

## Research Article

# Chinese Culture at Thiong Ting Funeral Home

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## Abstract.

In Indonesia, the death customs of different ethnic group have different characteristics, customs and habits. Some are buried in a special area, burned (Ngaben - Balinese) and other methods. In every province in Indonesia there are one or two Chinese funeral home services that provide mourning services to families, start from bathing, makeup, providing coffins, preparing funerals and cremations, they also give services for traditional ceremonies, religion in accordance with the beliefs. A Chinese funeral home whose existence is very striking is in the middle of the city of Surakarta, namely THIONG TING. This study aimed to describe Chinese culture in death customs, religion, socio-culture in the community using THIONG TING funeral services, describe mourning service activities and facilities provided to funeral home service users. Data was collected using observations, interviews, data processing and presenting data analysis. The results of studies and research at the THIONG TING funeral home are very useful for researchers who have an interest in the cultural life of the Chinese community.

**Keywords:** Funeral home, THIONG TING, Chinese culture

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## 1. Introduction

The cultural assimilation between Chinese and Javanese in 1966 to 1998 in Surakarta is interesting, it's because the city of Surakarta is where for two palaces, Kasunan and Mangkunegaran, were located, both have different characters, which the process of assimilation between the majorities (Kasunanan and Mangkunegaran) and the minority (ethnic Chinese) generated problems. Surakarta is multiracial and multicultural city with various ethnicities including Chinese.

Although the ethnic Chinese presence in Surakarta was restricted by the Dutch East Indies colonial government regulations, it did not reduce the ethnic Chinese social communication personally and institutionally, or even their communication with sunan or nobles. The connection between the palace and the several Chinese figures was good. The estate and THIONG TING (funeral parlor) in Jebres were a gift by Pakubuwana VII to the Chinese community in Surakarta and surround. [? ]

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THIONG TING, became an icon for the Chinese community in Surakarta, hence as the object of this research in the discussion of Chinese funeral customs.

### **Methods**

This study used descriptive research with field research, and also library research as the research strengthened. This study uses two types of data, primary sources and secondary sources. According to Abdurrahman (1999) primary sources in historical research are sources that delivered directly by persons. While secondary sources are not conveyed directly and can be in the form of books, documents, articles, newspapers, magazines. To obtain related information data to the research objectives, the sources are used primary and secondary sources of informants and literature studies.

## **2. Result and Discussion**

### **2.1. THIONG TING establishment history**

THIONG TING was founded by the Perkumpulan Masyarakat Surakarta (PMS). PMS is a Chinese society foundation, was founded by 6 associations of Chinese community clans in Solo Raya. The originator of THIONG TING is Kapitein LIEM Djie Bo in 1858. The establishment of THIONG TING was used for burial place, especially for the Chinese community and public for generally. Initially all burial, cremation and ashes storage activities were carried out in the THIONG TING, but in 2012 the building underwent a change in function only as a burial place, while cremation and ashes storage are carry out to Delingan, where is close to the Chinese cemetery.

### **2.2. Location of Thiong Ting**

Thiong Ting funeral Hime is located in Jebres , Surakarta trading area directly connected to the highway. Rumah Duka Thiong Ting terletak di Jebres, Surakarta, terletak di kawasan perdagangan dan berhubungan langsung dengan jalan raya. Address: Jl. Colonel Sutarto No.79, Jebres, Kec. Jebres, Surakarta City, Central Java 57126, Open hours: 24 hours, Telephone: (0271) 648270, Province: Central Java.



**Figure 1:** QR code for Thiong Ting location.

## 2.3. The Building

Thiong Ting Funeral Home building with symbols and ornaments have contain a lot of meanings of Chinese philosophy of life and culture. Among them is the entrance, that area is plastered with a gate with Chinese architectural style.

### 2.3.1. Entrance Gate

There is a Chinese architectural style temple on right side of parking area, a pair of lion statues placed at the front left and right side of the temple. Placed on the right side a female lion statue is taking care of her cubs on the left leg and a male lion statue is carrying a ball with his right foot.

In the middle of the entrance area, there is a giant golden elephant statue and two blue pillars wrapped by clouds and dragons at behind. The pillars are combined of gold, red, green colors that depicted dragons from the clouds. A hanging board Thiong Ting Funeral Home in Chinese character(同同同同) and Bahasa is placed in the middle of pillars.



Figure 2: Temple.



Figure 3: .Main Entrance.

Pa Kua (Ba Gua) is carved on main entrance roof. Pa Kua is octagon symbol used in ancient chinese to represent the fundamental philosophy. “Ba” is eight and “Gua” is trigam, which each consists Yao three lines. Yao symbols is described *Ying* and *Yang*.

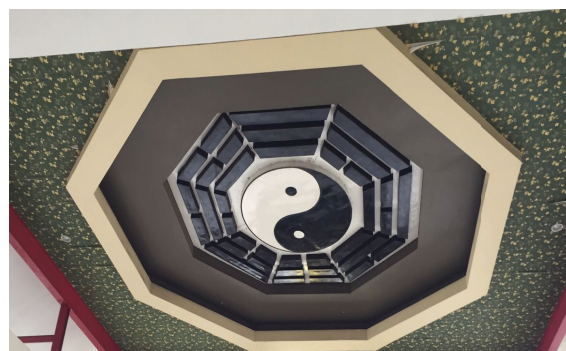


Figure 4: The entrance’s roof (Pa Kua).

Modern architecture applied to the main building, where there is a lot of opennes room. From reception room to parlor rooms are designed to be open with transparent glass material, as all rooms is directly facing the lobby. There are 9 parlors room, VIP room (2 rooms) for 200 guests and the reguler room (7 rooms) for 100 guests.

An inscription of the establishment of THIONG TING was signed by Mr. Joko Widodo ☒mayor of Surakarta ☒ placed the right side of lobby,. In addition, there are names of



Figure 5: Parlor room.

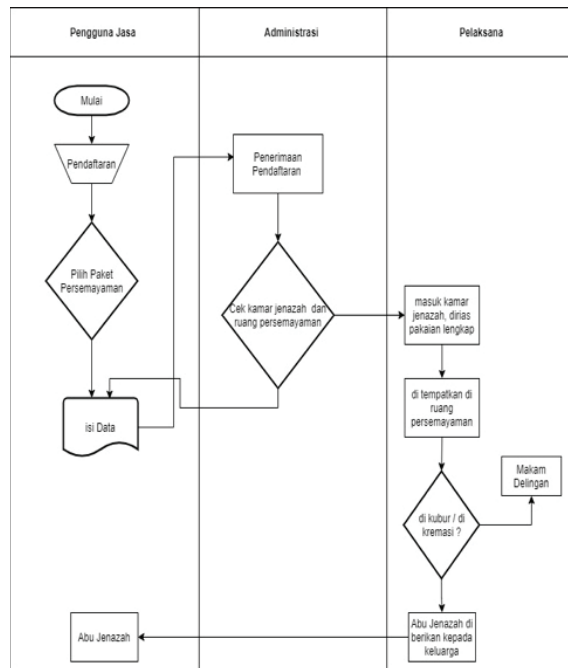
the founders, administrators, and donors of the THIONG TING and at the both sides have chinese character 行功多積德福報子孫昌, on the right side is “探地子秋業學風畫垂持”, and on the left side is “行功多積德福報子孫昌” .



Figure 6: Thiong Ting Inscription.

The other rooms are administration office , guest room, parlor room, coffin showroom, parking lot, toilet dan cleaning service room.

## 2.4. Service Steps



Thiong Ting provides funeral service packages go from millions rupiah to hundreds of millions rupiah, the customers can choose the services with prices that match their financial. Every funeral package is for 3 days and 2 nights, additional charge will be apply if the customer want to extend. If the family are low-income and cannot afford to pay, they can apply for fee waiver.

## 2.5. Religion and Culture of ethnic Chinese in Funeral Customs

The Chinese community in Indonesia, has been acculturating a lot with Indonesian culture, as well as religious matters embraced by the Chinese community. In Thiong Ting, the service is customized for each religion, there are Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Budhist and Confucian . Confucianism is a religion that is predominantly followed by the Chinese community, the terms of customs and culture of death has been adjusted to Confucian religious ceremonies which refer to the customs of the Chinese in China.

There are process of funeral customs ceremony of the Chinese is before the body being cremated/buried. The implementation is also gradual, there are 6 stages that must be passed until the body is buried/cremated.

Step 1 *Jiep Bok* : Put the body in coffin, after The body has been washed, fully clothed and put on make-up.

Step 2 *Moy song*: night ceremony before the body is buried / cremated. The family paid their last respects and asked for blessing so that tomorrow's funeral would go well

Step 3 *Sang seng*: funeral ceremony.

Step 4 Completion of ceremony is carried out for the bodies to be cremated.

Step 5 The body will be buried or cremated

Step 6 Mourning, the ceremony is performed on the third day after the funeral or cremation. The family will holding other ceremonies at the 7<sup>th</sup> day, 49<sup>th</sup> day and 100<sup>th</sup> day, and also at the 1<sup>st</sup> year and 3<sup>d</sup> year after the funeral.

In the process of funeral, there are equipments and offerings that must be prepared:

1. Candle, red candle is frequently used at funeral, it's the symbol of illuminate, vibrant and good fortune.



**Figure 7:** Lilin.

1. Incense, burning incense has the meaning of calming the mind, facilitating concentration, expelling lust and evil. There are rules for using the number of incenses, two green incenses are used by relatives to give honor to the corpse, the red incenses are used for various prayer ceremonies, two or four sticks have the same meaning, to honor the spirit who have died more than three years. Five sticks for honor common people who have died.

1. Pearls, there are seven pearls have been wrapped in cotton and filled into died body's holes, 2 pearls put on eyes , 2 pearls to cover nostrils, 2 pearls for ears



**Figure 8:** Green and red incenses.

and 1 pearl for mouth, Pearl sis the symbol of things that shines, pearls replace human's five senses they hope the pearls can illuminate the spirit.



**Figure 9:** Pearls.



1. Clothes and ribbon, mourning family usually wear the white outfit and on the left arm tied a ribbon, white ribbon for deceased's son, red ribbon for child-in-law and yellow ribbon for grandchildren.



**Figure 10:** White clothes.

1. Perfume, spraying perfume around the coffin by family members, is symbolize that the fragrance always accompanies the deceased.



**Figure 11:** Perfumes.

1. Miniature of house are made with complete furniture in it will be burned, so that the spirits of deceased in the world of life after death become peaceful.
1. Ngo Kok, means provide 5 kinds of staple foods (rice, wheat, soybean, corn and tubers). In addition, a number of coins are also prepared. 5 kinds of foods and



Figure 12: Miniature of house.

coins will be given to the descendants as provision to earn their own living. The amount is adjusted according to the age of deceased.



Figure 13: Staple food.

1. Cabbage , served with the white rice as the symbol of the sincerity of the family who gave offerings to the deceased.



Figure 14: White rice and cabbage.

1. Sam sing, dish of meat from 3 different habitates of animal , land, water and air, usually pork, chicken *ingkung* and fried milkfish. Pig means of fast-breeding

animals and have many children, chicken ingkung means diligent animal, when the sun rises the chickens immediately look for food, eat the milkfish will leave thorns, it has meaning, when we have got money we should not spend it all but must be saved.



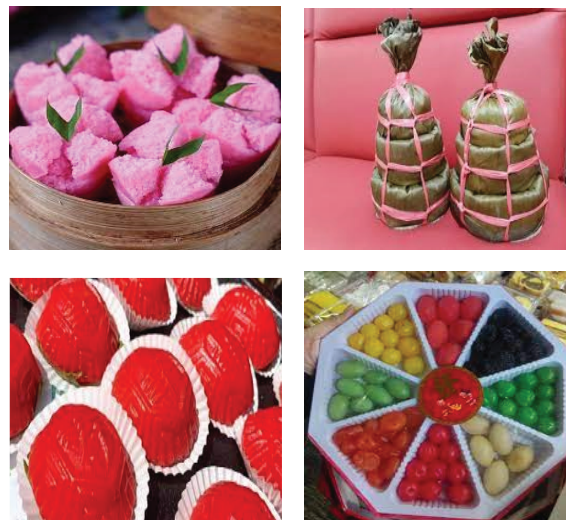
**Figure 15:** Dish of meats.

1. The fruit, orange and plantain are the must be present fruit at the ceremony. Orange is a fruit that grows from a small seed to a large one and has many seeds in it, which means that fortune can continue to grow for generations. Banana is a fruit that can grow and be obtained at any time, contains meaning of hope that descendants get a lot of fortune.



**Figure 16:** Fruits.

1. Cakes and 4 kind of snacks from traditional market, cupcake is the symbol of human's life, from baby birth until grow old bloom like a cupcake. Cone-shaped brown sugar sticky rice is the symbol of mountain. means dream as high as a mountain, we must do not give up on reaching it. The shape of karo cake is like a turtle, it's the symbol of simplicity, the origins of simple life. Sweets are symbol of sweet memories accompanying the departure of the deceased.



**Figure 17:** Cakes and sweets.

1. Watermelon, when the body is about to be departed there are 2 watermelons prepared, 1 watermelon is smashed when the body is departed, and another one will be brought to cemetery or crematorium when the body will be put in the grave or cremated. Smashing the watermalon symbolizes even though it is scattered, the whole family are still united.



**Figure 18:** The watermelon smashed.

1. Sugarcane, sugarcane is straight and sweet, straight like a staff, it's the symbol of stick for descendant. The segment of sugar cane is a symbol of continuous sustenance from generations of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and so on to remain united.



**Figure 19:** Sugarcane.

The following is the ritual offerings that served for the ceremony.

## 2.6. The Public Opinion on Thiong Ting Funeral Home

Based on the google platform, Thiong Ting funeral home received 4.4 star rating out of 5. The public response on Google reviews mostly very good, they were satisfied with the services that managed by the Surakarta Community Association (PMS).



Figure 20: Ritual offerings.

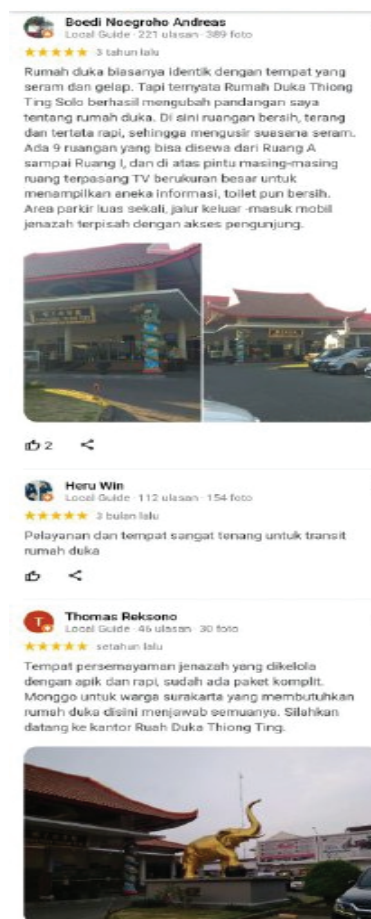


Figure 21: Opinion #1.

### 3. Conclusion

Finally, this research concludes that the THIONG TING funeral home has a lot of Chinese cultural influences. Its buildings with red and gold shades, which can be seen from the red roof of the tile, and the golden elephant symbol, as well as the dragon at the



Figure 22: Opinion #2.

entrance. In addition, there is a pagoda in front of the funeral home, which is the hallmark of every building in China. The Chinese character also characterizes the existence of Chinese culture.

Some of the funeral ceremony still use Chinese cultural customs such as lighting the candles, preparing the pearls, serving the food, closing the coffin and departing the body. Despite religious ceremony is carried out according to their religions, some of the customs are still related to Chinese culture.

The people of Surakarta and the palace of Surakarta very much welcome the existence of the THIONG TING funeral home. Since THIONG TING was established, if there is a family from the sunan passed away, THIONG TING funeral home has always been

there to help, this is proven by the photo of Mangkoenagoro VI's funeral on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1928, he was previously buried in THIONG TING then buried in the Nayu burial site.

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