

## Household Altar of Overseas Chinese: Case Studies of Phuket Province

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### Abstract

Overseas Chinese immigrated to Thailand and brought their cultures, way of life, religion and faith, especially in Phuket. One of the significant culture related to religion and faith of Chinese people in Phuket was the household altars. It was combine with Thai domain culture for political and cultural purposes. The study aimed to observe the household of Overseas Chinese descends and analyze with the related theory of symbolic formation and complex pluralism.

Qualitative research methodology was used to study this phenomenon with in-depth interview and observation. The result of the study found that deities and worship objects of 5 houses were similar such as Guan Yin Bodhisattvas, Guan Yu, and Mazu. In summary, household altar of Overseas Chinese in Phuket responded social and individuals needs in terms of religious belief and created consciousness of Chinese identity in Thai society.

**Keywords:** Household altar, Overseas Chinese, Phuket Hokkien Culture, Mahayana Buddhism

## โต๊ะพระในบ้านชาวจีนโพ้นทะเล: กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดภูเก็ต

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### บทคัดย่อ

ชาวจีนโพ้นทะเลอพยพมาเมืองไทย และได้นำวัฒนธรรม วิถีชีวิต ศาสนาและความเชื่อมายังประเทศไทยอีกด้วย โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งจังหวัดภูเก็ต หนึ่งในวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญที่สุดของภูเก็ตคือวัฒนธรรมจีนฮกเกี้ยน คือ โต๊ะพระในบ้าน เป็นวัฒนธรรมที่มีการผสมผสานกับวัฒนธรรมไทยที่เป็นวัฒนธรรมหลักเนื่องจากเหตุผลทางด้านการเมืองและวัฒนธรรม การศึกษานี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจโต๊ะพระในบ้านของชาวจีนโพ้นทะเล และวิเคราะห์กับทฤษฎีการก่อรูปของสัญลักษณ์ และความเป็นพหุสังคมแบบซับซ้อน ระเบียบวิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพใช้ในการศึกษาโดยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลด้วยการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกและสังเกตการณ์

ปรากฏการณ์ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าทั้งองค์พระและของไหว้นั้นมีความเหมือนกันทั้ง 5 บ้าน เช่น เจ้าแม่กวนอิม กวนอู และม้าจ้อโป้โดยสรุปแล้วโต๊ะพระในบ้านของชาวจีนโพ้นทะเลในภูเก็ตเป็นสิ่งที่ตอบสนองความต้องการของสังคมและปัจเจกบุคคลในเรื่องความเชื่อทางศาสนา และการสำนึกรู้อัตลักษณ์ความเป็นจีนในสังคมไทย

**คำสำคัญ:** โต๊ะพระในบ้าน ชาวจีนโพ้นทะเล วัฒนธรรมจีนฮกเกี้ยนภูเก็ต พุทธศาสนานิกายมหายาน

## Introduction

Approximately 300 years ago, Chinese migrated from Hokkien Province (福建省) of China and Strait Settlement of British Colony to Phuket Province of Thailand. Majority of Overseas Chinese in Phuket actually was Hokkien nationality. Variety of researchers discovered that Hokkien people diffused their culture, religion, faith, ritual, and way of life to Thailand, especially Phuket (Manomaivibool, 2011, p.540 & Pinpradab, n.d., p.1-2). Bilateral Chansatatham (2007) and Phochanakit (2003) described in their theses that Overseas Chinese played significant roles in terms of culture, religion, faith, ritual and way of life in Phuket.

The above religion and faith diffused in Overseas Chinese society in Thailand, and the culture reinforced Overseas Chinese felt very proud in their ethnicity. This kind of social activity was categorized as the national threat of Thailand. Because, once the Chinese shrine was used as the secret organization of Chinese rebellion (Angyee) in Phuket. Skinner (1959) summarized in his journal articles of “Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia” that the patriotism campaign was evolved among Overseas Chinese in Thailand, and Thai government could assimilated Chinese culture into Thai culture. Nevertheless, Chinese Thai still maintained Chinese religion, in this matter represented through ceremonies, traditions, festivals, as well as rituals nowadays in Phuket. Furthermore, governmental organizations in Phuket recognizes that Hokkien Chinese culture was the

identity of Phuket. However, the combination of two cultures influencing from such an assimilation campaign also explicites (Morita, 2007, p.125).

Additionally, some Thai culture also has been transformed due to the influences of Chinese culture. Chinese religion and faith were the main equipment influencing the consciousness of Chinese ethnicity and the unity of Chinese in Thailand. Furthermore, they established the Chinese-language schools and Chinese shrines to maintain their identity (Pattamacharoen, 2011, p.93-97). Since 1955, Thai government slightly reduced the stress to the assimilation campaign because of the establishment of Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Asian African Conference in Bandung, and the tour aboard of General P. Phibulsongkram, the prime minister of Thailand in the period (Skinner, 1959, p.139).

Furthermore, Royal Thai Government abandoned the assimilation and the limitation of Chinese culture control in Thailand; thus, various Chinese associations established in Thailand for power negotiation of their ethnicity, such as Phuket Hokkien Association, Confucius Institute, and Chinese Classroom. Variety of researchers suggested that this is a kind of using soft power in order to establish the consciousness of Overseas Chinese ethnicity around the world (Chinese Soft Power, 2014; Lo & Pan, 2015, p.1-2 & Volodzko, 2015). Especially, Thailand was the number one country in number of Confucius Institute and Chinese Classroom ranking in

Southeast Asian Nations. There are also the Chinese cultural collaboration between Thai and Chinese governments influencing from satisfying bilateral countries relation and supporting Overseas Chinese descends project by Chinese government to support the consciousness of Chinese identity among Overseas Chinese in Thailand.

To providing provincial positive relation between Thailand and China, Phuket City Hall has signed “Friendship Provinces” cooperative relation with Xiamen (廈門) of China in 2015. The situations related to positive image through international relations strategy of China influenced the freedom of Chinese religion and faith in Thailand. Thus, Phuket people unavoidably described that the majority of Phuket culture is Hokkien culture. For, there are no researchers conduct the study directly to the household altar of Phuket people, the researcher conducted the study from this and reasons above.

This study aimed to observe the household altar of Overseas Chinese in Phuket and to analyze the relation of household altar to the function, symbolic formation as well as pluralism society. There were three research questions in the studies: First, what deities are Overseas Chinese in Phuket worshipped through household altar. Second, how pluralism society approach the household altar phenomena in Phuket. Third, what are functions and symbolic formation of household altar in terms of religious life. There were three significant variables of the studies, deities, worship objects, and objectives.

The individual objective in the house could determine what deities they choose to install on the altar, and the worship objects were used to worship the deity for achieving wish to the deity. This study choose to study only the pluralism household altar in Chinese and Thai identities, but the study was not included the altar in temple and Chinese shrines in Phuket. The study used only two related theories which are Form and Function of Symbolic Formation of Emile Durkheim (1995) and Complex Pluralism theory of Abner Cohen (1974). The result of the study could assist the researcher to comprehend the establishing household altar of Overseas Chinese in Phuket; moreover, governmental organization could use the data to preserve Phuket household altar culture through the finding of family institution, one of the most influenced institution of social institutions.

## Related Theories

### 2.1 Form and Function of Symbolic Formation Theory of Emile Durkheim (1995)

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist who composed the book of “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life” in 1995. He proposed to study the most simplest and primitive religion which was known at the present time. The most antiqued religion that could be studied until nowadays had to suit with two conditions:

Firstly, the religion must be simply pattern. Secondly,

the religion must be explainable without predecessor religion. He was very interested in providing information for ethnographer and historian, he suggested that studying religion was not only giving description; nevertheless, sociology which used to study the religion needed to explain reality and capable of affecting ideas and action. To comprehend the nature of man, Emile Durkheim suggested to study primitive religion, and studying this field also comprehended the fundamental and permanent aspect of humanity. The religious symbol can graph the reality.

Furthermore, some human need and some aspect of life could be comprehended by studying the most bizarre or barbarous rites in individual and social contexts. Fundamentally, religion fulfilled the condition of human existence and the way to live from various teachings. Going back to its simplest and most primitive form of the religion could comprehend religious belief, a moral rule, a legal principle, an aesthetic technique or an economic system.

Firstly, researchers should start from studied the existence of religion, then its development, gaining complexity and at the moment under consideration. Researchers must find a concrete reality of religion from the observation. There were two religion facts that explained differently about establishing chronology, some studies found that naturalism was established before the animism; nonetheless, some studies found that animism was established before the naturalism. Emile Durkheim

discovered that the method philosophers studying religion was dialectic, but dialectic alone caused many problems for studying religion.

To study the religion, Durkheim suggested that researchers should study religion at foundation of all system of belief and all cults; furthermore, study necessarily be a certain number of fundamental representations and modes of ritual conducts. There were some objectives meaning everywhere which endure the element that constitute what is eternal and human in religion, fulfill the same function. In the religion, some elements were uncovered because of complex situation of the religion. Every religion established from variety of elements that was very difficult to distinguish the establishing chronology. Each religion closed relation with localities, temples, generations, dynasties and invasions. In addition, the dogma was formed from superstition and religion. The belief and rites were taken in different ways depending on men, milieu, and circumstances (Durkheim, 1995, p.1-5).

To summarize, Durkheim described that religions established from similar psyche and were displayed similarly. It was the consciousness to the superstition and dogma which could be the behavior in the society. Furthermore, some French anthropologists used the religious theory of Emile Durkheim to describe the kinship systems such as the study of Claude Levi - Strauss (Duangwisess, 2018).

## 2.2 Complex Pluralism Theory of Abner Cohen (1974)

Abner Cohen suggested that modern society was unavoidably describing as complexity. There was an on-going politico-symbolic processes. Some groups considered their own groups in isolation from other groups. There were overlap, cut across, support or oppose one another in modern society with pluralism structure. Each group attempted to impose their culture according to their view to the society. There are two questions arise from Abner Cohen. Firstly, what are the different variables function each other as an on-going system. Secondly, how does the individual integrate with different cultures and world view.

This problem did not arise in primitive society, the Evolutionists believed. They presented the antiqued society as a monolithically organize group which by implication; nevertheless, conflicts did not occur. Men were undersized by the social structure and their personality and worldview were those of the group. In contrast, the term of pluralism often affiliated to different groups. Abner Cohen believed that the modern society was more freedom than the primitive society from this reason. Many options were opened to people in the modern society in the conduct of their life.

Nonetheless, pluralism was in the simple society too. Social strife between groups occurred some conflict of loyalties within individual self were endemic. The principles of social organization was often flexible, and the individual

can battle their course between different alternatives. In contrast, modern society was not free in the choice of group affiliation, for example business men in metropolis like New York or London who were middle classes and were volatile, highly mobile and very free. They lived in the most pluralism and complex conurbation areas, and they were well-educated. They were realize as the freest of men; nonetheless, when we came to the empirical realities, some freedom was illusory or exaggerated. They were forced to belong to certain clubs, meet with narrowed group of friends, and marry with someone from a narrow group of people.

Hence, the patterns of behavior and ideology were in fact an exclusive culture. They lived within small area of social life and were forced to stick to their jobs. As modern society developed, the end of freedom dominating social and cultural life was from the corporations. Abner Cohen described that Hausa man of Northern Nigeria enjoyed the freedom in precolonial period more than contemporary industrial man. He could move freely from a village to another village and from a country to another country. In term of marriage, the marriage with four wives, sexual and social intimacies with many concubines were not much shame or embarrassment like nowadays, which could marry only one wife at a time.

Thus, neither modern man nor man from simple societies can describe as monolithic or pluralism, as the

evolutionists argued. There were pluralism in quarrels and cooperation between groups. Many other cultural mechanisms develop between potentially conflicting groups and link them to one another such as marriage regulation, friendships, ritual, institutionalized exchange of insults, which were rule and regulation. There were also corresponding psycho-cultural mechanisms that work to integrate the ideologies of different groups in which the individual was a member, within individual psyche, for relating to the variety of roles people playing to one another within the framework of the same psyche or self (Cohen, 1974, p. 87-89).

### **Methodology**

Qualitative approach was used as the main research methodology. Interview and observation were selected as the data collection methods. Household Altars in three Phuket households were the main result of the study. The key informants were three pensioners and one teenager of each household. The descriptive analysis with the related theories as well as the analysis of collected data were reported in the study.

### **Categories of Household Altar**

According to the data collection in the fieldwork, Phuket Province, the researcher discovered two categories of household altars in Overseas Chinese houses. The first

category of household altar is in traditional Chinese style altar, the altar is a big table for worship the gods in the house (Figure 1). Gods' image were from various religion and faith could be worship together in only an altar. However, different religion and faith of god's image and deity's image are clearly categorized. In the figure 1, Thai Theravada Buddhism Buddha's image and Buddhist monk's image are located on the left hand. However, Chinese deity's image are located on the right. This kind of ordering the images on the altar were very popular in Phuket, because Overseas Chinese are taught the tradition by their ancestors.



*Figure 1: Traditional Chinese Style Altar*

According to the interview, Overseas Chinese descendants believed that the gods have holy power to protect human from bad fortune and harmful accidents. The worship tradition of Overseas Chinese in Phuket respond people and psychological need. For the second category of the household altar, the hanging altar in Thai style

In the figure 2, Overseas Chinese in Thailand does not only worship the god in Theravada Buddhism and Chinese

religion and faith, they also worship the King Chulalongkorn. Because, King Chulalongkorn made a great contributions to Thailand in various ways, especially the canceling of slave system which is very famous among Thai people. Normally, King Chulalongkorn is very famous for assisting those who are working as the official of Thai governmental organization. Hence, when people see the altar of King Chulalongkorn in a house of Phuket, the house would have at least one family member who work as the official.



*Figure 2: Hanging Altar in Thai Style of King Chulalongkorn's image*

### Deities on the Household Altar

Overseas Chinese migrants purposed to inquire the holy blessing and holy protection from the gods. Because, they aimed to be protected during the migration. There were also various maritime accidents and violence during the migration from China to Phuket. Overseas Chinese also believed that the gods would protect them, in case they strongly believed in the gods (Krueaphat, 2018). There were also various religious rituals in Hokkien province of China and

Phuket. The religious rituals contained of three main religions of Chinese faith, Confucianism (儒家), Taoism (道教) and Mahayana Buddhism (大乘佛教) (Patamacharoen, 2011 & Pakdeekham, 2010). To deeper analyze the religion and faith in the Chinese shrine in Phuket, the shrine consisted of four categories. Firstly, Taoism emphasized the worship to Lao Tzu (老子). In Hokkien dialect, Lee Laogun or Shieng Laogun were the name of Lao Tzu in Hokkien dialect. Secondly, Confucianism emphasized the way of worship ancestor spirit, there were various gods of Chinese clans for instances, Koi Seng-Ong (God of Koi Clan) (光澤尊王), and Tan Seng-Ong (God of Tan Clan) (陈圣王). Thirdly, folk lore emphasized the way of superstition as well as gods of the heaven, universe and earth. Finally, Mahayana Buddhism emphasized the Bodhisattvas and Arahants (Fine Arts Department, 1989).

In term of Chinese gods belief, the folk lore also included the Chinese gods hero in the Chinese literatures for instances, The Journey to the West (西游记) and The Story of Three Kingdoms (三国演义). Monkey King (Sun Wukong: 孙悟空) was worshiped in Sam Sae Ju Fut Shrine (三世祖佛) of Phuket. Furthermore, Tang Xuanzang (唐玄奘), the monk who went to India for inviting Tripitaka (Three Baskets of Buddhism) to China was also worshiped in some shrines in Phuket. Furthermore, there were three main Bodhisattvas were worshiped in Phuket such as, Guan Yin Bodhisattvas (观音菩萨), Tae Jong Ong Bodhisattvas (地藏王菩萨), and

Manjusri Bodhisattva (文殊菩萨) (Krueaphat, 2018).

Overseas Chinese invited various gods from various religion and faith to establish on the altar of their houses. According to the data collected from fieldwork, there are 5 categorizes of deities on the household altar, Theravada Buddhism (小乘佛教), Mahayana Buddhism, Chinese folk belief, Thai God Hero, and Confucianism.

### 5.1 Theravada Buddhism deity's image

There are two images of Theravada Buddhism on the Overseas Chinese's household altar, Buddha's image and Luang Por Chaem. For the Buddha's image, there are various style of the Buddha's image, depending on the temple they invited the image to their home. Most of the Buddha's image are worshipped by using the flowers and drinking water, especially Overseas Chinese would worship the Buddha's image with flowers in the Buddhism holy day.

For Luang Por Chaem (The deity on the right of the figure 3), he was once the most famous Buddhism monk in Phuket. He was very famous for assisting Phuket from the Myanmar army. The holy red cloth was recited by him for establishing people to fight with Myanmar. Finally, Phuket people use the red cloth to wear on their head and reach the victory. Phuket becomes independence from the war against Myanmar. After that, Luang Por Chaem is very famous among Phuket people for his holy protection and blessing the life of local Phuket people.

According to the interview, Mrs. Suan-yea informed that the image of Luang Por Chaem is very famous among Phuket people nowadays. Numerous people are finding for the older generation of his image. However, numerous local Phuket people do not sell the image; because, they realize that the images could protect them from the bad fortune, as well as harmful situation in their life.



*Figure 3: Image of Luang Por Chaem Buddhist Monk*

## 5.2 Mahayana Buddhism deity's image

There are two deities of Mahayana Buddhism discovered during the data collection in Phuket Province, Guan Yin Bodhisattvas (观世音菩萨) (Figure 4) and Guan Yu Bodhisattvas (关羽) (Figure 5). The narrative of Guan Yin Bodhisattvas related to assistance to people influenced Phuket people establish the shrine for Guan Yin Bodhisattvas, Pud Jor Shrine (佛祖庵). The meaning of Pud Jor is the Guan Yin Bodhisattvas. In Mahayana Buddhism, people follows the way of Bodhisattvas for the practice. Moreover, Guan Yin Bodhisattvas are very famous in the Vegetarian Festival

(九皇齋). All of the worshipped food are vegetarian similarly to the principle of Mahayana Buddhism.



*Figure 4: Image of Guan Yin Bodhisattvas*

For Guan Yu Bodhisattvas or Guan Yu God (Figure 5), he is hybrid god who are in Chinese folk belief and Mahayana Buddhism. In Chinese folk belief, he is the god in the story of Three Kingdoms. Thus, Chinese people worship him as the god hero who protected the country with his honesty (忠). In Mahayana Buddhism, honesty is one of the greatest morality of people that followers should practice, so he is also worshipped in Mahayana Buddhism.



*Figure 5: Image of Guan Yu God*

### 5.3 Chinese folk belief deity's image

In the figure 6, Hok Lok Xiu (福祿壽) deities was worshipped as the auspicious deities of the house. Each represented different auspicious from their name in Chinese language. Hok (福) represented happiness, Lok (祿) represented good fortune, and Xiu (壽) represented longevity. It was very famous among Overseas Chinese descends, the owner of the house informed that there was also one set of Hok Lok Xiu at the house of her son and her daughter in law's sister who was also Hokkien descend.



*Figure 6: Images of Hok Lok Xiu*

### 5.4 Taoism God's image

There are 5 images of Taoism god worshipped on the household altar of Overseas Chinese's house. They are the Seven Angels (七仙女), Bun Thao Kong (本头公), Bun Thao Ma (本头妈), Mazu (妈祖) and Guan Yu (关羽). For the Seven Angles, they are categorized as the god heroes who could protect the house, and they can also bless anything the

owner of the house desire. For Bun Thao Kong and Bun Thao Ma, they are categorized as the god of the ancestors. After the immigration of the Overseas Chinese in Phuket, they purposed to compensate their ancestor spirits achieved living and succeeded the business in Phuket, and establishes various culture and places remembering their Chinese ethnicity for the inheritance in Phuket. Bun Thao Kong and Bun Thao Ma are the symbols for remembering the kindness of their ancestor.

Mazu (Figure 7) is the highest position of lady gods in Taoism. Mazu was very famous for the maritime protection of Overseas Chinese. Mrs. Suanyee described that she invited Mazu's image from the shrine, because she is conducting the renting house business. There was a superstition that no one could see the house for renting from the main street. However, she could see her houses for renting from the main street. After the invitation of the Mazu's image to the altar of her house, many people slightly come to rent her house normally.



*Figure 7: Image of Mazu*

## 5.5 Thai God Hero's image

There are two Thai God Hero's images in the figure 8 which are Thao Thep Krasattri, Thao Si Sunthon and King Chulalongkorn (Figure 2). Thao Thep Krasattri, Thao Si Sunthon were the most famous heroes who protected Phuket from the Myanmar invaders. Burmese purposed conquer Phuket; however, with the braveness of two ladies protecting the city as the soldiers. Phuket people nowadays highly have a faith in two heroes.



*Figure 8: Image of Thao Thep Krasattri, Thao Si Sunthon*

There are also some gods related to Indian Devas and local Thai belief, such as Shiva, Nang Kwak, and Kuman Thong. Shiva is one of the three main gods of Indian people. Normally, Overseas Chinese in Phuket realize that Shiva could bless them, especially for the merchandising. In the figure 9, Nang Kwak, Miss Wathanyuta informed that her family are selling the fried spring rolls during the Vegetarian Festival. Nang Kwak could assist her business more successful. Moreover, when someone could success

in the society from believing gods, people beside them would also believe in the gods too. In this case, the family of Miss Wathanyuta successfully sold the spring rolls, so they would provide more precious worship objects to Nang Kwak.



*Figure 9: Image of Nang Kwak*

Kuman Thong (Figure 10) is a baby spirit created from black magic in Thailand. Overseas Chinese in Phuket believe similarly to Thais that Kuman Thong could bless them or assist them every situation. They could assist the business, and protect the house of the owner from the unfortunate luck. Moreover, the owner of Kuman Thong is subjected to provide Kuman Thong with appropriate worship objects.



*Figure 10: Image of Baby Spirit*

## 5.6 Image related to Confucianism

Confucianism emphasizes people to rememorate the kindness of the ancestors (祖先); because, ancestors saved numerous money and asset inheriting to the descents. On behalf of their descendants, Overseas Chinese have to compensate them during they live, and after the death. After their death, Overseas Chinese establish the altar of the ancestor spirit for compensate their kindness. Moreover, the key informant, Mrs. Supak informed that (Figure 11) there are the pictures of her parents, husband and two daughters. She is approximately 80 years old now. Unfortunately, her two daughters were death, but she has only one daughter who take care of her. She realizes that the ancestor spirit could bless her for her healthy and the auspicious power to come to her house.



*Figure 11: Ancestor spirit altar*

### Worship Objects

According to the interview, the tradition of worship object to the god on the household altar of the house is

not as serious as the past. In the past, the earlier generation of Overseas Chinese ancestors were very strict focusing on the worship object, they believed that worship objects could decide the way of their life. Hence, they were very careful about finding the worship objects, every worship objects were required to have auspicious name in Chinese for instances, pineapple (凤梨), apple (苹果), orange (橘子), and pomegranate (石榴) (Chanwongpaisal, 2010).

Nevertheless, the serious tradition of worship objects are slightly disappeared in Phuket nowadays. Because, there is the economic crisis of the world and Thailand influencing the way of life of people. Overseas Chinese in Phuket slightly transformed their religious way of life to worship some cheaper products in the market. They do not so serious about finding the worship objects, but rather purchase cheap products in the market at the time they wish to worship the god.

However, there are still some household who maintain the serious worship object tradition in the house. They believe totally similar to their ancestor in the past that the worship object could decide their future. Furthermore, some gods also require special worship objects for examples, people normally use the rose to worship King Chulalongkorn, and people worship the only Vegetarian food for Guan Yin Bodhisattvas. Such worshipped tradition require special worshipped object, because people realize that it is very necessary to worship specific objects to these gods.

According to the figure 1, people in the house offered drinking water to worship Thai Theravada Buddhism's images and Chinese god's image. This kind of tradition is not similar to the past, because Overseas Chinese had to worship the tea to Chinese deity's images. This situation could happen when the time changes, the religious behavior would change, but still maintain in the modern society.

### Household Altar and Symbol Analysis

Emile Durkheim described that the religious belief should be studied by not only providing the description; nevertheless, the researchers also require the reality and capable of affecting idea and action. In the case study, the description of household altar of Overseas Chinese could be described as a social phenomenon responding the desires of individuals. Because, Overseas Chinese migrated to Phuket with the dangerous and difficult life. They had to face with the oppression from the capitalists who hired them for the businesses in Phuket. They all were the laborers in the past, so their life were difficult and suffered. The desire of their life was to be the millionaire in Phuket and could gave a birth to their descendants. Furthermore, they also purposed their children could receive appropriate education and could assist them to establish wealthy family.

From the above situation, the hope of people could not only stay in the heart of Overseas Chinese who all have the targets for their immigration. They aimed the gods to

know their targets and wish that the gods could bless them successfully live in Phuket. Additionally, for the effecting idea and action of Overseas Chinese in Phuket, they usually went to the shrine for paying respect to the gods, and some of them invited the gods to establish in their houses. They believed that highly respect the gods and providing appropriate worship objects could made the gods to assist them to have successful and peaceful life in Phuket.

### **Hokkien Chinese Culture on the Household Altar**

Hokkien Culture is a dialect of Chinese language. Overseas Chinese call the Chinese gods with Hokkien dialect names, which are not the name in Mandarin Chinese, for example Guan Yin Bodhisattvas is called as Pud Jor, Mazu is called as Ma Jor, and the Nine Emperors (Jiu Wang) is called as Kiu Ong. Furthermore, the spoken language of the spirit medium in the shrine are Hokkien language, they believed that the gods could only speak in Hokkien language. Researcher mentions the spirit medium in the study, because the household altar of Mrs. Wathanyuta (Figure 6) was established by the spirit medium who is the aunt of hers. Hokkien culture in Phuket related to the household altar are also the worship objects. There are the tradition inheriting from generation to generation what objects should be worshipped and what should not be worshipped to the gods. Some newer generation of Overseas Chinese in Phuket believe that inheriting household altar could maintain the ethnicity of Hokkien and Phuket culture.

## Household Altar: Identity of Thai and Chinese

Thai and Chinese identities are on the household altar. As the researcher mentioned above, Thai Theravada Buddhism's images and Chinese god's image are installed together on the altar. Various worship objects and worshipped rituals are combined between Thai and Chinese, for example Overseas Chinese in Phuket provide drinking water to the gods instead of tea. In the other hand, auspicious worship objects in Chinese belief, such as pineapple, apple and oranges are worshipped to the Buddha's image and Chinese god's image.

The identity of Thai could enter to the sub-culture of Chinese is because the strategy of assimilation by the Thai government. Chinese culture was once recognized as the national threat of Thailand because of the rebellion of Angyee. Every social activity and culture of Chinese in Phuket were seriously captured by the Thai government. Assimilation could decrease the risks of Chinese shrines as the religious institution of Overseas Chinese in Thailand. Furthermore, this could be described as power negotiation for protecting the religious institution from the capture of Thai government, which influencing Overseas Chinese could live in Phuket and Thailand peacefully and safely.

## Conclusion

The studied social phenomenon is recognized as the situation in the pluralism society. The Chinese culture

could exist and be inherited from generation to generation peacefully. With the acceptances of Overseas Chinese by Thai government, the Overseas Chinese have religious rights to believe in their religion and faith, but they could not establish social activity harming Thai Buddhism, accordingly to the laws. Furthermore, Thai government also use some assimilation strategy influencing Overseas Chinese in Phuket believe in religions. However, they are all categorized as the Buddhism when the government see from the overall point of view. The evidences are the Buddha's image and the image of Luang Por Chaem and other Thai belief image in their houses. Therefore, the pluralism society could describe the society of Phuket theoretically. For the theory of symbolic formation, the summary of such a phenomenon is to provide the respond to individual and social needs, establishing the equilibrium point of the society.

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