

Malayan-Chinese Interactions in Bangka from the Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

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Abstract

Bangka Belitung is recognized as a place where peace between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups is upheld. Multifarious unique features emerge as the implication of cultural dialog between both groups. This study aimed to explore the meaningful relationship between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups in Bangka from the symbolic interactionism perspective. The main foci are placed upon the roles of cultural symbols as a means to understand intercultural relationships. This study applied the qualitative method and ethnography approach, gathering data from the observation and interviews with people from both ethnic groups in Bangka. The result highlighted the importance of cultural symbolism in understanding the interaction between Malayan and Chinese people in Bangka. This study has contributed a deeper insight into the dynamics of interethnic interaction in Bangka, made meaning of quotidian life between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups, and carried implications for interethnic and intersocial relationships. The key to strengthening interethnic relationships in Bangka is reconciliation and integration of cultural symbols.

Keywords

malayan chinese, symbolic interactionism, bangka

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a renowned archipelagic country with a vast wealth of ethnic and cultural diversity (Sutardi, 2007) and a unique social landscape that has been enticing to explore. Ethnic and cultural diversity integrates into a harmonious symbol enshrined in the slogan *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Rahman et al., 2020) carries expectations to bridge between dialects, ethnicities, and cultures in Indonesia and preserve their existence.

However, maintaining interethnic harmony over time is difficult, as evident from historical interethnic conflicts across Indonesia. In 1918, a vertical conflict occurred between Chinese lords and indigenous traders in Kudus; consequently, many Chinese descendants died, and their houses were burnt to ashes (Muntholib, 2008). A horizontal conflict called Somber Christmas (Natal Kelabu) fuelled sporadic riots from Tasikmalaya to Rengasdengklok, Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Pekalongan, and Situbondo between 1997 and 2000. Most victims of these riots were Chinese descendants (Satya & Maftuh, 2016). In addition, some issues led to inevitable interethnic conflicts between Lampung and Bali groups in 2012, claiming a sizeable death toll (Kumparan.com, 2023). Reflections from these past conflicts have sparked a question as to why interethnic conflict often leads to a dead end and what sort of solution can best be applied to prevent interethnic conflict.

Social studies on cultural symbolism are crucial to address these interethnic conflicts. Cultural symbols in the community are potentially developed into an alternative. It takes a deep perspective to study this phenomenon, and therefore, this study analyses symbolic interactionism and its close relation with social interaction. More specifically, this study highlights ways to perceive differences as a unity toward integration.

Interethnic integration, particularly the one related to multicultural conditions in the community carries a huge potential to study under the microscope. Analysis of interethnic interaction should transcend the social relationship aspects in interethnic groups and arrive at an understanding

of how individuals of each ethnicity make meaning of daily interactions. In this way, symbolic interactionism becomes relevant because it emphasizes the roles and meaning of symbols in social interaction (Blumer, 1986). Symbolic interactionism highlights that symbols play a vital role in making meaning of social interaction. In the context of interethnic interaction, symbols can be cultural symbols, language, and gestures (Subari, 2018). These symbols are feasible tools for expressing meaning and creating perception around ethnical identity. The concept of symbolic interactionism in this study will look at the symbols of interethnic interaction in the cultural celebrations of the great day, language, and community gestures, as well as in regional political contestations.

One of the regions in Indonesia that has become an archetype of interethnic harmony is Bangka Island. Situated in Bangka Belitung Province, Bangka Island is renowned for the harmonious relationship between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups (Sya et al., 2019). This interethnic interaction has given birth to multifarious, interesting social structures that are enticing to probe deeper. Bangka has developed into one crucial melting pot where local cultures, traditions, and histories enmesh. Malayan and Chinese communities in Bangka share memory bonds in the island's history, which subsequently create a unique social reality. Harmony and diversity bonds between these two ethnicities are embodied in daily life, from communal celebration to dialects and religious tradition (Yuliarni, 2015). This harmony is the strength to describe the positive interaction between Malayan and Chinese communities in Bangka.

The importance of a better understanding of interethnic interaction in Bangka is to honor diversity and shape perceptions of the social dynamics in a complex community. Accordingly, the symbolic interactionism theory has been claimed as a sufficient theoretical basis to understand what lies beyond these cultural symbols. These cultural symbols are embodied into making daily interactions, shaping ethnical

identity, explaining the conflict in making meaning, and working on reconciliation efforts between Malayan and Chinese descendants in Bangka.

The symbolic interactionism approach can promote a deep understanding of the roles of symbols and meaning in shaping the interethnic relationship. Some previous studies taking the symbolic interactionism perspective have dissected the use of cultural symbols for the community in shaping and maintaining ethical identity. A study by Watini (2017) shows that the cultural symbol in the form of ancestor worship is an acculturation of Sundanese culture (followers of Buhun-Islam) and Chinese culture that plays in constructing ethnical identity. Investigations on symbolic interactionism were conducted on the role of language and acculturation as the elements of social interaction between Chinese and Madura cultures in Sumenep (Al Humaidy et al., 2020). The latest study highlights language and cultural symbols as a means of conflict resolution. Applying symbolic interactionism study, this study indicates three contributing factors to social interaction in Kauman, namely language and culture acculturation, tolerance, and economic partnership. The interaction of three ethnic groups in Kauman is embodied in trading partnerships, religious activities, and socio-community relationships. The purpose of this partnership is to realize social harmony and resolve the existing conflicts (Nabilah et al., 2023). Symbolic interactionism is also discussed in the Manggarai birth ceremony, where each symbol in the ritual represents the identities and values of the Manggarai community (Niman & Darong, 2023). In addition, Tutri Rio (2012) state that this theory can manage conflict between local ethnic group and migrants of different ethnic groups in Parawang District, Riau Province. A relationship of different cultural backgrounds often experiences conflict in making meaning and prejudice. Rio shows that conflict in making meaning in the Parawang community can be addressed by maintaining a patient attitude and mutual respect, not relating ethnicity to any conflicts that occur, inviting others and

responding to invites to every social event, and perceiving representatives of figures from other ethnic groups as the honorable member of the local ethnic organization.

Symbolic interactionism can also explore the symbols of ethnical identity, namely language, culture, religious symbols, and traditional outfits of the Malayan and Chinese communities in Bangka. There have been limited studies reporting the symbol of harmonious Malayan-Chinese relationship in Bangka from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Abdullah Idi wrote that historically, the Malayan and Chinese have established a 'natural' assimilation, which is a harmonious relation without any systematic social engineering (Idi, 2012). This perspective may imply the possibility that the Bangka community does not experience conflict in making meaning. Other previous studies apply descriptive qualitative and general ethnography to unpack the Malayan-Chinese interaction in Bangka (Damiasih & Riana, 2022; Satya & Maftuh, 2016), and harmonized ethnicity between the Malayan and Chinese in Bangka from the historical and political perspectives (Sya et al., 2019; Yuliarni, 2020). On the other hand, Ibrahim et al. (2022) puts more stress on exploring the process of habituating the subculture of the Chinese community amid Malayan hegemony in Bangka. This study seeks to better understand the symbolic interactionism to make meaning of the harmonious relationship between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups in Bangka from social, economic, political, and cultural perspectives.

METHODS

The research was conducted using qualitative methods and an ethnographic approach. This approach was chosen to provide an understanding of the experience and meaning contained in the Malay-Chinese interaction in Bangka, focusing on cultural symbolism. One of the methods used in collecting this research data is interviews. Referring to Creswell (2008), the first activity in the interview was to identify key informants as research mediators. The key

informants in this study are six people who clearly understand the Chinese-Malay interaction in Bangka. To optimize the objectivity of the research, the public figure targeted is from the Malay ethnicity. To obtain in-depth information, the author applied unstructured interviews to the sources. In addition to interviews, research data collection techniques are observational activities and documentation studies. This research applies participatory observation by jumping directly to the location of the interaction between the Malay and Chinese ethnic groups in Bangka.

Meanwhile, a documentary study collected photos of Malay and Chinese community activities in Bangka depicting the mixing. The validity activity in the research consists of eight stages: 1) Triangulate the data of information obtained from each research source while examining the evidence derived from the source and collecting data from various sources such as interviews with members of the Malay and Chinese communities, direct observations of interethnic interactions, and local historical documents. Different methods such as in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis are used to ensure the accuracy and richness of data; 2) Member checking strategy is used to test the accuracy of research results. Invite participants to review the interview transcripts and initial findings to ensure the researchers' interpretation aligns with their experience and views. Hold group discussions with participants to confirm and deepen the conclusions and get direct feedback; 3) Describe the research results accurately and accurately. They are preparing a research report describing the interaction between Malay and Chinese ethnicities in a clear and structured manner and using direct quotes from the participants to illustrate the findings. Organize findings into major themes such as the role of symbols in interaction, the perception of ethnic identity, and the dynamics of power; 4) clarify the data bias in research. Researchers reflect on their influence on research and how personal perspectives influence data interpretation. Record and report pos-

sible biases that arise during data collection and analysis and measures taken to reduce them; 5) give resistance analysis to specific themes. Research and highlight contradictions or anomalies in data that may indicate complexity or variation in interethnic interactions. Using a critical analytical approach to consider alternative perspectives and possible resistance to emerging dominant themes; 6) using observational activities to understand the phenomena studied. Participate in community activities and observe daily interactions between Malay and Chinese groups. Making detailed field records of interactions, symbols, and socio-cultural contexts observed; 7) conducting peer debriefing to improve the accuracy of research results. Conduct a debriefing session with fellow researchers to discuss findings, interpret data, and identify potential biases or errors. Use colleague feedback to improve and strengthen analysis and interpretation; last, 8) Invite external auditors to review the research results. Invite researchers or external experts not involved to review and evaluate the entire research process and results. Receive and consider input from external auditors to ensure the integrity and validity of research. Data analysis in this study is carried out through six main stages, namely, determining the data to be analyzed, recognizing all the data, creating encodings for all data, applying the coding process to describe the setting, participants, categories, and themes to be analyzed, displaying a picture of the theme through a written report, and compiling interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Malayan-Chinese Interaction in Bangka

The observers in this study agreed that there was almost zero doubt in acknowledging the harmonious relationship between Malayan and Chinese in Bangka. Nearly all previous studies we investigated also mentioned that in Bangka, the Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups lived side by side almost without conflicts (Erman, 2009; Heidhues et al., 2008; Huda, 2009; Ibrahim et al., 2020, 2022; Sujitno, 2011; Theo & Lie, 2014; Wido-

do et al., 2019; Yuliarni, 2020). In addition to research findings, the movie “Laskar Pelangi” illustrates the social setting of Malayan and Chinese in Bangka (Hirata, 2006). The narratives of the movie explain the equality between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups in the economic sector where some people have well-to-do life, and some others may live a more ordinary life. Also captured in this movie is the relationship and emotions intertwined between both ethnic groups. While the movie was set in Belitung, it represented similar conditions in Bangka, which shares province with Belitung.

Other studies reported that the social interaction in Bangka is a natural interaction and nearly perfect in the assimilation framework (Idi, 2012). Abdullah Idi explained that assimilation is the cornerstone of social interaction between Malayan and Chinese in Bangka to engage in multilayer assimilation from structural to cultural assimilation, marriage, identification, and non-prejudice or non-discriminating assimilation. Structural assimilation refers to involvement on a large scale where individuals of both ethnic groups participate in different kinds of gatherings and institutions of the hegemonic group (Poerwanto, 1999). Chinese ethnic in Bangka, for example, participate in politics and even hold an outstanding position in practical politics (Yuliarni, 2015). Marriage assimilations have indirectly practiced cultural assimilation for the involved ethnicity. Malayan-Chinese mixed marriage allows the assimilation of values that have long been upheld as one unity. The succession of social interaction between Malayan and Chinese in Bangka is also narrated in a song entitled *Serumpun Sebalai* as follows:

“Budaya Bangkak, Budaya Malayan Islam kek Cina. Bersatu padu dalam ikatan rumpun Malayan. Kami nak nyube, merangkai kate dalam nyanyian, nyanyian zapin, zapin Malayan dipersembahkan. Bangka Belitung pulaunye indah mempesona, objek wisata ade dimane-mane. Hasil buminye melimpah ruah, hasil lautnye tiade terkire. Marilah datang ke negeri kami sayang, negeri bename serumpun sebalai. Silahken datang ke negeri kami sayang, negeri lah kami se-

rumpun sebalai.” (Tarsa, 2014).

The first sentence of this song means “Bangka culture Islamic Malayan and Chinese cultures unite in one bond of Malayan family.” This sentence explicitly expresses that the culture in Bangka is the assimilation of Malayan and Chinese. This song is relatively popular in Bangka, indicating an awareness of tolerance in Bangka. The message delivered through this song can be applied universally to uncover an implied theme that it is important to exercise openness to address a difference. The attitude formed by the interaction of these two different ethnic groups leads more to an inclusive attitude (Yuliarni et al., 2024). The local Wisdom should be appreciated and respected by the younger generations to have a good impact on the local Wisdom itself. As Rosidah said, an attitude of appreciation and respect for local Wisdom and inheritance to future generations can guarantee its sustainability while keeping it intact (Rosidah et al., 2023).

Based on the elaboration above, we analyzed that Malayan-Chinese interaction in Bangka is not an ordinary interaction. The behavior of both ethnic groups conveys acknowledgment and acceptance of each ethnic group to the other. The characteristics of Chinese descendant in Bangka is the implication of the behavior of Malayan people towards them. Both people of Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups show mutual inclusivism.

Cultural Symbolism in Malayan and Chinese Ethnic Identity in Bangka

An ethnic identity that is rich in uniqueness includes the combination of several cultural symbols that can imply affiliation, tradition, and heritage. Each symbol bears a deeper meaning that reinforces a group identity. Cultural symbolism is not simply a reflection of a rich cultural heritage, but a strong foundation for individuals to make meaning of their identity in the multicultural community. Ethnic identity in the community can be shaped according to the values upheld in a culture. Both elements, cultural symbol, and ethnic identity, have a strong interdependence. Understanding

of the cultural symbols needs to be strengthened so that individuals can identify where and how their self-identity is placed. Also, it is important to understand that cultural symbols are feasible means of both verbal and non-verbal communication.

Cultural symbolism, such as traditional costume, language (verbal and non-verbal), and religious tradition are worn and used by individuals to convey their interaction with the implied meaning. These symbols are not only visual attributes, but symbols of togetherness, origins, and collective values that are upheld as a guide by particular social groups. More specifically, traditional costumes and traditional celebrations display ethnic origins and the grace of inherent history and culture.

In Bangka, Malayan and Chinese ethnic identity is also formed from the interactions of people from both cultural groups. The relations of both ethnic groups are known as intimate and almost conflict-free. It is evident from the activities of both ethnic groups (Theo & Lie, 2014). Mixed marriage is prevalent, and it is not uncommon for non-Muslim Chinese who marry Muslim Malayan to convert to their partner's religion (Idi, 2012). The Malayan-Chinese ethnic identity that conveys the harmony of both ethnic groups in Bangka includes the emergence of mixed dialect and language, combined lifestyle, communal celebration, and art and culture. All ethnic identity is crystalized into one popular slogan in Bangka "Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong" meaning Malayan and Chinese are the same (Riyadi, 2006). *Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong* is the community slogan, a strong cultural symbolism to mitigate potential conflict of meaning.

Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong is more than a slogan – it embodies various forms of togetherness. For example, mixed language in Bangka is evident in the interaction between Malayan and Chinese, especially when mixed marriage is involved (Rizki, 2022). Malayan in Bangka borrows some Chinese words, such as expressions in daily life. In addition, the naming of food in Bangka also adopts many Chinese ways. Language adoption also occurs in the mining sector in

Bangka (Muhidin, 2014). Chinese descendants in Bangka speak in the Hakka dialect, which is a dialect that borrows many words from Malayan Bangka (Tan, 1981). Table 1 below contains some words that Malayan and Chinese in Bangka pronounce similarly:

Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong is also embodied in the combined lifestyle in Bangka that includes culinary/local food as a fusion of Chinese-Malayan acculturation. This fusion food, among others, is *yaitu pantiauw, hoklopan, tew fu sui*, and *otak-otak* Bangka (Widodo et al., 2019). *Pantiauw* is a delicacy brought into popularity by the Chinese people living in Bangka and is recorded as a tangible form of cultural acculturation in Bangka Belitung (Direktorat WBTB, 2018). *Hoklopan*, a local term for sweet martabak, means Hoklo or Hakka people who reside in Bangka Island (Yuliarni, 2015). In addition to culinary, wedding attire in Bangka combines Malayan and Chinese culture (Elvian, 2005). In terms of lifestyle, both Malayan and Chinese are entitled to equitable roles in the political sector. Therefore, it is common to have outstanding political leaders in regional Bangka, such as the Regent and Vice Regent (Ibrahim et al., 2022), who come from both ethnic groups. In the economic sector, many Malayan and Chinese descendants establish partnerships and business ventures.

The embodiment of the community slogan is evident in the communal celebration that, includes paying mutual visits during religious holidays like Chinese New Year, Idul Fitri, and Idul Adha, as well as other activities held by Malayan and Chinese. Lion dance attraction is one of the Chinese cultural public performances in Bangka (Huda, 2009). The lion dance was performed at the launching of Independent Village attended by a Regent. Furthermore, the equality between Malayan and Chinese is reflected in the construction of the worship center. Our observation found a mosque and a temple were built next to each other in Muntok Bangka. Another icon of togetherness is apparent from the name of the streets in Bangka. Sungailiat Bangka bears street names written in three languages: Indonesian, Mandarin, and Arabic.

Table 1. Absorption of Chinese Vocabulary into Malayan Bangka

Malayan Bangka	Chinese	Indonesian Language
<i>camoi</i>	<i>ca moi</i>	Suction pit
<i>kolong</i>	<i>ko long</i>	Sand mine cave hole
<i>taikung</i>	<i>tai kung</i>	supervisor
<i>palong</i>	<i>pa long</i>	channel/tin washing vendor
<i>sakan</i>	<i>sa kan</i>	lead sand erector
<i>hok lo pan</i>	<i>ho lo pan</i>	Sweet murtabak
<i>bakpao</i>	<i>bah po</i>	Bakpao
<i>tai fu sui</i>	<i>tai fu sui</i>	Soy bean juice
<i>hio</i>	<i>Hio</i>	Rake
<i>paksian</i>	<i>paksian</i>	Bride tiara
<i>nai si fuk</i>	<i>nai si fuk</i>	Kampung Bintang
<i>yung fo hin</i>	<i>yung fo hin</i>	Kampung Semabung
<i>sung sa tie</i>	<i>sung sa tie</i>	Kampung Pasir Putih
<i>Tauke/towkey</i>	<i>Tauke/towkey</i>	Boss
<i>sengkeh</i>	<i>sinkeh</i>	Chinese laborer

Source: (Muhidin, 2014)

In addition, *Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong* is embodied in the arts of Bangka. The *Chit Ngiat Pan* is a dance that illustrates the togetherness of Malayan and Chinese in Bangka (Nirmala et al., 2021) and reflects the harmonious social relationship between both ethnic groups. *Belijong Culture Festival* is an event that showcases Malayan and Chinese cultures in Belinyu Bangka (Pras, 2018).

Unique ethnic identity in Bangka has exhibited a deeper meaning of togetherness. The use of symbols in social interaction is a crucial method to express and strengthen the identity of a member of an ethnic group. Despite the succession of interaction, there remain challenges and the potential emergence of conflicts when making meaning of these cultural symbols.

Conflict Reconciliation in Making Meaning of Cultural Symbolism in Bangka

Behind the harmonious relationship between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups in Bangka, skepticism of conflict in making meaning arises, and this is interesting to unravel. Cultural symbolism emerges as an effort of the potential conflict reconcili-

ation in making meaning. Stereotypes and prejudice towards the Chinese ethnicity are not new and can occur anytime at any place. Historically, issues regarding ethnicity can be traced back to the colonial era when the Dutch raised the social status of the Chinese descendants in Indonesia as the second higher class after the Dutch and European people, while indigenous Indonesians were the third class. Consequently, stereotypes and prejudice towards the Chinese descendants arose even after the independence era because the Chinese were perceived as the accomplices of the Dutch colonizer (Zein, 2000). Ethnic conflict is often used as an excuse to compete for political and economic interests. An interesting phenomenon to raise in the political realm is ethical and religious issues. There is a concern that this issue can stain democracy in Indonesia and may spark social envy and conflict (Ritau'din, 2017).

Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong as a community slogan in Bangka where Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups live side by side is an effective means of reconciliation to address the emerging conflict in making meaning. As part of the cultural symbolism, this slo-



Figure 1. Mutual visits during Idul Fitri (left) and Chinese New Year (right)
Source: (private document, 2023)



Figure 2. Street name in Bangka written in three languages
Source: (private document, 2023)

gan contributes to mitigating conflicts and reminding all ethnic groups of the beauty of harmonious living in Bangka. In economic activity, there remain cynical remarks from Malayan to Chinese descendants in Bangka, for example, “*denglah belanje di tukoh Cine, Cine makin kaya, Malayan maken miskin*” (quit buying from the Chinese store, the Chinese get richer, the Malayan get poorer) and “*belance di tukoh Cine mahal mintak ampoh, kaben die beli barang dirik murah-murah agik*” (we buy very expensive from Chinese stores, but they buy from us very cheap) (Riyadi, 2009). When left unchecked, this envy can grow into a threat in the future. Even worse, it may lead to intolerance.

Surveys showed that Bangka Belitung may look safe and sound from the surface, but a deeper probe will find many drawbacks. It was recorded that 30 percent of teachers in Bangka Belitung were exposed to intolerance and radicalism, and approxi-

mately 40 percent of students are potentially exposed to intolerance (Suhendri, 2023). The term *Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong* (Malayan and Chinese are equal, no difference whatsoever) is expected to be more than a slogan but an introspection when tolerance values are fading. There are times when *Fan Ngin Tong Ngin Jit Jong* is successful to maintain harmony, for example during the political campaign to maintain stability and ward off ethnic conflict.

Cultural symbolism in Bangka is seen in two perspectives: first, it became a foundation for strengthening interethnic relations, and second, cultural symbolism served as an attempt to resolve conflicts of meaning. The findings and social facts in Bangka have significant implications for understanding the dynamics of Malay and Chinese life at Bangka. Understanding cultural symbolism through the lens of effective symbolic interactionism helps promote positive dialogue, strengthen attitudes of tolerance, and sti-

mulate interethnic social inclusion. Symbolic interactionism is based on three main premises that are relevant to this analysis: 1) People act on something based on what it means to them. In Bangka, cultural symbolisms such as the celebration of Cap Go Meh or Idul Fitri have a profound meaning for the Malay and Chinese communities, so their actions in this celebration reflect appreciation and respect for these symbols; 2) The meaning comes from the social interaction that occurs between individuals. In traditional markets, for example, the interaction between Malay and Chinese traders shapes and strengthens the sense of mutual trust and cooperation; and 3) these meanings are processed and modified through the interpretative processes individuals use in dealing with the things they face. In the context of meaning conflict, this interpretative process allows individuals of both ethnic groups to navigate and resolve their understanding differences through dialogue and compromise. By applying Blumer's theory, we can see how cultural symbolism in Bangka serves as a bridge between ethnicities and a dynamic mechanism to overcome and resolve conflicts of meaning. This process, rooted in everyday interaction and mutual reproduction, strengthens social ties and creates an inclusive and tolerant environment. Promoting peace and harmony in multi-ethnic societies such as Bangka is important, where cultural and ethnic diversity is an integral part of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

The symbolic interactionism approach in this study enables understanding that the interaction between Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups in Bangka is influenced by cultural symbols, meaning, and social interaction. The important foundation of identity shaping of both ethnic groups is no other than cultural symbols, language, and social norms. In quotidian life, interethnic interaction occurs with interpretations of different symbols, but mutual understanding of these symbols has implied the mutual identity of two different ethnic groups.

In this case, symbolic interactionism gives a deeper understanding of how symbols that are incorporated into social interactions have made meaning in the daily life of Malayan and Chinese ethnic groups in Bangka. The emerging implication is raising awareness of the importance of understanding cultural symbols in maintaining interethnic relationships, thus promoting cross-cultural understanding in a multicultural community.

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