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Graduate School of Social and Environmental Development

:

# **The Roles of Overseas Chinese Foundations and Associations in Samutprakan Towards the Thai – Chinese Relationship**

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# Introduction

- Samutprakan (Pak Nam) province has a long history, was able to connect to the ocean which facilitated to be the center of transportation and trading of Thailand since Sukhothai Kingdom, Ayutthaya, Thonburi, Ratanakosin until present period.
- The Chinese immigrants known as the "overseas Chinese" (华侨) came to settle down in Thailand and "Pak Nam" mostly came from the southern Guangdong Province, consist of the Chaozhou Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, Hakka Chinese, Hainan and Fujian Chinese from Fujian province.
- They established many kind of association of Chinese people; hometown association, local association, language association and clan association.

# The purpose of the research

- 1. To study the concept in the establishment of the Overseas Chinese Organization in the Samutprakan province.
- 2. To study the role and strategic position of the Overseas Chinese Organization in the area of people to people relations between Thailand-China.
- 3. To study the conditions and factors that affect the relationship between people of Thailand - China.

# Scope of Research

- **1. Content Boundaries**
- Study the roots of Chinese immigrants in Samutprakan province, Ideological and regional guidelines in the various forms of the Overseas Chinese Organization in Samutprakan province, focusing on the Foundation's format that provide philanthropy for public sectors in pattern of Family and clan associations, career associations. The study will root to the dimension of people to people relations. Analysis of the conditions and factors that facilitate public sector relations between Thailand - China, including finding ways to sustainability of people to people relations and the advancement of Thailand-China relations.

- **2. Scope of data collection**

- Researchers collected data from foundations and associations in Samutprakan province in 6 districts: Pak Nam or Amphoe Mueang, Bang Bo, Bangplee, Bangsaothong, Phra Pradaeng and Phra Samut Chedi districts which consists of 50 Tambon 405 villages in Samutprakan province boundaries including 3 foundations 1 clan association and 1 career association.

- **3. Scope of time sequence**

- Researchers started to enter the local area as well as collect data during January 2018– February 2019

# Research Methodology

- Qualitative research method was selected to collect among documents related to Chinese Immigrants Topics from books or important documents are available on the foundation and the association.
- The selected sample group (Location)
  - 1. Ruamkusol Samutprakarn Association (北榄天德善堂)
  - 2. Ruamkatanyu Foundation/ (义德善堂)
  - 3. Holy Father Sawangboonphenthansatham Foundation (Bangbor District) (挽帽善堂明圆善坛) or Meng Yi Xiang Duo (明圆善坛)
  - 4. Ying Chuan Chan Association (泰国榕江颍川陈氏宗亲会)
  - 5. Thai Tanning Industry Association (泰国製革廠公会)

- **Key informants**
- President of foundation or association
- Vice-President of foundation or association
- Director or member of foundation or association
- Secretary of foundation or association
- Operating Staff of foundation or association

Total 30 key informants

# Expected Benefits

- 1. To create awareness of the integration and the establishment of the Organization of the Thai-Chinese descent in Samutprakan Province.
- 2. To create awareness and make note of the favorable conditions and factors that affect the people to people relations of Thailand – China.
- 3. To create awareness of the guidelines in the development of the relations between Thailand-China relations across public sector.

# Research report

- **The role of the foundation and association of Overseas Chinese in Samutprakan province and relationship among Thailand - China.**
- The Chinese immigrants in Samutprakarn, although there is a large community in the province scale but the idea of creating and developing a new home of Chinese immigrants is the same as other places.
- The research found that all of 3 foundations in Samutprakan Province have less connection with similar foundations in China.

- The foundations in Samutprakan's never have a trip to visit the similar organization in China, except sending money from the Foundation in case of disaster in different occasion such as Ruamkusol Samutprakan Foundation (北榄天德善堂) has donated money 500,000 THB to help China through the Chinese Embassy in Thailand in a large earthquake in the Sichuan province in 2008.
- About creating a network and connection, the foundations in Samutprakan have more contact and close connection with similar organization in Thailand.
- Ruamkatanyu Foundation (义德善堂), from the study found that this foundation has no work plan or strategy that will contact China. The implementation and management remain focused on the work with local poor and suffering victims only. But when China has any disaster, the Foundation also attended to help in the form of donations as well.

- Holy Father Sawangboonphenthansathan Foundation (Bangbor District), in the aspect of connection with China still does not clear, because of the scopes of work of the foundation which focus on the local area more than contact with other country.
- The Association of Chinese in the Samutprakan does not appear to have formed an association in term of the local language such as Teochew Association and Fujian Association which much seen in Bangkok. But the associations are form as a clan association.
- The connection is between organization, which is association of Thailand and community leader in China. And also have the contact between family and family.
- Ying Chuan Chan Association (颍川陈氏宗亲会), from the study found that the members of the association are traveling to China to visit relatives occasionally.

- Career association such as Tanning Industry Association of Thailand, there are no evidences of contact with China in the organization level. But on a personal level, the owner of business has a lot of contact with China.

- **The Annual Celebration of the Foundation and the Association of Overseas Chinese in Samutprakan province**
- All of the 3 foundations and 2 associations have a different purpose of the establishment, but their concept and development organization are modern, sustainable and contributes to the benefit of themselves and return to their local community.
- Although many overseas Chinese organizations do not have policies to contact with China to build a good relationship with China.
- But these foundation and associations have promoted the cultural heritage of the Chinese in Thailand in a different dimension to remain in the long run.
- The foundations and associations arranged the events annually to demonstrate the cooperation of the Thai-Chinese community in the area.

- Ruamkusol Samutprakan Foundation organized 3 important events per year which are the Chinese New Year festival, Zhou Shi Kong Father Memorial in late October and Zhong Yuan Festival (Ghost Festival).
- Holy Father Sawangboonphenthansathan Foundation organized Chinese New Year Festival, Pa Geng Ceremony (Exorcise ceremony in the beginning of the year-research) and Zhong Yuan Festival (Ghost Festival).
- Ying Chuan Chan Association held activities which focus on worshipping the ancestors spirit the association.
- The Tanning Industry Association of Thailand also join overseas Chinese in the area by donate money to support the Chinese Opera Show in the or Lantern Festival (元宵节).

# Conclusions

- From the study of foundation and association in Samutprakan clearly shows that with China rise up becoming the develop country has stimulate Thai-Chinese in Samutprakan consider more about have a relationship with China, but mostly are the form of people to people relations which specific on connection between relative and business.
- The connection between organization in Thailand and China still cannot found much. The factors that allow the Oversea Chinese associations ability to operate their activities without supporting from China mainland come from the scope of activities which focus on activities within Samutprakan Province area that needed less support from china.

- Moreover, the management and the board of trustees in various associations, mostly those who are old aged, who have a conservative vision that have limited creativity to see chance to connect with the foreign country much. But they are more emphasis to remain the Chinese traditional culture in the society.
- This is one way to expand China soft power in Thailand.
- Thailand Foundation and the Association of Chinese descent are organizations which promote social development in many ways, but it is a pity that the opportunity to build bridges relationship between Thailand - China appears not so prominently as they should be to push for the establishment of close relations between Thailand and China.

- The organization should have a leader who has the vision to see the importance in this regard.
- In addition, there is a need for personnel with knowledge and understanding of the Chinese language.
- There should be more support, driven by members and organizations as well as government sectors to strengthen relations between the countries.