

Research on the Integration Path of Chinese Culture and Thai Native Culture under the Background of “Belt and Road Initiative”

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Abstract

Belt and Road Initiative has set up a new platform for economic and cultural exchanges between China and countries along the route, and also provided an opportunity for the international spread of Chinese culture. As an important node country in Southeast Asia, Thailand has attracted much attention in the spread of Chinese culture. Through literature research, field investigation and case analysis, this paper comprehensively sorts out the history and present situation of Chinese culture spread in Thailand, analyzes language learning barriers, cultural cognitive differences and challenges of uneven distribution of resources, and reveals the opportunities faced by Chinese culture spread under Belt and Road Initiative. The research shows that under the joint promotion of education, cultural activities, digital platforms and other fields, the integration of Chinese culture and Thai local culture has achieved certain results, but it is still necessary to further tap the potential of their in-depth interaction. This paper proposes that strategies such as strengthening cultural exchanges, promoting localization of educational content, developing digital cultural communication channels, and cross-disciplinary integration practices can effectively deal with obstacles in communication and promote the deep integration of the two cultures. This not only helps to enhance the international influence of Chinese culture, but also provides a practical reference for the cultural integration of countries along Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative; Chinese Culture; Indigenous Thai Culture; Fusion Path

1. Introduction

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, China's economic and cultural exchanges with other countries around the world have deepened day by day. In recent years, Thailand, as an important partner of China in Southeast Asia, has seen increasing exchanges between the two sides in the political, economic and cultural fields, and the number of people learning Chinese has also been increasing. The spread of Chinese and Chinese

culture in Thailand has gradually accelerated. However, cross-cultural communication is not only language exchange, but also the collision and interaction of cultural cognition and values. Especially under Belt and Road Initiative, the two sides are facing unique opportunities and challenges in cultural exchange and integration. Thailand has a long history of Buddhist culture and social value system, which is obviously different from Chinese Confucianism and traditional culture. This kind of cultural difference may become a potential obstacle in the process of Chinese culture spread. Although Thai society is open to Chinese culture, there are still differences in cultural identity and acceptance. How to realize mutual learning and integration of the two cultures on the basis of respect and tolerance is an important issue in cultural exchanges between China and Thailand.

According to the data of foreign tourists visiting Thailand in 2024 released by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand on January 3, from January 1 to December 31, 2024, a total of approximately 35.54 million foreign tourists entered Thailand, including China (mainland) There are 6,733,162 people and China (Taiwan) 1,089,910 people, ranking among the top 1 foreign tourists visiting Thailand. Under this background, Thailand's demand for Chinese is gradually increasing, and promoting the spread of Chinese culture not only helps to improve Thai people's understanding and recognition of China, but also creates favorable conditions for political and economic cooperation between China and Thailand, and promotes the development of tourism in Thailand. In the field of education, Chinese is included in the compulsory course of Thailand's education system. According to the data of the global portal website of Confucius Institutes, there are 17 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius Classrooms in Thailand. Colleges and universities have also offered business Chinese and international Chinese education majors, which have provided strong support for the spread of Chinese culture in Thailand. Although the Chinese education system in Thailand is gradually improving, the difficulty of language dissemination and the challenge of cultural integration still exist.

In recent years, scholars have conducted extensive research on Sino-Thai cultural exchanges and Chinese cultural communication, mainly focusing on issues such as communication status, challenges and cultural integration paths. Zhang (2022) pointed out that there are some problems in Chinese cross-cultural communication, such as fragmented cultural knowledge, lagging communication methods and low audience recognition, and it is necessary to improve the communicational effect through optimization strategies . Yao (2023) emphasized the constraints of insufficient cultural awareness and lack of high-quality carriers, and suggested enhancing communication power through top-level design, teaching material development and “all-media +” model . Liu (2023) proposed the complementarity of language and culture, and advocated the use of network technology to innovate communication paths . Yan(2022) emphasizes the richness of Chinese perspectives and communication channels, and pays attention to strategic adjustment to meet cross-cultural needs. In addition, Li (2020) put forward the importance of practical teaching and “multilingual +” talent training mode to international Chinese education; Li (2024) discusses the key role of educational cooperation in language teaching and cultural integration based on the background of Belt and Road Initiative. These studies reveal that there is still much room for

improvement in theory and practice of Sino-Thai cultural exchanges, which provide an important reference for follow-up research.

To sum up, it is particularly important to explore how Chinese culture interacts and integrates with Thai local culture under the background of Belt and Road Initiative. This paper mainly studies and analyzes the current situation, challenges and opportunities of Chinese culture communication in Thailand, combined with specific cases, discusses how to promote the two-way integration of the two cultures through education, cultural activities and media communication, and provides some practical suggestions for future cultural exchanges.

2. History and Present Situation of Chinese Culture in Thailand

2.1. The spread history of Chinese culture in Thailand

Chinese was originally called “Chinese” in Thailand, mainly teaching Chinese as its mother tongue to cultivate students' sense of identity with China and Chinese culture. According to Zhang (2019) Thailand Chinese Survey Report data, the earliest Chinese education appeared during the Ayutthaya Dynasty (1350-1767), but at that time, Chinese education was not formal school education, but private school education in families. In 1933-1934, the number of Chinese schools reached its peak: there were 271 Chinese schools in Thailand, mainly educating students to be loyal to their ancestral (home) country (China). From 1937 to 1938, the total number of students receiving Chinese education in primary schools, secondary schools and normal schools reached 16,711, which was the peak of the number of students in Chinese schools in Thailand before the war. From 1938 to 1978, the political environment changed constantly due to the war, and Chinese education also experienced ups and downs. Until 1978, the Ministry of Education of Thailand issued a new general order, stipulating that private junior high schools can set up high school departments, that is, the fifth and sixth grades, but the high school departments are not allowed to teach Chinese, instead of five hours of English classes per week. By 1980, Chinese classes were limited to five hours per week for all students in grades one to four. Because of the changes in the political and social environment, most courses in Chinese schools are not much different from those in ordinary public schools, and Chinese is completely regarded as a foreign language course.

2.2. Current Situation of Chinese Culture Dissemination in Thailand

Since 2006, Chinese education in Thailand has been at an unprecedented high, the scope of Chinese teaching has expanded rapidly, and the number of people learning Chinese has doubled. As of June 2011, there were nearly 2,000 schools offering Chinese courses in Thailand, with more than 700,000 students studying Chinese. After Belt and Road Initiative was put forward, colleges and universities, Confucius Institutes and primary and secondary schools in Thailand strongly supported Chinese education and promoted the integration of Chinese culture into local Thai culture.

In terms of colleges and universities, colleges and universities in Thailand have continuously strengthened the level of Chinese education and paid more attention to it. Chulalongkorn

University, Chiang Mai University, Thammasat University and other institutions of higher learning have set up Chinese departments, offered Chinese majors, and provided Thai students with multi-level and multi-field Chinese learning opportunities. For example, the Chinese major at Chulalongkorn University not only focuses on language teaching, but also focuses on the curriculum of Chinese culture, history, and society, so as to provide students with a more comprehensive platform for Chinese learning. In addition, many universities have actively carried out exchanges and cooperation with Chinese universities. For example, Krirk University and Beijing Language and Culture University have cooperated to build Bangkok College of Beijing culture and culture university, which has run through the training of undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees in international Chinese education majors at home and abroad, promoted the in-depth exchange of Chinese and Thai cultures, and improved the new mode of professional talent training.

As for Confucius Institutes, Confucius Institutes, as one of the main platforms for the promotion of Chinese culture, have played an important role in international exchanges. At present, there are 17 Confucius Institutes in Thailand, such as Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University and Confucius Institute at Chiang Mai University. These institutes not only teach Chinese language courses, but also hold a large number of Chinese cultural activities, such as calligraphy, Tai Chi and drama, which are deeply loved by Thai students and people. However, the influence of Confucius Institutes in Thailand is limited. After all, they mainly rely on the establishment of Thai universities, and they are generally concentrated in big cities. Chinese education resources in underdeveloped areas and rural areas are relatively scarce.

In terms of primary and secondary education, with the proposal of "Belt and Road Initiative", the exchanges between China and Thailand are getting closer and closer. More and more primary and secondary schools in Thailand offer Chinese courses and take Chinese as one of the compulsory foreign languages. However, due to the shortage of Chinese teachers and teaching resources, the quality of Chinese education in primary and secondary schools is uneven, especially in remote areas.

In terms of social exchanges, cultural activities have always been an important form of cultural exchanges between China and Thailand. Every year, Thailand holds some large-scale cultural exchange activities, such as Sino-Thai Food Culture Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival Gala, Spring Festival Temple Fair, etc. These activities not only provide a platform for displaying Chinese traditional culture, but also provide an important channel for Thai people to understand Chinese culture. Through the activities, Thai people can personally experience Chinese cultural elements such as festivals, folk customs, music and dance, thus enhancing their understanding and recognition of China. In addition, more and more Chinese cultural programs are spread through local media in Thailand, such as the legendary Chinese costume drama "Splendid Peace" introduced by Thailand's TrueID platform, the Chinese movie "Hot and Hot" broadcast at SF Cinema in Bangkok's Central World Shopping Mall, and the adaptation of Chinese online texts broadcast on TikTok platform, etc. The younger generation in Thailand is exposed to more and more Chinese content through social media and short video platforms, which makes the spread of

Chinese culture no longer limited to traditional classroom teaching and cultural activities, but has more flexible and convenient learning channels.

3. Challenges and Opportunities Faced by Chinese Cultural Communication

3.1. Challenges Faced by Chinese Cultural Communication

Although the spread of Chinese culture in Thailand has made some achievements, it still faces many challenges in the actual process.

First, cultural differences and cognitive impairment. The main religion in Thailand is Buddhism, while Chinese culture is centered on Confucianism. There are significant differences in cultural backgrounds between the two countries. Thai society pays more attention to the relationship between families and individuals, and pays attention to the pursuit of religion and spirit, while China has different values in politics, economy and culture. This difference may lead to cognitive obstacles in the process of Chinese culture communication. For example, Thai people's understanding of Chinese traditional festivals may deviate from the actual situation, and misunderstandings and cultural conflicts may affect the effect of cultural exchanges.

Second, the obstacles to language learning. Although the demand for learning Chinese is increasing year by year, Thai students face great difficulties in the learning process due to the great difference between Chinese and Thai language structure. In particular, the use and understanding of Chinese tones, Chinese character writing and vocabulary all make Thai students feel difficult. Many Thai students' motivation to learn Chinese mainly comes from the needs of career development, and their understanding and absorption of cultural connotation are relatively weak, which affects the deep spread of Chinese culture.

Third, the shortage of teaching resources and teachers. Although Chinese language education in Thailand is a well-developed region in Southeast Asia, there are still some problems such as difficulty in raising funds for running schools, shortage of teachers and lack of teaching resources. High-quality Chinese teachers are mainly concentrated in big cities, and the economic development in remote areas is weak, the capital investment is insufficient, and the teachers are limited, which leads to the inconsistency of education quality. Many local schools lack professional Chinese teachers, and the content and form of teaching materials are not well combined with the characteristics of local Thai students, thus affecting the teaching effect.

3.2. Opportunities for Chinese cultural dissemination

The promotion of Belt and Road Initiative has created important opportunities for the spread of Chinese culture in Thailand. First of all, the deepening cooperation between China and Thailand has created a favorable external environment for the spread of Chinese culture. Thailand's dependence on Chinese investment and technology has increased the demand for Chinese language learning, and many Thai enterprises and individuals regard speaking Chinese as an important skill for career development. Secondly, the cooperation in the field of education continues to deepen, and the Confucius Institute and the Sino-Thai joint school-running training program have created systematic support for the promotion of Chinese culture. Finally, the rapid

development of cultural activities and digital media provides a diversified platform for the spread of Chinese culture. In particular, the rise of Chinese film and television works and short video platforms has made it easier for Thai young people to contact and accept Chinese culture. In the future, with the further strengthening of Sino-Thai relations, the spread potential of Chinese culture in Thailand is huge and the spread space is unlimited.

4. The integration path of Chinese culture and Thai local culture

The integration of Chinese culture and Thai local culture is not only a cultural interaction, but also an important measure to deepen Sino-Thai relations and promote long-term cooperation between the two countries. To realize this deep cultural integration, we need to start from the following aspects.

4.1. Localization improvement in education

First, the localization of course content. Education is an important carrier of cultural communication. In Chinese teaching in Thailand, the course content needs to be further combined with the local cultural characteristics of Thailand. For example, a Chinese-Thai cultural comparison module is added to the textbook, so that students can understand Chinese expression and its cultural connotation through comparison by listing life scenes familiar to Thai students, such as Songkran Festival and Loy Krathong Festival.

The second is the localization of teachers. In order to solve the problem of insufficient resources of Chinese teachers in Thailand, it can be solved by Sino-Thai joint training. On the one hand, Chinese universities can provide special training for local Chinese teachers in Thailand to improve their language teaching ability and cross-cultural understanding ability; On the other hand, Thailand can select outstanding Chinese teachers to go to China for further study, bring the learned cultural knowledge back to Thailand and integrate it into classroom teaching. In addition, support Thai universities to set up more majors related to Chinese education, from undergraduate to graduate students, comprehensively cultivate local talents and build a long-term teacher system.

Third, the teaching mode is diversified. Thai students are generally lively, and more interactive and practical links can be incorporated into traditional classroom teaching. For example, students can feel the charm of Chinese culture in practice through situational simulation dialogue and performing traditional Chinese programs. At the same time, online education platforms such as Chinese Alliance are used to cover high-quality Chinese teaching resources to remote areas, providing learning opportunities for more students.

4.2. In-depth interaction of cultural activities

First, jointly organize cross-cultural activities. China and Thailand can regularly organize joint cultural activities. For example, the cultural activities of the Spring Festival and Songkran Festival, through exhibitions, lectures, scene experiences and other forms, let the people of the two countries have a deep understanding of each other's festival culture. In addition, small-scale cultural experience exchange activities can also be carried out at the level of international students, such as family visits and food sharing, so as to narrow the emotional distance.

The second is to promote the two-way output of culture. While promoting Chinese culture, we should respect and learn to understand Thai native culture. For example, in classroom teaching, traditional Thai folk stories can be translated into Chinese to lead students to learn and understand the similarities between the two cultures and stimulate their interest in learning. On the contrary, Chinese people are also encouraged to learn Thai culture, such as holding Thai Culture Week and Thai Film Exhibition in China, so as to realize the two-way output and absorption of culture.

The third is to strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations have played an important role as a bridge in cultural exchange. For example, the Sino-Thai Cultural Association, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and other organizations can jointly plan long-term cultural exchange projects, attract participants through calligraphy, drama, paper-cutting, dance and other courses, and enhance cultural interaction and interest.

4.3. Application of Digital Media Technology

First, use short video platforms to spread Chinese culture. Short video platforms such as TikTok and YouTube are very popular among the younger generation in Thailand. By making simple and interesting Chinese learning videos, Chinese songs videos and content videos showing Chinese traditional culture, more Thai people can be attracted to understand and learn Chinese. For example, publishing short films with the theme of traditional Chinese festivals, showing relevant customs and characteristic costumes, and explaining them in Chinese not only attracted the interest of Thai audiences, but also spread Chinese culture.

The second is to develop a digital platform for cross-cultural interaction. Use AI large model technology to create an online platform for cross-cultural communication, providing opportunities for cultural exchanges and language learning for students and people in China and Thailand. For example, develop an APP or small program for cultural exchange between China and Thailand, with built-in language learning modules, cultural forums, bilingual online classrooms and other functions, so as to facilitate users of both countries to learn and understand each other.

The third is to strengthen the integration and dissemination of film and television culture. Film and television works are an important carrier of cultural communication. Encourage China and Thailand to jointly shoot film and television works with cross-cultural themes, such as films telling Chinese and Thai family stories or transnational friendship, and present the process of cultural differences and integration from a perspective closer to the audiences of the two countries. At the same time, promote the mutual broadcasting of Chinese and Thai film and television works, and make film and television a link of cultural integration.

4.4. Cross-domain integration and practice

The first is to promote cultural integration in the economic field. In the process of Sino-Thai economic cooperation, cultural exchanges are integrated into the daily operations of enterprises. For example, when Chinese-funded enterprises do business in Thailand, they can help local Thai employees better understand corporate culture and let Chinese employees understand Thai culture by carrying out team building and promoting Chinese language learning, thus forming an atmosphere of multicultural coexistence within the enterprise.

The second is to add cultural experience activities to the tourism industry. Thailand is a world-renowned tourist destination with a huge number of Chinese tourists. China and Thailand can cooperate to launch Chinese guided tour services and Sino-Thai bilingual cultural experience routes, such as temple cultural tours during the Spring Festival, combining the dual religious experiences of Thai Buddhism and Chinese Taoism, so that tourists can feel the charm of cultural integration during the tour.

The third is to strengthen academic cooperation. Universities in China and Thailand can deepen cross-cultural research cooperation on the basis of existing cooperation. For example, a cross-cultural research center is set up to conduct research on the deep integration of Chinese cultural communication and Thai local culture. The research results can provide scientific basis for formulating cultural exchange policies, and also put forward guiding suggestions for actual communication work.

4.5. Build a cultural mentality of mutual tolerance and respect

The ultimate goal of cultural integration is to achieve mutual tolerance and respect. Therefore, in the process of spreading Chinese culture, we should uphold an open and respectful attitude, avoid cultural superiority and emphasize cultural equality. By encouraging the people of the two countries to participate in cultural dialogue, cultivating the awareness of mutual understanding and respect, and promoting the harmonious coexistence of the two cultures in tolerance.

5. Conclusion

Belt and Road Initiative provides a valuable opportunity for the spread of Chinese culture in Thailand and the deep integration of the two cultures. By analyzing the history and present situation of the spread of Chinese culture in Thailand, this paper points out the challenges of language barriers, cultural differences and uneven distribution of resources it faces, and discusses the integration paths of education, cultural activities, digital platforms and other fields. It is found that the integration of Chinese and Thai cultures not only needs to rely on language and cultural communication platforms, but also needs to pay attention to localization and two-way communication. By promoting the localization of education, innovating cultural activities, strengthening digital media communication and cross-disciplinary and multi-level cooperation, Chinese culture can be more effectively integrated into Thai society and form a new situation of cross-cultural interaction. In the future, it is necessary to further deepen cultural exchanges between China and Thailand, respect cultural diversity, and create a broader space for bilateral cooperation in the economic, political, cultural and other fields. This not only helps to enhance the international influence of Chinese culture, but also sets an example for promoting the multicultural integration of countries along Belt and Road Initiative.

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