

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSIMILATION
OF THE SECOND - GENERATION CHINESE IN
THAILAND



by

Miss Tiparat Schumrum

B.Ed., (Hons.), Chulalongkorn University

007035

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

in

The Chulalongkorn University Graduate School

Department of Psychology

April, 1966

(B.E. 2509)

118366910

Accepted by the Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education.

.....

Dean of the Graduate School

Thesis Committee *Ubol Ranyasuman* Chairman

..... *Picha Sangwang*

..... *Saisree Chutikul*

Thesis Supervisor *Saisree Chutikul*

Date *May 2, 1966*

ABSTRACT



The purpose of this study is to investigate the psychological identify of the second-generation Chinese in Thailand. It was hypothesized that the second-generation Chinese who adopted Thai cultural behaviour would identify themselves with the Thai rather than with the Chinese community. In order to test this hypotesis two scales were constructed to measure the two variables. The Cultural Scale was constructed to measure the degree of "Chineseness" and "Thainess" of the subjects. On it, the subjects were divided into four groups, namely, the "Thai", the "Chinese", the "Sino-Thai" and the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai".

To measure the self-identification of the subjects, a standardized Modified Bogardus Social Distance Scale was constructed. Six descriptions of hypothetical Thai and Chinese were used as stimulus persons. A low social distance expressed by a subject towards any group was taken as evidence for his identification with that group. The subjects were made up of 71 ethnic Chinese and 73 ethnic Thai secondary school students.

It was found that the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" showed a tendency to identify with the "Thai" and the "Sino-Thai" were not sure of their identity. The "Chinese" accepted the "Chinese" most and the "Thai" accepted the "Thai" most. Other interesting findings were: the ethnic "Chinese" rejection of the "High Thai Culture Sino-Thai" the reason for which was suggested as being that the latter were perceived to be turncoats; the rejection instead of acceptance, as would have been expected, of the "extreme Thai" by the "Thai" which is discussed as a reaction against the discriminating Thai.

The theoretical and methodological problems involved in this study were also debated. It was suggested that this type of study had some values, especially for use in the exploratory stage of research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The author would like to express her gratitude to the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Mrs. Poonsapaya Navawong, and the Asia Foundation for their arranging of the contract and financial support which contributed towards making this research.

Deep appreciation is also due to Dr. Frederick W. Mote whose encouragement, kindness and interest helped the author to struggle through the first phase of the research. His expert insight into problems of the Chinese, together with his challenging questions and useful comments, forced the author to clarify her thought. This helped the development of a suitable mode of procedure to encounter the problems.

Dr. Nathan Talbott and Dr. William R. Berkowitz were the two advisors most indispensable to this study. Without their knowledge, help, encouragement and understanding this study might not have been completed at all.

It is almost impossible to mention all the teachers, students and friends who have helped in one way or another throughout the project. However the author would like to mention the following people to whom her thanks are due:- Dr. Saisuree Chutikul, Professor Ubol Riengsuwan, Mr. Preecha Saengsawang, Dr. Jaques Amyot, Dr. Richard G. Morrill and Mr. Alan E. Guskin. The author is also indebted to Dr. Harry C. Triandis of the University of Illinois for permission to use some of his material, and to Mr. Francis W. Radice for his editorial help.

Last but certainly not least, the author wishes to thank the principles of the three schools and the students who as subjects provided the indispensable basis of the study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	III
LIST OF TABLES	V
INTRODUCTION	1
 CHAPTER	
I	7
II METHOD AND PROCEDURE	21
Sample	21
The Questionnaires	21
The Cultural Scale	21
The Social Distance Scale	25
III PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	28
IV INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION	41
V SUMMARY	52
 APPENDIX	
A THE CULTURAL SCALE	56
B THE SOCIAL DISTANCE SCALE	68
C SUBJECT CHARACTERISTICS	70
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 74



LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Mean Cultural Scores of the Four Cultural Groups.....	24
2. Social Distance Scores on a 100 Point Scale Expressed Towards Six Stimulus Subjects by Four Cultural Groups..	28
3. Analysis of Variance of Cultural Groups and Stimulus Persons as Determinants of Social Distance Scores.....	30
4. Comparisons of Social Distance Means Expressed Towards Six Stimulus Persons by all Cultural Groups.....	32
5. Comparisons of Social Distance Means Expressed Towards Six Stimulus Persons by "Chinese" Subjects.....	35
6. Comparisons of Social Distance Means Expressed Towards Six Stimulus Persons by "Sino-Thai" Subjects.....	36
7. Comparisons of Social Distance Means Expressed Towards Six Stimulus Persons by "High Thai Culture Sino-Thai" Subjects.....	38
8. Comparisons of Social Distance Means Expressed Towards Six Stimulus Persons by "Thai" Subjects.....	39
A. Ethnic Name and Sex of the Subjects.....	70
B. Level of Fathers' Education of Chinese and Thai Subjects.	71
C. Family Income Per Month of the Chinese and Thai Subjects.	72
D. Parental Birth Place of the Chinese Subjects.....	73

INTRODUCTION



One of the oldest and most persistent myths about the Chinese is that they are "unchanging" - immune to assimilation.

These people, it is said, show no desire to assimilate into the society to which they have migrated; ...¹

They are believed to be a group of people who are highly clannish, ethnocentric, proud of their 'superior' race and culture. Even if they have had to migrate to other countries for better economic opportunities, it is said, they still keep their "Chinese-ness" and hope that one day they will return to China. These oversea Chinese call themselves Hua-Chiao which means Chinese "Sojourning" abroad.² They never consider themselves as one of the native citizens of the countries in which their families have lived for generations.

Elegant in his book 'The Dragon's Seed' illustrates this belief clearly. He wrote

Men whose families have lived in the Southeast for eleven generations still describe themselves as natives of some obscure farming villages in Southeast China. If they have a scholarly bent, they study classical Chinese and concern themselves with chronicles of China or records of the Hua-Chiao, rather than with the history of the nation in which they live. If they are men of affairs, they serve

¹Richard J. Coughlin, Double Identity: The Chinese in Modern Thailand (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), p. 198.

²Robert S. Elegant, The Dragon's Seed (New York: Saint Martin Press, 1959).

as officers of the Chinese associations and sit on the boards of Chinese orphanages and schools.³

However, many writers have observed that Chinese assimilation in Thailand has taken place to a considerable degree. When discussing Chinese assimilation in Thailand, Elegant 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.⁴

Skinner in his review of Chinese assimilation in the early Ratana Kosin era (nineteenth century) quoted from Annandale's article - "The Siamese Malay States" as follows:

Whereas the son of a Chinese father and a Malay mother often grows a pigtail and calls himself a Chinaman, ... the son of a Chinese father and a Siamese mother just as often calls himself a Siamese and attempts to lose sight of his paternal ancestry.⁵

Skinner in his work on Chinese leaders in Bangkok also mentioned that several Chinese leaders seemed more Thai than Chinese in many aspects. Some of them even identified themselves as Thai.⁶

³ Ibid.; p. 7

⁴ Ibid.; p. 274

⁵ Nelson Annandale, "The Siamese Malay States" Scottish Geographical Magazine, 1900, 16, 505 - 522, as quoted in G.W. Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957) p. 133.

⁶ G.W. Skinner, Leadership and Power in Chinese Community in Thailand (New York: Cornell University Press, 1958).

Gutzlaff, 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.⁷

But Coughlin was more skeptical of Chinese assimilation in Thailand. He said

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.⁸

And Coughlin's answer to the question he raised seemed 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' as voluntary desire for more thorough integration is lacking.⁹

This point of view is not accepted by the members of the Chinese minority group in Thailand. On the contrary, they argued that the assimilation is complete and genuine. S.Y. Lee, a distinguished economist, who is himself a member of the Chinese

⁷Gutzlaff, "Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832 and 1834, with notice of Siam", London, 1840, as quoted in Victor Purcoll, The Chinese in Southeast Asia (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

⁸Coughlin, op cit.; p. 11.

⁹Ibid.; p. 193.

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'.¹⁰

In Lee's ideas, most Chinese consider themselves Thai for the following reasons: First, they were born and brought up in Thailand. Second, they have neither Chinese education nor knowledge about China. They cannot be considered as Chinese in either a cultural or sociological sense. In his discussion of the Chinese assimilation in Thailand, Mr. Lee pointed out the most important question. He said,

The real question is whether a person considers himself in his heart to be a Chinese or not, ... [and] if that be the criterion, it is very difficult to define a ... Chinese, ... because it is impossible to investigate the inner heart of each individual.¹¹

At this point we have come to the most interesting and crucial aspect of the problem of the Chinese in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. Mr. Lee is correct in stating that the criterion to count a person as Chinese is his psychological identification to the Chinese community. And it is true that this psychological identification is secret in nature. It is not as simple as the investigation of the overt behavior. That is

¹⁰S.Y. Lee, "Double Identity, the Thai Chinese", Far Eastern Economic Review, 1961, XXXII (9), p. 401.

¹¹Ibid.; p. 403.

why the "distrust" and "doubt" of the host societies towards their Chinese residents is persisting in most countries in Southeast Asia.

On the one hand, all the governments in Southeast Asia want a complete assimilation of the Chinese aliens in their countries. And this also means that the Chinese must be given full rights as well as the natives. However, at the same time these governments fear that this policy will only lead to the economic strengthening of the Hua-Chiao community.

In the Philippines, a Chinese complained bitterly;

"The Filipinos accuse us of not assimilating, but make it almost impossible for us to do so".¹²

And the Filipinos replied,

The Chinese almost own us now. If we removed all legal obstacles to their rapacity, they would devour us. The Chinese might pretend to become good Filipinos but they would always remain an independent economic realm within our country.¹³

In Thailand, Dr. Puey Ungphakorn, one of the most outstanding scholars and government officials when being asked the question:

"How do you envisage the future of Thailand with four million Chinese nationals"?, replied, "Speaking for those Thais who are, like myself, partly Chinese, I should say first that we have never been to China. We don't know Chinese. ... Most members of this group [Chinese] also consider themselves Thai even though they are essentially

¹² Elegant, op cit.; p. 274.

¹³ Ibid.; p. 284.

second class citizens. ... But there are deep suspicions as far as the Thai are concerned.¹⁴

It seems that most countries are concerned with the questions, How do we know that a Chinese, who is culturally indistinguishable from our natives, really considers himself as one of us?

In Indonesia this concern is emphasized by the Head of Minority Affairs. On broadcasting he announced;

Those who intend to choose Indonesian citizenship must wholeheartedly love the country and the people that they are about to choose, because it is love for the country and its people that must be the primary basis and most important element is deciding to choose or to reject in this case. More rational calculations also should not be neglected. But such considerations must not be made basis.¹⁵

This evidence seems to suggest that Southeast Asian governments and people would accept, without prejudice and discrimination, the Chinese aliens in their countries; if they can be sure of the true identity of those Chinese.

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 the Thai or Chinese group?

This study is designed to attempt to answer this question.

¹⁴Peuy Ungphakorn, Interview with Miss Close, Bangkok, Far Eastern Economic Review, 1965, XLIII (8), p. 365.

¹⁵Donald E. Willmott, The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia (Cornell University's Interim Reports Series: 1956), p. 65.