The Funeral Business: The Business and Economic Activity of the Chinese Clan Associations in Medan

Mariana Makmur
Department of Anthropology, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract
This paper describes the other side of the function and social role of the Chinese Clan Associations, that is related to the business side of the funeral of the deceased. The funeral businesses, especially the luxury ones lately have become a popular trend in Indonesia. In many big cities in Java Island, we can find expensive cemeteries, such as Quilling Cemetery in Jonggol, San Diego Hills Memorial Park in Karawang, Mount Carmel Cemetery in Semarang, etc. In North Sumatera, a similar trend can also be found when we visit various Chinese cemeteries especially in Medan and Deli Serdang, such as Chinese Cemetery in Kedai Durian, Chinese Cemetery for the Ong Clan Foundation, etc. Unlike the expensive cemeteries in Java Island that are managed by large companies, the cemeteries in Medan are still managed by some Social Foundations such as Angsapura and Wijaya Social Foundation, etc. Some of those foundations have Chinese clan association backgrounds, such as Marga Raja (Ong), Wijaya (Huang), Lautan Mulia (Tan) and Marga Goh Social Foundation. This paper specifically discusses business and economic activity of Chinese clan associations. In Medan, in addition to those associations, there are other voluntary associations by region of origin, dialects, profession, temples, etc. The focus of this paper is Marga Raja Social Foundation in Medan. It not only manages the cemeteries, especially for the ones with Ong surname, but it also provides cremation and the ashes storage services that are offered publicly. As time goes by, the Chinese clan association’s role has changed from serving the interests of its members to the business side of the funeral activity.

Keywords: Chinese clan associations; funeral business; social role

INTRODUCTION
Nowadays the luxurious and modern funeral businesses can be found in many big cities in Indonesia, especially in Java island. In those big cities, we can find expensive cemeteries, such as Quilling Cemetery [1,2], San Diego Hills Memorial Park [1,3], Lestari Memorial Park, Graha Sentosa Memorial Park [4], Nirwana Memorial Park [5], Mount Carmel Cemetery [6], and Heaven Hill Cemetery [7]. The land shortage for public cemetery causes the rising demand for expensive cemeteries. Moreover, the land shortage also creates the business opportunity for cremation and the storage of the deceased ashes for those who choose not to be buried [8]. The lucrative business opportunity begins to draw the attention of the big corporations, even conglomerates [4].

Unlike the luxurious and modern cemeteries in Java island, the management for the Chinese cemetery in Medan is still conducted by many social foundations [9]. The Chinese cemetery, especially the one located in the Deli Serdang district, is considered as the luxurious
one because many of the rich Chinese were buried there and the Chinese has the tradition to build a cemetery as large as possible.

The Chinese clan associations in Medan also see the land shortage as a lucrative business opportunity. They also provide the service for the cremation and the storage for the deceased ashes [8].

THE CHINESE CLAN ASSOCIATIONS IN MEDAN, ITS FUNCTION AND ACTIVITY

In the past, almost 90% of the Chinese emigrated to Indonesia, including the ones that lived in East Sumatera, came from Guangdong and Fujian Province. As a consequence, in this area there were a lot of Chinese association originated from those two provinces [10,11].

The Chinese clan association is an organization, whose members consist of those with the same family name [11,12,13,14]. Ch’ng [11] stated that the Chinese overseas community in East Asia is bound by the social relationship, with the ties starting from a big family and its relatives and getting wider to include those who have the same family name or same province or same Chinese dialects. In this writing, I limit the discussion to the Chinese clan association with the same family name. After the Indonesian “reform”, President Abdurrahman Wahid deactivated the Presidential Instruction No 14 (1967) and applied the Presidential Decree No 6 (2000). This gives the opportunity for the Chinese clan associations in Indonesia to reestablish and be active again, including the Chinese clan associations in Medan.

There were many Chinese clan activities [15,16] made after the Presidential Instruction No 14 (1967) was deactivated, among others:

1) The World Xu (Kho) Clan Reunion in Jakarta in 2006 [17].
2) The World Lim Clan Reunion in Medan in 2007 [18].
3) The World Lie Clan Reunion in Jakarta in 2008 [19].
4) The 60th Celebration of the Indonesian Wu (Ng) Clan in Medan in 2013 [20].
5) The World Huang Convention in Medan in 2014 [21,22].
6) The 23rd International Convention of the Shun Clan (the 10 Clan Associations) in Medan in 2015 [23].

The early development of the Chinese clan associations serves to facilitate the ancestor worship, help the financial needs of their members, celebrate traditional Chinese festivities such as the Qingming Festival, the Zhongyuan Festival, etc. or settle disputes among their members and also to offer the funeral service [9,10,12,14].

Nowadays, Chinese clan association in Medan also offer the funeral service with crematorium and columbarium (the place to store the deceased ashes) as a business and economic activity [8].

THE FUNERAL BUSINESS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN JAVA ISLAND

The land shortage for the cemetery in big cities is now seen as a lucrative business opportunity. Naga Sakti Corporation in 1995 opened a 123-hectare cemetery in Jonggol, Bogor, known as the Quilling Cemetery [1,2]. In 2003, Alam Hijau Lestari Co., built a 35-hectare cemetery, Lestari Memorial Park and at the end of 2003, Permata Bumi Kencana Co. built a 200-hectare cemetery in Kaligandu village, Teluk Jambe, Karawang, known as Graha Sentosa Memorial Park [4]. Then in 2007, Lippo Group offered a 500-hectare cemetery, well known as San Diego Hills Memorial Park and Funeral Homes at Cikarang, West Karawang [1,3]. In 2011, HM Sampoerna Co., a public company, built a 60-hectare cemetery in Pasuruan, East Java, known as Nirwana Memorial Park [5]. In 2005, Pagoda Karya Abadi Co., built a 100-hectare cemetery in Central Java, known as Mount Carmel Cemetery, the first and the largest one in that area and PT Ungaran Sumber Berkat Jaya Co., build a 10-hectare cemetery, known as Heaven Hill Memorial Park in Kawengan, East Ungaran, Semarang [6,7]. Most of the luxurious cemeteries are offered for the Moslem, Christian, Buddha, etc. Not far from San Diego Hills, the Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School Foundation offers Al-Azhar Memorial Garden, the cemetery for the Moslem, generally for the haves [24].
The land shortage in a big city has now become a business opportunity for big companies to build luxurious and modern cemeteries with one stop service concept. They may offer the funeral home, the cemetery, the cremation, the storage of the ashes, and even more. Like San Diego Hills, it even offers recreational facility, five-star restaurant, sport facility, florist, food mart, and even chapel for the newlywed couple.

**THE ONG CLAN SOSIAL FOUNDATION (MARGA RAJA) AND FUNERAL BUSINESS IN MEDAN AREA**

The Chinese cemeteries, especially for those who are Buddhist in Medan are located in Kedai Durian area, or in Deli Serdang area, such as in Tanjung Morawa, Sibiru-biru, Deli tua, Pantai Labu etc. For Deli Serdang area, the Chinese cemeteries are managed by the 12 foundations, such as Pantai Labu, Buddha Murni, Setia Budi, Budi Murni, Angsapura, Tanah Mujur, Marga Raja, Sentana Abadi, Hang Kang, Budi Mulia, Marga Wijaya and Budi Luhur Social Foundations [25]. Aside from the Chinese cemeteries, in Tanjung Morawa area, there is a big Christian cemetery that is Eden Park, that is managed by the Indonesia Gloria Methodist Church Foundation. The Chinese Christian are usually buried there, while for the Chinese Catholic are generally buried in the Easter Park cemetery in Sibiru-biru, even though some choose to be cremated.

From Analisa or Medan Bisnis newspapers’ condolences ads on March 2016, we can see that there is a tendency for the Chinese people to be cremated. From 160 condolences ads from those 2 newspapers, around 110 or 70% were cremated. And from those who were cremated, 11% were cremated at Ji Le Ling crematorium from the “Ong” clan Social Foundation and the remaining were cremated at Di Zang Dian crematorium from the Buddha Murni Social Foundation.

The Ong Clan Foundation (marga Raja) is one of the Chinese clan associations in Medan. It manages the cemetery especially for the one with Ong surname. It also manages the crematorium and columbarium (the place to store the deceased ashes), known as Ji Le Ling and it is offered publicly. In the 2-hectare Ong clan Foundation cemetery, there are many tombs for the Chinese with Ong surname, with variety of sizes. The service for cremation and the storage of ashes become the lucrative business that has been adopted for the last 15 years by the Ong clan Social Foundation at Limau Manis village, Tanjung Morawa, Medan.

**CONCLUSION**

The association which is based on the origins, dialects or surname has a structure where its members have moral obligation to help others financially. This condition is also adopted by the Chinese business community. With the era of globalization, the association that never adapts will be left by its members [14]. To survive in this global era, the clan associations must follow the trend and adapt with the change [15,16,26,27] while still maintain its social functions and activities. The luxurious and modern funeral business, including the service for funeral home [8], cremation and ash storage that appear lately in many big cities in Java island becomes a lucrative business that can be adopted by the Chinese clan associations in Medan.

The global era and the economic and business rapid growth have created the business transaction opportunity that involves the living people with the deceased as the object.

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**REFERENCES**


