

Material Culture in Cina Benteng Marriage Tradition: An Ethnography Studies

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Abstract: Among all Chinese in Indonesia, Cina Benteng in Tangerang has its own uniqueness. Being called as Cina Benteng or "Ciben" because they lived in Colonial fortress and doing farming activities to supply food for Colonial. Their black skin, slanted eyes, having prayer ash table at their home, and mostly on medium-low economic and social level. Nowadays, Cina Benteng tradition's is still hold and preserved. Its marriage tradition that is being called as Cio Tao rituals. This tradition is not only about material culture but also as a mean of historical and cultural memories in wider context. Marriage tradition in this writing will be regarded as a text that being functioned as the active agent in socio-cultural process (Auslander, 2005). The main argument of this writing is "How do material culture in Cina Benteng marriage tradition reflect collective memories of historical, cultural, and identity through its meaning". This is an ethnography research that will use visual documentations and interviews. This writing uses qualitative approach and utilizes ethnography, archeology, and semiotics studies. The result of this writing shows, marriage tradition of Cina Benteng is an artifact that contains tangible and intangible meaning. These meaning are still relevant to modern life. It also highlighted that Cina Benteng culture are able to adapt and acculturate to other culture in its context.

Keywords: *Ethnography, Artifact, Material Culture, Cina Benteng*

Introduction

This research examines the meaning as a reflection of historical and cultural memories contained in the material culture used in the marriage ceremony by the Cina Benteng ethnic group in Tangerang. The choice of Cina Benteng was motivated by the consideration of the uniqueness of the Cina Benteng ethnicity, namely brown skin, slanted eyes, working as a farmer and unable to speak their native language. The existence of the Cina Benteng, which is known as the native of Tangerang, is now starting to face challenges related to its identity and existence. This is indicated by the language situation of the Benteng Chinese ethnic group, which is no longer considered to be speaking the Betawi Ora language, their native language, based on the latest data released by *Pusat Bahasa* at 2018. This is contrast to the results of language mapping research by M.R.T Lauder in 1990, namely that the Betawi Ora language is still discovered and spoken by the Benteng Chinese ethnic group. Language as one of the seven elements forming a universal culture forms the culture and identity of an ethnic or cultural community (Koentjoroningrat, 1997). Even though in the linguistic situation there are dire conditions, in everyday life the ethnic Cina Benteng still carry out ancestral cultures such as marriage rituals, worship, funeral ceremonies or certain important days of the year.

The marriage ceremony is one of the unique cultures of Cina Benteng which is a series of *sangjit* processions and marriage parties. In the marriage ceremony there is a material culture starting from the marriage dress, composition and amount of food, addiction, and so on. The

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materials used in this series of ceremonies have roles, functions and meanings for the ethnic Cina Benteng. The argument in this paper is how the material culture in the Chinese Benteng marriage ceremony describes the memory of historical values, culture and identity, or there are aspects of change that differentiate it from ethnic Chinese in general.

Literature Review

The traditional Cina Benteng marriage ceremony is seen as a text that contains memories related to the history and culture of Cina Benteng. A text or object from the point of view of archeology and history is not only seen as a product but is an active agent of the historical process (Auslander, 2005). The author understands the active concept because in a text there is a memory that can be interpreted from era to era within the scope of a history.

Furthermore, memory from a cultural point of view is seen as a result of cultural processes (Hallam and Hockey, 2001). Memory is used by the community to remember what happened in the past and interpret it as a form of identity in the present. As a cultural process, the meaning of memory cannot be separated from aspects of political interests and other aspects of social life. This illustrates that material culture in its meaning is part of a continuous social practice, even though its material objects are fixed or the same and originate from the past.

Miller (2010) explained that at the beginning of the emergence of the study of material culture, it was in a scientific discipline that focused on artifacts as a world object made by humans. However, in its development, the study of material culture has contributed a lot to dozens of disciplines ranging from archeology to design disciplines. This shows the advantages of material culture studies that can stand and be applied in various disciplines. The study of material culture in Dr. Irmawati is emphasized by focusing on explaining the meaning behind material objects. Meaning itself has an abstract or intangible nature, while material objects have tangible properties, can be touched and felt with the senses. Cultural material as a form of human cultural production stores cultural memories, expressions and values, activities and even lifestyles. Through material culture, it can be seen how humans create material culture, how to use material culture and interpret it in socio-cultural life.

The authors take advantage of the explanation above as the background of this paper, namely the material culture in the traditional Cina Benteng marriage ceremony. The author has reviewed several previous studies related to the Cina Benteng ethnic marriage ceremony, which was written by Priscilya (2015), Ramadhanty (2016) and Suratminto (2019). The three studies above utilize the *Cia Tao* ceremony to be dissected from a cultural point of view and semiotic meaning. Priscilya's research (2015) argues that the twelve bowl ceremony (part of the *Cia Tao* ceremony series) has a meaning seen from the order and the food served. Meanwhile, Ramadhanty's research emphasizes the analysis of the meaning of the order and procedures at *sawer* and *pedaringan* ceremonies in fort Chinese marriages. Furthermore, Suratminto (2019) emphasizes the analysis of the meaning of the *Cia Tao* ceremony using the perspective of the linguistic - semiotic discipline.

Although presented in the form of articles, this paper seeks to fill the gaps in previous research. If the three previous studies only took part of the Cina Benteng marriage ceremony, namely the *Dua Belas Mangkok*, *Sawer* and *Pedaringan*, and *Cia Tao*, this paper will look at the marriage ceremony as a whole with limitations on the material culture used. If the three previous studies make use of historical and cultural explanations or the significance of semiotic symbols, this paper uses a material culture point of view. Furthermore, the authors also reviewed research related to material culture in Indonesia. One of the most influential writings is *From Rubbish to Cultural Identity* by Marwoto (2019). This research shows that artifacts in the form of pottery from the old Banten kingdom, which have been neglected, can be lifted and become a form of cultural identity. The concept of cultural identity is in line with the research that is currently being pioneered by the author in the Cina Benteng community. The description

of how cultural artifacts become an aspect in shaping identity is the argument adopted in compiling this paper. Through the explanation of previous research above, this paper is expected to be able to add diversity and novelty to research on material culture and ethnic Cina Benteng.

Research Methods

This paper is a form of qualitative research conducted by providing descriptive explanations related to the object of writing. The discussion section describes the material cultures used in the series of traditional Cina Benteng marriage ceremonies. The systematization of discussion following the order of the marriage ceremony and the same or repeated material culture is skipped. If in the ceremony section (photo) there are several materials, the discussion will focus on materials that have a dominant role. The consideration of choosing the dominant aspect uses background information from the source and the writer's understanding of cultural meaning. Information regarding the meaning was extracted from two sources, namely Mr. Daud Hasan (Chinese Benteng Cultural Activist) and Mr. Teng Tjin Eng (Elder at the Boen Tek Bio Temple), interviews were conducted on November 20 and 23, 2019, in the city of Tangerang, Banten. Furthermore, for photo documentation in this paper, it is the author's personal documentation when attending the marriage and personal documentation at the traditional marriage ceremony on April 21, 2019 in Kampung Melayu, Tangerang Regency. Inclusion of the names of the sources and the use of photo documentation have been carried out with the permission of the parties concerned.

Findings & Discussion

a. Material culture in the ritual of lighting candles and *hio*.



Pictures 1. Lighting Candles and *Hio*

Lighting candles and incense is the opening of a traditional Cina Benteng marriage ceremony. In this ceremony, the material culture that plays an important role is candles and *hio*. Candles and *hio* are placed on the table until they are. The *sam kai* table is a table that functions as a place to put good offerings, candles, and *hio*. A burning candle is a tangible form of matter. Candlelight is interpreted as a bright light in married life. Hopefully, the domestic life that will be navigated by the bride and the groom will be smooth from temptations. The light of the

candle is then used as a spirit to navigate life, even though there will be a point of experiencing trials. *Hio* or incense is interpreted as a sacred form of respect for gods or ancestors. This honor is given with the intention of asking for blessings and fluency in the activities they are commencing. At this stage of the ceremony, the material culture that gets meaning or is intangible is lit candles and *hio*. The intangible meaning of candles and *hio* is the same for other ceremonies that are part of the ethnic Chinese tradition of Cina Benteng.

b. Material culture in the ritual of pouring wine (*Gan Ciu*)



Picture 2: Ritual of Pouring Wine

The ritual of pouring wine and paying homage to ancestors. White wine was poured three times and then knelt down to the ancestor three times. This is done to pay homage to the ancestors, before starting the traditional marriage ritual. This procession is carried out by the father of the bride or groom. At this ceremony, the dominant material culture is wine. *Gan* means happiness or joy. *Ciu* itself is translated as wine. *Gan ciu* means joy and enthusiasm for the wine used to honor the god *Thian*. White wine as a tangible material is interpreted as a form of enthusiasm and happiness and a form of respect for the god *Thian*. Through this **gan ciu** procession, it is hoped that the marriage party can run smoothly, happily and with joy.

c. Tetampah Ritual



Picture 3: *Tetampah* ritual

The bride and groom set foot on a tetampah with a picture of yin and yang

At this ceremony, the bride and groom set foot on a red bed and in the center is a picture of yin and yang. *Tetampah* is one of the kitchen utensils made of bamboo and used for weeding rice or wheat. The *Tetampah* used by the Cina Benteng is not brown but red and with the yin and yang logo. Based on information from the source, red is interpreted as luck and joy. Meanwhile, the round shape of *tetampah* is interpreted as perfection and without end. And yin and yang are interpreted as a form of harmony between two strong elements in human life. *Tetampah* as a tangible artifact is interpreted as a form of luck, perfection, and harmony in the household ark that will be pursued by the bride and groom.

According to the author, in this *tetampah* ceremony, the Cina Benteng ethnic group fulfills the distinction concept. In various ethnic cultures in Indonesia, there is also a procession of stepping on an egg or flower on a mat or falling. However, Cina Benteng ethnicity distinguishes itself by the use of red and the yin and yang symbols. This distinction can at the same time be used as a form of identity that shows the existence of Cina Benteng.

d. Material culture at the *Cia Tao* ritual (combing hair)

Before the ceremony, combing the hair of the groom hands over the bushel to the bride. The bushel contains mirrors, combs, scales, scissors, threads, swords, money and ancient books like the following photo:



Picture 4 : *Gantang*

Gantang is a measurement tool used to measure rice, wheat, or corn in ancient times when people were not familiar with units of kilos or liters. The red color for ethnic Chinese is understood as spirit and luck. A set of tools for everyday life that are in a bushel is described as tools that will be used in navigating through life which are interpreted as follows:

a. The mirror is used to reflect or see self-reflection.

Intangible meaning: so that we are always introspective, can see our own shortcomings and mistakes before seeing a partner's shortcomings.

b. Comb is used to comb hair.

Intangible meaning: whatever problems in life must be resolved patiently, according to the applicable rules until the problem can be resolved. Like the process of combing, slowly, thoroughly for the sake of straightening the hair.

c. Scales are used to measure the weight of an object.

Intangible meaning: a husband and wife in facing problems in life or when making a decision must be good at weighing the positive - negative impacts that will be reaped.

d. Scissors are used for cutting.

Intangible meaning: in navigating the household ark a husband and wife must have responsibility and mature thoughts, have an understanding in deciding everything.

e. Threads are used in sewing or basic textile materials.

Intangible meaning: the relationship between a husband and wife is described as a knot of threads in a cloth, tight and strong.

f. The sword is used for fighting or fighting unrighteousness.

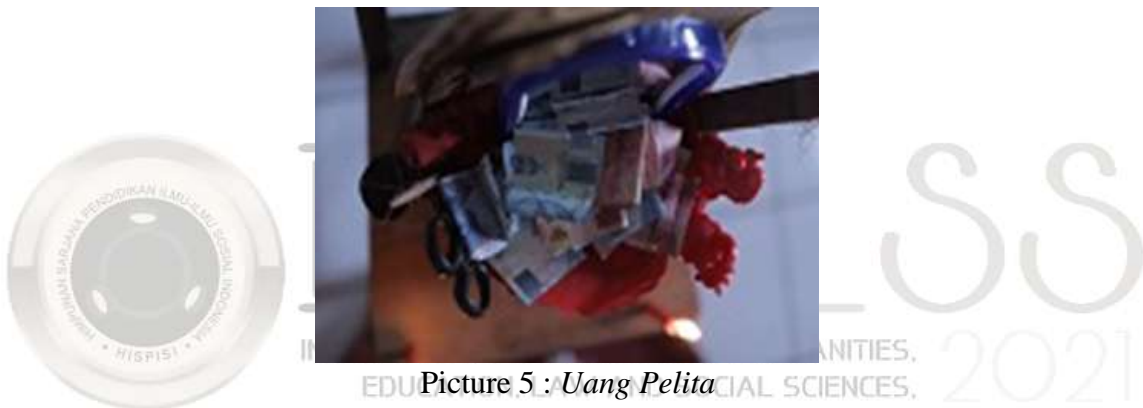
Intangible meaning: husband and wife must have courage and toughness in facing challenges in domestic life.

g. Ancient books: Chinese ethnic almanacs used in everyday life.

Intangible meaning: in navigating the household, a husband and wife must have a guide or guidance in order to achieve a good and harmonious life.

h. Money: money is a means of buying and selling in everyday life.

Intangible meaning: money which is a gift from relatives and family is the initial capital or provision to navigate household life. This money is called *lamppost*. After the bushel is handed over, the whole family will make a donation so that the bushels that start out empty like the photo 4 turn out to be as follows:



Picture 5 : *Uang Pelita*

After the bushels are handed over and the money for the lamps is collected, the hair combing ceremony is carried out. This ceremony is performed by the brother or sister of the bride and groom by combing the hair of the bride. The material culture in this ceremony is a comb which has been described as having the intangible meaning above. Siblings play a role in the combing process, illustrating that the family is ready to release the bride to navigate domestic life. But also give advice (through the philosophy of combing) to always be patient, careful, not impetuous in facing problems in life. Below is a photo of the hair combing ceremony.



Picture 6: The process of combing hair

After combing, the bride's hair will be in a bun and worn with rocking flowers. The process of using this flower shake must be ritually worn by family members or the mother, but in practice it can be assisted by the original makeup in the Chinese Benteng marriage ceremony. The following is a photo of the rocking flower and when the rocking flower has been worn by the bride,



Picture 7 and 8 : *Kembang Goyang*

Kembang Goyang is a form of material culture that is composed of the composition of the number of flowers, gems, crowns with a certain number, color and function. The elements that make up the flower shake have a very complex philosophical function and require separate discussion. In this paper, based on information from the source, the flower rocking as an artifact has a function as a headdress. However, the Cina Benteng attaches an intangible meaning to the rocking flower as a form of character for a wife who not only has a beautiful face but also has the character and ability to maintain family dignity, is able to bear burdens for the sake of the family, and devotes herself to the family.

e. **Eating *Dua Belas Mangkok***





Picture 8 and 9 : Eating dua belas mangkok food

At the 12 bowl rice meal rituals, the bride and groom are accompanied by their relatives, generally the younger ones. The groom quickly dips or tastes alternately over 12 bowls and then is eaten. This immersion is carried out three times. Food in 12 bowls consisting of main food and side dishes is a material culture. Philosophically, each bowl has its own philosophical meaning. However, in general 12 bowls of artifacts are tangible and have intangible meanings as 12 different months of the year. And within 12 months a married couple may face something joyful, sad, bitter or sad. Through this ceremony, a husband and wife are given a picture and are expected to go through all of these life processes well and patiently.

f. Rituals Eating Rice

Eating rice can be seen in picture 8, which is white rice dipped in white sugar liquid. This rice is fed by the mother to the bride and groom in turn. The bride and groom should not chew but swallow immediately. Literacy rice as an artifact has an intangible aspect as a problem to be faced in life. Whatever the form, sad or happy, cannot be denied but must be faced. In literate rice, bitter liquid material is not used because the bitterness in life is something that is not expected to happen.

g. Saweran Ritual



Picture 10 : Saweran

The series of ceremonies, starting from lighting a candle to eating two literary rice dishes, is performed in the living room (the Cina Benteng marriage house consists of the back room, the living room and the front room). After the procession ate twelve bowls and ate literate rice. The bride and groom are paraded into the front room where the guests are. When entering the living room the bride and groom will be presented with a *saweran* consisting of coins, flowers and rice. The three materials constitute material culture in this procession. Flowers symbolize life and happiness. Rice is a basic human need. And money is a buying and selling

tool in meeting daily needs. The intangible meaning of the three material cultures above is that the bride's household life is expected to be filled with abundant happiness, prosperity and prosperity.

h. Material Culture in *Te Pai* Ritual



Picture 11 : *Te Pai* Ritual

In this ceremony, the bride and groom serve tea to the parents and symbolically the parents drink the tea that is served. In this procession tea becomes a form of material culture. The is a daily drink consumed by the family, it is also a treat when someone is visiting. As a form of material culture, tea has an intangible meaning as a form of warmth and gratitude for both parents. And at the same time it shows that the bride and groom have become a family unit and are ready to visit the household ark. After the tea drinking procession, there is a series of ceremonies, namely *Pai Ciu* (serving wine to the family) and *Cin Pang* (the bride and groom entering the bridal chamber). However, this paper is not included in the discussion because the author does not encounter any new forms of material culture. The material culture used in both ceremonies is the same as the artifacts used in the previous ceremonial stages.

The traditional Cina Benteng marriage ceremony as part of the Chinese cultural tradition has become increasingly difficult to find in this modern era. This ceremony involves various artifacts which are material culture that has intangible aspects that are still highly relevant to modern life. The intangible meaning of material culture in the Cina Benteng marriage ceremony does not only describe the richness of the culture but also the historical aspects, how they acculturate with the surrounding culture and at the same time fulfill the function as cultural identity.

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