

Death Kongsî and the Survival of Chinese Death Processions in Padang City

Erniwati*¹, Yelda Syafrina¹, Adri Febrianto¹, Retnaningtyas Susanti¹

*erniwatinur@fis.unp.ac.id

¹Universitas Negeri Padang

Abstract

This article explains how the ethnic Chinese of Padang maintain the continuity of the death procession in Chinese culture. This article uses a historical approach by utilizing sources in the form of Dutch period documents, organizational documents of *Himpunan Tjinta Teman* (HTT) and *Himpunan Bersatu Teguh* (HBT), newspaper news and literature studies on the death processions of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and outside Indonesia, as well as observations and interviews with HBT and HTT funeral administrators. These sources are used to find facts related to the death processions carried out by ethnic Chinese and the existence of HBT and HTT as institutions organizing Padang Chinese funeral processions. Furthermore, the existing facts are analyzed using historical and ethnographic approaches. The findings of the article show that the ethnic Chinese of Padang still carry out and preserve the implementation of the Chinese cultural death procession in an organizational forum. In this case, the organization's function as the organizer of the death procession for Padang Chinese is the key to the survival and existence of the organization itself. Various Chinese cultures preserved and inherited in the HTT and HBT organizations, including the culture of death, are essential in forming self- and collective identity and solidarity of Chinese community groups in the city of Padang.

Keywords

Death Kongsî, Death Procession, Padang Chinese, Survival

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Introduction

The Chinese in Padang City are migrants from mainland China in several phases and had already formed their settlements when Padang was under VOC rule in the 17th century (Erniwati, 2019). Chinese migrants in Padang City, although they have adapted to the natural environment and culture of Padang, still maintain Chinese cultural values that place ancestors and the land of origin as essential elements in their lives. Adaptation to Padang's locality has strengthened the cultural identity within the Chinese migrant community amid a dominant and culturally strong Minangkabau society. Ethnic Chinese in Padang struggled to maintain the survival of ancestral culture by establishing the death of Kongsí. Traditional Chinese beliefs understand human life as a continuous cycle between earthly life and the afterlife. In traditional Chinese belief, there will be life after death, also known as reincarnation. For this reason, living life in this world well is as important as life in the afterlife, which must be well-prepared, and reincarnation is covered in the teachings of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Anggara, 2019). Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism are the main three philosophies or religions in Chinese culture. The Chinese culture has a particular perspective on dying and death. Chinese society and its people have developed meanings about death throughout history, particularly religious beliefs, philosophical beliefs, and cultural practices (Berkson, 2019; Hsu et al., 2009). Like Taoism, Confucius agreed that death is a natural part of the life span, but he disagreed that the spirit of the dead preoccupies the living. Also, funeral and death anniversaries must be based on the ritualized norms of proper conduct because an appropriate ceremony will secure the quality of the deceased's life in the other world.

In traditional Chinese belief, the death of a person is followed by a series of processions to usher in the new world. There are several death rituals with specific meanings that must be organized. To carry out a complete funeral procession would be very difficult if done by the family alone. For this reason, the ethnic Chinese in Padang formed a unique institution. For this, the institution is a Chinese death congregation, which has played a role in Chinese sociocultural life in Padang since the 19th century (Erniwati, 2007). Death is an event where the spirit leaves the human body and the process of separating the soul from the body. Death for ethnic Chinese is a phase that humans and all living things must pass. Death is an absolute future, a certainty that is the answer to life itself because death is so believed to happen to someone even though that person has never experienced it (Aufa, 2017). As an essential part of the Chinese life phase, including Padang Chinese, several vital processions or ceremonies, as well as many death processions or ceremonies, must be carried out because there are values contained in each ceremony. Koentjaraningrat defines a ceremony as an activity or series of actions organized by custom or law that applies in society related to various kinds of permanent events that usually occur in society (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). This is in line with the opinion of Hertz, who states that the death ceremony performed by humans is a form of custom and social structure of society (Koentjaraningrat, 1987).

In theory, death ceremonies such as those in Chinese society are a form of human activity in social life driven by the desire to seek salvation by fulfilling the procedures that have become a tradition in their culture. In the implementation of death ceremonies, there are usually rituals or rites performed by ethnic Chinese related to religious understanding (Apri Yolanda et al., 2020; Dhavamony, 1995). From today's context, it can be said that the death ceremony in the Padang Chinese community is a tradition that preserves and carries out Chinese culture. Based on some literature searches, it was found that death processions with a series of certain processions are no longer widely practiced in China. Modernization has changed Chinese behavior patterns, especially in urban areas. A person's death ceremony is generally organized commercially and carried out by professional funeral specialists managed by private companies (Kipnis, 2019).

Interestingly, the desire to maintain tradition and pass on the values embodied in the death procession is found in overseas areas. Death traditions and processions remain an essential sociocultural identity among Peranakan Chinese, such as Malaysians, Singaporeans, and Indonesians (Chee-Kiong, 2004; Sankar et al., 2016). The difference in the Chinese death procession in Padang discussed in this article is how the Chinese community in Padang still carries out traditions in the bonds and solidarity relationships built in the death kongsí, which has experienced a long historical process. Kongsí is there to help its members, especially those who do not have the economic means. One's loyalty to the HBT and HTT congresses or organizations has formed a strong bond between fellow Chinese communities in Padang. There has been no commercialization of funeral processions in Padang, which is very common among Chinese people in other places such as Medan, Pekanbaru, Bogor, and Semarang (Makmur, 2016; Salmon, 2016). The HTT and HBT Kongsí are present as institutions that bind a sense of brotherhood

among fellow members so that the procession of someone's death becomes a social event that becomes an arena for other members to show grief, empathy, and a helping hand for families who need help.

Research Methods

This article uses a historical approach by going through four stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). Primary sources were obtained in the form of documents (manuscripts) from the list of reports of the dead and the list of prayer items found in the HBT and HTT Kongsj Padang. Dutch documents on the establishment of HTT and HBT Padang, documents on the establishment of crematoriums, photographs of funeral processions, and contemporary newspapers. Oral sources were obtained through in-depth interviews with the administrators of HTT and HBT Padang, as well as the families of people who died and whose funerals were organized by the two Kongsj. In addition, observations were also made to follow and directly observe the process of Padang's ethnic Chinese death ceremonies. Source criticism is carried out for data processing or data analysis of both written and oral sources, which are tested through a series of internal and external criticisms so that data is obtained that shows how the implementation of the Chinese death procession in Padang is carried out from time to time. Interpretation is done to distinguish historical facts related to changes in the implementation of the Chinese death ceremony and the factors behind it. The final stage is that the article is written descriptively and analytically in a chronological narrative.

Result

History of the Chinese Death Alliance in Padang

Historical records show that in 1663, several Chinese people were found living in a group around the Batang Arau riverbank in Padang. Furthermore, in 1673, it was recorded that a Chinese skipper bought land from Panglima Padang to build businesses and houses around the mouth of the Batang Arau River, which was still a town (Dobbin, 2008). This group of Chinese traders is known to have lived in houses more established than the rest of the population (Du Puy, 1893). The large Chinese population in Padang led to the appointing of a Chinese lieutenant in 1682 to organize and control the Chinese. The function of the Chinese as traders grew more robust when the Minangkabau cloth and gold trade declined. The Chinese, who already had a currency then, occupied an important position and succeeded in becoming brokers who could shift the traditional Minangkabau brokerage group into the interior (Young, 1988).

In addition to receiving economic facilities, the Chinese in Padang also received special treatment in the social and political structure in the Dutch East Indies as second-class citizens after Europeans (Lan, 2000). The colonial government implemented various regulations to regulate the lives of ethnic Chinese. It started with implementing *Passenstelsel* in 1816, then continued with a centralized settlement system in one place (*Wijkenstelsel*) for immigrants since 1820 (Beaver, 1994). Based on these regulations, Padang's Chinese settlements were built linearly on one side of the Batang Arau River, and these settlements had already been established before the colonial government introduced the *Wijkenstelsel* system. The Chinese settlement is bordered by warehouses owned by the Dutch colonial government, private company warehouses, and Chinese-owned warehouses. As an ethnic group that upholds ancestral cultural values, in Padang, there are worship buildings in the form of a temple, namely the See Hien Kiong temple, clan houses, and social, cultural, and death associations with Chinese architecture (Cheng, 2005).

Initially, people from the same clan formed clan associations or kongsj as a place of self-protection as new migrants to Padang (Vleming, 1992). Clan houses nurture ethnic Chinese based on the same tribe, so the main activity is to help fellow members organize prayers to ancestors and gods believed to be protectors. In addition, clan houses also play a role in preserving ancestral culture and traditions, including arranging family ceremonies, such as marriage parties, organizing prayers for ancestors and gods believed to be protectors, and traditional funeral processions.

A heterogeneous social, cultural, and funeral association was also formed in the subsequent development. Namely, Hok Tek Tong (HTT) was established in 1863 with the first Toako Lee Po Keng. (Articles of Association and Bylaws of HTT, 1987) and Heng Beng Tong (HBT) was established in 1873 with the first Toako Oei A King (Reglement Peratoeran, 1899; Huishoudelijk Reglement, 1924). These two sociocultural organizations were officially registered in the Dutch East Indies in 1895 (Staatsblad,

1895; Staatsblad, 1917). The names of these two organizations were translated into Indonesian in 1987 and are now better known as *Himpunan Tjinta Teman* (HTT) and *Himpunan Bersatu Teguh* (HBT).

The requirements to become a member of the HTT and HBT were Chinese men (*Hiati*) who were over 17 years of age (*Huishoudelijk Reglement*, 1924). Choosing to become a member of HTT or HBT is based on a choice of conscience with the consequence of following cultural rules, namely the worship of different ancestral spirits. This consensus cannot be violated by anyone who has chosen HTT or HBT association. Someone who has become a member of HTT will not be able to move to the HBT association. Vice versa, if someone has entered HBT, that person will also not be accepted into HTT. This rule follows the verbal agreement between the two associations and is still adhered to by ethnic Chinese living in Padang. Apart from Padang, HTT, and HBT also have branches in several areas in the interior of West Sumatra, namely in Padang Panjang, Bukittinggi, Payakumbuh, and even Pekanbaru and Sibolga (Erniwati, 2016).

In principle, HTT and HBT are death societies that share the same activities, but the *Toa Pek Kong* distinguishes the two societies they worship. The difference in *Toa Pek Kong* worshipped affects the formation of different characters of each association's membership. Even among HTT and HBT members, a common thread seems to separate the two groups. Regarding the activities carried out, HTT and HBT are almost the same. The main activities of these two associations are, first, culturally, organizing worship ceremonies to ancestors or patron gods, organizing ceremonies related to traditional ancestral rituals, such as *Cap Go Meh* celebrations, Chinese New Year celebrations, and eating together (*Ciak Ciu*). Another essential function is to organize the procession of death, starting with equipment, the implementation of corpse respect ceremonies, and organizing traditional funeral processions. There are some differences in membership between HTT and HBT. Where historically, HTT was formed by groups of merchants, while HBT is more dominantly from the farmer and coolie classes. However, in its development, this difference is no longer prominent because there is a tendency in a Chinese family to choose one of the two congresses. This means that in one family, there will be members of the HTT and HBT.

The cemetery's location is essential to organizing a proper funeral procession. In 1850, the rich Chinese of Padang bought a cemetery in Bukit Sentiong. Bukit Sentiong was chosen as the burial ground because its location was considered by *Feng sui*, namely the position of the land facing the sea. The money for the hill purchase was obtained from donations from Captain *Lie Pie Goan*, Lieutenant *Tjoa Tiang Mo* (donating 240 Gulden), and other donors. The cemetery at Bukit Sentiong was intended only for Chinese people living in *Gemeente Padang* (Padang City) and was managed directly by the Chinese Captain and Lieutenant ("*Javasche Courant*," 1851; *Seksi Perundang-Undangan Pemerintah Kota Padang*, 1979). On Bukit Sentiong, a prayer place was also built with the donation of *Kapiten Lie Maa Saay*, Lieutenant *Lie Lian Ie*, Lieutenant *Lim Sun Mo* and eleven other people (Lieutenant *Pho Tjeng Bie*, Lieutenant *Tjia Tui Hay*, Lieutenant *Oei Liang Tju*, *Tat Teck Kongsj*, *Bun Hap Kongsj*, *Sun Bie Tjian*, *Lim Roei Sui*, *Lie Sun Tong*). Each figure donated 275 Gulden to build a significant *los* as a place to gather and pray (Bukit Sentiong Purchase Inscription, 1850). The burial ground at Bukit Sentiong was later certified in the name of *de Chineesche "Kerk Ho Tjouw (Hoe Tjo)"*. The coffin had to be carried up the hill over dozens of steps or climbed a dirt road over various obstacles of shrubs and unfortunate graves across the slope. It takes at least 20 healthy, well-trained men to carry the coffin to the grave site, weighing up to 500 kg or more. This cannot be done by immediate family alone, so organization and participation in a death partnership is vital to the Padang Chinese.

The formation of the culture of entering the *kongsj* is inseparable from the existence of the *kongsj*, which has lasted hundreds of years. HBT was established in 1876, and HTT in 1863. The support that the *kongsj* provide, especially the organization of funerals, is vital to the community because everyone is bound to die. Meanwhile, in Padang, only HBT and HTT provide mutual support (from members, for members, by members) for the implementation of Chinese death and funeral rituals. This function is still ongoing today, and the values of cooperation and togetherness are prioritized.

This situation, it must be admitted, puts HBTs and HTTs in an essential position in the community. On the other hand, it also proves that *kongsj* is a culture created by the Chinese community to make their lives easier. Culture "teaches" people how to adapt to their environment. Through existing traditions, culture maintains the process of inheriting and preserving the value system from generation to generation. Data from HBT and HTT organizations show that in 2023, approximately 4000 Chinese people joined as members. Ethnic Chinese living in Padang will be members of one of the two social,

cultural, and funeral societies. This is because, socially and culturally, Ethnic Chinese living in Padang have been conditioned by the environment and values developed in Padang society. Economic factors are sometimes also one of the motivations for choosing to become a member of one of the social, cultural, and funeral associations. Economically, not all Padang Chinese are in a strong position. Generally, this weak economic group works as small traders and laborers.

For this reason, becoming a member of an association is necessary for Padang Chinese, as the association has become a means of culture among the Padang Chinese community in the face of sociocultural and economic problems. HTT and HBT organizations are concerned with cultural preservation and have several social programs to help members. Becoming a member of an association is necessary for Padang Chinese, as the association becomes a means cultivated among the Padang Chinese community in the face of sociocultural issues. Therefore, becoming a member of one of the social, cultural, and funeral associations is a choice the Padang Chinese Ethnic must make.

The Survival of Death Procession of Padang Chinese

Several beliefs underlie the implementation of the death procession in Chinese society. The beliefs are belief in reincarnation, karma from every action taken, the spirits of the deceased will come at certain times, the need to honor ancestors, the enactment of curses for evil deeds, and life in the world will be experienced again while in the afterlife (Cabgianto, 2015). When someone dies, the sad news will be conveyed to the management of the kongsí he belongs to, whether HTT or HBT. HBT administrators will immediately distribute *Pek toa*, a white card containing information on the deceased, and a call for Kongsí members to attend the funeral procession. The equipment needed for the funeral procession can be assisted by HBT and HTT kongsí if the family members cannot do so. One of the most essential pieces of equipment is the coffin. The type of coffin used affects the life of the deceased family in the next life (M, 2023).

To implement the death procession, a series of processions must be carried out from the time the body is placed in the funeral home until it is buried. In HBT and HTT, some administrators specialize in caring for the death procession. The HBT and HTT organizations have "three categories of administrators." The first category is the highest leadership consisting of *Toako* (first chairman), *Jieko* (second chairman), *Shako* (third chairman), and the secretary. The second category of organization, which is similar to the "middle management" level, is called the *Sutaishiang* and consists of officers at the level of section heads, including the treasurer and public relations. They are structured under *Jieko* and *Shako*. The third category is part of the death section and is called *Conglie*. This section is the frontline in dealing with all active members of the association. It is in the death section that interaction with all active members of the association occurs regularly under the funeral section (*Conglie*), which organizes *Twee tauw* (head of the team) and *Cap jie siang* (retired *Twee tauw*). A *Twee tauw* is responsible for delivering the mandate or invitation letter directly to members throughout Padang City. The association issues two kinds of mandates. First, *Pek toa* is a call/mandate letter from the association typed on white paper for members to come to the procession of delivering/burying members or families of members of the association who died in the cemetery. The second is *Ang toa*, a letter of invitation/mandate from the association typed on red paper for members to attend certain events, such as prayers and *Ciak ciu* (eating).

In the HBT management structure, there are four *Conglie*. The *Conglie* can be contacted at any time, especially when a member or family of a *Conglie* member dies. *Conglie* must be at the funeral home whenever there is a death event. So, no matter what time a member experiences death and needs to pick up the body, the *Conglie* will pick it up. The rhythm of an administrator's life can change following the "demands of duty" as a *Conglie*. One *Conglie* revealed that he used to stay up all night and sleep from dawn until noon due to the habit of being on duty at the funeral home, mainly if the funeral home was being used for a death procession. When a member or family of an HBT member dies and is laid to rest at the funeral home, then in addition to the daily guard, usually *Conglie*, *Twee tauw*, and several HBT members are ready to guard the back entrance of the funeral home (the front door for mourners). Just like *Conglie*, being a *Twee tauw* is also not easy. Each *Twee tauw* has a team of 50-60 members. If there is a *Pek toa*/*Ang toa*, then the *Twee tauw* must deliver it to all members directly (brought by themselves). To connect with thousands of members, HBT has 20 *Twee tauw* in two large squads, Squad A (*Hakka*) and Squad B (*Siangka*).

When a member of the association dies, the family will come to the funeral home secretariat. The rule in the HTT association is to make a death report. Members will come with a pair of red candles. At

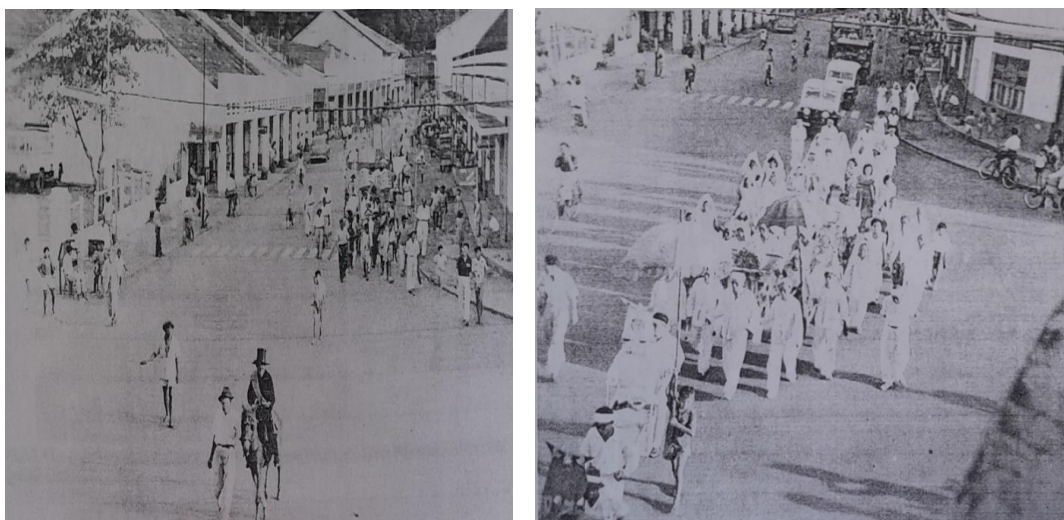
that time, the family also determined the funeral day based on the results of an agreement with other families. The congressional officer who gets the news of the funeral from his members will coordinate with Conglie to pick up the body and prepare the hearse. The body that Conglie has picked up is then handed over to the funeral home. Once at the funeral home, the corpse will be handed over to the prayer section caretaker. The body handed over will be bathed and dressed by the prayer section. After the family gives a red candle as a form of a report to the secretariat of the congregation, it will be directly escorted by the chest section to choose the chest used by the corpse. The coffin section will immediately prepare the coffin selected by the family to be putty so that there are no leaking coffins and to prevent any unpleasant odors from coming out of the coffin.

In the past, family members would wear clothes made from merkan (calico) cloth, and some were lined with gunny sacks, depending on their proximity to the deceased. In this way, the number of daughters, sons, eldest children, besan, sons-in-law, grandchildren, and so on can be determined through prayer ceremonies, the clothes worn, pieces of bamboo about an inch long that are placed near the coffin, and so on. It can be said that the funeral procedures of 'tempo doeloe' for community culture are full of traditions or cultural customs of the ancestors. In the researcher's observations from June to August 2023, bereaved families more commonly wore dark-colored shirts. In the old days, the corpse was kept for days, some even up to weeks, to see the best day for the corpse to be buried. The choice of coffin, including the type of wood used, is also critical. During the Tuako Lim Tjeng Hong (1971-1975) period, the manufacture of kuaca coffins previously made from raw teak was replaced with mahogany trees. However, since the 2000s, the materials used to make the coffins have varied, and many use board coffins, which are lighter and cheaper. In the past, the wood quality was highly regarded as a form of respect and devotion to the deceased's family. According to Chinese belief, siupan is a Chinese coffin made from teak wood consisting of three parts: the lid, hull, and base, and is durable. This type of coffin is hefty, so it must be carried on a liong by 32 people, usually done alternately on foot to Bukit Sentiong (Bukit Gado gado).

In 1985, the Bukit Sentiong cemetery was closed by the Padang Municipal Government during the period of Padang Mayor Syahrul Ujud (1983-1993) and then moved to the Bungus Teluk Kabung Public Cemetery. This policy of the Padang municipality led to changes in some of the congregation's rules, such as the regulation that the summons could only be stamped and returned at the funeral home. The distance of the new cemetery from Kampung Tjina also meant that Liong no longer carried the corpse from the funeral home, but rather, the coffin was transported by hearse. After arriving at the TPU, the cemetery staff took it back up the hill. Nowadays, in addition to choosing coffin materials that are not too expensive, lightweight coffins are also considered lighter to carry and do not require too much labor. Eight people can take a plank coffin. It is usually the Katio who carries the crates under Conglie's coordination.



Coffin decorated with dolls (symbolizing the number of servants of the deceased) 1900
(Sumber: <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl no.761873>)



Procession bringing the body to Sentiong Hill around 1910
Source: HTT Padang Collection 1924

If a board member dies, a summons is issued to all members, including the board of the HTT branch. Daily/plenary committees must wear a black tire on the left upper arm as a sign of condolences when escorting the body of a deceased committee member whose position in the kongsj is higher. It is not permissible for white call letters (Pek toa) to be represented by children under 16 or to bring more than one Pek toa. Likewise, there are sanctions for members who do not fulfill the summons. However, if a member cannot attend due to work or other reasons, they can be replaced by paying monetary compensation, but not more than three times in a row. He must provide a letter of authorization if he is out of town. The funeral schedule is usually at 2 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. on holidays and Sundays.

After a series of processions at the funeral home has been completed, the following ritual is the raising of the body. Some procedures must be followed to honor the corpse. A beating instrument (brengr-brengr) is sounded to encourage people along the way. Along the way, silver paper is spread, and at every intersection or bridge, one of the deceased's family members (male) kneels on the side of the road until the coffin passes. According to the funeral director, Tjiek Wie Tjie (67), there are several rules in the funeral procedure. When following the funeral procession, the caregivers must be polite and maintain traffic order, not deviating from the rules such as walking outside the lane. It is also forbidden to speak inappropriately. If an officer reprimands this violation, the reprimand must be accepted and not challenged. In addition, escorts must walk and not carry vehicles such as bicycles, motorcycles, and cars.

At the initiative of Lao Jiko Tjoa Leng Gie (1956-1965), in 1967, during Tuako Oci Ho Tjeng, HTT used a stroller to ease the burden of carrying the coffin. The rules used to be quite strict when accompanying the corpse. During the procession, the Conglie will monitor and organize the procession until the body is buried. In addition, Conglie is also tasked with setting aside shrubs with a stick so that the group carrying the coffin can travel to the grave site smoothly and not be blocked by shrubs. After the coffin is put into the grave, an officer (Songsu) is in charge of observing the position of the coffin and the funeral process. "Since the cemetery moved from Bukit Sentiong to Teluk Kabung, conditions have changed by 90 percent (Interview Tin Soci, 2022). When the funeral was conducted at Bukit Sentiong, the coffin was lifted uphill, and the road was winding and full of rocks, so it required more energy. It is traditionally forbidden to take pictures of the procession unless the body has entered the grave. When the funeral was still at Bukit Sentiong, the caretaker had to follow the procession to the cemetery and then return the Pek toa that the officer had stamped at the funeral home. Now that the funeral is at Teluk Kabung Bungus Public Cemetery (TPU) outside Padang, Pek toa is collected at the funeral home, except for Kaktio, who is in charge of escorting them to the TPU. As a token of gratitude, the deceased's family members convey it through soja. Given the distance, according to Tjiek Wie Tjie

(Interview, 2022), in the past, more people accompanied the Pek toa because it was compulsory. But now it is free, whether you want to accompany or not.



Procession of lifting the body to TPU Bungus Teluk Kabung
Source: Researcher Documentation at HBT in 2022

Discussion

The procession of Chinese death ceremonies in Padang in the HBT and HTT Kongsis, it is known that there have been many changes in the implementation of the procession. Many steps or traditions have been abandoned or replaced. However, the decision is indirectly agreed upon together to leave some steps that should be in the ceremonial process or replace them with things considered more modern. However, the survival of HBT and HTT as the organizers of Chinese funeral processions in Padang shows that this community still considers ancestral traditions a source of its sociocultural identity. Identity refers to a specific character that individuals or members of a social group have. Identity implies a sense of togetherness or unity in a particular area or thing (Rummens, 1993). Identity can also mean a character that distinguishes an individual from other group identities. Thus, identity contains two meanings: the relationship of similarities and the relationship of differences. In this case, for Chinese Padang, cultural identity is the key that strengthens group solidarity and differentiates it from other ethnicities in Padang.

There have been some recent adjustments, although the identity is still maintained. In recent decades, Padang Chinese have had several options for funerals when they pass away. Not only is the body buried, but the body is also cremated. Cremation ceremonies have been practiced since the 1960s (Hasana & Erniwati, 2023). From the 1960s until 2000, the cremation ceremony was held in an open area (open field) in Gunung Padang. The coffin is placed on a pile of firewood 1 to 2 meters high, then poured with kerosene, and the burning process begins. The cremation process, in this traditional way, takes place all day. In the meantime, the officer in charge will monitor the fire's strength and ensure the corpse is entirely burned and turned into ashes.

Before cremation, other processions from arriving at the funeral home are still carried out. Since the 2000s, another change that has also begun to be considered normal has been related to the use of mourning clothes. The change can be seen in the mourning clothes used. Merkan clothes have changed into ordinary T-shirts. Merkan garments are made of calico cloth covered with burlap sacks worn upside down. Based on an explanation from Conglie LWT from HBT, it is known that many Chinese families mourn. Currently, only 1 to 5 families still wear the Merkan shirt. These families are generally financially well-off and fully endeavor to carry out the death ceremony according to Chinese tradition (Interview,

Lie,2022). Meanwhile, it is more common for ordinary people to wear mourning clothes made of black and white t-shirts.



One of the mourning families dressed in black
Source: Albert Family Photo Collection, 2011

These two colors, black and white shirts, symbolize grief for the family left behind. For some ethnic Chinese, wearing white and black shirts is just to make it easier for the family and not have to bother making clothes from calico cloth and burlap sacks. This was expressed by several families interviewed from June to August 2023 at HBT and HTT. This also shows how the current generation thinks about the traditions of their ancestors. Modernization has made this community feel more practically and economically. Although the meaning and value of the symbols used are no longer as important, it can be seen that the organization of a procession in the event of the death of a family member is still considered essential and cannot be ignored.

Apart from the dress code, the offerings have also changed. Usually, bereaved families who have rich sons-in-law will offer Toettoa and Ngoseng. Toettoa is a pig's head, and Ngoseng consists of five kinds of food: 1 crab, 1 squid, 1 chicken, and 1 duck. The son-in-law must prepare Ngoseng for the deceased in-laws as a sign of respect. According to Conglie Lie Wie Tjie, only a few Chinese families can still provide Toettoa and Ngoseng. Toettoa and Ngoseng are quite expensive, and many Chinese families can only afford to give Samseng. Samseng is 3 types of meat. The meat consists of chicken, duck, and pork. Samseng has a means of escorting the deceased to the afterlife. Families who cannot afford it will only serve Sengle, which consists of 1 chicken egg, 1 duck egg, and 1 piece of pork (AD/ART, HBT 1987; Interview Marcus, 2023).

Another change can be seen in the procession of delivering the body. During the delivery process, there are now two ambulances designated for poor Chinese people, which has happened since the meal was moved to TPU Bungus Teluk Kabung. HBT has two mini-buses with a capacity of thirty people intended for families of the deceased and HBT members—a truck for loading coffins and two ambulances. The development of facilities provided by the HBT makes it easier to deliver the body to the cemetery or cremation site to be carried out. Moreover, a large bridge already stands tall over the Batang Arau River, which connects the Pondok village and the area across Padang. This bridge began construction in 1995 and was completed and inaugurated in 2002. The various novelties that have taken place in the last two decades show that a tradition does not simply disappear in the lives of Padang's Chinese community despite changing times and various adjustments being made. This is possible when culture is well-maintained and not separated from the identity formation process of a community group.

The changes described above show how the death culture has undergone various adjustments to the changing times. Despite the changing times, the group solidarity that is built in the lives of Padang Chinese by being part of one of the existing death partnerships shows that to this day, the organization is an essential aspect for the formation of personal and group identity for Padang Chinese who can distinguish themselves ethnically and culturally from other groups in the city of Padang. On the other hand, the rich culture of the Padang Chinese is a source of personal and collective pride that contributes to the city's cultural diversity.

Conclusion

Tradition in Chinese culture is a form of culture that is preserved and passed down occasionally. The death procession for ethnic Chinese is a form of value cultivation that places the devotion to ancestors as an essential and meaningful thing in their lives. Culture and cultural identity owned by each ethnic group will change. Cultural change occurs when a process of adaptation occurs where a person learns and understands the rules and customs of a new culture (Nakayama & Martin, 2010). In addition, these cultural changes occur because of the latest inventions or discoveries that are considered more practical and economical. The changes that occurred during the implementation of Chinese death procession rituals cannot be avoided. However, the values underlying the implementation of the death procession have not changed, namely the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. This article ultimately shows that the cultural survival pursued by the Chinese community in Padang by maintaining the values of collectivity in its sociocultural life in organized and modern ways proves that Padang Chinese have their way of forming their identity and group as an existing part of urban life. This gives this group a strong identity as "Padang Chinese."

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