

Stories of Peranakan Culture in Thailand's Andaman Cluster Provinces

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of how the stories of Peranakan culture in Thailand's Andaman cluster provinces are told. Utilising Berlo's communication model as the primary research framework, this research elaborates on how the Peranakan culture's stories are told and how these stories help define the Thai Peranakan cultural identity. The findings indicated that there is a lack of storytellers in the new Peranakan culture to continue and drive culture preservation (sender), stories presented did not contain subject matter that points to the real identity of Peranakan culture (message), the channels of storytelling are not continuous and diverse enough (channel) and the awareness of Peranakan culture is limited (receiver). The Peranakan cultural identity, meanwhile, was elaborated in two ways; the history of the Peranakans and the Peranakans' way of life. It was also discovered that the Andaman cluster province was not where the Peranakan's culture was originally constructed. Instead it was brought to Andaman by Chinese who were trading, living or studying in Malacca or Penang at that time. These Peranakan's cultural identity is an assimilation of Chinese, Malay, European, and Thai cultures, as evident in Peranakan food, clothes, architecture, and beliefs and traditions.

Keywords: *Peranakan, Baba, Andaman cluster, storytelling, cultural identity.*

INTRODUCTION

Traveling out of their mainland hometown, Chinese in 2000 B. E. (1458 C. E.), with Princess Hang Li Po's entourage, by the command of Ming's Emperor marked the beginning of many stories. For a diplomatic reason, Princess Hang Li Po and her 500 male followers and several hundred noble maiden sailed to the Taifa of Malaga to marry Sultan Mansur Shah (Wee, 2011) after she converted to Islam (Abdullah, 2013). Under the navigation of the naval commander Zheng He, all of them settled down, converted to Islam, and raised families near Bukit China, Malacca (Brown, 1970). Later, Chinese men emigrated from their homeland to settle in the vast Malay region, which consequently increased interracial marriage with local brides and produced mixed-race offspring's who practised their own new culture. Acculturated Chinese culture from their father, Malay culture from their mother, and European culture, influenced by Europeans in the Malay Peninsula, marked the new culture called Peranakan (Abdullah, 2013; Attharathasatharn, 2013); the name literally means "locally-born, but non-indigenous Chinese" (Pue, 2017). Princess Hang Li Po and her escorts from mainland China were revered as the Peranakan ancestors out of this interracial bonding (Tan, 1983).

In the age when the tin industry flourished, the need for tin in the world also increased. Mining spread to the area of the Andaman cluster as the area abundant in tin ore. This area was an important port city adjacent to the coast, making it a new destination. Seeing an opportunity for occupation, some Chinese men who used to live in the Malay peninsula and the new group of Chinese men from China moved to Thailand. These Chinese immigrants worked tirelessly and made their living until they became rich. When they settled in Thailand and saw that this land was abundant with resources and were welcoming, they decided to

settle down and marry local Thai women, which led to a Chinese-Thai mixed race. This allowed the Chinese father's culture to be mixed with the mother's Thai culture, becoming an integration of culture between Chinese, Malay, European, and Thai cultures which led to the Peranakan culture in Thailand (Noonmee, 2018; Pongvat & Tonpradoo, 2019; Sakunpiphat, Sakunpiphat, Chaopreecha & Tovankasame, 2012). Upon economic change, trading in the Malay regions and Thailand slowed down, and the tin mining industry also lost its popularity. As time went by, the Peranakan culture faded in the form of cultural assimilation. However, traces of Peranakan culture can still be seen today in the Andaman cluster provinces of Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang, and Satun.

In Thailand, Peranakan people are commonly called Baba people, which refers to the mixed-race group of a Chinese father and a Thai mother (R. Phumiphutawon, personal communication, February 3, 2020). The Peranakans in the Andaman cluster area have their own unique culture. The Thai Peranakans are almost similar to the Malay Peranakans. The Peranakans' identity can be portrayed in their way of life through their food, clothes, architecture, beliefs, traditions, languages, occupations, and local arts (Sakunpiphat et al., 2012).

The Peranakan culture became popular when the Tourism Authority of Thailand hosted an IMT-GT Peranakan and Nature Trail event. It was according to the economic development plan of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, under the IMT-GT Implementation 2017-2021 which saw the collaboration to support marketing the region's goal with a shared Peranakan culture (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2018). The event clearly emphasised the importance of Peranakan culture.

Ironically, the synthesis of research related Thailand's Peranakan culture in the national research database indicated that the stories about Peranakan culture in Thailand were vague and unknown (Chuenpraphanusorn, Bhulapatha, Boonchart, Snguanyat, Combuathong, & Natpinit, 2018). For this reason, research studies are needed to shed some light on this confusion, using the storytelling concept to depict a glorious past that traces the diverse cultural heritage and up to its present role (Mihardja, Widiastuti, & Agustini, 2020).

This study on storytelling recognises and contributes to the importance and preservation of the Peranakan culture. The study provides essential information and portrays Peranakan culture's current situation, a nation's cultural foundation. Research results can be beneficial for tourism and cultural institutes. It can be advantageous in planning tourism development and preserving the Peranakan culture in Thailand.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study uses Berlo's communication model (Berlo, 1977) as the primary research framework to study storytelling. The framework starts from the storyteller (sender), the story itself (message), the channels of the storytelling (channel), and listeners (receiver). In addition, the idea of eight cultural ways (Ministry of Industry, 2016) is also used in examining the stories in Peranakan culture.

In the framework, researchers referred to the PESO (paid-earned-shared-owned media) mode (Dietrich, 2021) to operationally define the channel. The message, meanwhile, is inspired by the STP marketing model in which researchers will see how the stories are positioned according to various levels of society.

The research framework is depicted in Figure 1.

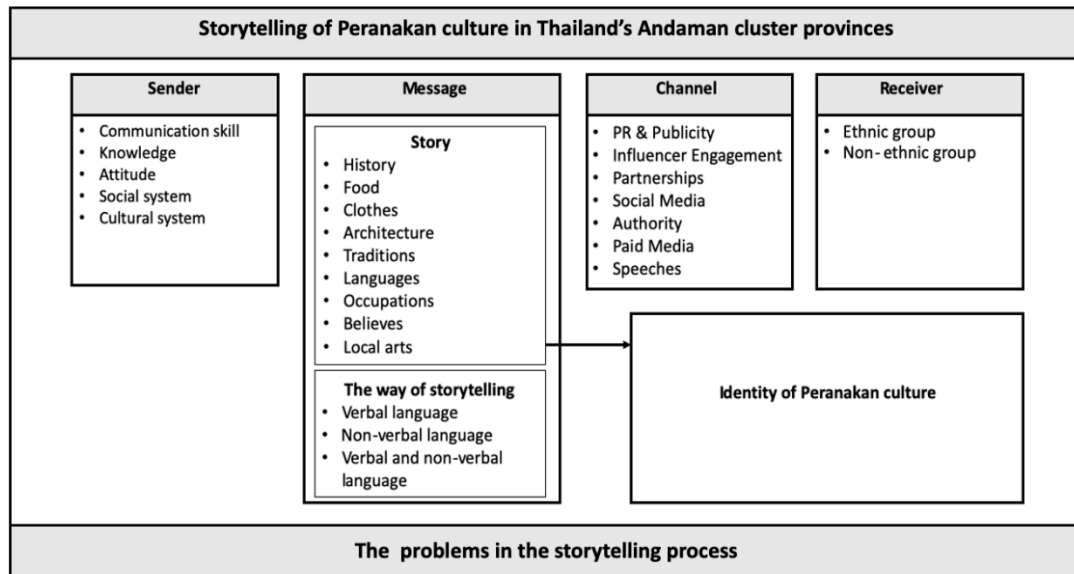


Figure 1: Research conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative survey research used multiple data collection and triangulation methods to verify analysed data (Oppermann, 2000).

Firstly, documents related to Peranakan were content analysed. This includes online and hard-copy documents. Two keywords: "Peranakan" and "Baba" (in Thai), were used to locate the materials. Library search and information from interviewing were the keys to identify the text or book about Peranakan. The documentation evaluation form used to verify the identified content's accuracy yielded 79 documents related to Peranakan culture.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with 47 key informants related to the storytelling of Peranakan culture, using purposive sampling and snowball technique. They were representatives from Provincial Cultural Office, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Provincial Office, Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports, Provincial Administrative Organization, National Archives Commemoration of H. M. the Queen's 60th Birthday Trang, and local experts whose names are listed in relevant online documents, offline documents, and based on recommendations from interviews with other key informants.

In addition, researchers did a non-participant observation of the places in the Andaman cluster provinces to identify traces of the Peranakan culture using Place Evaluation Form, and a total of 117 sites gathered from documents and interviews were qualified and confirmed.

Focus group discussions were also held with 20 academicians and experts in storytelling, and Peranakan cultures to confirm the preliminary findings using typology and taxonomy. Descriptive writing was done for the final verified reconfirmed analysis and description (analytic induction). Figure 2 illustrates some of the methods used for data collection.



Figure 2: In-depth interviews and criticising the storytelling in Peranakan culture in Thailand's Andaman cluster provinces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Storytelling is information transmission with the same process as general communication. It consists of the sender, message, channel, and receiver. Storytelling is different from public communication. The former focuses on transmitting valuable experiences of the storyteller, using several artistic techniques to encourage a change in one another (Fisher, 1989). Peranakan culture's storytelling is a study of the present to understand the past and predict the future through the storytellers' experiences, taking an emic view. Storytelling can be divided into two parts: the process of storytelling and the story about a Peranakan culture's identity.

Lack of Storytellers and Inheritors of the Culture.

It was found that every province in the Andaman cluster has a storyteller that is an expert in Peranakan culture. This group of storytellers is the true and deep learner of the culture and usually is an important driver of culture preservation in each area. However, there are only a few of this group of people compared to Peranakans' descendants in the area. This leads to a problem in personnel development to increase values to the culture.

Apart from the principal storyteller, it was found that in every province, there were still people who lived in the society where the authentic Peranakan culture existed. They are 86-90 years old, who can still tell stories, and provide information. However, if there is no information collected from these people soon, some of the Peranakan culture elements could vanish.

Therefore, it is evident that there is a need for their stories to be told, online or offline. As it is, there are not many channels for them to share their cultural stories. However, the government and private sectors tried to use different channels to tell stories about Peranakan culture in the form of signs, leaflets, street art, and even architectural restoration. Examples of street art are in Figure 3. With time, some of these storytelling channels were broken, decayed, and turned into media that is useless.

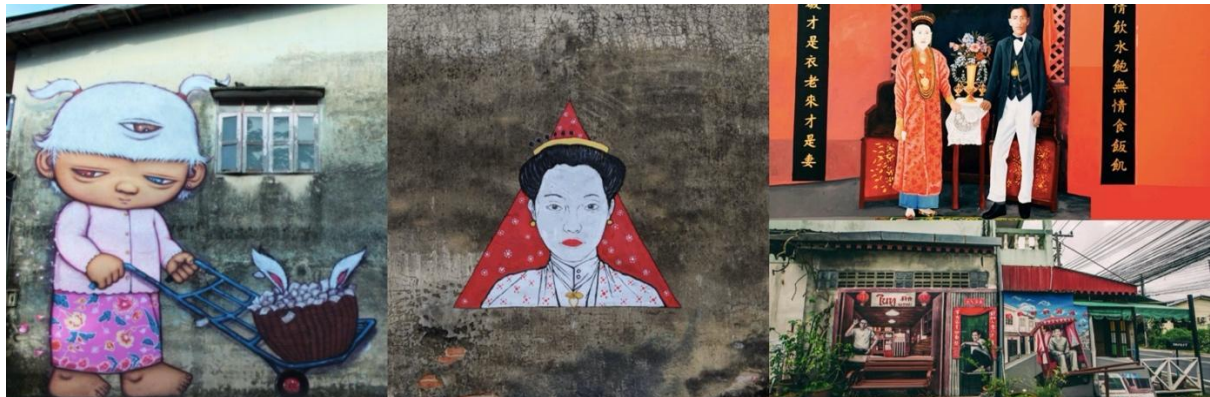


Figure 3: Street art telling a story about Peranakan culture in the old town of Phuket, Kathu, Kantang, and Satun.

Meanwhile, researchers found countless stories on Peranakan cultures, but the stories told do not depict the authentic cultural identity of Peranakans. Another noticeable feature of the stories told is that it is constantly tied to the Chinese culture. Although Peranakan culture has its roots in Chinese culture, it is important to note that it is not merely Chinese culture per se but a combination with Malay and Eurasian roots. Because of this, telling the story by just emphasising Chinese cultural elements is not an accurate depiction of Peranakan and could confuse receivers who are mainly Peranakans, assumed to have little knowledge or awareness of their very own cultural values.

These problematic findings are consistent with the research results on "Peranakan Culture Management of Agencies and Networks for Sustainability in Phuket Province." It was found that the challenge in managing Peranakan culture was the lack of understanding of the cultural framework and content, as well as the lack of personnel with cultural knowledge and expertise (Noonmee, 2018). Peranakan culture inheritance is a problem in Thailand and abroad, especially in Indonesia; it faces a severe cultural heritage crisis due to the Peranakan traditions. Separated from the surrounding society, over time, the Peranakan people, including traces of Peranakan culture such as the Peranakan houses, were swallowed up to symbolise marginalised people. In particular, according to Darmayanti and Bahauddin (2020), Peranakan houses in Lasem, Indonesia, are increasingly becoming merely symbols of marginalised people. Due to changing times, there is a crisis in the inheritance of ancestral identity. However, these houses need maintenance to benefit future generations for a deep cultural understanding.

Figure 4 illustrates summary points of storytelling of the Peranakan cultural situation in Thailand's Andaman cluster.



Figure 4: Summary points of storytelling of Peranakan cultural situation in Thailand's Andaman cluster.

Cultural Identity

With regards to the issue of cultural identity, although Chinese culture is patriarchal, Chinese men respected their wives as the house caretakers who had supreme power. When the local Thai women took care of their Chinese husbands, they did not abandon their culture, which led to culture integration (Sakunpiphat et al., 2012). This discovery is also following the interview of Piyanat Itsarasongkram, founder of Craftsmanship and Antique Braid club. He mentioned that:

"... Ranong Baba people accept others' ideas, so they know how to mix everything, such as food, clothing, and cultures..."

(P. Itsarasongkram, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

Peranakan cultural identity conveys the spirit of "unity in diversity" (Pue, 2016, p. 67). Similarly, the study on "The Peranakan Baba Nyonya Culture: Resurgence or Disappearance?" found that Peranakan culture is a "rare and beautiful blend" of two dominant cultures – Malay and Chinese – with elements from Javanese, Batak, Siamese, and European (specifically English) cultures (Lee, 2008). Also, In the book "Straits Chinese Society", it was said that:

"...the result of this blending is not simply a random mixture, a potpourri of bits and pieces, it is a genuine synthesis – something which not only incorporates but also transcends the parts out of which it springs..."

(Clammer, 1980, p. 1)

The information above shows that a Peranakan culture's authentic identity is actually focused on cultural integration. Therefore, if there is no integration from Chinese, Thai, Malay and European culture, that culture cannot be truly counted as Peranakan culture. Barry's acculturation concept explains the emergence of Peranakan culture in four aspects: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation (Berry, 2017). It was found that Peranakan culture arose from "integration strategy" because Peranakan people are born in Thailand, they live by practising something along the father's way, doing something in mother's way, and living their life by integrating culture from both parents. Barry described

"Integration strategy" as a point between these two extremes where immigrants can maintain their original cultural patterns and adopt vital elements of the mainstream culture.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the story of Peranakan culture focuses on the history of Peranakans and the way of lives of Peranakans (see Figure 5).

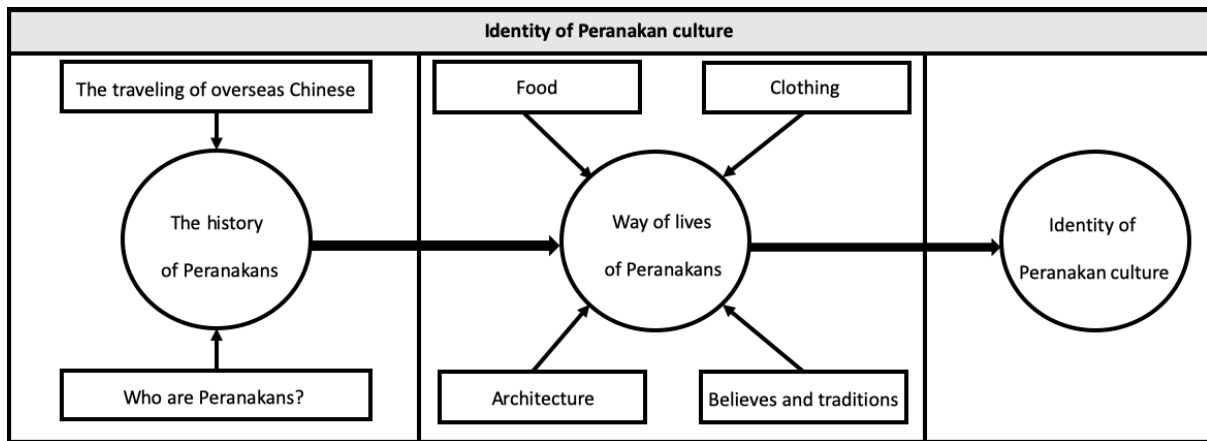


Figure 5: Identity of Peranakan culture in Thailand's Andaman cluster

The history of Peranakans: Malacca - the source of culture.

Princess Hang Li Po's marriage to Sultan Mansur Shah is considered to be the beginning of a mixed-race marriage story told up to the present. It also saw throngs of people from China making their way to Malacca and adjacent areas in the Malay peninsula for trading. Most of them are from important port cities in China, such as Xiamen, Fuzhou, Zhangzhou, Fujian (Hokkien). Some just came to trade and left, and some settled down permanently since the geographical features were similar to their hometown. This inadvertently normalised the marriage of Chinese men and local women. Meanwhile, there were not only Chinese that settled in the Malay peninsula, but other nationals, such as Indians, Arabians, Westerners, etc., that came to trade and settle. As such, mixed-race marriages did not only happen between Chinese men and local women, but also between other nationals (Phumiphutawon, 2016; Pue, 2016).

It is unknown when humans started to travel for the first time, but when Thailand began to step into the chronological age in 5-11 B.E., there was already evidence that the Chinese travelled to Thailand. The most apparent evidence was the emergence of chinaware since Sukhothai was the capital city. Accordingly, it could be inferred that the Chinese settled and had children in Thailand since before the history of Thailand. The Chinese travelling to the Andaman cluster was the beginning of a Peranakan culture until it continued to the present day. From the Chinese's travelling paths that migrated to the South of Thailand (Phongphaiboon, Wuttipanit, & Chinnakarn, 2011), it can be concluded that three groups of Chinese travelled into the Andaman clusters. However, the group that started the Peranakan culture or the group who brought Peranakan culture into the Andaman cluster is the Chinese who migrated to settle in the Malay peninsula area along Malacca strait. They were ambitious Chinese. They were under the government of other nationals before, so they were used to Western culture.

Some of them immigrated and were willing to be under the government of other nations in order to have political and trade privileges. Once they moved to Phuket, this Chinese group had a better connection with Chinese people in Penang and Singapore than in

Thailand. They are also a group of Chinese that integrated with the Westerners more than with people of the same ethnicity. This is said as such because the Andaman cluster area was not where the original Peranakan culture originated from. Instead, they were merely recipients of the culture which were brought there by Chinese, who previously lived in Malacca or Penang.

Anyhow, Peranakan culture in the Andaman cluster is not precisely the same as the ones in Malacca or Penang', since the wives were not Malaysian, but Thai that had a different culture. The Peranakan culture that appeared in the Andaman cluster could be considered a complicated mix of cultures. This finding is consistent with an interview with Dr. Kosol Tanguthai, President of the Thai Peranakan Association. He said:

"...Originally they were not from Phuket in terms of architecture. The architecture that we can see, whether it's Sino-Portuguese that we can obviously see, we sometimes call it incorrectly, sometimes correctly. Actually, we didn't pass Portugal; we passed Penang. It's colonial-style..."

(K. Tanguthai, personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Ruedi Phumiphutawon, a historian of Phuket town, when interview said that:

"...Phuket people dressed in 2 ways, differently. The first way is the culture from the people who migrated from Penang, Malacca, Saiburi, Kelantan, ...these areas. These people would wear Yaya tops. The second group was the Chinese, who were the actual descendants of real Chinese. They were also mixed-race but were the children of the people who immigrated during King Rama V's reign when people hired the whole ship to do ore mining or opencast mining specifically. These people didn't follow Penang's influence. Their houses, clothes, Yaya clothes, and Baju Panjang gowns were influenced by the families that sent their kids to study in Penang. Likewise, Chinese families went mining in Malaysia and saw the opportunities in Phuket, so they moved into Phuket. A part of it is the travelling and the integration of culture because in Phuket in the past, you cannot reach out to anybody except here in Malacca, Penang. This place is all of Phuket; therefore, its products, education, connection with other countries, all of this were influenced..."

(R. Phumiphutawon, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

In sum, Peranakan culture had its beginning from the travelling out of mainland China to Malacca by the Chinese, who were mainly Hokkiens. Once they moved to Malacca, they got married to local women and had mixed-race children. These children became the ancestors of Peranakans. Traces of Peranakan culture, in the Andaman cluster, are scattered across Satun, Trang, Krabi, Phuket, Phang-Nga, and Ranong provinces.

The diverse aspects made it difficult to determine who the Peranakans are. This was discovered from the interview with Chaknarong Pakkhamookkh, knowledge management officer of the Phuket Museum. He said:

"...The problem of defining Peranakan is a problem we're facing, which is still unsolvable. We still don't know what Peranakan is now, whether it's a cultural group, a culture, a group of people, or whatsoever. It's not clear. This is another problem we're facing. The fact that it's unclear makes the other things unclear too..."

(C. Pakkhamookkh, personal communication, January 29, 2020)

This problem is not only found in Thailand. Even in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and other areas with traces of mixed culture, the matter is still debatable. For example, the article "Neither Fish nor Fowl": Constructing Peranakan Identity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Singapore" indicated:

"...As political power shifted in post-colonial Singapore, Singaporean nationalists suppressed problematic aspects of Peranakan identity. People who defined themselves as Peranakan were encouraged to assimilate into a majority Chinese population...". (Hardwick, 2008: 51)

However, with the information collected from this study, it can be concluded that the meaning of Peranakan can be explained in two contexts: 1) Peranakans in the modern context; and 2) Peranakans in the context of the Andaman cluster.

Peranakan in Andaman Clusters

The Malay peninsula settlement of other nationals, whether Chinese, Indian, Westerner, etc., has led to the existence of interracial marriages and mixed-race children, especially involving the Chinese. This made the English, the colonists during that time, was referring to the mixed race as between Chinese and locals "Straits Chinese." Later, a new vocabulary was coined to name the mixed-race people. Not only the mix between Chinese-Malay, but also between other countries and the Malay.

The word Peranakan emerged when the Peranakan museum in Singapore was built. Later it spread to other countries, creating a collaboration between Peranakans in each country. There were meetings every year and each country took turns to be the host (K. Tanguthai, personal communication, January 27, 2020). When considering the meaning of "Peranakan," one can find that the root is from the Bahasa Indonesia word "Per" (affix) together with "*Anak*" that means child. Together, they formed a local base meaning locally-born children (Hardwick, 2008; Lee, 2014; S. Permsap, personal communication, January 31, 2020).

In truth, Peranakans not only means the mixed-race of Chinese and Malay, but refers to the mix of many races, which can be divided into four groups. 1) Chinese Peranakan, Baba-Nyonya means the mixed-race between Chinese and locals; 2) Eurasian Peranakan means mixing Westerners and locals.; 3) Jawi Peranakan means the mix between Indians and locals who are Muslims; and 4) Indian Peranakan, Chitty means the mix between Indians and the locals who are Hindus (Phumiphutawon, 2016; Pue, 2016).

Peranakans, in the Andaman cluster, usually appear in groups. Figure 6 shows a photo of Peranakans in Thailand. The Peranakans in Thailand are different from Peranakans in other countries because Peranakans in Thailand depicts a group of a mixed-race between Chinese and Thai. In the past, these people called themselves "Baba" regardless of gender. Later, when

the word "Peranakan" was coined, it was not familiar to the people and was not accepted by some groups. This has caused debates to the present day, as pointed out in an interview with Ruedi Phumiphuthawon.

"...There are many groups of authentic Peranakans, whether they are Indonesian Peranakan, Malaysian Peranakan, Singaporean Peranakan. They are all Peranakans, while what we have are Chinese and Thais, which are also Peranakan, just that it's not common to call them that way. We call them Baba. So, we are familiar with the word Baba since the beginning. When someone asks you to call them Peranakan, we are not used to it, and we would be against it, saying we're not Peranakans while actually, we are. Since the locals don't accept the word Peranakan, but accept the word Baba, a mixed-race of Phuket Thai and Chinese, we call them Baba for the mixed-race of Chinese Phuket. Apart from calling these people in Phuket Baba, we also call the people in the surrounding provinces Baba, such as the group in Phang-Nga. Anyway, they don't oppose the word Peranakan as much as in Phuket. They can accept the word Peranakan, but they still call themselves Baba. The teacher once asked them why in Phuket people don't accept the word Peranakan, and they answered that they don't live in the straits, we don't belong to England. England does not colonise us, England used the word Peranakan to call the people in the straits, but we don't want to accept it..."

(R. Phumiphutawon, personal communication, February 3, 2020)



Figure 6: Peranakans in Thailand

However, whether "Peranakan" or "Baba", in Thailand it refers only to the Chinese's mixed-race descendants, with Chinese ancestors, mostly Hokkiens who travelled from Fujian. Earlier, their ancestors had travelled to the Malay peninsula first. Some of them lived and had homes in Malacca, Penang, or Singapore, but they saw opportunities in making tins and trading other products in the Andaman cluster area. Some of them migrated from Penang to settle in Thailand and brought the Peranakan culture with them. Therefore, Peranakan in the context of the Andaman cluster means the mixed-race of Chinese and local Thais. It is common to call them "Baba," whether men or women.

(a) Peranakan traditional cuisines

It could be said that Peranakan food is "Remembering food from Chinese fathers that a Thai mother makes". The outstanding element that determines Peranakan food is seasoning with

spices and the use of coconut milk. It is the mixture of Chinese food with the local Southern food, making the food taste spicy, but less than those of the Southerners'. The flavours and aromas are added from the spices. Historically, Penang has been the source of spice trading for hundreds of years, making Peranakan food concentrated with spices. Thai food emphasises more on local spices, such as caraways and galangals, lemongrasses, bergamots and turmeric. Besides that, Peranakan food began in a tropical coastal area. Food with spices will make people sweat and create immunity for the bodies to be robust against weather changes. However, Peranakan food spices are slightly different from Chinese spices because they mostly came from India or the Malay peninsula. They have a more pungent smell than the spices used in steaming pots of mainland Chinese, such as turmeric, gingers, cloves, or cardamoms. All of these are spices common in port cities because merchants like to exchange abroad. Peranakan food usually has seafood as the main ingredient. It usually also has vivid colours such as red, pink, green because the Chinese food culture is also in it.

An example is the Hokkien stir-fried noodle that is sold in restaurants in the Andaman cluster. The customer will not order if the restaurant puts meat in the food. Customers prefer to select the meat themselves, such as seafood, shrimp, pork, or fish balls. Ruedi Phumiphuthawon, in an interview on this matter, said that:

"...If we look at the local ingredients since we are a coastal city, the local ingredients are mainly seafood. The source of Fujian food is also a coastal city..."

(R. Phumiphutawon, personal communication, February 3, 2020)



Figure 7: O-tao, Hong pork, and O-aew, Peranakan food in Thailand

Peranakan food that appears in the Andaman cluster in each province has similarities and differences, but they are still based on the same root: Chinese food mixed with local food, whether savoury or sweet. This can be observed from the dish names that are Hokkien names, but will have different ingredients and tastes. The popular delicious dishes are Hong pork (Southern-style braised pork stew), Hong som pork, Loba (Ngo Hiang), Apong, Sunpia, Yawye, O-tao. A sweet dish example is O-aew (see Figure 7).

(b) Clothing of Peranakans

Being the breadwinner of the families, Peranakan men are like the house commander. Therefore, their clothing generally emphasises the convenience of working. However, when Peranakan men got richer and were trusted to be civil servants or mining leaders who needed to communicate with foreigners, their interest in fashion developed.

The "Zhongshan suit" (from the word "Zunzhongshan" in Mandarin according to the name Sun Yat-sen that the mainland Chinese called Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Cantonese) which represents the clothing of educated people, was modified in Thailand to fit into local fashion trends. This suit has a standing neckline, with long sleeves, similar to the royal pattern suit, with five buttons. It has two pockets at the top and two pockets below – left and right. A man would wear long trousers; both the top and the trousers will be in khaki. It became the clothing of the mine leaders – Peranakan men in the present. It is common to wear a white or cream sun helmet and carry a cane like lords in the past.

Meanwhile, Peranakan women pay attention to clothing when they have to attend social events because dress shows their status and family. The clothing of Peranakan women in the past can explicitly distinguish between rich and the high-class. Their clothes and accessories are beautiful and neat. The dress of Peranakan women can be divided into three parts. 1) Tops - there are many types of Peranakan women tops according to the trends, such as long gown tops, short gown tops, standing neck tops, Kebaya tops, connected floral lace tops; 2) Batik cloth - although Indonesians are masters in making Batik cloth, Peranakans have their own style which makes the group distinctive. They are all rich, so they usually design Batik patterns according to Chinese beliefs. The colours used are vivid such as pink, yellow, green, and red. The prints are auspicious, such as roses, peonies, with components such as birds and butterflies. Peranakans can design Batik cloth and hire a dressmaker from Pekalongan to produce the cloth. With the knowledge and the capabilities of the dressmaker, the talented dressmaker can make clothes to compliment the Peranakan woman's taste, and 3) Accessories - accessories start from head to toes, such as Hua-Guan, Bin-Tang, Kerongsang. (Phumiphutawon, 2016; Sakunpiphat et al., 2012; Cherry [Pseudonym], personal communication, February 6, 2020) (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Hua-Guan, Bin- Tang, and Kerongsang, Peranakan accessories in Thailand

(c) Architecture

Sino-European is a type of architecture in Thailand that can be found in the old towns of Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang, and Satun. It is a distinctive architecture and portrays the distinct Peranakan cultural identity that can be visually seen. In the past, this kind of architecture was called Sino-Portuguese buildings (see Figure 8). Sino means China, Portuguese means Portugal. Before this, in the past ten years, people would debate on how to correctly name the architectural style of the buildings. Ruedi Phumiphuthawon, in an interview, said that:

"...Someone told me that he took a Portuguese to look at the building around the Thalang road area. He said that the Portuguese never build buildings like this, and Portugal never colonized Thailand; Portugal should not be brought into the picture. Actually, it would be more appropriate to call these buildings Sino-European...".

(R. Phumiphutawon, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Anyway, these buildings are valuable architecture and are important traces that can tell the past stories that connect to the present. As such, these buildings are places that can be tourist attractions of Peranakan culture (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: Sino-European buildings in Thailand

(d) Beliefs and Traditions

In the early ages, Chinese ancestors were Mahayana Buddhists and Taoists. Later, in the period of the descendants, beliefs became integrated. Most Thais were Theravada Buddhists, so in the present, Peranakans in the Andaman cluster became Buddhists as did most Thais. However, they did not abandon the belief in sacred things as in Taoism that their ancestors believed. Apart from having triple gems as a spiritual anchor, Peranakans also believe in multiple gods, such as believing in Yok Ong Song Tae as the god of gods.

An obvious example that illustrates the integration of this group's beliefs is that during the wedding ceremony of Peranakans in Phuket, the bride and groom will pay their respects to Pud Cho or Guan Yin at the Pud Cho shrine. Later, they pay their respects to Luang Por Cham at Chalong temple to ask for blessings. If they pass through a Peranakan community, there will be a red shrine in front of most of the houses. The said shrine is the Tigong shrine (the god of the sky in which Peranakans believe) (see Figure 9). Inside the house, there are Buddha images, including Kimsin (god statues). It is clearly a mixture of Chinese and Thai beliefs. Peranakans pay attention to both Thai holy Buddhist days and Chinese religious days. (S. Permsap, personal communication, January 31, 2020) (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: House of Peranakans in Laem Sak community, Krabi. Tigong shrine is found in front of the house. Inside the house are Buddha images and Kimsin.

Peranakans' traditions and beliefs could integrate because most traditions are rooted in assumptions about sacred things that protect people who do good deeds and show gratitude towards ancestors. This belief continues from the past until it becomes the soul of Peranakan descendants. Traditions can be divided into two parts: 1) Traditions according to the lunar calendar, and 2) Traditions according to the circle of life. One tradition that is most popular among people both inside and outside the culture is Nine Emperor Gods Festival otherwise popularly known as Vegetarianism Day, in Thailand. It is on the first day of the waxing moon until the ninth day of every Chinese calendar.

This study concluded that Vegetarianism Day came from the spiritual anchoring of the people who were far from home (China). Vegetarianism Day in the Andaman cluster is not like anywhere else because there is a grand procession (see Figure 10), with horses representing gods to show a miracle to the general public. Some say that "Vegetarianism tradition began in China, grew in Malaysia, and flourished in Thailand" (S. Permsap, personal communication, January 31, 2020) (see Figure 11).



Figure 11: Vegetarianism in Thailand

CONCLUSION

Peranakan culture is rooted in the integration of Chinese, European, Malay, and Thai cultures creating a distinctive culture. Even though this culture changed and transformed through time, traces of the culture remained and are relatively well maintained as a national heritage.

The problem found in communicating about this unique culture started from the lack of a storyteller (sender), the presentation of stories that are not a true identity (message) and insufficient and non-continuous channels of storytelling (channel). As a consequence, it limited the awareness of Peranakan culture (receiver).

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