

THE EMERGING COMMODITY OF CHINESE BRIDE CHAPERONE (DAI KAM JIE) IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT: *Bride chaperone (Dai Kam Jie) traditionally dominated by women plays a prominent role in Chinese marriage rites and is meticulously chosen based on the fame and expertise to assist the wedding couple throughout the ceremony. This study explores the transformation of the bride chaperone from her traditional to an economic role. The objectives of this study were to identify the significance and economic role of bride chaperone, to determine the innovations and their sustenance to assess its economic growth in 21st century. Purposive sampling research method was used where the bride chaperones were interviewed using a qualitative open-ended questionnaire. It was found that despite great influence of Westernised weddings Chinese traditional practice is very important and interestingly its sustenance is linked to a lucrative business. Its innovations include male chaperones, online promotions with storyboards (extensive use of social media), photographers/video makers, musicians, beauticians and initiation of business awards. These innovations are self-sustained as e-business is becoming a norm of the society.*

Keywords: Bride chaperone, Chinese, marriage, Malaysia, Dai Kam Jie, Dai Kam Gor

1. INTRODUCTION

In Chinese society, the traditional marriage is expected to comprise a set of complex procedures because the chronicle of Chinese traditional culture documented that “from the beginning of Zhou Dynasty in 2000 BCE, marriage is highly regulated institution” [1]. From this context, the complicated Chinese marital ritual and custom is usually referred to as Six Rites or Liù Lǐ which includes marriage proposal or matchmaking (nà cǎi), asking the woman’s birth date (nián gēng bā zì) and name by the man’s family (wèn míng), matching the couple’s birth dates to predict the compatibility in the future (nà jǐ), betrothal gifts ceremony (nà zhēng), choosing an auspicious day for the wedding (qǐng qī) and lastly, welcoming the bride into the groom’s house (qīn yíng) [2]. Hence, there is an essential need for a mediator to carry out these detailed responsibilities in conducting these traditional and demanding marriage rites. It is feared that without the aid of the mediator, the overall process of marriage may not run smoothly or relatively become incomplete. The mediator in question is the bride chaperone or in canonical Dai Kam Jie or Da Jin. Broadly speaking, the term Dai Kam Jie originally has its own definite meaning which represents the eldest uncle’s wife who particularly comes from the bride’s family and given the honourable status in performing the rite of passage in the conventional marriage [3;4]. In the past, she was invited to be a bride chaperone in the traditional wedding practice because they believed that she personally possessed the luck and fortune and would pass be passed down to the bride [5]. Thereby, she was assigned with a specialized name called Xī Niǎng or Xī Pó which she was often referred to as the “auspicious lady”, who was endowed with happiness and prosperity [4]. Thus the role of Dai Kam Jie was to assist in the traditional wedding ritual as accustomed to her considerable expertise in carrying out the demands of the high value placed on marital customs [5]. In this regard, she was typically designated with innumerable responsibilities and duties in different phase along with the marriage process that strictly ascribes to the Chinese culture and practice [6]. Prior to the couple stepping into the official Chinese marriage ceremony, it was a must for them to adopt the traditional rules and regulations of the marriage (Travel China Guide, 1998). So Dai Kam Jie was to guide the newlyweds with the dos and the don’ts in conjunction with the preparation of their wedding to make

sure that the whole process of the marriage runs smoothly [6]. She was also in charge of the betrothal ceremony whereby the gift exchange between two families took place by preparing all the wedding groceries like red candles, golden coconut, wedding biscuits, Chinese tea, red cloths, wedding paper cutting, hair combing set, red rope, sesame, pork’s hand, sǎn shēng which consists of chicken, goose, pork’s spleen, wine, crystal sugar and areca all by herself [7]. Apart from that, the role of Dai Kam Jie in practicing brides wealth system was one of the most common characteristic of the wedding practice because both families would normally agree upon the exact bride price after receiving the consultation from the bride chaperone [4]. Before the wedding ceremony, it is a must for Dai Kam Jie to assist the groom in installing a brand new bridal bed, mattress, pillows, bed linen and blanket in his house, determining the position of the bed, scattering candy and fresh petals on the bed, and placing a pair of red candles and red body pillow [9]. On the day of the wedding, Dai Kam Jie is responsible to be beside the bride and assisted the bride in the preparation of the bridal’s hair-dressing ritual [8]. Then, she would need to escort the bride until the bride reached the groom’s house safe and sound [9]. Not only that Dai Kam Jie was also obligated to maintain a good social interaction with the elderly in both families especially during tea ceremony [4]. Throughout the ceremony, she would speak auspicious words and blessings when the newlyweds are preparing to serve the tea to their parents and elderly relatives [6]. Besides that, entertaining the guests of the wedding was also considered as one of the important tasks carried by Dai Kam Jie [4]. Thus, there used to be a great underlying significance in their existence for those who wished to get married.

2. Problem statement

Recently, the presence of Dai Kam Jie as a marriage mediator awakens the nostalgia of substantial transition among the contemporary Chinese society. Accelerated with the force of the globalization and modernization, most of the Chinese people, being more or less susceptible to the Western cultural value have changed their attitude and behaviour towards the significance of wedlock [10]. This has motivated the Chinese family to practice their marriage with the simplified mode of tradition [11]. They intend not to make themselves troublesome and in turn, only showed little care on their wedding preparation [12]. Due to their

collective ignorance, certain chief constituent of the marital ritual is consigned to oblivion. To such a degree, they rather hire a bride chaperone, Dai Kam Jie to provide a guideline in conducting the traditional procedure of marriage ritual [6]. Even though this tradition of employing the bride chaperone seems to be relatively available to some modern Chinese society, it is unfortunate to remark that the dignity and value of being a Dai Kam Jie has lost the purity in its essence [5].

For today's sake of rampant consumerism, what were once the private functions and positions of Dai Kam Jie has now been institutionalized [6]. Nowadays training courses are offered to those interested in training them to be a professional bride chaperones [4;6]. They then advertise their services in exchange for a high price. As a consequence, their social identity is a commercialized form of the Dai Kam Jie; shifting its distinctive and respected status as "the chosen one" to a business endeavour. Beyond that, the trend toward gender switch on holding the role of a bride chaperone has gradually advanced. In the past, the wedding chaperone was mostly positioned by the female until it is even more so in the present day [6]. Surprisingly, more and more males have started to experience their interest and participation in rendering their services as a bride chaperone to regulate the marital ceremony in response to cultural practices and orders today [3]. Accrue to their active participation, this has given birth to the term Dai Kam Kor or Dai Kam Gong or male bride chaperone (Kaodim, 2016). In this paper, the extent to which the prospect in social identity of bride chaperone, Dai Kam, is examined, highlighting the significance of being as bride chaperone, Dai Kam in Chinese matrimony and exploring the effect of their role transition in the marriage ceremony across time.

3. Research Questions

The bride chaperone is socially accepted as an important person in marriage in particular societies such as Chinese-Cantonese (Dai Kam Jie) Brunei-Malay (pengangun) and Kihnu (ironhand) [13;14;15]. Despite the various identities widely entitled to the bride chaperone, this practice more or less comes out with some similarities and differences among these three communities.

One of the similarities among the bride chaperone in these three societies is their main role in keeping the bride safe. As articulated by researcher [13], lighting the candle by the children is one of the crucial part of the Brunei-Malay wedding ritual carried out by the pengangun because "the central role of pengangun is to give cahaya (glow) to the bride during weddings" (p. 6). In the Chinese context, Dai Kam Jie covers the bride's head with a red umbrella to usher in the virtue of fertility as emphasized by "kāi zhī sǎn yè" (raise the bark, spread the leaves) and to ward off the unpleasant spirit from the bride [16]. By the reason of "...guards and protects the bride until she is firmly attached to the bridegroom's lineage", the ironhand of the Kihnu society brings their sword along to assure the bride free from indulging in the risky condition and evil influence especially abduction during the wedding [14;15]. Furthermore, the social service of the traditional marriage rendered by the bride chaperone was free of charge. Typically, their willingness to volunteer themselves in regulating the order of wedding ceremony is far greater than expecting to be paid in return but it is astonishing to note that their effort is usually repaid by the family or the

newly wedded couple. As in the case of the Brunei-Malay society, the bride's mother shows her sincere appreciation to the pengangun by rewarding her a gold ring or pikaras in the afterlife for truly taking good care of the daughter or son during the entire marriage process [13]. Similarly, the ironhand in the Kihnu society is repaid for their endeavour in organizing the traditional marriage custom, the ironhand's spouse is given an honour to receive some share of dowry in the form of basic living necessities like "two or three pairs of stockings, two belts" [14]. As for the Chinese society, the bride's family usually gives Dai Kam Jie a red pocket or hóng bāo at the end of the ceremony as an expression of their deep gratitude. Nevertheless, the number of bride chaperone involved in three different cultures of wedding ceremony has appeared in inconsistency. In Chinese society, only one bride chaperone is invited for the whole marriage ceremony [9]. However, Kihnu and Brunei-Malay communities highly welcome two bride chaperones to serve the bride and groom, respectively [13;14]. Another distinction among the bride chaperones of the three societies is the precise attributes and exhibiting characteristics for a qualified bride chaperone. In the Brunei-Malay context, being a pengangun is solely preserved for the elder married women aged more than 40 years old who are endowed with the spiritual knowledge in the form of jampi (spells) and technical skill especially dressing up the bride [5]. In contrast, Dai Kam Jie in Chinese society is basically the eldest uncle's wife of the bride who possesses soul of happiness [3]. Although the bride chaperone in these societies have passed through the marriage phase in their life span, the Kihnu's ironhand or bride's guardian is predominantly preserved for man who has been selected from the bridegroom's family [14].

Apart from that, Dai Kam Jie in Chinese society is not the same as Kihnu and Brunei-Malay's bride chaperones who enlighten the bride with excellent wife characteristics through two major processes; beautification and casting a spell on the bride for future benefits in her marriage [13;14]. Moreover, looking after the groom is a prevalent role of pengangun in the Brunei-Malay societies as opposed to the Dai Kam Jie and ironhand. Researcher [13] researched that the pengangun stays with the groom for about two weeks before the wedding ceremony. Their purpose of dwelling into the groom's house is not merely to make an elaborate ritual preparation for the matrimony; rather, every single movement and behaviour of the groom is constantly supervised by the pengangun [13]. On the contrary, instead of living together with the groom, Dai Kam Jie helps the groom in dealing with ritual procedures such as the installation of the bridal bed before the wedding ceremony [13]. Unlike Dai Kam Jie and pengangun who start their service before the wedding ceremony, ironhand only assists the groom on the first day of the ceremony by accompanying the groom and his relatives to the bride's house with car or vans [14]. Despite the prominent role of Dai Kam Jie in Chinese marriage ceremony, the traditional practice of this bride chaperone is gradually dying out. Dai Kam Jie have existed due to her significant role and autonomy power in intervening an important process in human life. As mentioned earlier, her existence in a wedding process is seen as incontestably important because of the meaningful aura she brings into a marriage. Her identity thus used to be restricted as she could only be the bride chaperone of her husband's nieces, only if her

husband was the eldest son in a family. However, as time passes on, not only does her identity face extinction; she also appears in a new identity. These changes are in line with the demands of people nowadays, but it must be ensured that the role and function of a bride chaperone must not be contaminated or deviated from the tradition norms. It is a critical point when it comes into distinguishing the transformed role and function of a bride chaperone in present context as compared to the past. This transformation is a vital focal point as it opens up the understanding on the form of modern bride chaperone and the reason of this new form coming into being, leaving behind some of the old yet genuine constituents of her identity.

Last but not least, as the study goes along with the identity of Dai Kam Jie and her new transformation, another question is still relevant to be asked: what is the significance of bride chaperone? What are the changes in the roles of bride chaperone overtime? What is the role of Dai Kam Jie in Chinese marriage? After all, Dai Kam Jie is a dynamic existence. Therefore, she invariably faces new challenge by the ever changing societies, thus forcing her to have a new outlook. Yet, the significance of having a bride chaperone is reflected among some families that values her.

4. Purpose of the study

Bride chaperone (Dai Kam Jie) traditionally dominated by women plays a prominent role in Chinese marriage rites and is meticulously chosen based on the fame and expertise to assist the wedding couple throughout the ceremony. This study explores the transformation of the bride chaperone from her traditional to an economic role. The objectives of this study were to identify the significance and economic role of bride chaperone, to determine the innovations and their sustenance to assess its economic growth in 21st century. For today's sake of rampant consumerism, what were once the private functions and positions of Dai Kam Jie has now been institutionalized [6]. Nowadays training courses are offered to those interested in training them to be a professional bride chaperones [4;6]. They then advertise their services in exchange for a high price. As a consequence, their social identity is a commercialized form of the Dai Kam Jie; shifting its distinctive and respected status as "the chosen one" to a business endeavour.

5. Research methods

This study employed qualitative method as it ensures the authenticity of the data collected from respondents. This research focuses on comparison of the practice of bride chaperone in the past and the present. Respondents are allowed to answer the questions depending on experiences and confidentiality. Open-ended questions are used because it does not restrict the respondents from giving their opinions. This process is same like the previous researchers [17;18;19]

The target group for this study is professional bride chaperones. Initially, purposive sampling is used in this research. Purposive sampling is an example of non-probability sampling technique. This is the most reliable technique as researchers targeted a specific group of people as respondents. They were selected based on their years of experience as well as their popularity. They were retrieved through a few reliable websites. Due to popular demand, their background was posted into these websites including their contact numbers so they could be reached. Four respondents were interviewed; two Dai Kam Kor

(male bride chaperones) and two Dai Kam Jie (female bride chaperones) based in Peninsular Malaysia. Respondents are Lisa Jie (from Penang), Hong Shao Dai Kam Gor (from Rawang), Kengo and Anna Jie (both from Kuala Lumpur). Subsequently, this study was conducted through telephone as the researchers are based at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (refer to Figure 1 in Appendix 1). The research was done within a span of one week. During the research process, calls were made to inquire and seek their permission to be interviewed. However, Anna Jie could only spare a little time for the interview and provided a phone number belonging to another bride chaperone. This is known as snowball sampling. It is a technique where the respondent identifies another potential subject who shares the same characteristics that fits the research interest (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). An interview schedule is used to enable a two-way interaction with the respondents. In addition, the interview schedule contained semi-structured questions which would guide researchers in asking the respondents where the respondents were able to provide their opinion without any doubt or hesitation. Each call lasted more than an hour. One of the researchers was able to communicate with the respondents in Chinese and after the interview, the responses were then translated to English for report writing purposes. Secondary sources were obtained from literatures such as journal articles and books to provide a better grasp of the history of bride chaperone and its significance for Chinese communities. The respect towards respondents and emphasis on their contribution on this research was taken into the account as ethical considerations. Their consents to become respondents were sought by explaining the purpose of the research. The respondents needed to be convinced so they could entrust the researchers to not manipulate the data. As for their identity, they gave the permission to have their names written in the report nevertheless this study will formulate anonymous names to protect their identity. There were certain limitations faced while conducting the research. Firstly, the data collection method used was by phone interview. Thus, the interview sessions were rescheduled to suit the respondents' availability. Another problem was the target group. Respondents from Kuching were hardly found because Dai Kam Jie is not a well-known practice in Sarawak. Since there was no bride chaperone institution available in Kuching, all respondents are from Peninsular Malaysia.

6. Findings and discussions

6.1 Origin

3 different and insufficient ideas on the origins of Dai Kam Jie given by the respondents have shown that the modern day Dai Kam Jie are doubtful on her classical identity as most of the respondents were not keen with the historical background. Hong Shao who is a Dai Kam Gor or male chaperone claimed that Dai Kam Jie was initially performed by Ma Jie from Canton, the nuns in black attire whose hair were braided. Slightly similar to the claim made by Hong Shao, Kengo also proposed that Dai Kam Jie was first originated from the Cantonese society before it was spread to the rest of the Chinese sub-groups like Hakka, Hokkien and Fu Chow. For Anna Jie, the word "Jie" derived from Dai Kam Jie is only specialized when a female outsider becomes a bride chaperone whereas "Gor" refers to a male modern bride chaperone.

6.2 Which relative

According to Anna Jie, people tend to unconsciously

misunderstand that a Dai Kam Jie literally means a relative appointed to be the bride chaperone. Proposing that the terminology of “Dai Kam Jie” for a bride chaperone does not refer to a female relative, she added that if the word “Jie” is reduced from the Dai Kam Jie, it carries the meaning of groom’s mother’s elder brother’s wife. This account depicts that the word Dai Kam originally means groom’s mother’s elder brother’s wife and it is only due to absence of this suitable person that Dai Kam Jie, an outsider replacing the groom’s mother’s elder brother’s wife eventually appears [6]. While Lisa Jie further explained that Dai Kam Jie was an outsider hired by the groom’s family, Hong Shao and Kengo gave a more detailed information, claiming that the bride’s family was the one who initially asked the groom’s family to hire a Dai Kam Jie. Another opposing statement to these accounts are rooted from Anna Jie who argued that the groom’s mother’s elder brother’s wife was initially asked by the groom to assist him and his bride because people in the past would only ask their elder family members to do the wedding planning.

6.3 Role

Hong Shao defines Dai Kam Jie’s role as the task of a bride chaperone to accompany the bride to the groom’s house. On the other hand, according to Lisa Jie and Kengo, Dai Kam Jie was best recognized as Mei Po, the matchmaker in the past. It must be noted that the difference between a bride chaperone and a matchmaker is extremely strong. This is because according to Hong Shao and Anna Jie, the task of a bride chaperone is to represent both sides of family to arrange the flow of wedding ceremony whereas a matchmaker is simply to help a man to find a suitable bride for himself.

6.4 Payment

Hong Shao, Lisa Jie and Anna Jie mentioned that unlike the modern Dai Kam Jie who determines the payment for their service, the traditional Dai Kam Jie was only paid without any predetermined amount of money given in a red packet, *hóng bāo* at the end of the ceremony. Kengo claims that female modern Dai Kam Jie are paid in the range of RM 500 to RM 800 whereas their male-counterparts are paid around RM 800 to RM 1, 200. Male bride chaperons are paid higher than their female counter-parts because of the former are relatively limited compared to the latter.

6.5 Gender

In terms of suitability of a particular gender on being a bride chaperone, Lisa Jie and Anna Jie said that albeit gender was not important, female was preferable because in performing the task, she had to touch the bride at some point of time. Therefore, a man does not suit the task. Hong Shao and Kengo, on the other hand, argued that although 40 to 50 years old women who came from a big family were usually hired in the past, men appear alongside their dominant women counter-part nowadays.

6.6 Traits

This is due to changing demands that modern society assess the professionalism of a Dai Kam Jie through their ability to socialize as well as skillful and talkative attributes [6]. In accordance with the suitable attributes, Lisa Jie, Anna Jie, Hong Shao and Kengo elaborated aspects such as good moral values, the skill to utter auspicious words and courage of which a good Dai Kam Jie can be identified. They added that society prefers a good luck lady or “*hǎo mǐng pó*” to be the bride chaperone because this term

literally means a woman who has a big family and practices good quality of life. The term “*hǎo mǐng*” means lucky. This is crucially emphasized because the luck is believed to be transferred on the bride. Thus, a widow or single woman is excluded from being a bride chaperone.

6.7 Skills and training

In terms of the ability to perform the task, Lisa Jie maintained that Dai Kam Jie in the past did not undergo any training. Instead, the knowledge was passed from generation to generation. There was possibility that being a Dai Kam Jie could be inherited. Hong Shao further explained that Chinese idioms were adopted as the auspicious words. However, this has changed in today’s context due to the addition of longer sentences in those idioms. While Lisa Jie opined that modern Dai Kam Jie are trained by memorizing poems and auspicious words, Hong Shao emphasized that a qualified sifu’s experience and expertise help to mould the professionalism of a Dai Kam Jie whereby the trainees follow their sifu to wedding accessories shop instead of attending formal classes. To this account, he added that building a company is vitally needed so as to assure the credibility of a Dai Kam Jie. Unlike Hong Shao’s statement, Kengo and Anna Jie said that formal classes are conducted to teach the trainee auspicious Chinese poems and ritualistic etiquette.

6.8 Preservation

When she is asked about preserving the practice of hiring Dai Kam Jie in modern Chinese society, Lisa Jie responded that instead of the practice, it is the ritual alone that is dying out. It is important because bride chaperone is an intermediary between the groom’s and bride’s families especially when there is argument, issue, or dispute rising up in the middle of dealing procedure. Further, Kengo and Anna Jie mentioned that some families are not familiar with traditional wedding ritual practice. Therefore, they seek bride chaperone’s consultation especially in terms of deciding bride’s price. In the past, it was the duty of Mei Po as matchmaker to consult the groom and his family in deciding the bride’s price. Now, this has transformed into new situation whereby Dai Kam Jie replaces this particular task. Furthermore, compared to past Chinese societies who determined a woman of luck as the suitable Dai Kam Jie, Hong Shao asserted that the modern families choose their preferred Dai Kam Jie by making comparison either among a list of bride chaperons recommended by their friends and relatives or via online surfing. This has clearly shown how such important practice for traditional Chinese wedding is operationalized through online business. Nevertheless, Hong Shao also claimed that some do not hire bride chaperone due to financial problem, so they will either hire or ask a relative to become the bride chaperone.

6.9 Man

Hong Shao and Kengo remarked that some men take the responsibility of being Dai Kam Gor simply because they want to show their talent or to make money. Based on his knowledge, bride chaperons basically carry out their task by standing aside and talk. This is much contradict to Lisa Jie’s claim when she shared her viewpoint that a man is not encouraged to be a bride chaperone since the process requires them to touch the bride. Correspondence to this is the statement later made by Hong Shao that hair combing was excluded from a bride chaperone’s duty. However, modern bride chaperone may add extra charge for their service fee if they conduct the hair combing. Based on his

experience as a male chaperone, he shared that there are couples who hire male bride chaperone to show the uniqueness of the wedding ceremony. In addition, Anna Jie indicated that some important rules are not fulfilled during performing their task as bride chaperone in some wedding ceremonies because the family's demands; it is either they want it to be simplified or due to some restriction whereby the bride could be pregnant, thus leading to inappropriateness of practicing those rules.

6.9.1 Procedure

Although the process of performing the task of Dai Kam Jie elaborated by both Lisa Jie and Hong Shao is slightly different from each other, the difference should be noticed as a matter of their value judgment and equal professionalism. The procedure explained by Lisa Jie will be described first before the procedure shared by Hong Shao. The difference of procedure in relation to Lisa Jie's explanation elaborated by Hong Shao shall be made noticeable so as not to restrict the procedure in rigid style. According to Lisa Jie, Dai Kam Jie will usually assist the groom before assisting the bride. In contrast to Lisa Jie, however, Kengo claimed that traditional bride chaperone used to assist the bride in terms of bridal makeup and dresses before serving the groom. As time passes by, this particular task is replaced by modern makeup artist and fashion designer. Before the day of the wedding, the ritual of hair combing or shàng tóu for both newly couple will usually be handled by Dai Kam Jie. In the groom's house, said by Lisa Jie, while the groom worships the God of Heaven, Dai Kam Jie stands aside and utters auspicious words. Then, after the groom wears his new pyjamas, Dai Kam Jie will comb the groom's hair thrice while uttering auspicious words stroke by stroke as elaborated by Kengo below:

1st stroke: 一(yī) 梳(shū) 梳(shū) 到(dào) 尾(wěi)
(sweet beginning of marriage till the end)

2nd stroke: 二(èr) 梳(shū) 梳(shū) 到(dào) 白(bái)
发(fā) 齐(qí) 眉(méi)
(harmonious marriage till old age)

3rd stroke: 三(sān) 梳(shū) 梳(shū) 到(dào) 儿(ér)
孙(sūn) 满(mǎn) 堂(tāng)
(many sons and grandsons)

After that, the groom's parents will feed him with small sweet rice ball soup or tāng yuán prepared by them and he needs to swallow it so as to appreciate the virtue of harmony, yuán yuán mǎn mǎn. The groom is strongly prohibited from going out because he is in the protection of God of Heaven after worshipping the God of Heaven. Dai Kam Jie will then switch to the bride's house and carries her task as similar to that in the groom's house. However, her task ends only after doing facial threading or wán niǎn on the bride to cleanse her face for the upcoming big day. In the past, Dai Kam Jie used to be sent home by the groom's family after serving the bride. However, the modern Dai Kam Jie normally goes back by herself. The next day, she needs to go to the groom's house whereby she stands aside and utters auspicious words while the groom's parents help the groom to wear dà yī or the wedding costume. Kengo and Anna Jie expressed that during this procedure, Dai Kam Jie takes a serious task whereby she needs to remind the groomsmen on two crucial things; first, the groomsmen must park the groom's car properly since it should never be reversed once the groom enters the car and

second, harsh words are strongly prohibited. After the groom worships his ancestors, Dai Kam Jie appears to instruct the groom during appreciation tea ceremony or gǎn ēn chá specifically for the parents to show appreciation for taking care of him. While the groom is doing this, Dai Kam Jie stands aside and utters auspicious words. Right after this process, she switches to the bride's house with the groom and carries a basket of mandarin orange which symbolizes dà jí or auspicious. The amount of mandarin orange is varied according to different Chinese sub-ethnic groups. For example, while the Cantonese and Hakka use 18 pieces, the Hokkien usually takes 12 pieces. In Kengo, Hong Shao and Anna Jie's perspectives, roasted pork is sent along with the mandarin orange to the bride's family by the groom's family. This is because the bride's family perceives that if the groom wants to take away their virgin daughter, giving roasted pork should not be a problem to him. After Dai Kam Jie and the groom arrive at the bride's house, the former will enter first, passing the roasted pork and mandarin oranges to the bride's parents. This is done to illustrate the groom's main intention which is to pick up the bride. Then, Dai Kam Jie will head to the bride's room and instructed the bride to perform the gǎn ēn chá to her parents. After the ceremony, Dai Kam Jie will guide the bride's parents to put on her veil or gài tóu shā. This is followed by a game conducted with the bride-maids standing outside of the bride's house, informing the groom that he has to overcome the obstacles they have designed for him and the groomsmen if he picks the bride who is waiting for him in her room. This is to depict that getting the bride is not an easy task. The groom can only enter the bride's house after he has succeeded. Soon after, the groom picks his bride in her room and once again, Dai Kam Jie appears to conduct her task of delivering auspicious words as elaborated below:

1st bow: 夫(fū) 妻(qī) 百(bǎi) 年(nián) 好(hǎo)
和(hé)

(husband and wife live a harmonious life for everlasting)

2nd bow: 夫(fū) 妻(qī) 白(bái) 发(fā) 齐(qí)
眉(méi)

(husband and wife live harmonious life till old age)

3rd bow: 夫(fū) 妻(qī) 百(bǎi) 花(huā) 齐(qí)
放(fàng)

(husband and wife produce offspring)

Then, Dai Kam Jie guides the couple to come outside of the house to worship the bride's ancestors. While the couple are doing this, Dai Kam Jie again stands aside and utters auspicious words. The script of auspicious sentences uttered by the conventional Dai Kam Jie used to be as follow:

1st bow: 一(yì) 拜(bài) 天(tiān) 地(dì)
(pray to the heaven and earth)

2nd bow: 二(èr) 拜(bài) 高(gāo) 堂(táng)
(pray for the groom's parents or elder family members)

3rd bow: 夫(fū) 妻(qī) 交(jiāo) 拜(bài)
(pray for each other)

However, Kengo explained that while these words used to be uttered in the past, the modern Dai Kam Jie rarely does this. This explanation illustrated how the full practice of the script is diminished in modern era. Later on, she guides the

couple in serving tea firstly to the bride's paternal elder family members followed by the maternal elder family members. Kengo said that this must be done according to the descending generational sequence. Again, Dai Kam Jie stands aside and utters auspicious words. The couple will then receive *hóng bǎo* from the elder members and give *hóng bǎo* to children. After this ceremony is over, a pair of trouser is stuffed into the body part of the pork and it then will be returned to the groom's family to depict their wish on the groom to be richer (*huā kāi fù gù*), together with the mandarin oranges. Anna Jie acknowledged that this process reflects the practice of reciprocity between the couple's families. The couple then switch to the groom's house and Dai Kam Jie is in charge of delivering the pork's body part and mandarin oranges to the groom's parents. While accompanying the wed-couple to leave the bride's house, Dai Kam Jie is responsible to cover the bride using a red umbrella that functions to chase off the evil spirit. Notably, covering the bride with the umbrella used to be the task of Dai Kam Jie. In modern society, however, the bride is covered either by her father or her father's brother. After reaching the groom's house, the process or worshipping ancestors and tea ceremony are done as similar to that in the bride's house. The process will then move into *dòng fáng* or the initiation ritual to usher the couple's copulation. Unlike the traditional Dai Kam Jie, modern Dai Kam Jie involves in the betrothal and purchasing the bridal bed. Hong Shao further justified that none is allowed to touch the bridal bed. In the bridal chamber, Dai Kam Jie will ask five to six years old boy to smash a potty chair wrapped with red paper in which *hóng bǎo*, orange or both are found. The boy and girl will then jump or roll over the bed; while the children are doing this, Dai Kam Jie does her final task by standing aside and uttering auspicious words. After that, the groom will open the bride's veil and the bride will help her husband to take off his *dà yī*. The respondents have vividly described the importance of a bride chaperone by comparing it with the past and present context. In the past, a bride chaperone only assists the couple during the wedding. Other than to ensure the flow of the wedding goes smoothly, hiring a bride chaperone is crucial in blessing the wedded couple with good luck and prosperity. Bride chaperones are required to utter auspicious words several times to the couple as a way to bless them. However, in the present context, they do not necessarily have to be related to the family but they do act as a mediator in solving any arguments during the planning of the wedding. A Dai Kam Jie is also significant in helping the family decide the bride price. From the obtained analysis, we found that this practice has undergone many changes over the years. Even among those respondents, it can be seen that both male and female can take on the role, provided that they have established a legitimate company for their practice. The steps also vary in some parts of the Peninsular Malaysia. Some steps are necessary while some can be skipped or are altered. As Herbert Spencer posits that human progress is inevitable and develops naturally [17]. This particular study sheds light on past and present practice of bride chaperone. Even though some of the steps are still maintained, the traditional ritual has depleted due to the bride chaperone's value judgement and professionalism.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Bride chaperone is still a prominent figure in planning and

conducting a wedding in modern context especially among Chinese families who still adhere to their traditions. The practice has come a long way from purely inheriting the attributes from their ancestors to being trained as a professional. Despite undergoing various transformations in terms of the gender, the expertise, the significance, and of course the role itself, they still maintain the role of assisting the bride and the groom during the wedding so as to serve them a pleasant wedding ceremony. Although there are quite significant kinds of changes in this practice, it is crucial for the bride chaperone to bless the couple with fertility, prosperity, and eternal bliss. Thus, the results of this study provide implications for future research assessing the changes Dai Kam Jie has undergone over the years. Our results have shown that their various responsibilities have a lot to do with their skills especially for the male bride chaperones. This is due to the fact that some Chinese families have only recently accepted the service of a male bride chaperone. Hiring a Dai Kam Gor may bring more entertainment to the wedding ceremony but they sometimes need to be restricted from performing any task that require some kind of physical contact with the bride. As a result, the skills that they have acquired from their training may not be put to good use. However, this is solely depending on the decision of the family on whether they would allow the Dai Kam Gor to perform all the tasks step by step or skip certain steps. Even so, different Dai Kam Jie have different take on their responsibilities. Certain tasks are a must while others are only applicable if they are trained to do so. Another thing that needs to be emphasized is the payment for the service. It has been highlighted that male bride chaperones are paid more than their female counterparts due to the growing number of males venturing into this business. Though it is hard to imply, this particular treatment may bring up the issue of gender inequality among the bride chaperones. Future research requires a larger scope whereby both male and female bride chaperones in Malaysia are compared to those from other Chinese communities in other parts of Southeast Asia. Moreover, future studies can examine the role of bride chaperones in an economic perspective.

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