

**Cultural Adaptation of Thai: A Case Study of Chinese Descent in the Mae Klong River Basin**

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Citation: Sukjairungwattana, P. (2023). Cultural adaptation of Thai: A Case Study of Chinese Descent in the Mae Klong River Basin. *J Edu Psyc Res*, 5(2), 638-643.**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the cultural change of Thai-Chinese people in Muang District, Ratchaburi Province, as well as to investigate the factors that contribute to their cultural adaptation. Participants from the Mae Klong River Basin in Ratchaburi Province were interviewed, data analyzed, and descriptive writing was also used as a research method. The results indicate that cultural changes in Thai-Chinese has been changing from the past to the present, and it is constantly changing. Cultural change can be fast or slow, depending on the environment and social context. As human behavior is determined by culture, and culture governs society, today's culture has evolved according to the times, and today's communication is becoming more open. As the Internet and technology have made communication easier and faster, more foreign cultures are spreading across the globe. Moreover, Thai-Chinese cultural adaptation has been affected by a variety of factors over time, including population factors, economic factors, social and political factors. People of Chinese descent in Thailand are affected by societal and political factors that affect their adaptation. The use of social media and online resources is becoming increasingly modern, which has resulted in more effective communication between people in different locations. The findings of this study can provide suggestions for the development of the community in the future.

Keywords: Cultural Adaptation, Thai-Chinese People, Chinese Descent, Thai Culture**1. Introduction**

There is a great deal of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity in Thailand. Due to its proximity to many neighboring countries such as Myanmar, Laos, Malaysia, and Cambodia, Thailand possesses a wide range of cultures and languages and blends them in many different forms, particularly in the northern provinces that border Burma and Laos. In northern Thailand, there is still constant contact, trade, opportunity to visit, and cross-cultural descent, resulting in a similarity between the culture and language of northern Thailand and those of neighboring countries in the present day. Furthermore, China is one of the countries that has influenced Thai society in addition to the combination of cultures between Thailand and neighboring countries. The sea route has been used for trade with Thailand since the reign of King Narai the Great in the 17th century. There was a significant amount of Chinese migration to the Kingdom of Thailand during the reign of King Nang Klao Chao Yu Hua (Rama III), and they brought their own culture of life and language into the Kingdom. After studying the relationship information, it was discovered that Thailand and China have a long-standing relationship. In addition to trade, there has been good diplomatic cooperation all along. Both countries have been good neighbors for a long time. Chinese emigrants to Thailand, who have moved for economic

purposes, for war, or for other reasons, place a high value on their "root" culture [1]. Chinese language study is therefore a subject that many countries place a high value on because of the convenient, easy, and fast transportation that has made China's economy develop unceasingly. Currently, there are also many studies about Thai students' learning Chinese as a foreign language in Thailand. For example, Xu et al. investigated the relative prediction of motivation, anxiety and learning strategies for second language achievement among 90 Thai adult learners of Chinese as a foreign language [2]. Due to the widespread use of Chinese throughout the world, Thai society continues to contain Thai of Chinese descent who continue to pass on their culture to their children. However, the time of migration has long passed. At present, Thai descendants of Chinese background are tending to be unable to communicate in Chinese at all [3, 4].

1.1. Chinese Immigrants in Thailand

Chinese immigrants have settled in Thailand for many years and have contributed to the exchange of traditions and cultures. The way of life of both Thais and Chinese people has changed as a result of this Chinese immigration. G. William Skinner concluded that Thai society is supportive. In addition to the government's policies regarding minority groups, the color

of their skin facilitates and pressures Chinese citizens to fully integrate into Thai society and culture in terms of culture, religion, and appearance. In addition, the Chinese are a group of immigrants who have lived in Thailand for many years. During the reign of King Yongzheng of the Chong Dynasty and from the middle of the Qing period onward, Teochew Chinese began to immigrate to Siam, according to Rattanamankasem [5]. A growing number of Teochews migrated to Siam as a result of poverty. During the year 1809 (B.E. 2352), many Teochew Chinese left for Siam because of natural disasters and wars. Political and administrative problems in China, as well as natural disasters and poverty in life were the reasons for the emigration. It is common for Chinese immigrants not to intend to emigrate permanently. However, once they have left, most of them tend to mix with the locals.

The Chinese immigrants in Thailand are divided into five major language or dialect groups: Hokkien, Hakka, Haila, Teochew, and Cantonese. There are three important river basins in Thailand in particular, including the Chao Phraya River Basin, Tha Chin, and Mae Klong. The eastern seashore districts include Trat, Chanthaburi, Rayong, Chonburi and Chachoengsao. The majority of these are Teochew Chinese [6]. Throughout history, it has been reflected in both concrete and abstract forms. The concrete symbol that appears clearly everywhere the Chinese live is building a shrine. The construction of Chinese temples and Chinese temples, etc., are abstract and reflect concepts. Chinese beliefs that remain closely linked to those of their ancestors include important festivals and ceremonies as well as paying homage to gods and ancestors.

A walking street market along Woradet Road along the Mae Klong River in Mueang Ratchaburi District, Koi Kee Old Market Ratchaburi is located along the Mae Klong River. The Mae Klong River flows through many provinces as part of the Tha Chin River. About 200 years ago, the name Koy Kee means riverside in Chinese and passes through Ratchaburi Province. Previously, this area was an important commercial area in Ratchaburi because it was close to the waterfront, making transportation convenient. Furthermore, there was a market for trading dragon jars, which were a good product of the province. However, due to the expansion of roads crossing many routes, the market was closed later. This reduced the popularity of water travel. As a result, the Ratchaburi Provincial Municipality has organized a walking street market in order to stimulate the economy of the community. A number of products can be found in the market, including OTOP products, local foods, crafts and souvenirs, as well as a viewpoint along the riverfront. The Koi Kee Old Market is open in the evening until late on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. There are many beautiful photography angles such as the clock tower area and a large sculpture of a white monkey that faces the river.

The reason why Thai people of Chinese descent in the Talat Kao Koi Kee community still follow the customs and traditions of the Chinese people in terms of their way of life, beliefs, rituals, and offspring. This includes the conditions of social change due to the process of modernizing society. The modernization process does not affect the community's practice. Due to the presence

of religious centers such as Chinese temples, Shrines, and vegetarian restaurants that still have a strong influence on the practices and traditions of Thai-Chinese descent, the researcher became interested in studying the inheritance process of the Koi Kee Old Market community. The old market in Muang District, Ratchaburi Province, lies along the Mae Klong River Basin. Using the results of this study, Chinese ancestors will be able to gain a deeper understanding of ritual patterns, beliefs, ideas, values, changes and modifications to traditions and rituals, as well as the cultural inheritance processes that they wish to pass down to their children. As a result of Lan's following his beliefs, the community's economy has been positively impacted. Thus, the community was impelled to have a distinctive identity, including continuing and maintaining the good traditions of its ancestors [7].

1.2. Cultural Identity of Thai-Chinese

Most often, identities are constructed on the basis of opposites, such as whites and blacks, normals and deviations, and males and females. This has been described as "all things that make life liveable and constitute society" or, more specifically, it can be defined as "a person's nature and nurture", which include their experiences, talents, skills, beliefs, values, knowledge and status within their family, school, workplace, environment and country, and beyond these limits in the world, as globalization continues to shrink the world with each passing year [8, 9].

Despite the large number of Chinese immigrants in Thailand, the Chinese tend to gather together as a community. Chinese people, even though they have moved far from their hometowns, still adhere to the old traditions. The integration of the Thai and Chinese cultures has been achieved by continuing to practice, for example, having Chinese New Year parades, and various texts as used in China when coming to Thailand, which has resulted in some Chinese marrying Thai nationals and settling permanently in Thailand. The Thais have adopted the Chinese language, beliefs, customs, traditions, and culture into practice in many ways, resulting in the transmission of traditions and culture from generation to generation. The Chinese culture has been blended with Thai culture in some instances.

As an intellectual heritage passed down from generation to generation, wisdom is an intellectual heritage that may be lost over time if the new generation does not recognize its importance. Due to the lack of connection between the past and the present, wisdom is at risk of being lost. Therefore, guidelines are provided for inheriting wisdom (Office of the National Education Commission, 2002) as follows (originally in Thai language).

1. In order to facilitate the transmission of the landscape's intelligence, it is essential to promote local wisdom and village sages. It is imperative that we continue to develop quality works and provide opportunities for them to be recognized and widely accepted. We need to act as a role model and encourage people to be confident, proud, create faith in our work, and accept the views of each individual.
2. Recruiting people who are local wisdom in each field of study who possess knowledge and experience until they become proficient in that profession, which villagers are generally

unfamiliar with self-publicity Governments or relevant organizations should provide support to create opportunities for local people. Selection, competition and seeking are the methods. To disseminate to the general public that the recruitment process of local wisdom will make the person famous and well-known, information regarding the person's history and work must be compiled.

3. Those who are responsible for operations should be able to coordinate with related agencies, such as provincial cultural centers, district cultural centers, public and private organizations, and universities located throughout the country. Requesting cooperation and surveying villages, subdistricts, districts and provinces across the country in order to obtain accurate and clear information that will then be published in a variety of media outlets. Disseminating information in a variety of forms, including electronic media such as books, pamphlets, journals, digital libraries, Local Wisdom: Nonthaburi Suksa, etc.

4. The media that will be utilized for public relations purposes should be considered when the selection of local wisdom with outstanding characteristics of each branch has been completed. The recipients should be provided with an opportunity to learn and experience information which can be utilized as a guideline for practice.

5. For a study and research, encourage the use of the results of the experiment to summarize as a body of knowledge, thereby creating a study and research. As a result of the results of the research, wisdom can then be improved and strengthened to be accepted or adjusted to the current environment, which will affect those associated with that wisdom, such as income, reputation, social acceptance, etc.

6. In order to encourage the transmission of local wisdom, there should be a mass transfer of knowledge to students and other individuals with general interests. We should be able to study and acquire knowledge so that we can continue to inherit that knowledge or exchange knowledge and experiences in order to improve the results and improve ourselves through the exchange of knowledge. The state or organizations, associations, groups, and members should cooperate and coordinate in order to achieve the best results possible. It is our goal to make the cost of studying as low as possible for those who are interested in studying.

7. As an educational curriculum, there should be a curriculum or additional content. Wisdom is essential in teaching and learning at all levels. Engaging youth in preserving and passing on the wisdom of the ancestors should be emphasized.

8. Collaboration between public and private agencies. Both public and private agencies can play an important role in working together, for example, by conducting effective studies and research, conserving wisdom, promoting widespread dissemination, and enhancing efficiency.

9. As a result of government support, various conservation, promotion, protection, and dissemination activities must be implemented. The state should encourage people to take pride in the wisdom of their ancestors. They should work seriously, follow up, and evaluate the results.

10. Assist in protecting intellectual property The state or related agencies should protect the potential benefits of the people in the developed wisdom, such as patents and copyrights, etc, for legal protection.

Additionally, governmental encouragement of assimilation is largely responsible for the shift. The commodification of a second language offers learners, particularly those from low-income families, more affordable and accessible educational opportunities. Furthermore, language proficiency can expand learners' career prospects and provide them with additional value in industries such as tourism, commerce, and service. Multilingualism is becoming increasingly important for global citizenship and communication. The ability to speak multiple languages can create a wider range of cultural understanding and appreciation. It can also help to bridge the gaps between nations and create a more unified global community.

Moreover, a transnational construction of Thai-Hakka identity was examined by Wang at the local, national, and global levels [10]. This identity is the result of the negotiation from the common motherland (Mainland China) in the past, the new modern Hakka discourse and multicultural policy (Taiwan), and the complex ethnic experiences and interactions in everyday life (Thailand), which has led to the development of a new transnational identity for Thai-Hakkas: multi-locally distributed, without clear center-periphery relationships. This kind of resident group can also establish strong mechanisms of a multicultural society and develop into sustainable tourism [11].

According to Tamonwan Tangwongcharoen, Om Yai residents are Thai-Chinese in their ethnicity. As a result of the study, it was found that the first generation of Chinese people had a strong sense of Chinese identity and chose to preserve Chinese culture. The second-generation members of the family were able to retain the Chinese culture that their parents had passed on to them while also beginning to make some adjustments, such as speaking Thai, and learning Thai culture from school and their friends. When family members attempt to live in Thai society, adaptation is evident. Furthermore, the Thai government at that time attempted to press the Chinese population in Thailand to convert to Thai culture. Because of this, Chinese Thais of the second and third generations often choose to become Thais and maintain their Chinese cultural identity by belonging to Chinese-Thai families based on the concept of rational choice. Based on their lack of capital, most first-generation Chinese chose agriculture over trade. However, members of the second generation tend to leave agriculture in pursuit of better employment opportunities. In terms of education, it has been discovered that Chinese parents did not encourage their children to study in the past as they were only concerned with making a living. Once their family status improved, however, they allowed their children to study. People of Chinese descent who have completed compulsory education are most likely to choose careers based on their parents' influences, whereas those with higher education tend to choose careers more independently. In the study, the relationship between settlement and occupation was established after the Chinese settled in Thailand. Despite the fact that occupation characteristics remain unchanged prior to and after the decision to settle, the occupational change from agriculture to trade will occur in the second or third generation following the settlement decision. Due to their desire to trade, Thai people of Chinese descent often choose to live in urban areas or communities where they prosper based on their occupational

characteristics, according to their values. It has been found that when China changed its regime in 1949 to become a communist regime, the Thai government was concerned and wished to dismantle Chineseness in order to promote Thai nationalism in order to promote their ethnic identity. Therefore, there are measures to control Chinese nationals in the country. In order to avoid conflicts with the government, the Chinese had to give up some ethnic Chinese identity and adjust their new ethnic identity in accordance with the country in which they lived. At that time, dualak became a characteristic of Chinese-Thai people.

In order to explore more on this issue, the current study aims to answer the following two research questions:

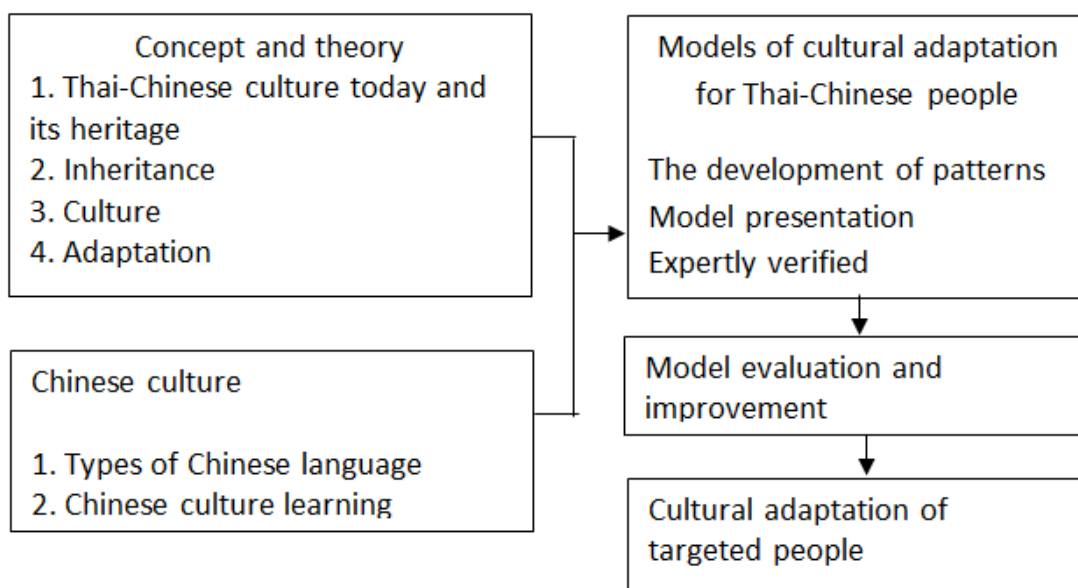
(1) What are the cultural changes of Thai-Chinese people in the

Mae Klong River Basin, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province?
 (2) What are the factors that influence the cultural adaptation of Thai people in this area?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Conceptual Framework

It was a qualitative study conducted to examine the cultural adaptation of Chinese-Thai individuals. A study of the Mae Klong River Basin, Ratchaburi Province, based on the conceptual framework derived from the study, will include changes in ritual belief systems, inheritance processes, and social traditions that will be conducted in accordance with the conceptual framework derived from the study.



2.2. Selection of Participants

The participants in the research were a family of Thai-Chinese descent living in the Koi Kee market community. The Mae Klong River Basin, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province, is a historical area where Chinese immigrants lived. It still maintains a high density of the Chinese population, which is a result of the Chinese identity. Similarities in language and lifestyle still remain.

A tourism-rich country in Southeast Asia, Thailand has a large number of Chinese temples that have become well-known tourist attractions [12]. A representative of Chinese religious sites around the Koi Kee market community has also been selected by the author. There is still an influence from Mahayana monks from Chinese temples shrine keepers, representatives from various foundations, etc., in the rituals of various important days. A sample of cultural adaptation research design of Thai-Chinese people Mae Klong River Basin Ratchaburi Province The criteria used to select a specific sample group (Purposive sampling) outlined conditions or criteria for the structure of selecting a sample group for the study.

Specifying conditions and criteria for selecting the sample group must be a family that continues to perform important Chinese

rituals annually. A group of informants must be at least 20 years old and perform rituals in a strict manner. To observe the transmission of culture and change, the sample must be willing to provide information or act as a sample group for research. Elders in the community and various clubs are heavily involved in rituals.

2.3. Research Design

Throughout the data collection process, tools and methods of collecting data are consistent. A qualitative research model was used to interview the sample for the accuracy of the adaptation data based on the topic and frame of the deer questions. The steps involved in creating a question line are as follows.

- (1) Establish the conceptual framework for setting the interview questions.
- (2) Review various documents and literature concerning Chinese-Thai culture and the process of cultural inheritance
- (3) Learn from experts or people who have in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture.
- (4) The interview guideline is an interview topic consisting of three parts consistent with the conceptual framework for designing interviews and interviewing the sample group.

Answering questions in an interview guide is a way for respondents

to respond freely and without bias or misunderstanding of the researcher's responses. By using a triangular test, the information obtained from the sample can be compared for similarities or differences. If the information is the same, 2/3 of the information will have similar facts if the information is the same.

2.4. Data Collection

Thai people of Chinese descent in the Mae Klong River Basin of Ratchaburi Province have relied on qualitative research methods for their cultural adaptation. As for data collection, the following formats were used:

- (1) Investigate information contained in documents to discover information on cultural matters.
- (2) A research assistant, who is a local person, collected data as a guideline for in-depth interviews during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- (3) To obtain credibility of information, key informants were interviewed by community leaders and elders with actual knowledge of Chinese culture and rituals, who were also interviewed by community leaders and elders with knowledge of various rituals. Interviews with skilled individuals to learn more about the culture and traditions.

3. Results

3.1. Changes in the Culture of Thais of Chinese Descent in this Area

In order for a nation to be secure, culture has to be in place. Culture is something that represents national identity. It is constantly changing. Depending on the phenomenon or social context involved, cultural change may occur quickly or slowly. Culture determines the different forms of institutions which differ in society. Culture determines human behavior. A society's and a culture's behavior is what controls the society and creates order within that society. The culture includes beliefs, values, norms, beliefs, etc. At present, culture has evolved according to the era. Obviously, communication is more open nowadays. Whether it is on the internet network, or television, which is a channel that makes communication more convenient and faster, it contributes significantly to the spread of foreign cultures. In Thai society, foreign cultures are everywhere, and foreign cultures influence teenagers, such as Korean, Japanese, and Chinese cultures.

With the shift from a centrally planned to a market economy, China has opened its economy up for reform. The market mechanism has been the control since 1978, resulting in significant changes in Chinese society. Chinese traditional culture is deeply rooted. The Chinese culture of today is a mix of traditional and modern cultures. The Chinese immigrant community has brought together Chinese technology and culture, as well as disseminating and passing on knowledge to others. Chinese people settled in Thailand and built a stable living environment by making a living. Chinese people are diligent and strive to achieve stability in life by making a living. When immigrants came in for the first time, Chinese people worked for hire. Later, Chinese people began a small trade and then expanded into a stable trading career. It contributes significantly to the Thai economy.

Thus, Thai people of Chinese descent still follow their ancestors'

traditions in terms of culture. As an example, pay homage to the ancestors during Chinese New Year, worship the gods Guan Yu and Guanyin, or take pleasure in opera performances, but the intensity has been reduced. There have been some changes, such as succession. Marriage is a choice made by a daughter, expressing gratitude to elder relatives is another choice made by a daughter.

3.2. Cultural Adaptation of Thai People of Chinese Descent: Factors Affecting It

Increasingly, Thai people of Chinese descent have higher education, resulting in advanced thinking. Looking for employment abroad will increase income, although more work is needed. In addition to the adequacy of income, it is a necessity for the younger generation to find employment in different places, since in the past most of the previous generation worked in trading, while in the present, the younger generation must find employment elsewhere.

Among the factors that influence social and political behavior is membership in community organizations or groups. Accordingly, government policies and modern development concepts have a bearing on the adaptation of Thai people of Chinese descent. Social media has become more modern. This has made communication in different places more prosperous. Information factors include the use of social media. Social media has enabled Thai people of Chinese descent to share information, news and updates with one another, increasing their collective knowledge and understanding of issues. Social media has also allowed them to connect with people with similar experiences, beliefs, and goals, helping to create a sense of community and solidarity. Finally, social media has allowed them to advocate for their interests and have their voices heard in the public discourse. This has enabled them to gain greater visibility and recognition as a minority group in Thai society. It has also helped to create social change, particularly in terms of cultural and political issues. For instance, the Thai transgender community used social media to successfully advocate for the passage of the Gender Equality Act, which provides protection against discrimination based on gender identity and expression. However, there are also some drawbacks to the increased visibility of transgender people in Thai society. For example, many transgender people have been the target of hate crimes and violence. In addition, the increased visibility of transgender people has also led to more scrutiny and criticism from conservative members of Thai society.

Moreover, the findings are in line with other studies that have examined identity among new Chinese immigrants in Bangkok and the attitudes of the second and third Thai-Chinese generations toward Mandarin Chinese in Bangkok [13, 14]. Han found that the degree of identifying China of them has decreased with the increase of their settlement years in Bangkok, but the degree of identifying Thailand has increased with the increase of their settlement years in Bangkok [13]. Despite the complexity of cultural identity, Tian argued both the second and third generations of Thai-Chinese demonstrate positive attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese by emphasizing their Thai national identity with some acknowledging their Chinese ethnic identity [14]. In addition, it was suggested that even if these informants

had a positive attitude towards Chinese Mandarin, it was mostly instrumental rather than integrative. As a result, the informants' identities were mainly formed by Thai culture, with Chinese culture playing a secondary role. Thus, the informants are more likely to use Chinese Mandarin as a tool rather than as a part of their identity. For instance, they often express pride in their Chinese heritage, but focus on Thai culture when it comes to their daily lives and relationships with others.

4. Conclusion

It is concluded that there are four main factors affecting the cultural adaptation of Thai people of Chinese descent Mae Klong River Basin Ratchaburi Province, namely: population factors, economic factors, social and political factors, and information factors. Population factors, such as the population size and growth rate of the area, can influence cultural adaptation. Economic factors, such as the availability of jobs and the amount of income generated, are also important for cultural adaptation. Social and political factors, such as the level of acceptance and integration of the Chinese population into the local community, can also impact cultural adaptation. Finally, access to information, such as access to education, media, and technology, can also affect the cultural adaptation of Thai people of Chinese descent. These factors all contribute to the successful or unsuccessful adaptation of Thai people of Chinese descent to their new culture. It is essential to consider them when understanding the process of cultural adaptation. Therefore, it is clear that proper access to resources can have a significant impact on the adaptation of Thai people of Chinese descent to their new culture.

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