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The Role of the Tjong a Fie Museum in Preserving Chinese Cultural Heritage in Medan

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ABSTRACT

Based on the analysis of the eight journals, it is concluded that the implementation of risk management and emergency response in the workplace is crucial for building a safe and efficient work environment. Every organization must have a clear and comprehensive plan to handle risks and respond to emergency situations. In addition, training and awareness regarding safety among employees are also important elements in improving preparedness and response to emergencies. This study offers valuable insights for organizations to develop more effective risk management practices and enhance workplace safety and health. This study utilizes library research or literature review. For gathering data for literacy studies, one can reference local and international books, research journals, scientific articles, and studies done by other researchers, the result is based on the analysis of the journals, it is concluded that the implementation of risk management and emergency response in the workplace is crucial for building a safe and efficient work environment. Every organization must have a clear and comprehensive plan to handle risks and respond to emergency situations.

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is a valuable asset that reflects the identity, values, and history of a nation. This heritage does not only take the form of tangible heritage such as buildings, sites, and artifacts, but also includes intangible heritage such as traditions, language, arts, and belief systems (UNESCO, 2003). Amid the currents of globalization and rapid modernization, the preservation of cultural heritage becomes an important challenge so that historical values and local wisdom do not disappear swallowed by time. The preservation of cultural heritage not only aims to maintain the physical existence of a legacy, but also includes efforts to preserve the values, meanings, and socio-cultural functions contained within it (Kartodirdjo, 1992).

Cultural preservation has several main dimensions, namely conservation, revitalization, and the transmission of cultural values to the younger generation. Conservation focuses on maintaining and protecting the physical aspects of cultural heritage; revitalization emphasizes efforts to revive the socio-cultural functions of a tradition or historical building; while value transmission emphasizes the importance of education and community participation so that cultural heritage remains relevant

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in the present (Suprihatin, 2019). Thus, preservation is not only the responsibility of the government, but also requires the active involvement of the community and the private sector. In addition, the preservation of cultural heritage plays an important role in strengthening national identity, increasing historical awareness, and supporting the development of sustainable culture-based tourism (Putra & Dewi, 2021).

Indonesia as a multicultural country has a very rich diversity of cultural heritage. One important element of This, diversity is Chinese culture, which has become an integral part of the nation's social and economic history. The Chinese community in Indonesia has not only brought influence in trade and the economy, but also left a strong legacy in art, architecture, and cultural value systems (Setiono, 2008). In various major cities such as Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, and Medan, Chinese cultural heritage can be found in the form of temples, old houses, artifacts, and traditions that are still preserved today. The city of Medan, as one of the main trading centers on the island of Sumatra, has a long history of cultural acculturation between the local community and the Chinese ethnic group. The presence of the Chinese community in Medan has contributed greatly to the development of the city, especially since the Dutch colonial period. One of the concrete proofs of the existence and influence of Chinese culture in Medan is the Tjong A Fie Mansion Museum, the legacy home of a prominent Chinese figure named Tjong A Fie. He was known as a successful merchant, philanthropist, and a figure who played an important role in bridging inter-ethnic relations in Medan in the early 20th century (Suryadinata, 2010).

The Tjong A Fie Museum building has high historical, architectural, and cultural value. From an architectural standpoint, this building displays a combination of Chinese, European, and Malay styles, which illustrates the harmony between cultures in Medan in the past. Historically, this museum stores various artifacts, photographs, and original furniture that tell the life journey of Tjong A Fie and the Chinese community during the colonial period. Culturally, this museum functions as an educational and preservation center that introduces the values of hard work, solidarity, and diversity as part of the cultural identity of the Chinese community in Indonesia.

However, the preservation of Chinese cultural heritage such as the Tjong A Fie Museum does not escape various challenges. These challenges include changes in the function of urban space, the lack of attention from the younger generation toward history, limited conservation funding, as well as the influence of modernization that can shift traditional values (Utami, 2022). In addition, public awareness of the importance of cultural heritage preservation still needs to be increased so that historical sites are not only seen as tourist objects, but also as sources of learning and strengthening local identity.

Previous research shows that Chinese cultural heritage is now experiencing significant development in terms of preservation and public recognition. According to Wibowo (2021), Chinese culture is increasingly accepted as an integral part of Indonesia's cultural richness, especially after the multiculturalism policies in the post-reform period. Traditions such as Cap Go Meh, barongsai, and ancestral rituals are now openly displayed and have become cultural tourism attractions.

Therefore, structured and sustainable preservation efforts are needed to maintain the existence of the Tjong A Fie Museum as Chinese cultural heritage in Medan. These preservation efforts include physical aspects such as building and collection maintenance, as well as non-physical aspects such as public education, cultural tourism promotion, and the involvement of local communities in preservation activities (Rahmawati, 2020).

Based on this background, this research aims to analyze the role of the Tjong A Fie Museum in the preservation of Chinese cultural heritage in the city of Medan, and examine how this museum functions as a means of education, tourism, and cultural identity strengthening. The research results are expected to contribute to cultural heritage preservation efforts, especially those related to Chinese ethnic heritage in Indonesia, as well as become a reference for managing cultural heritage–based tourist destinations in the future.

METHOD

This research uses the literature study (literature review) method, which is a method that focuses on tracking, collecting, and analyzing various literature sources relevant to the research topic. This method aims to obtain a deep understanding of concepts, theories, and previous findings related to cultural heritage preservation, the role of museums, and Chinese culture in Indonesia, especially in the city of Medan. According to Creswell (2016), a literature review is a systematic approach in identifying, evaluating, and interpreting all available research related to a particular topic. Through this method, researchers can find research gaps, strengthen theoretical arguments, and build a comprehensive conceptual framework.

Data Sources

The data sources in this research are secondary and obtained from various scientific literature, including:

a. Academic books on cultural heritage, preservation, and museums;
b. National and international scientific articles and journals;
c. Policy documents related to cultural heritage preservation (such as Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage and the 2003 UNESCO Convention);
d. Publications and archives from relevant agencies or institutions, such as the Medan City Cultural Office and the management of the Tjong A Fie Museum.

The selection of sources was based on relevance, validity, and the novelty of information, prioritizing literature published in the last ten years.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through the following stages: Identification of literature using keywords such as cultural heritage, cultural preservation, museum, Chinese culture, and Tjong A Fie.

Selection of literature by choosing references relevant to the research focus and eliminating unsuitable sources. Classification of data by grouping literature into main themes such as:

a. Concepts of cultural heritage and preservation;
b. The role of museums in cultural preservation;
c. The history and cultural values of Chinese communities in Medan;
d. Case study of the Tjong A Fie Museum.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using a qualitative descriptive approach, interpreting and synthesizing the contents of various literature to produce a comprehensive understanding of the topic studied. The analysis steps included:

a. Data reduction by selecting important information from the collected literature;
b. Data presentation by organizing findings into structured thematic descriptions;
c. Drawing conclusions by formulating the main findings regarding the role of the Tjong A Fie Museum in preserving Chinese cultural heritage in Medan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical and Architectural Value of the Tjong A Fie Museum

The Tjong A Fie Museum is a historic building that bears witness to the existence and contributions of the Chinese community in the city of Medan since the early 20th century. Established in 1900 by Tjong A Fie, a prominent Chinese figure influential in the fields of economics, social affairs, and philanthropy, the building reflects the cultural blend and multiethnic values that thrived in Medan.

Architecturally, the museum showcases a mixture of traditional Chinese architecture, European colonial style, and Malay elements, illustrating a harmonious process of cultural acculturation. Chinese characteristics can be seen from the curved roof (teng), dragon and phoenix carvings, Hanzi calligraphy, and the use of red and gold colors that symbolize luck and prosperity.

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On the other hand, Dutch-style windows, geometric patterned tile floors, and open balconies show the influence of colonial and Malay architecture.

The authenticity of the building's structure, teak wood furniture, and antique items such as the ancestral worship altar table, hanging lanterns, and Chinese calligraphy paintings is still preserved to this day. This strengthens the museum's historical and educational value as a living cultural heritage site, not merely an inanimate relic of the past.

The two-storey building also contains historical rooms such as the main guest room, the ancestral altar room (Tang), and Tjong A Fie's private workspace, each representing the value of filial piety loyalty and respect toward ancestors at the core of traditional Chinese culture, Thus, the Tjong A Fie Museum is not only a historical monument but also a reflection of the philosophy of life within the Chinese community: the balance between humans, nature, and ancestors.

The Museum's Role in Preserving Chinese Cultural Heritage

The main role of the Tjong A Fie Museum lies in its function to preserve, introduce, and transmit Chinese cultural values to the wider community. Based on observations and literature review, the museum carries out three strategic functions in cultural heritage preservation, namely:

a. Conservation Function

The museum plays an active role in maintaining the authenticity of artifacts, documents, traditional clothing, household furniture, and ceremonial objects originating from the lifetime of Tjong A Fie. Some important collections that reflect Chinese culture include: The ancestral altar table and incense burners, symbols of respect for ancestors. Hanzi calligraphy with philosophical meanings, such as the word Fu (happiness) and Shou (longevity). Red lanterns and dragon paintings, which symbolize good fortune and spiritual strength. Traditional Cheongsam and Changshan clothing, inherited from Tjong A Fie's large family. Through periodic maintenance and digital documentation, the museum ensures that every artifact remains in good condition so it can be passed down to future generations.

b. Educational Function

The museum also carries out an educational function through the provision of guided tours, educational programs, and collaborations with schools and universities in Medan. Through educational visits, visitors can understand Chinese moral values such as hard work, loyalty, modesty, and solidarity, which formed the foundation of Tjong A Fie's success in socio-economic life. In addition, the museum frequently holds Chinese cultural workshops, such as Mandarin calligraphy, mooncake making, and introductions to traditional music such as guzheng and erhu.

c. Socio-Cultural Function

The Tjong A Fie Museum functions as a space representing Chinese cultural identity as well as a place for intercultural interaction. Various cultural activities such as Chinese New Year celebrations, barongsai festivals, and Chinese art exhibitions are often held in the museum area. These activities strengthen the image of Medan as a multicultural city that upholds tolerance. Furthermore, universal values such as harmony and virtue passed down by Tjong A Fie continue to be transmitted as concrete examples of how Chinese culture contributes to social life in Medan.

The Tjong A Fie Museum as a Cultural Tourism Attraction

As a leading cultural tourism destination, the Tjong A Fie Museum makes an important contribution to the development of heritage tourism in Medan. The uniqueness of its architecture and the richness of its history attract domestic and international tourists, especially from the Chinese diaspora community. Visitors not only enjoy the beauty of the building but also gain insight into the life of the Chinese community in the past, the values of virtue instilled by Tjong A Fie, and how these cultural values continue to live today.

The museum is part of Medan's historical tourism route, along with other sites such as the London Sumatera Building, the Old Post Office, and Maimun Palace. Through social media promotion, collaboration with the Tourism Office, and involvement from local historical communities, the Tjong A Fie Museum is becoming increasingly well-known as an educational and cultural tourism icon.

Challenges in Museum Preservation

In carrying out its preservation functions, the Tjong A Fie Museum faces several challenges, including:

a. Limited conservation funds, which affect efforts to maintain the building and antique collections.
b. Low youth participation, particularly in cultural and local history activities, which threatens the sustainability of preservation efforts.
c. Modernization pressure in the Kesawan district, where commercial development may alter the character of the historical area and reduce its authenticity.
d. If these challenges are not properly addressed, the museum's social and educational functions may decline. Therefore, synergy is needed among museum management, local government, Chinese cultural communities, and educational institutions in maintaining the museum's sustainability as a center for cultural heritage preservation.

Preservation Strategies and Strengthening the Museum's Function

Based on the study results, the preservation strategies implemented by the Tjong A Fie Museum emphasize educational, participatory, and cultural digitalization approaches. These strategies include:

a. Developing educational visit programs for students, university students, and tourists so they can learn Chinese cultural values directly.
b. Cross-institutional collaborations with Chinese communities, the Cultural Office, and universities in cultural research and building conservation.
c. Physical maintenance and digitization of collections, including the creation of virtual archives and 3D tours to increase public access.
d. Digital-based cultural promotion through Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to attract the interest of younger generations.
e. Organizing routine cultural events, such as barongsai performances, calligraphy exhibitions, and Cap Go Meh celebrations in the museum area.

With these strategies, the Tjong A Fie Museum functions not only as a storage place for historical artifacts but also as a center for learning, intercultural dialogue, and innovation in cultural preservation. The museum stands as solid evidence that the preservation of Chinese cultural heritage can coexist with sustainable tourism development, while also strengthening the local cultural identity of Medan as a plural and inclusive city.

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Figure 1 A table with carvings depicting a combination of Chinese, European, and Malay elements

Figure 2 The library room that stores books inherited from Tjong A Fie

Figure 3 Tjong A Fie's workspace

Figure 4 The dining room of the Tjong A Fie family

Figure 5 The room where Tjong A Fie relaxed (the house terrace)

Figure 6 A mirror with beautiful carvings combining European and Malay elements

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Tjong A Fie Museum has a very important role in preserving, maintaining, and introducing Chinese cultural heritage in the city of Medan. Through its historical collections, authentic architecture, as well as various educational programs and cultural activities, the museum serves as a learning space and a medium for preserving the cultural values passed down by the Chinese community since the colonial era. The museum not only preserves the physical building and artifacts but also plays a role in transmitting values such as hard work, tolerance, modesty, and solidarity, which are part of the cultural identity of the Chinese community in Medan. In addition to being a center for cultural preservation, the Tjong A Fie Museum also contributes to the development of historical and cultural tourism in the city of Medan. The presence of this museum enriches the variety of heritage-based tourist destinations and serves as concrete evidence that ethnic diversity can be a strength for building cross-cultural understanding and strengthening the city's identity. Nevertheless, the museum still faces several challenges, particularly related to limited funding, low youth interest in history, and modernization pressure in the Kesawan area.

Therefore, better collaboration is needed between museum management, local government, the Chinese community, academics, and the wider public to ensure the sustainability of this cultural heritage preservation. Support in the form of educational programs, collection digitalization, area revitalization, and more creative cultural promotion is necessary so the museum can remain relevant and attractive to future generations. Overall, the Tjong A Fie Museum is not only a repository for historical objects but also a symbol of unity, cultural acculturation, and the historical journey of the Chinese community that has become an important part of the history of the city of Medan. Its existence must continue to be preserved so that this cultural heritage remains alive and beneficial for present and future generations.

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