ceremony but also strengthens an adaptive and dynamic local cultural identity.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

Conclusion

A study of Chinese bridal makeup and fashion in the Sangjit procession reveals a strong dynamic between efforts to preserve tradition and the adoption of modern elements. Makeup, which was once synonymous with bold colors such as red and classic techniques, is now evolving with a more minimalist, contemporary touch, while still maintaining its distinctive cultural symbolism. Similarly, bridal attire, especially cheongsams and other dresses, has undergone changes in terms of cut, material, and ornamental details, which now often combine global and local aesthetics.

This transformation demonstrates that the Chinese community in Indonesia, particularly during the *Sangjit* celebration, is capable of creative cultural adaptation. Makeup and clothing are not just visual elements, but also a medium for affirming cultural identity and reinforcing family values, as well as symbols of good luck. This blend of traditional and modern elements also reflects efforts to maintain the relevance of traditions, ensuring they continue to be accepted by the younger generation amid the tide of globalization.

Overall, previous studies have enriched our understanding of how aesthetics, technique, and cultural meaning converge in the *Sangjit* ritual, demonstrating that traditions can evolve without losing their philosophical essence.

Limitations

Although this study has utilized various relevant articles and studies, there are several limitations that should be noted:

Limitations of Primary Data: This study is literature-based and does not include primary data such as direct interviews with bridal makeup artists or fashion designers, which could provide deeper insights into the techniques and philosophies applied in practice.

Specific Focus on *Sangjit*: Some of the sources used review bridal makeup and fashion in general, rather than specifically focusing on the *Sangjit* tradition. Although relevant, this could affect the specificity of the findings if all sources exclusively discussed *Sangjit*.

Fast-Changing Trends: The makeup and fashion industries are highly dynamic, with trends and techniques shifting rapidly over short periods.

Therefore, the results of this study should be viewed as a snapshot at a particular point in time that requires periodic updating. Given these limitations, further research using an in-depth ethnographic approach or contemporary case studies is highly recommended to enrich our understanding of the aesthetic and cultural phenomena in the ever-evolving *Sangjit* tradition.

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