

Western Settlers' Impact on Phuket's Demographic Diversity in an Era of International Tourism ¹

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Abstract

This study aims to explore western settlers' impact on the demographic diversity of Phuket and to analyze socio-cultural changes and consequences of increase in cultural diversity caused by western settlers in an era of international tourism.

A large number of western settlers residing on the island of Phuket produce significant social changes in Phuket society in the era of international tourism by generating a greater diversity in the demographic composition of Phuket. Western settlers appear in various guises, such as retirees, investors, business people, diplomats, short-term-staying young westerners, and Westerners who are married to Thai spouses. Their settlement forms a new generation of lukkrueangfarang, who are children of mixed ethnic Thai and farang parentage. The dominance of Thai-Chinese lukkrueang born during the mining era changing into that of lukkrueangfarang, which group is rising in numbers in the international tourism period. Western settlers have become a key component of Phuket's demographics. Those already show a high level of cultural diversity, which is visibly reflected through many religious and cultural sites: Buddhist temples, Sikh and Hindu temples, churches, mosques and shrines. A high concentration of international restaurants, a diverse linguistic situation and the emergence of Thai Pidgin English are key social phenomena that have resulted from the settlement of westerners in Phuket in the era of international tourism.

Key Words: Western Settler / Impact / Demographic Diversity / International Tourism / Phuket

¹ This article is a part of the author's PhD dissertation "Influx and Impact of Western Settlement in Phuket (2004-2014): A Case Study of Ban Saiyuan, Tambon Rawai, Amphoe Mueng Phuket, Changwat Phuket" in the Thai Studies Program, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

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ผลกระทบจากผู้ตั้งถิ่นฐานชาวตะวันตก ต่อความหลากหลายด้านประชากร ของจังหวัดภูเก็ตในยุคการท่องเที่ยว³

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความฉบับนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบจากการตั้งถิ่นฐานของชาวตะวันตก ซึ่งมีอิทธิพลต่อความหลากหลายของประชากรในจังหวัดภูเก็ต และเพื่อวิเคราะห์ความเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมวัฒนธรรม รวมถึงการเพิ่มขึ้นของความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมที่เป็นผลมาจากการเข้ามาตั้งถิ่นฐานของชาวตะวันตกในจังหวัดภูเก็ตในยุคของการท่องเที่ยว

การเข้ามาตั้งถิ่นฐานของชาวตะวันตกที่เพิ่มสูงขึ้นในจังหวัดภูเก็ตส่งผลให้เกิดการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมที่สำคัญในหลายมิติของจังหวัดภูเก็ต และทำให้กลายเป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญด้านประชากรของจังหวัดภูเก็ตในปัจจุบัน ชาวตะวันตกที่เข้ามาตั้งถิ่นฐานในจังหวัดภูเก็ตมีหลายประเภท เช่น ผู้เกษียณอายุ นักลงทุน นักการทูต ชาวตะวันตกวัยหนุ่มสาวที่เข้ามาพักอาศัยระยะสั้น รวมถึงชาวตะวันตกที่มีคู่สมรสเป็นคนไทย ทำให้เกิดปรากฏการณ์คนรุ่นใหม่ที่เรียกว่า “ลูกครึ่งฝรั่ง” ซึ่งหมายถึงเด็กที่เกิดจากพ่อหรือแม่ที่เป็นคนไทยมาแต่งงานกับชาวตะวันตก ความโดดเด่นของลูกครึ่งไทย-จีนในยุคเมืองแร่ เริ่มจะเปลี่ยนไปเป็นลูกครึ่งฝรั่งในยุคการท่องเที่ยว ความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมสะท้อนให้เห็นผ่านทางสถานที่ทางศาสนาและวัฒนธรรมหลายแห่งในจังหวัดภูเก็ต เช่น วัดของชาวพุทธ วัดของชาวซิกซ์และฮินดู โบสถ์ สุเหร่า ศาลเจ้า นอกจากนี้ยังเห็นได้จากร้านอาหารที่มีความเป็นนานาชาติ ความหลากหลายทางภาษาทำให้เกิดการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษที่มีลักษณะเฉพาะระหว่างชาวตะวันตกและคนภูเก็ต ซึ่งเป็นปรากฏการณ์สำคัญที่เป็นผลมาจากการตั้งถิ่นฐานของชาวตะวันตกในจังหวัดภูเก็ตในยุคของการท่องเที่ยวในปัจจุบัน

คำสำคัญ: ผู้ตั้งถิ่นฐานชาวตะวันตก ผลกระทบ ความหลากหลายด้านประชากร การท่องเที่ยว ภูเก็ต

³ บทความนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวิทยานิพนธ์ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต เรื่อง “การเข้ามาและผลกระทบจากการตั้งถิ่นฐานของชาวต่างชาติในจังหวัดภูเก็ต (พ.ศ.2547-2557): กรณีศึกษา บ้านไสยวน ตำบลราไวย์ อำเภอเมืองภูเก็ต จังหวัดภูเก็ต” สาขาวิชาไทยศึกษา คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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Introduction

Phuket presented favorable perspectives for the formation of a multicultural society since the mining era, when people of different ethnic came to live on the island. A large-scale Chinese migration to Phuket started in the 1800s with Chinese immigrants, who came mainly to work in the tin mines. The Chinese settlers had a strong influence on Phuket society and changed it into one dominantly Chinese during the mining time. In addition, Phuket's population doubled with the settlement of Muslims, Thai-Buddhists, Indians, and Chao Lays or Sea Gypsies, which groups reside on the island up to the present day.

A transformation of Phuket's production landscape from tin to tourism caused the island's demographic diversity to change visibly, with a large number of foreign – particularly western – settlers from various nationalities living on this small island. A vast development of the tourism industry in Phuket started in earnest in the 1980s. Since then, the economy of the island relies mainly on tourism. The high demands of tourism increase constantly with the high potentiality of its basic qualification as a tourist attraction and the positive attitude of local people to support tourism activities. Obviously the flow of foreign settlers to the island of Phuket is closely tied to tourism development and the island's tourist facilities, which keep parallel with the huge expansion in housing and holiday real estate property on Phuket, particularly in the last decade. In addition, the key forces of globalization and advanced technology have caused more and more people from all parts of the world to visit Phuket and have led it to become a melting pot of different cultures.

The growth of the tourism industry has positioned the island more visibly into a context of internationalization and made its society a more multicultural one. Part of the growth is caused by the large number of foreign settlers residing on the island. Foreign

communities and entrepreneurs make up approximately ten percent of the island's population, with more than 100,000 foreign settlers residing in Phuket (Mackay, 2013: 399, Schatz, 2014). The impact of western settlement on Phuket's society has produced various aspect of change, but this article mainly aims to examine the western settlers' impact on the demographic diversity of Phuket as well as to analyze changes in socio-cultural aspects and the consequences of the increase in cultural diversity caused by western settlers in the context of international tourism of Phuket.

The increase of demographic diversity of Phuket is driven by the settlement of westerners of various nationalities in the current context of international tourism. They are added to the demographic composition of Phuket residents, which before the tourism era consisted mainly of Chinese, Muslims, Thais, Indians, and Chao Lays. Obviously, in present-day Phuket, within the context of international tourism, the emergence of western residents on the island has evidently altered the island's demographic composition. This situation can be observed by taking into consideration the various nationalities of western settlers residing on the island of Phuket, particularly in the south. They have produced a great impact on Phuket society, mainly through their economic success and huge expansion of the housing and holiday property on the island.

In order to thoroughly consider western settlers' impact on the demographic diversity of Phuket in the current context of international tourism, one has to consider that the influx of foreign settlers to the island was instigated by two significant socio-historical periods: the past era of tin mining and the recent age of international tourism. This study will therefore first examine the socio-cultural context of Phuket before Premodern Tourism prior to 1980, and in the second place, the current socio-cultural context of Phuket's international tourism. Thirdly, the settlement of Westerners as a transnational

community in the current context of international tourism in Phuket will be reviewed. Finally, these western settlers' impact on Phuket's demographic cultural diversity will be considered.

Socio-cultural context of Phuket before the Pre-Modern Tourism (1980AD)

As Phuket was on the sea route between India and China, the island has historically been visited by various foreign seafaring men and traders from different countries. Throughout history, also before its intentional transformation into a tourist attraction during the 1980s, the island had always been regarded as an important place in economic as well as social senses. Within the context of its mining industry, Phuket was host to a large number of foreign traders and settlers and a key economic force in the tin trade. Phuket became a significant tin-producing center. As a result, Phuket has always been in contact with foreign influences, with various foreigners visiting and making the island their home.

Before the expansion of its economy with the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855 Phuket had very few people living on its territory. It was inhabited by local Thai Buddhists, Thai Muslims and Sea Gypsies or Chao Lay (SulimanNarumonWongsuphap, 2001: 17). The locals were relatively tolerant towards foreigners and to the different cultures they brought. The island in this time hosted foreigners such as Malays, Mons, Chinese, Tamils, Bengalis, Arabs, Persians and Europeans living there and visiting for trade. Religious freedom and relaxed sexual mores were the rule (Mackay, 2013: 64). The economic system was mainly self-supporting. Digging for tin was the main resource of income of the locals, as about 82.52 percent of the island consisted of mountainous areas in which tin was present. The locals used simple tools for searching and panning for tin, and they did not need much manpower and money to

invest. They just dug for tin in order to exchange it for food and other supplies (SureeLiangsangtong, 1981: 13-14).

In the early 16th century, trade with foreigners became more obvious in Phuket with the Portuguese traders as the first western nation having trade relations with the island. However, before the coming of the Portuguese, there were many other foreign traders such as Malays, Indians, Arabs and Chinese from Malacca who already traded at the port of Thalang and other minor ports (Mackay, 2013: 97-98). The Portuguese were followed by other western nations such as the English, the Dutch, and the French, who came to trade with Phuket during the 17th century (Dhiravat Na Pombejra, 2002: 91). Because of the abundance of tin ore and the increase of tin production in Phuket and other nearby west-coast ports, more western nations wanted to compete in taking over the tin trade monopoly from the Siamese government at that time. During the reign of King Narai, the Siamese government offered governorship of Phuket to the French from 1680 – 1689 in order to monopolize the production of tin and control the administration on the island (PhuwadolSongprasert, 1992: 5). Phuket had become a golden area for tin mining and attracted more various foreign traders. This resulted in more people moving to Phuket in order to work in tin mining and trading. The port of ThaRua in Thalang town at that time became the port of trade and commerce in the region. It was well-known by seafarers and raiders from the Bay of Bengal and the Malay Peninsula (Mackay, 2013: 8).

The signing of the Burney Treaty in 1826 between the Siamese government and the British, was the beginning of direct free trade with the British, who controlled the ports of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore. This resulted in the growth in economic activities connected to tin production and commerce in Phuket (SureeLiangsangtong, 1981: 31). This was a key, dynamic step on the

way to economic expansion of Phuket and its turning point in becoming an internationalized society.

From the 17th century onward, the number of Chinese migrating into Phuket and the southern part of Siam had increased greatly. The Chinese came with the strong intention to work and acquire wealth from tin, and a large number of them had chosen to settle down on the island. Eventually, after the French governorship of Phuket, the position fell to the Chinese (PhuwadolSongprasert, 1992: 5). The Chinese would later considerably increase the tin trade of Phuket and other west-coast ports of southern Siam. They were in many important positions related to local rulers and regional governors (Mackay, 2013: 172). They could procure tax concessions. After 1827, a large settlement of Chinese immigrants appeared in the area of Kathu. This was considered the first big wave of Chinese immigrants who came to the island in order to work in the Phuket mines. They were followed by a large group of Chinese that arrived later, and settled in the area of Thung-kha, which is presently the location of Old Phuket Town (PreeyachananSaisakares, 2004: 30, 35).

Phuket therefore had seriously started to develop its society and economy, having tin as its key product, enhancing itself as an important trading port during this mining era. The coming of foreigners to trade and work in its mines had gradually carried Phuket into the realm of international trade. When the Bowring Treaty was signed in 1855, it encouraged a more rapid growth in economic activities, particularly the commercial relations between Phuket and the British colonized ports of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore. The treaty also stimulated more foreign investments to the island of Phuket (PhuwadolSongprasert, 1992: 5, SureeLiangsangtong, 1981: 32). The period from 1855 to 1932, is therefore considered the boom time of the tin mining industry of Phuket, with its growth developing its economy and society.

The rapid growth in tin mining activities had a great impact on the society of Phuket; more and more foreigners moved to Phuket to work and invest in tin production. From the 1870s onwards, the influx of Chinese immigrants to the island was a remarkable social phenomenon, solely caused by the fact that the island needed more manpower to run the growing tin mining sector (Mackay, 2013: 313). As the number of local residents in Phuket was insufficient to operate the mines and they were laboring under a system of servitude, Chinese laborers were strongly required by the tin mining operators. Remarkably, in the period from 1892 to 1901, there was an especially strong demand for Chinese laborers, who were shipped directly from China to the island for their labor, during the boom time of the mining industry in Phuket (SureeLiangsangtong, 1981: 28).

In 1907, the bucket dredge, which was considered very sophisticated technology for tin mining in offshore areas, was brought to Phuket at Tongkah Harbour by Captain E.T. Miles from Australia (PhairatSuthakorn, 1992: 450). The subsequent use of this dredge can be counted as one of the factors involved in achieving a higher production of tin. For this reason, in the beginning of the 20th century Phuket had a positive growth from the tin mining boom. The town of Phuket was developed. Many streets, and beautiful buildings in Sino-Portuguese style were built, and the first Mining Act was promulgated. The Mining Act offered more freedom in tin mining, and was first officially used in Phuket. This motivated more foreign investors to operate in tin production and gravitated more Chinese laborers toward work on the island. Many important buildings appeared during this boom period; for example, the provincial hall or Sala Klang was built from 1907 to 1913 and was designed by an Italian architect. Furthermore, the governor's mansion, the tin mines department building and the old provincial court building

were built . A sanitation system, police stations, banks, schools, hospitals, cinemas and Phuket's first ice factory followed (Mackay, 2013: 330-333).

The boom period of the mining industry from 1855 to 1932 was an outstanding period for Phuket society in tin production, trading activities, and agriculture. The boom caused huge changes in society in various aspects. Prosperity was brought to the island by the key force of tin production. However, during 1933-1967, the tin mining industry of Phuket fell into decline. This was caused by many factors such as the revolution in June of 1932; World War II, when tin mining operations were forced to stop; and a decrease in the demand of tin on the global market. After the revolution, in 1933, the Monton administrative system of Phuket was replaced by a provincial administration, dividing the island into three districts, namely, Mueang District, Kathu District, and Thalang District.

After the war, many local and Chinese entrepreneurs had turned their business interest to rubber production. Subsequently the prosperity of Phuket was carried by rubber production, which constituted one of the key economic forces after the war (Mackay, 2013: 402). In addition, the relationship between Phuket and Bangkok was improved and contributed to development after the war. In the heydays of the tin mining industry, Phuket had had a very close relationship with Penang and Singapore, as they were the most important tin smelting and trading centers for the island, while the connection to Bangkok consisted only of an administrative link (Uthoff, 1997: 11).

From 1967 to 1976, Phuket was in a period of transition from mining to tourism. The new direction in the economic development of the tourism business in Phuket had started in 1967. The world travel market had started to play a significant role in this business trend. The Thai government had started to support the tourism

industry by providing tourism policies in the National Economic and Social Development Plan No.2 (1967-1971), as they found that the tourism industry would be the key force in driving the country's economy (Apsorn Na Ranong, 2007: 99). Starting from 1972 onwards, tin mining was dropped due to the fact that the rich mineral resources had been exhausted by mining for centuries, leaving only bad quality mineral resources.

Importantly, the mining industry was the key force in driving Phuket's economy and now it turned out to be a significant basis for further development of Phuket, particularly its tourism industry. Phuket therefore had stepped into a new industry by shifting land use and its production since 1976 into basic infrastructure and facilities for the initial steps to be taken by the tourism industry. This was considered a turning point for the island, moving into its new role as an international tourism destination. The rapid development was aided by rapid construction of accommodation, building up Phuket as a holiday island.

During the pre-modern tourism era of Phuket, the tin mining industry played as a significant role in developing the society of Phuket with the social phenomenon formed by the influx of Chinese migrants who came mainly to work in the mines and later made the island of Phuket their home. The settlement of the Chinese as foreign settlers in this period has produced great changes in various aspects of the society of Phuket, which are reflected in an economic as well as a socio-cultural sense through the Phuket Chinese way of life. In contrast, Westerners during this mining time just came mainly for trade, and not to settle down on the island. Consequently, the island of Phuket can be considered as once inhabited by a transnational community of Chinese who had had a noticeable influence on all aspects of society during the tin mining period, and who are in fact extending that role in present-day Phuket.

The Socio-cultural context of Phuket in the current era of international tourism

Since the 1980s Phuket's tourism industry has continually moved in an upward economic growth trend by attracting both international and domestic visitors into the island. The new business of tourism in Phuket has changed the pattern of economic activities, as well as the island's landscape, which was targeted to transform into a conventional tourism destination through the development of properties, hotels and resorts, shopping centers and many other components that serve the international tourism industry.

In the mid-1970s, the American magazine "Newsweek" listed Phuket as a destination for travelers who are keen to discover and search for something special. The article appeared in a special feature section of the magazine. A significant new industry was created as many travelers were attracted to the island within a short time (Warren, 2009). Back in 1927, when a five-room hotel was opened in Phuket Town (Muang Phuket) by a Chinese immigrant, this was considered the first hotel on the island, and the beginning of the development of Phuket as a tourist destination. In early 1976, 'Patong Beach Hotel' was opened as the first hotel in Patong, located on the west coast of Phuket. During this year, the start of tourism-related economic change, as well as the change of the landscape of the island was initiated, particularly on the west coast. This was considered the first step in promoting international tourism in Phuket (Uthoff, 1997:19).

Many brand name beach hotels appeared on the new business direction of Phuket; for example, Club Med in Kata, Holiday Inn in Patong, the Phuket Yacht Club in Nai Harn, the Meridien in Karon, the Chedi and Amanpuri in Surin and the Laguna Resort located at an old mining area in Bangtao (Mackey, 2013: 410). Interestingly, the

first foreign, famous chain investing in Phuket was the Club Méditerranéecommonly known as Club Medfrom France in 1986 (Warren, 2009: 9). This was followed by many other hotels and resorts financed by both foreign and domestic investors.

During the period of transformation into an international tourism destination, Phuket had been changed overwhelmingly by the influx of visitors and rapid growth in tourism development. Thousands of different kinds of jobs and opportunities in doing business on the island have been generated by tourism development. In addition, changes in the pattern of economic activities drew people from different countries to the island, which led to the international context of Phuket society. The development and changes in the approach of the tourism trade during this transformation period has affected the island in all aspects, but especially in its economic structure, society and landscape.

The major income of Phuket today relies mainly on tourism growth. The influx of tourists, especially international tourists entering Phuket during its tourism boom period, forms the key impact, which has led the island towards expansion of economic activities and income, and has improved the city's infrastructure. The economic and social contexts in Phuket are in accordance with Kreag's study (2001: 6): the impacts of tourism development produce a varied and complex impact on economic concerns. Tourism brings along both positive and negative consequences to the host destination. The positive impacts of tourism development are, for example, that it contributes to a higher general income and higher foreign exchange earnings; to improvement of the standard of living and the local economy, jobs, and tax revenue generation; to stimulation of infrastructure investment in public utilities and transportation; and to the creation of new business opportunities. The negative impacts are, for example, the increase in prices for goods and

services land and housing included; a high cost of living; a rising potential for imported labor; and a high cost of additional infrastructure. In addition, profits may be exported by non-local owners, and there is a high competition for land with other economic uses.

The development of tourism infrastructure facilities to support the tourism industry of Phuket has resulted in a change local lifestyle and greater extravagance. With culture, community, economy, and environment, these significant local social elements have been affected by tourism development. Local people have strong positive perceptions towards tourism development in Phuket as it could generate more benefits in developing the local economy (Marzuki, 2012: 202).

The negative impacts of tourism development that have affected local people directly are the rise of land prices and housing property as well as local residents' cost of living. In addition, tourism in Phuket also has carried with it problems of overcrowding, traffic congestion, and an overload of the water supply network. In general, local residents of Phuket have positive perceptions on the economic impact, and take negative impact for granted, as they have more opportunities to earn higher income by working in the tourism industry (Marzuki, 2012: 210).

Regarding the ecological aspect, Phuket has been suffering from environmental dilemmas and conflicts occurring as a result of the tourism industry; for example, mangrove forest areas have been invaded and severely damaged, and mountainous parts have been converted to hotel and resort areas. Although Phuket experienced a natural disaster on 26 December 2004, the damage brought on by it has in part been providing opportunities to improve the tourism infrastructure in Phuket in places where development had tended to move into uncontrolled growth and insufficient planning, which

led to environmental degradation of the island (Henderson, 2007: 236).

Phuket, with its history as a tin mining location transformed into an international tourism site, has in a social and cultural sense become a very unique society. This is reflected in its multicultural nature within which various ethnic groups have been making the island their home for centuries. On this small island of Phuket, the socio-cultural setting is a combination of cultural differences of people residing on the island. Of course, the reflection of Chinese culture and belief is most obvious in the variety of local culture and ways of life. Additionally, Thai Muslims, Chao Lay, and foreign settlers, mainly from the western countries, also form communities that take part in shaping Phuket society through their ways of life. All this has resulted in a great social melting pot.

The settlement of Westerners as a transnational community in the current context of international tourism in Phuket

The improvement of advanced technologies in transportation and communication has been a key factor to dynamite the movement of people into transnational connections in new locations. This leads to the phenomenon of transnational communities in different countries in today's world, and results in changes throughout the host societies. This phenomenon is defined by Vectovec (1999: 447) as the phenomenon of transnationalism, which refers to "multiple ties, exchange interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states". The increase of foreign settlers residing or making other countries their home or second home is in an upward trend. In the meantime, settlers still keep moving back and forth to the home country, which is easier to do in today's world.

At present, Phuket has become one of the receiving destinations for mass movements of international migration. In the social

context of the international tourism industry, the island is confronted with an increasing influx of tourists and foreign settlers. The number of foreign settlers residing in Phuket has been rising since the 1980s, when the island started moving into the new production landscape of the tourism industry. Comprising different groups of people living and/or working on the island, this dynamic situation has made Phuket a melting pot formed by various transnational communities. Apart from the local residents, there are three other major groups of residents consisting of foreign settlers and laborers. The first and major group is mainly from western countries such as Britain, Russia, France, America, Italy, Australia, Sweden, and Germany. Another group is from Asian countries, coming from the Philippines, China, Korea, and India, respectively (Phuket Provincial Employment Office, 2015). The last consists of laborers and low-paid workers from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. They form quite a large group in Phuket, particularly the workers from Myanmar (Phuket Provincial Employment Office, 2013).

Significantly, the key new wave of foreign settlers making the island of Phuket their home and/or second home hails from western countries. They are apparently a majority in the new wave of foreign settlers during the international tourism era of Phuket. Various shapes and nationalities of foreign settlers live on the island, such as western businessmen and entrepreneurs, investors, retirees, diplomats, those who have married Thai spouses, and many other guises. Their presence has produced a substantial impact on the island and has brought on changes in various aspects of society. Their formation as a transnational community has accelerated the island of Phuket into an internationalized society, creating not only a variety of new economic relationships, but also reforming socio-cultural substance and physical landscape.

The western settlement has spread all over the island, but the key areas, preferred most by western immigrants are in the southern part of the island. As Hodges (2015) states, in the south of Phuket has formed a large expat community. Rawai Sub-District and Chalong Sub-District are the areas where western settlement is mostly concentrated. This is because these locations are close to many beautiful beaches, for instance, Kata beach, Karon beach, Ya Nui beach, and NaiHarn beach. These areas are equipped with tourism infrastructure to support the rising demand and they are not far away from the business center of Phuket Town and many department stores. Also, the international hospitals are within easy reach. In addition, going out to other islands is convenient from Chalong Bay Marina, which is a key marina for mooring yachts and a center for boat activities. Besides, the southern tip of the island in Rawai is also has a pier for mooring long-tail boats and speedboats offering activities such as sightseeing, snorkeling and diving near the surrounding islands.

The northern part of Phuket has started to become more urbanized by the economic growth and more Thai as well as foreigners have been moving into the area in the last five years. The land prices there are more reasonable than in the western, southern, and central parts of the island. Rawai and Chalong Sub-Districts both have a high density of western settlers.

The central part of Phuket, the Kathu District, has become an important residential area for foreign settlers because it is not far from Phuket Town and many shopping malls. The area has become even more attractive since it is anticipated that in the near future there will be an expansion of Central Shopping Mall and that The Mall Group is planning to open the BluePearl Mall in Kathu. The great increase of condominium development in this area has caused land prices to rise (Hodges, 2015). KoKaeo Sub-District is

another one of the areas that has turned into a foreign residential zone because of the establishment of the British International School Phuket in the area.

Among the western settlers in Phuket, one of the most significant groups that confirms the transnationalism phenomenon is that of the retirees. These citizens, who rely mainly on their monthly pensions, have chosen Phuket as their home or second home. However, they still keep strong economic and political ties with their home countries. This can be seen from the fact that they return home regularly; some stay in Phuket for one half of the year, and return to their countries of origin for the rest of the year, whereas some reside here permanently with their Thai spouses, and visit home just shortly .

It is the policy of the local Phuket government to welcome not just the aforementioned group of citizens, but all other foreign settlers as well. In so doing, infrastructure has been developed to facilitate their stay. The local views towards foreigners as settlers in Phuket tends to be positive, particularly towards their contribution towards Phuket's socio-economic growth because their settlement brings about several advantages, such as higher income and better quality of life. Therefore, the transnational community of the Westerners, which is the largest community of foreign settlers in the present international tourism era in Phuket, has produced remarkable changes, particularly in Phuket's demographic diversity.

Large numbers of western settlers residing on the island of Phuket in an era of international tourism

The increasing number of foreign settlers in Phuket has its reflection in the number of foreign honorary/general consulates established on the island. There was a total of 22 in 2015. Key responsibilities of the consulates are to provide assistance and

services for residents of their respective nationalities in Phuket and surrounding areas. Amongst foreign honorary/general consulates established in Phuket, 17 out of 22 are honorary/general consulates of western countries (Royal Norwegian Consulate, Phuket, 2015).

Foreign settlers in Phuket come in various shapes , for instance foreign retirees, with a total registered number of 3,739 in 2014 (Phuket Immigration Office, 2015). Figure 1 shows the various nationalities of international retirees living in Phuket (with a majority of western retirees).

Figure 1: International Retirees in Phuket

Item	2014		2013	
	Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number
1	British	563	German	509
2	German	544	British	505
3	Swiss	401	Swiss	345
4	French	372	French	305
5	American	312	American	305
6	Swedish	228	Australian	226
7	Australian	218	Swedish	199
8	Italian	194	Italian	194
9	Norwegian	124	Norwegian	128
10	Austrian	122	Austrian	100
11	Others	661	Others	613
	Total	3,739		3,412

Source: Phuket Immigration Office, 2015

With the number of international expatriates holding work permits in 2014 at a total of 12,034, this recent statistic reveals that western expatriates outnumber other settlers (Phuket Provincial Employment Office, 2015). Figure 2 displays the number of foreign settlers with work permits living on Phuket, with a majority of western residents. The number of this group is increasing yearly. In 2012, the total number of international expatriates was 6,947, in 2013 was 9,635 and in 2014 the number increased to 12,034.

Figure 2: International Expatriates with Work Permits in Phuket

Nationality	Total Number December 2014	Total Number December 2013	Total Number February 2012
British	1,404	1,272	1,095
Russian	1,142	848	403
French	736	596	432
American	572	528	408
Italian	591	492	357
Australian	569	493	338
German	466	419	361
Swedish	447	297	302
Others	6,104	4,690	3,251
Total	12,034	9,635	6,947

Source: Phuket Provincial Employment Office, 2015

The number of business investors is reflected in the large number of resort and hotel establishments and other related tourism services that are visible in the growth of Phuket's economy. Figure 3 shows the number of foreign business operators who registered for a Business Visa in Phuket in 2012.

Figure 3: Various nationalities of business operators applying for Business Visa in Phuket

Nationalities	Number
British	353
French	228
Italian	205
German	156
Russian	154
Australian	137
Others	1,958
Total	3,191

Source: Phuket Immigration Office, 2013

Additionally, there is a number of foreigners married to Thai spouses, of which western settlers form the largest part. Figure 4 shows the top ten nationalities of foreign men applying for a Marriage Visa. Most of these foreign men are from western countries. A very small number of 286 foreign women have applied for a Marriage Visa to a Thai man in Phuket (Phuket Immigration Office, 2013).

Figure 4: Top 10 nationalities applying for Marriage (to a Thai woman) Visa

Nationalities	Number
British	125
German	50
Italian	44
French	41
American	39
Australia	34
Swiss	31
Swedish	31
Indian	19
Danish	17
Other	166
Total	597

Source: Phuket Immigration Office, 2013

Furthermore, young westerners who come for a short stay in Phuket with various activities come and take part in activities such as Muay Thai boxing training and scuba diving training courses. Thus, in present-day Phuket, the island consists of various communities of westerners settling on the island. Combined with the settlement of Muslims, Thai-Buddhists, Indians, and Chao Lays (or Sea Gypsies), who have historically resided on the island, this social phenomenon has a clear impact on the different groups of island inhabitants.

Western settlers' impact on Phuket's demographic diversity

Foreign settlers in Phuket have been attracted by two key industries, namely the tin mining industry, which drew a massive influx of Chinese settlers, and the current period of international tourism, which is characterized by large numbers of foreign settlers mainly from western countries. The types of settlement of these two groups are differentiated by living conditions, socio-cultural context, national policy, laws, and their transnational lifestyles.

In the era of international tourism, a large number of western settlers live in Phuket. Their settlement pattern has created a transnational community in the form of either a semi-permanent basis or of their making the island their second home. This means that a large number of them still keep strong economic, social and political relationships with their home countries and keep going back and forth to their countries. Some of them live in Phuket for around six months a year or when it is winter time in their home countries, and some settle down permanently on the island of Phuket. However, both types of settlement visibly influence society, as they are a key new demographic composition of the Phuket residents. This has led to Phuket becoming a more multicultural society.

The impact has also become clear through the emergence of many local English language newspapers, such as the "Phuket Gazette", "The Phuket News" and "Phuket Wan". A local bi-weekly German language newspaper is "TIP". In addition, there is a free monthly magazine in French called "PARIS PHUKET", and there exist several independent Russian publications, as well as a Russian version of "The Phuket News". These newspapers and magazines clearly show the demographic diversity in Phuket with its multitude of foreign settlers.

Another key impact of the western settlers on Phuket's demographic composition is a new generation of luekkreung, which is on the rise on the island. As a large number among the Westerners came to Phuket in their civil status of single men. The emergence of "luekkreung" is an interesting social phenomenon in Phuket nowadays. Cross-cultural marriages and the settlement of new foreign communities tend to be crucial factors in molding the society and culture of Phuket into its new ethnic identity. Unquestionably, cultural values and traditions are at stake, and the change is dynamic and inevitable. The generation of luekkreung, who are the children born in cross-cultural marriages, is assimilated and accepted, and makes a considerable impact on the society of Phuket. Luekkreungs tend to be more tolerant and positive to the context of cultural diversity. As Gilroy (1993) illustrates, mixed-blood children can understand and enjoy the experience of their doubleness and the mix of cultures. In addition, Iyall Smith (2008: 4) asserts that the hybrid individual or mixed-blood child in the era of globalization is an asset in negotiating across natural barriers such as language, culture, religion, race, and physical appearance.

This phenomenon is not happening only in Phuket, but also in many other popular tourist destinations in Thailand. Significantly, as time goes by, the new generations of luekkreung in Phuket tend to transform from "Chinese-Thai luekkreung" to "Western -Thai luekkreung" (luekkreungfarang), with a more western look, along with different identities and characteristics. In accordance with Mackay (2013), some Westerners have been living with their families in Phuket for over 30 years. Among these, some work or invest in businesses, and pay taxes in Phuket. Consequently, the new generation of luekkreung is getting larger in numbers on the island. This phenomenon can be demonstrated from the number of students studying at the British International School Phuket, which ranks as the leading private

international school in Phuket with the highest number of student enrolments among schools in Phuket. A good example are the numbers of students with various backgrounds enrolled in March, 2014: out of a total of 312 students from Grade 7 to Grade 12, there were 63 mixed-blood students with Thai-Foreign parents, which accounted for 20%; 92 were Thai students, and the rest were international students from various nationalities (British International School, Phuket, 2014)

Due to the fact that there is not only a large number of Westerners who have made Phuket their home, but also a considerable number of Thai people moving from other regions of Thailand to work and settle down in Phuket in this era of booming tourism, the social phenomenon of cross-cultural marriages in Phuket does not only concern Westerners marrying local Phuket people, but also Westerners marrying people from other parts of Thailand. Thus, lukkruengfarangs in Phuket are the children from various nationalities of westerners and Thai people, not specifically or exclusively the locals of Phuket. These lukkruengfarangs tend to be more tolerant and benevolent toward cultural diversity with their doubleness and their mix of cultures. They represent a new cultural form and use new practices and expressions in different social contexts in a more westernized way than their ethnic Thai counterparts.

Phuket's demographic diversity generated a high level of cultural diversity

With its many different ethnicities residing on the island, Phuket is an island with a long history of cultural diversity. This is reflected by many religious and cultural sites; temples, churches, mosques, shrines, Sikh and Hindu temples. These are the witnesses that show the settlement of inhabitants on the island of Phuket

through their cultural and traditional practices. The more demographic diversity increased, the more cultural diversity has put its mark on the society of Phuket.

The socio-cultural context of Phuket started to form a combination of cultural differences of people who have resided and worked on the island. Of course, the influence of Chinese culture and belief is most obvious in the variety of local culture and way of life. Additionally, Thai-Buddhists, Thai-Muslims, Chao Lay, and foreign settlers are also key communities that take part in forming Phuket society through their ways of life, and partake in creating this great social melting pot. The tolerant perception of the locals towards foreigners presented them with a friendly host, which was important for the increase of cultural diversity in Phuket.

At present, within the international tourism context of Phuket, the influx of foreigners from around the globe is abundant. Particularly, people from western countries arrive in various forms; as investors, entrepreneurs, tourists, retirees, diplomats, students and so on. A large community of Westerners tends to play a dominant role in the society of Phuket in this period, which is characterized by a booming international tourism industry. A high concentration of international restaurants with different kinds of food from different countries have been established all over the island of Phuket. Meanwhile, local food and local restaurants also take part in the internationalization of Phuket. Various international and local restaurants in Phuket have together created an international atmosphere and form a fine picture of internationalization on this small island. Many hotels and restaurants have opened Thai Cooking Programs, for example the Blue Elephant Cooking School on Krabi Road in Phuket Town, which has welcomed many international students. Visiting the market in order to learn about local and authentic Thai ingredients is a must for the students in this program. This is considered a good way for people to learn about and understand cultural differences.

The linguistic diversity of the island's residents is also one of the highlights of the 'melting pot situation' in Phuket. Many Phuket locals cannot speak English, while many foreign settlers cannot speak Thai and some cannot speak English. When it comes to the necessity of communication, for instance in business interactions, the language that is used consists of a mix of easy Thai and English words, which may be considered a "pidgin". According to Wardhaugh (2010: 67), "a pidgin is a language with no native speakers: it is no one's first language but is a contact language". Cultural diversity in Phuket has caused the emergence of a Thai English Pidgin. NichaTovankasame (2010: 3) points out that some local people in Rawai Sub-District on the southern part of Phuket do not have a chance to learn English in school, but they communicate by picking up the language by themselves because they need to communicate with foreigners in specific settings such as trade, living or joining a particular group. They learn English from real situations during their trade or business dealings.

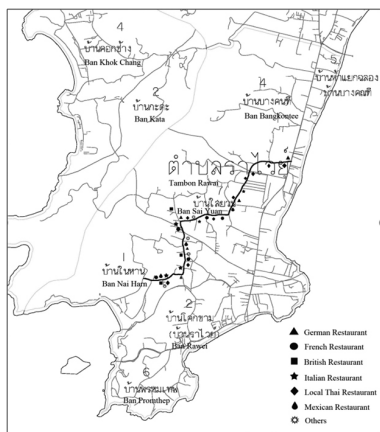
However, some locals can communicate in English and some western settlers do speak Thai fluently. JesadaSoipord (interview, May 10, 2016), a local of Ban Saiyuan, Rawai Sub-District confirms that many farangsat Ban Saiyuan speak Thai fluently. He adds that there is one farangwho alwayslikes to talk with him in a Thai southern dialect very much. The diversity in languages has generated a new business for language schools offering Thai language courses for foreigners and in many other language courses such as English, German, French and Russian providing for Thais or for the people who want to learn.

Western settlers have had a key impact on Phuket demographics. They influence changes in society. Plenty of international restaurants, coffee shops, butchers, bakeries, massage parlors and spas are operated by both local and international entrepreneurs. In the

south of Phuket international restaurants are ubiquitous. Ban Saiyuan, located in Rawai Sub-district, where a large number of western settlers resides, is a clear example of the social phenomenon, representing a high level of diversity in population in this area. The site is mostly known as the "international Soi" or in Thai, Soi Nana-chat (ซอยนานาชาติ). This obviously implies that the area of Ban Saiyuan is comprised of a large number of foreign settlers. Most of the areas have become residential areas for settlers mainly from western countries such as Britain, Russia, Germany, France, Australia, Italy, and Sweden.

The map in Figure 5 shows the emergence of many international restaurants, which is one of the ongoing changes that this area underwent during the past decade. The settlement of Westerners in this village generated the internationalized setting of Ban Saiyuan's catering industry through a variety of cuisines mainly from western countries (for example German, French, Italian, Mexican and British). Local Thai food is also sold, however, with about 80 percent of the market occupied by international restaurants, the proportion of international restaurants is much higher.

Figure 5: International restaurants and local Thai restaurants at Ban Saiyuan, Rawai, Phuket



Interestingly, various groups of people living together in the society of Phuket have reproduced their own way of life in different activities and festivals. Many events that are organized on the island reflect westernization, such as Patong Carnival, the Phuket Kings Cup Regatta in early December, or Christmas in December. In addition, small activities are organized by different groups of western settlers. For example, playing music at NaiHarn beach on Sundays, organized by western settlers who live in the area of Ban Saiyuan and surrounding locations of Rawai Sub-District.

Conclusion

In short, a more diverse demographic composition of Phuket is one of the effects generated by western settlers who have formed themselves into a large transnational community. Some are commuting between their home country and a second home in Phuket and maintain strong social, economic and political relationships with the country of their origin, and some have made the island their permanent home. This social phenomenon has transformed the island of Phuket into a demographic melting pot with, as a major characteristic, its internationalized society with a steadily rising population of foreign settlers, particularly a growing number of western settlers. In addition, a new generation of *lukkreungfarang*, who are children born in cross-cultural marriages of Thai-Western parentages is on the rise in Phuket. The *lukkreung* are assimilated and accepted, and make a considerable impact on Phuket's demographic diversity, as their generation grows up to become the replacement of the Thai-Chinese blend generation, which played a dominant role during the mining time. Today, in the era of international tourism of Phuket, the dominant role is being played by the generation of *lukkreungfarang*. Without doubt, the island of Phuket is trending toward what cannot be called otherwise than a cosmopolitan society.

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