TRADITION CARD GAME CEKI: COMMUNITY IDENTITY CHINESE MELAY MEDAY, MINANG, AND BALI

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Abstract

A game is a cultural product of a society that created it. In games there is a reflection of the cultural patterns and philosophical values of the community concerned. Every society has a different form of games, but there are also similarities to each other, which in essence is to meet the needs of the expression of togetherness among them. Ceki card game is a cultural product of Chinese society that has already spread among Malay community around Malaysia, Singapore and North Sumatra, even some other Indonesian ethnic such as Minang and Bali. Based on this background, this paper discusses how Chinese cultural traditions could be spread and accepted by other societies outside of ethnic Chinese, and whether there are differences and similarities between them. The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the similarities and differences in the function and meaning of Ceki card game to the Malay communities of Medan, Minang and Bali. Sources of data are taken from literature review and field observation. This article is the result of qualitative research. The analysis used to understand the function and meaning of Ceki card game in a study in cultural studies.

Keywords: Tradition of Kartu Ceki, Malay Medan, Minang, and Bali

Introduction

A man is a creature of play (homo luden). Playing is closely related to the actuality and expression of one self. A traditional game is one of the cultural products of a society that contains values, such as educative, therapeutic, recreative, and normative. A traditional game is a legacy of the results of socialization that is derived in descending societies in the arena. Various aspects, functions, and benefits of traditional games can actually be used as a creative information medium. However, today most of the traditional games, especially those in big cities, are extinct, rarely played, and pushed aside by modern games. There are several factors that cause the loss of traditional games,
one of which is because it has been replaced by the game models with new technolog. Nevertheless, traditional games act as a medium of cognition need to be nurtured, preserved, transformed, and functioned in accordance with the times. One form of the traditional game is the game of Ceki cards.

Until now the study of traditional games in Indonesia is rare. These articles are only in the form of information that is still limited. The articles are generally produced and published by the local government or the Regional Office of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as Cultural Park which records several types of traditional games in their respective areas. Other publications are articles from magazines, newspapers, and special journals of culture, both locally and abroad or can now be spread across various websites or blogs on the internet. However, especially for the information the Ceki card game, it is still very limited. The study of games in Indonesia, especially games for children in some areas of Java Island, had been done by some Dutch ethnographers before independence, among others (1) H. Overbeck, Javaanse Meisjessepen en Kinderliedjes (Girl Games and Javanese Children's Singing, 1939), and (2) Catharina H. Kool, Das Kindespiel in Indischen Archipel (Children's Games in Indonesia, 1923). While the study for a traditional adult game, such as these Ceki cards, may be said to have not worked much. Despite so, this game still survives as it is played by the Malay Chinese community in the region of North Sumatra (Medan), in the Minang community, and in the people of Bali. Some traditional Indonesian games that use cards or the like are Mahjong, Domino, Remi Card, Bridge, Poker, kyiu-kyiu, Song cards, and Ceki.¹

Traditional games are passed down from generation to generation. It shows that the game contains educational meaning that teaches habitual habits that are conventionally and codified from moral values of ethics (normative values) adopted by the supporting community. Children games serve to maintain the continuity of value by inserting various meanings in various forms and types of play (Alkatiri 2010: 98).

Traditional games today are almost said to be no longer easy to find in the area, especially some big cities. There are several factors that cause the loss of the game, among others (1) facilities and playgrounds are reduced in line with changes and developments of the local area, (2) the time it takes to play also has reduced, due to the emergence of more modern means of entertainment, such as television, entertainment venues, video games, play stations, gamewatch, and various games provided by internet devices, as well as due to (3) that it has been rarely played, because some of its players did not have time to disseminate, record, and record it as one of the cultural products of the community. Nevertheless, this card game is still played by adults in some Malay Chinese communities in North Sumatra (Medan), in the Minang community, both in their

¹ After tracing the sources about the game of Ceki cards from other than scientific articles that are generally in informal information spread on sites on Google and Youtube, as well as on individual blogs. It is possible that people do not care much about this popular culture product that very minimum scientific sources can be found.
own Minang area (West Sumatra) as well as those scattered in other areas, such as the community Bali.

Based on this background, this paper could discusses the following questions: how Chinese cultural traditions be spread and accepted by other societies outside of ethnic Chinese? Is there any differences and similarities of the game form of the Ceki card among the educated people? The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the similarities and differences in the function and meaning of Ceki card game to the Malay community of Medan, Minang and Bali. Sources of data are taken from literature review and field observations assisted by searching on several Youtube channels showing the game of the Ceki card. In search of this source we have also done it through historical method. Meanwhile, the data relating to the reconstruction of the history of the game of Ceki card has been taken from the websites or blogs on the internet. This article is the result of research using qualitative method by the description of this game of Ceki card in three different communities. Meanwhile, to analyze the function and meaning of game ceki, this research has used the approach of cultural studies.

**Brief History of Ceki Card**

Until now no accurate source has been found on the origin of Ceki card game. From some internet sources rumours, this card was made in the Tang dynasty (613-906) as a game of kings and nobles. At that time it was still made in bamboo slats. Another source reported that in the year 1294 the reign of Yen Sengzhu introduced the form of the game in the form of cards with less number of cards than today. The form of the game continued to experience developments and modifications. This Ceki game is actually similar to the Mahjong game (pictured bar), even considered to have come from a modified Mahjong that is simpler and easier to play. In the eighteenth century, the Chinese were familiar with the processing, manufacture, and printing of paper used for Buddhist teachings and the necessities associated with the form of payment in the form of banknotes. The Ceki cards were then made in the form of prints that mimic the form of banknotes and certainly with some modifications, either in form, pictures or special signs. In addition, other modifications of the game play was tailored to the needs of its time. The game play that is known today has come from the fifteenth century.

Due to the enthusiasm of Chinese people who loved to spend their time playing cards, in the 1930s, the printing industry produced a variety of games in the form of cards, one of them was Ceki card. All of these industries were based in Shanghai city. In the city there were nearly 30 factories that produced this card game. However, during the Cultural Revolution imposed by the Mao government, all forms of this card game were prohibited, as well as its manufacturing plants.
The ban came to an end until 1970. After that, the Chinese returned to play these Ceki cards everywhere.²

Ceki Card Game

A game is a cultural product of a society that created it. In games there is a reflection of the cultural patterns and philosophical values of the community concerned. Every society has a different form of games, but there are also similarities to each other, which in essence is to meet the needs of the expression of togetherness among them. Ceki card game is a cultural product of Chinese society that has already spread among Malay community around Malaysia, Singapore and North Sumatra, even some other Indonesian ethnic such as Minang and Bali.

The Ceki cards are now known to be 6x3 cm in length and width, with styles that are different from each other. They are generally black and white and there are some cards that are colored red as a distinguishing marker. Each card has a meaning to be played with a similar pattern. The general form is shown below.

At the moment this Ceki card game requires 180 cards consisting of 3 sets. Each set of cards is 10 different cards that are different from each other. A round of the game is divided into 30 types of cards and each card has a name with its own code marks. Therefore, every player needs to memorize the image and mark listed on the Ceki card, because the winner of this game is able to collect the cards with the same sign faster than any other players. If a player is able to collect cards of the same type as the local convention faster, then he has the right to declare the word "Ceki” and that means the first stage of the game is over. This game can be done by 4 people or 6 people pairing with each other. This card game requires cooperation and trust between partners, as well as carefulness in predicting the opponents’ strategy. In addition, it also takes sharp instinct to memorize the game. On that basis, this game is also often used for gambling.

In this game of Ceki cards, teammates sit facing each other. Each player is given 11 cards. The first player takes one card from the stack of cards in the middle of the table, and shows the card or he keeps it or discards the card in his hand. The second player can have an option to choose whether he wants to take the first player's discarded card or take the card from the stack of cards in the middle of the table. The game depends on whether the card can be a sideways or forward, and so on until a player is able to collect eleven cards of the same type that have been mutually agreed upon. The winner of this game is a player who manages to collect 3 groups of cards, which consists of 3 eyes (cards of the same image mark), 6 feet and 2 marks klorok, as shown below.

The three leftmost lined cards with the same image mark are called eyes. The next six cards must have the same image mark (3 shark cards & 3 bent cards) called legs. The last two cards should be with the same picture mark called klorok. Sideways card that is then referred to as Ceki. This means one more step to victory, where only one card with the same image mark with the card type klorok is needed to obtain.

Ceki Cards are also marked by unique Chinese script. The sign is usually on the card. On the first card there is a Wan script that means tens of thousands and the next card is a multiple of the previous, so on if lined up. While the script on the right means the number one to nine. Other signs can also be seen in the code above each card, such as the example below.
The card game is likable because every player has the secret of every card he has and his confidence arises in the togetherness and competition among the players. Even every player can behave as a scout, trapper, and at the same time become a determinant to monitor the opponent. As with all games, it certainly has rules, so is the game of this Ceki card. However, the rule is a deal between players and only applies in certain places.

The Background of Chinese History of Medan

Historically, the arrival of Chinese ethnic community into the territory of Medan occurred in three waves. The first wave was estimated around the 15th century. The first not too many of these are Chinese merchants who visited ports in East Sumatra. The second wave of ethnic Chinese came around the middle and late 19th century, during the growth and development of the Dutch tobacco plantation industry in Deli which required a lot of manpower. Meanwhile, the third wave came in the early 20th century as labour, free workers and traders. They were generally from the Toechow and Hokkien tribes. They were brought through secret societies (Triad Secret Society), located in Singapore (Basarshah 2013: 2).

After their contract expired, some workers returned to their home country. However, most of them lived in cities and worked with businesses. At the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese businessmen received help from the Dutch Indies government. They were granted concessions and monopolies of plantation production, transportation, distribution, to retailers in the eastern part of Sumatra. The Dutch government also provided an opportunity for the Chinese community

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3 What is meant by the Malay Chinese community is the Chinese who have immigrated in waves from several provinces in mainland China to various regions, especially in Malay-speaking communities such as North Sumatra (Medan, Pematang Siantar, Tebing Tinggi, Binjai, Padang Sidempuan). This article is only devoted to the Malay Chinese community in the city of Medan. (See Nasrul Hamdani. 2012. Komunitas Cina di Medan: Dalam Lintasan Tiga Kekuasaan 1930-1960. Jakarta: LIPI).
to become food suppliers and contractors in plantations (Basarshah 2013: 13 and Pelly 2015: 176 and 242).

Initially, the Chinese in the city of Medan was a pure Chinese group. They generally still retained the culture of their original city or province in China. In the process of development later, some of them had mixed with the local community, which became known as the Chinese descent, the Chinese who on the one hand still maintained the culture but on the other hand also accepted the local culture. Some of them had mixed marriages with local people. The Dutch colonial government placed either Descendants or Pure Chinese as a group of Eastern' or Eastern Orientals or Vremde Oosterlingen (Greif, 1991: xi). They occupied a higher position than the natives. This was a policy that the Dutch colonies deliberately undertook to separate Chinese and indigenous peoples, so that they could not unite to cooperate in raising economic or political power (Suryadinata, 2002: 8). In its journey, both Descendants and Pure Chinese still wanted to maintain their identity. It then became a source of jealousy for Indigenous people, both during and after Indonesian independence and even in subsequent periods.

The Chinese tribes in Medan, among others were (1) the Cantonese. They were the residents of Kwantung Province. Their profession was goldsmiths, carpenters, tailors and fabric traders. And then (2) Hakka or Khek tribe, who generally worked as shoemakers, timber traders, and lead producers. (3) Thiochiu and Hailhok Hong tribes, from Swatow, generally worked as porters on the plantation. (4) The tribe of Hailam, who came from Hainan island, most of them later became housemaids, cooks, and hotel employees. (5) Amoy tribe or Hokkien tribe, who originated from Shiang Shou Fu district, was known as traders and hard workers. (6) Some other small tribes, partly from the Luitsiu peninsula and Kaotsiu, are commonly called the Luchiu, Caochio and Hoakchio Tribes. They are from Hokkien Province. Most of them were fishing boat owners in Belawan and Bagansiapi-api (Basarshah 2013: 17-19).

Since the 1910s the city of Medan had become their shelter. Although their place of residence was limited by the Dutch government, in the process of its development they were scattered in various areas in Medan. Based on the decision of the Colonial government, they were appointed figures who could represent their interests, as an organized Captain or Lieutenant to the lower level, among which the popular and charismatic was Chong A Fie.

In Medan, they formed various associations according to their backgrounds. This Chinese association aimed to provide assistance to the struggling Chinese traders. This association also acted as an intermediary for dispute settlement among members, providing support to workers, as well as providing assistance to poor Chinese and so on. Their associations consisted of an association of professions or professions, associations of villagers or provinces, family associations, and joint business associations (kongsi). In addition, there were still associations set up to run the school and take care of the dead. Each club had its own rules, its own figures, its own meeting houses, including its own monastery with different gods (Basarshah 2013: 16).
Chinese people from various provinces and various circles knew and brought this game of Ceki cards to Medan. This game was played at the meeting (kongkow-kongkow) together. It was usually played in one's home alternately or in a tavern or food stall. At first this game was played by women who had free time while waiting for their husbands to come home. In the course of this Ceki game then more people who belonged to the men of workers or employers played in their spare time. This game was a meeting place between relatives and partners who already know each other. Therefore, strangers who could not be trusted were not able join to play this Ceki card. There are various philosophical rules, values, and ethics derived from their cultural conceptions, based on the tradition of Confucianism which is deeply embedded in the daily life of the Chinese of Medan until now.  

Ceki Card Games in Medan, Minang, and Bali

In the late 1920s a Belgian industrialist named Van Genechten produced this card and exported it to different areas where Chinese immigrants settled, especially in Southeast Asia. This success was followed by Camoin from the city of Marseilles who also produced and distributed it to various Chinese settlement areas in Sumatra and elsewhere. In Sumatra this checkbook was manufactured by Handelsvereeniging Harmsen Verwey & Dunlop N.V. Java- Sumatra- Celebes, a Dutch company located in Ambacang Building on the coast of Padang city (once was Hotel Ambacang and suffered from an earthquake in 2009). Thanks to the products of this factory, the Minang people found the game of Ceki card. The game then became more popular among Minang people, even able to replace the game of the Dutch model card (playing cards), let alone the Minang people had a habitual tradition of gathering in Lapau to interact and the time spent interacting and socializing was used to play cards.

In Minangkabau there were two media that served as a place of mental mentoring, spiritual, intellectual, and social skills for the younger generation Minang. Both media are considered to have had a major effect on the attitude of the Minang people, they were (1) Surau and (2) Lapau. In the colonial period, Surau became a place built and place of the Islamic culture preservation. But unfortunately at this time the function and meaning of Surau had faded and was replaced with Lapau. In Lapau there were various levels of society and generations gathered at several tables (starting from nephews to mothers and marriage officiants). For mothers and officiants, Lapau became a presentative media for teaching customary philosophy and moral ethics. The media Lapau was considered more flexible and democratic compared with other media, so it was possible for the occurrence of intercultural exchange. As for the younger

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4 For the Chinese community the Ceki cards are also used for fortune telling. Various markings on the Ceki cards for them are considered to have meaning for their lives. There were special speakers in the Chinese community in Medan who were invited to predict using this Ceki card.
generation, Lapau was regarded as an arena to sharpen their ability to adjust to the environment (Son 2007: xviii-xx).

Therefore, this form of Ceki card game in Minang society was more open, because anyone could take part. In addition to Lapau or taverns, sometimes it was also played in the house of people who were preparing the event kendi baralek (thanksgiving). In Minang this type of card was better known by the name of Koa than Ceki.5 This game was mainly played by Minang men from various ages and social strata. It was also used often for gambling, either openly or hidden, and both small and large-scale.

The Ceki card manufactured by the Dutch printing factory in Padang (Handelsvereeniging Harmsen Verwey & Dunlop N.V. Java- Sumatra- Celebes) also later spread to Chinese immigrant settlements in the city of Medan. As a game of their traditions, the Ceki cards became popular in the Chinese community in the city of Medan. Every Chinese from all walks of life had its own group from clans, families, business colleagues, and villagers. They used to play it generally in private. Given the character and nature of those who were always in groups, only people who were known to them who could be invited to play together. On the basis of that, the game was mostly played in homes or closed places.

Meanwhile, the Balinese had various ritual traditions that required considerable time preparation. Opportunities or spare time in between ritual preparation activities were generally used to play cards. One of the popular card games in the Balinese community up until now has been the game of Ceki cards. Moreover, there was no element of prohibition in their religious teachings to play this type of card so that this habit has continued until now.

For a long time in Bali, it was found that some Uang Kepeng were identified as Chinese kepeng money from several dynasties (Han, Tang, Song, and Ming) until Qing Dynasty (1911). Chinese Kepeng money by the people of Bali is named Jinah Jepit which has been used for various important rituals up to now. Based on the findings, Bali also had been in contact with the Chinese since before the colonial era until the early 20th century (Harthawan 2011: 21).

In the nineteenth century China’s relationship with Bali grew stronger. This can be analysed from the increasing number of data of Chinese who came and settled in Bali, especially in North Bali (Buleleng). Some Chinese leaders were given the position of syahbandar and tax collector by King Buleleng. They lived in separate settlements in a Chinese village (Chinatown) (The Great Son in Harthawan 2011: 24-25). In those days, Chinese kepeng money continued to diffuse in Bali through trading and was used as a legal means of payment in Bali. It was possibly not only Uang Kepeng, but also some Chinese culture entering and influencing Balinese culture, one of which was this game of Ceki card.

In Bali, these Ceki cards were played according to their leisure needs, when there was a procession of death and the need to prepare for some ritual events. In other

5 In Malaysia it is also called the Kowah which is commonly played by the Chinese ladies and Babahs. It could be that the term Kowah comes from Chinese "Ka" which means thick card made of bamboo or wood.
words, while waiting for the various ritual events, they made use of the free time available by playing Ceki cards. On the basis of that, the people of villages or sebanjar could play this game, even people from outside the village (banjar) who would help the preparation of the ceremonial procession could also come into play. It can be said that Balinese game cards were more open, even more playable at several tables in homes preparing for ritual processions.6

Analysis Based on Cultural Studies Approaches

Games that are played and popular in some community groups cannot be separated from the identity characteristics of a particular group of people. In other words, a society has an identity associated with the game of the Ceki card. Identity relationship with Ceki card game and is community can be studied with the approach of cultural studies, especially the theory of cultural studies with respect to identity.

In the approach of cultural studies, identity and hybridity in a society are the elements that cannot be separated. The identity of a community group will always be related to something identified by the various meanings within the group, whether representative meaning, political meaning, or cultural significance and social constructs formed in relation to their identity (Hall, 1997). The concept of identity is always related to how a society needs social construction related to how strong the identity belongs to the group. The need and construction of an identity cannot be separated from a community studied in the cultural studies approach.

The Ceki card game in Malay Chinese society in West Sumatra, Bali and Minang is highly relevant by using identity-cultural studies approach because the game of Ceki card in the three groups of society reflects a 'special' identity which is 'special' compared to the game Ceki in other communities. Ceki card games have a certain meaning in these communities because by playing Ceki card the individuals involved in it have a certain identity. If the Ceki card is played by a group of people in Jakarta, the meaning of the game Ceki card is limited as a game only. The significance of the identity it contains is not related to the meaning that exists in the citizens of Jakarta. However, the game of Ceki card in the Malay Chinese community of Medan, Minang, and Bali has its own identity

6 In addition to the three communities above, it turns out that the Javanese card game is also known in Javanese society, although it is not as popular as in the Chinese, Medan, Minang, and Balinese communities. In Java, especially in Central Java this Ceki card is known as the Lintrik card. According to an informant, this type of card game is now rarely found. In some Javanese communities this card was also used for fortune telling, even more extreme was used for facilities for memelet (sooth saying), especially used by commercial sex workers (PSK). Some of the ceki or lintrik cards with special marks had been given spells with certain rituals so that customers who come would continue to be present and become loyal customers of the PSK.
whose values can only be interpreted by those communities. Ceki game serves as a space where the identity of contraction, mutually meaningful, to a group of people. The identity of the play may be related to the value of togetherness among fellow entrepreneurs, the association with ancestral similarity, the commodification of space from 'moments of togetherness', among others, by gambling or by becoming a leisure activity to wait for a certain ritual, such as death ritual.

From the perspective of cultural studies, the identity of the game of Ceki card in the Chinese group of Medan can be read as one way of embodiment of the exclusivity of the identity of a group. It is mentioned that from the beginning of their arrival, the Chinese people of Medan were placed in the second position, as Foreign Easterners, in the stratification of Dutch colonial society. Thus, there was a distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous, especially the Medan Chinese group in Medan. The game of Ceki card was not known as a common game played by indigenous people in Medan. This made the Ceki card game one of the factors that constructs the strong identity of the Chinese group of Medan. It can also be analysed that the game Ceki card tend to be played by men from Medan Chinese.

This makes the identity formed by the game of Ceki card to be more specific, namely: Medan Chinese - Male, and always identified with time of kongkow-kongkow. Thus, if analyzed from the identity approach of Stuart Hall (1997), then the identity of Ceki card also encompasses the public spaces that seem to belong only to men in the Chinese group of Medan. Ceki card game is proof that leisure time (kongkow-kongkow) for Chinese people of Medan can only be filled by men only. The male identity in Chinese Medan will always be identical to whether or not someone plays a game of Ceki cards. If not, then the individual will be 'deprived' and even lose his own value among the Medan Chinese.

From the approach of cultural studies, it can be seen that what happened in the Minang society became an identity that seemed to describe the dominant discourse resistance that existed in the Minang tribe of men in Minang. As we know that in Minang society, the dominant culture is matrilineal culture, for example from the side of kinship, inheritance process, and others. However, the identity of the game Ceki card in Minang was dominantly played by the men.¹ The Ceki card game co-opts the public space, which was not yet dominated by the matrilineal culture, and insisted that public space - especially leisure time, could be filled with a game of identical Ceki cards with men. Here, the Ceki card game constructs the identity that Minang men were playing Ceki cards fill their leisure time or 'kongkow-kongkow'. This can be read as a form of resistance from the dominant discourse that links the identity of Minang society with matrilinealism. The card game Ceki emerged as one of the venues where Minang men had a place to show their male identity.

¹ For Minang women, they saw the Ceki card game identical to gambling, so they always advised small children to stay away from groups of people who were playing the Ceki card.
However, it does not mean that the Ceki card game in Bali is free from the construction of exclusive identity. It can be analyzed from several factors. First, the game of Ceki card is played when death occurs. Secondly, the Ceki card is played while waiting for time to prepare for a religious ritual. Thirdly, the Ceki card can be played by all residents sekampung or sebanjar without knowing gender restrictions. The correlation of these three things is the same time and space. These three things are read by the identity approach of Stuart Hall (1997), in fact the game Ceki card has created a 'new identity' in the tradition space of a society. The Ceki card game in the Balinese community will place the individual as one of the larger sections, which can be cultural rituals or death rituals. The empty space here serves as a 'trap' for the individual who plays it, with the individual following playing the Ceki card, then it will be co-opted as part of one of the cultural rituals in Bali. The claim that Ceki card game in Bali does not recognize gender restrictions and allows the outsiders to play can be taken into account that explains the strong linkage of identity between a ritual and the game of Ceki card. By individuals learning to play the Ceki card in the Balinese community, the individual is subconsciously co-opted in the space of a cultural ritual in Bali. In line with Hall & Du Gay (1996), that identity will be in line with the cultural genealogy of a society, then playing Ceki card in Bali is one way to show the strength of Bali's identity in Indonesia.

Conclusion

Thus, the game of Ceki cards in the three communities has different identity traits, either in the way, the number of players, the use of space (closed or open), the use of time (free or special), the choice of players (only relatives or free or only male or mixed), and it use as a gambling arena or just as to fill free time or wait for the preparation of rituals. All this shows how a community needs a space of expression of togetherness that indirectly strives to preserve its cultural traditions as well as to show the identity of their respective communities.

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