THE IMPACT OF CHINA’S ECONOMIC RISE ON THE ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN THAI-CHINESE CLAN ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

On one hand, this paper illustrates after the 1997 Asian financial crisis and signing ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), China has become Thailand's most influential economic partner. And it drives Thai people to be keen on learning Chinese language. As same time, it highlights the Chinese government attaches great importance to establishing relations with leaders of Thai Chinese communities. By the way of example, this article introduces the Chinese government through various activities drew the leaders of Thai-Chinese communities to China's government side. On the other hand, due to the anti-China anti-communist policy during the Cold War and the impact of Western culture, most young generation Thai-Chinese do not speak Chinese. In addition, actually, Thai-Chinese mainly retain the Chaoshan (Teo Chiew) culture and do not understand Chinese culture. Hence, the young generation of Thai-Chinese are not interested in the ritual of ancestor worship in the Thai-Chinese Clan Association. In other words, the rise of the Chinese economy do not arouse the Thai-Chinese younger generation to pay attention to the ancestor worship in Thai-Chinese clan association.

Keywords: Thai-Chinese, clan association, ancestor worship, the rise of China’s economy

1. INTRODUCTION

Thai-Chinese communities are composed by kinship, geographical relationship, Business relationship, religious relationship and Product relationship association. Generally, The clan association is organization that reflect kinship; the regional or dialect association is geographical relationship organization; Chamber of Commerce and association with same industry belong to business association; the religious relationship and charity promoted to set up charitable association. The produce relationship organization includes cultural, academic, hobby, and Alumni Association etc. (Yu Yunping 俞云平 1998)

The United Chinese Clans Association of Thailand (UCCAT) is most critical clan association in Thailand. UCCAT was set up in 1970. As so far, UCCAT has 65 single surname clan associations, 5 multiple surname clan associations. According to survey, there were fifty-one percent single surname associations founded in 1960s and twenty-eight percent of them founded in 1970s. Therefore, near four-fifths single surname associations founded from 1960s to 1970s. Thus, most of Thai-Chinese clan associations have about 40 or 50 years old history. Twenty-two Thai-Chinese clan associations have built their ancestral halls in Bangkok or around Bangkok. Every year, Thai-Chinese clan associations hold the ritual of worship ancestor in their ancestral hall.

This article will involve Thai-Chinese communities and the ritual of ancestor worship in Thai-Chinese clan association.

2. THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHINA AND THAILAND AFTER 1997 AND ITS INFLUENCE TO THAILAND AND THAI CHINESE COMMUNITIES

When the world entered the Cold War after World War II, Thailand joined the ‘free world’ camp governed by the USA. The USA became Thailand’s patron. Meanwhile, Thailand’s economy maintained close relationship with the United States and obtained economic and military aid from United States. Yos Santasombat(Yos Santasombat 2019)(p1) claims, with the support of the United
States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as an anti-Communist strategy, in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in Bangkok. Then, Brunei, Viet Nam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia took part in ASEAN in 1984, 1995, 1997 and 1999 respectively. (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Hsing-Chou Sung (Hsing-Chou Sung 2015) (p23) in his article “China’s Geoeconomic Strategy: Toward the Riparian States of the Mekong Region” states, before 1997, due to the territorial dispute between China and some Southeast Asian countries in the South China Sea and China exporting of communist revolution, China was regarded as threat by Southeast Asia. Sung (Hsing-Chou Sung 2015) (p23) also shows the Mainland of China was eager to reshape its image to win the trust of Southeast Asian countries and the Asian financial crisis in 1997 gave a good opportunity for China to establish economic cooperation with ASEAN member countries.

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Egberink (Fenna Egberink 2011) (p22) in his study “Asean, China’s Rise and Geopolitical Stability in Asia” analyzes, compared with USA and Japan, China can be called as trustworthy partner during the suffering time of Thailand and other Asean in 1997 Asian financial crisis since China provided over 4 billion US dollars to aid to Thailand and other Asian countries depending on the International Monetary Fund (Pro-Active Policies. Moreover, Renminbi was stabilized in response to Asian Financial Crisis. (Fenna Egberink 2011) (p35) In 2002, the PRC–ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) was signed. Liu Ying’s (Liu Ying and Jayanthakumaran Kankesu 2016) (p1) research of “People's Republic of China (PRC): Thailand economic relationship after signing of free trade agreement in 2005” declares CAFTA promoted the bilateral trade and investment between Thailand and PRC to increase considerably. According to the data from Bank of Thailand, Liu Ying’s (Liu Ying and Jayanthakumaran Kankesu 2016) (p6) analyzes the importance of PRC market for Thailand’s exports that Thai exports to the PRC as share of total Thai exports increased from about 3 per cent in 1995 to over 7 per cent in 2003 after signing CAFTA. Less than 10 years, Thai Exports to China as a share of total Thai exports increased more than 2 times. By 2017, Thai exports to the PRC have grown to 12 per cent as a share of total Thai exports so that China became the first export partner of Thailand. As an export oriented country, the economy of Thailand highly relies on export. (Trading Economics 2018a) Besides, Thai imports as a share of total Thai imports to the China increased from about 3 per cent to 8 per cent from 1995 to 2003. In 2013, China had become the second import partners of Thailand with 15 percent of total imports Thailand. In less than 20 years, the proportion of Thailand's imports from China had increased five-fold. From 2013 to 2017, Thai imports to the China stabilized in 15 percent of total imports Thailand. (Trading Economics 2018b) Nozaki (Nozaki Kenji 2017) (48-49) in his study of “FDI Directed to Thailand by Chinese Enterprises for Circumlocutory Export” provides the data of China’s outward Foreign direct investment (FDI) flowing to Thailand from 2004 to 2014. After signing the “PRC-Thailand Investment”, Agreement FDI from China to the Thailand increased sharply from US$ 50 million in 2009 to US$ 700 million in 2010. From then on, China’s outward FDI flowed to Thailand with high investment. In 2014, it achieved to US$ 839 million. (Table 1)

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In Contrast to 1.7 million Chinese visitors traveled to Thailand in 2011, (www.China.com.cn 2013) in 2017, 9.8 million Chinese tourists arrived Thailand as about 30% of total inbound travelers in Thailand. (Reuters staff 2018) In other words. in past 6 years, the number of Chinese travelers to Thailand increased 6 times. By the word of Pongpanu Svetarundra, who is Permanent Secretary of Thailand’s Ministry Of Tourism and Sports, Chinese tourist brought about 500 Billion Baht income for Thailand in 2017. (Hongyu and Bianji 2018) Reuter(Reuters staff 2018) reports Thai tourist revenue is about 1.8 trillion baht in 2017. Then, Chinese tourist was account for 27.8 percent of the total annual income of Thailand in 2017. To quote the words from Thailand’s Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the travel and tourism revenue contributed a 21.2 % of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017. (World Travel & Tourism Council 2018). Therefore, it can be inferred that Chinese tourists’ consumption in Thailand contributed 5.9% for Thailand’s GDP in 2017.

By the introduction of the 10th anniversary of Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand(Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University 2017), Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University was initiated by Princess Sirindhorn. It was established in 2007 with Cooperation of Peking University and Chulalongkorn University. Its main goal is to teach Chinese and recommend Chinese culture. The main job of Confucius Institute at Chulalongkun, from 2007 to 2017, included Chinese language education, Chinese language examination, providing scholarship, organizing summer camp in China, Chinese cultural activities and library etc.

Thailand Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification of China (TCPNRC) is subordinate China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (CCPPNR). By report of CCPPNR (China Council for the promotion of Peaceful National Reunification中国和平统一促进会. 2008), CCPPNR was established in 1988. CCPPNR has covered more than ninties Countries or Areas in world involving 14 branches in China (including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan), 8 branches in Asia, 30 branches of Europe, 2 branches of North America, 14 branches of South America and 27 branches of Africa. CCPPNR(China Council for the promotion of Peaceful National Reunification中国和平统一促进会. 2008) claims the purpose of CCPPNR “holds high the banner of patriotism, unites all compatriots in domestic and abroad who support China's peaceful reunification, promote non-governmental exchanges and contact between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and oppose the creation of "Taiwan independence", "two Chinas", "one China, one Taiwan" and other activities to split China and promote to realize peaceful reunification of China early.” (China Council for the promotion of Peaceful National Reunification中国和平统一促进会. 2008)

As the declaration of Thaicn.net (Thaicn.net, 2016f), in 2016, the Global Overseas Chinese promotion of Peaceful National Reunification Promotion Conference was held in Bangkok second time. The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of China, the Ministry of Taiwan Affairs and other internal departments, the promotion of China's peaceful reunification meeting around the world, the Thai political figures, the head of the Thai Chinese community, more than 1,000 people attended the meeting. The Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political and the vice president of the China Peaceful Reunification Promotion Association declared that “the conference formed a good situation in which Chinese people at domestic and abroad jointly opposed Taiwan independence, opposed splittism, and promoted peaceful reunification of the motherland.” (Thaicn.net, 2016f)

By my survey, some staff of Thai-Chinese clan association of Thailand are the members of TCPNRC. For example, Mr. C immigrated to Thailand in 1980s. He is member of TCPNRC. Almost every month, he joined the activities of TCPNRC. Almost every recent year, he traveled to Heilongjiang Province in China organized by TCPNRC. In 2017, he traveled to Bangladesh and Italy to join conference of against Taiwan independence and promote unification organized by
3. DISCUSSING THAI-CHINESE YOUNG GENERATION’S VIEW OF THE RITUAL OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

I joined the ritual of ancestor worship in Autumn in 2015 and Spring and Autumn in 2016 in Zhen (郑) ancestral hall, on 17th and 18th December 2015, 2016 and 2017 in Xu ancestral hall, on 19th 2015 and 8th October 2017 in Lin ancestral hall, on 20th 2015 in Qiu (邱) ancestral hall and on 17th April in Huang ancestral hall. I interviewed some young generation Thai-Chinese who participated in the ritual ancestor worship.

Mr. Zhen was born in Thailand in 1970s with bachelor degree. He said when he was child, his parents brought him to ancestral hall to worship ancestors. Mr. Xu, the fourth Thai-Chinese generation, was born in Thailand in 1980s with Ph.D. He said he joined the ritual of worship ancestors of Xu Clan Association of Thailand when he was child. He participates in ancestor activities every year. When he was a teenager, he used to return to his ancestral home, Fengshun, Guangdong Province, China to participate in the ritual of worship ancestors there. He is very proud of his Chinese surname. His participation in the activities of the Xu Clan Association of Thailand made him know a lot of friends. He hopes to become the leader of the Thai-Chinese communities in the future. Besides, some young Thai-Chinese who participated in the ritual of worship ancestor for it would bring good luck to them.

There are some presidents of Thai-Chinese Clan Association complaining to me about their sons having no interesting to the ritual of worship ancestors. They have big generational gap with next generation.

Mr. N mentioned above said in recent years, almost every year, he joined the ancestor worship ceremony in Thailand from mainland of China. He has about one hundred relatives living in Thailand. But just one of his Thai lineage old brother join the ritual of ancestor worship in clan association of Thailand every year. Other Thai relatives believe they are already Thai, and do not participate in the activities of the Thai-Chinese communities at all. However, his lineage old brother cannot speak Chinese and he cannot speak Thai. Though they joined the ritual of worship ancestor in Xu ancestral hall of Thailand together, but they cannot communicate.

Therefore, in my investigation, how to attract the young Thai-Chinese to participate in the activities of the Thai-Chinese communities are a major problem.

From 2015 to present, the Lim Clansmen Association of Thailand (LCAT) organized Lin’s students to worship Bigan (比干), the original ancestor of Lin clan, in Henan province China each year and study Chinese culture in China. In addition, in the ancestor worship ceremony of 2016, the young generation of Lin were offered a stall at the square of the Lin’s ancestral hall to sell their products to attract the younger generation to participate in the ancestor worship activities.

Apart from these, LCAT also invited the young generation to work at LCAT. Miss Lin is third generation of Thai-Chinese. In fact, her mother is Thai and her father is Thai-TeoChiew. When she read bachelor degree, she had the opportunity to go to Peking University as exchange students for a year. Later, she studied master degree in Beijing. She can speak fluent Chinese. She loves Chinese culture very much. So, after she got master's degree in 2017, she has worked in LCAT. But after she worked in LCAT nearly a year, she said she lost work enthusiasm for Thai-Chinese clan associations’ work efficiency is very slow and everything must be done according to the old rules with no any creative. she confused about her future. She also admitted that most of her Thai Chinese peers are not willing to carry the burden of history for they think they are Thai.

In short, a few young Thai Chinese in my survey participated in the ritual of worship ancestors. Even though some younger generations who prefer to participate in ancestral rituals and Chinese culture...
are influenced by their families, their behaviors are not directly related to the rise of China's economy.

4. CONCLUSIONS
After Asian financial crisis, China became a trustworthy economic partner with Thailand. In 2017, China is the first export partner of Thailand. From 2013 to present, China is the second import partners of Thailand. Chinese tourists’ consumption in Thailand contributed 5.9% for Thailand’s GDP in 2017. Meanwhile, the Chinese government attaches great importance to establishing relations with leaders of Thai Chinese communities. By the way of example, this article introduces the Chinese government through various activities drew the leaders of Thai-Chinese communities to China's government side. Nonetheless, the young generation of Thai-Chinese are not interested in the ritual of ancestor worship in the Thai-Chinese Clan Association. In other words, the rise of the Chinese economy does not arouse the Chinese ancestor worship of Thai-Chinese young generation.

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