

**Thailand as a Performative State : An Analysis of Thailand's
Cultural Diplomacy towards the People's Republic of China**



Mr. Natdanai Kietigaroon

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รัฐไทยในฐานะรัฐปฏิบัติการแสดง : การวิเคราะห์ผ่านนโยบายการทูตทางวัฒนธรรมของไทยต่อ
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ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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By	Mr. Natdanai Kietigaroon
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Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Dr. PONGPHISOOT BUSBARAT, Ph.D.

Accepted by the FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Arts

----- Dean of the FACULTY OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE
(Associate Professor Dr. AKE TANGSUPVATTANA,
Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

----- Chairman
(Dr. BHANUBHATRA JITTIANG, Ph.D.)
----- Thesis Advisor
(Assistant Professor Dr. PONGPHISOOT BUSBARAT,
Ph.D.)
----- External Examiner
(Dr. Sittithev Eaksittipong, Ph.D.)

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

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งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ได้ศึกษาการทูตไทยเชิงวัฒนธรรม ผ่านมุมมองรูปแบบใหม่ในการวิเคราะห์การทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของประเทศไทยต่อสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน โดยงานวิจัยนี้ได้เจาะจงไปยังหน่วยงานและสถาบันของรัฐไทยจำนวนทั้งหมด 5 หน่วยงานหรือสถาบันซึ่งมีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องกับการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมและความเป็นจีนเป็นอย่างมาก ได้แก่ พระราชวงศ์ รัฐบาล กระทรวงวัฒนธรรม กระทรวงการต่างประเทศ และกระทรวงการท่องเที่ยวแห่งประเทศไทย ทั้งนี้ จากการศึกษาผลงานต่าง ๆ ที่มีอยู่แล้ว จะพบว่า การทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของไทยเดิมที่มักจะมีมุ่งส่งเสริมความเป็นไทยเป็นหลัก แต่สำหรับในกรณีที่มีต่อประเทศจีน ประเทศไทยกลับใช้ความเป็นจีนเป็นเครื่องมือทางการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของไทยเสียมากกว่า

โดยงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ได้มีการนำเสนอผ่านคำถามจำนวนสองคำถาม ในส่วนของคำถามวิจัยแรกคือ รัฐไทยใช้ความเป็นจีนอย่างไรในการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมต่อจีน ซึ่งในการศึกษาความเป็นจีนในการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของไทย การวิจัยนี้ได้ทำการค้นหาแหล่งข้อมูลต่าง ๆ อาทิ กิจกรรม ข้อริเริ่ม การกล่าวสุนทรพจน์ และอื่น ๆ ซึ่งรัฐไทยได้ดำเนินการและเกี่ยวข้องกับความเป็นจีน และจากการวิเคราะห์ต่อมานั้น งานวิจัยนี้สามารถจัดประเภทความเป็นจีนที่แสดงโดยรัฐไทยผ่านการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมได้เป็น 2 ประเภท ได้แก่ ความเป็นจีนแบบเก่าและความเป็นจีนแบบใหม่ โดยผลการวิจัยพบว่ามีการแสดงความเป็นจีนแบบเก่ามากกว่าความเป็นจีนแบบใหม่อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ

ด้วยเหตุนี้ จึงเกิดคำถามต่อมาในคำถามข้อที่สองว่า เพราะเหตุใด รัฐไทยจึงใช้ความเป็นจีนแบบเก่าที่สามารถเห็นผ่านชุมชนชาวจีนโบราณอย่างสำเพ็ง ในการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของไทย ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าความเป็นจีนเก่ายังคงเป็นตัวเลือกที่ถูกใช้ในการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของไทยมากกว่าความเป็นจีนแบบใหม่ ที่อาจคล้ายคลึงกับความเป็นจีนที่เห็นได้ในสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีนในปัจจุบันมากกว่า โดยผลการวิจัยพบว่าการใช้ความเป็นจีนแบบสำเพ็งในการทูตเชิงวัฒนธรรมของไทยเกิดขึ้นจากปัจจัย 3 ประการ ได้แก่ ประการแรกคือ ชุมชนชาวจีนสำเพ็งที่หลอมรวมเข้ากับสังคมไทย ประการต่อมาคือ อิทธิพลของรัฐจีนที่มีต่อการทูตวัฒนธรรมไทย และประการสุดท้ายคือ ความชื่นชอบส่วนตัวของราชวงศ์ต่อความเป็นจีน นั่นเอง

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สาขาวิชา การพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ
ปีการศึกษา 2563

ลายมือชื่อนิติ
ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก

6384011024 : MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. PONGPHISOOT BUSBARAT, Ph.D.

Thailand as a performative state is a research that looked at the cultural dimensions of Thailand's diplomacy, by taking the alternative view on Thai cultural diplomacy towards PRC. Thai cultural diplomacy, according to existing literature, revolves around promoting Thainess. However, in the case of China, Thailand has been using Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy. The research specifically looked at five Thai state actors that are most involved with Chineseness, namely, the royal family, the government, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Two questions were raised in this research. Firstly, how Chineseness is being used in Thai cultural diplomacy, where the research will lay out events, initiatives, speeches, etc. from the Thai state, that constitute as Chineseness. The research, then, categorizes how Chineseness is being promoted by the Thai State actors, by analyzing the initiatives as Old Chineseness as portrayed by Sampheng Chinese community or New Chineseness as portrayed by Huai Khwang Chinese community, two largest, yet, very distinctive Chinese communities in Bangkok. Findings show that Old Chineseness is portrayed more across all five Thai state actors.

Consequently, the question of why does the Thai State use Sampheng Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy is asked, which will throw light on why the Old Chineseness, portrayed by old Chinese communities in Thailand like Sampheng, is still represented in Thai cultural diplomacy, even more than the new and modern-day Sino-centric Chineseness, that is more attached to the present-day PRC. The findings proved that Old Chineseness is used more because of the assimilated Sampheng Chinese community and how they have integrated into Thai society, Chinese state's influence over Thai cultural diplomacy, and the royal family's personal interests in Chineseness.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT (THAI)	iii
ABSTRACT (ENGLISH).....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER I: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Statement of Problem	1
1.2 Literature Review	3
1.2.1 Cultural Diplomacy	3
1.2.2 Chineseness in Thailand.....	7
1.2.2.1 Migration Pattern.....	7
1.2.2.2 Social Identity.....	13
1.2.2.3 Attachment with the People’s Republic of China	19
1.2.3 Literature Review Conclusion.....	21
1.3 Research Question.....	19
1.4 Hypothesis	19
1.5 Methodology.....	19
1.6 Research Scope.....	20
1.7 Limitations.....	20
1.8 Significance/ Expected Research Contribution	21
CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Thailand as a Performative State	26
2.2.1 Performative State towards the United States during the Cold War	27

2.2.2 Performative State towards the People’s Republic of China	30
2.3 Chapter Summary	32
CHAPTER III: THE PERFORMANCE.....	33
3.1 Chapter Introduction	33
3.2 How is Chineseness being used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy.....	33
3.2.1 Government	33
3.2.2 Ministry of Culture	39
3.2.3 Tourism Authority of Thailand	46
3.2.4 The Royal Family of Thailand	53
3.2.5 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).....	62
3.3 Contesting Chineseness	66
3.3.1 Sampheng (Old) Chineseness.....	66
3.3.2 Huai Khwang (New) Chineseness.....	72
3.3.3 Other types of events: Cultural Exchanges and Chineseness from PRC .	73
3.4 Chapter Summary	78
CHAPTER IV: OLD CHINESENESS IN THAI CULTURAL DIPLOMACY	79
4.1 Chapter Introduction.....	79
4.2 Why is Old Chineseness used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy?	79
4.2.1 The Reactivation of Existing Norms (Assimilated Sampheng Chineseness).....	80
4.2.1.1 The Representation and Inclusivity of Thais of Chinese descent.	81
4.2.1.2 The Negotiation Power of “the Chinese and Thais are the same Family” (中泰一家亲)	83
4.2.1.3 Political Power of Thais of Chinese descent and Thai Chinese Associations.....	87
4.2.2 China as the Influential Actor in Thai cultural diplomacy	94
4.2.3 The Royal Family’s Personal Interests and Influence on Thai State	100
4.3 Chapter Summary	103
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND DISCUSSION	106
5.1 Conclusion	106

5.2 Significance and Contributions.....	109
5.3 Discussion: The Lesser Significance of Huai Khwang Chineseness to the Thai State	111
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW LIST.....	118
REFERENCES	119
VITA.....	131



LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Literature Review Conclusion	18
Table 2: Performance Tools.....	26
Table 3: Prime Ministers' Chinese New Year wishes	34
Table 4: Ministry of Culture's Chinese New Year wishes	41
Table 5: Categorization of Chineseness as cultural diplomacy	77
Table 6: Interview of relationship between Thais and Chinese in Huai Khwang	115



LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Religion in Huai Khwang Chinese community (Ran, 2015).....	19
Figure 2: Performative State	25
Figure 3: Thailand as a Performative State towards the United States in the Cold War	30
Figure 4: Thailand as a Performative State towards PRC in the 21st Century	31
Figure 5: (left) Thaksin’s visit to ancestral home in 2005. (right) Thaksin and Yingluck visit 2018.....	37
Figure 6: Former DPM Somkid Jatusripitak saying “中泰一家亲”	37
Figure 7: Officials from MOC celebrate Chinese New Year	41
Figure 8: Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market (Centre) Thai Minister of Culture.....	43
Figure 9: Two cultural Agreements with China	45
Figure 10: The Untamed at “Chinese New Year for newer generations”	49
Figure 11: The Governor of TAT at the Mooncake Festival	51
Figure 12: The Summoning of Mazu Goddess to Bangkok in 2019	52
Figure 13: Princess Sirindhorn’s Chinese Calligraphy at Peking University	54
Figure 14: Princess Sirindhorn at the 2020 Yaowarat Chinese New Year	58
Figure 15: Princess Sirindhorn’s 2021 Chinese New Year Wishes.....	59
Figure 16: (left) Princess Chulabhorn giving an interview to CCTV on her first interests in guzheng. (right) The princess and her teacher, Li Yang.	60
Figure 17: “Two Lands, One Heart” Concert	61
Figure 18: Thai Foreign Minister and Chinese State Councillor meet in 2021. The news report was headlined “Same Family”	63
Figure 19: Ambassador of Thailand to China giving the opening speech for the Reception for the 45th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China in 2020 at the Royal Thai Embassy in Beijing.....	64
Figure 20: Mr. Itthiphol Khunpluem, Minister of Culture of Thailand at the Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market	69

Figure 21: Guanyin Statue at Thian Fah Foundation, Yaowarat Road..... 71

Figure 22: Flowchart explaining why Old Chineseness is used in Thai Cultural
Diplomacy..... 103

Figure 23: Thailand as a performative state to China in the 21st century 106

Figure 24: Chart showing diversity of Huai Khwang Chinese community (Ran, 2015)
..... 114



CHAPTER I: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Problem

Thailand as a Performative State is an analysis that throws light on how the Thai state uses cultural diplomacy towards the People's Republic of China for political and economic opportunities. The significance of looking at Thai cultural diplomacy towards China stems from the interesting dynamic and shift of paradigm on Sino-Thai relations from the Cold War towards the 21st Century. According to Pattajit Tangsimunkong's article "Thai Perceptions of China: The 1960s to the 2010s", Sino-Thai relations went through various phases but ended with "friendship" towards the end of the 20th century. However, before this friendship phase, Sino-Thai relations since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 has been a descent from enemy to friend. First, the article conceptualizes the period between 1949-1968 as "confrontation". Quickly after the establishment of the PRC, the Thai state viewed China as a national threat with alliance from the United States, as recorded by many scholars like Wasana Wongsurawat. Sino-Thai relations since its official establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975 have been increasingly dynamic and positive, majorly because of the political and economic rise of China. Pongphisoot Busbarat analyzed the significance of China to Thai international relations as the "China Factor".¹ Busbarat said that in the post-Cold War period, Thailand views China as an important economic partner that became a pull factor for Thailand's pragmatic diplomacy of "bamboo bending with the wind". With a huge population, China represents a potentially massive market for Thai exports, which in turn can help promote Thailand's economic growth. The Chinese policies like the "Go West" strategy has led it to boost its relations with Thailand by creating a regional environment where China's economic expansion can be accommodated. The strategy plans develop the country's western inland regions of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Tibet by shortening transport routes from these regions to seaports in Southeast Asia, thereby stimulating trade, investment, and tourism in Western China. Busbarat stated that these economic interests between China and Thailand have been an important

¹ Busbarat, 2016

factor in nurturing the bilateral relations that are comprehensive in all facets, including culture.²

In the 21st century China has had several huge economic and political influences over Thailand. In 2019, the Thai tourism industry generated 60 billion US dollars, welcoming over 39 million international tourist arrivals.³ Out of the 39 million, approximately 10 million are Chinese tourists. Geopolitically, China also has economic influence of resources like water distribution, transportation, and connectivity projects, over the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), which includes Thailand as well. The United States, who once, showed significance to Thai diplomacy has been lurking in the shadows of Sino-Thai relations. The lack of priority of the United States towards Thailand, its oldest Asian ally, has allowed for Thailand's bamboo bending with the wind diplomacy to shift its importance to China.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, China's vaccine diplomacy is categorized to be reaching out to geopolitical interests in its Southeast Asian allies.⁴ The United States' vaccine diplomacy of Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, are scarce in the Thai vaccine cabinet. The first doses of Pfizer from the United States' government arrived in Bangkok on June 30th, 2021, five months after China's Sinovac doses arrived in Bangkok on 25 February 2021. These situations of GMS, tourism, and vaccine diplomacy are only a few pieces of evidence of how Sino-Thai relations has been overpowering the historic friendship of Thailand and the United States. However, there are also many internal factors like Thai politics that cause the shift in paradigm.

In a nutshell, the research sees this contestation of power with Thailand as an opportunity to explore Thai cultural diplomacy towards China, that uses Chineseness as a tool to "perform" to the PRC for the mentioned economic and political interests in the 21st century. Chineseness, according to Allen Chun, refers to "Chinese culture and society".⁵ The logical explanation behind the necessity of analyzing Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy is that Thai cultural diplomacy should be centered around promoting "Thainess". However, Thainess as Thai cultural diplomacy is not the focus

² Busbarat, 2016

³ Sweeny, 2021

⁴ Pongsidhurak, 2021

⁵ Chun, 1996

here. There are existing Chineseness present in Thailand due to various waves of Chinese migration, thus, the research will explore how Thailand incorporates Chineseness in its cultural diplomacy. A facet of diplomacy that should, otherwise be promoting Thainess.

Other than taking the alternative view of looking at Thai cultural diplomacy through promoting Chineseness, the research also aims to conceptualize how Thai cultural diplomacy, through the scope of public and bilateral diplomacy, promotes Chinese culture and identity, both willingly and unwillingly. Whether or not the Chineseness portrayed represents the Chineseness portrayed by the two largest, yet very distinctive Chinese communities in Bangkok, Sampheng and Huai Khwang.

1.2 Literature Review

The Literature Review will be divided into two sections. The first section looks at the literature on cultural diplomacy in Thailand, and Chineseness in cultural diplomacy. The second section of literature aims to highlight the comparisons between the Chineseness portrayed by Sampheng Chinese community and Huai Khwang Chinese community, two distinctive and largest Chinese communities in Bangkok. Chineseness will be compared through many aspects, and the last comparison will determine to what extent the two identities of Chinese are attached to the People's Republic of China, where Thailand is using cultural dimensions of diplomacy to perform.

1.2.1 Cultural Diplomacy

From previous literature, Thai cultural diplomacy has been through the promotion of Thainess, what Thailand is known for, or what the Thai state would want Thailand to be.

According to the Thai Ministry of Culture's publication of “เกียรติภูมิและภาพลักษณ์ไทยในเวทีโลก” (translation: The Prestige and Image of Thailand in the World Stage), cultural diplomacy is used to create friendship, trust, mutual understanding, and good imagery of Thailand in the eyes of other countries. Cultural diplomacy can be used as a media to portray the friendliness of Thailand that strengthens international relations. The investment in cultural diplomacy translates to

“unmeasurable benefits”.⁶ The portraying of good imagery of Thailand that translates to benefits, for many, would refer to Thai cultural promotion. In fact, many state sectors who are involved with cultural diplomacy emphasized that the main focal point is promotion of Thainess. For instance, the Ministry of Culture works with many other state sectors like the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, other private sectors, and Thai community abroad to spread culture in the name of “Team Thailand”. Cultural diplomacy adapts policies from the national development plan like the “5F” which is a cultural promotion strategy to support Thai creative industry in 5 areas, namely, Film, Food, Fashion, Fighting, and Festival. The strategy is to support Thai stakeholders in the said fields (financially and otherwise) to raise value to Thai cultural products. Apart from the Ministry of Culture’s definition of cultural diplomacy, according to “Cultural Diplomacy: Thailand’s Foreign Policy to Indochina, the Neighboring Countries”, by Apinan Thasuthorn, Thai cultural diplomacy towards its neighboring countries mainly constitutes academic assistance, training, and scholarships, cooperation of Buddhism, and cooperation of Thai-language teaching. The research stated the importance of promoting relationships amongst neighboring countries to build trust in terms of co-assisting and co-developing in accordance with political, economic, social, and cultural policies. Thailand’s foreign policy to Indochina countries after the Cold War has been changed from conflict to cooperation. As a result, cultural diplomacy plays a key role for Thailand as a cooperating tool to establish a good relationship among the bordering countries. The paper adds that Thai foreign policy should be holistic in binding the four disciplines together. As for cultural diplomacy, the research defines it as using culture as a tool to promote diplomatic operations. The heart of cultural diplomacy is how to encourage foreigners, especially at the general public level, to gain an appreciation, good imagery, and understanding of Thainess. This will result in the implementation of foreign policy, both politically and economically. Thus, it is undeniable that cultural diplomacy has been viewed as a facet of outward foreign policy.⁷

⁶ Ministry of Culture, 2019

⁷ Thasuthorn, 2018

Seksan Anantasirikiat, a researcher at the International Studies Center (ISC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, states that although Thailand is rich in diplomatic and cultural assets, its operation of public diplomacy has been underexplored in academic circles. He is one of the few scholars that studies Thai cultural diplomacy through public diplomacy. He mentions that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) enacted the 20-Year National Plan on Foreign Affairs (2018-2037). The plan underlines nine core strategies to enhance Thailand's national image and international recognition such as branding Thailand, encouraging Thai people and public entities to be more proactive at international stages, publicizing the correct understanding of Thailand among foreign publics, etc.⁸ He emphasized this strategy of national image projection through the analysis of the public policy used during the Tham Luang Cave rescue. However, Anantasirikiat only focuses on the implementation of Thai public image as public diplomacy. Looking at the case of Tham Luang, Anantasirikiat mentioned that the process and the result of the incident brought the world together and focused on Thailand. The negative image of Thailand's political uncertainty, bad traffic, and infamous sex tourism industry overshadows Thailand's scenic nature. Thus, the Thai state's involvement and media framing of the result of Tham Luang cave rescue was viewed by Anantasirikiat as a projection of Thailand's "leadership responsibility that encompasses decisiveness and discipline". The image framing projected Thailand as playing an intellectual leading role in multilateral cooperation, an image that Thailand has long aspired to. The assessment of this positive image projection of Thailand's public diplomacy was evident by the congratulatory messages to Thailand's involvement in the case from world leaders like Donal Trump, Teresa May, Moon Jae-in, and Lee Hsien-Loong.⁹ Anantasirikiat may have contributed to literature on Thai cultural diplomacy through public diplomacy, yet, most literature still look at Thai cultural diplomacy as either bilateral or public diplomacy and the promotion of Thainess or Thai image in the global stage. The literature that looks at Chineseness as cultural diplomacy are mostly from the angle of the Chinese state themselves, not from the Thai state.

⁸ Anantasirikiat, 2019

⁹ Anantasirikiat, 2019

“The contribution of Chinese cultural diplomacy to Thailand (2012-2017)” by Han Xianyi represents a literature of Chineseness in Thailand as cultural diplomacy, but rather from the Chinese state’s side.¹⁰ The research, firstly, touches upon Chinese influence in the Thai public. Starting off with early Chinese settlements in Thailand, the paper claims that the Chinese communities have been formed in Thailand for over 400 years and claims to become a part of “local Thai culture”. Thailand has 9.4 million Chinese or Chinese descents, accounting for 14% of the total population. The assimilated culture is significant to this research and will be discussed in the second part of the literature review, namely, Sampheng Chineseness. According to the research, Thailand has been an evident target to this spread of cultural influence in the region. In regard to China spreading its cultural influence on Thailand, Han laid out how the Chinese influenced Thailand in the field of medical science, popular culture, festivals, and customs. Yet, this research highlights how the Chinese state uses cultural diplomacy through the Belt and Road Initiative in Thailand. The report of the 17th CPC National Congress emphasized the need to “strengthen cultural exchanges with foreign countries and absorb the outstanding civilizations of various countries and enhance the national influence of Chinese culture”.¹¹ This provides a great insight into the significance of promoting Chineseness from the Chinese state, which eventually found its way into Thai state’s recognition of promoting Chineseness in cultural diplomacy. Han further adds that Chinese state views that cultivation of soft power through cultural and public diplomacy will seal the deal of development in China, with existing strong political and economic development. The Chinese government has been using strategic communication efforts to win the support of Chinese culture from other countries, to secure a stable image in the international arena as a rising regional and global power. Through the infrastructure and connectivity projects of BRI, Han analyzed that Chinese state inserted Chinese culture through various aspects. Firstly, talent support is used to strengthen cooperation to educate people, improve the quality of the regional population, and provide talent support for the construction of the projects. Secondly, Han stated that the Chinese government wishes to offer government guidance on civil subjects. Thirdly, the

¹⁰ Han, 2018

¹¹ Han, 2018

project aims to “discuss, build, and open cooperation” for educational integration and interaction amongst countries as evident by the rising numbers of 12 Confucius Institutes in Thailand. Lastly, the Chinese State through BRI had always aimed to promote “win-win” benefits from both China and the receiving country. This involves cultural exchange initiatives between the two countries.

Han’s findings on the cultural aspects of BRI is interesting in the fact that the Chinese state has been using its culture to spread to Thailand as well, as part of cultural diplomacy. However, the research remains mostly theoretical as the BRI project itself is not solidified in Thailand as of 2021. However, the paper proves the existing literature of Chineseness in cultural diplomacy from the Chinese state. Nevertheless, the literature on Thai cultural diplomacy (from the Thai state’s initiative) is mostly through the promotion of Thainess or the image of Thailand. There is a literature gap on looking at the portraying of positive Sino-Thai relations through cultural diplomacy. In other words, literature does not look at Chineseness as a tool for Thai cultural diplomacy, a dimension that this research will aim to add on.

1.2.2 Chineseness in Thailand

1.2.2.1 Migration Pattern

Chinese communities in Thailand have been growing for a long time through various factors over the course of Thai/Siamese history. The research looks at why Chinese migrated to Thailand and analyzes in a more convenient way, which is the Push-Pull Factor Theory by Castles and Miller. The Push-Pull Factor Theory is explained by Castles and Miller as a theory that helps to understand why people move from one place (push) and decide to settle down in another (pull). Castles and Miller illustrate that “Push factors include demographic growth, low living standards, lack of economic opportunities and political repression, while pull factors are demand for labor, availability of land, good economic opportunities and political freedom”.¹² The Push-Pull Factor will be applied to the literature review for the Migration Pattern aspect of both the Sampheng Chinese community and Huai Khwang Chinese community.

¹² Castles & Miller, 1998

Sampheng Chinese community:

The historical description and analysis of the migration wave of Sampheng is based from “The Chinese Society in Thailand” by G. William Skinner, “Chinese Identity in Thailand” by Walwipha Burusratanaphand, “Siamese Melting Pot: Ethnic Minorities in the making of Bangkok” by Edward Van Roy, and “Sampheng: Bangkok’s Chinatown Inside Out” by Edward Van Roy.

Push Factor:

The wave(s) of migration that had settled in Sampheng came into Siam for two reasons:¹³

1. Rapid population growth that led to Overpopulation: Guangdong and Fujian land were initially infertile, so did not have much population. Chinese got overpopulated, and the usual flood and droughts of the area caused higher famine than ever. Siam, on the other hand, was underpopulated from constant war and internal rebellion. It was now entering an era of peace and prosperity. Siam was very attractive to Guangdong and Fujian people along with the rest of Nanyang (Southeast Asia).
2. Lose Emigration: Organised Recruitment from Shantou, where “ketou” 客头 recruited people from villages to Siam. There was also bribing of officials to allow illegal emigration of about 500-600 pilasters per passenger vessel.

Pull Factor:

The historic community settlement of Sampheng came into limelight only after the shift in Siamese capital. After the fall of Ayutthaya, Sino-Siamese relations took an even better development through the first ever Chinese-blooded Siamese head of state, King Taksin. Taksin was born in 1734 to a Thai mother and Chinese father, his Chinese name was Cheng Chao. He was of Teochiu descent, coming from Chaozhou, Guangdong province.¹⁴ Chinese migration, especially the Teochiu population who were often referred to as Jin Luang or “Royal Chinese” because of the speech group’s relations to the King, increased and prospered. Under King Taksin’s patronage, the Teochiu community, large as it was, grew compared to other “speech groups” in Thailand, namely, Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese, and Hainanese. The reason

¹³ Skinner, 1957

¹⁴ Skinner, 1957

Chinese migrants to Thailand were referred to as speech groups was categorized from the dialects they spoke. Teochiu coming from Chaozhou, Guangdong province, was able to come to Nanyang the most due to the port of Shantou where most Teochius and Hakka emigrate from, due to various reasons like recruitment of immigrants from villages in the areas to migrate to Siam. The recruitments or “ketou” (客头) work like businesses to gather people for a better economic survival in Siam. Moreover, another reason was that there were records of Shantou being the easiest port to travel to Nanyang (South East Asia) as there often were bribes to emigration officers.¹⁵ These factors all contribute to the growth of the Teochiu population that was then residing at Tha Tien.

After King Taksin’s downfall, one of the regimes’ first decisions was to move the palace from Krung Thonburi to the present-day Grand Palace. With the Teochiu community and other Chinese migrants now gaining a prominent status in Thai society, the community moved to Sampheng district not far from the Grand Palace. The new residence did stop the Teochiu community from growing, where the immigrants crowded the Sampheng port, eventually, leading to an expansion of the Teochiu community.

With the new capital at Rattanakosin (Bangkok), the Kings of the early Chakri Dynasty did not treat Teochiu as “royal Chinese” anymore. As a matter of fact, King Rama I’s mother was Hokkien. Thus, the rise of other speech groups in Bangkok (especially Hokkien) became evident. The Hokkiens were settled across the river from Sampheng at Kudi Chin, where Hokkien gained more influential roles in businesses and government posts.¹⁶ Moreover, despite being the most populous Chinese speech group in Bangkok, Teochius were excluded from high prestige positions. This showed the era of “benign neglect” towards the Teochiu after the fall of Taksin.¹⁷

However, the turning point that justified the Thai state’s actions of looking at Sampheng as the symbol of the Chinese community came in the 20th Century. After the death of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), the Siamese State’s project to assimilate its Chinese community into the emerging Thai-nation state required all five speech

¹⁵ Skinner, 1957

¹⁶ Van Roy, 2017

¹⁷ Van Roy, 2017

groups with a population of over 400,000 individuals to be “infused with a unifying sense of Thai nationalism”.¹⁸ Thus, the Naturalization act of 1913 triggered a century process (including the process during the cold war by Pibunsongkram) of Thai nation-state building that saw the Chinese-to-Thai cultural assimilation. In the eyes of the state, all five speech groups are now to be called “Thais of Chinese descent”¹⁹, leaving out their legal ties to Mainland China, and their dream of going back to retire in their hometown or even getting buried there, as well. Sampheng, hosting over 60 % of the Chinese population in the 20th Century (Teochiu, Hakka, Cantonese) were then seen as the symbol of the Chinese community in Thailand.

Huai Khwang Chinese community:

Amongst all the Chinese communities in Thailand, the Sampheng Chinese community unanimously has been the most studied. Moreover, with their similar time period of migratory pattern, the identity of Sampheng Chinese represent other minor Chinese communities in Thailand like Talad Noi and Thonburi as well. However, the Huai Khwang Chinese are distinctively different in migration pattern, identity, and other elements that cause them to settle down in Bangkok.

Push Factors:

The paper “New Migrants and the Revival of Overseas Chinese Nationalism” by Hong Liu, generally talks about Xinyimins as a whole, since their migration pattern after the “Open Door Policy” in the late 1970s. Xinyimins can be categorized into four types; Students-turned-migrants, Emigrating professionals, chain migrants, and illegal immigrants.²⁰ Student-turned migrants were the product of the Chinese State sending scholars and students overseas. The UNESCO report estimates about 380,000 Chinese students by the end of 2000.²¹ Emigration professionals are the majority of the cohort in Huai Khwang²² and makes up the biggest percentage of Xinyimins all over the world.²³ Chain Migration are people who come with the emigration professionals and the students. They are generally family and friends.

¹⁸ Van Roy, 2017

¹⁹ Burusratanaphand, 1995

²⁰ Liu, 2005

²¹ Liu, 2005

²² Ran, 2015

²³ Liu, 2005

Lastly, illegal migrants of Xin Yimins are defined by Liu as people who sneak across national borders to seek their fortune in other countries. They migrate through human trafficking or over-staying their visas. It is important to note that the motive of Xin Yimin in Thailand is to seek “economic opportunity” rather than “economic survival” like their predecessors, and they intend to return to China, once they have enough “economic benefit.”²⁴ These Xinyimins settle down semi-permanently outside China, which differentiate them from their predecessors who seek permanent settlement. Initially, Xinyimin went mainly to developed countries, particularly to North America, with an estimated population of 8 million Xinyimins in North America in the 1980s. According to Yos Santasombat, the Chinese government's view, the Xinyimin may or may not return to the country but may have created their lucrative opportunities and gained economic success outside China. In return, whether they settle outside China or go back and forth between home and new countries, these Xinyimins send money remittances, provide economic investment, and donate money to charities for Chinese in mainland China. The fact that large numbers of Xinyimin were leaving China to go to Western countries attracted the world's attention in the 1980s. It is estimated that more than 6 million Xinyimin headed to North America in the 1980s. In addition to Xinyimin emigration during the 1970s-1980s, there has been a new phenomenon of Xinyimin mobility beginning in the 1990s. It has come to light that more and more Chinese migrants are heading to developing countries, and that is where Thailand chimed in.

Ran Guanyu's research titled “Outside the Old Enclave” that studies the migration of Huai Khwang Chinese community, analyzes five “push” factors that helped form the Huai Khwang Chinese community of today. Firstly, analyzed as development pressure, he mentions the socio-economic development that accelerated in modern PRC causing domestic individual competition. Factors like higher education, skilled employment, and decent salary against the backdrop of the huge population in China, pressured many to find educational and work opportunities in Huai Khwang. For instance, Thai language major graduates were found to be quite a huge portion of Ran's findings of Huai Khwang Chinese, as they stated that their

²⁴ Wangkiat, 2016

skillset did not find them decent jobs in China, thus, they were not able to compete and left for better opportunities. Secondly, the education dilemma, once again, saw the backdrop of the huge population of China play a role as a “push factor”, this time through getting higher education. The education system that is exam-oriented seemed to be problematic in Ran’s findings. Thus, students go abroad, including Thailand, for a more liberal education system. Business expansion is the third “push” factor. Chinese companies have accumulated huge capital in recent years through the benefits of the free market economy, so they applied the “go-out strategy” for searching economic opportunities. Fourthly, personal career planning of new working-age Chinese who grew up around the ideology of “reform and open” is analyzed to be the next “push” factor. Ran mentions them to be braver and more open-minded, take charge of their life, and most importantly more familiar with international culture than their elders. Lastly, the social demand of international communications between China and foreign countries. Thus, foreign work experience and educational background are more and more in demand, causing Chinese to go abroad to study.²⁵

Pull Factors:

Many “pull” factors were analyzed by Ran that enabled Xinyimins to migrate to Thailand and settle down in Huai Khwang. Ran, firstly, analyzed why New Chinese Migrants chose to come to Thailand in general. Ran mentions that Thailand presents young Chinese with a less social pressured lifestyle that includes lower standard of living, and less competition to the aforementioned Chinese developmental pressure that pushed them out. Education is also a big part of the attraction. The Thai educational system is more western style with less exam-oriented systems compared to China. The tuition fee and the cost of living are also much cheaper and Thai Universities have begun to cater to Chinese students, setting up exchange programs and cooperating education programs. Another educational allure of Thailand is for many students who studied Thai-related majors in university and want to utilize that education background that is not of much demand in China itself. Another factor was Thailand’s vibrant development opportunities with “commercial environment, natural

²⁵ Ran, 2015

resources, etc., caused many Chinese companies to be interested in investing. Ran's findings also saw many Huai Khwang Xinyimins explain their reasons to come to Thailand was because of the peaceful culture that was shaped by Buddhism and the culture and environment that came with it. Last "Pull" factor for coming to Thailand was chain migration through family reunions.²⁶

1.2.2.2 Social Identity

Sampheng Chinese community:

The book ชุมชนชาวจีนในกรุงเทพฯ และปรากฏการณ์ย้ายถิ่น (*Chumchon Chao Jin nai Krung Thep lae phrakottakarn yaithin*) by Chantavanich Suphang & Triamwittaya Chada takes on four most prominent Chinese communities in Bangkok by looking at their background, identity, and the culture they leave behind through architecture and other cultural aspects. I find this book useful as they offer a comparison between Chinese communities in Bangkok, namely, Sampheng, Talad Noi, Thonburi, and Huai Khwang. This book is one of the very few literatures to shed light on Talad Noi Thonburi, and Huai Khwang, as well. The book mentions Sampheng, Talad Noi, and Thonburi to be of similar migration pattern being of the five speech groups, thus, their identity show similarity.

The social identity of the Sampheng Chinese are divided into "speech groups" or the dialect of Chinese they speak. Teochiu, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese, and Cantonese are the speech groups categorized, with Teochius being the majority with 60% of the population.²⁷

Hokkiens were the first to make their way to Talad Noi for business development, and later, the Hainanese population grew in the area as well. Thus, Talad Noi is home to a more diverse type of Chinese speech groups rather than the majority being Teochiu like in Sampheng. Hokkien, Hainanese, Hakka, Teochiu, and Cantonese are all present in the area. The migration patterns are similar to Sampheng's Chinese, yet they boast more diversity of speech groups that diversify the belief system of the community as well.

²⁶ Ran, 2015

²⁷ Van Roy, 2007

The Thon Buri Chinese call themselves “Kudi Chinese”, who mostly comprised of Hokkiens and Teochius and have always maintained their small community amongst many other ethnic groups in the area like Thais and Muslim community.

The identity of Chinese communities in the three areas may differ in ratio, but it is proven that they comprise people within the five speech groups. The reason that it is easier to classify them into speech groups is because they derive from the similar migration pattern that is rooted from Ayutthaya Chinese communities onwards.

The region of Sampheng turned into a Chinese community since the start of the Chakri Dynasty. King Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty insisted the Chinese community move to the area between Wat Sampleum Canal (Wat Jakraphattra) to Wat Sampheng canal (Wat Pathum Kongkha) in 1792. The area traditionally known as Samphraeng got mispronounced by the Chinese immigrants as “Sampheng”, and the name stuck until this day.²⁸ The Sampheng community became of political importance during the reign of King Rama V. The region of Chinese settlement consisted of Saphan Hun, Talad Kao, Talad Sampheng, Talad Wat Kho, which came to be the area extending from Sampheng to Yaowarat road. The King wanted to uphold the region by officially naming the region as “Yaowarat” as a celebration of the first Crown Prince of the Chakri Dynasty, Vajirunhis. Thus, Yaowarat became an official name under royal patronage, but the name Sampheng has still been household and referred to in academic literature. The migration pattern of Sampheng, as mentioned in the background, came from the fall of Ayutthaya, and consisted mainly of the five speech groups: Teochiu, Guangdong, Hokkien, Hakka, and Hainanese.

The area of Talad Noi or Taklak Kia (Children of the Market) as called by the local Chinese settlers is an offspring of the Chinese community from Sampheng. The migration patterns of Talad Noi Chinese are similar to the Chinese settlements who first settled down in Sampheng. The reason why some settled elsewhere or moved from Sampheng was because of the special treatment of Teochius from King Taksin. Teochius were often referred to as “Jin Luang” or royal Chinese as King Taksin was of Teochiu descent.²⁹ Thus, during his reign Teochius were put to high level office

²⁸ Chantavanich & Triamwittaya, 2020

²⁹ Skinner, 1957

and worked closely with the palace. This special treatment caused many speech groups to form their own settlements elsewhere than Sampheng. Talad Noi is one of them.

Thon Buri used to be an old capital of Siam and Bangkok's predecessors. The Migration pattern of Thon Buri Chinese communities is about the same time as the migration pattern of Sampheng from Ayutthaya. The community in Thon Buri formed at the same time as Sampheng, just that it was smaller in size.

An important aspect of Sampheng's social identity is religion and belief system. According to "Guanyin Worship among the Thai-Chinese: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender", a research done by Dr. John Giordano and Luo Yong, religion and belief system of the early Chinese migrants to Thailand in communities like Sampheng was compromised and adapted in an interesting way. The research criticizes the works of William Skinner in the sense that, Skinner analyzed that Chinese migrants would lose their Chineseness by the fifth generation due to succumbing to assimilation and pressure from the social state. However, Richard J. Coughlin disagrees, stating that even though the Sampheng Chinese adopted Thai nationality, they seek to preserve their cultural identity as Chinese, and eventually contain two identities, Thai and Chinese.³⁰ Bao Jiemin adds that identity can become fluid and relative, and involves a process of negotiation.³¹ This is opposed to Skinner's beliefs that identity can either be preserved or assimilated. The research by Giordano and Yong analyzes how Chinese migrants in communities like Sampheng negotiate their religion, ethnicity, and gender identities through their former beliefs in the Guanyin Goddess. In terms of religious identity of the Sampheng Chinese, many of them were formerly Taoist, Confucianist, or part of Chinese folk religions. Upon arrival to Thailand and facing forced assimilation, the Chinese migrants had to choose an official religion accepted by the Thai State. The Thai State was 94% Buddhism and attached the religion closely to the state. Consequently, many Chinese (apart from few Christians and Muslims) who were formerly Taoist and Confucianist, took up Buddhism, but with a negotiated mindset. The negotiation was possible because of Goddess Guanyin. The Guanyin is considered a Bodhisattva (a person who is able to

³⁰ Luo & Giordano, 2016

³¹ Bao, 2005

reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings) in Mahayana Buddhism. However, in Chinese beliefs, the Guanyin was also considered a deity, Goddess of Mercy and Goddess of the Earth, and not the same as Lord Buddha. With the Guanyin holding multiple identities as a Goddess and also a Buddhist Bodhisattva, the Chinese accepted Thai Buddhism as the official religion, so that they could continue believing their deity beliefs.³² These compromised beliefs not only impacted the Chinese migrants who were passing down their belief system to later generations, but also influenced Thai Buddhism. Buddhism in Thailand has accepted the Guanyin along with other Gods and Goddesses of Chinese folk religions. This evidence is seen through many Thai temples creating statues for both the Theravada Buddhism side and the Chinese influenced Buddhism side as well. Being able to keep a section of their religious identity, meant that the early Chinese migrants did not get fully assimilated. Thus, their ethnic identity was also partly reserved, by them being able to be Thai and Chinese. This also shows the significance of the word “Thais of Chinese descent”, rather than just Thai.

Huai Khwang Chinese community:

Hong Liu analyzes the social identity of Xinyimins to revive Chinese nationalism overseas. The policies towards overseas Chinese in the past couple of decades denote the PRC government has been inclusive of overseas Chinese diaspora, and the Xinyimins has been methodized to revive Chinese nationalism in both themselves and the Chinese communities before them. The logic applies to Thailand as Huai Khwang Chinese settlements are aimed to revive Chinese nationalism in other Chinese communities in Thailand. The author mentions that reviving nationalism, today, through the New Chinese Migrants carry certain structural changes than their predecessors. Firstly, they are mostly PRC citizens and the modern Chinese state-building sentiment is already familiarized with them. Secondly, Xinyimins carry a more diverse socio-cultural background. Many of them are well-educated and are of more economically well-off families. However, the predecessors are of menial and uneducated class. The policies of Chinese nationalism are based on the logic of

³² Luo & Giordano, 2016

huaqiao huaren, meaning every “Chinese” person including ethnic Chinese to be part of the People’s Republic of China.³³

The revival of nationalism is done so by the norm of “huaqiao huaren” is the government support for overseas students to come back to PRC as “overseas Chinese talent”. Returning to China has been promoted by the policy of “weiguo fuwu” which means “serve the country” rather than the old policy of “huiguo fuwu” which meant “comeback and serve the country”. This can be analyzed as reviving nationalism even though they are abroad, or “deterritorialized nationalism”. This eventually leads the sentiment of Chinese overseas to come back to their motherland. Another policy that revives nationalism is through Overseas Chinese Affairs Offices or Qiaoban, where they deliver political and cultural messages. Qiaobans were originally also used to spread anti-Taiwanese sentiments for nation-building.³⁴ This can be concluded that the constructed identity of Xinyimins revive nationalism and glorify Chineseness where they go in the world, Huai Khwang included.

The article *Garn khleun yai khong kon jin gub bothbart rutjin nai sattarwat ti 21* (การเคลื่อนย้ายของคนจีน กับบทบาทรัฐจีนในศตวรรษที่ 21) by Siriphon Aranya, analyzes a very important aspect of Xinyimins (yet similar to Hong Liu’s analysis of Huaqiao Huaren); how their identity is linked to a Chinese State discourse. It is almost like a neocolonialist viewpoint of cultural imperialism that states are using, and in this case, migrants are used as tools of the Chinese state. Dr. Aranya Siriphon of Chiang Mai University names it the Xinyimin Discourse. Hereby, she analyzes the general identity of Xinyimins and how they relate to Chinese State’s development discourse. Siriphon argues that the new wave of Chinese migration is under transnational cultural politics, where the Xinyimin discourse is done through many policies that translate to soft power, civilization mission and peripheral diplomacy for the end goal of Chinese power recognized in the world stage. The concept analyzes how the state constructs the identity of the Xinyimins and when they go abroad, the identity carries on. There are few concepts proposed as the identity of Xinyimins:³⁵

³³ Liu, 2005

³⁴ Liu, 2005

³⁵ Siriphon, 2018

Deterritorialized Nationalism: China still subscribes to the Westphalian State norm of “territory”, however after the 1980s, the country started to emphasize that one shall not be stuck up in territory to identify as Chinese. A Chinese citizen can be a “transnational subject”. This is very contrasting ideologically, to Qing dynasty’s stigma on Chinese emigrants to Southeast Asia as they were then called “disloyal, dishonourable to family and the nation”. The concept analyzes this shift in paradigm to allowing “transnational loyalty” for two reasons. Firstly, the spread of the modern Chinese image was the goal of the state. This will be more elaborated in the “Civilized Mission”. Secondly, the Chinese state hopes encouraging its transnational subject discourse would bring about nationalism from Chinese diaspora all over the world to link their social as well as their economic ties to the PRC. Thus, with all these strategy in mind, the Chinese state came up with the policy of Qiaowu that uses organizations called Qiaoban that implements nationalism building actions like programmes for academics and bureaucrats to go out to Chinese communities all over the world, and also promote programmes that bring Chinese diaspora back to China and help them find their hometowns.

Civilizing Mission: The idea is that China is a civilizer and it is their mission to bring civilization to barbarian places. Two narratives that go with this concept are, firstly, developing, and underdeveloped countries will benefit from China’s civilized norm. The so-called civilized norm is referred to by China as “Alternative Modernity” that consists of two elements. The first is that China wants the world to believe that “modern” communism is not a threat to capitalism. Secondly, the Chinese state wants to push the image of a responsible superpower that believes in justice.

Another aspect of Huai Khwang Xinyimin’s social identity was researched by Ran Guanyu. Ran interviewed Chinese migrants in Huai Khwang on their religion. The findings show that out of 21 interviewees, 15 had no religion or were atheist. This is another important component that took place from within the Chinese State after the older migrants moved.³⁶

³⁶ Ran, 2015

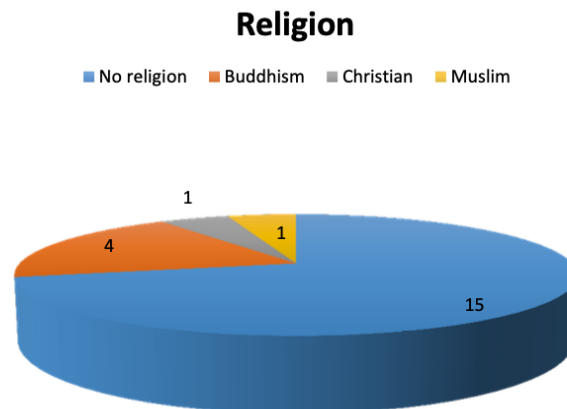


Figure 1: Religion in Huai Khwang Chinese community (Ran, 2015)

This point is also proven through China's rising atheism encouraged by the Chinese Communist Party. Religion lost popularity in mainland China, when communism took over and declared the policy of state atheism. The World Economic Forum listed China as currently the least religious country in the world.³⁷ Consequently, Xinyimins differ from Thais of Chinese descent in their religious beliefs.

1.2.2.3 Attachment with the People's Republic of China

Sampheng Chinese community:

Skinner predicts that the Chinese community in Thailand will finally disappear and be assimilated into Thai culture and society for two reasons. First, the number of Chinese migrants will decrease because Chineseness is attached to the first generation Chinese settlers in Siam, and if they pass away, the Chineseness will go away with them. Second, Thai government policy to reduce the number of Chinese immigrants has been effective.³⁸ However, Burusratanaphand argues with Skinner's view that the later generations' Chineseness will be assimilated into Thai culture and becoming "Thai" is not totally accurate. He adds that ethnic consciousness is subjective, and the descendants of China, though faced with assimilative measures, can still culturally

³⁷ Oliver, 2017

³⁸ Skinner, 1950

uphold their “Chineseness”. However, Chineseness may be adapted and differ from their ancestors as well.³⁹ Thus, I find it useful to categorize the identity of Chinese who were once settlers of the Sampheng community as “Thais of Chinese descent”, as analyzed by Edward Van Roy.⁴⁰ The phrase can be analyzed as two oxymoronic elements, when it comes to their attachment with the People’s Republic of China. Firstly, the Thais of Chinese descent, as analyzed by Burusratanaphand, still uphold certain Chineseness to their identity, adapted as they may be. Thus, they are not just Thai but “Thais of Chinese descent”. Secondly, however, the group immigrated to areas like Sampheng before many domestic milestones that took place in Mainland China. They came to Siam before China became the People’s Republic of China; thus, their Chinese identity development is only limited to their ancestors who came to Siam before China became communist. This is evident in norms like deterritorialized nationalism and cultural revolution, where the Thais of Chinese descent do not have much attachment to, compared to the Xinyimins.

Huai Khwang Chinese community:

The attachment of Huai Khwang Chinese towards the People’s Republic of China is evident in the social identity they hold. The Open-Door Policy in 1978’s Economic Reform by Deng Xiaoping was the State’s initiative to interact with foreign countries, which included sending their citizens abroad. Over the next few decades, the state tried to construct a unified identity for out-going Chinese, especially in term of them feeling nationalistic. The education campaign is a mechanism to protect the invasion of foreign ideology that could create distrust in the CCP. The Open-Door Policy (Economic Reform) started in 1978, and undoubtedly, it has brought in more open flow of ideology, and that was one of the factors that caused anti-communist sentiments like Tianamen Square Protests. China, thus, aims to use ideology as a protective measure moving towards global integrationism.⁴¹ This ideological construct was linked to Xinyimin or New Chinese Migrants by many scholars. Hong Liu analyzes that measures like huaqiao huaren are a way of controlling the ideology

³⁹ Burusratanaphand, 1995

⁴⁰ Van Roy, 2008

⁴¹ Gary, 2012

of New Chinese migrants by education campaigns like the Patriotic Education Campaign that was implemented in 1991. The campaign is one of the many Chinese nationalism revival policies that uses education reforms to glorify being Chinese and how the Communist Party of China (CCP) has brought China from poverty into greatness on the world stage. The policy was implemented and mandated all schools to follow the CCP's curriculum by 1994. Hence, nationalism/patriotism is deeply rooted into being Chinese citizens, including citizens that go to work abroad.⁴²

This point also explains Siriphon's analysis on deterritorialized nationalism and civilizing missions.⁴³ Even though, Xinyimins are abroad they still identify as a Chinese under the CCP and are heavily attached to the PRC.

1.2.3 Literature Review Conclusion

In academia, the literature covers Thai cultural diplomacy in the sense of promoting Thainess or Thai imagery. In the broad definition provided by the Ministry of Culture, cultural diplomacy refers to the creation of friendship, trust, mutual understanding, and good imagery of Thailand in the eyes of other countries for "unmeasurable benefits". Thasuthorn's research then states that Thai cultural diplomacy through the case of neighboring countries is directed through bilateral means like Buddhism and academic assistance. Anantasirikiat's research then proves that cultural diplomacy in Thailand can also be done in the public setting to create a positive image of Thailand at the world stage. Amongst his work on public diplomacy, Anantasirikiat analyzes the case of Tham Luang Cave Rescue mission as a part of Thai public diplomacy that redefined Thai image from the negative dimensions of political uncertainty, bad traffic, and the sex tourism industry, to the positive image of "leadership responsibility that encompasses decisiveness and discipline". Nevertheless, all the literature on Thai cultural diplomacy seems to be the promotion of Thainess and Thai image, and the only involvement of Chineseness as cultural diplomacy are more likely seen through literature analyzing the Chinese state's cultural diplomacy. Han's literature on cultural diplomacy of BRI to Thailand is one

⁴² Chen, 1995

⁴³ Siriphon, 2018

example of Chineseness in cultural diplomacy from the Chinese state initiatives. Thus, this research recognizes the trend of promoting Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy and aims to look at Thai cultural diplomacy from this alternative viewpoint.

The distinction between Chineseness is often ignored in academia and policy making processes. Thus, the second part of the literature review lays out the studies on two types of Chineseness present in Thailand, through Chinese communities in Bangkok.

From the above conclusion, we see that the Xinyimins in Huai Khwang are different from Thais of Chinese descent, thus they also have different attachments to the PRC. Considering the attachment of the Huai Khwang Chinese migrants to the PRC, the research would analyze that the Xinyimins portray “Sino-centric Chineseness”. The Sampheng Chinese, on the other hand, is not attached to the Chinese culture and way of life in contemporary PRC, but rather an assimilated Chinese culture in Thai society. Thus, the Chineseness they portray is “Thai-defined Chineseness”. From the literature review, it will be interesting into which type of Chineseness the Thai State chooses to use cultural diplomacy for a better Bangkok-Beijing cooperation.

	Huai Khwang Chinese Identity	Sampheng Chinese Identity
Migration Pattern	<p><i>Push Factor:</i> Initial: Open Door Policy 1978 (Liu, 1995) 21st Century: Development Pressure/ Education Dilemma/ Business Expansion/ Personal Career Planning/ Social Demand</p> <p><i>Pull Factor:</i> Less Competition/ Education Attraction/ Commercial environment/ Thai Language/ Peaceful Culture/ Chain Migration (Ran, 2015)</p>	<p><i>Push Factor:</i> Overpopulation, Lose Emigration, Shantou-Siam <i>ketou</i></p> <p><i>Pull Factor:</i> King Taksin's Teochiu privilege, Rama I's Hokkien privilege, Easier immigration into Siam (<i>ketou</i>)/ Chain Migration (Skinner, 1950) (Van Roy, 2007)</p>
Social Identity	<p>Huaqiao Huaren (Liu, 2015) Deterritorialized Nationalism/ Civilizing Mission/ PRC Citizens (Siriphon, 2018)</p>	<p>Five Speech Groups (Skinner, 1950) Naturalization Act of 1913: "Thais of Chinese descent" (Van Roy, 2007) Buddhist with beliefs in deity. (Giordano & Yong, 2016)</p>
Identity Attachment with PRC (Analytical)	<p>PRC identity of nationalism constructed by policies like Patriotic Education Campaign. (Gary, 2012) (Chen, 1995) Deterritorial attachment to PRC (Liu, 2015) (Siriphon, 2018)</p>	<p>Oxymoronic Elements of "Thais of Chinese descent": Hold Chinese Identity but not PRC Chinese Identity (Skinner, 1950) (Burusatanaphand, 1995) (Van Roy, 2008)</p>

Table 1: Literature Review Conclusion

1.3 Research Question

1. How Chineseness is being used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy?
 - This question will lay out events, initiatives, speeches, etc. that the Thai State has been doing that can constitute as Chineseness. The question also aims to answer which Chineseness is being portrayed more by the Thai State, Sampheng (Old) or Huai Khwang (New).
2. Why does the Thai State use Sampheng Chineseness in Thai Cultural Diplomacy?
 - This question will raise the point why the Sampheng (Thai-defined) Chineseness is still represented in Thai cultural diplomacy, even more than the new and more attached, Huai Khwang (Sino-centric) Chineseness.

1.4 Hypothesis

In answering the question of how Chineseness is being used in Thai cultural diplomacy. The research assumes that Thailand is promoting Chineseness through the Sampheng Chineseness because of the fact that Sampheng Chineseness has been the existing Chineseness that not only represents China but is assimilated into Thai culture.

1.5 Methodology

This thesis will be a qualitative research thesis paper. The two methods used are document analysis through discourse analysis, and interview of Thai State actors.

1. Document Analysis:

Here, the research will look at how the Thai State has been performing to the People's Republic of China that shows signs of positive performances. Hence, the research will not go back to look at Anti-Chinese policies during the Cold War, as the goal was not to perform to the PRC, but the United States. This research aims to look at documents including speeches, articles, etc., from the Thai State, news articles, and cultural celebrations that link to the identity of either the Chinese in Sampheng or the

Chinese in Huai Khwang. The documents will then be analyzed through discourse analysis to show how the Thai State has been performing to the PRC as a part of cultural diplomacy which has been analyzed by the concept of Performative State as a tool to achieve national interest, in this case, deepen and strengthen economic cooperation with Beijing.

2. Semi-Structured Interview of State Officials

The interview will be looking at different Thai State actors that are using Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy, through both public and bilateral settings. The interview findings will help determine the discourse of the Thai State in choosing which Chineseness to portray. The structure of the interview is a semi-structured interview, with the direction of the questions being set. However, the questions will also be spontaneous with the information given by the interviewee.

1.6 Research Scope

- **Thai State:** The term Thai State can be ambiguous as to which sectors constitute a Thai State. The thesis has selected five Thai State actors for data collection because the actors are seen to be the most involved with Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy. The actors are the Thai Government, Royal Family, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand.
- **Time Period:** The time period selected for this research is the 21st Century because most positive cultural engagement of Thailand and China have been through the 21st Century.
- **Chineseness:** The term Chineseness will be used as it covers more context than Chinese culture or Chinese identity. According to Allen Chun, Chineseness refers to Chinese “culture and society” all combined into one term.

1.7 Limitations

The research faced several limitations, most of which occurred during the methodology and findings sections.

Translation: As the research was conducted through interviews from the Thai State, the interviews were done through Thai language, thus, the data needed translation. As a Thai, English, and Chinese speaker, the researcher did the translations of interviews including the quotes by himself. Thus, the findings can be subjected to bias and lost in translation.

Document Analysis Limitations: The events, speeches, and other documents for the question of how Chineseness is used as Thai cultural diplomacy (Chapter III) is merely representational. The chapter explores various projects across why Thai state sectors on how Chineseness is used as Thai cultural diplomacy. The research admits that not all events, speeches, and initiatives were covered. However, the research tried to cover all the major events within the research scope and what the research finds beneficial to the argument. The arguments are not affected, but the data does not cover all the events and speeches from the Thai State in the 21st Century.

Limited study on Huai Khwang Chineseness: Unlike the Sampheng Chineseness that has been studied in academia for years, Huai Khwang Chinese migrants, their identity, and cultural attachments are not rigorously studied. Past literature studied the motives, occupation, and livelihood of the Chinese migrants or Xinyimins who migrated to Huai Khwang. Very little literature studies on the Chineseness they portray like what type of Chinese culture they are, what religion they believe in, or their similarities with Sampheng Chineseness. Thus, with this limited knowledge on the cultural dimensions of Huai Khwang Chineseness, the research will not be answering the question of whether the Thai State is using Sampheng or Huai Khwang Chineseness more evidently for Thai cultural diplomacy. The question will merely be discussed in the discussion towards the end of the research.

1.8 Significance/ Expected Research Contribution

Thai Diplomacy has been very consistent in its “bending with the wind approach”. As Dr. Thitinan from Chulalongkorn University puts it, “Thailand never puts too many of its eggs in any one basket, always having a foot in more than one

door, thereby fitting the description of bending with the wind".⁴⁴ However, Thailand as a Performative State towards the People's Republic of China, if proven, may be able to describe this changing pattern of Thai diplomatic stance, that uses culture to be able to strengthen and deepen economic cooperation with China. There has never been the usage of Peter Jackson's concept of Performative State to analyze Thai diplomacy in contemporary politics. Jackson mostly used the model to analyze Thailand's diplomacy in the Ayutthaya and Colonial era. Thai diplomacy towards the PRC is definitely a hot topic that will stay relevant for a long time, especially amidst the geopolitical contestation of the United States and PRC in the region.

Hence, with multiple identities of Chineseness present in Thailand, it will be very interesting to conceptualize how Chineseness is used as a cultural diplomacy from the Thai State. The research explores the influence of Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy, where the diplomacy should be centered around the promotion of Thainess. This consequently leads to looking at the influence of assimilated Chinese culture in Thai elitist politics. Thais of Chinese descent play an important role in Thai society both as public sector and as the people in power.

The main schools of knowledge that the research contributes to are politics and international relations, specifically, Sino-Thai relations that sees the influence of other cultures in one country's cultural diplomacy. The political contribution of this research is from the point that the research looks at why Thailand would allow Chineseness to be presented in Thai cultural diplomacy. The influence of China through Chinese state initiate and Thailand willing to support for the sake of Chinese tourism, to the impact of Thais of Chinese descent using identity politics in Thai political arena, showcases that Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy, under the framework of Thailand as a performative state contributes to both international relations and Thai politics.

⁴⁴ Pongsudhirak, 2017

CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The Thai state's recognition towards the two Chinese communities' identity in Bangkok has been very different. This is a vital part of this analysis that theorizes why and how cultural dimensions of diplomacy can be used as tools to gain goals that the Thai State has in mind, in this case, deepening and strengthening political and economic cooperation with the PRC.

Before getting into the main conceptual framework of this thesis, performative state, other concepts must be laid out to justify why this concept was particularly picked to analyze Thailand's cultural diplomacy towards China. As mentioned in the literature review, the existing literature on Thai cultural diplomacy have looked at the matter on a more straightforward view of Thainess promotion. This case theories like soft power could suffice. However, as the research aims to look at Chineseness being an initiative from the Thai state to conduct cultural diplomacy, usage of theories and concepts that analyze the usage of foreign norms by the Thai state should be more fitting. In international relations, one of the most comprehensive concepts that analyze the discourse of the state and their actions is norm entrepreneur.

According to Finnemore and Sikkink's paper "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", norm entrepreneurs are people who promote norm change by challenging the appropriateness of the existing norms or standards.⁴⁵ The case of the Thai state taking an alternative view of norms for cultural diplomacy, by inviting Chineseness in, would mean that the Thai state is a norm entrepreneur. Once state actors adopt a new norm, they become norm leaders who further socialise other states to accept it. The process of norm replacement over the pre-existing one occurs at a tipping point where a critical mass of states agrees to adopt that norm. Thus, the Thai state's acceptance of Chineseness into Thai cultural diplomacy, ipso facto, leads to different factors accepting the influence of that foreign norm across Thailand. Norm entrepreneurs, according to Finnemore and Sikkink, carry out this pioneering of new norms (Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy) through various tactics like reinterpretation, public relations events, media, etc. While this concept may prove to

⁴⁵ Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998

be useful to analyze why Chineseness is used in Thai cultural diplomacy from the state sector, the concept of norm entrepreneur is merely based on international relations, and does not explore the studies of cultural diplomacy. Another concept that combines both the usage of a foreign culture as a tool for creating an image for international relations is performative state, a concept the research seems more fitting to the interdisciplinary element of this research. However, norm entrepreneurs and its tactics will also make its appearance in parts of the analysis of findings in this research.

The concept that the research will use to analyze why the Thai state has pursued cultural diplomacy towards China by using the identity of Chinese communities in Bangkok is “Performative State” coined in the paper; “The Performative State: Semi-coloniality and the Tyranny of Images in Modern Thailand” by Peter Jackson. The paper goes into details of how Thai society today is shaped by Thailand's measures in surviving colonialism. The paper argues that the contemporary Thai political system remains authoritarian due to the public images of being “civilized”, Thailand portrayed to the European imperialists. The “regime of images” created was in accordance to the western demands of “civilized” (a phrase “siwilai” was coined in Thai, back then), and it was a top-down approach of governance “mandated” by the government and the monarchy, as they felt it was Thailand’s chance to survive colonialism. “Siwilai” became the era’s notion of Thainess that places the maintenance of public shows of harmony or orderliness (khvam-riap-roi) at its core value, thus, the tyranny of images.⁴⁶ Peter Jackson concludes that Siam's usage of cultural performance rather than military response, like many other countries, was outstanding as the influential factor on the outcome of what Siam wanted, to stay a sovereign nation and endure national interests.

Thailand as a performative state during the colonial era used cultural performances mandated by the state to the public to perform to the western power. Stripping the essence of “Performative State” to apply to other situations of the Thai state, the foundation of this concept is that the Thai state must have a goal towards a foreign entity, and the performance must be a top-down mandate towards a domestic entity.

⁴⁶ Jackson, 2004

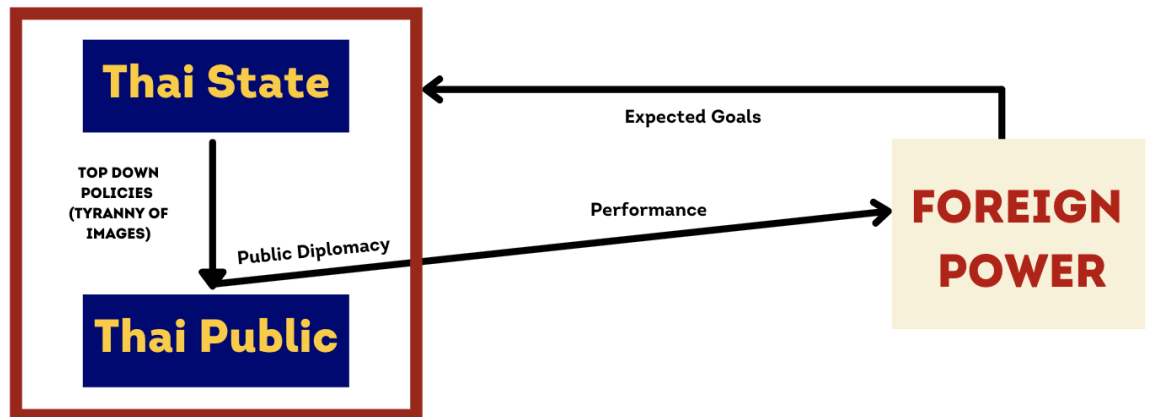


Figure 2: Performative State

Peter Jackson gives a historical explanation of how Thailand/Siam as a performative state uses different measures that evolved through time to “perform” for a specific goal aimed towards an alien entity.

1. Dance-Dramas or *Lakhorns*

The root of the analysis of the performative state stems from actual “performance”. Jackson recalls the *lakhorns* or dramas that used to be performed in Siamese royal courts back in the Ayutthaya era, when the Kingdom first witnessed international relations in more established settings like embassy establishments. These dramas displayed for the royal guests from Western Embassies were done by the royal court and the selection process of actors and themes were carefully picked by the King and his courtiers, and it was by no means, an ordinary “after-dinner event”. Jackson titles it “Theatrics of Power” where he assessed that the political importance of these dramas was through Western visitors' record of the drama to be impressive, and that was, indeed, the goal of the Siamese state back then. The point was, according to Jackson, for the Thai stage to carefully stage symbols of authority, legitimacy, and power, to impress the Westerners of Siam. Thus, the first form or tool of performative state’s “performance” would be an actual performance of royal drama.

2. Photographs and Videos

During the 19th and 20th Century, the Performances were translated into certain objects that spread the wanted information. Peter Jackson cites Morris's account of how capitalism and new imaging technologies have together altered the regime of representation in modern Thailand, the Imaging technology. The so-called imaging technology refers to photography and videos. The videos and photos were great assets when it came to intensify the reproduction of performances. It captured the cultural value and spreaded to many western powers, which was more convenient than organising dramas in a single locale. Thus, the second evolution of performance tools were photographs and videos.

Era	Factor (s)	Goal	Performance Tool
Historical Siam: Ayuthaya	Emergence of Royal Guests	To impress foreign visitors with symbols of authority, legitimacy, and power of the Siamese court.	Dance-Dramas
Modern Siam: 19th and 20th Century	Capitalism and New Emerging Technologies	To intensify power of appearances on cultural values and civilized norms	Photographs and Videos

Table 2: Performance Tools

2.2 Thailand as a Performative State

Even though, Thailand as a “Performative State” was used to analyze the colonization period, the research found the concept applicable to many post-colonial events, including how the Thai state performs to China over the years through the lens of the Chinese communities in Bangkok, both Sampheng and Huai Khwang.

The analysis of Thailand as a performative state towards foreign power by using Chineseness, has Jackson's essence. The Thai state can be seen as the main actor by performing to the external power, and that performance is using the norms produced by the Chinese communities in Bangkok (Chineseness). When applying Jackson's analysis of the tools of a performance to Thailand as a performative state to

Chinese community, the research found the tools to be applicable to the research as well. The Drama-Dances (Lakhorns) is substituted with Chinese performances like lion dances, while the photographs and videos were still used as a reproduction of images and is relevant in the performance of the Thai state promoting Chineseness.

2.2.1 Performative State towards the United States during the Cold War

During the Cold War, Chinese identity in Thailand, especially through its most influential community; Sampheng community, was heavily suppressed. After the Second World War and going into the Cold War, the United States - Thai relations had become that of a patron - client relationship. Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram was reappointed Prime Minister in 1948, with the support from the United States. Phibunsongkram was allowed to return to office, only after providing assurance that he would base his policies around fighting communism.⁴⁷ As someone who declared war on the allies a couple of years earlier, Phibunsongkram went against the People's Party ideology, and partnered with King Bhumibol and the United States. By accepting the United States' influence, the policies under this era were analyzed as Anti-Chinese actions that would lead to containing communism. These Anti-Chinese actions were reflected from utilizing law enforcement towards numerous suppressions of homogeneous identity of ethnic Chinese or any groups that upheld Chinese identity. The Thai state, then, used the "authoritarian basis" provided in the 1952 constitution of the triumvirate regime like increasing government censorship of media, emergency powers, and imposing heavy penalties on any person suspected of communist activities. This suspicion of communist activities was, ipso facto, suspicion towards the ethnic Chinese in Sampheng.

One example of the Thai state's Anti-Chinese policies was the incident involving Thailand's ethnic Chinese's reaction to the ideology presented at the Asia Pacific Rim Peace Conference. According to Wasana Wongsurawat, it was an incident that showed the Thai state's stance of suppressing Chinese identity through law enforcement. In 1952, the PRC hosted the Asia Pacific Rim Peace Conference to protest US interference in Korea War, where many ethnic Chinese in Thailand came out to state their agreement with Beijing. The Thai state did not stay

⁴⁷ Wongsurawat, 2019, p.137

silent on the matter. In November that year, many people were arrested and jailed for being suspicious of showing support to the ideology of the PRC. Interestingly, the majority arrested were ethnic Chinese or people in professions related to China and the Chinese community in Thailand, including ethnic Chinese journalists at Chinese newspapers, labor activists, and leftist politicians.⁴⁸ This incident was a prime example of how Chinese identity was treated by the Thai state during the Cold War.

The Chinese community at that time was divided into many socio-economic classes, which Wongsurawat analyzes as “good and bad Chinese Dichotomy”. The “good” Chinese were the ones siding with the Thai state’s stance on alliance with the United States to fight communism and even suppress their own identity. The “bad” Chinese, on the other hand, were referring to Chinese menial workers who did not hold high social positions and good education. However, records show that both dichotomic groups of ethnic Chinese were affected by the Thai state’s Anti-Chinese actions.⁴⁹ The “bad” Chinese were subjected to racial discrimination and Chinese-based violence as evident by the Phlaphlachai Riot of 1974. The incident saw an ethnic Chinese taxi driver named Pun illegally park in front of a cinema, waiting for customers. Though the taxi driver did an illegal activity, the area in question was a regular stop for taxis. He was asked to pay a fine by the police, but he refused as he claimed he has been fined three days in a row for similar events. The refusal to pay fine saw the police arresting him on the spot and violently manhandling him to go to the Phlaphlachai Police Station near Sampheng area. Pun started to scream accusations of police brutality and the incident caught the attention of a lot of passers-by. Pun was taken into the police station and many people gathered around the police station as they felt the situation was unjust on many levels; one of which was the treatment stemming from Pun’s Chinese descent. The crowd started to grow and there were many talks from the police to the crowd to ensure that Pun was not facing brutality. However, this quickly turned violent as the crowd attacked the police station. The Phlaphlachai police station eventually caught fire and the electricity was cut. The police then replied with open fire and at least 7 people were killed from the first round of open fire. This escalated into a state-level affair, as the state had to issue

⁴⁸ Wongsurawat, 2019, pp. 140-141

⁴⁹ Wongsurawat, 2019, p. 146

a statement later on. This incident briefly shows the negative sentiment of people to the authoritarian state's actions during the Cold War, including the action to treat ethnic Chinese.⁵⁰

Apart from the “bad” Chinese facing suppressive actions, the “good” Chinese also found difficulties in dealing with the suppression of their identity. It was evident that any Chinese person, no matter how high their socioeconomic status was or even if they were politicians, if they maintained any ties with China, were persecuted and eliminated from their positions.⁵¹ According to historical records by Wongsurawat, even though “good” Chinese like leaders, entrepreneurs, and politicians were (forced to be) supportive of the Thai state's stance, openly siding with the United States proved challenging. The land of their ancestors was now run by communists, and maintaining any ties with their homeland, ethnic heritage, or even cultural background were all falling into the suspicious activity of upholding communism, and a threat to national security. Thus, if they wanted to be Thai and not targeted as a communist, they would have to have Thai surnames, Thai language-schooling, and Thai-reserved occupations.⁵² It is clear to say that being Chinese in this era was majorly suppressed, and the Chinese were forced into cultural assimilation, all a part of the Thai state's performance to the Western Camp. Here, the tools used to perform to the US alliance was Policies as a Performative Tool.

However, it is also important to note that the suppression of Chinese did not exactly last till the end of the Cold War, as even when there were anti-Chinese policies, Wongsurawat mentioned that the Thai state, under Pibulsongkram who promised the United States for anti-communist policies, still maintained “underground diplomacy” with the PRC. As a matter of fact, Wongsurawat wrote that Pibulsongkram was “completely charmed” by the then Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai. This “underground diplomacy” became mainstream in 1975, when Thailand and the PRC established formal relations under Prime Minister Kulkrit Pramoj.

⁵⁰ Wongsurawat, 2019, p. 146

⁵¹ Wongsurawat, 2019, pp. 144-145

⁵² Van Roy, 2007

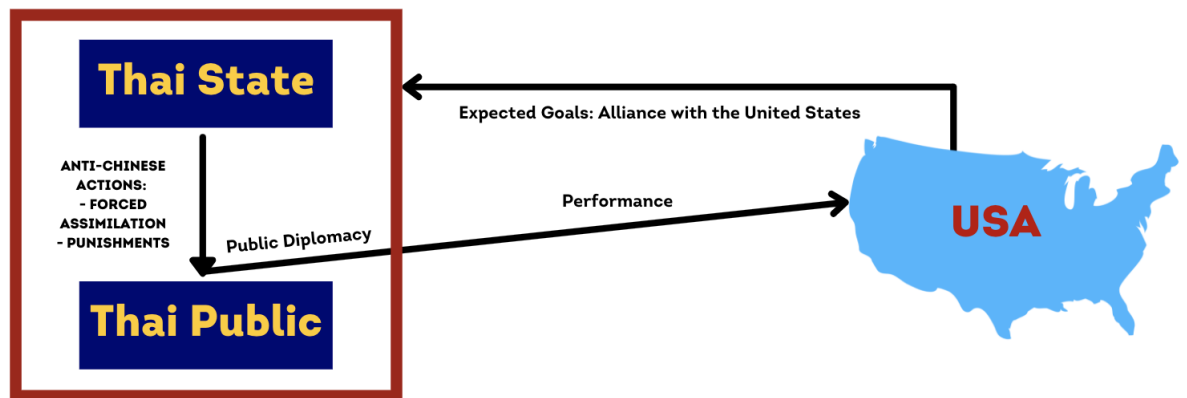


Figure 3: Thailand as a Performative State towards the United States in the Cold War

2.2.2 Performative State towards the People's Republic of China

After the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with China, the Thai state started to see the shift in Chinese policy outlook. Former Deputy Prime Minister, Korn Dabbaransi, recalls his meeting with Deng Xiaoping in 1978, where Deng told him that China is shifting its focus from “politics to economic growth”. This point is a milestone for Thailand as a performative state to China for economic opportunity. Over the next few years, Deng Xiaoping’s economic reform saw an opening up of the economy and engagements with foreign countries including Thailand. As the Chinese economy grew in the 1980s, with hard evidence like the “Shenzhen Success Story”, China from the last decade of the Cold War towards the 21st Century, was viewed very differently from the Thai state. Once again, the performative state could be a concept that analyzes Thailand’s actions towards its domestic Chineseness through the lens of Chinese communities. The post-Cold War Chinese migration to Thailand was most evident through the migration of Xinyimins to Huai Khwang. Xinyimins no longer face suppression of Chinese identity like the Cold War, and neither do the Thais of Chinese descent of the Sampheng Chinese community who were forced to assimilate during the Cold War. This is for many reasons but the lack of US pressure in the region to contain communism and, especially, the rise of China’s economy are proven to be the external factors that leads the Thai state to perform by promoting Chineseness.

Many pieces of evidence suggest that the Thai state was promoting Chineseness towards the end of the Cold War and that stance has continued to be Thailand's cultural diplomacy to the present day. In 1989, during the formal banquet of his visit to the PRC, former Prime Minister Chatchai Choochavan stated that "Thailand and China are brothers". Former Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda also expressed similar promoting Chineseness when he stated that "Thais and the Chinese have close historical bonds, which can be regarded as brothers".⁵³ These points illustrate the demonstration of Chineseness, after once suppressing them during the Cold War. The term "the Chinese and the Thais are the same family" analyzes that mutual economic benefits is a cause of why Sino-Thai relations are so strong to the point of it being coined a family.⁵⁴ The strong family relations is the reason why New Chinese Migrants or Xinyimins are comfortable to come to Thailand as well. As mentioned, the Cold War saw Thailand perform to the United States for security alliance, but the evidences show that towards the end of the Cold War, Thai state under Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan started to openly promote Chineseness by mentioning their "historical bonds", that can be analyzed as the integration of Sampheng Chinese into Thai society.

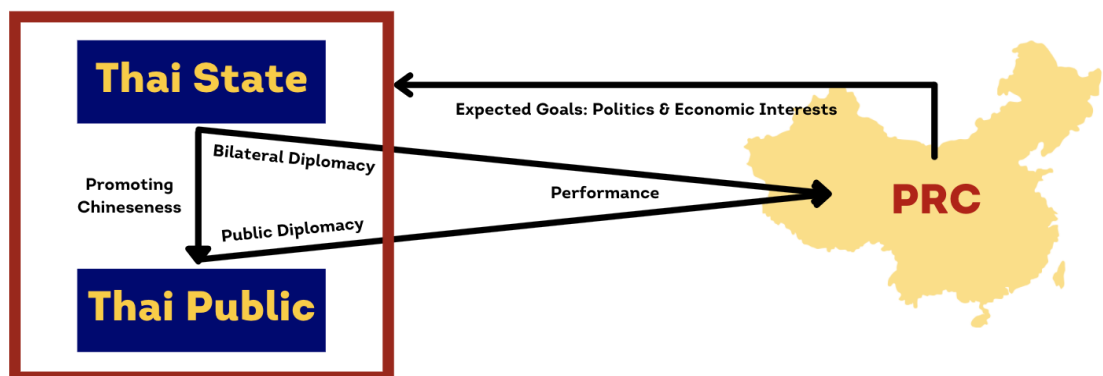


Figure 4: Thailand as a Performative State towards PRC in the 21st Century

⁵³ Busbarat, 2015

⁵⁴ Tissanavadee, 2020

2.3 Chapter Summary

The Diagram above is the conceptual framework that has been adapted from Peter Jackson's Performative State. Thailand as a performative state towards the People's Republic of China in the 21st Century is done through promoting Chineseness in both public and bilateral settings. There are two arrows showing the "performance" of the Thai state in promoting Chineseness. The first arrow is directed from the Thai state to the Thai public, where the Chineseness portrayed is reflected as a performance of using Chineseness to the PRC, via the arrow of public diplomacy. The second arrow from the Thai state is directed to the PRC, which are the various bilateral events that uphold Chineseness from the Thai state. Both arrows directed towards the PRC show Thailand's performance of Chineseness with an expected goal in return.

This framework is an adapted version of the original performative state concept of Jackson. Peter Jackson's model of performance was a top-down public diplomacy, on performing on the public towards the western power. However, with Thailand as a performative state to China in the 21st century, the research finds that the Thai state has been performing Chineseness both through the original way of public diplomacy as the model suggests, but also with addition of bilateral diplomacy directly towards the PRC. This is one element that Thailand as a performative state to China differs from Thailand as a performative state to the western powers during the colonial era.

CHAPTER III: THE PERFORMANCE

3.1 Chapter Introduction

After laying out why Chineseness is used as Thai cultural diplomacy, this section of the chapter aims to illustrate how Chineseness is being used in Thai cultural diplomacy, through findings of document analysis and interviews. This chapter will lay out the Chinese events, speeches, initiatives etc., from the Thai state in both public and bilateral settings, due to different actors overseeing different arenas. The Thai state actors are the Thai Government, Royal Family, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. For the government and royal family, the research was not able to conduct interviews with them, thus, the data from these two actors will come from document analysis. As for the remaining three, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism Authority of Thailand, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the findings will come from both document analysis and interviews.

3.2 How is Chineseness being used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy

Chineseness in public diplomacy and bilateral diplomacy refers to the events, speeches, and any other actions of the Thai state that present Chineseness in a public setting, and a bilateral meeting between the two nations, respectively. As the conceptual framework of Performative state, previously, illustrates that the performance of promoting Chineseness is, whether public or directly bilateral to the Chinese state, has the agenda of getting recognition from the Chinese state to gather the expected goal of economic opportunities. Several events from various state actors who are involved with Chineseness and cultural diplomacy where Chineseness is celebrated, for a better Bangkok-Beijing relation.

3.2.1 Government

Chinese New Year is one of the most prominent public diplomacy events, where Chineseness is portrayed. Different state actors have different roles in promoting the event. The most renowned Chinese New Year celebration in Thailand is the Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebration, which is attended by the likes of the

Princess of Thailand and state officials from both the Thai and Chinese sides, which was first officially organized in 2005. However, the research also shows the evolution of Chinese New Year celebrations over the years and the different platforms used for this important Chinese cultural event in Thailand.

Firstly, analyzing the government as a state actor, the role of this actor towards Chinese New Year celebrations are mostly seen through the Chinese New Year wishes of the Prime Ministers, past and present.

Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister	Message
Thaksin Shinawatra	<i>“Xin jia yu yi xin ni huad cai, Happy Chinese New Year to all Thai brothers and sisters”</i> ⁵⁵
Prayuth Chan-O-Cha	<i>“For this Chinese New Year, I invite all the sacred spirits to bless our Chinese brothers and sisters, as well as Thais of Chinese descent. May you have strong hearts and minds, and be blessed with fortune, merit, and happiness in all aspects of your life.”</i> ⁵⁶
Abhisit Vejjajiva	<i>“I am very happy that yesterday I got the opportunity to meet with Thais of Chinese descent shopping at Yaowarat during the Chinese New Year celebrations, 新正如意 新年发财”</i>

Table 3: Prime Ministers’ Chinese New Year wishes

The Chinese New Year Wishes show from past and present Prime Ministers show that the government celebrates Chineseness and both Thais of Chinese descent and Chinese people in the PRC are represented in the wishes. However, the way the wishes are being conveyed is through either the usage of “xin nian kuai le/ chun jie

⁵⁵ Post Today, 2010

⁵⁶ Daily News, 2021

kuai le” (Mandarin) or “xin jia yu yi xin ni huad chai” (Teochiu dialect). The symbolism of these distinct Chineseness will be analyzed in the discussion. Yet, what can be analyzed from these Chinese New Year wishes is that the various public speeches from the Head of Government on this occasion shows that Chinese New Year is considered a significant event from the view of the Thai state. Moreover, the message that addresses both the “Thais of Chinese descent”, “Thai brothers and sisters”, and the “Chinese brothers and sisters”, show that the Thai state is glorifying the closeness of the Sino-Thai relations by presenting that Thailand and China are like a family, thus, the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family”.

Apart from the Chinese New Year wishes, the government has also upheld Chineseness by making Chinese New Year a national holiday for 2021. Post Today article reads.

According to the Working Group to study and determine the holidays for the year 2021, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Witsanu Krea-
Ngam, a total of 24 holidays are included, with the addition of a special public holiday on February 12, 2021, which is the Chinese New Year. This is the first time that the Chinese New Year holiday was announced as a public holiday.⁵⁷

There are bilateral events, in which government actors celebrate Chinese culture, either directly addressing the Chinese state in bilateral meetings or promoting Chineseness in China themselves. A notable figure in Chinese cultural promotion from the Thai government side is former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The former Prime Minister who served in office from 2001 to 2006 has used Chineseness as a tool for cultural diplomacy, mainly bilaterally. However, the former Prime Minister is a rather special case, as he is a Thai of Chinese descent himself, thus using his own identity as a political tool. One such incident was his visit to his ancestral home in 2005. Prior to the visit in 2005, Thaksin’s agenda on economic regionalism was clear. There were existing regionalist policies with China like “Asia for Asians Mindset”, where Thaksin proposed the idea to then Chinese Prime Minister Zhu

⁵⁷ Post Today, 2020

Rongji, which emphasized preferential treatment for economic cooperation with Asian countries like India and China, rather than the United States.⁵⁸ Thaksin has also openly stated since his being prime minister that the Sino-Thai Relations were sure to bring mutual benefits, and that the two countries should cooperate closely to keep norms and order in the region.⁵⁹ Even though the cooperation emphasizes economic ties, the actions of the Thai state goes over economic policies, but also cultural diplomacy analyzed by identity politics. Two years prior to the visit to his ancestral home, Thaksin visited Beijing, where he met with Vice-President Hu Jintao. In a video from AP Archive, Hu Jintao expresses that “China is the most important cooperative partner of Thailand in Asia”, to which Thaksin responded, “We even look the same”, playing to his Chinese roots for diplomacy.⁶⁰ This event and the aforementioned emphasis of Sino-Thai relations and regionalism, can be analyzed as the agenda for why Thaksin would want to track down and eventually visit his ancestral home in Taxia Village, Fengshun Township, Meizhou, China.

It was almost like a performance on how diplomacy worked here, where Thaksin shook hands with 11 of his uncle’s relatives, spoke some phrases of the local dialect with them, and praised the Hakka cuisine prepared by them for him.⁶¹ This was an organized visit, and all the reactions of Thaksin as a representative of the Thai State spoke volume on what he thought of Chinese culture. Upon being interviewed, the then Prime Minister, emphasized the symbolism of his visit, linking himself to identity politics. “When the Chinese people see a Thai leader and so many entrepreneurs come to China to pay homage to the place where their ancestors once lived, they will understand that the Thais and Chinese are from one family, and they are relatives,” said Thaksin to Xinhua.⁶² In 2018, Thaksin revisited his ancestral home with another former Prime Minister and his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra.

⁵⁸ McCargo & Pathmanand, 2005

⁵⁹ Xinhua, 2001

⁶⁰ AP Archive, 2003

⁶¹ China Daily, 2005

⁶² China Daily, 2005



Figure 5: (left) Thaksin's visit to ancestral home in 2005. (right) Thaksin and Yingluck visit 2018

The former Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak is another prominent figure in Sino-Thai relations, and he was no stranger to Chineseness promotion. During a video released by the Tourism Authority of Thailand titled “Welcome to Thailand”, the then Deputy Prime Minister promoted Thai tourism by saying:

I am Song Qi Fu Zhongli (Mandarin: Somkid Deputy PM) and I welcome all Chinese people to travel to Thailand with their families and loved ones. All Thai people are ready to provide happiness to Chinese as siblings. The Chinese and the Thais are the same family.



Figure 6: Former DPM Somkid Jatusripitak saying “中泰一家亲”

The Former Deputy Prime Minister Somkid also stated and emphasized the long-lasting close relations with China in several bilateral meetings. During the

“Thailand-China Business Forum 2018: Comprehensive Strategic Partnership through the Belt and Initiative and the EEC”, Jatusripitakl stated:

China and Thailand have had a long-standing relationship for more than two thousand years. The tight ties between the two countries have led to deep friendships that are close by blood, culture and people, and are sparking new dynamics.

Somkid Jatusripitak is mostly involved with economic cooperation with China, yet cultural aspects can be read between the lines of his diplomacy. Like the aforementioned quote at the Thailand-China Business Forum 2018, is the opening remarks of welcoming the Chinese state officials like State Councilor Wang Yong to Thailand for talks on enhancing cooperation between businesses of the Chinese BRI and businesses of the Thai EEC. The event is of economic diplomacy, yet, starting off bilateral events with citing the long ties of China and Thailand, through “blood, culture, and people”, is referring to the Chinese communities present in Thailand for a long time. Using these cultural dimensions for economic gains illustrates how Thailand is a performative state to China throughout the 21st Century. This same way of portraying Chineseness through bilateral meetings is also seen by the Prime Minister, Mr. Prayuth Chan-O-Cha. Commencing the 45th Anniversary of Sino-Thai relations, the Thai Prime Minister included the history of Chinese diaspora in Thailand and how the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” represented the unbreakable bond of China and Thailand.⁶³ The Prime Minister stated:

Looking back on the path of friendship and cooperation between Thailand and China, it is special that both countries share precious memories and go through difficult times together. This has helped forge a close and deep bond between Thailand and China that extends beyond the central government relations. It has also expanded to the provincial government, the private sector, civil society, and our people.

⁶³ MFA, 2020

This special relationship is perfectly suited to the Chinese saying, “中泰一家亲” (the Chinese and the Thais are the same family).

3.2.2 Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture is another significant state actor, when it comes to using Chineseness as public cultural diplomacy, especially through Chinese New Year's. When the Foreign Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture was asked on what is the significance of the Thai state organizing Chinese cultural events like the Chinese New Year's, Treechada Aunruen, the Director stated:

We have a lot of Chinese identity present in Thai culture through the integrated communities. We must recognise this point because when there are these traditions, Thais of Chinese descent also follow them. When there are festivals like ancestral worship, a lot of our staff also take leave on such holidays to a point that it has now become a part of Thai culture. When Chinese culture affects the way of life of Thais (portion of Thais), it is a shared value, so it is important to both countries.

In terms of Chinese New Year, the Ministry of Culture is not in charge of co-organizing the most famous Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations, which has been taking place since 2005. Thus, one might wonder what the so-called Ministry of Culture does with Chineseness, culture and identity. The Ministry of Culture has been presenting Chinese New Year Wishes through videography since 2018. Over the last four years (2018-2021), the Ministry utilizes the Chinese zodiac signs and Chinese proverbs to wish Thais of Chinese descent and the Chinese people, on the occasion of Chinese New Year. The videos majorly consist of three major parts. First, a cultural performance of Chinese and Thai cultures, and at times, interexchange. Second, the Minister of Culture wishes Thais and Chinese in Thai. Lastly, the Minister of Culture continues the Chinese New Year wishes of similar meaning in Mandarin Chinese. Here are the original wishes from the videos from 2018 to 2021, uploaded to youtube under the official channel of “Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture”:

Year	Speech	Translation
2018 ⁶⁴	<p>ขออวยพรให้ทุกท่านสุขสันต์วันปีใหม่อจีน ปีจอนี้ เฮงๆ รวยๆ มีสุขภาพที่แข็งแรง</p> <p>คิดสิ่งใดขอให้สมความปรารถนา ราบรื่นทุกประการ</p> <p>มิตรภาพไทย-จีน ยั่งยืนสถาพร</p> <p>祝大家春节快乐 狗年汪汪 身体健康 万事如意 事事顺利 最后祝泰中友谊 万古长青 亲上加亲 新年快乐</p>	<p>I wish you all a Happy Chinese New Year. This year of the dog may everyone be lucky and rich. May all your wishes come true. Finally, I wish for a long-lasting Thai Chinese friendship.</p>
2019 ⁶⁵	<p>ขออวยพรให้ทุกท่านสุขสันต์วันปีใหม่อจีน ปีภุณนี้ เฮงๆ รวยๆ มีสุขภาพที่แข็งแรง</p> <p>คิดสิ่งใดขอให้สมความปรารถนา ราบรื่นทุกประการ</p> <p>มิตรภาพไทย-จีน ยั่งยืนสถาพร</p> <p>猪年到猪年好 祝愿大家 猪年快乐 大吉大利 事事如意 岁岁平安 是福绵绵 财运滚滚 最后祝愿泰中两国国泰民安 友谊长裙</p>	<p>I wish you all a Happy Chinese New Year. This year of the pig may everyone be lucky and rich. May all your wishes come true. Finally, I wish for a long-lasting Thai Chinese friendship.</p>
2020 ⁶⁶	<p>สุขสันต์วันปีใหม่อจีน พ.ศ. 2563</p> <p>ผมขอให้ปีหนูแห่งความโชคดีของทุกท่านขอให้ทุกท่านมีความสุขสมหวังโชคดีร่ำรวย</p> <p>新的一年新的一岁 新的希望 愿你事业有成 大吉大利 祝大家新年快乐 2020 鼠年吉祥 春节快乐</p>	<p>Happy Chinese New Year 2020, I wish you a very lucky year of the Rat. Wish you all happiness, good luck, and wealth.</p>

⁶⁴ MOC, 2018

⁶⁵ MOC, 2019

⁶⁶ MOC, 2020

2021 ⁶⁷	<p>เนื่องในโอกาสวันตรุษจีน 2564 ปีฉลูทอง กระผมขออวยพรให้ชาวจีนและชาวไทยเชื้อสายจีนสุขภาพ พพลานามัยสมบูรณ์แข็งแรงพร้อมด้วยทรัพย์สินเงินทอง คิดสิ่งใดขอให้สมความปรารถนาทุกประการครับ</p> <p>今年春节来临之际，我向中国人和泰国华人祝福。祝大家身体健康，恭喜发财，万事如意。</p>	<p>On the occasion of Chinese New Year 2021, the year of the Golden Ox, I would like to wish Chinese people and Thais Of Chinese descent good health and wealth. May all your wishes come true.</p>
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Table 4: Ministry of Culture's Chinese New Year wishes



Figure 7: Officials from MOC celebrate Chinese New Year

The videos received quite a high number of engagements. Its inaugural year, 2018, saw the views go up as high as over 150,000 views on youtube, a rather high number of views for official cultural videos on youtube. The 2021 version of the video also saw a virtual set up, adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Ministry of Culture, the necessity of these events is mostly to represent Thailand's cultural diversity to the Thai public. Treechada Aunruen and Chinnapong Chullanandana from Foreign Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture states:

The Ministry does not view Chinese culture as beneficial to any stakeholder. We view promoting Chineseness as a way of respecting diversity in cultures, and space for cultural expression. This is to accommodate the general public and also to the Chinese state, cultural

⁶⁷ MOC, 2021

presentation should be as inclusive as possible. When people learn about the culture of a country it could lead to interest in that country that could lead to tourism, and vice versa, if Chinese learn that Thailand is promoting Chineseness, it could lead to more tourism and other economic opportunities for Thailand. The Ministry views that promoting Chinese culture is all positive.

According to interviews with the Ministry of Culture, the research also finds that the Ministry of Culture also has a department that supports various events initiated by community level. Findings from interviews with the Department of Cultural Promotions, Ministry of Culture, suggest that many Chinese events are ideologically initiated by Thai Chinese communities around the country. The role of the Department of Cultural Promotions is to oversee support, whether it is financial, location, or otherwise. For instance, the Department mentioned the instance where the Department of Cultural Promotions, under the Ministry of Culture promoted the "Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market/ Walking Street " in Chonburi's Chinese community. In August 2020, Mr. Itthiphol Khunpluem, Minister of Culture of Thailand, was the keynote speaker for the inauguration of the Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Walking Street. Him and the Ministry of Culture were invited by the Baan Sak Ngaew Chinese community association to inaugurate the event to get media recognition and coverage. Moreover, prior to the inauguration, the Ministry of Culture also funded the event as it was in accordance with the allocation of the Ministry's policy implementation budget.⁶⁸ Simply, many events are funded by the Ministry of Culture, but ideally they were initiated by other sectors like the Chinese communities.

⁶⁸ Kaoded Online, 2021



Figure 8: Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market (Centre) Thai Minister of Culture.

In terms of bilateral settings, the Ministry of Culture does not directly uphold Chineseness, but rather uses Thainess as cultural exchanges with China. When asked about the events that the Department of Cultural Promotions does concerning Chineseness, the research received a compilation of events over the last two years, where China invited the Ministry of Culture to participate in. From 2019-2021, here are the event list that Thailand's Ministry of Culture was invited to participate or send performers to China, courtesy of the Chinese State:

Dialogue of Asian Civilization: Held in Beijing between May and June 2019, the Dialogue of Asian Civilization was an event held to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The event invited many countries across Asia and required the Ministry of Culture of Thailand to send several participants. Firstly, the Department of Cultural Promotions coordinated Khon artisans and Benjarong handicrafts to participate in the semi-event called Asian Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition—Civilization & Craftsmanship Spirit. Secondly, traditional Thai dancers were coordinated to represent Thailand at the Asian Civilizations Grand Parade.

Silk Road International League of Theatres 2019 Annual Conference: The Silk Road International League of Theatres invited a representative from the Ministry of Culture of Thailand to join the said event held at Quanzhou and Guangzhou, where

Chinese cultural heritage from the historical silk road will be exhibited, as well as cultural performances in the Chinese International Performing Arts Fair.

3rd China International Import Expo (CIIE): Held in Shanghai between 5 - 10 November 2020, the event invited officials from the Ministry of Culture of Thailand to attend and bring with them Thai Intangible Cultural Heritages to exhibit in the expo to promote cultural exchanges between Thailand and China.

4th Maritime Silk Road International Arts Festival: Held in Quanzhou from 25 - 30 November 2020, the Ministry of Culture was invited to send Thai cultural performers to the event as a display of cultural exchanges amongst many countries invited.

All these aforementioned events are cooperation initiated by the Chinese state to invite the Ministry of Culture of Thailand to display Thainess. Thus, the events show that much work between the Department of Cultural Promotion of the Ministry of Culture and the Chinese state are to coordinate the promotion of Thainess through Thai performers, State officials, and Thai intangible cultural heritages. There has not been mention of Chineseness in this aspect of cultural diplomacy done by the Department of Cultural Promotions.

As far as bilateral cultural diplomacy between China and Thailand is concerned, the two also have a few binding documents to officiate the cultural cooperations. According to an interview with the Bilateral Affairs Group, Foreign Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture, Thailand, and China have two agreements and one executive program to ensure the cultural exchanges between the two countries. The first agreement titles, “Agreement of Cultural Cooperation between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the People’s Republic of China”, fundamentally addresses that both parties shall promote culture through fields like performing arts, language and literature, education, mass media, sports, youth activities, and religious affairs, to ensure equal and mutual benefits. Moreover, the Agreement addresses that the actions shall be reciprocal, ensuring that both Thailand and China have an equal representation of respective cultures. This agreement also can be analyzed to explain why Thailand must promote Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy, as the country also expects China to facilitate the promotion of Thainess in the Chinese setting. The second agreement on culture

between the two countries is to set up cultural centers in each country. However, as of 2021, Thailand is yet to set up a Thai Cultural Center in China, whilst China Cultural Center in Bangkok has been operating since 2012. This also reflects the more immediate importance of Chineseness present in Thailand, from the Thai state view, and the lesser importance stretched upon the facilitating of promoting Thainess from the Chinese side.

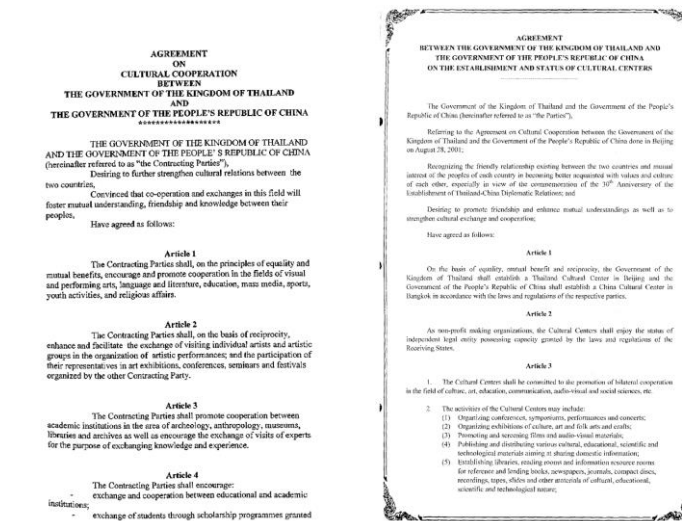


Figure 9: Two cultural Agreements with China

Apart from the broader agreement, the two states also have an agreed upon executive program titled, “Executive Program for Cultural Cooperation for the Years 2019-2021 between the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China and the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Thailand”. The Executive Program mandates:

1. Frequent personnel exchanges.
2. Increasing exchange and cooperation between cultural institutions, groups, and enterprises.
3. Enrich and enhance Chinese New Year Celebrations.
4. Encourage intellectuals and scholars to research in sinology and hold dialogues on sinology and contemporary China.
5. Work together to coordinate regional and cultural cultural cooperation.
6. Support celebrations of the 45th anniversary of Thailand-China diplomatic ties in 2020.

7. For the cultural exchanges, the sending party will cover their international travel expenses and personal medical insurance, and the receiving party will cover local expenses like accommodation and transportation, or as agreed upon on a case-by-case basis.
8. Details concerning the implementation will be settled by the Parties.
9. During the implementation, cases of readjustments can be made through consultations by the Parties.
10. This Executive Program will take effect upon signing (2019) and remain in force until 31st December 2021.

From the mandates of the Executive Program, the research views that Chineseness is more prioritized. While many of the mandates are in fact general cultural exchange programs, number 3-4 of the Program suggests that both parties are to be a part of Chineseness promotion, through Chinese New Year events and academic promotion of sinology. The official documents of two Agreements and an Executive Program is one of the fundamentals why and how Thailand should promote Chineseness, especially through the Ministry of Culture.

3.2.3 Tourism Authority of Thailand

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) demonstrates Chineseness through many events in coordination with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Cultural Center in Bangkok, and also various Thai Chinese Associations. This may also be interesting because the said organizations from the Chinese side are supposed to be cooperating mostly with the Ministry of Culture. The Chinese Cultural Center in Bangkok is even a product of the Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of Thailand and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China. Yet, many events that show usage of Chineseness are co-hosted by the Chinese state and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The findings from the interview with the Krittiga Chumyawong from the Tourism Authority of Thailand explains why the unlikely cooperation is taking place.

It is without a doubt that China should be in charge of initiating events that promote Chinese culture, but at most times, Chinese Embassy always contacts TAT to co-host or organize these events. Sometimes we are reluctant because they do not have tourism prospects, but we must still cooperate. There are times I wonder if the Ministry of Culture would be more suited for these corporations and events, but the Chinese embassy always contacts us, with the reason that we work faster than other departments.

The reason that the Tourism Authority of Thailand works “faster” than the Ministry of Culture is assumed from several factors. The TAT is a state enterprise, while the MOC is a state agency. State enterprises have a lesser bureaucratic system than state agencies and could prove to be less political and more efficient. Thus, these elements may prove why the Chinese state agencies approach the Tourism Authority of Thailand for more projects that use Chineseness to co-host.

The most distinct and renowned project that TAT organizes using Chineseness is the Yaowarat Chinese New Year Celebrations. The project is so impactful, that the guest list of the annual events for the past couple of years include HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the Minister of Culture and Tourism of China, and various other government officials from both countries, making the event a mixture of both Public and Bilateral Diplomacy. Thus, a prime example of Thailand’s performance that China recognizes. The Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand first dates to 2005. According to the experienced Deputy Director of TAT (Shanghai Office), who were working with TAT during the inaugural year of the event, the creation of the renowned event is a result of the development of Sino-Thai relations and also to boost people-to-people exchanges.

Chinese New Year celebrations is considered one of the most important events of TAT’s involvement with Chinese culture. It is because it is considered “golden week” for Chinese tourists to travel. We utilize this period to attract the Chinese people who are on holiday to spend time in Thailand. It is an opportunity to stimulate the

economy for Chinese tourism in Thailand. The first TAT-event was in 2005. During the 2000s, the Thai-Chinese relations were booming with various diplomatic visits from both states. So, there was a discussion to bring in the Chinese New Year Celebrations as a “win-win” cultural exchange. Thai people go to China and Chinese come to Thailand.

The question is rather how the TAT uses Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy during this golden week to drive the Thai economy. According to interview findings, Krittiga Chumyawong says that about three weeks prior to the events, the Deputy Governor of TAT travels to at least three Chinese cities to pick out the Chinese performances like lion dances, himself. Before travelling, the deputy governor will ask the Chinese embassy, which Chinese city has interesting Chinese performances, where the Embassy will provide a list of Chinese cultural performances by city. During these visits, the Deputy Governor will also find opportunities to speak with local politicians. Thus, each year will see different portrayals of Chinese cultural performances. For instance, in 2019, cultural performances from seven provinces were picked. These include acrobats from Shanxi, puppet shows from Fujian, and traditional Chinese dances from Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang and Qiandongnan. From Shandong alone, there are Chinese opera shows, traditional dances, acrobats and martial art (Kung Fu) exhibitions.⁶⁹ From these findings, the research gathers that even though TAT goes out to discuss and picks performances for Chinese New Year celebrations in Yaowarat, yet the Chinese state also has power over the Chineseness portrayed in Thailand’s most famous Chinese New Year. According to the government’s public relations department, in 2020 TAT expects Thailand to welcome 1,016,000 visitors and generate 21.7 billion baht in revenue, representing a 1.5 percent and 1.6 percent increase, respectively, when compared to the same period in 2019. Chinese arrivals are expected to reach 312,000 visitors and generate 8.4 billion baht in revenue, both representing an increase of 2 percent.⁷⁰

Chinese New Year celebrations in Thailand are not only limited to Yaowarat road. TAT also holds similar celebrations across Thailand, and the reason each area is

⁶⁹ TAT, 2019

⁷⁰ TPRD, 2020

picked to organize Chinese New Year Celebrations is either because it is a popular Chinese tourist destination, or the area is concentrated with Thais of Chinese descent. The other areas include Chiang Mai, Nakhon Sawan, Suphan Buri, Ratchaburi, Ayutthaya, Phetchaburi, Nakhon Ratchasima, Udon Thani, Trang, Chon Buri, Songkhla (Hat Yai), and Phuket. The celebrations in this area are similar to that of Yaowarat Chinese New Year, with Chinese cultural performances interexchange with Thai culture. Most of the aforementioned Chinese New Year venues tend to incline towards a more older culture performances like Chinese operas, dance troupe, Chao Pho-Chao Mae Pak Nam Pho and Chao Mae Kuan-im (Guanyin), acrobatic performances, dragon parades, lion dances and Chinese Gods parades.⁷¹ However, TAT also stays updated on the changing Chineseness as 2019 marked its first year in organizing “Chinese New Year for newer generations”, held at Bangkok’s younger hotspot, Siam Square. The “Chinese New Year for newer generations” is different from other celebrations of the events as it highlights the newer Chinese identity and way of life, citing similarity to that of Huai Khwang Chinese identity. From inviting performances like Chinese boy band “The Untamed”, Chineseness in Thailand is portrayed to also consist of modernity and electronic music, rather than just the pre-existing operas and dragon dances. According to an interview with the Deputy Director of TAT (Shanghai Office), the newer Chinese identity portrayals at Siam Square Chinese New Year event was once again partly credited to the Chinese State’s choice of portraying Chinese culture.



Figure 10: The Untamed at “Chinese New Year for newer generations”

⁷¹ TAT, 2020

The “Chinese New Year for newer generations” also saw the Chinese state bringing a Chinese youngster from the series “The Untamed” to perform. Of course, all these new Chineseness were selected and offered by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and we just allow them to be represented in accordance with the Chinese Strategy. I think this strategy of showcasing new Chineseness is also important to the newer Chinese people in Thailand, many of whom are studying or working. The event was quite successful in terms of engagement, as there were a lot of people in the audience, both Thais and Chinese.

The Deputy Director also stated that the event at Siam Square also shows old Chinese traditions portrayed in technologically advanced platforms. For instance, the tradition of giving “hongbao” or Chinese red envelopes filled with money that are given to friends and families on Chinese New Year is a tradition that dates back to as old as the Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD). However, hongbao in China is being digitized and are now being sent through social media platforms like Wechat and Weibo. The Deputy Director states that Chinese New Year for younger generations showcases this changing Chinese traditions.

The main characteristics of those Chinese New Year Celebrations in the early years, were mostly invited Chinese performances. However, in the past 5 years, we are seeing more involvement of social media and technological advancement as a way of promoting Chineseness. TikTok is also used to promote these events. We are seeing technological advancements of China as a part of Chinese cultural promotion as well. “Chinese New Year for new generations” showcases Chinese culture that is a current way of life for newer generations of Chinese like the Chinese “virtual hongbao” sent through Wechat.

Apart from Chinese New Year, TAT also boast itself in hosting several other events that uses Chineseness as a way to attract tourism and stimulate Thai economy.

According to interview findings, the following are the major events that TAT organizes or co-organizes with the Chinese state to promote Chineseness:

Mooncake Festival: Mooncake Festival or the Mid-Autumn Festival is the second most important holiday in China, second to the Chinese New Year. It is the holiday for family gatherings and eating mooncakes or stuffed cookies with patterns on the surface. During the festival, people sacrifice these cookies to the moon as offerings, eat them for celebration and present them to relatives and friends for good wishes.⁷² The TAT officers mentioned two major Mooncake Festivals organized by TAT are the edition held in Pattaya in 2019, and Bangkok in 2020. The event includes chefs teaching audiences how to bake mooncakes, and interactive experiences for audiences to make mooncakes themselves. The event partners with the Chinese state actors, namely China Cultural Center in Bangkok and the China Travel Services (CTS) to ensure that Chinese culture is represented according to the Chinese state and that Chinese tourists are allocated to the event, respectively.⁷³



Figure 11: The Governor of TAT at the Mooncake Festival

Thailand-China Friendship Caravan: This event involves state officials from both Thailand and China jointly travelling by road from Kunming, Yunnan Province down to Northern Thailand. According to the Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, “The objective of this event is to strengthen Thai-Chinese relations and promote culture and tourism between the two countries. This is achieved through a

⁷² Gunawan, 2017

⁷³ Thansettakij, 2019

specially designed route and activities of the caravan trip. It helps build Thailand's positive tourism image and gives confidence to Chinese tourists. This time we are targeting visitors from China's secondary cities."⁷⁴ With that in mind, the car rally visited several towns, cities, and villages in southern China on its way to Thailand. Peacock dance, Hulusi music (The cucurbit flute) and the 'Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group' performance, a UNESCO-listed Intangible Cultural Heritage listing, were all the Chineseness portrayed by China, whilst Thailand portrayed Northern Thai and Isaan Cultural performances.⁷⁵



Figure 12: The Summoning of Mazu Goddess to Bangkok in 2019

Summoning of Mazu Goddess Statue to Bangkok: Mazu (妈祖) Goddess or เจ้าแม่ทับทิม (*Jao Mae Tubtim*) is believed to be over 1,000 years old, and is worshipped for prosperity and safe travels by sea in China and Chinese diasporas around the world, Thailand included. In November 2019, the Tourism Authority of Thailand supported the Lim Clansman Association of Thailand (along with other various Thai Chinese Associations) to summon one of the most sacred Mazu Goddess Statues from Putian, Fujian province. The event for public worshipping was from 14 to 19 November. According to the Minister of Tourism and Sports, the summoning of this legendary figure was to build friendship and illustrate the intimacy of Thai and Chinese people that shared similar belief systems for a long time. The TAT and other

⁷⁴ TAT, 2019

⁷⁵ TAT, 2019

state agencies also stated that this activity that highlights the importance of Chinese culture and traditions can be linked to the policy of Belt and Road Initiative by China, showing interconnectivity through culture.⁷⁶

3.2.4 The Royal Family of Thailand

Amongst many stakeholders that comprises the Thai state, several royal family members of Thailand are proved to be the defining actors of promoting Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy to China. Two names come up as the prominent figures of Chineseness celebrator: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Princess Debaratanarajasuda, The Princess Royal and Princess Chulabhorn, the Princess Srisavangavadhana. As the research could not access primary data with the royal family, the findings are collected through secondary data of document analysis.

1. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn is the third daughter of the late King Rama IX, and the younger sister of the current King Rama X. From a young age, the princess has been involved with Chineseness. Sirindhorn is a keen follower of China. Discourse Analysis from the documents and interviews suggests that the princess got into Chineseness from her childhood exposure to Chineseness, including a belief system installed by the current Queen Mother that Chinese people are comprehensive learners and researchers. In an interview with Xinhua, the princess stated, “I have known China as a country from a very young age. Although Thailand had yet to establish diplomatic ties with the PRC at that time, I had been able to hear the voice of New China through the radio”.⁷⁷ At the same interview she also recalled that her mother (Queen Sirikit) once said that Chinese people were “fond of reading and learning, and understanding Chinese would offer her more knowledge”, to which she agreed to the statement. Thus, her interest in Chineseness is not mainly through the cultural aspect, but from the lifestyle and education approach of Chinese people, that eventually got her to learn more about China. In 2001, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn won a scholarship to study Chinese Culture at Peking University for one

⁷⁶ Komchadluek, 2019

⁷⁷ Xinhua, 2019

month, where she was also awarded an honorary doctorate.⁷⁸ Being passionate about China from an early age to being educated at one of China’s most prestigious universities, the princess has had the most involvement with Chineseness amongst any other royal family figures and has been an important image of Thai cultural diplomacy towards China, in both public and bilateral settings. The interest of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in Chineseness may seem to be personal, but, as a member of the very much politicized Thai royal family, all her interests and actions are politicized and a matter of the state.

Being educated from Beijing, the princess’ notable works in Sino-Thai relations are mostly in the form of education and encouraging Thais to learn more about China. This is reflective in many of her initiatives. According to a research titled “Chinese cultural diplomacy towards ASEAN Countries: Case Study of Confucius Institutes in Thailand”, the princess was the key player to establish the first Confucius Institute in Bangkok at her alma mater, Chulalongkorn University in 2006. Prior to the establishment, the Confucius Institute was the main actor in spreading of Chinese language and cultural education overseas. Coming to Thailand in 2006, the Confucius Institute aimed to set up its branches in either Thammasat university or Chulalongkorn University but was initially turned down by both institutions due to fear of restricted academic freedom. After setting up its first branch in Thailand at Khon Kaen University, the Confucius Institute was re-evaluated by the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, credited to Chinese government’s close relations with Princess Sirindhorn, the alumni. In 2006, the first Confucius Institute was finally set up at Chulalongkorn University.⁷⁹

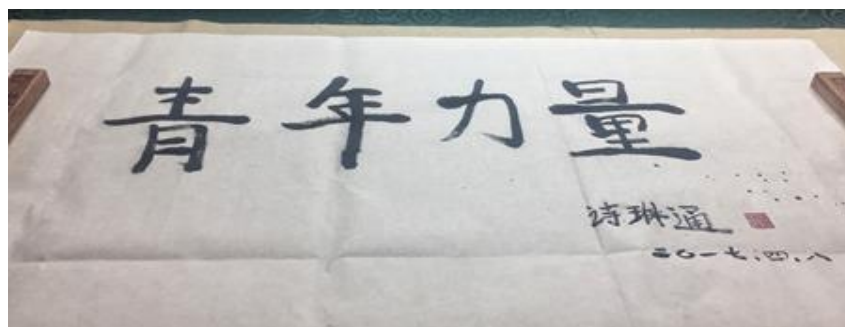


Figure 13: Princess Sirindhorn’s Chinese Calligraphy at Peking University

⁷⁸ PKU, 2012

⁷⁹ Trisanawadee, 2020

Apart from setting up Chinese education centers in Thailand, the princess is also a keen enthusiast in Chinese literature. In the field of literature in the genres of Chinese history, art, culture and way of life, the princess has written and translated a total of 13 books. Moreover, amongst her over 50 trips to China, the princess has also documented 11 books as a personal travel experience to different places all over China and its autonomous regions.

The following are the list of 24 books of both literature and travel experiences written or translated from Chinese to Thai by the princess. These literatures are mostly fictional take on Chineseness, taking place in different areas in China, through different cultural settings in China's multiculturalism. As for the travelogues, Chineseness is upheld through the princess' lens of her travel experiences in significant events she was invited to. Numbers 1-11⁸⁰ are travelogues written by the princess, and numbers 12-24⁸¹ are literature written or translated by her.

1. เมื่อข้าพเจ้าเขียนย่าแดนมังกร “Treading the Dragon Land” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
2. มุ่งไกลในรอยทราย “Forward afar the Sand Streams” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
3. โอรักคืออะไร “What is love?” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
4. เกล็ดหิมะในสายหมอก “Snowflake in the mist” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
5. ใต้เมฆที่เมฆใต้ “Under the clouds” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
6. เย็นสบายชายน้ำ “Chilling by the River” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
7. คืนถิ่นจีนใหญ่ “Back to China” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
8. เจียงหนานแสนงาม “The beautiful Jiangnan” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

⁸⁰ Bangkokbiznews, 2021

⁸¹ Chinatalks, 2021

9. เมื่อข้าพเจ้าเป็นนักเรียนนอก “When I was a foreign student” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
10. หวงเหออยู่อารยธรรม “Huanghe, the hub of civilization” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
11. ต้นน้ำ ภูเขา และป่าทราย “Watersheds, mountains, and sand forests” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
12. ศิลปะจีน “Chinese Art” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
13. มองสังคมจีนผ่านวรรณกรรม “Chinese society through the lens of literature” written by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
14. Tea House: A Play in Three Acts (translated from 茶馆 by 老舍)
15. Butterfly (translated from 蝴蝶 by 王蒙)
16. เมฆเหินน้ำไหล “Soaring cloud and flowing water” (translated from 行云流水 by 方方)
17. หมู่บ้านเล็กตระกูลเป่า “Pao’s little village” (translated from 小鲍庄 by 王安忆)
18. ไปอิ่นน่า หมู่บ้านลับลิ้มฝิ่งน้ำ “Baiyinna” (translated from 白银那 by 迟子建)
19. นารีนครา “Her city” (translated from 她的城 by 迟莉)
20. ตลอดกาลนะนานแค่ไหน “How long is forever” (translated from 永远有多远 by 铁凝)
21. ความรักใดจะไม่ปวดร้าว “What kind of love is hurtless” (translated from 哪一种爱不疼 by 川妮)
22. รอยยิ้มของน้ำตาและหัวใจ “The smile of tears and heart” (A collection of 4 short stories by 冰心, 严歌苓, 苏桥)
23. มรกต “Emerald” (translated from 祖母绿 by 张洁)

24. เพียงวันพบวันนี้ที่สำคัญ “The important day” (translated from 爱尔克的灯光 by 巴金)

Her various works in literature and travelogues over 50 visits to China proves that Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn upholds Chineseness by providing and promoting information on Chinese culture, literature, history, and way of life to the Thai public. Once again, the act may not come from a political nature, but her position is politicized, thus, all her actions are. This point is proven by the recognition of both the Thai and Chinese state of the princess, an ambassador of Sino-Thai relations. Thus, the princess is invited to many important public and bilateral settings that involve Chineseness. One such public event that the princess has been consistently involved with is the Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand since 2005. However, upon interview with the TAT, findings show that the princess was already involved with Chinese New Year celebrations at Yaowarat Chinese community even before TAT stepped in to host the event. Thus, the actual year of the princess’ involvement in the event is not known because prior to the 2005 event, the Chinese New Year Celebrations was not held by the Thai state, but the Yaowarat Association.

The princess’ involvement at the Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations from 2005 onwards was to be the guest of honor. Her duties include opening the event through speeches and new year greetings, visiting the Thai Chinese people who gathered to meet her, visiting shops exhibited during the event, etc. Here are some of the recent recollections of the princess’ role at the renowned event:

2020 Yaowarat Chinese New Year Festival: “Prosperity and Wealth in the Year of the Rat”

On 25 January 2020 at 4 pm, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided at the Krung Thai Art Gallery where she was greeted with high ranking officers like the Prime Minister of Thailand, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China. There, she watched the coerced performance of lion dance from Nakhon Sawan, who

simultaneously performed different types of lion dances, namely, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese. According to the royal news broadcasted on the 25th January 2020, the motive of the dance was to represent the harmony within the diverse Chinese diaspora in Thailand that has assimilated into Thai culture, thereby known as, Thais of Chinese descent.⁸²

The next stop for the princess was at Golden Buddha at Wat Traimit, a Buddhist temple that stood within the Sampheng Chinese community. The princess then proceeded to the Odeon Circle, where a Chinese architecture gate lies, built by Thais of Chinese descent as a celebration of the late King Rama IX's 72nd Anniversary in 1999. The gate symbolizes the gateway to Yaowarat Chinatown. This is where the princess officially opened the 2020 Yaowarat Chinatown. The Minister of Culture and Tourism of China, then, proceeded to publicly pay his respect to the princess, and the Prime Minister of Thailand presented her with souvenirs from the government on this occasion. The rest of the evening included the princess observing performances sent by the Chinese state like the Thousand-hand Bodhisattva dance performed by the Artists of China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe. After the performances, the princess moved to worship at the Guan Yin Shrine at Thian Fah Foundation, a replica of the statue that dates to the Tang Dynasty over 900 years ago. There, she was also seen interacting and chatting with Thais of Chinese descent who came out to see her. The princess, then, ended her duties with visiting the shops and foundations exhibiting Thai Chinese products in the walking street zone of the area.⁸³



Figure 14: Princess Sirindhorn at the 2020 Yaowarat Chinese New Year

The aforementioned program for the 2020 edition of the Chinese New Year is laid out through the lens of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to reflect her

⁸² Royal Office, 2020

⁸³ Royal Office, 2020

involvement with Chineseness at Chinese New Year celebrations. The event, according to TAT, has a similar flow as they have all been organized at Yaowarat road. Minor details in performances and protocols may differ from year to year, but the gist can be captured through looking at the 2020 edition of the event. Yet, on some years like the 2021 edition of the Chinese New Year, the princess will deliver a Chinese proverb to wish the Thai public a happy Chinese New Year. In 2021, the princess presented a handwritten card that said “牛气冲天” or niú qì chōng tiān. The princess also included her translation, “proud Ox climbs towards the heavens,” and explained that she wished for a prosperous economy for the Lunar New Year.⁸⁴

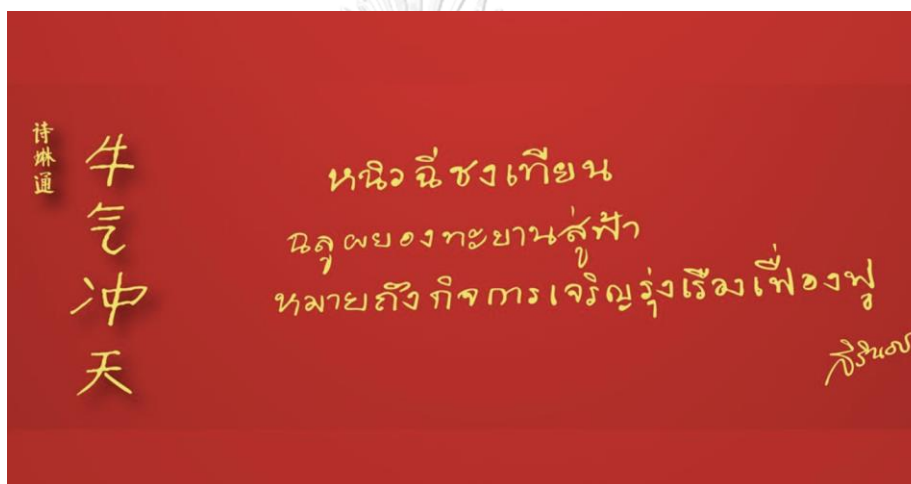


Figure 15: Princess Sirindhorn's 2021 Chinese New Year Wishes

Apart from Chinese New Year, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has also been involved with Chineseness in bilateral settings. As mentioned, the princess has visited China over 50 times and many significant visits are documented in her travelogues.

2. Princess Chulabhorn

Princess Chulabhorn is another member of the Thai royal family that consistently promotes Chineseness. She is the youngest out of the four siblings of the late King Rama IX, and is the youngest sister of the current King Rama X. Unlike Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Princess Chulabhorn's interests in Chineseness are not education and learning, but through music, especially the Chinese instrument,

⁸⁴ Royal Coastal Review, 2021

guzheng. The princess already had a musical background, being an accomplished pianist, before coming into contact with the guzheng. According to the Bangkok Post, Princess Chulabhorn first heard the instruments through a performance from the Academy of Shanghai during her cruise down China's Lijiang River in 2000.⁸⁵ In an interview with CCTV in 2005, the princess said, "When I first saw the guzheng, I thought it was the most beautiful instrument I have ever seen, and I wanted to know what they sound like. So, I hired a group of students from the Academy of Shanghai to play for me. She did not play difficult songs, but I liked the sound of the guzheng. It was very gentle and melodious."⁸⁶ Her guzheng instructor, Li Yang, recalled how she became the princess' instructor. "When the princess returned to Thailand, she submitted a request to the Chinese government, via the Thai embassy in Beijing, that a guzheng instructor be introduced to her. That's how I became her instructor," recalled Li Yang.⁸⁷



Figure 16: (left) Princess Chulabhorn giving an interview to CCTV on her first interests in guzheng. (right) The princess and her teacher, Li Yang.

After her interest was sparked, the princess organized her first guzheng concert, titled, "Two Lands, One Heart" in Thailand in 2001. This event has turned into one of the most consistent Chineseness portrayals from the Thai state, as the event has been hosted by both the countries alternately.⁸⁸ The event is named "泰中一家亲" after the famous phrase "the Chinese and the Thais are the same family". According to the CCTV interview, Princess Chulabhorn chose the renowned word to

⁸⁵ Bangkok Post, 2012

⁸⁶ CCTV, 2005

⁸⁷ CCTV, 2005

⁸⁸ Bangkok Post, 2012

express Thai and China's "brotherhood" citing the huge Chinese diaspora in Thailand. The significance of the annual event is of high magnitude when it comes to the promotion of Chineseness in Thailand. According to Li Yang, the princess' instructor, before the princess took up guzheng and performed at "Two Lands, One Heart", her work as a guzheng instructor was almost none, and she got by living in Thailand as a Chinese language teacher. However, after the princess' public concert, a lot of Thais got interested and her career as an instructor boomed. Li Yang also said that teaching guzheng in Thailand represented more than the instrument but is the promotion of "Chinese culture including literature and philosophy". Li Yang gave the example, "When teaching the piece, Su Wu Herding Sheep, I can tell the story of Su Wu. It was set against the historical background of the reign of Han Wudi of the Han Dynasty". There's another piece called Weeping for Yanhui, which is a story of Confucius."⁸⁹



Figure 17: "Two Lands, One Heart" Concert

The similarity that the two princesses have towards Chineseness in the sense that both political figures met Chineseness through personal interests. Yet, through personal interests, both princesses' actions represent a political act that can be translated through cultural diplomacy. This is owing to their positions as a member of the royal family and what they represent in Thai politics.

⁸⁹ CCTV, 2005

3.2.5 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

Unlike many Thai state agencies presented here, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not organize events or initiatives that promote Chineseness in both public and bilateral settings. According to findings from the Worawut Chawengkiat, Counsellor at the Department of Information, MFA, “cultural diplomacy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is promoted through two main divisions, the Cultural Diplomacy Division, and the Embassies and Consulates overseas. In the eyes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cultural diplomacy is the promotion of Thainess and finding ways to advertise Thailand to other countries. Thus, Chineseness is not promoted through the initiatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ cultural diplomacy. This is because the MFA’s agenda is mainly looking at the political relations of those countries.” However, the reason that the MFA is chosen as one of the state actors that is involved with Chineseness is because, though they do not intentionally initiate promoting Chineseness events, the Ministry has the most dynamic relations directly with the Chinese state, through bilateral meetings and events. Moreover, one phrase that stands out as a way of promoting Chineseness by the MFA in a bilateral setting is the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” (中泰一家亲) or “ไทยจีนใช้ชื่ออื่นไกลเป็นพี่น้องกัน.

During the Reception for the 45th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China in 2020. Mr. Attayuth Srisamut, the Ambassador of Thailand to the PRC stated, “The two countries have been in relations for more than 700 years since the Sukhothai period of Thailand and the Yuan Dynasty of China. Therefore, at present, the people of the two countries have a deep and close relationship, Thus, the saying “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family.” This was said as the ending to the opening speech of the event. Prior to the aforementioned quote, the Ambassador stated that Thais and Chinese have to continue to trust each other, especially in times like the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a testament that Thais and Chinese are brother and sisters (Thai translation for “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” is พี่น้อง which means brothers and sisters).⁹⁰ The event was

⁹⁰ MFA, 2020

attended by high-ranking officials of the Chinese state like Mr. Luo Zhaohui, Deputy Foreign Minister of China.

The Royal Thai Consulate-General at Nanning also released a video to encourage support for Sino-Thai trade during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The Counsel-General was seen giving words of encouragement through a speech, where she starts with, “The Chinese and the Thais are the same family! Last year we got through COVID-19 together and through the 45 years of diplomatic relations, we have had great cooperation with each other. Our trade deals have been growing....”.⁹¹

The latest visit of Foreign Minister of Thailand, Mr. Don Pramudwinai to China on 8 June 2021, also saw both the Thai and the Chinese Foreign Minister, Mr. Wang Yi, reiterating that both states are defined by the relations that “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family”. The bilateral meeting that took place mainly focused on the promotion of their respective agendas and interconnectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative. Yet, the phrase still managed to be used as cultural diplomacy in the said event.⁹² Through the numerous bilateral meetings of the MFA Thailand and China in the 21st Century, the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” has been used to enhance cooperation on numerous occasions.



Figure 18: Thai Foreign Minister and Chinese State Councillor meet in 2021. The news report was headlined “Same Family”

Even though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been using the phrase in bilateral settings with China on many occasions, other state sectors have also expanded usage of the phrase in many events like public settings as well. As

⁹¹ Royal Thai Consulate-General Nanning, 2021

⁹² Matichon, 2021

mentioned earlier on how the government uses Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, Mr. Somkid Jatusripitak has said the phrase in his campaign speech to promote Thai tourism with the TAT. The Ministry of Culture, in April 2021, had also used the phrase in their event “ด้วยรักและผูกพัน สายสัมพันธ์ จีน - ไทย ใช้อื่นไกลพี่น้องกัน” (Translation: With love and bond, the Chinese and the Thais are the same family) that celebrates the long standing cultures and exchanges between Thailand and China.⁹³ The phrase is also used by the Chinese state on numerous occasions like when the China Cultural Centre in Bangkok produced a song to commemorate the two cultures titled, “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family/ จีนไทยใช้อื่นไกล พี่น้องกัน”.⁹⁴ Thus, the phrase is not only used for cultural agenda but there is an underlying politics behind the phrase that will be talked about in Chapter V of this research.



Figure 19: Ambassador of Thailand to China giving the opening speech for the Reception for the 45th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China in 2020 at the Royal Thai Embassy in Beijing

Apart from demonstrating Chineseness in bilateral meetings through the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family”, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes Chineseness through supporting other Thai state sectors in

⁹³ MOC, 2021

⁹⁴ China Cultural Center, 2020

facilitating bilateral events. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs helped coordinate the “Two Lands, One Heart” Guzheng Concert of Princess Chulabhorn. As the nature of the concert was held interchangeably between Thailand and China, thus, the Concert relied on the coordination of setting up the event with the Chinese state from the total of 10 Thai Embassy and Consulates in China. The event also relied on the reception of important state officials. An anonymous diplomat stressed on this influence of royal family over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

As I mentioned earlier, the Cultural Diplomacy division of the Department of Information of the Ministry mostly focuses on Thainess or Thai soft power like boxing, food, etc. However, one event that the Ministry was a part of helping out and facilitating was the initiative from Princess Chulabhorn to organize the “Two Lands, One Heart” concert. This was one of the most important events that we helped facilitate in terms of Chinese culture representation.

Worawut Chawengkiat, Counsellor at the Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentioned that bilateral events initiated by other sectors that uphold Chineseness are monitored and reported by the Embassies and Consulates, the Royal Embassy of Thailand in Beijing recorded the event of “Two Lands, One Heart” in their official website.

We have no intentional initiatives of promoting Chineseness in both Public and Bilateral Diplomacy, the MFA supports initiatives by other Thai state agencies. Especially, if the event is taking place in China, where the political authority lies with the MFA. The Embassies and Consulates will get invited to the event to take notes, coordinate, and monitor the event, as the event will be reported to the MFA in Bangkok, and can be used as a factual example when having bilateral meetings with China.

3.3 Contesting Chineseness

Looking at the details of the Chineseness portrayed across the five different actors, it is evident that different state actors have their own understanding of what Chineseness is. Moreover, from the literature review, the research can mainly categorize Chineseness present in Thailand as Chineseness portrayed by the Sampheng and Huai Khwang Chinese communities, respectively. With factors that suggest that much of Sampheng Chinese identity is not currently considered mainstream Chineseness in the People's Republic of China, due to many factors like the Economic Reform and Cultural Revolution. Thus, the research would refer to the Sampheng Chinese identity as Old Chinese identity. The Huai Khwang Chinese identity represents the new wave of Chinese migrants that bring with them Chineseness (culture, identity, and way of life) that differs from the Sampheng Chinese identity significantly. Thus, the research refers to the said identity as New Chinese identity. With that said, the discussion will focus on the analysis of data from this chapter to see how Thai state actors represent Chineseness, and would the Chineseness represented fit within the scope of the two Chinese identities present in Thailand's largest Chinese communities.

3.3.1 Sampheng (Old) Chineseness

Old Chinese identity or the identity portrayed by the Sampheng Chinese community has many strong characteristics. One characteristic of this community that the research would like to point out is the social identity of the community. "Five speech groups" was first coined by William Skinner in 1950, where he stated that the Sampheng Chinese can be categorized into the dialects of Chinese they spoke, Teochiu, Hakka, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hainanese. Another characteristic is how they are attached to the current PRC Chinese identity. From the literature review, the research analyzes that the Sampheng Chinese identity used to be the predominant Chinese identity at the time of Chinese migration to Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia. Yet, when mainland China faced events like communist regime, cultural revolution, and economic reform, the predominant Chinese identity in the mainland evolved, but the diaspora did not.

From the projects and initiatives by the Thai state, it is evident that there have been a lot of mentions of the five speech groups. First off, the term *xin jia yu yi xin ni huad cai* is still used as the Thai state's way of wishing people a happy Chinese New Year. The term is of Teochiu dialect, reflecting the ethnicity as the most predominant Chinese identity in Thailand. The term has been used by many Thai state officials, especially the past and present Prime Ministers. Another term that can be analyzed as using Old Chinese identity in Chinese New Year wishes is the term "Thais of Chinese descent". This term represents the assimilated Chinese people into Thai society, through inter-marriage, passed down from generations to generations. They are of Chinese descent through ancestors, but most of them are now Thai citizens. When talking about Sampheng Chinese community, the Thais of Chinese descent are the main components of this community, unlike the Huai Khwang community, who are a majority of Chinese citizens living in Thailand for economic opportunity, and show no initiative for assimilation into Thai nationality. According to Siriphon, this is because of the creation of the sense of Deterritorialized Nationalism (为国服务) by the Chinese state. One evidence of how this term is reproduced, the research cites Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-O-Cha's latest Chinese New Year message in 2021, "For this Chinese New Year, I invite all the sacred spirits to bless our Chinese brothers and sisters, as well as Thais of Chinese descent. May you have strong hearts and minds, and be blessed with fortune, merit, and happiness in all aspects of your life."⁹⁵ This evidence shows that Thai State upholds Chineseness towards both the "Chinese brothers and sisters" from the PRC, as well as the "Thais of Chinese descent" from the Sampheng Chinese community who have now assimilated into Thai society and live across Thailand.

Still on track with categorizing the Chinese New Year celebrations, the majority of the performances portrayed in Chinese New Year celebrations can be categorized as Sampheng Chinese identity or the Old Chinese identity. First off, the most renowned and recognized Chinese New Year Celebrations in Thailand is undoubtedly the Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations, organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC. The event

⁹⁵ Daily News, 2021

has been taking place since 2005. Thus, location itself is already a significant evidence for the analysis of it being a part of Old Chinese identity. Yaowarat road is located within the scope of Sampheng Chinese community and is often referred as Bangkok's Chinatown. This choice of location for the most official Chinese New Year event in Thailand in terms of the number of high-ranking state officials, from both Thailand and China, in attendance is within Sampheng Chinese community. This discourse analysis shows that the state recognizes Sampheng Chinese community to be more suitable for the demonstration of Chineseness through Chinese New Year's. According to an officer from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (the event organizing body), the Sampheng community is chosen for events because of its history.

The culture of Sampheng/Yaowarat is more evident in Thai history. It is a location where we learn the most about Chinese culture and story. That is why major Chinese ceremonies are mostly organized around Yaowarat/Sampheng.

Another aspect of the Chinese New Year celebration that show signs of Old Chinese identity being portrayed is from the actual performances in the event. As seen by the 2020 Yaowarat Chinese New Year event, titled, 2020 Yaowarat Chinese New Year Festival: "Prosperity and Wealth in the Year of the Rat", the events showed performances that can be categorized into Old Chinese identity. According to the royal news report, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn watched "the coerced performance of lion dance from Nakhon Sawan, who simultaneously performed different types of lion dances, namely, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese. The motive of the dance was to represent the harmony within the diverse Chinese diaspora in Thailand that has assimilated into Thai culture, thereby known as, Thais of Chinese descent."⁹⁶

The Ministry of Culture's Chinese New Year videos can also be analyzed as the usage of Sampheng Chineseness but with a twist. In the videos from 2018 to 2021, the MOC can be seen using lion dances, dragon dances, and showcasing various Chinese gods from the folk religions that are analyzed as to have come to Thailand

⁹⁶ Royal office, 2020

through the Sampheng Chinese community. However, the interesting twist is that the Ministry of Culture gives a speech each year, in Mandarin Chinese, in cooperation with various Chinese proverbs on the zodiac years. This is a tradition that may have started for a long time but have continued to take place even in the PRC today. However, the setting and the performances are of Old Chineseness. Another significant Sampheng Chineseness initiative from the MOC is their work to support Chinese communities. As explained by the Department of Cultural Promotions, the MOC at times, will give support in various aspects to initiatives proposed by Thai Chinese communities all over Thailand. These Thai Chinese communities also carry an Old Chineseness. Events like the “Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market/ Walking Street ” in Chonburi’s Chinese community, was supported financially, and the Minister of Culture went to open the event himself. The event showcases many components of Old Chineseness like the wooden rickshaws and street food that can be found in Sampheng community.



Figure 20: Mr. Itthiphol Khunpluem, Minister of Culture of Thailand at the Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market

Another performance mentioned in the findings that proved to be Sampheng Chineseness is the Thousand-hand Bodhisattva dance (Guanyin Goddess). As seen in the 2020 Chinese New Year celebrations, there was a performance of Thousand-hand Bodhisattva dance, which is a tribute paid towards Goddess Guanyin. Goddess Guanyin is traditionally a Taoist and Buddhist Goddess of Mercy. The Guanyin used to be one of the most popular deities worshipped by Chinese as ancient as the Song

Dynasty.⁹⁷ However, the goddess lost popularity in mainland China, when communism took over and declared the policy of state atheism. The World Economic Forum listed China as currently the least religious country in the world.⁹⁸ Thus, the popularity of Guanyin and the faith that came with religions like Buddhism and Taoism is not a popular modern Chinese identity, like that represented by the New Chinese Migrants of Huai Khwang. Moreover, a research by Yong Luo and Dr. John Giordano, titled, “Guanyin Worship among the Thai-Chinese: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender”, emphasized how important Guanyin is to the Thai Chinese community of Sampheng. The research analyzes that the belief of Guanyin is related to the sense of cultural and ethnic identity of Thai Chinese or as this research likes to call, Thais of Chinese descent. When early Chinese migrants in Sampheng faced top down assimilative policies from the state, they had to integrate or almost compromise their belief system with the Thai state. The Thai state was 94% Buddhist, and the official religion for the state did not accept Confucianism or Taoism, which most Chinese migrants believed in. Thus, the Guanyin was what connected the Chinese, spiritually, to the majorly Buddhist Thai state. Guanyin was considered both a Bodhisattva (a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings) in Mahayana Buddhism, but also seen as a Goddess in Taoism. The multiple identity of Guanyin allowed the Chinese settlers to accept being Buddhist in Thailand, and still believe in Guanyin as a Taoist deity.⁹⁹ Thus, the Goddess is an important figure in Sampheng Chinese identity, even more so than the revolutionized mainland Chinese identity.

⁹⁷ Gehrman, n.d

⁹⁸ Oliver, 2017

⁹⁹ Luo & Giordano, 2016



Figure 21: Guanyin Statue at Thian Fah Foundation, Yaowarat Road.

Another religious figure that has close ties to the Sampheng Chinese identity and was used as a cultural performance by the Thai state is the Mazu Goddess. As seen from the findings from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the summoning of the Mazu Goddess in 2019, which was well received with an amount of media coverage. Mazu (妈祖) or เจ้าแม่ทับทิม (*Jao Mae Tubtim*) in Thai, is a Chinese deity originating from the Hokkien people. Mazu is believed to be the Goddess of the sea that acts as a guardian deity for people travelling by water on long trips. The influence of the Goddess first started at China's Fujian region, where many of the Hokkiens originated from, but then spreaded to be worshipped by many parts of Southern China.¹⁰⁰ Incidentally, many Sampheng Chinese are from the southern provinces, including the Hokkiens being one of the five speech groups of Sampheng Chinese community. Thus, the entire event of summoning the Mazu Goddess is an example of the Thai state promoting Sampheng Chinese identity.

Bilaterally, the Chineseness used by the Thai state can also be categorized as Sampheng Chineseness. The phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” stemmed from the era of King Rama VII. At the time, the Chinese migrants who settled down in the Sampheng area grew in exceeding numbers. This caused various problems. Firstly, there was clearer evidence of ethnic segregation between Thais and

¹⁰⁰ Sikkhakosol, 2020

Chinese, and conflicts and violence often were the results. Secondly, the economy was at a low, and the Chinese community was making money, but the money was turned into remittances, which flowed back to their Chinese motherland. Thus, King Rama VII initiated the phrase “ไทยจีนใช้อื่นไกล เป็นพี่น้องกัน” (Thais and Chinese are like brothers), to inject a sense of Thai nationalism on the Chinese community, and also inject acceptance of the Chinese from the local Thais.¹⁰¹ The term, was then translated to Chinese as “中泰一家亲” (the Chinese and the Thais are the same family), and became a huge part of diplomacy between the two. The term is used, today, as a reiteration of the successful assimilation of Thais of Chinese descent. Thus, when using this term in bilateral events, the Thai State is indirectly promoting Sampheng Chinese identity.

Another significant event that translates to promoting Sampheng Chineseness is Thaksin Shinawatra’s visit to his ancestral home in 2005. As aforementioned, the visit was carefully televised and promoted as Thaksin’s first ever homage to his ancestral home. There, the then prime minister spoke in Hakka, gave thumbs up to the Hakka cuisine, and gave interviews to the local press on how important the event was to him and many Thais of Chinese descent. Many references here including Hakka language and culture, Thais of Chinese descent, etc., are important aspects of Sampheng’s social identity of five speech groups and Thais of Chinese descent.

3.3.2 Huai Khwang (New) Chineseness

As for the Huai Khwang Chinese community, the Thai state has initiatives that uphold the Chineseness that the community represents but has very few initiatives that are directed towards the community themselves. For the Thai state initiatives that are directed at the Huai Khwang Chinese community, one event that can be included is from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. According to interviews, the TAT almost had an initiative with the expats of Huai Khwang to take them to travel around Thailand as influencers so that they can promote Thailand to their friends and families in the PRC. This is categorized as Huai Khwang Chineseness because the Thai state is playing to the identity that Huai Khwang Xinyimins have a clear attachment to the

¹⁰¹ Busbarat, 2016

PRC, much more than the Sampheng community. However, this initiative was postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic. Natrudee Intatip, Junior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division at Tourism Authority of Thailand, showed her interests in the community, stating:

It is a very interesting community, they are literally Chinese, unlike the ancestral Chinese. During the COVID situation, we got the opportunity to look into them. However, when we approached them, we must approach them as Chinese, not Thais of Chinese descent. So, we tried to make a tour campaign with them travelling as internet influencers. They are attached to China. When they post something on social media, their friends will want to come. They are an unassimilated culture and could work in Thai state's national interest.

The Huai Khwang Chinese community and the Chineseness they represent has not been upheld significantly. However, many Thai states also showed interest in the community, when asked during interviews. They feel like Thailand could utilize the study of the evolving Chineseness to develop Thailand's cultural diplomacy as well.

3.3.3 Other types of events: Cultural Exchanges and Chineseness from PRC

After the research tried to categorize the Chineseness initiatives from various Thai state actors, the research finds that some events do not fit in the box of either Sampheng (Old) Chineseness or Huai Khwang (New) Chineseness. Some are rather cultural exchange programs where Thainess and Chineseness are represented. Others are Chineseness that are influenced directly from the People's Republic of China. However, all the initiatives, no matter what type of Chineseness they may be, are equally important to analyze that Thailand is a Performative state to the People's Republic of China in the 21st Century.

Cultural Exchange Initiatives

From the events showcased in this chapter, many of them cannot be categorized under the Chineseness of either Sampheng or Huai Khwang. Many of these initiatives are from the Ministry of Culture, due to their agenda with

Chineseness is to represent the many cultures of China. According to interview with the Bilateral Cooperation Group of the Ministry of Culture, Chineseness is presented with the agenda of providing spaces for cultural exchange:

The Ministry does not view Chinese culture as beneficial to any stakeholder. We view promoting Chineseness as a way of respecting diversity in cultures, and space for cultural expression. This is to accommodate the general public and also to the Chinese State, cultural presentation should be as inclusive as possible. When people learn about the culture of a country it could lead to interest in that country that could lead to tourism, and vice versa, if Chinese learn that Thailand is promoting Chineseness, it could lead to more tourism and other economic opportunities for Thailand. The Ministry views that promoting Chinese culture is all positive.

Thus, with the Ministry of Culture signing agreements to officiate cultural cooperations like the “Agreement of Cultural Cooperation between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the People’s Republic of China”, and the “Agreement between the Government of Thailand and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Establishment and Status of Cultural Centers” shows that the two countries mutually agree to represent each other’s culture. Thus, with the official documents in mind, the MOC is likely to implement the policies through the Executive Program, where they mandate both sides to have frequent cultural exchanges. This also means that MOC demonstrates Chineseness through participating in Chinese-led initiatives held in China, by sending Thai cultural performances as well. However, with their own initiatives with Chineseness, the MOC can be seen working more with Sampheng Chineseness like the Chinese New Year videos and the Department of Cultural Promotions supporting various Thai-Chinese community initiatives like the “Baan Sak Ngaew Ancient Chinese Market/ Walking Street ” in Chonburi’s Chinese community.

Chineseness directly influenced by PRC

The case of the princesses is interesting because it comes from personal interest and has a lesser political explanation on why they are doing so. Thus, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has been promoting Chineseness for a long time, thus, she promotes a mixed bag of Chineseness. As the princess herself is devoted to studying and researching about China, her relations with Chineseness is influenced directly from the PRC. Her continuous efforts from education to technological advancements of China shows that her interests are not limited to the Chineseness represented in Thailand. In an interview with Xinhua, the princess stated that, “Chinese are independent, diligent people, which is a gift bestowed by Chinese tradition. I think in the future China will be more advanced, make breakthroughs in technology, keep developing sustainably and maintain stability and prosperity.”¹⁰² In another interview, she also added that, “I will continue studying and learning about China in the years to come.”¹⁰³ Another royal family who promotes Chineseness through her personal interest is Princess Chulabhorn. Her interview with CCTV shows that she found out about the guzheng through travelling in China. Thus, this means that she did not get influenced from the Sampheng Chinese community for this interest but rather from the PRC.

Apart from the Royal Family, the Tourism Authority of Thailand also has had an initiative that promotes Chineseness that is influenced directly from the PRC. “Chinese New Year for newer generations” by TAT is a clear example of the Thai state recognizing China’s evolving identity and culture. This inclusivity of the newer generations causes the TAT to come up with the initiative (working with the Chinese state) to hold the event at Bangkok’s younger hotspot, Siam Square. The “Chinese New Year for newer generations” is different from other celebrations of the events as it highlights the newer Chinese identity and way of life, citing similarity to that of Huai Khwang Chinese identity. From inviting performances like Chinese boy band “The Untamed” to promoting the usage of the “virtual hongbao”, Chineseness in Thailand is portrayed to also consist of modernity and electronic music, rather than just the pre-existing operas and dragon dances.

¹⁰² Xinhua, 2019

¹⁰³ Xinhua, 2020

Thai State actors	Sampheng (Old) Chineseeness	Huai Khwang (New) Chineseeness	Cultural Exchange Initiatives	Chineseeness directly influenced by PRC
Government	Chinese New Year Wishes/ Thaksin visit of ancestral home/ “中泰一家亲”	N/A	N/A	N/A
MOC	Chinese New Year wishes through videos (2018-2021)/ Supporting events done by Chinese communities and associations in Thailand	N/A	Signing Agreements on cultural cooperation and establishing Chinese cultural center/ Participating in Chinese cultural events	N/A
TAT	Yaowarat Chinese New Year Celebrations (since 2005)/ Chinese New Year in other provinces/ Mooncake Festival/Summoning of Mazu Goddess	N/A	Thailand - China Friendship Caravan	“Chinese New Year for younger generations”

Royal Family	Yaowarat Chinese New Year	N/A	N/A	Guzheng/ Confucius Institute/ Books and Travelogues/ “Two Lands, One Heart”
MFA	“中泰一家亲”	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 5: Categorization of Chineseness as cultural diplomacy



3.4 Chapter Summary

It is evident that five Thai state actors have been promoting Chineseness through either bilateral or public settings. The events, speeches, or other initiatives containing Chineseness from this chapter shows that Thailand is a performative state towards China in the 21st century. As mentioned in the conceptual framework, the “performances” in Thailand as a performative state to China can be both a public and bilateral diplomacy, depending on the state sector’s agenda, as long as Chineseness is promoted. Through the analysis of “Contesting Chineseness”, the research finds that Sampheng (Old) Chineseness is represented in the projects across all five of the Thai state actors selected. This confirms the research assumption that Old Chineseness is being used more in Thai cultural diplomacy, compared to the Huai Khwang (New) Chineseness. It is also interesting that Huai Khwang Chineseness is not in use at all, but the other types of Chineseness that the research did not predict, are also present in Thai cultural diplomacy. For instance, the actions of the royal family in promoting Chineseness are rather analyzed as Chineseness directly influenced by the PRC, and not the Huai Khwang Chinese community. There is also some Chineseness used through cultural exchanges between Thainess, like the two agreements with the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism to ensure cultural exchanges of the respective cultures are represented in both countries. Yet, Sampheng Chineseness is used by all Thai state actors involved in this research.

CHAPTER IV: OLD CHINESENESS IN THAI CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The research starts off with analyzing data on why Chineseness is used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy. Then, the events used in Cultural Diplomacy that uses Chineseness are laid out by Thai State actors. Moreover, the events are analyzed and categorized whether they fit into the Chineseness represented by Sampheng or Huai Khwang Chinese. The findings show that Huai Khwang Chineseness is not represented at all through five Thai State actors. Some of the events may be categorized as influenced directly from the PRC or mere cultural exchanges programs. Yet, it is unanimous that all five sectors have been using Chineseness that can be analyzed as Sampheng Chineseness.

This chapter will try to analyze why the Thai State chooses to use Old Chineseness that came from Sampheng Chinese community in Thai Cultural Diplomacy in the 21st Century. The four reasons were a result of discourse analysis of interviews and documents from the Thai State.

4.2 Why is Old Chineseness used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy?

With the dilemma being laid out from the chapter introduction, the trend of Old Chineseness being used as cultural diplomacy is an evidence of Thailand being a performative state to China. The research collected the interview findings and categorized them into the following reasons that answers why Old Chineseness is used in Thai cultural diplomacy. The researcher was able to interview three Thai state actors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. All interviewees have experiences in working with Chineseness or cultural diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' main role in promoting Chineseness, as aforementioned in Chapter III, was through usage of the term "the Chinese and Thais are the same family" (中泰一家亲) in bilateral settings. The MFA also works with Chineseness in supporting roles, like helping facilitate the initiative of Princess Chulabhorn's "Two Lands, One Heart" guzheng concerts. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has had several initiatives to promote Chineseness in the 21st century. Events like the Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations that have been taking place since 2005 are vital displays of Chineseness in Thai public

diplomacy. The Ministry of Culture, similar to the TAT, has initiated several Chinese cultural events in Thai public diplomacy, mainly through working with Chinese communities in Thailand. The research was not able to interview the government or the royal family, thus, analysis of the said stakeholders will come from documents and secondary sources.

Thus, the research was able to contact key informants in the three state agencies that work to promote Chineseness. Three diplomats from the MFA including former who have worked with Chineseness or cultural diplomacy were contacted. Four cultural officers including Director of the Bilateral Group and Director of the Department of Cultural Promotions were interviewed from the Ministry of Culture on their experiences and thought process of using Chineseness. From the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), two officers at the Asia 1 section (China section), East Asia Market Division, were interviewed on their roles with Chinese cultural promotions. Moreover, the researcher was also honored to interview the Deputy Director of TAT (Shanghai Office). Similar patterns of questions were asked to extract the reasons why the Thai state uses Old Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy.

4.2.1 The Reactivation of Existing Norms (Assimilated Sampheng Chineseness)

Thai state sectors state that the significance of the assimilated Sampheng Chineseness in Thailand is one of the most important reasons on why Old Chineseness has been initiated as cultural diplomacy, towards both the Thai public, and in bilateral settings with China. The definition of Sampheng Chineseness refers to both the community, the history of the community, and how the community has expanded to become Thais of Chinese descent. For instance, a diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared their thought process on using Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy as:

The role of the Thai state in cultural diplomacy is mostly through promoting Thainess. However, the assimilated Chinese culture is also quite astonishing in the sense that they have now become an integral

part of Thainess. Food evidence like the Chinese “Kuey Teow” (noodles) in Thai cuisines like Pad Thai are all assimilated Thai (Chinese) culture. Chinese culture is also assimilated into many Thai cultured products like clothing, where the patterns like “กัญแจจิ้น” (Kun Jae Jin) cloths are marketed as Thai local products, but with Chinese influence. So, in many ways we are indirectly promoting Chinese culture through Thai culture because they are an integral part of Thai Culture.

This analysis will comprise three parts on why the assimilated Sampheng Chineseness is vital in Thai cultural diplomacy. Firstly, in public diplomacy, Chineseness is used through showcasing the representation and inclusivity of Chinese communities in Thai society. This is a performance directly towards the Chinese community themselves and can be reflected as Thai cultural diplomacy towards the PRC. Secondly, in bilateral diplomacy with the PRC, Chineseness is represented through the usage of “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” (中泰一家亲), which is a reiteration of the successful assimilation of Chinese communities in Thailand. The phrase has become household as a phrase used for various negotiated situations with the PRC. The section will also throw light on how the Thai state’s stance on the phrase. Thirdly, the analysis of the political power of Thais of Chinese descent are also another reason why this Sampheng Chineseness is reinterpreted as cultural diplomacy towards China.

4.2.1.1 The Representation and Inclusivity of Thais of Chinese descent

Many Thai state sectors stated that Old Chineseness is represented in cultural diplomacy with the goal of pleasing or being inclusive of Thailand’s assimilated Chinese community. Worawut Chawengkiat, Counsellor at the Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that:

Chineseness as cultural promotion is done because the Sampheng "Thais of Chinese descent" are a huge section of Thai population, and

sometimes the state issues domestic policies to make the domestic happy, like this year was the first year Thai state made Chinese New Year a public holiday. The action was mostly aimed at making Thai people (mostly Thais of Chinese descent) happy.

The Ministry of Culture also shares similar views. According to an interview with Treechada Aunruen, Director of Bilateral Cooperation Group, Foreign Affairs Division, findings shows that:

The Ministry also wants the Thai public to learn and be aware of different cultures including Chinese culture which has been in Thailand for a long time. The relations of Thailand and China have been for a long time on many levels from state-to-state to people-to-people with the history of Chinese diasporas in Thailand.

Moreover, Chinnapong Chullanandana, Cultural Officer -5 (Practitioner Level) at Bilateral Cooperation Group, Foreign Affairs Division, added that:

We have a lot of Chinese identity present in Thai culture through the integrated communities. We must recognise this point because when there are these traditions, Thais of Chinese descent also follow them. When there are festivals like ancestral worship, a lot of our staff also take leave on such holidays to a point that it has now become a part of Thai culture. When Chinese culture affects the way of life of Thais (portion of Thais), it is a shared value, so it is important to both countries. For instance, the Ministry proposed to the cabinet, earlier this year, to officiate Chinese New Year as the National Holiday. This reflected Thai state's respect for all cultures and the importance of Chinese culture present in Thailand. The action was also met with praise from the Chinese state showing gratitude to the Thai state for promoting their culture. The Thai domestic was also happy.

The Ministry of Culture also stated that Chineseness was not only used to represent the history of Chinese diasporas in Thailand, but also to showcase Thailand's multiculturalism. For instance, making the Chinese New Year a national holiday is representing pre-existing Chinese culture through positively reinforcing to other cultures that Chinese New Year is very much a Thai holiday, and all Thais, regardless of ethnicity, are given a holiday to celebrate this joyous occasion.

4.2.1.2 The Negotiation Power of “the Chinese and Thais are the same Family” (中泰一家亲)

Apart from having the agenda of representing Chinese communities in Thailand as a part of Chineseness in public diplomacy, the Thai state also uses Chineseness of Chinese communities in bilateral diplomacy with the PRC. This is done because of the negotiation power of the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family”. From the findings of Chapter III, there are many bilateral meetings with the Chinese state that involved the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” (中泰一家亲) or in Thai, ไทยจีนใจอื่นไกลเป็นพี่น้องกัน. The phrase symbolizes Chinese and Thailand's historical roots, especially the Sampheng Chinese identity. The statement was the concept used to analyze Thai leaders and politicians that looked at Chineseness and Thainess to be of similar “family”, for an economic, politic, etc. agenda.¹⁰⁴ According to Pongphisoot Busbarat's article, “‘Family’ making in Sino-Thai Relations”, Sino-Thai relations has been branded to become a family. The “family” discourse, of course, requires both parties to be consensual, but as the focus is on the Thai state's role, the research will be focusing more on the Thai state's contribution to this “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” (中泰一家亲). Busbarat states that the “association” of the state with Chineseness stems from “purposely” strategic for economic and political reasons. This usage of the phrase was first seen from the Thai Royal Family, who were at that time, the Head of Government and the State.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Busbarat, 2016

¹⁰⁵ Busbarat, 2016

The phrase stemmed from King Rama VII's era. At the time, the Chinese migrants who settled down in the Sampheng area grew in exceeding numbers. This caused various problems. Firstly, there was clearer evidence of ethnic segregation between Thais and Chinese, and conflicts and violence often were the results. Secondly, the economy was at a low, and the Chinese community was making money, but the money was turned into remittances, which flowed back to their Chinese motherland. Thus, King Rama VII initiated the phrase “ไทยจีนใช้อื่นไกล เป็นพี่น้องกัน” (Thais and Chinese are like brothers and sisters), to inject a sense of Thai nationalism on the Chinese community, and also inject acceptance of the Chinese from the local Thais.¹⁰⁶ The term, was then translated to Chinese as “中泰一家亲”, and became a huge part of diplomacy between the two. The phrase represents a reiteration of the successful assimilation of Thais of Chinese descent.

Thus, with the historical and constant usage of the phrase, the researcher was able to ask the Thai state officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, why the phrase is used, and how it is significant to Thailand's cultural diplomacy towards China. In contemporary politics, the phrase is rather used in bilateral settings with China. It is analyzed as cultural diplomacy because, even though the phrase is used quite often in bilateral events from both the Thai and Chinese side, the explanation of how the term came into place are very similar with citing the Chinese migration to Sampheng community, the chaos and conflict that the Thai state faced with racial segregation, and the eventual usage of the term for a normalization of peaceful coexistence, that lead to the creation of Thais of Chinese descent, which has spreaded all over Thailand. Thus, usage of this term is to remind both Thailand and China that they are in fact a family bounded by blood, and the Chinese ancestry in the current Thai population is significant. This was unanimously agreed by the interviewees. However, the way the phrase is being used may not have a similar pattern of agreement amongst the various Thai state actors interviewed. Three analyses are extracted from the interview findings on how the phrase can be used as a negotiation tool for Thailand as a performative state.

¹⁰⁶ Busbarat, 2016

The most positive recognition of using the phrase is from the Ministry of Culture. The term is said to enhance mutual benefits or dispel conflicts, citing that a family will always be a family. Treechada Aunruen, Director of Bilateral Cooperation Group, Foreign Affairs Division, Office of the Permanent Secretary for Culture, stated:

Since the restoration of the relationship, the expression "the Chinese and the Thais are the same family" has been used continually by both the public and private sectors, and by both Thai and Chinese states. Whether it is to seek mutual benefit or to dispel grievances with one another, the term is used to showcase this historical root of how Chinese in Thailand overcame the chaos and conflict to integrate into Thai Society, just like a family. The concept of "the Chinese and the Thais are the same family" is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of both countries. This can be seen from the number of Chinese tourists who visited Thailand over 11 million in 2018 and the number of Thai tourists visiting China has increased accordingly. It is a dimension that helps support the Thai economy. It is an important part of building intimacy and understanding between the peoples of the two countries."

Another positive, yet cautious stance on the term derives from Wisit Bunyaratthipong, Counsellor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he shared his experience on how the phrase is used at the first opening remarks of diplomatic talks.

From my experience, this term "the Chinese and Thais are the same family" is mostly used during bilateral meetings, press conferences, etc. It is mostly used as an initiative to carry out discussion under a productive environment. Moreover, it will look more natural to cite the undeniable fact that we do share the same blood. I used to be a notetaker during Thai - Chinese bilateral discussions, and I did indeed see both leaders start with the term "Sino - Thai One Family". Imagine

starting out a negotiation that is intense, Thailand would prefer to be seen in that negotiation as a sibling, rather than a stranger. Therefore, cultural diplomacy in this sense is very important to shape the environment of the room during bilateral discussions to carry out the negotiations that will maximize national interests of the two states.

However, the Counsellor remains cautious in using the phrase. Citing that there are anti-Chinese sentiments from the people's level because of the fear of excessive Chinese influence over the Thai domestic. Thus, the Counsellor states that Thailand cannot just randomly use the phrase, as they need to balance the influence given to China. By stating that the two countries are family, both sides need to re-examine how each side treats each other to make the relations, an equal familial relation.

The final stance of using the phrase as a negotiation tool is to be cautious. An officer from the TAT states that the phrase is used for China to get away with unequal relations. “It does not entirely seem like an equal family relationship, but rather that of a sibling, and in this sibling relationship Thailand is the younger brother, catering to the needs of China”, she stated. The Marketing Officer from TAT, goes on giving examples on how Thailand is rather a younger brother than an equal family member. She states that, in terms of the two states working together, Thailand allows China to take the lead for almost all occasions. For instance, during the Chinese New Year event in Bangkok, Thailand financially supports the event in every way, including the flight and accommodation of the Chinese guests. However, when the Thai Ministry goes to China, China does not reciprocate. According to Natrudee Intatip, Junior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division of the Tourism Authority of Thailand:

There are many events that make us (TAT) feel like we are inferior in this relationship, like congratulatory events, we always try to make them feel very congratulated with elaborate videos and letters. Moreover, when we have meetings with them, the Chinese side often just shows up to us without much notice, however, when we go to their

place, we must send letters of requests and so on. We give them the upper hand because of national interests/ benefits. We must cater to their needs because China is a state led authoritarianism, and if the central government does not support tourism to Thailand, the Chinese people would likely listen.

Apart from Intatip, another diplomat from MFA, also gave more examples on why Thailand should be cautious of using the term “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family”.

From my experience working with Sino-Thai relations for over 6 years, using the term too often gives China more power considering the current Sino-Thai relations is not really a family. At the end of the day, China does not see Thailand as equal. Thailand has not been an important country in the eyes of China. I do not think it is very sincere that China has not sent an Ambassador to Thailand for almost a year now. China did not invite Thailand for the latest Boao Forum for Asia. Xi Jinping has never even visited Thailand.

The phrase can be used as a powerful negotiation power for both countries as it represents the historical integration of Chinese culture in Thailand. However, the Thai state should also remain cautious in saying “family” as it can be proven it can lead to China getting away with unequal diplomacy. The notion of family may not be of equality, but rather the “younger” catering to the “bigger”, while the bigger approves of the catering, but does not reciprocate.

4.2.1.3 Political Power of Thais of Chinese descent and Thai Chinese Associations.

Throughout history, Chinese people have come from the southern parts of China as migrants and settled down as the five speech groups. However, through time, the Chinese migrants have intermarried with Thais, and expanded away all over Thailand. In the contemporary era, these people are no longer called Chinese

migrants, but rather, Thais of Chinese descent. The ethnic group is a product of the successful assimilation of Chinese in Thai society. Thais of Chinese descent have not only assimilated but became the driving force of Thai politics in the 21st Century. According to findings from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Worawut Chawengkiat cited this reason to answer why Chineseness was represented in Thai cultural diplomacy.

It is more evident that Thai diplomacy towards China has been mostly through identity politics of the older Chinese people coming from Sampheng. However, from the MFA's point of view, when using cultural diplomacy towards China, we do not really think about using old identity or new identity, but our main agenda is keeping close relations with China. It just turns out to be evident that old Chinese identity reflected from Sampheng is more used. This is mainly because the policy makers and high-level officers who decide on diplomacy are more familiar with old Chinese identity, where most of them are Thais of Chinese descent with ancestral heritage coming from Sampheng community migration.

There are many examples to support this argument. Firstly, the research reiterates Thaksin Shinawatra's visit to his ancestral home. As mentioned in Chapter IV, Thaksin Shinawatra, a Thai of Hakka Chinese descent, one of the "five speech groups" of Sampheng Chinese identity, televised the first visit to his ancestral home in Meizhou in 2005. The visit also saw many promoting Chineseness like representing the food, Thaksin speaking phrases of the local dialect, and giving interviews to the press on how his homage trip symbolizes Thailand and China as one family.¹⁰⁷ All this would not have been done, if the former prime minister was not a Hakka Chinese, and the reception was also well received and became a matter of identity politics as well, due to the large number of Thais of Chinese descent assimilated into Thai society.

¹⁰⁷ China Daily, 2005

Other politicians who used the identity politics of Old Chineseness is Banharn Silpa-acha, former Thai Prime Minister. Wongsuwarat's book, "The Social Capital of Being Chinese in Thai Politics", highlights how ethnically Chinese-descent Thais influence Thai political scene. Banharn Silpa-acha, the 21st Prime Minister of Thailand, was used as the main argument. Banharn was a son of two Chinese parents born at Suphan Buri, a province of many first-wave Chinese immigrant settlements, during the same period with Sampheng Chinese community. As Prime Minister, his priorities were localized development of his home province and, especially paying tribute to his Chinese descents. In 1995, Banharn made a vow to the Suphan Buri City Pillar Shrine to set the fundament of his foreign policy of building the nation's largest Chinese diaspora museum; Museum of the Descendants of the Dragon to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Sino-Thai diplomatic relations, where much of the funding was provided by himself or the Silpa-acha Family Foundation. The presence of Chineseness in Thai political bias, can provide a logical explanation on why most events resemble the Sampheng Old Chinese identity.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the Thais of Chinese descent in politics, civil groups like Thai Chinese associations are also vital in driving Thai cultural diplomacy to be inclined towards promoting Chineseness. An anonymous diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains how the different Thai Chinese associations are the main driving force behind Thai state's association with Chinese cultural promotions.

In my view, the using of Chinese culture as a way to strengthen relations with China are mostly present in non-state actors like the Thai-China Chamber of Commerce, Hainan Association of Thailand, Teochiu Association of Thailand, etc., as they represent the Chinese diaspora in Thailand, where they mostly came from the Sampheng wave of migration. These associations support the people to people relations between Thailand and China. Projects like giving scholarships to students to go study in Xiamen, where students who come back will have absorbed certain Chinese culture and positive

¹⁰⁸ Wongsuwarat, 2019

sentiments towards China as a whole are all initiatives pushed by them to promote people to people exchanges.

Another evidence that show similar findings of Thai Chinese associations being the initiators of Chinese cultural promotion is from an interview with Krittiga Chumyawong, Senior Marketing Officer at the Asia 1 Section, Tourism Authority of Thailand:

We have also cooperated with Thais of Chinese descent associations like the Lim Clansmen Association of Thailand, where we sponsored the bringing of “Mazhu” Goddess Statue to Bangkok for Thai people (mostly Thais of Chinese descent) to worship for a couple of days. The event is interesting because it is a corporation between Thai and Thai actors, promoting Chinese culture.

The research also cites Wasana Wongsurawat’s analysis on how the Thai political elites or people in power are linked to Thai Chinese Associations who are the driving force of using Chineseness in Thailand. The 100 Years Anniversary of the Communist Party of China was broadcasted live in CCTV 4, where China invited leaders or high-ranking government officials around the world in a program called “Talk with Lujian”. A question was raised by many, including Wasana as well, as to why Dr. Abhisit Vejjajiva was chosen as the Thai representative for the event. Not only is Dr. Abhisit a representative of the current government, but he has also been away from the Thai political limelight for a long time. Dr. Wasana initially thought that the Chinese state wanted an English-speaking official. However, she also questioned the reasoning, as various current Thai state officials who have had ties with the PRC are also decent English speakers like the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Don Pramudwinai, an ex-ambassador to the PRC. Wasana then cites a news article from Matichon Online, that the state official vocal about the Chinese selection of Abhisit Vejjajiva was Mr. Paisal Puechmongkol, the Secretariat of Thai Chinese Culture and Economy Association. Mr. Paisal goes on to comment on how Dr. Abhisit is the most qualified candidate to represent Thailand in

this Chinese event.¹⁰⁹ He is the most well-known and well-rounded politician in international relations, which could be debatable. Moreover, the point is that Dr. Wasana assumed that Mr. Paisarn and the Thai Chinese Culture and Economy Association had connections with the Chinese state in influencing Thai politics. Thus, she researched more into the Association. From her findings, the Thai Chinese Association has had interconnections with the Chinese state for several decades now. According to the website of the Association, it was founded by former Thai Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh in 1993. However, according to the Association itself, the establishment of the Association was suggested and assisted by the Chinese State for security reasons that came from the Third Indochina War in 1975. During the period, Prime Minister Chavalit travelled to China for a security cooperation with Deng Xiaoping. After a successful military cooperation with China, the commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army of China suggested Thailand to establish a "private association that bridges the two countries' military cooperation".¹¹⁰ This led to the eventual establishment of the Thai-Chinese Culture and Economic Cooperation in 1993. The Association started with military cooperation and added culture and economic facets through its development.

Wasana analyzed that the "private association", is interestingly an influential actor in Thai politics due to its members and roles. Succeeding Chavalit as the President of the Association is another prominent figure of Thai politics who is no outsider to initiating Sino-Thai relations, Dr. Somkid Jatusripitak. Moreover, the member list of the association is fascinating to Dr. Wasana as the members include the likes of Dhanin Chearavanonth (CEO and Founder of Charoen Pokphand Group), Sontaya Kunplome (Political Advisor to Prime Minister Prayuth), Sudarat Keyuraphan (Former Minister of Public Health/ Agriculture and Cooperation, etc.).¹¹¹ The member list includes past and present high-ranking officials of the Thai state, whether it is military, private sectors, and politicians. Thus, the Association that comprises mostly politically powerful Thais of Chinese descent is suspected by Dr. Wasana Wongsurawat was the driving force between Thai State's diplomacy towards

¹⁰⁹ Matichon, 2021

¹¹⁰ Thai-Chinese Culture and Economy Association, 2017

¹¹¹ Thai-Chinese Culture and Economy Association, 2017

China, that also includes cultural diplomacy by using Chineseness, for over two decades.¹¹² Dr. Wasana said that it became evident that the Association had influence over the selection of Dr. Abhisit Vejjajiva from its Secretariat Paisal Puechmongkol was the vocal actor in supporting the decision. However, the research finds that this analysis is still left ambiguous as there is no clear evidence on how the Association is involved in the decision for the event, but what is clear is that the Association's members are powerful politicians who are no outsider to Chineseness promotion in Thailand.

Most importantly, the members of the Association composed of Thai political elites, are Thais of Chinese descent, and as research from the literature review suggest, they derived from the Sampheng Chinese community, thus their identity in selecting the events also reflect their identity politics of Old Chinese identity. The new Chinese identity is not widespread amongst people in power, and when the Thai political elites refer to Chineseness, the old Chineseness is more personal to many of them. It is also reciprocal in the sense that the Thai population also consist of assimilated Thais of Chinese descent, so these politicians know that their promoting Old Chineseness will be more well received, than the smaller group Xinyimins in Huai Khwang, who are Chinese nationals. It is a mixture of identity politics and populism.

All three analyses show the way the Thai state answers to why Old Chineseness is used in Thai cultural diplomacy, but in different settings and platforms. The representation and inclusivity are a discourse that aims to use Old Chineseness for the sake of the Thai public or public diplomacy, where Thais of Chinese descent make up a portion of the Thai population. The Ministry of Culture, who mostly uses this discourse as the reason to promote Chineseness, has also added that, apart from inclusivity of Thais of Chinese descent, promoting Chineseness in the public sector also represents Thailand's multiculturalism. The second analysis is that Chineseness is used as a negotiation tool under the phrase "the Chinese and Thais are the same family". This phrase, as controversial as it is, is admittedly used in various events as seen from the earlier chapters. The phrase stems from the successful assimilation of Sampheng Chinese migrants in Thailand. Lastly, the political power of

¹¹² Wongsurawat, 2021

Thais of Chinese descent, who hold high positions in the circle of Thai elitist politics and also their relations with Thai Chinese associations are vital to why Chineseness is used in Thai cultural diplomacy. The three analyses, as different as they may be, have similar roots, that is a reiteration and reinterpretation of the successful historical assimilation of Sampheng Chineseness in Thailand. Whether it is the Thais of Chinese descent in power, public diplomacy towards the Thais of Chinese descent on a people level, or reiterating the assimilation through the phrase “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family”, they all go back to a norm that happened many years ago.

This reinterpretation of an older norm is not new in analysis of norm tactics in international relations. According to Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink’s article, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, norm reinterpretation is a tactic to use an existing and familiar norm to extend, reinterpret, and modify the existing norm to suit their agenda. The process is also referred to as framing. “The construction of cognitive frames” if successful, showcases the old norm in new frames that suits the political or economic strategies, which leads to new ways of talking about and understanding issues.¹¹³ The case here is that Chinese migrants of Sampheng community is an old norm, and their story consists of the brutal side of top-down forced assimilation during Pibulsongkram’s era. Yet, in contemporary politics, the Thai state has reinterpreted or reframed the old norm of Sampheng Chineseness, which was once suppressed, to become a tool for the promotion of Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy. The old norm of suppressing Sampheng Chineseness, is reinterpreted as successful assimilation as evident by Thais of Chinese descent in Thai society. The reason “norm entrepreneurs” use tactics like norm reinterpretation is because they tend to be more familiar with the old norm already existing, and to reactivate that norm is more convenient than coming up with a new norm altogether. The “norm entrepreneur” in this case is the Thai state, while the old norm reactivated is the Old Chineseness, reframed to achieve the agenda of the state. Thus, this reinterpretation of the successful assimilation of Sampheng Chineseness is used by Thailand as a performative state, to perform to China, for political and economic benefits.

¹¹³ Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998

4.2.2 China as the Influential Actor in Thai cultural diplomacy

Part of a discourse analysis, the research finds that the Chinese state is responsible for selecting the Chineseness portrayed in Thailand through the Thai state. From interview findings of Thai state sectors, the majority of the events, though organized by the Thai state, were initiated by the Chinese state sectors like the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC, and the China Cultural Center in Bangkok. Surprisingly, the Chinese state is evident to have an inclination in selecting Old Chineseness for Thai cultural diplomacy.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand, a Thai state agency that has one of the most involvement with using Chineseness in public settings amongst other sectors, stated how the Chinese state is involved with selecting performances for their famous Chinese New Year's Celebrations.




The TAT does not work alone. We work in an alliance with MFA, MOC, MOC (China). The Chinese state is also a very important actor in choosing what they want to represent as Chinese culture. When it comes to Chinese culture, we allow the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism to select the performances or cultural heritages, which is in accordance with their foreign policy or grand strategy. From my observation, I have seen both old and new Chineseness selected from the Chinese state to promote in Thailand. The protocol is that they select the performances, propose to TAT, and TAT most likely approves their choices, because we want the Chinese state to represent their culture as they wish to. The reason we allow them to freely represent their culture as they wish is because we also want to be treated the same when promoting Thai culture in China. We are not as aware of Chinese culture as the Chinese themselves.

The Deputy Director of TAT (Shanghai Office) stated the above quote as a response to the question of why TAT mainly chooses Old Chineseness in cultural events. The response can be analyzed that the TAT, even from the word of a high ranking official like the Deputy Director, is not in charge of the selection of many cultural events. A lot of factors go into consideration of this discourse, like talks with

other Thai state actors, and most importantly, talks with the Chinese state actors. The Deputy Director reasons that the TAT gives space for representation in respect to the Chinese state, as Thailand also expects representation space in China for Thai culture.

Thus, the interview findings showed that the authority of choosing Chineseness in many sectors of the Thai state is still with the Chinese state actors as well. Yet, the issue in question is that why the Chinese state still chose the Old Chineseness present in Sampheng, which, from a Chinese point of view, would be a minority identity of Teochiu, Hakka, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hainanese, present in the Southern parts of China. The more obvious choice of mainstream Chineseness would be the more modern Chineseness present in the PRC. For instance, why did the Chinese state choose Teochiu Opera over the world-renowned Beijing opera (京劇) for Thailand. The research contacted the China Cultural Center in Bangkok for the answer to these wonders but was denied an interview due to inconvenience. Thus, the answer to this will be presented by the Director of Bilateral Group, Foreign Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture of Thailand:



The Chinese state has the China Cultural Centre in Bangkok that coordinates with the local cultural agencies in China on how to promote Chinese culture in Bangkok. Recently, they have stated that they would like to promote Teochiu Operas (潮劇), which is a popular cultural heritage of Thai-Chinese, which is a smart move because they look at the “consumer behavior” aiming at Chinese assimilated Thai culture. Us Thai state agencies allow the Chinese state to represent their Chinese culture and identity as they want, we just organize events where there are cultural exchanges. For instance, if we are organizing events on food, we promote Thai food, and also allow them to promote whichever type of Chinese food they want. It is very interesting that they chose Teochiu opera as the content to promote Chinese culture right now. This reflects the localization of how the Chinese state views Chinese culture in Thailand via “consumer behavior”. Of course, they do not openly state that Chinese culture is just limited to Teochiu opera or the older type of southern Chinese culture, but I believe that the

Chinese state's thinking process is very strategic, and they tend to use historical roots as the approach to Thai-Chinese relations. Every cultural content they select to portray has an agenda behind that.

From the interview, it is no mistake that China uses Old Chineseness like Teochiu operas in Thailand as a selected culture. The Director views that the agenda behind this is recognizing the "consumer behavior" of culture. Moreover, the Director also stated that China is very strategic in choosing their culture to portray in other countries. From experience working, every step of their initiatives has a political agenda, and they tend to use the historical roots of Chinese assimilated culture in Thai society to approach Sino-Thai relations. This shows that the Chinese state is pragmatic enough to let go certain political correctness of representing Chinese culture, in return for good reception of the local context. Yet, the agenda of Chinese cultural diplomacy is still not known, as the research was not able to interview the Chinese side for discourse analysis.

At the end of the day, the data shows that the Chinese state is also influential and holds certain power in selecting Chineseness represented by the Thai state. The Thai state can be seen as almost a medium of promoting Chineseness for many reasons, economic or allowing Chinese to freely represent with expectation for the same treatment when promoting Thainess. The Chinese state, on the other hand, is pragmatic enough to be strategic on which Chineseness is being selected, whereby Old Chineseness or Sampheng Chinese identity is showcased more for the local context.

Another intriguing question would be why the Thai state would allow Chinese state actors to influence Thai cultural diplomacy, to the point of selecting and even initiating Old Chineseness, while Thai state actors would cater to all the expenses. One of the reasons for the allowance of Chinese state influence in Thai cultural diplomacy is catering to China's tourism approval.

Before the pandemic, 39.9 million foreign tourists arrived in Thailand.¹¹⁴ Approximately, 10 million of those were Chinese tourists. Thus, the significance of

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021

Chinese tourists in Thailand plays a role in Thailand's choice of cultural diplomacy. All three people interviewed from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, unanimously said that Chineseness is used as a way with the end goal of attracting Chinese tourists. Apart from the three TAT officers, a diplomat also referred to the importance of tourism on Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy. Wisit Bunyaritthipong, Counsellor at the MFA stated:

I think there are many points of view to Thai state agencies celebrating Chinese culture in Thailand. For instance, Chinese New Year celebrations may be seen as promoting Chineseness and the common historical roots, yet, on the other hand, celebrating Chinese New Year can also bring in a lot of tourists, who will be made aware that Chinese New Year traditions do not need to only be celebrated in China, but Thailand too. Thai state actors must also think about national interest, when doing cultural diplomacy, thus, the culture portrayed can be selected.”

The Deputy Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (Shanghai Office) referred to using Chineseness as a way of promoting “two-way tourism”.

It is called two-way tourism. We cannot just promote Thai culture. Even though Chinese tourists like Thai culture, they also feel more acquainted with Chinese culture. It is all about exchanges in culture that lead to exchanges in tourists. Therefore, with two-way tourism we can create inclusivity for Chinese tourists to feel welcomed but can also experience Thai culture. Another point that I would like to bring up is the political structure of China, authoritarianism. The Chinese state has the power to control the behavior of its citizens, including tourism behavior. If the Communist Party of China is displeased with Thailand in any way, there is a tendency where the state will discourage or prevent its citizens from traveling to Thailand, and our

economy could go downhill. Therefore, representing Chineseness in Thailand could provide a positive relationship with the PRC.

On a people level, presenting Chineseness as two-way tourism shows that Chinese people can travel to Thailand, a place that welcomes their culture and way of life. Knowing that Chinese people can celebrate Chinese culture overseas as well, they would choose to come to Thailand in their main holiday periods like Chinese New Year, National Day (国庆节), etc. The Deputy Director also explains how presenting Chineseness is also vital on a governmental level. Stating that China is authoritarian, the Deputy Director states the Chinese government is responsible for Chinese people's tourism behavior. Natrudee Intatip, Junior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division of the Tourism Authority of Thailand also stressed the importance of catering to China for tourism statistics:

We get tourism statistics. TAT, under the Thai government, really cares about the number of tourists per head and China provides over 10.5 million tourists a year. As I have mentioned before, we recognize the influence of the Chinese state over their people. Sometimes Chinese people might not even consider Thailand as their travel destination, but if we cater to their needs in terms of protocol, uphold Chineseness, and maintain strong familial relations, the Chinese state might persuade Chinese people to come to Thailand.

Krittiga Chumyawong, Senior Marketing Officer at Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division, Tourism Authority of Thailand agrees with her colleagues, adding that:

Thailand must also cooperate because we know that we gain a lot of benefits, like organizing Chinese New Year events, would only boost tourism during the "golden week" where Chinese tourists travel a lot. Moreover, there is no harm in helping promote Chinese culture during these periods, where Thailand can also assure the Chinese people that

one can also celebrate Chinese New Year in Thailand, where we welcome Chinese-style celebrations. It is inevitable that we cannot reject the projects that the Chinese embassy approaches us. The main goal of TAT is to promote Thai tourism awareness to other countries. However, when the Chinese embassy says that working with TAT is more convenient than working with other sectors like the Ministry of Culture, we cannot deny them because we know that Chinese tourists are very important to the Thai economy. Sometimes we pay for the events in whole, but we must say that the event is a cooperation between Chinese and Thai states. We cannot reject them because Chinese tourists are very important to us.

This point is proven by many previous research stating, “The Chinese government has a degree of leverage over its tourists that other governments do not enjoy. Many Chinese tourists are new to international tourism and have limited international language abilities. There is still a strong desire for comfort-zone or group tourism”.¹¹⁵ Another research conducted by the World Tourism Cities Federation, also shows that 38 percent of outbound Chinese tourists are on group tours.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, research shows China’s three largest licensed tourist agencies by revenue are all state-owned and that only 8 percent of the 25,000 Chinese licensed travel agencies are permitted to offer international travel.¹¹⁷ Conclusively, what all the interviewees from the TAT are referring to is the Chinese policy called, Approved Destination Status (ADS) that allows overseas pleasure travel by its citizens in tightly controlled groups and only to countries (and territories) approved by the government.¹¹⁸ Many countries who are dependent on Chinese tourists are heavily dependent on the Chinese state’s tourism policy as well. Thus, presenting Chineseness in events and speeches pleases the Chinese government, and would only have a positive impact on how the government will persuade the Chinese tourists to travel to Thailand.

¹¹⁵ Anwar, 2020

¹¹⁶ WTCF, 2014

¹¹⁷ Anwar, 2020

¹¹⁸ Mak, 2020

4.2.3 The Royal Family's Personal Interests and Influence on Thai State

The factor of the Royal Family's portrayal of Chineseness cannot be entirely analyzed as Old Chineseness. This is because it is evident that the royal family promotes Chineseness through personal interests, and the political agenda behind that is unknown due to the inability for scholars to interview the royal family for in-depth research. However, it is evident that two members of the royal family have shown many initiatives to explore Chineseness in various aspects, they are, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn.

Starting with Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. In an interview with Xinhua, the princess stated, "I have known China as a country from a very young age. Although Thailand had yet to establish diplomatic ties with the PRC at that time, I had been able to hear the voice of New China through the radio".¹¹⁹ Moreover, it was also the then queen and her mother, Queen Mother Sirikit that influenced her point of view towards Chinese education. The princess recalled that her mother used to tell her that Chinese people are "fond of reading and learning, and understanding Chinese would offer her more knowledge".¹²⁰ All this evidence of interviews with Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn suggest that her interests with Chineseness started from personal interest and upbringing.

Being a part of the royal family, she remains above politics which means her actions are not accounted to be for political agendas, at least on paper. Thus, she has no official duties to promote Chineseness in any way, yet she still does out of interest. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn said that the Thai royal family values the friendly relations between Thailand and China, and appreciates the support and assistance of the Chinese side for the cause of education, science and technology and poverty alleviation in remote areas in Thailand. She is willing to "continuously contribute to propelling bilateral friendship and cooperation in various fields".¹²¹ The Chinese state has given her various degrees and awards in recognition of her promoting Chineseness. In the year 2000, the Princess received the Chinese Language and Culture Friendship Award by China's Ministry of Education in recognition of her

¹¹⁹ Xinhua, 2019

¹²⁰ Xinhua, 2019

¹²¹ China Mission, 2019

well-known expertise in things Chinese and her research on Chinese culture and history.¹²² Moreover, in 2019, the Princess received the Friendship Medal from President Xi Jinping, the highest honor given to any foreigner by the Chinese state, to represent her long standing friendship with China.¹²³ Her long and continuous efforts in learning about China, even though it came out of personal childhood interests, became a symbol of Sino-Thai relations by both the Thai and the Chinese State recognizing her work.

Another prominent royal family member in Thai cultural diplomacy towards China, using Chineseness, is Princess Chulabhorn. The Princess, like her sister, came into promoting Chineseness through personal interests. Princess Chulabhorn was an accomplished pianist and enthusiast in musical instruments. According to her interview with CCTV in 2005, the princess said, “When I first saw the guzheng, I thought it was the most beautiful instrument I have ever seen, and I wanted to know what they sound like. So, I hired a group of students from the Academy of Shanghai to play for me. She did not play difficult songs, but I liked the sound of the guzheng. It was very gentle and melodious.”¹²⁴ Immediately after, she took up guzheng classes and in 2001 she organized her first concert, titled “Two Lands, One Heart”, that was held four times between Thailand and China since then. The question lies in how personal interests from the royal family became Thailand’s cultural diplomacy. To answer this rhetorical question the research cites findings from interviews from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry mentions that Chineseness is not part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ agenda to promote cultural diplomacy. Thainess through soft power like Muay Thai, food, and films are rather promoted as cultural diplomacy. However, events like “Two Lands, One Heart” that come from the royal family’s orders require the MFA’s assistance in areas like coordination, reception, and organization. A diplomat who chooses to be anonymous stated:

The cultural diplomacy division of the Department of Information of the Ministry (of Foreign Affairs) mostly focuses on Thainess or Thai

¹²² Xinhua, 2019

¹²³ Bangkok Post, 2019

¹²⁴ CCTV, 2005

soft power like boxing, food, etc. However, one event that the Ministry was a part of helping and facilitating was the initiative from Princess Chulabhorn to organize the “Two Lands, One Heart” concert. This was one of the most important events that we helped facilitate in terms of Chinese culture representation.

Similar views on how the royal family’s interests put the Chineseness on Thai state’s agenda, was shared by Worawut Chawengkiat, Counsellor at the Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

We have no intentional initiatives of promoting Chineseness in both public and bilateral diplomacy, the MFA supports initiatives by other Thai state agencies. Especially, if the event is taking place in China, where the political authority lies with the MFA. The Embassies and Consulates will get invited to the event to take notes, coordinate, and monitor the event, as the event will be reported to the MFA in Bangkok, and can be used as a factual example when having bilateral meetings with China.

These findings suggest that the interests of the royal family in Chineseness has become a political event in Sino-Thai relations and can interfere with the agenda of Thai state actors. The MFA, which is not particularly in charge of promoting Chineseness, is required to do so with orders from the royal family. However, the research must admit that information on why the royal family is interested in Chineseness is limited due to being unable to interview the institution themselves. Thus, the thesis is only able to obtain information from the past interviews of the two princesses in various press. From the reasons of the interview, personal interest seems to be the most fitting discourse analysis. Thus, the interest of the royal family and the dynamic between the royal family as the head of state and the government actors, is one of the reasons why Chineseness has been used in Thai cultural diplomacy.

However, the promotion of Chineseness from the royal family is not limited to Old Chineseness but rather a mixed type of Chineseness is promoted through the two

princesses. Princess Sirindhorn is a good example of this diversity in Chineseness promotion. The Princess' interests that got her into Chineseness mainly lies in education and literature. She has been promoting different Chinese literatures, translating them herself. Through travelogues like “The Beautiful Jiangnan (เจียงหนานแสนงาม), she explores different Chinese culture from Jiangnan area, that is not related to Sampheng Chineseness. However, due to her being a prominent figure in Thai politics (members of the Head of State) and her overall interests in Chineseness, she is often called upon to celebrate Old Chineseness in Thailand through events like the Yaowarat Chinese New Year celebrations, held annually.

In a nutshell, the royal family does not only represent Old Chineseness, but other types of Chineseness as well due to their personal interests. However, it is evident that the two princesses have had influences on the Thai state to promote Chineseness, including Old Chineseness.

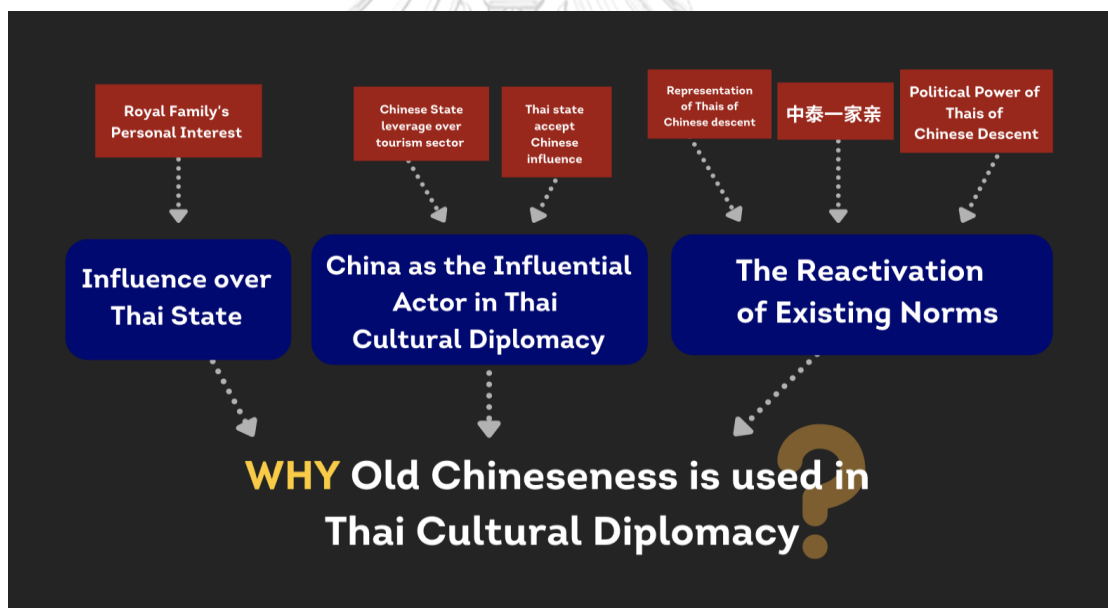


Figure 22: Flowchart explaining why Old Chineseness is used in Thai Cultural Diplomacy

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter is a continuation of the analysis that Thai State sectors have been using Old Chineseness as a part of Thai Cultural Diplomacy. The consequential question is why Old Chineseness, even with the existence of New Chineseness, is

being prioritised by the Thai State. The answers are a collection of the document and interview findings on the matter, answered through discourse analysis.

The successful assimilation of Sampheng Chineseness and the reactivation of that existing norm is the most important analysis of this question. Firstly, it is done for the Thai domestic's portion of Thais of Chinese descent, for inclusivity and representation. Policies like officiating Chinese New Year's as Thai public holiday was stated by an interview with Thai state official to "make the Thai domestic happy". Secondly, "the Chinese and Thais are the same family" is a phrase famously used by both the Thai and Chinese States to reiterate the successful assimilation of the early Chinese migrants in Thai society. The phrase is used in contemporary politics as a negotiation tool. It is evident that before bilateral talks on various issues like economic, security, even vaccine diplomacy take place, both sides would reiterate this phrase just to set a friendly environment. However, the usage of this phrase is perceived differently by different interviewees. Some officials from the Ministry of Culture see no wrong in using the phrase for positive engagement with the PRC. A counselor from the MFA views that the phrase is a good establishment for a friendly environment, yet, the Thai State should also be cautious in seeing that all the agenda that they set is met, to ensure Thai national interest. Furthermore, a diplomat from the MFA, and an officer from the TAT both claims that the phrase does not necessarily ensure Thai national interest, but rather lets China get away with unequal relations. The "family" is not to be, but rather a younger brother and an older brother relation. Lastly, the Thais of Chinese Descents are a reproduction of Sampheng Chinese community, and have been assimilated into not only Thai society, but the ruling elites as well. Wongsurawat analyzes the connection between significant Thai politicians, army generals, and business sectors in Thai Chinese associations like the Thai-Chinese Culture and Economy Association. She analyzes that these associations are behind many events of Sino-Thai relations. The Thais of Chinese Descent in power shows that Old Chineseness is more inclined to be presented due to identity politics. Wongsurawat even goes out on a limb to analyze that these Associations have attachments to the Communist Party of China, seeing how they are behind the selection of Abhisit Vejjajiva as the Thai representative to the 100th Anniversary of the CPC. This analysis could be an interesting topic on its own as well. This usage of old norms

is not rare in international relations, as explained by the concept of norm entrepreneurs and norm reinterpretation. The successful assimilation of Sampheng Chineseness represents an old norm of Thai history, and this norm is now being reactivated to suit the political and economic interests of the Thai state.

Another significant analysis of why Old Chineseness is used in Thai cultural diplomacy is initiated through the Chinese State themselves. TAT and MOC have all said that the Chinese State sectors like the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China and the China Cultural Center all want Thailand to uphold Chineseness in events, and the Thai State is willing to do so, for various reasons, mostly in the sense of economic and tourist benefits. Moreover, the Chinese State selects Chineseness that is more inclined towards Thailand's older Chinese communities, as they predict it will be well-received. This point shows China's pragmatism when it comes to culture and political correctness, in the sense that the mainstream Chinese culture does not need to be presented. Thus, the events like the Guanyin, Teochiu operas, lion dances from the five speech groups, etc., are sent or selected from the Chinese state.

The royal family's personal interests in Chineseness is the most straightforward analysis of this question as their position influences the Thai state sectors to facilitate and support the event they initiate. Thus, the Thai state sectors must also promote these interests, even though it may not be the priority of their working agenda. However, it is proven that the royal family's interests may be one of the most significant reasons why Chineseness is promoted in Thai cultural diplomacy, yet the Chineseness promoted is not only Old Chineseness. This point only shows that unlike the Thai state actors that have an agenda in using Chineseness for Thai cultural diplomacy, the two princesses' involvement in Chineseness only came from personal interests. Thus, they do not think about how Old Chineseness would be more beneficial or any other agenda, but rather promote what they are interested in as their main agenda.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

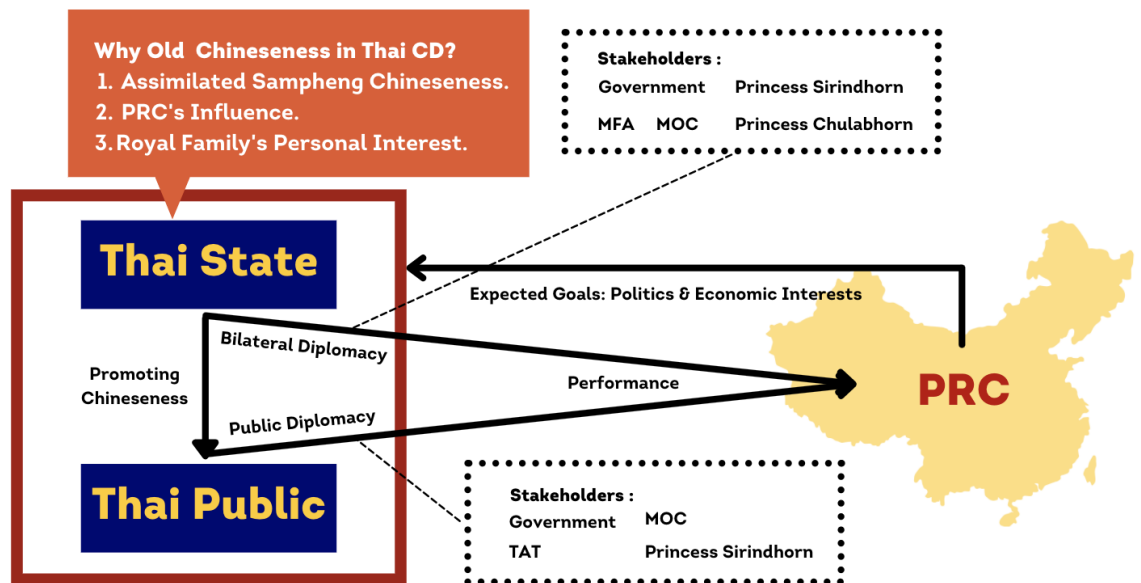


Figure 23: Thailand as a performative state to China in the 21st century

Thailand as a performative state towards the People's Republic of China in the 21st century is an analysis of Thailand's cultural diplomacy from an alternative viewpoint. Thai cultural diplomacy that is defined by the Ministry of Culture is to portray the good image of Thailand in the world stage, that translates to unmeasurable benefits. While this good image production involves Thai cultural promotion as the main focus, the research finds that Chineseness is also promoted in the mix.

The research starts off by looking at what a performance is originally defined by Peter Jackson. Peter Jackson, the pioneer of "Performative State" analyzed that Thailand (Siam) during the colonial era used foreign norms and mandated them to the public as a new norm. The clearest example was the western norm of being "civilized", and how King Rama V took the norm and localized it in Thailand as "siwilai" to redefine the notion of Thainess. This action was analyzed as one of the reasons why Thailand survived colonialism. Peter Jackson's model of performance,

however, was a top-down public diplomacy, on performing on the public towards the western power. However, with Thailand as a performative state to China in the 21st century, the research finds that the Thai state has been performing Chineseness both through the original way of public diplomacy as the model suggests, but also with addition of bilateral diplomacy directly towards the PRC. This is one element that Thailand as a performative state to China differs from Thailand as a performative state to the western powers during the colonial era.

After recognizing the model of analysis, the research looks at the events, speeches, and other initiatives that promote Chineseness from the Thai State, both in public and bilateral settings. That “state” here refers to five state actors that the research found fitting to using Chineseness promotion in their agenda. The five state actors are the government, members of the royal family, the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The findings show that each state actor has different platforms and events in promoting Chineseness as a “performance” in this analysis. The public diplomacy performance of Chineseness is done through the government, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Ministry of Culture, and Princess Sirindhorn. The main theme of promotion of Chineseness in public settings is surrounding Chinese New Year celebrations, wishes, interacting and facilitating events with Chinese communities, and many other cultural events of the existing Chineseness in Thailand or the Sampheng Chineseness. The bilateral diplomacy of promoting Chineseness is done through stakeholders like the government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Princess Sirindhorn and Chulabhorn. The MFA mainly uses the term “the Chinese and the Thais are the same family” as a way of promoting assimilated Chineseness in Thailand, and also as a negotiation tool with China. The government is bilaterally performing Chineseness through different cases like the visit of Thaksin Shinawatra to his ancestral home at Meizhou in 2005. Princess Sirindhorn performs Chineseness out of her childhood interests in China, where she mainly focuses on education and development. She has been promoting Chinese literature and culture through her many books and translations. Princess Chulabhorn, also out of her personal interests, promotes Chineseness through the musical instrument of guzheng, where she held concerts between the two countries. Thus, five Thai state actors have been promoting

Chineseness in various ways, and these actions are analyzed as the “performance” to China, and consequences in political and economic interests with Beijing.

After the research describes the performances, the research raises the analysis of why Old Chineseness is being promoted in Thai cultural diplomacy. First, the royal family’s interests are the most direct discourse analysis.

The elements of the successful assimilation of Sampheng Chineseness in Thailand proves vital on why Old Chineseness is promoted as part of Thai cultural diplomacy. The Sampheng Chineseness has had its ups and downs in Thai society, and with China’s economic and political rise, the norm has been upheld as a performance from the Thai state. The old norm has been used to promote Chineseness in three ways, inclusivity and representation of Sampheng Chineseness, the phrase “the Chinese and Thais are the same family”, and the political power of Thais of Chinese descent. These points are the findings on how Sampheng Chineseness is the reason why Chineseness is used in Thai cultural diplomacy. This usage of older norms for newer arenas can be conceptualized by the concept of norm reinterpretation. It is when older norms are reframed and used to gain political benefits. Second, China’s influence in Thai cultural diplomacy is another reason why Thailand must use Old Chineseness as cultural diplomacy. Interestingly the Chinese state themselves select Sampheng (Old) Chineseness for Thailand to portray Old Chineseness as cultural diplomacy. From the lion dance to Teochiu operas to Guanyin worshipping, the Chinese state’s encouragement for Thailand to use these Old Chinese traditions and culture are analyzed by the Thai state officials as China’s localization strategy for their cultural promotion. Moreover, China’s ability to meddle into Thai cultural diplomacy is very interesting as most of this allowance comes from the Thai state. The Ministry of Culture stated that Thailand allows China to select Chineseness portrayal in Thai cultural diplomacy, even in Thai public settings, because they value representation of Thailand’s multiculturalism, with Chineseness being one of them. The second reason for the Thai state allowing China to influence Thai cultural diplomacy is because of their massive tourism in Thailand. The Tourism Authority of Thailand unanimously stated that they recognize China’s leverage over its domestic tourism sector. Moreover, the Chinese citizens have strong faith in where the Communist Party recommends their citizens to travel to, and also not to travel to. The

power of China's authoritarianism over its tourism sector makes Thai state actors like the TAT say yes to any initiatives coming from the Chinese state actors like the China Cultural Center in Bangkok and the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok. Lastly, it is the royal family's interest in Chineseness that causes the Thai state to promote Chineseness. As the royal family's actions are supposed to be apolitical, thus the members of the institution can take action out of interest. However, these personal interests in Chineseness, over the years, have been politicized and analyzed as Thai cultural diplomacy. The members of the royal family were also given awards and honors for their work in promoting Chineseness from the Chinese state, showcasing the political interests gained back after performing to China.

These reasons are discourse analysis from interviewing and document analysis from the five Thai state actors. It answers the question of why Thailand is a performative state to China by using Chineseness as cultural diplomacy (performance). However, it is important to note that this analysis is only from Thai state actors and does not involve discourse analysis of why China wants Thailand to perform using Chineseness. This would require expansion of the research scope for further findings.

5.2 Significance and Contributions

This research contributes to the literature of international relations, especially on the significance of how cultural diplomacy can shape bilateral relations. This research takes an alternative view of using Chineseness as Thai cultural diplomacy. As mentioned at the start of this research paper, the comprehensive dynamic of Sino-Thai relations has been increasingly positive from the end of the Cold War towards the 21st century. Thus, many scholars who study Sino-Thai relations cannot leave out the cultural aspect that helps drive the significant economic cooperation between the two countries. From Thailand's perspective, China's huge population represents Thailand's economic interests, thus, positive cultural diplomacy is performed. When it comes to cultural diplomacy, the existing literature has only been analyzing cultural diplomacy from the promotion of Thainess. The definition of cultural diplomacy from the Ministry of Culture of Thailand refers to the creation of a positive image of Thailand on the world stage in return for "unmeasurable benefits". The official

strategy of the Thai state in promoting cultural diplomacy is through promotion of the “5F”, namely, Film, Food, Fashion, Fighting, and Festival. Looking at the projects, the areas seem to be more inclined in promoting Thainess. Moreover, in academic literature, both Thasuthorn’s analysis of Thai cultural diplomacy towards neighboring countries through bilateral means, and Anantasirikiat’s analysis of cultural promotion in public diplomacy, both point to the promotion of Thainess. To the neighboring countries, Thailand uses cultural diplomacy like Buddhist principles, Thai language-teaching, etc. In terms of public diplomacy, Thailand uses cultural promotion in creating a positive image of the Thai state, as mentioned in the case of the successful Tham Luang rescue mission. However, when it comes to cultural diplomacy towards the PRC in the 21st century, the Thai state involves Chineseness.

By looking at this unorthodox norm creation, the research is able to contribute to the study of Thai cultural diplomacy where Chineseness is present in the face of Thainess promotion. Hereby known as Thailand as a performative state towards China, the framework looks at the overflowing Chinese influence in the mechanism of the Thai state, to the point where evidences suggest that Thailand is involving Chineseness as a performance of Thai cultural diplomacy for a expected goal of strong Sino-Thai economic and political cooperation. Moreover, the second question that analyzes why old Chineseness evident through the Sampheng Chinese community would be overpowering other types of Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy, throws light on the discourse analysis of the Thai state. Findings from Thai state officials’ interviews explore reasons like reactivation of existing norms (Sampheng “old” Chineseness), China as the influential actor, and the royal family’s personal interests. These reasons are significant to how the PRC and Chineseness still hold certain influence within the Thai state’s decision-making process on cultural diplomacy.

5.3 Discussion: The Lesser Significance of Huai Khwang Chineseness to the Thai State

Finally, the research would like to end with a discussion for future research. It is very interesting that no Thai state actors had used Huai Khwang (New) Chineseness in Thai cultural diplomacy at all. Through interviews with the said actors, the research was intrigued to find out why that is, and could provide a discussion to research more into the dynamic between the Thai state and Huai Khwang Chinese community and the identity they represent.

The findings show that the assumption was proven correct that Old Chineseness is more represented in Thai cultural diplomacy. However, the analysis from Chapter III also shows, from interview findings, that there are many factors that caused the Thai state to have very little cultural interactions with the Huai Khwang Chinese community. The only Thai state actor that came the closest to have cultural interactions with the Huai Khwang Chinese community was the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Natrudee Intatip, Junior Marketing Officer, East Asia Market Division, TAT, expresses her interest in the community and finds them as a target group that the Thai state could explore into how they portray Chineseness, especially when interactions with mainland Chinese people are limited due to the pandemic. She gave the research insight on how the TAT almost came up with an initiative with Xinyimins in Huai Khwang. Natrudee Intatip, Junior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division of the Tourism Authority of Thailand stated:

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It is a very interesting community, they are literally Chinese, unlike the ancestral Chinese. During the COVID situation, we got the opportunity to look into them. However, when we approached them we must approach them as Chinese, not Thais of Chinese descent. So we tried to make a tour campaign with them travelling as internet influencers. They are attached to China. When they post something on social media, their friends will want to come. They are an unassimilated culture and could work in the Thai state's national interest.

However, the plan was postponed after Thailand struggled with the pandemic and came into lockdown in 2021. Apart from this miss opportunity, the TAT has also

dabbled with Huai Khwang (New) Chineseness in their events like the “Chinese New Year for newer generations” by inviting modern and trending artists like The Untamed. However, when asked about the decision making of the event, the TAT did not specifically choose the newer Chinese identity because of the Huai Khwang community, but rather due to an agreement with the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism to also present a newer Chinese identity in Thailand. Apart from all the said events, there has been no cultural interactions with the Thai state with the Huai Khwang Chinese community or the identity they represent. Several factors are illustrated in the interviews.

The first factor is that the Thai state sectors view the Huai Khwang Chinese community as rather new, small, and temporary. Wisit Bunyaratthipong, Counsellor at the MFA stated that:

Huai Khwang is a Chinese community that is very recent and not permanent. They are not fitted for cultural diplomacy because they are actors with temporary settlement with the goal of economic opportunities.


Krittiga Chumyawong, Senior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division, Tourism Authority of Thailand, shared similar views stating:

I do not think that the Huai Khwang Chinese community is significant to TAT in promoting Chinese culture. The only time we have considered them is when we considered expats and their tourism activities. However, the size of the community is still very small, and they are not here mainly for tourism, but rather economic interests, so we do not have their culture in mind, when organizing events as much as Sampheng Chinese identity.


From the findings, the research finds that size and motive for settlement also is an important factor for the Thai state to decide whether to have cultural interactions with. According to Ran Guanyu’s 2015 research on Huai Khwang Chinese community, there is no official number on the population of New Chinese Migrants

because many of them come and go over the years, but his research estimates around at the range from 5,000 to 10,000 people.¹²⁵ Compared to the scattered and reproduced Thais of Chinese descent who live all-round the country and are highly concentrated in the Sampheng Chinese community, the number is significantly smaller.

The second factor that can be taken from the interviews is that the Thai state finds that the Huai Khwang Chinese community do not prioritize culture. Many Thai state interviewees recognize the Chinese migrants in Huai Khwang as economically driven labor migrants. Wisit Bunyaratthipong, Counsellor at the MFA explains:



Restressing my point on new Chinese culture, Huai Khwang Chinese carry this economic-driven culture, and do not emphasize Chinese family-values, morality, etc., that old Chinese culture emphasizes. Thus, the Thai state does not use Huai Khwang Chinese culture to initiate cultural diplomacy.



Moreover, the Huai Khwang Chinese community is multi-culturally Chinese. Due to the fact that their migration pattern came from state-encouraged migration for economic opportunities, thus, the Xinyimins come from all over China. This causes an ununified Chinese culture that the Thai state could promote for cultural diplomacy. This analysis from the Thai State is also factually correct as research from Ran Guanyu did mention that the interviewees in Huai Khwang are from a broad range of Chinese provinces. The picture below is taken from the research, “Outside the Old Enclave”, by Ran Guanyu.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Ran, 2015

¹²⁶ Ran, 2015

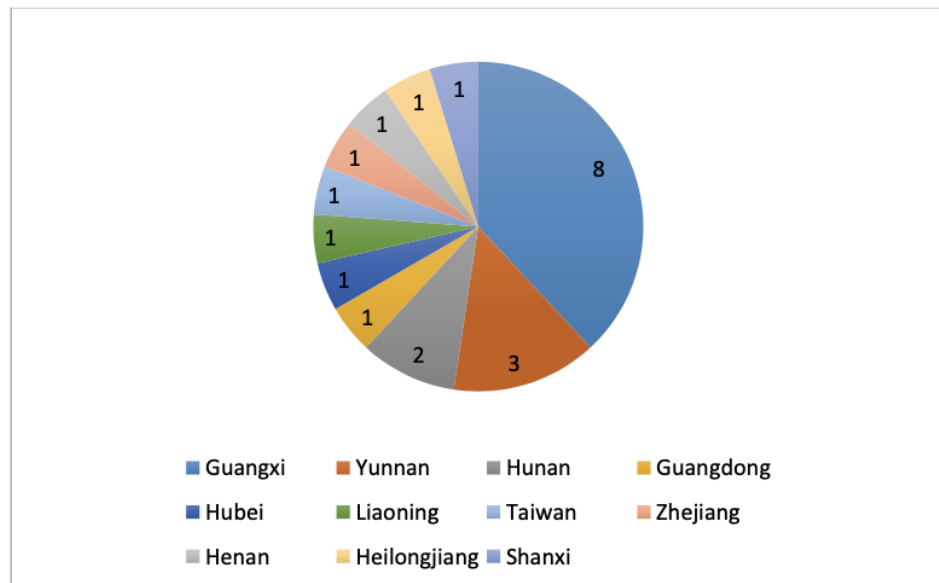


Figure 24: Chart showing diversity of Huai Khwang Chinese community (Ran, 2015)

The multi-cultural and the less prioritization of Huai Khwang Xinyimins causes there to be less cultural connection of the community to the Thai state. Furthermore, as an icing on the cake, the Huai Khwang Chinese community is also viewed by the Thai state as a community that stays in “bubbles” and does not plan to assimilate into Thai culture. Worawut Chawengkiat, Counsellor at the Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated:

Huai Khwang is a new trend that came from settling around the Embassy and Chain Migration, all for a better economic opportunity in a globalized world. They do not wish to settle down for good, and do not plan to assimilate into Thai culture as much, but rather stay in bubbles.

This idea is not only seen by the Thai state as research by Ran Guanyu also points out the isolation of the community. The following are the findings from the interview of Ran’s research on the relationship between Thais and Chinese in Huai Khwang area:¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Ran, 2015

Description of Interviewee	Findings on isolation of Huai Khwang community
A Thai shop owner in Huai Khwang area	“To tell the truth, I didn’t even know that there are so many Chinese immigrants here until more and more Chinese people appeared in our community after the military coup last year, though I have run the business here for decades.”
A Thai shop owner in Huai Khwang area	“We don’t have any communication, only sometimes they come to my shop to buy some products. My main customers are still the Thai people in this community.”
A Thai shop owner in Huai Khwang area	“We don’t have problems with them. But sometimes we think they talk too loudly, and they play with fireworks at midnight at the Chinese New Year. We don’t like that, it is noisy.”
A Chinese immigrant in Huai Khwang	“They have their life, we have ours. We don’t talk too much and I think it is not necessary. And I don’t have Thai friends here, we only communicate with Chinese here.”
A Chinese immigrant in Huai Khwang	“We have been living and running business in this area for more than 5 years, and our customers are almost all Chinese. We do talk with some Thai people on this street sometimes, but not often.”

Table 6: Interview of relationship between Thais and Chinese in Huai Khwang

The last reason why the Huai Khwang Chinese community is not used as Thai cultural diplomacy is because of its economic relations with the Thai state. Even in economic relations, the Huai Khwang Chinese community does not have strong connections with the Thai state. This reason is divided into two reasons. Firstly, because the Huai Khwang Chinese are not reliant on the Thai state for migration as much as low-skilled migrants from neighboring countries. This is pointed out by a

diplomat from the MFA, where he mentions that the Huai Khwang Chinese migrants are high-skilled workers who came to work for mostly Chinese companies in Thailand like Huawei, Oppo, and other tech and logistic sectors. Thus, the Xinyimins do not pose many issues in terms of working conditions, human rights issues, etc., due to their decent standard of living and reliant on the big Chinese companies. Worawut Chawengkiat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared his thoughts on the community's economic status:

The Huai Khwang Chinese Migrants also have little impact on Thai economy compared to migrants of neighbouring countries. Professionals from Huai Khwang are mostly not here to serve Thai businesses but Chinese Businesses. They also do not have many problems with paperwork and illegal migrants compared to, say, Burmese migrants. This can also be because they are a smaller community. Thus, they might not be impactful enough for the Thai state to implement policies for good and for bad, and that also includes cultural policies.

Another economic reason for why Huai Khwang is not significant in the eyes of the Thai State, the research cites TAT's Deputy Director of Shanghai Office. Thamrongsak Lampangpipa, the Deputy Director shares his opinion that Huai Khwang Chinese community is not the target group for cultural diplomacy.

In my own opinion, I do not see them as a target group because they do have a lot of characteristics that go against the national interest of Thailand. TAT must stimulate the economy through tourism, and the Huai Khwang Chinese community do not stimulate the Thai economy as much. I view them, at times, to take away the jobs of Thai people, and it is the work of the Ministry of Labour to scan through these Chinese companies in the Huai Khwang area to ensure that Thai people are also employed fairly. Thus, it is not TAT's job to target this community as there is already an existing controversy around this area.

However, upon interviewing many Thai state representatives, a lot of them showed interest in the Huai Khwang Chinese community and the identity and culture they represent. Many of them also hoped that, in the future, their agencies could also work to promote this new Chineseness, side by side, with the old one. The Deputy Director of TAT (Shanghai Office), shared:

We are seeing more and more people-to-people exchanges that create awareness of the contemporary culture of both countries. For example, Chinese people are becoming more acquainted with more “modern” Thai cuisines like Mango Sticky Rice, Tom Kha Gai, etc. We are also becoming more acquainted with newer Chinese cuisines that were not brought in with the Sampheng Chinese like Mala and “Guo Qiao Mi Xian”. I see them as an interesting community, where we can explore our future works.

These several reasons are obtained from interviews of the Thai state to see why the Huai Khwang Chinese community or the type of Chineseness they present is not viewed of high significance by the Thai state. This consequently makes the Sampheng Chineseness clearer and more significant to the Thai state’s view of Chineseness and the usage for Cultural diplomacy.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW LIST

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

1. Worwaut Chawengkiat
 - a. Counsellor, Department of Information
 - b. Former diplomat at the Royal Thai Consulate in Nanning, China,
2. Wisit Bunyaritthipong
 - a. Counsellor, the Royal Thai Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya
 - b. Experiences with working in cultural diplomacy
3. Anonymous, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Culture (MOC)

1. Ms. Kittiporn Chaiboon
 - a. Director of Foreign Relations Group, Secretariat of the Department
2. Mr. Teerawit Boonrasri
 - a. Cultural Officer, Professional Level
3. Miss Treechada Aunruen
 - a. Director of Bilateral Cooperation Group, Foreign Affairs Division
4. Mr. Chinnapong Chullanandana
 - a. Cultural Officer at Bilateral Cooperation Group

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

1. Thamrongsak Lampangpipa,
 - a. Deputy Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (Shanghai Office)
2. Krittiga Chumyawong,
 - a. Senior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division
3. Natrudee Intatip,
 - a. Junior Marketing Officer, Asia 1 Section, East Asia Market Division

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

VITA

NAME	Natdanai Kietigaroon
DATE OF BIRTH	10 February 1999
PLACE OF BIRTH	Bangkok, Thailand
INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED	High School Affiliated to Shanghai Jiaotong University Bachelor of Political Science (Politics and International Relations), Thammasat University
HOME ADDRESS	867/118 Soi Punnawithi 49, Bang Chak, Phra Khanong, Bangkok 10260



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY