

Symbolic Interaction of the Chinese Community in Chengbeng (Sembahyang Kubur) Cultural Rituals (Study on the Ethnic Society of China Belinyu Bangka Belitung)

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Abstract

This research aims to know how the symbolic interaction of Cheng Beng procession for Chinese ethnicity in northern Belinyu Bangka Belitung island Province. Cheng Beng is an annual cultural ritual with cultural and symbolic meanings carried out from generation to generation. The acculturation process, social changes in the Chinese society do not change the importance of Cheng Beng that have moral values, such as obedience and respect for ancestors and parents who have died. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach and was supported with research instruments in the form of an unstructured interview, observation, participants, and literature study. The selected informants were ten people consisting of 5 young generations and five older generations of Chinese ethnicity. The research results show that symbolic interaction in Cheng Beng cultural ritual, besides having ethical values, such as obedience and way of repaying parents or ancestors who have died, also creates harmony and local wisdom between the Chinese and Malay ethnicities. This study concludes that Cheng Beng's cultural ritual creates social identity formation, acculturation, and balance in the Chinese and Malay ethnic communities.

Keywords

symbolic interaction; cultural ritual; Cheng Beng



I. Introduction

Cheng Beng or grave prayer is an annual cultural ritual held every April 5 or the 4th of a leap year by the entire Chinese community in the Province of the Bangka Belitung Islands. Belinyu District, located in the northern part of Bangka Belitung, is one of the cities where most people are ethnic Chinese who still adhere to the Cheng Beng celebration procession. The cultural rituals of Cheng Beng are carried out symbolically from the time chosen to visit the ancestral graves, pastries, food, prayer paper (Gin Cua), as grave decorations to be served on the grave altar, the colour of the grave paint, the clothes worn by pilgrims, as well as flag decoration (Chong Chien) to beautify the ancestral graves. The occurrence of inter-cultural intermarriage between ethnic Chinese and Malays in Belinyu makes harmonious life between the Chinese and the Malays. The term Fangin Tongin Jitjong (Malay and Chinese are the same) adds to the harmony of each religion.

The Cheng Beng ceremonial ritual in the procession contains many communication symbols related to the behaviour of the Chinese community in upholding values, norms regarding good behaviour and being devoted to ancestors or parents who have died so that these virtue values are passed down to children, in-laws or their descendants who are still

alive and continue from generation to generation. The process of good values carried out by the Chinese community at the time of the Cheng Beng ceremony is almost the same as the previous year. The development of the era and social changes, the number of descendants and the ancestors who migrated, the social and cultural changes that followed began to experience a shift, such as changes in serving food that is made as offerings, attributes, procedures, as well as the amount and type of money burned for ancestors. However, the meaning and symbols carried out still show signs of filial piety and family retribution to parents and ancestors who have died.

Symbolically the values in the Cheng Beng procession are still maintained even though in the ritual there have been many changes in communication behaviour when undergoing the procession because most of the descendants of the Chinese community do not live in Belinyu. However, they migrate to big cities, and some are even abroad so that foreign cultures contributed to these changes, such as the types of cakes, food, and grave decorations that are offered now, many times have changed with more modern decorations. For the younger generation in the Chinese community, the offerings that will be given as symbols show more practical things, such as cakes. -cakes can be given in the packaged form, and fruits do not require local fruit, but imported fruit can also be served. This practicality shows that the Cheng Beng ritual still has a symbolic meaning in maintaining moral values.

This research proves that the implementation of the Cheng Beng ceremony shows the symbolic meaning for the Chinese community, provides a form of harmonization between the Malay and Chinese ethnicities and provides opportunities for regional economic value. Traditional snack cakes, sponge cakes, apem cakes, and ice cakes are made mainly by ethnic Malays and knick-knacks in the Cheng Beng ceremony, such as wooden topangan in the cemetery. It is precisely the Malay ethnic community that prepares it, and it shows the differences in beliefs and culture when it is associated with symbolic interactions. It is fascinating to be used as harmonization and create harmony between religious communities. Every year, the Malay community feels their economy increases because of the Cheng Beng ceremony, and this is very supportive of government programs in development efforts in the form of local wisdom.

The purpose of this study is fundamental when there are differences in beliefs, culture, and social that have the potential to create conflict between religious communities. However, the Cheng Beng ritual shows harmonization and harmony between the Chinese and Malay ethnicities and increases the economic income provided by the two ethnicities in the Cheng Beng cultural ritual. Beng. This study aims to find out how the symbolic interaction of the Cheng Beng procession for the Chinese ethnic. This study proves that cultural rituals, although different beliefs, can show the values of goodness and local wisdom in harmonizing religious harmony between the Malay ethnic groups. Furthermore, Chinese and communication interactions occur through nonverbal symbols in the form of food offerings offered at ancestral graves. From the explanation above, the formulation of the problem in this research is how is the symbolic interaction of Cheng Beng (grave prayer) for the Chinese and Malay ethnic communities in Belinyu Bangka? In line with the formulation of the problem above, this study aims to examine how the symbolic interaction of Cheng Beng for ethnic Chinese in Belinyu Bangka.

As a reference from this research, the researcher looks for references to research results that other researchers have reviewed to distinguish from the problems faced by researchers. The research that Agung Suhayanto has carried out, Armansyah Matodang, Taufik Walhidayat, entitled The Meaning of Cheng Beng in the Chinese Ethnic community in Medan with the aim of research to determine the meaning and procession of the implementation and function of each sacred object/equipment used in the Cheng Beng

ceremony by Ethnic Chinese in Medan. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative research, direct observation, in-depth interviews, and focused discussions with ethnic Chinese. The conclusion in this research is The Cheng Beng ceremony to give offerings and prayers to the ancestors because without parents. Those who are still alive cannot exist in the world, and with the cheng Beng event, all close relatives, relatives, children can gather together so that the relationship is more closely intertwined and establish communication and kinship between relatives.

Sylvia Leslie's research (2017) with the title meaning of the Qing Ming Festival with the formulation of the problem: How are communication events in the Qing Ming Jie festival analyzed through the Dell Hymes concept and how the relationship between communication components is explained through the Dell Hymes concept. In the Qing Ming Jie festival, how the Chinese people interpret the Qing Ming Jie festival in Pontianak through the concepts in symbolic interactions.

Noor Haliemah and Rama Kertamukti's research in the journal *Aspikom* volume 3 number 3 (2017) with the title Symbolic interaction of the community in interpreting Jathilan art with the formulation of the problem, the method used is qualitative descriptive and data collection techniques using observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The results showed that the community interpreted the Jathilan art in Mendak Hamlet, Giri Sekar Village, Panggang District, Gunung Kidul Regency through verbal communication carried out by Jathilan art actors both in every performance or in everyday life. Verbal communication carried out by the actors of Jathilan art is through the elements of Jathilan art, such as motion, costumes, props, and accompaniment of Jathilan art.

This study reformulates the continuation of previous research that symbolic interaction gives its meaning for communicators by showing self-representation and changes in the social status of Chinese society during the Cheng Beng tradition.

II. Research Methods

This research was conducted in the northern part of Belinyu District, Bangka Belitung Islands Province. The reason for choosing this location is because the Belinyu sub-district still adheres to the Cheng Beng ritual procession and the majority of the people are ethnic Chinese, and the language used as a means of communicating with ethnic Malays using is compared to Chinese. In other areas in the province of Bangka Belitung, most of the indigenous population in Belinyu speak Chinese. Based on the formulation of the problem described and the objectives to be achieved, this research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Moleong (2004:13) suggests the characteristics of a qualitative approach using a natural setting, using humans as the main instrument, using observations, interviews, and literature studies to collect data, analyzing data descriptively and inductively.

Observations were made by directly observing the cultural ritual procession of Cheng Beng, observing the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research location, observing how the arrangement, the types of food served on the graves, and the communication symbols conveyed during the Cheng Beng process were carried out.

The primary data sources selected in this study were unstructured interviews. The informants selected in this study were ten ethnic Chinese, consisting of 5 representing the older generation and 5 representing the younger generation. These five parents are 84 years old, while the five younger generations are 20-35 years old. The purpose of selecting informants is to obtain as complete information as possible by taking into account the level of opportunity when and where and to whom the researcher as an instrument can explore, study, select, organize and describe as complete information as possible about the symbolic

interaction of Cheng Beng cultural rituals in the ethnic Chinese community. Tresearcher's data analysis was carried out using a qualitative descriptive method. Interview data, participant observations, documentation in research are the primary data sources that are the material for data analysis to answer research problems and are thoroughly described.

III. Discussion

Cultural rituals Cheng Beng is a wonderful celebration for Chinese people compared to the lunar new year. It can be evidenced by the large number of Ethnic Chinese who had long resided or travelled to the big city and even abroad to return to his hometown to celebrate the cultural rituals Cheng Beng held on April 5 (April 4 if it is a leap year). However, sensitivity to cultural differences is needed because an approach that is too fast can cause internal conflict for ethnicity itself (Angkat, 2019). This culture can be found in various aspects and scope, such as economics, education, law, and politics (Wayan, 2020). Tradition is something that is passed down from the heritage of the ancestors to the next generation in a relay descends performed by the indigenous communities that have become deeply entrenched the culture in life (Multajimah, 2021). The purpose of the ritual Cheng Beng is to respect the ancestors and parents who have none. This tradition has been carried on from generation to generation. All ethnic Chinese are taught to respect their parents and ancestors who have none. Hence, as a form of homage, return the favour to the elders and ancestors then the tradition of Cheng Beng is a momentum that must be celebrated, (most of the Chinese community Belinyu call it a party grave) because in the procession of the Cheng Beng, in addition, to clean the grave, recite the prayers to the deceased, also delivers the food preferences of the deceased during life and a feast. This food will be enjoyed together with family. The tomb of the visit will be decorated with various ornaments, Equipment prayer in the form of a rake (hio), wax, paper money (nyiunci), which consists of currency silver (gin cua) and gold coins (kim cua), the offerings in the form of tea, cake, wine, rice, samsang (three types of meat), yellow tofu, fruit tailored to the preferences of the ancestors while still alive. Structuring the delivery of food will be laid out in such a way as preparation for the coming of the ancestral spirits to earth, the magnificence of the feast of the tomb customized with social status, which is owned by the family who is still alive.

The exciting thing is kind of pastries such as cakes apam steamed bun, rice cake, sponge cake steamed, sangkolun, and cake-a traditional cake other cakes snacks market that has meaning and it is precisely obtained from the artificial ethnic Malays. Wood penompong to ornament the tombs were obtained from the Ethnic Malay who participated prepare the objects that will be sold at the time of the celebration of the Cheng Beng. This shows a harmonization of interaction and communication between ethnic Malays and Chinese. The interaction of the communication that occurs in the procession of the Cheng Beng accentuates the non-verbal communication in the form of the objects presented in the ritual Cheng Beng.

The procession of the Cheng Beng from year to year has undergone many changes, but this change does not remove the symbolic values that the Chinese people of every generation embrace. Since little, the Chinese community has been taught about moral values to respect, serve, and remember the kindness of ancestors who have already died, especially against the parents that raised them so that the prosperity in his life. The tradition migrated to the big cities or abroad, followed by every generation of the Chinese community in Belinyu, does not affect the cultural values to clean up and visit ancestors' graves. It is precisely their return to the land of the birth of to bring acculturation. The meaning of Cheng Beng already introduced by the parents makes it a tradition that can not

be forgotten each year, therefore as far as any of them migrated at the time of the celebration of the Cheng Beng, Chinese people will return to their hometown to celebrate. Changes occur only in the form of objects that will be presented at the time when pilgrimage to the tomb of the patriarchs. For the Older Generation, the offerings that will be delivered is still traditional food such as food which the fathers like in our life, such as traditional cakes sponge cake, steamed bun, rice cake, the meat of animals which consists of chicken, beef and pork (samsang, sam means three and the meaning meat). In the lifetime, some of the ancestors of his life yet prosperous generation now, therefore, if the family cannot provide samsang (three kinds of meat), the egg can be used as a meat substitute.

The time specified for cleaning the tomb and the colour of the clothes chosen still follow the old tradition, namely the time of dawn is considered to give blessings of sustenance. The colour red is symbolized as the colour of joy, splendour, different at the time of death red is not allowed to be worn during pilgrimage because Cheng Beng itself has the meaning of a funeral feast, which is a party to commemorate the death and welcome the arrival of ancestral spirits so that in this celebration there is no sadness and crying because the mourning period to mourn the death of the family left behind is on the day of death and the clothes worn are white.

The Cheng Beng procession is different for the younger generation because they live in the era of modernization. Practicality is the alternative chosen in undergoing the Cheng Beng ritual. For descendants who live overseas and their social life is getting better, the objects of offerings such as the types of cakes, ink, decorations, and paper money for burning in the graves have changed, even though at that time the deceased family did not have time to enjoy the results of their child's success, so as a child service, Instead, Cheng Beng's decorations and equipment have been chosen that have material value, such as traditional cakes that can be replaced with boxed cakes that can be brought from their cities to wander or buy at the market that has been packaged in suitable packaging and fruit which is an offering. Mandatory fruits such as oranges, apples, pears, grapefruit, which should be served in three types, are served in large quantities. Burning money (incense) can be in the form of paper money with a high nominal value, the aim is to show prosperity and share happiness even though parents have died, even the shape of the grave can be changed to be more magnificent by using ceramics and engraved with the writing of the clan of the descendants so that the families who make the pilgrimage know the identity of the descendants who are still alive. In the younger generation, the time for pilgrimage is preferred according to the free time that can be done, unlike the older generation who choose before dawn as a meaning of welcoming sustenance as taught by their parents, the younger generation prefers in the afternoon because it is considered a quiet time to spend time. Even though they experienced a shift, Cheng Beng as a symbol of devotion and remembering ancestral spirits was maintained despite undergoing social changes and acculturation processes. For the younger generation, the Cheng Beng ritual was a form of forming a new identity concept that showed their identity as part of their ancestral generation.

This tradition is a symbol that Cheng Beng, besides praying for ancestral spirits, this tradition is also a place for family, friends, and family identity search. This shows that parents teach role models for future generations about kinship ties. Family is the most important thing, besides the cultural rituals of Cheng Beng have formed harmonization, unity between religious people between Malay and Chinese ethnicities in Belinyu Bangka.

Table 1. Meaning of Chinese Ethnic Cheng Beng Cultural Ritual Attributes

Cheng Beng Prayer Supplies	Meaning
Hio (Garu)	Garu = Fragrant gives meaning to offerings to God the way home for ancestral spirits
Candle	As a sign of life, the return of the ancestors to earth and it continuously during the funeral, for the families who are still living. Furthermore, the candles are for a brighter life
Money (nyiuci)	As delivery money/provisions for spirits in the grave (giving money for ancestral spirits)
Tea	A drink of respect, thanks for the health and kinship of family ties
Wine	Health drink for ancestors after a big meal, to always be healthy and high respect when ancestors return to earth
Rice	The food that has been eaten by the ancestors while living three times a day so that the afterlife remains healthy
Samsang	Three types of meat that must be served as side dishes for ancestors (sam = three and sang = beef)
Yellow Tofu	The food chosen by the ancestors and the yellow colour as a symbol of splendour (bright and happy) is adjusted to the color of the grave
Steamed sponge cake	Cakes made from wheat/rice are a sign of prosperity because they have petals like flowers and are colorful, a sign of happiness
Apem Rice Cake	Cakes are made of rice which is the food of many people. it has the meaning of togetherness and intimacy
Lapis Cake	A cake made from glutinous rice with a complicated manufacturing process forms a strong bond between ancestors and generations
Sangkolun Cake	The Cakes made from sticky rice and coconut are the cakes of choice for ancestors because they are rarely made during cheng Beng as a special cake for family intimacy
Decorative flag	Colourful decoration as a sign Reception. Presence of ancestors at Cheng Beng's party. Colour the flag Was chosen red as the colour of happiness
Fruits	Consisting of apples, sweet oranges, grapefruit, the fruit of choice for health and prosperity, and benevolence for ancestors and living families

IV. Conclusion

Cheng Beng is a religious ritual and moral message that is conveyed through communication interactions that are full of moral values by cleaning the tomb, decorating it, praying, serving food, choosing the type of food to be delivered to the ancestral grave, and repairing the tomb damaged by the Chinese family for commemorating the services of the ancestors, parents who have died. Through symbolic interaction, the process of acculturation is created between Malay and Chinese ethnicities. Along with the rapid changes in times and technology, Cheng Beng's communication symbols have also changed. The presentation of food has undergone modifications from traditional to modern. Traditional cakes can be replaced in packaging for generations to come. Young people prefer practicality compared to the older generation who still adhere to old traditions, and the burning money used at the cemetery can be in the form of paper money with heaven bank notes written in high nominal value as gifts for ancestral spirits in the afterlife and prints with modern technology compared to with the older generation who still use traditional paper money. This form of symbolization is a form of respect for parents full of good values and the formation of family social status, which is conveyed through objects presented at the grave altar. The food given to the ancestors shows that the social status and prosperity of living families are getting higher, but the changes that occur in each generation do not reduce the true meaning of Cheng Beng, namely the moral message of how to respect and love parents and family.

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