

## Double Identity Representation of Chinese Shrines in Phuket Muang District

*Panuwat Chanasakun*<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

“Double Identity Representation of Chinese Shrines in Phuket District” has the main objective to study the adaptations of Chinese culture in the context of Thai society through Chinese shrines in Muang Phuket District and to comprehend the phenomena of double identity which is represented in Chinese shrines in Muang Phuket District. In-depth interviews and Participant Observation of the Qualitative research methods were used in this study. The Chinese shrines are an important part of maintaining and expressing Chinese culture. Chinese shrines and Chinese-Thai were adopted by Thai culture and belief. This phenomenon is presented by the double identity form. Chinese Shrines are the expression of the Hybridity of culture and are central to Chinese culture and double identity through art, religious activities and figures of god. Chinese shrines are involved with various organizations; both public and private sectors, and have a role in Thai society through the public benefit activities and social welfares. The double identity representation shows the development of a good relationship between Thai ethnic and Chinese cultural groups.

**Keywords:** Thai ethnic, Chinese ethnic, Double Identity, Chinese shrines

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<sup>1</sup> M.A. student of Arts in Chinese Study,  
Prince of Songkla University, Phuket campus

## การแสดงออกเชิงทวิลักษณ์ผ่านศาลเจ้าจีน ในเขตอำเภอเมือง จังหวัดภูเก็ต

พณูวัชร ชนะสกุล<sup>2</sup>

### บทคัดย่อ

"การแสดงออกเชิงทวิลักษณ์ผ่านศาลเจ้าจีนในเขตอำเภอเมืองภูเก็ต" มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาการปรับตัวของวัฒนธรรมจีนในบริบทของสังคมไทยผ่านศาลเจ้าจีนและเพื่อสร้างความเข้าใจในปรากฏการณ์การแสดงออกทางทวิลักษณ์ผ่านศาลเจ้าจีนในอำเภอเมืองภูเก็ต โดยใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพในการศึกษาและเก็บข้อมูลผ่านการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก ร่วมกับการสังเกตแบบมีส่วนร่วมจากการวิจัยพบว่าศาลเจ้าจีนเป็นส่วนหนึ่งในการรักษาและแสดงออกทางวัฒนธรรมจีน ศาลเจ้าจีนได้มีการปรับใช้และผสมผสานวัฒนธรรมความเชื่อของชาวไทย เข้ากับวัฒนธรรมดั้งเดิมของจีนและแสดงออกมาผ่านรูปแบบการแสดงออกรูปแบบของศิลปะ กิจกรรมทางศาสนา และรูปเคารพต่างๆ ทั้งนี้ศาลเจ้าจีนมีความร่วมมือกับองค์กรภาครัฐและภาคเอกชนของไทยเป็นอย่างดีผ่านกิจกรรมสาธารณะต่างๆ ปรากฏการณ์เหล่านี้จึงเป็นรูปแบบการแสดงออกของปรากฏการณ์เชิงทวิลักษณ์ในศาลเจ้าจีนและวิถีชีวิตชาวไทยเชื้อสายจีนซึ่งสามารถแสดงการพัฒนาและเชื่อมโยงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างชาติพันธุ์ไทยและชาติพันธุ์จีนได้เป็นอย่างดี

**คำสำคัญ:** ชาติพันธุ์ไทย ชาติพันธุ์จีน ทวิลักษณ์ ศาลเจ้าจีน

<sup>2</sup> นักศึกษาปริญญาโท คณะวิทยาศาสตร์  
มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตภูเก็ต

## Introduction

Double identity is an expression through the Cultural assimilation and is an identity of a group with a new culture and tradition, meanwhile, it has to maintain the identity of the group. The Chinese ethnicities emigrated to Phuket and they brought Chinese culture to Thailand as well. The Chinese adapted to social conditions and lifestyles of the local people. Chinese ethnicity has adapted and blended with the local culture in various forms. Although they can maintain their identities, they also can be integrated into Thai culture.

The purpose of my research focused on the double identity representation of the Chinese shrines in Phuket district because the shrines are regarded as the center of Chinese communities and also play an important role in the society. The Chinese shrines are still fostering traditional Chinese culture by various symbols. The symbols in Chinese shrines are representative of traditional Chinese culture and the Thai culture, and support society in various ways while also making a stronger relationship between Thai and Chinese.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To study the adaptations of Chinese culture in the context of Thai society through Chinese shrines in Muang Phuket District
2. To comprehend the phenomena of double identity which is represented through Chinese shrines in Muang Phuket District

## Scope of Study

This study is done through Chinese shrines in Muang District, Phuket because the Chinese shrines are important representations of Chinese culture. The study pays particular attention to the Jui Tui Tao Bo Keng shrine, Pud-Jor shrine and Sam SanTian Hou Gueng (Ma Jor Pho) shrine.

## Research Methodologies

This study is qualitative research that describes the facts utilizing documents, interviews and observations while relying on data links with main ideas and relevant theory.

### 1.Data Collecting

1.1 The information collected as evidence from research studies relates to documents, including the coordination of relevant.

1.2 In-depth interviews used to search for answers and understanding in the form of a double identity phenomenon in Chinese shrine.

1.3 The Participant Observation by participating in the various activities held at such events in various occasions of the shrine, etc.

### 2 Population and Sample

This research studies Double Identity Representation of Chinese Shrine in Muang Phuket District. The researcher used qualitative research methods by depth interviewing the key Informants such as;

1. Head of JuTui Tao Bo Keng Shrine
2. Head of Pud-Jor (Guan Yin) Shrine
3. Head of Sam San TianHouGueng (Ma-Jor-Pho) shrine
4. The selected of 8 people from Chinese-Thai families

### 3. Analysis of the Findings

All information will be related and analyzed using content analysis method and by firstly analyzing collected data with theoretical framework. Secondly, inspecting the data and collecting more information in this section is not complete. Finally, analyzing inspection of data and concluding the research findings.

## **Result**

### **1. The Cognitive Ability of Chinese-Thai People to the Identity as Chinese in the Present**

The Double identity representation of Chinese shrines in Mueang Phuket is a combination of Chinese cultural identity that has been passed down from generation to generation. From the collected data and field study to observe and interview Chinese-Thai people show that the cognitive ability of Chinese-Thai people to assume a Chinese identity in the present could divide Chinese-Thai people into three major groups.

#### **1.1 The Group of Conservative Opinion**

Chinese-Thai people in this group have a traditional Chinese concept. A survey has found that the people of this group preserve and revive Chinese traditional culture. It can be seen in practice of ritual activities. In the new generation of Chinese-Thai people in this group have also asked the elder for help the traditional activities.

#### **1.2 The Group of Double Identity Opinion: The Opinion of both Chinese and Thai**

The study found that the majority of reviewers are in this group. Chinese-Thai people in this group are the people who feel that they are Thai citizens; they have rights and duties like ordinary Thai citizens, but they also feel that they are Chinese. Chinese-Thai people in this group would like to maintain concepts of their ancestors as they still participate in traditional activities such as setting up of an altar of Chinese gods in their houses etc. At the same time they go to Thai temples and practice activities of Thai culture. The Chinese-Thai in this group would be living with two cultures together in their life.

#### **1.3 The Group that Perceive they are Completely Thai**

Chinese-Thai people in this group think that they have become Thai, not Chinese like their parents and ancestors. They do not concentrate and practice their traditions of Chinese life style.

## 2. The Groups of Participants of Chinese-Thai in Shrines

### 2.1 The Group Which Participates in Chinese Shrine Activities.

The first group is the group of general Chinese-Thai people who go to the shrine to only participate in the activities, but do not take part in the activity as a director or member of the Shrine. Most of the Chinese-Thai people will go to shrine to participate in activities during the traditional festival, including the ceremonies concerning gods.

### 2.2 The Group Which Participates with Chinese Shrine Activities and Helps Organize Activities and Religious Rituals

From interviews with the Chinese-Thai people it appears that the Chinese-Thai in the second group would help the shrine and work in activities or ritual practices. The Chinese-Thai people in this group are the people who are passionate and interested in Chinese culture and tradition. The people in this group are the directors of the shrine, the members of the shrine and the general public. If the Chinese-Thai people in this group have free time, they use their free time to go to Chinese shrine to offer advice or assistance for the shrines, whether the visitors or the faithful come to the shrine. As a descendant of Chinese-Thai people who are interested and involved in the activities of the Shrine in many ways.

According to the Chinese-Thai people both two groups have differences in practice, but it could be reflections of their duty as well.

Interviews and participatory observation found the phenomenon presented the Chinese identity very well. The identity was presented by the symbols that mean everything that can convey the idea of faith of the ethnic group.

The symbols represent the object, acts and concepts of linguistic formations.

**1) The Object:** The object symbolized in Chinese shrines are

the buildings of the Chinese shrines such as the architecture of the building, decorative structure as well as the stucco carvings or the statute of Chinese Gods.

**2) The Act or the Concepts:** This is the activity of particular Chinese shrines, especially the religious activities and ceremony or the rituals.

**3) The Linguistic Formations:** The Chinese still use the Chinese language as the primary language. The Chinese pass down their ceremonies and rituals by the Chinese language.

### **3. The Double Identity, Integration and Changing**

The majority of Chinese-Thai in the survey said that the pattern of traditions and rituals in Phuket largely retains the traditional pattern as the core. The sample of Chinese-Thai people in Phuket district said that Chinese shrines and the Chinese-Thai people in this present have changed from the past at several points, some of the Chinese shrines used modified forms of ritual.

The interviews show conclusive proof that there are various changes in many shrines that came from the perspective of the general public. Chinese ethnicity was maintaining art and culture in Phuket. Although there are some modifications, they still have a traditional identity. The Chinese-Thai think that the situation would be foster great variety and endorse better unity in the community.

### **4. The Double Identity Representation of Chinese Shrines through the Implementation in Various Opportunities of Thailand**

The examples of these activities in the interviews have presented particular activities that held onto the original events of the shrine. The annual events combine Thai Theravada Buddhism practiced with traditional Chinese ceremony and are a good reflection on the emergence of a mixed cultural phenomenon in the form of

double identity of Chinese and Thai. The Chinese-Thai people and the community around the shrine including Thai people will come to participate in the activity. The study showed that although the Chinese have been evacuated, settlers adopted a new culture, in addition there is also cultural integration. But Chinese ethnicity is still keeping Chinese culture simultaneously supported.

## 5. The Double Identity of Chinese-Thai People

In addition to activities in the shrine and Chinese-Thai today, they mixed Thai culture into cultural practices or religious practices and maintained traditional Chinese practices together. Based on the interviews, it was found that Chinese-Thai people continue to maintain and significantly adhere to the patterns of the Chinese culture. Some houses are the very strict and traditional. If a household member had been married with someone of Thai ethnicity, they strictly stood by their Thai culture, and their Chinese cultural aspects would decline. In the current generation, Chinese-Thai people are declining in concentration of Chinese cultural aspects or some of them have no Chinese cultural presence at all.

The study found that Chinese-Thai people practically all celebrate popular Chinese cultural holidays, for example, Chinese New Year festival. The collected data presents that Chinese-Thai culture in Phuket is a strict homage to the gods and gives offerings to their ancestors like in the past. Certain Chinese-Thai people in Phuket town have embraced Thai culture, and after absorbing Chinese traditional practices; they would go to Thai temple to make merit for the good fortune of Thai people.

Theravada Buddhism in daily life is the majority of the faith and religious practices that Chinese have taken from the Thai Culture and adapted to their culture. Numerous Chinese-Thai people wake up in the early morning and prepare food to give to the monk;



some people go to Thai temples for making merit every day; and the ordination to the monk of their sons. These representation the double identity aspect of the Chinese ethnicity very well. The double identity of individual Chinese-Thai people has always affected Chinese shrines.

## **6. The Opinion about Changing Phenomena and the Double Identity Representation**

The Chinese shrines in Phuket are continuing to maintain beliefs and traditions of their ancestors and successors rigidly. At the same time, there are a few of them that have changed through appropriate and various factors. The history of culture and society can help to indicate a social significance in the current situation as well. In part, these phenomena were caused by a combination of cultural beliefs of Thai ethnicity and become double identity later.

The society and culture must change; a social and cultural dynamic is a subject that could change at any time. The pattern of social and cultural change could be divided two patterns. There are the evolution and the development aspects.

### **6.1 Characteristics of the Evolution**

The evolving pattern of change is gradual; it may take shorter or longer depending on individual situations. As Chinese people combine Thai culture with their own, the double identity phenomena among Chinese people has been observed to be happening for a long time, since the second or third generation of Chinese people who were living in Phuket.

### **6.2 The Nature of Development**

The development must determine the purpose of the plain procedure. The study found that the sample of Chinese shrines is planned in terms of development as well, for example: preparing a book about the history of the shrine, traditional Chinese culture,

and Chinese festival and to describe the rituals of JuiTui Tao Bo Keng Shrine, which defines the action plan in the 2017 year.

## **7. The Opinion of Double Identity Phenomena**

The Chinese shrine is located in the community of Chinese ethnicity and Thai ethnicity. Chinese-Thai people mostly said the location is one of the reasons that make the double identity phenomenon into a Chinese shrine. According to the views and opinions of the people of Chinese-Thai people and a phenomenon found that the new generations are less interested or do not have a clarity of understanding of all traditional processes. But at the same time, it will start with a group of young Chinese-Thai people who are interested and try to study these processes to continue a culture of their ancestors.

## **8. The Trend of the Integration of Thai and Chinese in the Future**

The survey of Chinese-Thai people found that the majority opinion about the trend of double identity representation of Chinese shrines and Chinese-Thai people in Phuket think that these phenomena will be more and more present in the future. All of them would like to tell to the new generation of interest and inherit the traditional culture of their ancestor more than this present.

## **9. The Expression of Chinese Identity and Double Identity Representation of Chinese Shrine**

In the case of Chinese ethnicities and Thai ethnicities in Phuket, they have a cultural combinations between Chinese traditional identity and Thai identity together. These can be divided into 2 aspects.

### **9.1 The Chinese Identity Expression through Symbolic Forms**

The expression of cultural identity of Chinese still plays a role

in the community and life of Chinese shrine in Phuket. It can be present through the Chinese shrine in Phuket district maintaining its identity as well. They can keep following their traditional culture.

In case of Jui-tui Tao Bo Keng Shrine, PudJor Shrine and Ma Jor Pho shrine found that Chinese shrines as the spiritual centers and representative places of Chinese thought and belief, these three Chinese shrines play the key roles in transferring and expressing Chinese identity and also help to maintain the Chinese identity through various symbols in various formats. These symbols represent beliefs, values, and normality in society. The symbols are obviously expressing three aspects: Objects, Acts, and Linguistic Formations.

**9.1.1** The object symbol is about the things and objects in the shrine including the building of the shrine like Chinese architecture in a shrine.

**9.1.2** The act symbols, they are about the activities of the shrine, especially religious rituals and activities of the festival. According to the tradition and Chinese ancestor practice, in the year, Chinese shrines will hold many activities that Chinese and Thai people attended regularly. The main activities are as follows:

**1) JuiTui Tao Bo Keng Shrine:** The activities of the shrine are held by major traditional festivals such as Chinese New Year Festival, Vegetarian Festival, and Memorial of the main god of the shrine.

**2) PudJor Shrine:** PudJor Shrine will hold the activities on the remembrance day of Bodhisattva Guan Yin, three times a year. These are: Guan Yin's birthday (19th day of the 2nd lunar month), Guan Yin's enlightenment's day (19th day of the 6th lunar month) and Memorial renunciation's day (19th day of the 9th lunar month).

**3) Sam San Tian Huo Geung shrine (Ma Jor Pho shrine):** The shrine activities organize by Chinese traditional festivals, such as the Lantern Festival (Yuan Xiao) and the birthday of Goddess

Mazu on 23th day of the third month, according to the Chinese calendar.

**9.1.3** The Linguistic formations; Chinese will use the Chinese language in ceremonies, activities of a shrine association. In the ritual and public relation of Chinese shrine will use Chinese as well. In addition, Chinese shrines also help to revive and preserve Chinese tradition and culture, for example teaching the Chinese language to the public, transferring Chinese culture to young people or presenting Chinese culture to Thai society.

## **9.2** The Double Identity Representation of Chinese through Chinese Shrines

The Chinese shrine is a center of the community for various activities and preserves the culture that is inherited from ancestors. However, the Chinese shrine has contributed to strengthening unity between the Chinese and Thai community as well. Since the Chinese ethnic groups immigrated to Phuket, they adapted to the local culture and living with Thai people. It was beginning of the cultural integration between each other. The daily life of Chinese ethnicity was influenced by Thai, but they maintained and continued Chinese culture together. The Chinese began to adopt Thai culture with the traditional practices by Chinese-Thai people later. This phenomenon between Chinese ethnic and Thai ethnic called the phenomenon the “double identity form.” The distribution pattern of the double identity form in Chinese Shrine divided into three groups as follows:

### **9.2.1** The Expression through Art

The expression through art is including painting, sculpture, print, as well as music and performance. On the survey of the Chinese shrine in Phuket district it was found that three Chinese shrines in the study used art to mix culture. The mixing of cultural art is used least often; it is mainly used in the ritual practice of the

shrine. If the Chinese make merit or take religious ceremonies in Theravada Buddhism, they will use Thai altar that is decorated by Thai art.

### **9.2.2 The Expression through Faith and Religious Activities**

The expression through faith and religious activities of Chinese shrines is about the activities that are held or practiced in Chinese shrine. Most of it is about faith and religious activities. From data collection, it was found that the Chinese shrine followed their traditional rites, and the Chinese shrine also integrated Thai cultural beliefs or faith in many activities of the shrine. It could be seen from Theravada Buddhism activities such as inviting a monk to pray and make merit like Thai people do in the shrine ceremonies. Most activities that mix with Thai culture are associated with Theravada Buddhism.

### **9.2.3 Figures of Gods Adopted by Thai Buddhism**

The double identity is often expressed through the figure of gods, it could be present in the mixed-culture between Thai and Chinese. This figure means the Buddha image in Theravada Buddhism or other religions that Thai people believe. From the study, it was found that three of the samples of Chinese shrines in Phuket district take Thai's Buddhist imagery in a temporary time-scale. There will be a ritual ceremony that invites Theravada Buddhist monks to the shrine. When Chinese shrines hold the ritual or occasion in Thai culture form, they will take the Buddhist image in Thai culture to be a chairman of the ritual. When finished with their activities, the image of Buddha will be placed back to the room which is not located in the main building of the shrine.

In conclusion, this phenomenon can explain double identity in Chinese shrines as well. It is the cultural mixing between Chinese traditional identities with other cultures. The populations of society must adapt to the cultural change. The adoption of

culture was formed by willingly and makes it that so both cultures can live together without significant ethnic differences.

## 10. The Relationship between Chinese Ethnicities and Thai Ethnicities

The study presents three samples of Chinese shrines in Phuket district located in the center of Chinese-Thai community. In the time that Chinese ethnicities organized those activities, the Thai ethnic groups always would come to support the activities. Similarly, Thai people holding activities also received help from Chinese shrines as well. This phenomenon illustrates the close relationship which contradicts the incongruity of both ethnic groups. Thai ethnicity and Chinese ethnicities mixed their culture together and adopt a double identity phenomena afterwards. This is the remarkable feature of the ethnic groups that live in other cultures. There are many roles of Chinese shrines; the roles of Chinese shrines support the relationship with government organizations, private organizations, and the temples of Thai Theravada Buddhism.

10.1 The Government Organizations: The Chinese shrines would participate or support the activities of each organization, for example, participating in public activities, providing drinking water and appliances for the activities, providing medical support and sending experts to discourse about Chinese traditions and rituals in schools.

10.2 The Private Organization: Chinese shrines participate in private sectors for various organizations. Chinese shrines provide support through supplies, drinking water, and food preparation, but also provide educational services.

10.3 The Temple of Thai Theravada Buddhism: Chinese shrines provide support and assistance in various fields, through supporting charities which distribute food to people who attended the activity at the temple, for example, in the Kathin robe activity.

## **11. The Public Benefit Activities and Social Welfare of Chinese Shrines**

The activity patterns of Chinese shrines are often for the public benefit and social welfare. They are divided into various parts as follows:

**11.1 The Public Library:** The Chinese shrine has set up a small library in the shrine for community learning.

**11.2 Education and Mandarin Chinese Teaching:** The Chinese shrine set up Chinese classes in the shrine to teach Mandarin Chinese and Chinese culture. The class is taught by a Chinese teacher and volunteers and is set up for all people who are interested in Chinese language and Chinese culture. Yet, classes are not always limited to Thai or Chinese people. In addition, the Chinese shrines have awarded scholarships in the past as well.

**11.3 Help for Victims in Various Incidents:** Chinese shrines help the victims of the incidents, such as natural disaster, wildfires, floods and more. The shrines will donate money, provide accommodation, cook food, as well as distribute assistance to various victims.

**11.4 Support for Medical Services and Public Health:** The Chinese shrines give support in medical services and public health. For example: donating Mobile Dental Vehicles to the hospital or providing areas in the shrine to set up an exercise zone for the community.

**11.5 Providing Organizational Support to Public Service Activities:** Chinese shrines supported many organizations in various forms, for example, providing the equipment or drinking water to each organization's activities.

In conclusion, Chinese shrines cooperate with various organizations, both public and private sectors in Thai. In addition, Chinese shrines maintain a role in Thai society through public benefit activities and

social welfare. Provision of public libraries, Chinese tutoring classes, and assistance for victims in various incidents are all forms of community support provided by the Chinese temples. The double identity representation through Chinese shrines is indicative of a good and long lasting relationship between two ethnic groups.

## **12. Cultural Relations between Ethnic Groups in Chinese Ethnicities and Thai Ethnicities on the Cultural Hybridity**

Cultural hybridity means the mixing of different cultures. Its result is a meeting between two or more cultural groups and makes the culture of each group change. The results of the study found that in the Chinese Shrine there is an expression of hybridity in many forms, for example: Buddha's image in the shrine, the ritual of Theravada Buddhism, and use of equipment in Thai art. The Chinese Shrine combines Thai and Chinese ethnic identities together. This is a form of hybridity and is a testament to the expression of the double identity representation that appears in the Chinese shrines and Chinese-Thai people.

Chinese shrines will be a combination of culture or faith of Thai ethnicity and is adapted for use in various ways. In religious ceremonies or ancestor worship ceremonies, Chinese are invited by Buddhist monks and give food to the monks. The phenomena in these results are present in the relationship between Chinese ethnicity and Thai ethnicity in Cultural hybridity.

## **Conclusion**

The result of the study can explain the double identity phenomena. Study and discussion can demonstrate the adaptability of Chinese ethnic groups in Phuket district. Chinese ethnicity can maintain its traditional culture and adapt to the new society that they live in. This adaptation is accomplished through mixing



cultures through ways of life, beliefs, languages, and cultures. In particular, Chinese shrines are the center of Chinese communities and assist in retaining their traditional identity. A new of mixing culture becomes a double identity today. The Chinese Shrine is an expression of the hybridity of culture and a center of Chinese culture and double identity through the various forms of art, religious activities and figures of gods. Chinese shrines are involved with various organizations, both public and private sectors of Thai and provide a role to Thai society through the activities beneficial to the public and social welfare. The double identity representation through Chinese shrines is indicative of a good and long lasting relationship between two ethnic groups.

### 5.3 Suggestions

This study in double identity representation through Chinese shrines in Phuket district research found adaptation and incorporation between Chinese cultures with Thai culture. The Chinese-Thai people take Thai culture into their life and maintain their traditional culture at the same time. Research also found other dimensions of the double identity in Thai and Chinese-Thai society that can take the study further.

1. The issue of double identity could be studied in various dimensions, for example: art, literature, dress, and food. Moreover finding other evidence would support the acquisition of complete comprehension of the whole picture of double identity and Chinese-Thai in Phuket.

2. The study of lost Chinese cultural identity of the present generation in Thai society.

3. Researcher found that Thai people adopt Chinese culture in to their daily life as well. This point of the phenomena could be studied in the further.

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