

The Bride's Veil

This research paper investigates the Anatolian marriage traditions and customs from the perspective of the video art form. It also examines the Anatolian cultural rules and customs that include the married couples' actual stories in the video project's formation. In the context of related works, it highlights the superstitions, practices, and their symbolisms. It also analyses animation with live video footage (mix and match) to develop new visual language and storytelling. Simultaneously, this research aims to make the audience question the dramatic and humorous social influences through the stories told and video recordings.

Keywords: *Marriage Customs, Anatolian Marriages, Criticism of Culture, Media Arts, Digital Arts.*

Introduction

Marriage has existed from the earliest times and is of great significance to human life and society. It is the family foundation that, in essence, is the cornerstone of civilisation and has universal meaning. Specific rules and traditions in marriage practices change across the world, formed by different cultures. It includes rituals and practices that characterise a particular society.

Marriage ceremonies include several preparations and plans before the wedding day takes place. Often religious and superstitious beliefs are served during the ceremonies. Each community established its unique ways of conducting such events, following the rules and practices that correspond to their culture.¹

Anatolia has always been a region of abundance with its traditions and customs. Anatolian marriage customs from the past to the present remain unique and full of exciting stories. These customs have significant effects on individuals and families, such as; psychological and economic aspects. While couples who get married benefited from some traditions, most of the customs glorified and objectified the brides and grooms. They become pawns fulfilling the requirements of social norms. According to Kaya, society imposes its wishes on individuals in different ceremonies. All kinds of traditions, such as circumcision and weddings, are based on patriarchal reflexes. The emphasis is critical when the patriarchy in the family is more vigorous. (Kaya, 2019) It reflects the importance arising from the family in the community and the region.

An interview with people who experienced such a dilemma is essential to learn more about the culture's effects. The interview result indicates that married couples are unaware of some of these traditions' meaning or purpose. Many obedient couples are merely trying to behave as society demands and

¹<http://www.turkishculture.org/lifestyles/ceremonies/weddings/wedding-traditions-536.htm?type=1>

1 perform these ceremonies as best they can. However, strange situations
2 sometimes arise while fulfilling these requirements. These interesting
3 situations caused by ignorance and individual-society conflict could also create
4 tragicomic stories. As a result, this article investigates and analyses how such
5 stories turn into a subject of storytelling in the video art form.
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7 A visual language created by the combination of animation, live video
8 recordings, and illustration explained in detail in the methodology section. All
9 creation steps in four phases were examined and exemplified. Examples of
10 related works include three Turkish female artists' artworks criticising
11 marriage, wedding ceremony, and woman fact in Turkey.
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14 **Objectives**

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16 Marriage traditions in Anatolia remain characteristic and diversify in
17 stories. However, some of them involve tragedy and absurdity. A combination
18 of animation and real records brings these stories to the present with narrative
19 visual techniques and storytelling. As stated above, this paper investigates the
20 customs of marriage for artistic production purposes. The essence and the
21 objectives of the article are;
22

- 23 1. To examine the traditional Anatolian marriage stories till the present
24 period through storytelling in the video art form.
- 25 2. To highlight the practices of such unusual traditions in the past and
26 current community.
- 27 3. To expose how society affects people in terms of 'marriage' by forcing
28 them to obey traditional rules.
- 29 4. To underscore dark humour as a genre of the video by depicting the
30 senselessness of customs.
- 31 5. To combine different visual techniques to reinforce the credibility of
32 stories.
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35 **Related Works**

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37 Contemporary Turkish Art has many artists that produce works about
38 marriage, wedding ceremony and family. Many artists, especially Mehmet
39 Pesen, Fikret Otyam, Nuri İyem, and İbrahim Balaban, shed light on Anatolian
40 women, marriage, and ceremonies, particularly with their oil paintings.
41 Furthermore, there are a lot of female artists that contribute to the same issues
42 as them. The difference between female artists is that they take these certain
43 subjects from a feminist perspective and criticise it. This article will examine
44 female artists works because the video project's general approach is criticism.
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1 *Canan Şenol, İbretnüma/Exemplary*

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3 Canan Şenol (b.1970) was born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey. The artist,
4 whom we know from her studies on biopolitical concepts, also uses different
5 artistic techniques such as video, photography, installation, and textiles to
6 focus on feminism. In her works, she deals with the taboos, harassment, and
7 oppression in both the old and contemporary societies with a very sharp voice.²
8 In Art, she describes her language as provocative, aggressive, erotic, risky, and
9 violent.³

10 *İbretnüma* (Figure 1) is a video tale about a girl who cannot be herself
11 even in Southeastern Anatolia's dreams. It compares women subjected to
12 various forms of family, religious, social, and state pressures in the past and the
13 present. Fadike, the main character, draws a portrait of an ongoing, repressed
14 Turkish woman. Her body depicts the female body in secularism discussions
15 and conservatism in the 90's Turkey. Regardless of the east or west in
16 Anatolian culture, the woman's freedom of decision depends on her family's
17 authority at any time.

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19 **Figure 1.** *İbretnüma, 2016*

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22 She has to marry a man she never knew because of her mother's pressure.
23 The man is wealthy and reliable enough for Fadike, according to her family.
24 She could create an identity only by the man's social statute that she will marry.
25 The artist depicts a representative Turkish girls' fate by showing the lack of
26 freedom of choice. Family prestige plays a significant factor rather than a girl's
27 decision. Moreover, love is considered not to be a necessary quality for
28 marriage.

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30 Fadike's life changes after marriage by moving to Istanbul. She orients
31 herself to a new life with daily house works and child-care. Although
32 everything seems right, there are some problems with the relationship with her
33 husband. She is not sexually and emotionally satisfied because her unhappiness
34 continues over the years. She consoles herself with her naughty dreams. Her
35 mother does not allow her to be free outside. Thus the devils punish her
unmercifully in her dreams because of her fantasies. She veils herself

²<https://www.istanbulmodern.org/tr/koleksiyon/koleksiyon/5?t=3&id=1197>

³https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/canan-350-enol

1 accordingly. In time, she decides to have her daughters marry when they are
2 old enough to protect them from disreputable discourses. To respect and follow
3 her mother's customs, she decides the men that her daughters will marry. The
4 story ends here, but it will continue with the different characters in the same
5 flow repeatedly.

6 In brief, the video demonstrates how family decisions, rather than
7 individual choices, arrange marriage. Today, especially in western Turkey,
8 with demographic and ethnographic alteration, the situation has changed.
9 However, its effect is still ongoing. The number of people who got married
10 without the consent of their families is relatively low. These marriages can
11 completely change the direction of people's lives. While some are experiencing
12 happiness, others experience chronic unhappiness and pass it onto the next
13 generations.

14
15 *SENA, Çeyiz/Dowry*
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17 Sena (b.1982) was born in Istanbul. She works with diverse materials and
18 mediums such as; ceramic, paper, felt, embroidery, installation, and painting.
19 In Art, her colourful and joyful style contrasts the subjects she works on, such
20 as violence, morals, child brides, and femicides. She intentionally chooses eye-
21 catching colours and patterns. In this way, the audience can enjoy while
22 watching her works. On the other hand, social problems deliberately reveal
23 behind the scenes.

24 Çeyiz (dowry) is her sixth solo exhibition that happened in 2016. To
25 contribute to the newly established family union, the goods prepared and
26 purchased by the girl's family and the man to marry are movable and
27 immovable property and money. For centuries, practices of dowry tradition and
28 marriage customs rooted in many regions of Anatolia. Dowry preparations start
29 with the baby's birth, especially in the countryside, and continue until the
30 young girl's marriage. Dowry is prepared not only for girls but also for boys.⁴
31 The dowry delivered in a crate includes materialistic possession such as
32 clothing, embroidery and laceworks, household objects, and supplies. In many
33 Turkey regions, this tradition, which seeks to support married brides and
34 grooms, persists today.

35 The artist prepared a dowry in her style in this exhibition, based on
36 traditional Anatolian material and handicraft manners. For instance, she
37 arranged a dinner-set as a part of a dowry. She drew on the plates with real
38 stories from society, such as a child bride sold with 50 sheep, rape, and a girl
39 murdered by jealousy. (Figure 2)
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⁴http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11693/51125/Dowry_a_cherished_possession_or_an_old-fashioned_tradition_in_a_modernizing_society.pdf?sequence=1

1 **Figure 2.** *Dinner-set from “Çeyiz”, 2016*2
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4 In addition to these plates, the exhibition includes tangible artwork such as
5 embroidery, illustrations, and paintings. Another noticeable work is the
6 embroidery on bed linen. This work gives reference to one of the clandestine
7 traditions in Turkey. Like Çetin states, in Anatolian wedding traditions, as in
8 Ancient Greece, exhibit a bridal veil after the nuptial chamber. In the morning
9 of the night of the nuptial chamber in ancient Greece, the wedding guests
10 would go to visit the bride and groom. Visitors who came to the bride-groom
11 with wedding gifts at this celebration had a secret purpose other than
12 congratulating them and giving them gifts. It was to witness the wedding veil
13 too. This veil displays the blood of a young girl whose virginity is lost. (Çetin,
14 2017)

15 Sena's bridal linen demonstrates a girl's virginity metaphorically. She
16 embroidered red coloured beautiful flowers and patterns in white linen. (Figure
17 3) Given these points, the female body is objectified again by society. If the
18 guests do not see blood on that bed linen, it will eventually change the married
19 girl's fate completely. The fact that the girl is not a virgin may cause enormous
20 problems, especially with her husband and husband's family. Even more,
21 sometimes causing her death.

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1 **Figure 3.** Bridal Linen from “Çeyiz”, 2016



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4 *Şükran Moral, “Evli, Üç Erkekke”/Married with Three Men*

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6 Şükran Moral (b.1962) was born in Samsun. Her works revolve around
7 gender, identity, realistic and critical perspective on feminism and women's
8 rights. She produces situations in her performances, colourful drawings,
9 sculptures, and photos where social prejudices and taboos are tested and often
10 destroyed. The artist has met with numerous people and marginalised
11 communities in her life that are often marginalised, such as trans-sexual,
12 mentally ill, abused women. For her work, they became a great source of
13 inspiration, and in return, Moral has been a tool for making their voices heard.⁵

14 "Evli, Üç Erkekke" is an important work both in the sense of the wedding
15 theme and in the context of Feminist Art (Figure 4 & 5). As can be understood
16 from the name of the work, she refers to men's rights to have more than one
17 wife in Eastern Anatolia. The artist asks the viewer a straightforward question:
18 Why do men have more than one wife, and women have no more than one
19 husband? In a clear sense, women may have as many rights as men, but only
20 men reserve the right. She uses the traditional wedding metaphor, the nuptial
21 chamber metaphor, and a symbolic object such as a wedding dress, attempting
22 to disrupt this common understanding with a simple question. (Çalışkan and
23 Iştın, 2017)

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⁵<https://www.magnet.istanbul/married-with-three-men-sukran-moral>

1 **Figure 4 (up) & Figure 5(down).** “*Evli, Üç Erkekle*”, 2010



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4 Another essential detail of the work is the red belts tied around the grooms'
5 waist. The red belt is connected to the waist of the bride and symbolises her
6 virginity in Anatolian culture. (Çetin, 2017) On the contrary, she did not forget
7 to wear a red belt to the waist of men. Furthermore, she criticises taboos on the
8 sexuality of women. Besides, with her "cheeky" smile on her face, she shows
9 an aggressive stance directly towards the dominant paradigm. The artist also
10 uses her own body as an artistic expression. She performs the feminine subject
11 as the object of Art when presenting her choice. (Çalışkan and Iştın, 2017)

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14 **Methodology**

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Tragicomic stories place it in the category of dark humour, defining the
genre of the video. Dark humour used to express the irony, insensitivity,
paradox, and brutality of the modern world. Characters or scenarios usually are

1 exaggerated well beyond typical humour or sarcasm, perhaps requiring more
 2 cognitive efforts to get the joke. Furthermore, black humour also uses tragedy-
 3 associated instruments. (Willinger, Hergovich, Schmoeger, 2017) However,
 4 dark humour also empowers people to speak in a way that is not always
 5 straightforward or typical about sensitive and severe subjects. It captures
 6 attention, helps to touch on subtler messages beyond reality.

7 The video contains multiple visual styles. The researchers interview
 8 different households in the region to find tragicomic wedding stories, and some
 9 of their stories were recorded, followed by visualisation development. The
 10 video is combined with different visual techniques to enhance the credibility of
 11 the storytelling. The usage of traditional motifs and patterns is vital to form
 12 visual consistency.

13 The first visual style is base on old wedding ceremony records from the
 14 year 1985. The video serves as a transition between stories. This wedding,
 15 which happened following all the traditions and customs of its region, aims to
 16 illustrate these facts' reality. It serves to convince the audience with its reality.
 17 A culture where men and women separate from each other and entertainment
 18 takes place on different days and places, even at old weddings, shows us how
 19 traumatic these traditions are on gender separation. (Figure 6)

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 22 **Figure 6.** *Men and women are dancing in different places and days. Authors' file*



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 25 On the other hand, an animation based on authentic stories is the video's
 26 second visual style. The animation starts with analogue video and finishes with
 27 digital graphics. In the digital phase, uses traditional and rotoscope animation
 28 technique. The traditional method interprets beyond its manual side. Also, the
 29 reason for using the rotoscope technique is to engage the storytelling.

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 31 *Phase 1*

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 33 Firstly, we interview the families, friends, and relatives with tragicomic
 34 stories about wedding customs. Some of the stories are humorous yet pitiful.
 35 Subsequently, we recorded these stories to use as a reference for creating a
 36 video art form. Some of them are personal experiences, and some are memories
 37 of their relatives.
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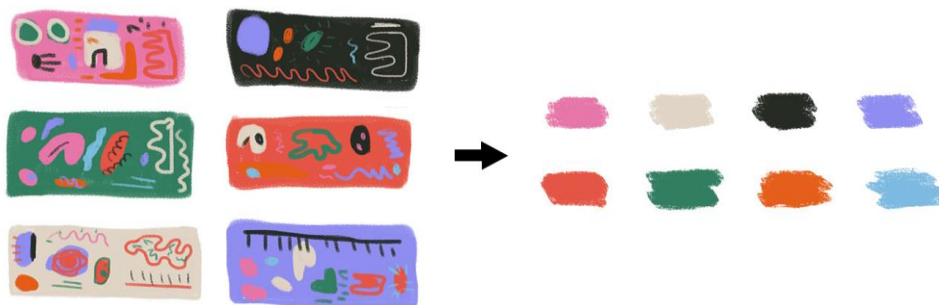
1 For instance, one of the stories is about a bride riding a horse. When cars
 2 were not common in the village, it was a wedding tradition to fetch the bride
 3 from her home with a horse. Again, according to the Anatolian tradition, the
 4 groom must dismount the bride from the horse. A tragicomic situation arises
 5 due to the groom is too short of dismounting her from the horse. The storyteller
 6 tells this part with a laugh. The recording of laughing sounds remains to
 7 preserve the naturalness of the narrative.

8 9 *Phase 2*

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11 The initial visual phase began with drawings of the storyboard according
 12 to the voice records and narrations. The storyboards are manually created
 13 sketches with papers and pens. In other words, the visual phase started
 14 manually. All visuals transfer to digital by scanning the drawings.

15 On the other hand, the colour scheme and brushes are essential to construct
 16 the animation's visual language in Photoshop. (Figure 7)

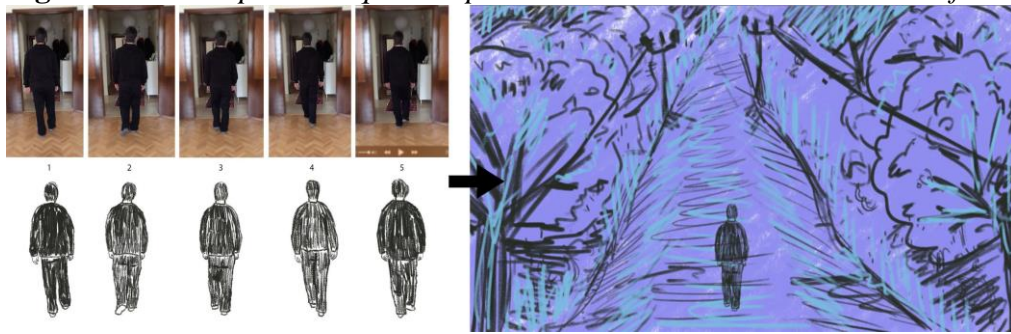
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18 **Figure 7.** *Evaluation of colour palette for animation. Authors' file.*



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21 The developed visuals correspond to each scene. For instance, when the
 22 narrator talks about riding a horse, a horse illustration presents on the scene.
 23 Metaphoric or symbolic images, like a woman's vulva, depicted female
 24 virginity. Apart from these, the same scene is drawn two or three times, added
 25 consecutively, thus providing the animation's dynamism.

26 In addition to still images, the rotoscope technique serves as a reference for
 27 scenes that requires movements. As an example of rotoscoping, a person's walk
 28 was video recorded to serve as a reference. Environment backgrounds were
 29 selected from the video and drew in Photoshop. When the walking sequence
 30 begins in a composition, the character in the story came alive. (Figure 8)

1 **Figure 8. Rotoscope technique and placement in the animation. Authors' file.**



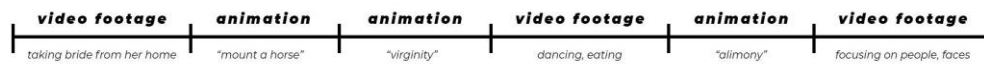
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4 *Phase 3*

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6 The post-production phase begins with the editing of stories and video
7 footage in a way that is correlated. (Figure 9) The video begins with an
8 animated wedding convoy. The convoy sets out from the groom's house to
9 fetch the bride, as it is today. Horns or live music accompany during this
10 journey. The purpose of doing so is to loudly announce to the whole region that
11 the groom and his family are going to the bride's house. It is an obvious fact
12 that the length of the convoy shows the strength of the family. However, when
13 vehicles were not common, the tradition was provided by horses.

14 Individual parts from the seven DVDs of wedding documentation were
15 selected to link the stories and recordings together. For instance, the video
16 begins with the wedding convoy, followed by the story of fetching the bride
17 with a horse.
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19 **Figure 9. The post-production phase. Authors' file**



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22 *Phase 4*

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24 When animations and video recordings came together in post-production, a
25 disconnection occurred in the visual language. The old, raw style of video
26 footage contrasts with the dynamic and colourful style of the animation.
27 Traditional Turkish patterns and motifs connect the two styles. Frame
28 decorated with flowers placed over the video records and short animations
29 serves to enhance the composition. (Figure 10)
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1 **Figure 10.** *Flower frame. Authors' file*



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4 In addition to the flowery frame, the animation chapter includes
5 illustrations. These illustrations are sheer demonstrations of the upcoming
6 scene. For instance, the first illustration is a depiction of typical village
7 scenery. Mosque, small adobe houses, mountains, and a few trees in the
8 background; village people, old cars, bride and groom in the front. The second
9 illustration is a representation of dancing wedding guests. (Figure 11)

10

11 **Figure 11.** *Village illustration (left), wedding guests (right). Authors' file.*



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14 As a result, wedding records usage invites the audience to reality and
15 moves away from the animation's digital imagery (fiction). Here, it can
16 demonstrate that the combination of animation with real visuals (video
17 artefacts) will undoubtedly reinforce the context and content of storytelling.

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20 **Video link**

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22 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gWHW6lvOHq4e8g7j6y1W2Wkf7qqu](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gWHW6lvOHq4e8g7j6y1W2Wkf7qquGJ-I/view?usp=sharing)
23 [GJ-I/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gWHW6lvOHq4e8g7j6y1W2Wkf7qquGJ-I/view?usp=sharing)

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26 **Conclusion**

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28 This article highlighted several influential artists and related artworks.
29 With all these findings mentioned, feminist theorists and practitioners have
30 turned the concept of "family and marriage" into a research study's focus field.
31 Especially in gender studies and contemporary art, we can observe the same

1 topic as the core subject of investigation. Simultaneously, it enables artists to
2 create artworks that express and question the community's identity. (Çalışkan
3 and Iştın, 2017) Canan Şenol, Sena, and Şükran Moral are the artists that
4 produce artworks addressing marriage, family, and female identity. These
5 artworks pointed out that especially the Anatolian marriage comes with severe
6 responsibilities and identities externalised.

7 To preserve the morality, religion, and growth of a culture, the family is
8 the fundamental unit; and is bound in almost every society by different
9 marriage laws. An ideal family's boundaries consist of a female, a male, a
10 child, or children who have been drawn and defined by duties and actions. In
11 particular, women are subject to taboos and traditions for the realisation and
12 preservation of marriage. (Çalışkan and Iştın, 2017) Moreover, the female body
13 often objectified by the authority and society within the framework of marriage
14 and traditions.

15 Investigating previous Anatolian ceremonies and rituals helped to reveal
16 the cultural background of traditions and customs. On the other hand, this
17 research demonstrates that certain cultures and ethics pressure individuals or
18 couples in a community to adopt the unquestioned ceremony customs.
19 Sometimes people unconsciously embody and deprive themselves of their
20 identity because of these special ceremonies. There is a general understanding
21 that marriage is holy and must be honoured. Nonetheless, the duties and
22 practices that the bride and groom must perform often cause absurd and
23 paradoxical circumstances.

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