Green Ang Pow and Purple Ang Pow in Malaysian Daily Life Practice

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Abstract: Malaysia is a multi ethnic, multilingual and multi cultural moderate Islamic country, the three main ethnic groups are: Malays, Chinese and Indian. During Chinese New Year, Chinese give each other 'Ang Pow' (red envelope) as monetary gift. It symbolizes prosperity and good fortune. This paper attempts to outline how the Malay's Green Ang Pow (Green envelope) and Indian's Purple Ang Pow (Purple envelope) in Malaysia subverted the Chinese's Ang Pow by not rejecting or transforming the purpose of it in the daily life practice. The designs printed on these different categories of Ang Pow have certain design criterion which reveals the unique culture of Malaysia and by adducted the elements of Cultural Makers Method to analysis the layout, symbol, language/typography, colour and image of these Ang Pow to reflect the preference of graphic prints were derived from the individual ethnic's cultural to the art of imposed into the everyday phenomena of Malaysia.

Key words: Malaysia, Ang Pow, Cultural Markers Method, Everyday life Practice

1. Intercultural Open House celebration

Malaysia is a moderate Islamic society since declared the independent in year 1957; it has multi ethnic, multilingual and multi cultural. The three main ethnic groups are Malays, Chinese and Indians, with a total population of 28.25 million (Statistics, 2010). The majority population is Malays, under the Malaysia's constitutions law; all Malays are Muslim while other races have the freedom of religion and the right to practice their culture. The three main ethnic groups are Malays stand at 50.4% population of the nation, Chinese at the population of 23.7% and Indian is at the population of 7.1%. (See fig 1).

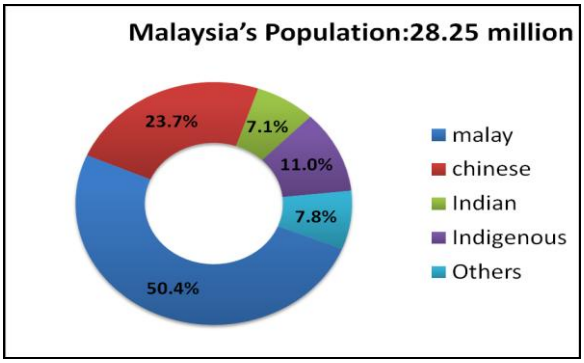


Fig 1. Malaysia Population in 2010

Malaysians tends to have friends, colleagues and neighbours in different ethnic groups. Open houses are part of the Malaysian culture that invites all the other races to enjoy the celebration together, normally these are held at the home of the host and delicious traditional cakes and cookies are served. For Chinese New Year, Chinese's host will hand out Ang Pow (red envelope) to kids regardless of races during their visit.

1.1 The Origin of Ang Pow

This red envelope is called 'Hong Bao' in Mandarin which is addressed as 'Ang Pow' in Malaysia, it is named in the accent of Hokkien, a Chinese dialects which spoken by many overseas Chinese throughout Southeast Asia. Red is the popular colour among Chinese for centuries, it had been widely used in the exterior and interior of the ancient Chinese palace and temples which symbolized affluence and inviolability. In the ancient times, ordinary civilian in China were not allow to apply the colour red, except during the wedding day and Chinese New Year. Chinese New Year is the most important festivity among Chinese and Chinese believed that Red has the possessed in exorcism of evil spirits, the display[1] of the Couplet[2] at the doorframe can put away the evil spirits and during the Chinese New Year's eve parents or elderly in the family will distribute cash, it can be in coins or note which wrap up in red paper and give it to all the unmarried juniors after the family gather for their annual reunion dinner; it was named as '*Ya Sui Qian'* in Mandarin or known as New Year's money. Parents will advise the children to place the red paper under the pillow to signify suppress the evil spirits as well and it also served as a blessing for the new coming year. Only after the wide-used of printing technology around 1900, the wrapper of cash had converted into a small envelope which printed in red and it becomes a gift which considered auspicious to receive it; Ang Pow is also commonly served as a wedding gift or used as a token of appreciation for requesting a favour from the divine in Chinese Temple and any other important events or occasions. This Chinese cultural practice has exercised a profound influence to all Chinese around the world, a Cultural hegemony. For the design of Malaysian Chinese Ang Pow, it is similar to any Ang Paw in the world, it consists of designing, colour separation, printing, hot stamping, die cutting, finishing and gluing. The standard size of the Ang Pow is 80mm x 155mm, which enable to insert a flat RM 100 note.

This paper attempts to outline how the Malay's Green Ang Pow (Green envelope) and Indian's Purple Ang Pow (Purple envelope) in Malaysia subverted the Chinese's Ang Pow in the theory of French scholar's Michel de Certeau (The practice of Everyday life, 1984). Interpreted a tactic insinuates itself into the other's place without being reified, reduced or altered to facilitate and not rejecting or transforming the purpose of it of the daily life practice. By determined and understand the appropriate elements of Cultural Makers Method to investigate the cultural inclusion and aim to identify the symbolism and visual recognition of different cultural groups which derived from the individual ethnic's cultural to the art of imposed into the everyday phenomena of Malaysia.

2. The Cultural Visual Elements of Chinese, Malays and Indians

2.1 Traditional Malaysian Chinese's visual elements of Ang Pow

In Malaysia, it is easily to come across Ang Pow printed with the phrase '*Gong Xi Fa Cai'*(in Chinese PinYin) or '*Kong Hi Fa Choi'*(in Hokkien), it expresses that 'wishing one to get rich or made a fortune and signify the

[1] Each and every family will displayed a couplet right at the doorway.

[2] Couplet is a pair of a meter long red paper, the wording which written on the couplets is often traditional and contains hopes for prosperity.

meaning of wishing one to be prosperous in the coming year. It is meant for some of the Malaysian Chinese who cannot speak only their native Chinese dialect or those who are not able to read or write Chinese characters, these groups of Chinese are those who had gone through the national educational system in which the Malay language is the medium of instruction.

The images for Chinese New Year are the fables creatures of dragons & phoenix and Chinese Zodiac as well as Peonies, Lotus, Bamboo, Pineapples and or Craps. Dragon is one of the twelve animals of the Chinese Zodiac-rat, Ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, roaster, dog and pig. The images of the animal under the Chinese Zodiac will appears on the year of it representing, whereas out of these twelve animals, Dragon symbolized the son of heaven, ultimate abundance, prosperity, good fortune also the symbol for the Emperor and Phoenix symbolized the Empress which represents strength, it was considered to be the most important of the winged animals. Other than these animal's icon and images, the common images appear in Chinese are either peonies in full bloom, Craps swimming amongst flowering lotus or an images of bamboo which symbolizes longevity thus golden pineapples which symbolized wealth, luck, excellent fortune and gambling luck.

For colours, Red and Golden Yellow are the favourable colours for Chinese. Red is the traditional Chinese bridal colour, it represents dynamic, good luck, enthusiastic, happiness, vitality and long life. Gold or Golden Yellow symbols completeness and wealth.

2.2 Malays

Islam is central and dominant in Malay Culture and ingrained in Malays life. Hari Raya Aidififtri is an important festival celebrated by Malaysian Muslim. Hari Raya Aidififtri is the day after the Ramandan (the fasting month which is the holiest period in the Islamic year). It is a time for Muslims in rejoicing after the holiest month in fasting, it is an important festival celebrated by Malaysian Muslim. Muslims in Malaysia hand out cash as a gift (which is name as duit raya) for children and old folks during this festive celebration.

2.2.1 Traditional Malay's visual elements in graphic print

Islam norms forbid animal images as decoration, the images which Malays are flowers, leaves, geometry patterns and Quranic Scripture. Oil lamps are known as pelita or panjut are lit during the days before Hari Raya to attract spirits and angels to descend and bring blessings to people's home. ketupat (glutinous rice) is a plaited diamond-shaped rice dumping uses coconut leaves. Crescent moon which is the traditional symbol of Islam and it is on Malaysia National Flag. Yellow is the colour of the monarch (the king) in the nation.Green is the traditional color of Islam. "Greenness" (in Arabic word) was mentioned many times in the Quran sura 55, verse 76: '*They relax on green carpets, in beautiful surrounding';* describing the paradise of the inhabitants and the dome that built above the tomb of the Islamic prophet Muhammad was also in green, it was known as Green Dome and therefore respresents the entire religion. Green becomes the favourable and respectful colour in Malays.

2.3 Malaysian Indians

Deepavali (also named as Diwali), it is known as the festival of lights, is one the most important festivals among Hindus and Malaysian Indians majority (84.5 percents) (statistics, 2012) of them follow Hinduism. In Hinduism, the celebration of the New Year Deepavali demonstrates non-monetary uses of money within a culture. But today with other cultural influences and diverse rituals has evolved this culture. During Diwali time, money or gifts are given in between family members.

2.3.1 Traditional Malaysian Indian's visual elements in graphic print

Indians are known for their fascination towards bright hues. They tend to use peacocks (National animal of India), swans, lotus, mango, mango leaves and sun rays as patterns on drawing, greeting cards and fabrics. During festive season, Indians will arrange decorative designs made on the floors, mainly at the living room and courtyard floors during Hindu festivals. Rangoli is a folk art, it is a pattern, the patterns are created with vibrant colored rice, dry flour, and colour sand. Rangoli is used as a symbol of religious and cultural beliefs which are meant to be sacred welcoming areas for the Hindu deities, the typical design of it is geometric shapes, deity impressions, flower & petal shapes. Since in far-off cultures such as India regards purple as an imperial color, purple is the most favourable colour among Indians in Malaysia. Tamil is the common language uses among Indians in Malaysia; they speak Malay to Malays and communicate with Chinese in English or Malays.

2.4 The compilation of the three main festive season's cultural visual elements

Structured and compiled the three key cultural groups in real-life visual context observations research for easy comparison, it was categorized according to the ethnic group, and the visual elements are grouped widely, it was classified as: Language, Images including symbols, cultural representation and colour (see table 1).

Table 1. The three main festive season's cultural visual elements

Visual elements	Chinese New Year	Hari Raya Aidififtri	Deepavali
Language	Chinese & Hokkien English	Malay Arabic	Tamil English
Images/ Symbols/ cultural representation	Flower- peony bamboo lantern Dragons & phoenix Chinese Zodiac Pineapples	flowers leaves Oil lamp Crescent moon Quranic Scripture geometry Mosque	Flower-lotus Rangoli Oil lamp peacocks swans mango sun rays
Colour	Red Yellow	Green Yellow	Purple Yellow

3. The formation of Green and Purple Ang Pow

In the 90's when two festivals Chinese New Year and Hari Raya Adifilitri were nearly coincides for three consecutive years in 1996, 1997 and 1998; a new phrase '*Gong Xi Raya*' or '*Kongsi Raya'* ('Raya' was the Malay word for 'celebration') was made-up by for this double festive celebration by Malaysian Media and Merchants had responded simultaneously in their decoration and sales promotion for this double festive celebration. TV commercial advertisements of Marlboro which launched in 1996, and Petronas which had launched the 'Kongsi Raya' TV commercial advertisements for 1996 to 1998 which expedited the formation of Green Ang Pow. The Malays had adapted the Chinese custom of handling out the monetary gifts in envelopes as well, whereas instead of red envelope, Malays Ang Pow is Green, which is commonly known as 'Green Ang Pow' in Malaysia. In 2004 and 2005 there was another coincidence, Hari Raya and Deepavali were just 2 to 3 days away from each other; a new phrase 'Deepa Raya" was coined. As mentioned earlier, Malaysia Indian also practice the act of giving monetary in their Deepavali , Purple Ang Pow was slowly formed. From the table below it showed the timing of these festivals fluctuated due to their reliance on their lunar calendars (See table 2).

Table 2: The co-celebration of Chinese New Year versus Hari Raya in 1996 to 1998 and Deepavali versus Hari Raya in 2004 and 2005.

Gregorian Calendar Year	Chinese Lunar New Year fall on:	Hari Raya Aidilfitri fall on:	Different by:
1996	19th Feb 1996	20th Feb 1996	1 day
1997	7th Feb 1997	08th Feb 1997	1 day
1998	28th Jan 1998	29th Jan 1998	1 day
Gregorian Calendar Year	Deepavali (Diwali) fall on:	Hari Raya Aidilfitri fall on:	Different by:
2004	11th November 2004	14th November 2004	3 days
2005	1st November 2005	3rd November 2005	2 days

4. The Cultural Markers Method

Galdo (1996) mentioned cultural factors such as icons, symbols, typography, colour and language are essentials in designing, Barber and Badre (1998) cited that Cultural Markers are ubiquitous and preferred by particular cultural group in identifying the visual design elements. This paper adducted the elements of Cultural Makers (Badre, 2000) to analysis the layout, typography, language, colour and images of Malaysian's Ang Pow; the graphic print on these Ang Pow which was known as the visual contents have certain design criterion which revealed and expressed the unique culture characteristics of Malaysia festive seasons which widely identified and recognizable by the society in everyday life practice.

This exploratory design research uses visual content analysis to determine the cultural message of Malaysian by conducting the stratified purposive sampling; a total of 99 stratified samples of Ang Pow were collected equally from the three main festive seasons which are of the three main ethnic group of Malaysian. Cultural Markers Method is undertaken to perform the structural analysis from the printed design of these Ang Pow. It was categorized according to the festive seasons and analyzed through the following six characteristics related to the Ang Pow. They are: Layout, Logo, Language, Typography, Colour and Image.

Layout refers to the image orientation, essentially Ang Pow is in the light of traditional Chinese writing style which is written in vertical columns from top to bottom and wherefore it is vertically oriented. The layout orientation of the Ang Pow may indicate the most obvious cultural indicator.

Logo is the identity of the corporate retailers in Malaysia including departmental stores, supermarkets, hotels and all the commercial banks which giving out Ang Pow packets to their respective customers according to the festive season.

Language expresses the wordings and message of the particular group of people including dialect.

Typography indicates the beauty of the cultural form.

Colour refers to the background colour or the main colour of the Ang Pow whereas in this indicator, yellow, orange and gold had group as one.

Image indicates the cultural form which demonstrates and representing the social realm of the races; Arnheim (2004) had mentioned that images can as pictures, symbols and a sign.

5. The Analysis Outcomes of the Ang Pow based on the Cultural Markers Method

The objective was to identify Cultural Markers of the Ang Pow, based on the 33 sampling from each category (see appendix 1, 2 and 3). The principal differences of each characteristic are elaborated below in Table 3. Only those with the highest score will then be discussed:

a. Layout

Malay alphabet consists of the 26 letters of the basic Latin alphabet and Jawi is an alternate script for Malay. Both types of alphabets are similar as English writing style which is written in horizontal row although Malay is written from left to right and Jawi is constructed from right to left. Indian's Tamil is an abugida script, which is also written from left to right whereas the layout of the Ang Pow for Chinese New Year, Hari Raya and Deepavali is evidently adopted the vertical orientation of traditional Chinese Cultural preferences of Ang Pow layout.

b. Logo

Majority of these Ang Pow are printed with the sponsor's identity on the front of the Ang Pow which served as a marketing tool for their respective customers to circulate it regardless which festive seasons. It becomes an annual cultural routine for the customers to request the free Ang Pow packets from the Merchants instead of buying.

c. Language

The Cultural Marker Method analysis of results indicated that Malays espouse their own literal cultural as well as Chinese. Bahasa Malay is the official language of Malaysia; it showed that Malay language is precedence over others during the celebration of this important festive of Muslims whereas Malaysian Chinese do concerns of the accessibility of those who cannot read or understand Chinese Han Characters, the phrase of '*Gong Xi Fa Cai'* and or 'Happy Chinese New Year' are display. English is generally used in Deepavali's Ang Pow instead of Tamil, it is for the convenient of the young generations and other ethnic group.

d. Typography

The three festive seasons are cultural symbol of joyful celebration. Cursive, script and calligraphy writing are distinctive used in these Ang Pow as it has a visual rhythm on the fonts, it is also apply to the fancy fonts which is more mischievous.

e. Colour

The most distinctive Cultural Markers for Ang Pow is the colour. It is obvious that Chinese New Year's Ang Pow is in Red series (pink had been group under this). Green is the major colour for Hari Raya's Ang Pow; Gold, Orange and Yellow are group under the same category, these series of hue is the colour which Malays are in favour of, as it is the royal colour for Malay majesty. Purple tends to be the major element for Deepavali's Ang Pow, it appears either as the base colour of the Ang Pow or the colour theme in or within the images of the Deepavali's Ang Pow.

f. Image

Individual culture characteristic can be signified from the elements of the Ang Pow which they represent. Ang Pow (Hong Bao) was origin from ancient China, it remains and carries uniform characteristics in term of their cultural representation for Chinese New Year's Ang Pow. Cultural Marker Method analysis of results showed that Hari Raya's Ang Pow reflects the cultural life of Malaysia and the elements that symbolizes Malay Islamic culture. For Deepavali's Ang Pow, the analysis of Cultural Marker showed the cultural values of celebration of festival of lights and Rangoli are strongly reflected in the pattern design of Deepavali's Ang Pow.

Table 3: The structural analysis by applying Cultural Marker Methods on 99 sampling Ang Pow at 33 each.

Cultural Markers		Chinese New Year	Hari Raya	Deepavali
Layout	Vertical	**24 (0.73)**	**26 (0.79)**	**26 (0.79)**
	Horizontal	9	7	7
Logo	front	**26 (0.79)**	**20 (0.60)**	**16 (0.48)**
	back	7	2	6
	Without logo	0	11	1
Language	Malays	0	**31(0.94)**	0
	Jawi	0	2	0
	Chinese	**22 (0.67)**	0	0
	Hokkien	7	0	0
	English	4	0	**28**
	Tamil	0	0	5
Typography	Cursive/script /calligraphy	**29 (0.89)**	**19(0.58)**	**33(1.0)**
	Fancy	0	6	0
	san serif	4	0	0
	Quran	0	8	0
Colour	red/pink	**31 (0.94)**	0	0
	yellow/ orange/gold	2	7	3
	green	0	**19(0.58)**	3
	Blue	0	4	5
	Purple	0	2	**19(0.58)**
	White	0	1	2
	Black	0	0	1
Images	Cultural representation	7	**13(0.39)**	**23 (0.70)**
	Human figure in traditional costume	3	2	0
	Chinese Han character	**14(0.42)**	0	0
	lifestyle	0	6	0
	Flowery pattern	9	4	9
	Non Cultural representation (commercial mascots)	0	3	1

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of the design phenomenon of Malaysian's graphic prints in Ang Pow in the daily life practice. There are a few findings showed that the Malays and Indians had silently derived new cultural identity to the everyday phenomena of Malaysia by created Green Ang Pow and Purple Ang Pow Although 'Ang' is known as Red and 'Pow' is referring to Envelope; the tactic of Green Ang Pow and Purple Ang Pow had insinuated itself into the visual design of 'Ang Pow', sharing the same function of towards the act of giving monetary as a gift wrap up in an envelope, the appellation of the phrase - 'Ang Pow' are kept. The Green Ang Pow also addressed as Hari Raya Ang Pow and Purple Ang Pow was also named as Deepavali Ang Pow in Malaysia, instead of Green Envelope and or Purple Envelope. The second findings was about he typical layout orientation of Ang Pow, it has been retained as in vertical format, even though the wordings in Malay language, Jawi language and Tamil language are written in horizontal format as in the same order as English language, as opposed to Chinese vertical format of wording on the Chinese Ang Pow. This Cultural Markers Method served as a context which conveys the contextual information and assisted to analysis

the connotation of the cultural frames. The analysis outcomes signified that the tradition in Chinese Ang Pow can be subverted; it has demonstrated that when there are opportunities to showcase the creative and aesthetics of individual's social and cultural impact, the act of connecting and transforming the design 'platform' (the space for the composition of the visual elements, the printable area of the Ang Pow) can be constituted. The modifying of the visual images on the graphic print of Chinese Ang Pow to other Ethnic group's graphic print has positively facilitated the flexible strategy which indeed win a small victory by proofing that it has been well accepted by the society as from the above structural analysis of cultural markers, majority (67 percents) of Hari Raya Ang Pow and Deepavali Ang Pow are similar as Chinese Ang Pow which are printed and sponsored by large corporations and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as an advertising tool, to be given away to their customers. Thus, it is evident that it has successfully imposed into the everyday phenomena of Malaysian.

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Appendices

The following three grouping of Ang Pow were analyzed for this study:

Appendix 1: Chinese New Year's Ang Pow:



Appendix 2: Hari Raya's Green Ang Pow



Appendix 3: Deepavali's Purple Ang Pow

