

Negotiating Tradition and Modernity in the Practice and Meaning of Marriage Beliefs in the Mangir Bantul Community

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Abstract

This study examines the persistence and transformation of marriage beliefs within the Mangir community of Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in the context of increasing modernization and social change. While modernization is often associated with the decline of traditional practices, local marriage traditions in Mangir continue to influence decision-making and social behavior across generations. This research aims to explore how marriage beliefs are maintained, legitimized, and negotiated within contemporary social contexts. A qualitative case study approach was employed to investigate the experiences, interpretations, and practices of community members. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving traditional leaders, village officials, married community members, and younger-generation residents. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal that marriage beliefs persist through the interaction of collective memory, personal experience, family socialization, and traditional authority. Practices such as petungan (auspicious day calculations), ngalang (ritual detouring), restrictions associated with Wednesday Pon, and post-marital residential norms function as culturally embedded mechanisms for managing uncertainty and preserving social harmony. The study further demonstrates that younger generations do not simply reject traditional beliefs but actively negotiate them through adaptive strategies that accommodate modern educational, occupational, and mobility demands while maintaining cultural legitimacy. These findings suggest that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive but coexist through continuous processes of cultural adaptation and reinterpretation. The study contributes to broader discussions on cultural resilience, community-based risk management, local wisdom, and the sustainability of traditional institutions in contemporary society.

Introduction

Marriage remains one of the most enduring social and cultural institutions through which societies reproduce values, identities, norms, and collective memories across generations. Beyond its legal and religious dimensions, marriage functions as a cultural arena where communities negotiate meanings, maintain social cohesion, and transmit inherited traditions (Khatun et al., 2022; Amaliyah, 2025; Sharma, 2024). Despite the rapid expansion of modernization, globalization, urbanization, and digital technologies, marriage continues to be

deeply embedded within local cultural systems that shape how individuals understand family formation, social obligations, and life transitions (Haq, 2024; Wijaya, 2023; Özkaya, 2022). Across many societies, traditional marriage beliefs remain influential even as social structures become increasingly interconnected and modernized (Adaki, 2023; Özkaya, 2022; Grassie, 2025).

Contemporary sociological scholarship suggests that modernization does not necessarily result in the disappearance of traditional practices. Instead, traditions often persist through processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and selective preservation that enable communities to maintain cultural continuity while responding to changing social conditions (Imbang et al., 2025; Yetti et al., 2025; Chatterjee & Molla, 2025). In this context, traditions are no longer viewed as static remnants of the past but as dynamic cultural resources that provide communities with symbolic frameworks for interpreting uncertainty, maintaining identity, and organizing social life. Marriage traditions are particularly significant because they involve critical life-cycle events that are closely connected to family expectations, social recognition, and cultural legitimacy (Pustulka & Sikorska, 2026; Kiet, 2026; Santos Cavalcante & Raposo, 2025).

The persistence of marriage-related beliefs has attracted considerable attention among scholars examining the relationship between culture and social change (Maula & Muhsin, 2024). Research conducted in various regions of Asia, Africa, and other parts of the world demonstrates that traditional marriage customs continue to influence decision-making processes despite increasing exposure to modern institutions and rationalized systems of governance (Adaki, 2023; Okolo & Nwanchor, 2025; Mendonça et al., 2024). Traditional practices frequently provide individuals with a sense of security and predictability in situations characterized by uncertainty. Rituals, taboos, and customary obligations serve as mechanisms through which communities manage social risks, establish moral boundaries, and reinforce collective identities. Consequently, the endurance of marriage traditions should not be understood merely as resistance to modernity but as evidence of the continuing relevance of cultural meaning systems in contemporary society (Szwed et al., 2024).

Indonesia offers a particularly valuable context for examining the interaction between tradition and modernity because of its extraordinary cultural diversity and the persistence of local wisdom across different ethnic groups. Although economic development, educational expansion, and technological advancement have transformed many aspects of Indonesian social life, customary beliefs remain influential in shaping community practices and social relationships (Fauzan, 2025; Judijanto et al., 2024). Numerous studies have documented the continued significance of traditional rituals in marriage ceremonies, kinship arrangements, and family decision-making processes throughout the archipelago (Tabroni et al., 2025; Ilmawan & Prasetyo, 2023). These findings indicate that local traditions remain embedded within everyday social life and continue to provide important frameworks for interpreting social reality.

Among Indonesia's diverse cultural traditions, Javanese marriage customs represent one of the most complex and enduring systems of symbolic practice. Javanese society has historically emphasized harmony between human beings, nature, spiritual forces, and ancestral heritage. Marriage is therefore viewed not merely as a contractual union between two individuals but as a significant social and cosmological event requiring careful consideration of various symbolic factors. Practices such as *petungan* (auspicious day calculations), directional considerations, ritual prohibitions, and customary obligations are believed to contribute to household harmony

and social balance. These traditions reflect a worldview in which human actions are understood as interconnected with broader moral and cosmic orders.

At the same time, contemporary Javanese communities are increasingly exposed to social transformations associated with formal education, labor mobility, urban migration, digital communication, and global cultural flows. Such developments have introduced new forms of knowledge and alternative value systems that may challenge traditional understandings of marriage and family life (Chande, 2023; Gebara et al., 2023). Younger generations often encounter competing expectations between maintaining inherited cultural obligations and pursuing opportunities associated with modern lifestyles. As a result, marriage traditions become important sites where cultural continuity and social change intersect. Rather than abandoning tradition altogether, many communities engage in ongoing processes of adaptation that allow cultural practices to remain meaningful under changing circumstances.

One of the communities where these dynamics can be observed is Mangir Village in Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Mangir occupies a distinctive place in Javanese cultural history due to its association with Ki Ageng Mangir, a prominent historical figure who remains deeply embedded in local collective memory. The symbolic significance of Ki Ageng Mangir continues to influence various aspects of community life, including beliefs surrounding marriage. Local residents maintain a number of customary practices, including *ngalang* (taking alternative travel routes before marriage ceremonies), avoiding specific directional orientations, observing restrictions related to Wednesday Pon, and adhering to expectations regarding post-marital residence. These practices are not regarded merely as ceremonial traditions but are interpreted as mechanisms for ensuring safety, harmony, and protection from misfortune.

The continued observance of these customs is particularly noteworthy because it occurs within a social environment increasingly influenced by modernization. Residents of Mangir participate in formal education systems, engage in diverse occupations, and maintain connections with broader social networks beyond the village. Nevertheless, traditional marriage beliefs continue to shape decision-making processes and influence perceptions of appropriate behavior. This persistence suggests that cultural traditions remain socially relevant because they provide symbolic resources through which individuals interpret uncertainty and negotiate important life choices (Bear & Offer, 2024). The coexistence of traditional beliefs and modern social realities therefore presents an important opportunity for understanding how local communities sustain cultural resilience in periods of rapid change.

Existing studies on Javanese marriage traditions have made significant contributions to understanding ritual symbolism, customary practices, and local wisdom (Risianti et al., 2022; Wahyuni & Nurliana, 2025; Putri et al., 2022). However, contemporary social transformations require further attention to the ways traditions are actively maintained, negotiated, and reinterpreted by different generations. Increasing educational attainment, occupational mobility, and exposure to global cultural influences have created new contexts in which traditional beliefs must continually demonstrate their relevance. Understanding how communities navigate these changes is essential for explaining the persistence of cultural practices in modern societies.

The case of Mangir Village provides important insights into broader discussions concerning cultural continuity, identity preservation, and social adaptation. The endurance of local marriage beliefs demonstrates that tradition remains an active component of contemporary social life rather than a passive inheritance from the past. Through ongoing processes of

interpretation, socialization, and collective validation, cultural practices continue to provide communities with meaningful frameworks for understanding social relationships and managing uncertainty. Examining these processes contributes to a deeper understanding of how local wisdom survives, evolves, and remains relevant in the context of accelerating modernization, offering valuable perspectives on the relationship between tradition, cultural identity, and social change in contemporary Indonesia.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to investigate the negotiation between tradition and modernity in marital beliefs among the Mangir community in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research sought to explore how individuals interpret, experience, and construct meanings surrounding customary marriage practices within their everyday social lives. Qualitative inquiry allows researchers to examine social phenomena in depth, emphasizing participants' perspectives, cultural contexts, and lived experiences rather than numerical measurement. The case study design was selected because the research focused on a specific social and cultural setting in which traditional marriage beliefs continue to be practiced despite increasing exposure to modernization, educational advancement, technological development, and social mobility. According to Annamalah et al. (2025), case study research is particularly suitable for investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its social environment are closely interconnected. Through this design, the study was able to generate a comprehensive understanding of how traditional beliefs are maintained, interpreted, and adapted within a rapidly changing social environment.

Research Setting and Context

The research was conducted in Mangir Village, located in Pajangan District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, between April and May 2026. Mangir Village was selected purposively because it represents a unique cultural setting where traditional Javanese marriage beliefs remain strongly embedded in community life. The village is historically associated with Ki Ageng Mangir, a prominent figure in local historical narratives whose legacy continues to influence social and cultural practices. Various marriage-related customs, including petungan (auspicious day calculations), ngalang (detouring travel routes), restrictions concerning Wednesday Pon, and post-marital residential norms, continue to shape community decision-making processes. At the same time, the village has experienced significant social transformation through increased educational opportunities, occupational diversification, urban migration, and access to digital technologies. This coexistence of cultural continuity and social change makes Mangir an appropriate site for examining how local communities negotiate traditional values within contemporary contexts. The setting therefore provides an opportunity to explore broader issues concerning cultural resilience, identity preservation, and adaptation in modern Indonesian society.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy widely employed in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess substantial knowledge and direct experience related to the phenomenon under investigation. The selection process prioritized informants who were actively involved in, knowledgeable about, or directly affected by local marriage

traditions. The participants consisted of traditional leaders, village officials, married community members who had practiced customary marriage traditions, and younger-generation residents who had experienced the challenges of balancing traditional obligations with modern educational, occupational, and social demands.

The inclusion of diverse participant categories enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives regarding the persistence and transformation of marital beliefs. Traditional leaders provided insights into customary regulations, symbolic meanings, and cultural authority, while village officials contributed perspectives concerning social change and community governance. Community members shared lived experiences related to the implementation of marriage customs, and younger participants offered valuable reflections on contemporary interpretations of traditional obligations. Data collection continued until theoretical and informational saturation was achieved, meaning that additional interviews no longer generated substantially new themes or insights relevant to the research objectives.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and to facilitate methodological triangulation. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured in-depth interviewing. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide sufficient flexibility for participants to express their experiences and viewpoints while allowing the researcher to maintain focus on predetermined research themes. Interview questions explored participants' understandings of marriage traditions, perceptions of customary obligations, experiences of compliance or negotiation, interpretations of cultural meanings, and reflections on the influence of modernization. Interviews were conducted in locations convenient to participants and were audio-recorded with their consent to ensure accuracy during transcription and analysis.

In addition to interviews, participant observation was conducted to examine cultural practices, social interactions, and symbolic behaviors within their natural social context. Observation enabled the researcher to document how marriage-related beliefs were expressed, discussed, and practiced within community settings. Attention was given to everyday interactions, cultural narratives, ritual preparations, and informal discussions that reflected the community's understanding of traditional marriage customs. Field notes were maintained throughout the observation process to capture contextual information, participant behaviors, and researcher reflections.

Document analysis served as a complementary source of data. Documentary materials included village records, local historical documents, cultural archives, photographs, community publications, and written sources related to marriage traditions and the history of Mangir Village. These documents provided historical and contextual information that enriched the interpretation of interview and observational findings. The integration of interviews, observations, and documentary evidence facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural processes underlying the persistence and transformation of marriage beliefs.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Interactive Model of Qualitative Data Analysis developed by Miles et al. (2014). This analytical framework consists of three interconnected and continuously recurring activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data analysis commenced immediately after the initial stages of data collection and continued throughout the research process.

During the data condensation stage, interview transcripts, observational field notes, and documentary materials were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized. Initial coding focused on identifying recurring concepts, experiences, and cultural meanings associated with marriage traditions. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories reflecting patterns across participants and data sources. The coding process was conducted iteratively to allow emerging themes to be refined and clarified as additional data became available.

Following data condensation, the organized data were displayed through thematic matrices, narrative summaries, and conceptual categorizations. Data displays enabled systematic comparison across participant groups and facilitated the identification of relationships between themes. Through this process, patterns concerning cultural beliefs, symbolic practices, collective memory, family socialization, traditional authority, youth perspectives, and adaptive strategies became increasingly visible.

The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification. Emerging interpretations were continuously examined against the data to ensure consistency and credibility. Themes were compared across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence to verify their validity and explanatory power. This iterative analytical process enabled the development of a coherent interpretation of how marital traditions are maintained, negotiated, and transformed within the contemporary social context of Mangir Village.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that marriage beliefs in the Mangir community remain deeply embedded in everyday social life despite increasing exposure to modernization, educational advancement, occupational mobility, and technological development. The analysis of interviews, observations, and documentary evidence indicates that these beliefs are maintained through a complex interaction of cultural values, collective memory, family socialization, traditional authority, and individual experiences. Rather than functioning as static remnants of the past, marriage traditions continue to serve important social and cultural functions by providing guidance, legitimacy, and a sense of security during major life transitions. The findings further demonstrate that community members actively negotiate traditional obligations with contemporary social realities, resulting in adaptive forms of cultural continuity. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) forms of marriage beliefs and customary practices in the Mangir community, (2) the construction of experience and collective memory as mechanisms reinforcing traditional beliefs, (3) the role of parents and traditional leaders in sustaining marriage traditions, and (4) the negotiation of tradition and modernity in contemporary social practice.

Forms of Marriage Beliefs in the Mangir Community

The findings reveal that the Mangir community continues to maintain a strong system of marriage-related beliefs that functions as an important cultural framework for regulating social behavior and ensuring harmony in family life. These beliefs are not merely inherited customs that are performed routinely; rather, they represent a symbolic system through which community members interpret reality, manage uncertainty, and seek balance between human actions and broader cosmological forces. Marriage is therefore perceived not only as a social and legal union but also as a sacred transition that requires adherence to culturally prescribed norms and practices.

One of the most prominent forms of belief concerns the cosmological significance of spatial orientation. The community maintains a customary prohibition against direct travel routes

associated with the directions of *ngalor* (north) and *ngulon* (west) during marriage-related activities. Within local understandings, space is not viewed as neutral or purely geographical; instead, certain directions are imbued with symbolic meanings and spiritual consequences. As a result, prospective brides and grooms are expected to follow specific procedures to avoid potential misfortune associated with these orientations. This belief reflects a cultural worldview in which spatial arrangements are closely connected to social well-being and cosmic harmony.

Another important aspect of the belief system is the use of *petungan*, a traditional calculation system employed to determine auspicious dates for marriage ceremonies. Informants consistently emphasized the importance of selecting appropriate days to ensure the success and stability of future household life. Particular attention is given to Wednesday Pon, which is widely regarded as an inappropriate day for conducting marriage-related activities. According to local narratives, Wednesday Pon is associated with the period when Ki Ageng Mangir, a revered ancestral figure, is believed to be in a state of *tetirah* (resting or traveling). During this time, the village is symbolically considered to be without spiritual protection.

This belief was explained by one of the traditional elders, Mbah S, who stated:

“On Wednesday Pon, I would never dare to conduct a wedding ceremony. That is the time when Ki Ageng Mangir is believed to be resting or traveling. In other words, no one is guarding the area. If people force themselves to proceed, something undesirable may happen. This is a reminder passed down from our ancestors.”

The narrative illustrates how historical and mythological figures continue to exert influence over contemporary social behavior. The figure of Ki Ageng Mangir functions not only as a cultural symbol but also as a source of moral authority that shapes community decision-making. Through such beliefs, collective memory becomes embedded within everyday practices and contributes to the regulation of social conduct.

Community members also interpret unexpected events as signs validating the truth of ancestral teachings. Several informants referred to incidents in which wedding decorations (*tarub*) were damaged by strong winds after ceremonies were conducted on Wednesday Pon. Such events are commonly understood as *sasmita* (symbolic warnings) indicating a violation of customary rules. Rather than being interpreted as random occurrences, these incidents are viewed as evidence confirming the importance of respecting tradition. Consequently, traditional beliefs function as mechanisms through which individuals attempt to minimize uncertainty and avoid potential risks in their future married lives.

Traditional Marriage Practices: The Ngalang Tradition

The symbolic worldview of the Mangir community is further reflected in the practice of *ngalang*, a customary tradition requiring prospective brides and grooms to take an indirect route before traveling to their future spouse’s residence when the destination lies within the prohibited *ngalor-ngulon* direction. Although the practice may appear simple in its physical execution, community members attach profound cultural and spiritual significance to the act.

Informants explained that *ngalang* serves as a preventive measure intended to divert negative influences and ensure a harmonious marital future. The practice is therefore understood as a form of protection rather than restriction. One village official described the rationale behind the tradition as follows:

“The purpose of ngalang is to prevent misfortune. If the prospective spouse’s house is located in the northwest direction, it is considered unfavorable. Therefore, people first

take another route so that negative influences can be diverted. Even in the modern era, we still practice it as a precaution.”

The statement demonstrates that community members do not necessarily perceive *ngalang* as an irrational obligation. Instead, it is regarded as a practical strategy for maintaining safety and avoiding future problems. The persistence of this tradition indicates that local cultural practices continue to provide a meaningful sense of security despite the increasing influence of modern knowledge and social institutions.

The findings further suggest that *ngalang* functions as a symbolic mechanism through which individuals align themselves with the moral and cosmological order recognized by the community. By undertaking the detour, participants express respect for ancestral wisdom and reaffirm their connection to local cultural values. The practice therefore serves not only as a ritual action but also as a cultural statement regarding the importance of maintaining harmony between human behavior and the broader universe.

Interestingly, the meanings attached to *ngalang* vary across generations. Older community members generally perceive the tradition as a necessary spiritual obligation that must be followed to prevent misfortune. In contrast, many younger residents acknowledge that they do not always fully understand the metaphysical foundations of the practice. Nevertheless, they continue to perform it out of respect for parents, elders, and community expectations. This finding indicates the existence of an intergenerational shift in the interpretation of tradition. While the ritual itself remains unchanged, the motivations underlying compliance have evolved from predominantly spiritual considerations toward relational and social concerns.

Another significant finding concerns the community’s adaptive response to the customary prohibition against relocating residence after marriage. Rather than openly rejecting the rule, some younger residents employ administrative strategies that allow them to fulfill modern mobility requirements while maintaining cultural legitimacy. One young informant explained that he changed his official residential status before marriage so that he would no longer be formally categorized as a Mangir resident when establishing a household elsewhere.

As he explained:

“I understand the customary rule that discourages people from moving away after marriage. However, my solution was to change my residency status before the wedding ceremony. After marriage, I was no longer officially considered a resident of Mangir, which allowed me to live elsewhere without feeling that I was violating the tradition.”

This practice illustrates a process of cultural adaptation in which traditional norms are not abandoned but strategically negotiated. Community members demonstrate considerable flexibility in balancing customary obligations with contemporary educational, occupational, and residential demands. The findings therefore suggest that marriage beliefs in Mangir are neither rigid nor static. Instead, they continue to evolve through ongoing negotiations that enable traditions to remain meaningful and socially relevant within changing social circumstances.

Construction of Experience and Collective Memory as Mechanisms Reinforcing Traditional Beliefs

The findings indicate that the persistence of marriage-related beliefs in the Mangir community is not sustained solely through inherited norms and customary obligations. Rather, these beliefs are continuously reinforced through the construction of personal experiences and collective

memory, both of which serve as important mechanisms for maintaining the legitimacy of tradition across generations. Through everyday experiences, shared narratives, and community interpretations of significant events, traditional beliefs remain meaningful and socially relevant despite increasing exposure to modern values and lifestyles.

A recurring theme emerging from the interviews concerns the role of personal experience in strengthening adherence to customary marriage practices. Several participants described how life experiences, particularly those involving marital difficulties, led them to reinterpret tradition as a source of security and stability. One community practitioner, Mrs. R, reflected on her experience of leaving Mangir after marriage without considering local customs. She explained that years of conflict and eventual separation prompted her to reassess the significance of traditional values. After returning to Mangir and entering a subsequent marriage while fully observing customary practices, she reported experiencing greater peace and stability within her household.

“When I first got married, I did not fully believe in the traditions, so I moved away without considering the customs. After several years of conflict and separation, I returned to Mangir. In my second marriage, I followed the customs completely, and I felt calmer. My household became more peaceful.”

This account illustrates how personal experiences are retrospectively interpreted through the lens of local cultural beliefs. Marital difficulties are not viewed merely as individual circumstances but are frequently understood as consequences of neglecting customary obligations. Such interpretations contribute to a process through which tradition is continually revalidated and internalized. Rather than accepting customs solely because they are inherited, individuals develop stronger commitments to tradition when their own experiences appear to confirm the wisdom embedded within ancestral teachings.

In addition to personal experience, collective memory plays a crucial role in sustaining community belief. Interview data reveal that extraordinary events associated with violations of customary rules are widely remembered and repeatedly narrated within the community. These stories function as collective lessons that reinforce the perceived consequences of disregarding tradition. One village official recounted an incident involving the construction of a wedding *tarub* on Wednesday Pon, despite warnings from community elders.

“There was once a family who continued preparing a wedding ceremony on Wednesday Pon even after being advised not to do so. After the tarub was completed, strong winds suddenly destroyed it, while neighboring houses were unaffected. Similar incidents happened more than once, and people began to believe that it was not merely coincidence but a warning from those who protect Mangir.”

The repeated circulation of such stories has transformed individual incidents into collective memories that shape community behavior. These narratives function as a form of social regulation by creating a shared awareness of potential risks associated with violating customary norms. Compliance is therefore maintained not through formal sanctions or coercive authority but through collective interpretations of past events that serve as symbolic reminders of the importance of respecting tradition.

The strengthening of traditional beliefs is further supported by narratives concerning unusual or unexplained phenomena that community members associate with ancestral protection. Such experiences are commonly interpreted as signs confirming the continued presence and

influence of spiritual guardians connected to the history of Mangir. One traditional leader, Mbah S, described an incident that has become widely discussed among local residents.

“Once, a satay vendor suddenly arrived at an event and claimed that food had already been ordered and paid for. However, no one present had made any order. Events like this strengthen our belief that Ki Ageng Mangir continues to care for and protect those who uphold the traditions.”

For community members, such occurrences are not regarded as random anomalies. Instead, they are interpreted as *sasmita* or symbolic signs that reinforce the relationship between the physical world and the spiritual realm. These interpretations contribute to the enduring legitimacy of customary beliefs by providing cultural explanations for events that transcend ordinary rational understanding. Consequently, marriage traditions are viewed not merely as cultural heritage but as protective mechanisms that help maintain harmony between individuals, ancestors, and the wider cosmos.

The Role of Parents and Traditional Leaders in Sustaining Marriage Traditions

The continuity of marriage traditions in Mangir is closely linked to the interaction between family socialization, traditional authority, and community expectations. The findings demonstrate that parents and traditional leaders play complementary roles in ensuring the transmission and preservation of customary beliefs.

Within the family, the transmission of traditional values begins at an early age. Parents regularly introduce children to local customs, marriage-related taboos, and cultural expectations through everyday conversations and social practices. A village official who is also a parent explained that discussions regarding marriage traditions are integrated into daily life, enabling children to become familiar with customary norms long before they reach adulthood.

“The biggest role actually comes from parents. Children are reminded from an early age about marriage customs, house directions, and days that should be avoided. It becomes part of everyday life, so they grow up knowing that in Mangir there are certain rules that must be followed.”

This finding suggests that traditional knowledge is transmitted not through formal instruction but through continuous socialization within the family environment. Through repeated exposure, customary beliefs become deeply embedded in individual perceptions and everyday understandings of social reality. Consequently, marriage traditions are often regarded as natural and self-evident rather than as external rules requiring justification. Such processes contribute significantly to the long-term sustainability of local cultural practices.

Beyond the family sphere, traditional leaders serve as important custodians of cultural knowledge and authority. Community members frequently consult them when determining appropriate wedding dates, interpreting customary regulations, or seeking guidance regarding marriage-related decisions. Traditional leaders are widely respected because they are perceived as guardians of ancestral trust and cultural continuity.

Mbah S explained his role in the following way:

“I am only safeguarding the trust left by our ancestors. When residents want to hold a wedding ceremony, they ask whether a particular day is appropriate. I tell them honestly because it is for their safety. I am not interfering in their lives; I am helping to protect them.”

This statement highlights the protective rather than restrictive character of traditional authority in Mangir. Traditional leaders do not impose customs through coercion but maintain legitimacy by presenting their guidance as a means of safeguarding community well-being. Their authority derives from cultural trust and collective recognition rather than formal institutional power. As a result, they continue to occupy an important position within the social structure despite broader processes of modernization.

Risk-Based Trust and the Younger Generation

An important finding of this study is that younger generations generally do not openly reject customary marriage traditions. Instead, they negotiate their relationship with tradition through pragmatic forms of compliance. Although many younger residents acknowledge that they do not fully understand the metaphysical foundations of certain practices, they nevertheless choose to follow them because they perceive tradition as a mechanism for avoiding potential risks and maintaining harmonious family relationships.

One young participant explained:

“Since childhood we have heard these stories repeatedly. Even though not everyone understands the logic behind them, there is a feeling that it is safer to follow the traditions. Our parents have more experience, so it is better to listen to them than to risk something going wrong.”

A similar observation was expressed by Mrs. R, who noted that many young people continue to comply with customary practices primarily out of respect for their parents and concern about the possible consequences of violating tradition.

“Young people today are quite critical, but when it comes to marriage they usually follow their parents’ advice. There is respect for elders, but there is also concern that something bad might happen if they ignore the customs.”

These findings suggest that contemporary adherence to tradition is increasingly characterized by pragmatic considerations rather than unquestioned acceptance. Compliance is shaped by a combination of respect for family authority, collective memory, and perceptions of risk. In this sense, traditional beliefs continue to provide a form of ontological security by offering individuals a sense of certainty and protection within an increasingly uncertain social environment.

Negotiating Tradition and Modernity

The findings demonstrate that the Mangir community is neither trapped in rigid conservatism nor fully detached from its cultural heritage. Instead, community members actively negotiate the relationship between tradition and modernity, allowing customary practices to remain relevant within contemporary social conditions.

This negotiation is particularly visible in the way traditional rules are interpreted as practical strategies for managing uncertainty. Community members continue to observe customs such as *ngalang* and *petungan*, even when these practices require adjustments to modern schedules, administrative arrangements, or personal preferences. One village official explained that although practical considerations are important, many residents remain willing to adapt their plans to accommodate customary requirements.

“The direction of travel and the choice of wedding day are still important. Sometimes families already have their own plans, but if they do not align with traditional calculations, adjustments are usually made.”

At the same time, parents play a significant role in mediating this negotiation process. Rather than simply imposing traditional rules, they increasingly provide explanations and cultural reasoning that help younger family members understand the importance of maintaining local customs. Through this process, traditions are reproduced not through coercion but through gradual internalization and dialogue within families.

The findings indicate that the Mangir community has developed a form of cultural adaptation that allows tradition and modernity to coexist. Community members embrace education, mobility, and contemporary lifestyles while continuing to preserve core cultural principles related to marriage and social harmony. Tradition is therefore not abandoned in the face of modernization; instead, it is reinterpreted, negotiated, and strategically maintained as a valuable resource for managing uncertainty and preserving collective identity.

Negotiating Tradition and Modernity in the Reproduction of Marriage Beliefs

The findings of this study demonstrate that the persistence of marriage beliefs in the Mangir community cannot be adequately explained through the conventional dichotomy between tradition and modernity. Rather than representing opposing forces, tradition and modernity operate as mutually constitutive processes through which community members continuously negotiate social meaning, cultural legitimacy, and future uncertainty. This finding challenges deterministic assumptions that modernization inevitably leads to the erosion of traditional practices. Instead, the Mangir case reveals that local traditions endure because they remain capable of adapting to changing social conditions while preserving their symbolic authority. The continued observance of practices such as *petungan*, *ngalang*, restrictions associated with Wednesday Pon, and post-marital residential norms demonstrates that traditions are not passive cultural remnants but active social resources that help individuals navigate complex life transitions.

What emerges most clearly from the findings is that marriage traditions function as a culturally embedded management system for uncertainty. Community members do not merely follow customary regulations because of inherited obligations; they engage with these practices because traditions provide interpretive frameworks for understanding risks that cannot be fully controlled through rational planning alone. Marriage represents one of the most uncertain and consequential transitions in human life, involving emotional, social, economic, and familial dimensions. In such contexts, traditional beliefs serve as mechanisms that reduce ambiguity and provide a sense of predictability (Sadeghian et al., 2025; Brisini et al., 2025). The widespread interpretation of household success or failure through customary frameworks illustrates how traditions operate as culturally legitimate tools for risk assessment and risk mitigation. From a management perspective, this finding extends the understanding of risk management beyond formal institutions and organizational settings by demonstrating how communities develop culturally grounded systems for managing uncertainty through symbolic practices, collective memory, and inherited knowledge.

Equally significant is the finding that the legitimacy of these traditions is continually reproduced through processes of social construction rather than inherited unquestioningly. The narratives surrounding Ki Ageng Mangir, the sacred status of Wednesday Pon, and the interpretation of unusual events as *sasmita* reveal how collective meanings are actively

maintained through ongoing social interaction. The authority of tradition is therefore not derived from objective verification but from repeated processes of validation occurring within everyday community life. Personal experiences, particularly those associated with marital conflict or perceived misfortune, become incorporated into collective narratives that reinforce the credibility of customary beliefs. This process demonstrates that traditions survive not because they remain unchanged but because communities continuously reinterpret contemporary experiences in ways that reaffirm existing cultural frameworks (Fauzan, 2025). The Mangir case thus illustrates how collective memory functions as a strategic cultural asset, enabling communities to preserve social coherence while adapting to changing social realities.

Another important contribution of this study concerns the role of intergenerational transmission in sustaining cultural continuity. The findings indicate that family institutions remain central actors in the governance of cultural values. Parents do not merely transfer information regarding customary rules; they actively shape the interpretive frameworks through which younger generations understand marriage, responsibility, and social belonging (Yeganehfar & Shahsavari, 2023; Hailu, 2023). What is particularly noteworthy is that this process occurs largely through normalization rather than coercion. Marriage traditions become embedded within everyday socialization practices, eventually forming dispositions that appear natural and self-evident. Such findings suggest that cultural continuity depends less on formal regulation than on the effectiveness of informal value management within family systems. In management terms, families function as decentralized institutions of cultural governance, ensuring the reproduction of shared norms without relying on explicit enforcement mechanisms.

At the same time, the study reveals that traditional authority remains highly relevant despite increasing educational attainment and exposure to modern knowledge systems. Traditional leaders continue to occupy strategic positions as custodians of cultural legitimacy, not because they possess coercive power, but because they are recognized as trusted interpreters of collective wisdom. Their authority derives from their ability to provide certainty in situations characterized by ambiguity and potential risk. This finding has broader implications for understanding leadership within culturally embedded communities. Whereas conventional management theories often emphasize formal authority, expertise, or bureaucratic legitimacy, the Mangir case demonstrates that legitimacy can also emerge from symbolic trust, historical continuity, and perceived moral responsibility. Traditional leaders therefore function as cultural risk managers who help communities maintain social stability during periods of change (Chotib, 2024; Olaopa & Ogundare, 2023).

Perhaps the most theoretically significant finding concerns the adaptive capacity of tradition itself. The younger generation in Mangir does not reject customary beliefs outright, nor do they follow them uncritically. Instead, they engage in strategic forms of negotiation that allow them to satisfy modern aspirations while maintaining cultural legitimacy. Administrative adjustments such as changing residential status before marriage illustrate how individuals creatively reconcile competing demands without openly confronting traditional norms. These practices reveal a high degree of cultural reflexivity. Community members recognize the practical requirements of education, employment, and mobility, yet they simultaneously seek to preserve symbolic connections to ancestral values. Such behavior represents neither resistance to modernity nor submission to tradition. Rather, it reflects a sophisticated form of cultural adaptation in which symbolic compliance and practical flexibility coexist.

This pattern of negotiation has important implications for management scholarship, particularly in relation to institutional adaptation and organizational resilience. Existing

literature often conceptualizes adaptation as a process involving the replacement of traditional systems by more rational or efficient alternatives. The findings from Mangir suggest a different trajectory. Adaptation may occur through the selective preservation of traditional institutions that continue to provide valuable social functions under new conditions. In this sense, resilience is not achieved by abandoning inherited cultural systems but by reconfiguring them to address contemporary challenges. The endurance of marriage traditions in Mangir demonstrates that cultural institutions can remain effective when they are capable of accommodating social change without losing their symbolic foundations.

The study therefore contributes to broader debates concerning cultural sustainability and community governance. It suggests that local traditions should not be understood merely as heritage requiring preservation, but as dynamic management resources that communities mobilize to maintain social cohesion, regulate behavior, and reduce uncertainty. The ability of the Mangir community to balance continuity and change illustrates how cultural systems can operate as adaptive infrastructures that support collective resilience. Rather than being obstacles to development, traditions may serve as valuable mechanisms through which communities interpret rapid social transformation and maintain a coherent sense of identity.

Ultimately, the Mangir case demonstrates that the future of tradition lies not in rigid preservation nor in complete transformation, but in continuous negotiation. Marriage beliefs persist because they remain meaningful, functional, and adaptable within contemporary social contexts. Their endurance reflects the capacity of local communities to manage uncertainty through culturally embedded forms of knowledge while simultaneously responding to the opportunities and demands of modern life. This insight extends current discussions within management studies by highlighting the importance of symbolic systems, collective memory, and cultural legitimacy as critical resources for sustaining organizational and community resilience in an era of accelerating social change.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that marriage beliefs in the Mangir community remain resilient despite the increasing influence of modernization, education, mobility, and technological change. The persistence of traditions such as *petungan*, *ngalang*, restrictions associated with Wednesday Pon, and post-marital residential norms is sustained through the interaction of collective memory, personal experience, family socialization, and traditional authority. Rather than representing rigid forms of cultural conservatism, these beliefs function as adaptive mechanisms through which community members manage uncertainty, maintain social harmony, and preserve cultural identity. The findings further reveal that younger generations do not simply reject or unquestioningly accept tradition; instead, they actively negotiate customary obligations with contemporary social realities through various forms of cultural adaptation and practical compromise. This dynamic process illustrates that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive but continuously interact in shaping social practices. Consequently, the Mangir case highlights the capacity of local cultural systems to remain relevant by adapting to changing circumstances while retaining their symbolic meanings and social functions. The study contributes to broader discussions on cultural resilience, community-based risk management, and the role of local wisdom in sustaining social cohesion and identity in contemporary society.

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