

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



One of the oldest and most persistent myths in Thailand concerns the 'unchanging Chinese'.¹ These people, it is said, show no desire to assimilate into the society to which they have migrated, rather, they remain aloof, perpetuating themselves as a distinct social and cultural entity within the Kingdom, drawing upon Thai society for their live-lihood but otherwise maintaining their own way of life virtually unchanged from that of China. One of the most graphic statements of plural society in this region of Asia appears in Colonial Policy and Practice by J.S. Furnivall.² He states that "...Probably the first thing that strikes the visitor is the medley of peoples-European, Chinese, Indian and native. It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the marketplace, in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit."

Statements like the preceding one have some validity. The overseas Chinese certainly wish to retain their cultural identity in what is for many of them an alien land. But to regard this minority

¹R.J.Coughlin. Double Identity: The Chinese in Modern Thailand. Hongkong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960.

²Ibid. p. 193.

as "unchanged" and "unchangeable" is to ignore quite obvious signs. As Coughlin has shown, the typical overseas Chinese has altered his way of life, culturally and socially, to such an extent that much of his behavior is no longer compatible with the patterns of people still living in the rural areas of China. Changes are particularly noticeable among the second-generation Chinese who would indeed be misfits in the social structure of the South China village from which their parents have come.

All Chinese, whether resident in Thailand or entering as immigrants, are influenced by three socio-cultural spheres³: the Chinese community already established in Thailand, Thai society and, finally, the western world which is represented by the small group of European and American diplomats, businessmen, professional people and missionaries in Thailand. The local Chinese community undoubtedly exerts one of the strongest influences on the arriving immigrant and its ways soon mould his patterns of behavior.

The overseas Chinese community itself is an instrument for acculturation, a kind of "cultural decompression chamber"⁴ in which the immigrant is prepared for a new way of life. For example, most Chinese learn to speak Thai, and the second-generation become so proficient in this language and other aspects of Thai culture that signs of a distinct cultural separation from the parental generation is obvious. Surprisingly, much of this "Thai-ification process"⁵ during the present

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. p.194

⁵Ibid.

generation can be attributed to the Chinese schools. Among the reasons are the following : These schools have more Thai instructors than Chinese, devote about three times as much time to the teaching of Thai as Chinese, send increasing numbers of their students to Thai secondary schools and universities which more than any other single institution prepare the youth for life in a Thai cultural setting.

While many Thai and Chinese institutions are distinct separate, innumerable opportunities occur daily for the two groups to mingle and mix. From these contacts each has gained an awareness and an appreciation of the cultural and social characteristics of the other. The items readily accepted by the Chinese cover a wide range: certain Thai dishes, such as curries, find a place in the home; Chinese names are "Thai-ized;"⁶ and increasing number voluntarily acquire Thai nationality; the worship of Thai gods and belief in Thai magic is widespread among the Chinese. While it would be incorrect to over-estimate the amount or the depth of the cultural transfer that has occurred, one would be equally mistaken to deny it altogether or to slight its importance. Integration of two people is "a gradual process which begins with changes which are in themselves apparently ephemeral or capricious."⁷

The assimilation situation of the Chinese in Thailand and of minorities in the United States, including the Chinese, has been different in one noteworthy respect: in the United States, minorities have often been pulled from their attachments to traditional ways by the attractions of a more highly specialized and materially superior

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid. p.195

national culture; the government has played a minor or neutral role. In Thailand, on the other hand, the strongest single force for assimilation has come from the government through its various laws regarding education, citizenship, vocations, and land ownership; the fact that this push has not been matched by an attraction from Thai society would seem to make the push more essential in this situation.

Another notion commonly held by the Chinese, as well as many Thai, is that the Chinese minority has not been, and indeed cannot be, assimilated. "Assimilation" can be an elusive term. It is most often thought of as the social mixing of two people and, in this case, can be viewed as the process by which Chinese persons become members of Thai social groupings and Thai persons join Chinese groups. In short, we find on different social levels, a common sharing of membership in the same groups, for example, young persons from each group often enter the same schools established by western missionaries in Thailand. Moreover, a definite integration is found in Thai secondary schools and universities. Chinese and Thai worship the same animistic shires, participate in Buddhist observances at Thai Temples, and frequently travel together to various holy places within the Kingdom. To think of the two peoples as being socially distinct, "mingling only in the market place" as Furnivall has suggested, is not completely accurate. Contacts may be fleeting and superficial but, nevertheless daily in a hundred different ways. Assimilation constantly goes on. It goes on in the schools beyond primary levels, at religious festivals which give occasion for social integration, and no less in business with its demands for recreation and relaxation after hard bargaining.

Many authors have observed that Chinese assimilation in Thailand

has taken place to a considerable degree. When discussing Chinese assimilation in Thailand, Elegant,⁸ in spite of his previous position on the question of Chinese assimilation, stated.

"In **Thailand**, assimilation, sometimes spontaneous and sometimes under compulsion, has gone further than anywhere else in southeast Asia".

Skinner⁹, In his work on Chinese leaders in Bangkok, mentioned that several Chinese leaders seemed more Thai than Chinese in many respects. Some of them even identified themselves as Thai.

Gutzlaff¹⁰, a Protestant missionary in Thailand during the nineteenth century, wrote:

"Within two or three generations, all the distinguishing marks of the Chinese dwindle entirely away; and a nation which adheres to its national customs so obstinately becomes wholly changed to Siamese".

Coughlin¹¹ was more skeptical of Chinese assimilation in Thailand when he stated:

"Culturally and socially this minority in Thailand has learned to accept Thai ways without, however losing its attachment to things Chinese. The question is whether these changes represent simply protective coloration or true identification with Thai society."

⁸Robert S. Elegant. The Dragon's Seed, New York: Saint Martin Press, 1959, p.274.

⁹G.W. Skinner. Leadership and Power in Chinese Community in Thailand, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958.

¹⁰Gutzlaff "Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832 and 1834, with notice of Siam," London, 1840, as quoted in Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

¹¹Coughlin, op.cit., p.11

Coughlin's answer to this question seems to be that the Chinese assimilation in Thailand is not genuine. He concluded:

"In general, the assimilation found is dictated by the demands of public life and one's livelihood--what might be called 'assimilation for convenience'; a voluntary desire for more thorough integration is lacking"¹²

This point of view is not accepted by the members of the Chinese minority group in Thailand. On the contrary, they argue that the assimilation is complete and genuine. S.Y.Lee¹³, a distinguished economist, who is himself a member of the Chinese minority in Thailand, commented in his review of Coughlin's book:

"Many Chinese desire to be naturalized as Thai, and to settle down in Thailand forever. Individual ideas and attitudes may vary, but most of the Chinese people, in my personal opinion, desire now to become real Thai under this great change and not merely 'a Summer patriot and fair weather citizen'."

In Lee's opinion, most Chinese consider themselves Thai for the following reasons: (1) they were born and brought up in Thailand, and (2) they have neither Chinese education nor knowledge about China. They cannot be considered as Chinese in either a cultural or sociological sense.

One must keep in mind that the Chinese are an extremely flexible people whose main concern is "self-interest in compensation for the hardships of living as far away from our native places" -- to cite a familiar phrase often heard in overseas Chinese communities. Their

¹²Ibid.; P.193

¹³S.Y.Lee. "Double Identity, The Thai Chinese", Far Eastern Economic Review, 1961, XXXII (9) P.401.

degree of "Thai-ness" or of "Chinese-ness" varies from time to time, from situation to situation; depending on the way they interpret their interest¹⁴.

However, in this fluid situation, certain objective indications of the persistence of Chinese cultural elements and interests can be recognized. One example is the persistent demand among the Chinese (including those who are Thai citizens) for a Chinese education. This demand has kept Chinese primary schools alive and has given rise to tutoring classes, evening schools, and various types of illegal schools designed to give Chinese language instruction beyond the elementary level¹⁵.

These various points of view raise a major question: Are there any differences in the extent of ethnic identification between the second-generation Chinese who attend Chinese school and those who never attend Chinese school ?

The Chinese community, particularly the one in Bangkok, is so self-sufficient that by becoming a part of its daily life, the individual is relieved of making more than a superficial compromise with the demands of Thai society. All social needs can be satisfied through community agencies-work, education, social status and recognition, protection and social security. The Chinese who originally moved to the community are likely to remain a part of it and to identify themselves with its institutions. However, the community

¹⁴Coughlin, op.cit., 193-194.

¹⁵Ibid.

does not act as a road to complete integration. The unwillingness of the second- and even the third-generation persons to disassociate themselves from this community is in marked contrast to the experience of comparable groups in the United States, and has given the impression that Thailand's Chinese are, in fact, impossible to assimilate. It is not so much a will to resist assimilation as lack of opportunities and economically profitable reasons to enter into a closer relationship with Thai society.¹⁶

Complete intergration, to the extent of losing their Chinese identity, is obviously further than many Chinese wish to go, or think it necessary to go. It would appear that to make a living, gain response, or even win social recognition, the degree of acculturation and assimilation expected by the Thai government and people is unnecessary. The Chinese believe they have fulfilled all reasonable expectations if they obey the law, work hard, and co-operate when possible in the development of public institutions and activities. But they insist on the right to maintain their own temples, schools, businesses, associations and families free from interference. By their own standards of peacefulness and public service, the Chinese feel that they have shown that they make excellent citizens, At the same time, they regard themselves as having a culture superior to the Thai as well as higher ethical standards. Therefore, it is a difficult matter to convince them that complete assimilation is desirable. The basic complaint of the Chinese minority is not that they are denied access to Thai society. For example, they do not

¹⁶Ibid.

complain that they are unable to marry Thai girls, or get jobs with the government, or enter the universities, or join Thai clubs, but rather that they are not permitted freedom to run their own schools, businesses and associations as they wish.¹⁷

But how can we assess a person's identification? How do we know that an ethnic Chinese, who is culturally Thai, considers himself as one of Thai or Chinese group?

This study is designed to attempt to answer this question. Its major purpose is to compare the ethnic identification of the second-generation Chinese in Thailand who use Chinese and Thai Family names, and the second-generation Chinese who attend and do not attend Chinese schools. From a identification point of view, the second-generation Chinese in Thailand constitute a heterogeneous group. As one investigation revealed, these people may be classified into three large groups: those who identify themselves with the Chinese, those who identify themselves with the Thai, and those who are uncertain about their identity i.e., Thai or Chinese.¹⁸ Another study compared values held by the second-generation Chinese in Thailand with those held by the Thai. From an identification point of view, the second-generation Chinese in Thailand were again classified into the three categories previously mentioned. It was hypothesized that the second-generation Chinese who identified themselves with the Chinese,

¹⁷Ibid., p.198-199

¹⁸Tiparat Schumrum, "The Psychological Assimilation of the Second-Generation Chinese in Thailand," Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1966.

rather than with the Thai, would be more different from the Thai in values than those who identified themselves with the Thai. In general, the hypothesis was supported.¹⁹

Before going on, it would be useful, at this point, to present a theoretical framework of the nature of identity. The construct of "ego identity" was first developed by Erickson.²⁰ He proposed that ego-identity was the product of the "interplay between the child and the social environment." According to his basic idea, once a child is born, he is assigned a membership in one specific group, usually the one to which his parents belong. Through stable interaction with the members of this group the child develops a secure identity of himself. That is, he has a clear answer to the question "Who and what am I?" At the same time, he acquires the norms and values of this group. However, as the child grows up he might have a desire to belong to another group which has different norms and values (an "out group"). So better understand this point, it would be useful to introduce the idea of "reference group" theory, because it distinguishes the two types of groups to which a person is alleged to belong. The first is the "membership group" - the group, to which a person belongs. The other is his "reference group" - the group to he aspires to belong.

¹⁹Chaiyaporn Wichawut, "Values differences between Thais and the Second-Generation Chinese in Thailand," Master's Thesis Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1967.

²⁰Erick H. Erickson. Childhood and Society, W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1950.

For most people, the membership group and reference group are identical.²¹ However, it is not uncommon to find persons whose membership group and reference group are different. The question then arises, why do some individuals aspire to belong to a group of which they are not yet a member ?

According to Merton²², the most important variables correlated with an individual's changes in his reference group are (1) the rate of social mobility in the relatively open social structure of the group to which the individual aspires to belong and (2) the existing status of the individual in his ingroup.

Sometimes, the individual becomes a "marginal man," standing at the edge of two groups but belonging to neither. If the social structure of the new reference groups is rigid, then the individual's aspiration to belong to that group will be unsatisfied because he is not admitted to the group. The individual repudiates his in group values and is also denied the membership of the group to which he aspire to belong.

Merton suggested that the nominal and peripheral group members are more ready to accept the outgroup's values. The nominal group member is the one who actually ceases to interact with the other members of the group but is still perceived by outsiders as a group member.

²¹G.W.Allport. The Nature of Prejudice. Doubleday Anchor Books: New York, 1958.

²²S.A.Stouffer et. all, The American Soldier: Adjustment During the Army life, Studies in Social Psychology in World War I (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949).

The peripheral group member is the one who has very little or only a remote relationship with the other members in the group. Both of them rarely conform to the group's norms and their behavior is uncontrolled by the group.

Milton²³ has put forth the following proposition:-

"Cultural assimilation, or acculturation, is likely to be the first of the types of assimilation to occur when a minority group arrives on the scene; and cultural assimilation, or acculturation of the minority group may take place even when none of the other types of assimilation occur simultaneously or later, and this condition of "acculturation only" may continue indefinitely."

Milton²⁴ has summarized the subprocesses of assimilation in the following way:

²³M.G.Milton. Assimilation in American Life. Oxford University Press: New York, 1964, p.73

²⁴Ibid., p.71.



Subprocess of Condition	Type or Stage of Assimilation	Special Term
Change of cultural partterns to those of host society	Cultural or behavioral assimilation	Acculturation
Large scale entrance into cliques, clubs a and institutions of host society, or primary level.	Structural assimilation	----
Large scale inter-marriage	Marital assimilation	Amalgamation
Development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society	Identification assimilation	----
Absence of prejudice	Attitude or receptional assimilation	----
Absence of discrimination	Behavioral receptional assimilation	----
Absence of value and power conflict	Civic assimilation	----

Thus assimilation can be viewed within a reference group framework as follows: the immigrants who aspire to belong to the majority group adopt its values and modes of behavior. However, complete assimilation of the immigrants depends on the social distance of the majority society. That is, if the majority society has a rigid structure it will not absorb the immigrants into its society. In such a situation, the immigrants would be in a marginal position. On the other hand, if the majority society is relatively open and provides a great deal of mobility, then the immigrants are

more likely to be accepted into the institutions of the host society and complete assimilation will occur.

Let us now say a few words about the assimilation of the Chinese minority group in Thailand. From one sociologist's point of view, Thailand is considered to be a "loosely structured social system".²⁵ For example, to the casual observer, Thailand appears to be a society which lacks regularity, discipline, and regimentation. Social mobility is great and can be achieved through wealth and education.

This mobility is not limited only to Thais. The Chinese in Thailand also enjoy this freedom -- under one condition: they must behave in a Thai way. Therefore, a Chinese who adopts Thai names and speaks Thai fluently is completely accepted into Thai society.

One of the best indicators of "Thainess" is whether or not the Chinese uses a bona-fide Thai name. Some Chinese leaders have adopted Thai names that bear no relation to their Chinese names. In these cases, the names have often been "bestowed" by a Thai official. Normally, however, the Chinese try to preserve something of the Chinese name in the adopted Thai name. The Thai name is based on either the sound or meaning (or both) of the Chinese **original**. For example, one way of forming Thai surnames is to add the word "trakun" :(surname) to a syllable based on the Chinese. Thus, Tantrakun, Huntrakun (Hun from the Hainanese for Yun).²⁶

²⁵ Embree, "Thailand: A Loosely Structured Social System", American Anthropologist, 1952, 181-193.

²⁶ G.W. Skinner. Leadership and power in the Chinese Community of Thailand, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.

Whatever the form of the Thai given name and surname, the Chinese' purpose in adopting it is clear. A Thai name is almost a prerequisite for study in a Thai school, for close business contact with the Thai government, or for social dealings with the Thai elite. The use of a Thai name is a particularly good indicator of Thainess.²⁷ Furthermore, the more the Chinese become Thai-oriented, the less they are discriminated against; the less they are discriminated against, the greater the possibility of their social mobility; which, in turn, influences the rate of assimilation.

Thus, it seems that the only prerequisite for entry into Thai society is acceptance of Thai ways of life and patterns of behavior. If this is accompanied by wealth and business success, entry into "Thai elite society" is not difficult at all. 006942

On the basis of the preceding discussion of the Thai social system, it is not surprising that Thailand is considered to be for more successful than other Southeast Asian countries in assimilating her Chinese aliens, especially those of the second-generation.

From this point of view, another major question must be considered: Are there any differences in the degree of ethnic identification between the second-generation Chinese in Thailand who use Chinese family names and those who use Thai family names?

From a psychological point of view, it is not likely that the discrepancies between behavior patterns and self image or identity could persist for a long period of time. Usually one's behavior patterns are congruent with one's concept about himself. If

²⁷Ibid., p.230

discrepancies arise, the individual is in an unbalanced state and is motivated to change either or both cognitions so that they are congruent again.²⁸ Closely related to this is the fact that the Thai social structure is relatively open and, in fact many Thai are nominal or peripheral members of the Chinese society.

Conceptual Definitions

Identification. The term identification may be defined as the "process of affiliation with one or more persons, groups, or institutions, which tend to become models."²⁹ Attitudes, values, and other behavior are imitated, and may be internalized by the imitator.

One school of psychologists, the psychoanalysts, emphasize the role of identification in value formation. Here, identification refers to the "the unconscious molding of a person's own ego....on... a model."³⁰ The process of identification begins at the very beginning of life. It is the child's parents who are his first identifying figures. And the elements of identification are values and other

²⁸Kretch, D., Crutchfield, R.S. and Ballachy, E.L. Individual in Society. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1962.

²⁹Ringness, "Identification Patterns, Motivation and Social Achievement of Bright Junior High School Boys," Journal of Education Psychology, 1967, 58, 93-102.

³⁰W. Healy, A.F. Bronner, and A.M. Bowers. The Structure and Meaning of Psychoanalysis, Knoff, New York, 1930, as quoted in John P. Seward, "Learning Theory and Identification: II. The Role of Punishment," The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1954, 84, 201-210.

qualities that constitute his ego and super-ego.³¹

From a sociological standpoint, the entrance of the second-generation Chinese into Thai institutions and, essentially, peer groups is "the key stone of the arch of assimilation."³² According to Gordon, there are seven assimilation subprocesses, namely, cultural, structural, identificational, attitude receptional, behavioral receptional, and civic assimilation, which means complete assimilation with the absence of values and power conflicts, when a minority group comes on the scene, cultural assimilation or acculturation, characterized by the adoption of cultural patterns such as language, dress, food habits, and so forth, of the host society, is the first of the types of assimilation to occur, either alone or simultaneously with others. But structural assimilation, characterized by the entrance of the minority group into the societal structures of the host society, is the most influential variable. "Once it has occurred...all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow."³³

Second-Generation Chinese. Second-generation Chinese are those who were born in Thailand of Chinese parents. They are the immediate descendents of the immigrant Chinese in Thailand. Their grandparents were also Chinese.

³¹W.E. Martin. "Learning Theory and Identification: III The Development of Values in Children," The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1954, 84, 211-217.

³²M. Gordon. Assimilation in American Life, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, p.73.

³³Ibid.

Among the various groups in the Chinese Community, the second-generation Chinese forms the most crucial group for the study of ethnic identification. They are the individuals who show the most drastic changes from Chinese culture to Thai culture. A complete identification can take place only from the second-generation downwards. The first generation's enculturation in their hometown in China is still strong. Thus, it is almost impossible for them to lose all Chinese characteristics. But the second-generation were born in Thailand and grew up (more or less) under some Thai influence i.e. speaking Thai, dressing in a Thai fashion, and some have Thai Christian or family names. Apart from their physical characteristics, they could be completely Thai, if they choose to be. However, the individual's choice varies and some second-generation may choose to remain Chinese. In other cases, while they themselves may not choose to do so, they may be obliged by their parents to remain Chinese. Therefore, in the second-generation Chinese one sees a wide range of assimilation. While some may be indistinguishable from the Thai, the great majority seems to lie some where between Chinese and Thai.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to attempt to discover:

(1) The degree of ethnic identification in the second-generation Chinese in Thailand who use Chinese family names and those who use Thai family names.

(2) The degree of ethnic identification in the second-generation Chinese who attend Chinese schools and those who do not attend Chinese schools.