

## 論文

# Newcomers, Old-timers, Under Borderless Integration: A Case Study of New Chinese Immigrants in the Phitsanulok Province of Northeast Thailand

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**Abstract:** This research is to canvass how China's foreign policy was introduced to integrate overseas Chinese, including old-timers (ethnic Chinese individuals with Thai nationality) and newcomers (legitimate Chinese immigrants from mainland China who have not yet obtained Thai nationality) in order to strengthen the state's soft power. The borderless integration is a new term created by author based on national integration theory, indicates to a process of integration that is not restricted by national borders. Borderless integration is constructed from three pillars: culture building, education, and social media. First, cultural building is to propagate Confucianism in overseas to enhance the state's soft power. Second, education refers to the use of Confucius Institutes to enhance overseas Chinese education and the influence of Chinese language. Third, social media refers to the use of a unique social software to enhance the connection between the state and immigrant individuals as to achieve the purpose of borderless integration. The case study focuses on the fieldwork we had been doing at the Xingmin School in Phitsanulok based on the information given by different interviewees. What new unexpected, but later found out, was that the old-timers have been using a "neutrality policy" to avoid sensitive topic when facing the borderless integration.

**Keywords:** Chinese, Soft power, Immigrant, Phitsanulok, Newcomer

アブストラクト：本研究では、中国の外交政策がいかにして国境を越え、中国のソフトパワーを強化するために、中国の旧華人（タイ国籍の中国系）と新移民（タイ国籍を取得していない中国大陸の合法的な華人移民）を統合したのを検討する。「国境なき統合」は、統合の過程で国境に縛られないという意味で、著者が「国家統合」理論に基づいて作った造語である。「ボーダレス統合」は、文化建設、教育、ソーシャルメディアの3つの柱で構成されている。1つ目に、文化建設とは儒教思想を海外で発揚し、国家のソフトパワーを高めることである。2つ目は教育で、孔子学院を利用して海外で中国語を普及しながら、中国語の影響力を高めることである。3つ目に、ソーシャルメディアとは、国境なき統合のために、独自のソーシャルアプリを利用し、国と移民者のつながりを強化することである。事例研究では、著者がピサヌロークの醒民学校で行った現地調査を通じ、様々な情報が収集できた。その中に興味深い発見は、旧華人たちが国境なき統合に関して、「中立政策」を強調しながらデリケートな話題を避ける傾向があったということである。

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## INTRODUCTION

By the time the huge wave of new Chinese immigrants settled down overseas, carried by Chinese enterprises propelled by the force of the national initiative, *Belt and Road*, their lives were filled with higher education, much more capital, and broader networks closer ties to mainland China. This coincided with the near disappearance of elderly immigrants and their well-integrated descendants, having surpassed the dark period of being oppressed. This eventually helped them get rid of titles such as “Chinese,” “ethnic Chinese,” or “overseas Chinese,” commonly used to clearly distinguished them from the natives or locals.

As these two parallel, yet contrary, trends continue, Wang (2000) raised a question to researchers at the very end of his book, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy*, concerning overseas Chinese individuals. It stands out much more than ever before: what will the impact be when the new immigrants gradually replace the old-timers, which could be in areas such as business, educational institutions, etc.? In particular, the impact on the settled immigrants who have chosen to integrate into their local communities will be most interesting to observe (p. 116). Old-timers struggled to escape from China, whereas, currently, China is sending more and more completely different new immigrants, who are more ostensible looking. Meanwhile, their descendants have started relearning the language which they had thrown away. The question remains: will this encounter between the “old” and “new” evolve into closer cooperation or stronger conflict? Will some external force interject? Especially when we consider the issue from a business standpoint in the context of Chinese culture, which has been given the most attention because most of the prior conflicts between Chinese-speaking groups were essentially caused by competition between businesses owned by each group (Skinner, 1957). This will be of particular interest and worth observing and further investigating.

Conflicts between newcomers and old-timers over have occurred, as observed by myself. Although there are regional and historical relationships among speech groups, this is not the case with regard to newcomers and older-timers, which could prove the fundamental causation strife. Similar to the case in Philadelphia’s Chinatown (USA), where a karaoke club owned by a newcomer was destroyed by older immigrants during the night one day before it opened<sup>(1)</sup> (T.T. personal communication, 2019). The first reason for this was that the newcomer did not pay a “protection fee” or “membership fee,” and the opening ceremony for the club (and the date on which it was held) was not reported and permitted by the “leaders” of Philadelphia’s Chinatown. Another plain assumption given by the interviewee was that the new and fantastic-looking Karaoke club could possibly take all the business away from older ones owned by the old-timers.

Upward mobility could be another factor that drives them apart, alluded by Skinner; horizontal class solidarity is largely absent from Chinese society because almost everyone is striving to achieve a higher status

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(1) The interview was proceeded on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 through Facebook Message.

(Skinner, 1957, p. 136).

Conflicts could also be ideological. As in Hong Kong, most new immigrants came from mainland China and were educated in different ideologies and histories, especially the younger generations who were informed by highly censored knowledge from the mainland. Business interests are put first in most situations in Hong Kong, as an interviewee described. The best way to sell a property or an insurance contract to a new immigrant is to either not speak about politics or nod along with them on any political dispute, particularly over Hong Kong and mainland China, which, undoubtedly, had to be a pro-central government. Otherwise, the Chinese clients were not happy<sup>(2)</sup> (P.W. personal communication, 2019).

The 'sinicization' doctrine and policy are part and parcel of Xi Jinping's vision for a 'New Era' (Vermander, 2019, p. 1). Sinicization indicates the procedure that brings Chinese culture, especially the Han culture, to other non-Chinese societies, such as education and ideology, as well as moral standards. Thus, in order to boost the nation's soft power overseas to have more negotiable conditions with foreign competitors, a big player has shown up in an attempt to interflow these two groups with somewhat similar histories but substantially different Chinese 'cultures'—old-timers and newcomers—by inwardly building a concept of "standard Chinese." This is designed to unify them under the name of a past-tense blood-linked nation. It could also be considered a solution for a recent issue that needs to be solved as quickly as possible—talent drain, which made China desperately demand more human capital and top talents, who are qualified to an interdisciplinary standard with transnational backgrounds in the wake of an aging society.

To understand new Chinese immigrant is significant and imminent because there are more and more newcomers are migrating transnationally, and they are contributing a tremendous part of the world economy. The number of new immigrants is huge, and their careers are more diverse than the old-timers. The fact that they included numbers of engineers, scientists, mathematicians, professionals, and academics in a wide range of disciplines suggests that the impact will be even greater in the near future (Wang, 2000, p. 104). Many scholars have obtained significant studies on the new Chinese immigrant society, and all of them pointed out that the new immigrant society is much more diverse and complex than old one. Especially the connection that the newcomers keep with the homeland becomes the hot spot to study. For example, Zhou (1992) said that, the new arrivals have already displayed remarkable differences from their predecessors not only in mentality and aspirations, but also in socioeconomic characteristics and modes of adaptation (Zhou, 1992, p. 69). Wang (2000) said that because those in the new wave were often much better educated than in the past, the chances of their preserving their Chinese ways were also greater (Wang, 2000, p. 104). Pongsapich (2001) used "rational choice" theory to prove that the relationship between old-timers and newcomers as well as the different speech groups depend on the relationship between Thailand government and China government. When Thai-Chinese

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(2) The interview was proceeded on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 through WeChat.

relations improved, decisions were made not as ethnic groups but as individuals, each wanting to become involved in the profitable market economy (Pongsapich, 2001, p. 96). Zhuang and Chen (2014) discussed the “nostalgic emotion” of between Chinese immigrant and their hometown. While Chinese people’s nostalgic feelings toward their hometown are weakened by the localization of the association, their ties to their relatives and hometown are strengthened by the internationalization of the association (p. 332). Ong (1999) used the word “flexible citizenship” to describe the new Chinese immigrant take their transnational identity which is able to cut political border as an advantage to win higher global status and earning more on economic benefit. While mobility and flexibility have long been part of the repertoire of human behavior, under transnationality the new link between flexibility and the logics of displacement, on the one hand, and capital accumulation, on the other, have given new valence to such strategies of maneuvering and positioning (Ong, 1999, p. 19).

From studying former researches, It’s obviously that the situation of today’s Chinese society has been changed totally that the huge gaps and differences between newcomers and old-timers in terms of educational level, capitals that they have carried with, employer-employee relationship, and the cooperation behind them, etcetera. Thus, as a young scholar of studying the overseas Chinese, we should stop merely relying on the past studies, rather we need to pay more and more attention on constantly coming and unpredictable newcomers because that is a much more diverse and mysterious community compares to the old-timers community in history, since most of them were growing up along with the, internet, globalization, and the tremendous capital that their motherland – China is hoarding. There is an ancient Chinese proverb saying that the fallen leaves return to the root, which means that wherever a Chinese is, he or she will finally revert to his or her origin – back to China mainland. As now we can see the tendency that more and more Chinese descendent chose to return to China mainland, it’s called *Guigqiao* (Chinese: 归侨) - the returned overseas Chinese. Thus, the position of this study among previous researches is to explore deeper not only on the new immigrant but also on the relationship between the new immigrant and their homeland, and what kind of policy that China has made to integrate the immigrants as a unified unity in overseas.

The position of this study will concentrate on the new Chinese immigrants, defined as the population who had left China since 1980s. I will concentrate on the policy of “borderless integration” from China’s side including how the diplomatic that China has been using to integrate the newcomers and old-timers as to strengthen the soft power in overseas. I will also use the knowledge that I learned during the fieldwork in Phitsanulok Province to prove the accuracy, reliability, and facticity of this study. The purpose of this article is to canvass that how the “standardization” has been implemented, and through what measures. Through this study hopefully may possibly to make certain recommendations on the immigrant policy which could be useful for Japan to dealing this current matter of concern.

The first reason I chose Phitsanulok as my fieldwork location is that Phitsanulok has tremendously potential of economic development. The location of Phitsanulok Province is three 3 hours away from the sharing

borderline of Laos and Thailand, where contains diversity in terms of ethnicity, Southeast Asian culture, and ethnic convention, therefore Phitsanulok is a multi-ethnic area for all the scholars who have been endeavoring on the research of multi-ethnic integration. Cambodians, Laos, even some of Myanmar's Rohingya people has been living in this place and sharing the same space over the generations with their distinct culture and harmony. Additional, multi-ethnic appearance is not the only particular feature for this place to research, Phitsanulok is also called as the South-North economic corridor crossing from the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region(GZAR) in China, through Nanning and Yunnan province, to Hanoi and Haiphong in Vietnam. Furthermore, as the city called central economic cross-point, the function of developing East-South economic corridor which starts from Danang in Vietnam to Myanmar has also been well performed. Thus, Phitsanulok will become an economic hinge between China and Southeast Asian countries and in the soon future.

The second reason I chose Phitsanulok is out of the specificity of academic research. Bangkok, or Chiang Mai, as two very typical and classic example of being an integrated-diversified city, there are multi-ethnic group living in these two city with multi-mixed culture and unique livelihood which is a worthwhile location for every researcher. However, there are so many studies about geopolitics, international relations, and urban design had been done over the last few decades which were about the city of Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Phitsanulok is an "academically-uncharted" place and a half rural half urban area where there is barely research on new migration could be found. This can be a new course to be brought on the stage of academy.

Because Phitsanulok is known as the crossroads of Indochina, it has great potential on development. Development requires infrastructures, welfare facilities, and public transportation, so I hypothesize Phitsanulok needs a lot of manpower, material resources and capital to build up the infrastructures. China's state-owned Enterprises have long been a powerful engine for the state to invest overseas and develop local construction, so I hypothesize that Chinese state-owned enterprises may also play a major role in promoting China's overseas soft power.

There are limitations in this study. First, investigating the relationship between the issue of migration and national integration in Thailand and build up useful and serviceable result as the basic of my research before takeoff to the designated region and start the field probe. I was trying to make a comparative study on the acceptance of migration between urban area (Bangkok) and rural area (Phitsanulok), but due to the limited duration of the fieldwork (three months) and the other limitations (inconvenience of transportations, and the pandemic of COVID 19 has broken out that I wasn't able to go back to complete my fieldwork and interviews). I was not able to make a completed conservation in Bangkok. Thus, my focus has changed from comparative study to one area-focused study.

## The Background Information of Fieldwork - Phitsanulok Province

This research has been conducted in Phitsanulok province, in the upper middle of Thailand, three hours from the Laos-Thailand border and 5 hours from the Myanmar-Thailand boarder by car. Phitsanulok shares a provincial border with Uttaradit and Sukhothai in the northern part, Phetchabun and Loei in the eastern part, and Kamphaeng Phet and Phichit to the southern part. It also has a short shared border with Laos on the northeastern part.

In 1998, the Eighth GMS Ministerial Meeting held in Manila launched the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) as one of the flagship initiatives of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) (ADB 2010). It aims to promote the development of technological cooperation and education, making effective use of natural resources and enhancing competitiveness. Phitsanulok province is now located at the heart of the North-South and East-West economic corridor of ASEAN, called the “Indochina intersection” or the “crossroad of Indochina.” As seen in Figure 1, as the center of South-North economic corridor connecting ASEAN from Kunming, which is the largest capital city of Yunnan province in southwest of China, through Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (GZAR), down to the Haiphong and Hanoi in Vietnam, Phitsanulok plays a role as a point of interchange linking all the economic branches.

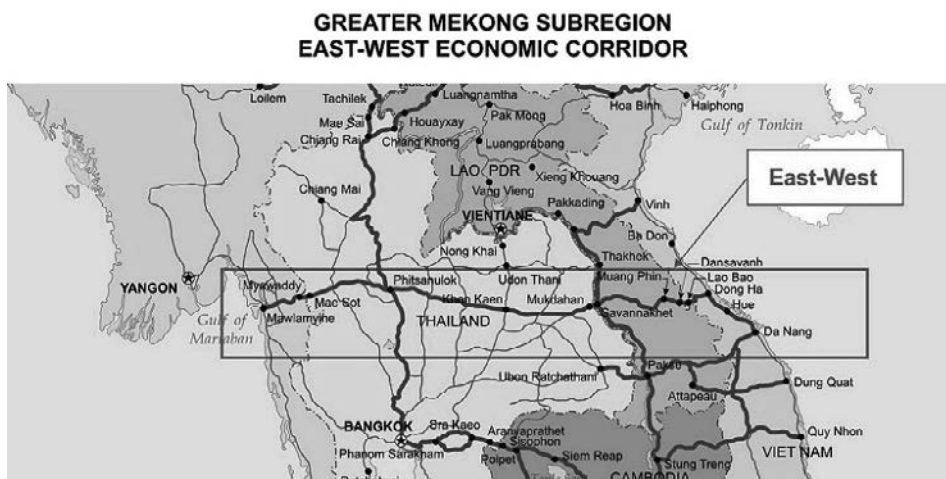


Figure 1: Phitsanulok province is the intersection of Indochina region.  
From [www.thedevelopmentadvisor.com](http://www.thedevelopmentadvisor.com)

## Phitsanulok and China

The Zhejiang province of China has officially been cooperating with Phitsanulok since 1999. According to Takahashi (2013), sister city exchanges between Phitsanulok and Zhejiang were carried out in fields such

as culture, tourism, education, agriculture, and industry. This was part of the development of the Indochina crossroads and was positioned as an investment, commercial preparation, and environmental development. Especially the provincial governor of Phitsanulok at that time had a keen interest in the Indochina crossroads economy and investigated how to promote commerce and investment. Another point is the outstandingly high salary of people in Zhejiang that they were expected to spend on tourism in Phitsanulok. In addition, there is a business opportunity in connecting Ningbo Port in Zhejiang to Da Nang Port in Vietnam by going through Phitsanulok in the East-West Economic Corridor. On the other hand, the Phitsanulok Chamber of Commerce seemed to be interested in doing business with Myanmar due to the advantage of excessive export rather than being overwhelmed by China.

As reported by Takahashi (2013), in 2007, Chinese capital officially entered Phitsanulok. There was a move to build a cargo truck parking lot by purchasing 50 rai<sup>(3)</sup> of land near the Indochina crossroads for 200 million Baht. The intention of Chinese investors is to use the North-South Economic Corridor to transport goods. Kunming was trying to use the port of Bangkok through the North-South Economic Corridor to catch up with the economy of the coastal cities of China. Since then, there has been no big move of Chinese business or investment seen in Phitsanulok; the only commercial activities from China were small business and retailing, which were displayed in commercial exhibitions. In 2011, from September 9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, the prefectural office took the lead, and an international product exhibition was held along with tourism promotion. Products from China, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia were sold. Another retailing exhibition called the 2013 Indochina Product Exhibition was held from June 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of 2013; not only Phitsanulok province, but also Uttaradit, Phetchabun, Tak, and Sukhothai participated to sell agricultural products. There were in total more than 1000 stores from China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Malaysia scheduled to exhibit. These 5 provinces in will be cooperated as a “cluster” to do business with China, so far the cluster has built up the relation with five provinces in China, those are Yunnan province, Shanxi province, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Shantou and Zhejiang.

**Population of overseas Chinese**

	1937*	1947	1947**	1960	1970	1980***	1990***	2000	2010
<b>Chiang Mai</b>	2,971	1,832	2,874	3,004	4,927	3,594	4,843	12,245	8,239
<b>Phitsanulok</b>	4,217	3,617	64,75	3,146	2,472	1,267	861	300	2,185
<b>Nakhon Sawan</b>	884	8,281	14,155	6,934	5,645	3,378	1,460	4,476	482
<b>Ubon</b>	2,854	2,066	4,174	2,016	1,491	1,186	796	356	333
<b>Rayong</b>	1,315	1,503	2,724	2,301	5,293	1,279	714	442	372

\*Population over 10 years old    \*\*Pedigree    \*\*\*Birthplace

Figure 2: based on Takahashi (2013), edited by author

(3) A unit in Thailand. Mainly used for large scale land such as farmland or forest in suburbs. 1 rai = 1600 square meters.



**Population whose home language is Chinese**

	2000	2010
<b>Chiang Mai</b>	16,484	19,244
<b>Phitsanulok</b>	96	885
<b>Nakhon Sawan</b>	345	386
<b>Ubon</b>	472	241
<b>Rayong</b>	162	374

Figure 3: Based on Takahashi (2013), edited by author

The lack of investment and business potential could be an important reason that Chinese immigration to Phitsanulok has slowed down or become more hesitant. People need reasons to immigrate, and most of them were driven by the desire for a better economic environment. Based on the information given by Takahashi (2013), Figure 5 shows that the highest population of overseas Chinese in Phitsanulok can be found in 1947, the lowest time was in 2000, which only had 300, and 10 years later the number had again risen to 2,185, but it was still low compared with Chiang Mai, and even more so compared to Bangkok. Figure 6 shows that the population whose home language is Chinese was very low in Phitsanulok especially in the year of 2000. On the other hand, Chiang Mai has a very high number of home speaker of Chinese. The given data has shown that the economic development of Phitsanulok isn't attractive enough to pull more Chinese immigrants here. As the former president of the Overseas Chinese Association in Phitsanulok, Mr. Chen Zhan Yang, said: "Chinese immigrant rather head to Chiang Mai or Bangkok, at least they can find business there." Nevertheless, Phitsanulok's commerce and finance are said to be carried by the ethnic Chinese.

From Figure 2 and Figure 3, we can see that the population of Chinese immigrants living in Phitsanulok has increased since 2000, but we cannot obtain more information from the existing materials to confirm their careers and immigration purpose. But according to the Chairman Huang of Chamber of Commerce of Phitsanulok, we can confirm that no businessmen from mainland China have come to invest in Phitsanulok in the past 10 years, although the business delegation of Zhejiang province visited Phitsanulok in 2004 and 2005, but the two sides did not reach any investment consensus, nor did they settle any private investment projects. Therefore, the increase in the number of people in the figures may represent an increase in the number of volunteers and Chinese teachers from mainland China. These volunteers and Chinese language teachers play an irreplaceable and very important role in China's expansion of overseas soft power. In the next chapters, I will describe in detail the roles and tasks of Chinese teachers and volunteers in the context of expanding soft power.



## The Ethnic Chinese (old-timers) in Phitsanulok

The ethnic Chinese, also called the old-timers, came from the southern part of China, mostly among Fujian, Canton provinces of the previous century. Like the pioneers, the population made lives by paying mostly heavy labor forces and selling as retailers. The Hainanese was said to be the first group who came to upcountry Thailand while, latterly, by the year 1917, demographically won out by the Chiuchows whose population numbered 40% of all Chinese individuals in Phitsanulok. Following the increased size of Hakkas and Cantonese, working mostly as artisan specialists setting shops here, Hainanese had established the first Chinese language school in Phitsanulok in 1928. The Hainan dialect was the teaching medium until 1930, when Mandarin was introduced into the school system.

An association plays an important role in every Chinese community in any country. G. William Skinner (1957) had specifically explained the pragmatic function of Chinese clubs. These clubs, formally registered as “friendship societies,” provide opportunities for legalized gambling and also serve as places where leading Chinese merchants to congregate, read newspapers, listen to music, and discuss business and community problems (p. 283). There are three types of Chinese associations formed by ethnic Chinese individuals for a long time: official associations, local clubs, and family clubs (surname associations). Dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, the secret society has had close relations with associations, and violence and assassination was somehow its common image. Currently, there are in total 29 associations formed by different Chinese speech groups in Phitsanulok: 7 associations based on the Phitsanulok Foundation<sup>(4)</sup>, five local clubs, 17 family clubs. Most of them are no longer operational; the only thing left is the image and memories that the Chinese had been here before<sup>(5)</sup> (P.G. personal communication, 2019).

Currently, the Chinese from Chiuchow remains the largest population among all the ethnic Chinese individuals in Phitsanulok, Hakka ranks the second, Hainan as the third, Fujian as the fourth. In total, there are 0.4 million ethnic Chinese individuals living in the northeast area of Thailand, including Phitsanulok, which seizes 4% out of the Chinese population in Thailand.

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(4) According to the information provided by former lecturer of Naresuan University, Miss. Piyarat. Phitsanulok Foundation neither has relation with Phitsanulok provincial government nor a governmental foundation. Foundation was established by the ethnic Chinese and it was officially registered under the governmental system. The finance of Phitsanulok foundation is being upheld by the “membership-fee” which collected from the members of different speech associations either annually or via the charity event. The other two types, local clubs and family clubs, are informal units as to gather the ethnic Chinese who came from the same hometown. Local clubs and family clubs have not been registered under the provincial government, and these two have the same capital rising system as Phitsanulok foundation.

(5) The interview was proceeded on October 11st, 2019.

## Who Are the “New Chinese Immigrants” ?

The term “Xin yimin” was introduced by the authorities of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to refer to Chinese people who have emigrated from China since the 1970s (Zhang, 2012), following the Open and Reform Policy launched by Deng Xiaoping, China has started its new era of economic development. The Chinese who had gone overseas during or after the time was called the new Chinese immigrants.

The particular characters that only can be found on newcomers compared to old-timers chiefly came from Hunan, Sichuan, and Hubei province. Additionally, due to the influences of modernity and multiculturalism brought from the largely won of civil right battle in the U.S. model of the melting pot, while the domestic reformation from planned economy system to market economy system appeared to be a consequent consonance to it like the tremendous influx of foreign capitals which had ideologically and psychologically changed the newcomers who since then have begun to represented different layout on Chinese values which claimed for higher self-awareness, anti-discrimination, and equal opportunities than old-timers. As Wang (2000) stated, the new Chinese identity was built on the growing confidence that communities could modernize themselves outside China (p. 97). Nyiri (2001) also held the same point that this difference enforces the sense that new migrants, unlike the old diasporas, are bound to China not only by ties of blood and culture but by sharing the modernizing goal of the state (p. 638).

An additional reason could be due to this new wave of moving overseas. The economic reform appeared in the 1980s includes restructuring unprofitable “State-owned Enterprises” in traditional sectors such as coals, textiles, and machinery, which resulted in massive unemployment as more than 21 million state workers had been laid off since 1990s to 2000s. The State Council’s China Development and Reform Commission estimated that in 2006, 25 million people were competing for 11 million jobs in urban areas, indicating that 14 million people are unemployed (Siriphon, 2015, p. 151). The unemployed populace is called “floating people.” Since then, instead of heading to the overpopulated cities of China, such as Beijing and Shanghai, moving to southeast Asian countries to ease more economic burden has become the trend among the new immigrants. Especially for Mekong regions—where nears to the border as Myanmar, Laos, Northern Vietnam, and also Thailand are their destinations.

By the time, also as another policy for paving the way for a floating population in a bid to decrease the domestic unemployment rate began, the following ‘Going Out Policy’ launched by the PRC government in the early 2000s was designed to ostensibly address the idea which indicates, to promote investments abroad has introduced much support to assist domestic companies in developing a global strategy to exploit and utilize opportunities in the expanding local and international markets (Santasombat, 2019, p. 19). at the moment, more and more new immigrants had begun moving abroad with Red capitals to seek more opportunities.

## Patterns of “New Chinese Immigrants”

These types of New Chinese immigrants could bring such diversity in terms of career, educational level, purpose, whom they worked for, where they chose to go, etc. To make a clearer understanding for the following chapters that why the new immigrant could be acting as a tremendous section of China’s borderless integration, only knowing old-timers is not enough, rather we have to be very updated on the current image of the newcomers based on the prior studies which are comparatively new.

Regarding the new immigrants in Cambodia, where is a Southeast Asian country, stated by Nguyen (2019), new Chinese immigrants who have ensconced in Cambodia categorized by cyclically personal motivation, which is considered as temporarily staying and highly ties to the probability of whether they could succeed in business or the length of contract signed with national enterprises. Namely in two groups, organized immigrant and spontaneous immigrant. The first group comprised technicians, contracted workers, representative office staff, project managers, students, and teachers. The Chinese contract aligned with Cambodia had converged them to stay and work as part of a national project which primarily concentrates on three sectors as well as most of the Chinese companies, infrastructure construction, land concessions, and mining and resources extraction. The second group consist of in much diverse pattern and sporadically outreach to nearly all types of small and middle-scale business, hawkers, petty traders, farmers, traditional healers (can be doctors or iatrical scholars who use traditional Chinese medical science to treat patients), and marriage migrant. These rovers have always been seeking better business opportunities by carrying cheap goods and technological accessories made in China, and sell into profit is not only Cambodia. Instead, their destination can be borderless but must be benefit-driven.

Lertpusit (2018) shares akin analogy with Nguyen but regionally focused on Thailand, where the new Chinese have been classified into four groups like students, entrepreneurs, workers (includes highly-skilled workers and unskilled workers), and visitors. Nguyen cataloged the new Chinese in Vietnam as contract laborers, professionals, independent migrants, and purportedly called “daily cross-border circulation along the borderlands.” The migrants are not only motivated by employment and business opportunities but also spurred by and facilitated by Chinese government policies (p. 216). All patterns of immigrant workers serve as national contributors under China’s, as Nguyen stated, “economic integration” while through an investigation shows that only 21% of Chinese workers are legally registered with the local authorities (p. 212).

Siriphon (2015) had categorized the new Chinese immigrant into four groups as medium-sized investors, Chinese entrepreneurs, small traders, and professionals. Medium-sized investors who consider Mae Sai as a transit interchange to buy and sell goods from China to Bangkok back and forth. Chinese entrepreneurs basically have better financial conditions and experience in wholesale and retail, even before they had immigrated to Thailand. Small traders originally came from the southern part of China and doing small-scale trading along the border area. Professionals are mostly youth volunteers either from PRC or Taiwan who is

taking summer vacation working as Chinese language teachers offering subjects in Chinese school along the border area. These four different groups of Chinese are living in the Mae Sai area in northern Thailand who rely on the “border guanxi” with local ethnic Chinese individuals to develop commerce, widen network, and settle down in Thailand either personally or institutionally.

The researches on over new identity of new Chinese immigrant is another academic realm which worth to be briefly mentioned, nevertheless it is in correspondence with the main idea of this article, but somehow explains why Chinese immigrants still intend to participate in the borderless integration although they are not legitimately “Chinese” or on the half within the transformation of being a local, but the external factors had psychologically been pushing them reidentifying who they are, hence virtually pulling them back to the track on poring Confucianism as the pillar in terms of morality and behavioral discipline as in any aspect of being a “standard Chinese.” In comparison, the new identity has complexly been mixed with local culture, religion, and the Chinese culture with folk religion, which still remains.

As a representative work in this academic area, the book *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities* written by Yang (1999) presented significant issues of the selection and recognition of identities that occurred mainly among the new Chinese immigrants in America who were simultaneously seen as being American, Chinese and Christian. While identifying as American, new Chinese immigrants still highly value their traditional and heritable culture of Confucianism even after they move to a new land. As Americanization continuously happens, assimilation does not mean simply blending themselves as individuals into American society or melting into the big American pot (p. 191). Yang also considered this bi-cultural identity as an advantage for new Chinese immigrants since they are neither entirely assimilated nor being taken away from their ethnic culture. This cultural balance and multi-identity gave them have more choices and options in life. Therefore, they could function well either in a Chinese situation or an American situation or in even more complicated situations (p. 198).

## New Chinese Immigrants (newcomers) in Phitsanulok

Phitsanulok is remote from the capital city, Bangkok, which absorbs all the best human capital, education, and medical resources across Thailand. The megacity of Bangkok, with its potential for investment value and development, has attracted various patterns of newcomers. On the contrary, nevertheless, Phitsanulok has been called the crossroads of Indochina since 1995, and several projects were already started from a decade ago, but what actually happened here is far below expectations. According to the Asian Development Bank (2010), the development of commercial intersections like Phitsanulok has remained stagnant, the reason being the lack of a master plan for sectoral development across the corridor, meaning that project interventions are often fragmented and lack support from other sectors such as infrastructure, finance, human resource development,

and central or provincial economic policies (p. 10).

In comparison, newcomers tended to choose the city such as Bangkok or Chiang Mai, where concludes more convenient transportation, better investment space, and a larger Chinese population, most important, where they are able to speak in the same language for the reason that lots of them will not be able to speak the local language. Given the fact that inefficiency and inconveniency in Phitsanulok, according to the definition in the previous paragraph, therefore, in the case of Phitsanulok, except for a small number of self-funded or state-sent students, the most common and almost the only Chinese immigrant are the Chinese language teachers (language volunteers). In addition, from the information given by the Chamber of Commerce of Phitsanulok, there is no individual Chinese investor has been found in recent years.

**Statistic of Chinese Students at Naresuan University**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total in 6 years
Current	—	1	—	2	11	6	20
Graduated	9	3	2	—	—	—	14
Dropped out	2	—	—	2	1	—	5

Figure 4: Statistics on the number of Chinese students at the top-one ranked university in Phitsanulok. Based on the Division of Academic Affairs, Naresuan University, Thailand. As shown, the total number of Chinese students is quite small.

## Constructing the Borderless Integration: Culture Building

Integration can also be defined as national integration, which needs communicative facilities as the key to integrating different ethnic people with a different background within a state. As the idea stated by Deutsch (1953), factors such as languages, collective memories, characters shape the populace, and it defines nationality. It consists of the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders (p. 71). Any absent communicative facility can be supplied by another one and will be sufficient as long as it is a cultural factor. The communicative facilities of the society include a socially standardized system of symbols, which is language, and any number of auxiliary codes, such as alphabets, a system of writing, painting, calculating, etc. (p. 70).

For Chinese, Confucianism had been respected in the core idea of the culture of touching to every ethical part and self-cultivation as being a typical and moral Chinese who knows virtue in terms of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, devotion, faithfulness, courage, and filial piety that taught by Confucius in The Analects. Coercive and economic aspects of control had been supplemented by a progressive intense cultural governance, management of the dispositions and meaning of citizen bodies, aimed at making territorial and national/cultural boundaries coexistence (Shapiro, 2004, p. 34). Put in simple words, when the taxation and

police power are still forcible for the population, the way to make the current government being more and more authorized and legitimated is to create the national identity by using cultural narratives.

Confucius has been considered as one of the important tools for China to enhance its soft power overseas. The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority.) (Nye, 2004, p. 11) Amid the international conference on Confucianism was held in Beijing in September 2014. Xi Jinping addressed the importance of grasping traditional culture and also actively collect the wisdom and findings of the ancient state government. The President spoke of China's traditional culture, underlining Confucianism as an important—but not the most important—building block (Kallio, 2015, p. 523). Of course, Xi finally confirmed the core idea that Chinese communism is Marxism, but it must be built under the influences of traditional culture. From 2006 that the Core Socialist Value was brought out, and in 2012 the Core Value was concluded as “prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, friendship,” which mixed with foreign value but the rest part was mostly according to Confucianism. In the same year, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation was claimed, which basically meant the revival of Chinese nationalism, but usually, Chinese officials had tried to avoid using the terminology “nationalism,” which was found by the western academic circle. Thus, cultural governance is helpful for understanding Chinese nationalism because the state has been intimately involved in setting cultural and moral standards for the populace from imperial times up to the present People's Republic (Callahan, 2006, p. 182).

An interviewee named T, sent by a local junior high school in Yunnan province where she has been living and working. The program she belonged to was launched by Qiao Ban, which is known as The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council (OCAO). OCAO has two non-profit branches that are likely functioning as NGOs, which had focused on making links with overseas Chinese individuals are called All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC or Qiao Lian). Since 1980, the Qiao Ban and the foreign affairs ministry have issued directives to strengthen new migrant work (Nyiri, 2001, p. 636). In 2018, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office was absorbed into the United Front Work Department, as an internal bureau, according to the document dated March 19 (Zhou, 2018). According to the information given by the website of The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, OCAO focused on eight goals:

1. Responsibility for making policies and plans relating to overseas Chinese individuals.
2. Investigating and researching the situation of overseas Chinese individuals and providing information about the affairs of overseas Chinese individuals to the central government and the State Council.
3. Assisting the Premier of the State Council in handling the affairs of overseas Chinese individuals.
4. Guiding the work of returned overseas Chinese individuals and their family members.
5. Contacting relevant associations and representatives in Hong Kong and Macau, and overseas.

6. Guiding and promoting the economic, scientific, and technological cooperation of overseas Chinese individuals.
7. Instructing and directing the propaganda, Chinese language education, and communication that is relevant to overseas Chinese individuals.
8. Dealing with other matters assigned by the State Council.<sup>(6)</sup>

Another type of volunteer is sent by Han Ban, called the Office of Chinese Language Council International, also broadly known in another name, the Confucius Institute Headquarters. CI focuses on the propaganda of the Chinese language and Chinese language education on a global level. In Phitsanulok, the CI was found in Xingmin School. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, called Confucius Classroom at Xingmin School Phitsanulok. On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, a group of delegates from Kunming University went to Naresuan University for a discussion regarding the establishment of the Confucius Institute at NU. On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016, members of Kunming University came to NU again and discussed the establishment of CI at the Faculty of Humanities. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017, members from Kunming University made another trip to NU to hear the progress report about CI.<sup>(7)</sup>

New immigrants hold work visas, which are valid for three years, but they can be renewed for another two years, it cannot be renewed after five years. Job positions are provided by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. Before coming to Thailand, they will go through two trainings, one is introduction training, which is held in February each year. The main content of the introduction training is to learn to speak basic Thai and basic knowledge of the country. The second training is called on-the-job training, which starts from May to July each year. After the training, all the Chinese volunteer from all over the provinces of Thailand gathered in Bangkok for an orientation and get to know each other. A volunteer stated that Thailand was the best working place instead of Myanmar or Vietnam, because they think that Myanmar's political situation is unstable and Vietnam is not friendly to the Chinese.<sup>(8)</sup>

## Constructing the Borderless Integration: Social Media

Social media carried out by smartphones have become dominant communication tools, especially for the younger generation who have already abandoned radios and traditional media for gathering information, chatting, entertaining. From the beginning of 2019 to the end of last November, each user spent an average of

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(6) Eight duties for Qiao Ban can be found in the website of Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council. <http://www.gqb.gov.cn/node2/node3/node22/node23//index.html>

(7) Sources come from the website of Naresuan University. <http://old.nu.ac.th/en/index.php>.

(8) The information can be obtained from Xingmin School's office.



6.2 hours of the day—or 1.8 full day a week—online on mobile devices (Zhang, 2020).

Sun (2013) had used the term “Chinese transnationalism” displayed how Chinese domestic media spreads its state’s idea internationally to every overseas Chinese individual, including old-timers and newcomers, in an attempt to impact the community of new Chinese immigrant as well as to redraw the boundary for the ethnic Chinese individuals by recomposing the definition of their “motherland,” in which the national institutions, embassies, and Confucius institution, have purportedly been playing as the center of recruiting and conveying national missionaries. Nyiri (2001) thought the function of global Chinese media had been taking part of the aim that is to essentialize an image of “Chineseness” for global media consumers especially to an overseas new Chinese immigrant, conforming its propaganda discourse which was politically oriented by the state was not the only function, but to reproduce more and more transnational patriots in bid to finally reach out the greatest return in terms on economic goal. Chinese consulates all over the world make systematic effort to reach out to these students and migrants alike, including providing free cultural events and participating in various diasporic Chinese gatherings during Chinese festivals (Sun, 2013, p. 438).

What worth to notice in Sun’s article is that China seems to be reluctant of showcasing its growing soft power overtly, according to those Chinese-language based radio stations, newspapers, television channel are not fully state-owned, instead ran by who is said of exerting their “flexible citizenship” for describing especially in this case the PRC immigrants who are also holding another country’s permanent residential card while benefiting from their media enterprises built-in overseas. Due to the ease of transnational movement by the formal PRC nationals and de-territorialized modes of production, it is increasingly possible for migrant individuals with Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, American and European passport to be based in China yet running their Chinese language media business in the host countries (p. 439). Collaborating with the so-called “three pillars”—Chinese-language media, the Chinese social and business network, and the Chinese-language school, the seemingly underground linguistic dissemination is aiming at all types of new immigrant and ethnic Chinese individuals as state’s propaganda. Also, courtesy of the Chinese-language media outlets, many of which are owned and operated by PRC migrants, Chinese government bodies, and embassies and consulates, have found an effective platform and pathway to extend their patriotic ideology beyond the national border (p. 439).

Although the network sector among the “three pillars” which mentioned by Sun (2013) is significant, in the context of borderless integration, particularly among the new immigrant communities, I would like to remove “network” is replaced by “culture building,” which comparatively has more straight connection with transnational move initialized by the state government in gaining the soft power, and the policies of Qiao Ban and Confucius Institution which mentioned in the last chapter are fully able to represent it. Moreover, I would also like to change “Chinese-language media” to “social media,” which the latter has more to do with a smartphone, and it is more mobilized and effective than traditional media. I will introduce the reason in this chapter.

In the case of Phitsanulok, for most of the volunteers are party members, there is a new way for connecting them but not via the media channel—a mandatory daily task that all the volunteers must have to complete is to learn the national knowledge on a smartphone application developed by Alibaba Group literally called “Xuexiqiangguo,” in the meaning as “study Xi and strengthen China” or could be translated in another version known as “study and strengthen the nation.” This application requires all the users who must be a party member to sign up and register with their true mobile numbers and real names. “Study point” is the main character of this application, can be earned by every time when the system had been noticed that user is logging in, reading articles, making comments, watching short videos, earning Party’s ideologies, and viewing internal governmental news and notifications, anyway but studying the nation required knowledge as an officially specialized volunteer, and taking multiple-choice quizzes over Party’s policies had been earned the most. This class of transnational apparatchiks is the main vehicle of the Chinese globalization project, which is constructed with an eye on ‘Western’ globalization but which carries a claim of authenticity, and in which the state has a stake (Nyiri, 2001, p. 649).

It is a daily compulsory task for every Party member and cadre not only just domestically but also including to global range, to use and learn the Party’s thoughts or Xi’s thoughts from the smartphone application. New immigrants who were sent by the mainland have to spend at least an hour every day to use this in order to catch up with national tendencies. Interestingly, as most of the time, earning more “study points” than senior members from the same working department could cause a relationship crisis because the application system was designed as internally connected in the unit of a department that overtly shows the scores of every staff member. It is not anonymous software. Each user’s score will be sharing on a ranking list with all colleagues concluded as well as their names. Thus, notwithstanding earning more study points than colleagues is allowed, but no one would like to surpass any boss or predecessor who stands on a higher job post.

Although the new immigrants are living and working temporarily overseas, the borderless internet had updated and extended the original state policy, which keeps reminding them to remember the reason why they had been dispatched—serving not only as a volunteer but to individually represents as “development gift” on the diplomatic level to symbolically reinforce the friendship between China and Thailand (Siriphon, 2015). Concomitantly, as a result, the Chinese volunteers, entrepreneurs, and other Chinese migrants who leave mainland China for developing countries view themselves as agents of Chinese development, helping the poor in the name of the nation(p. 157). Under these ideological rules created by modern technology, no matter how remote they are, and because still, they have to use the application installed in their smartphones to keep connecting with the original working department and unit, thus, this half-official task had been put upon on every newcomer regardless their job titles as what they have become represents not only a personal resource who contribute on the national economy but amply a borderless patriot who is able to rise up the national reputation in overseas and strengthen the soft-power in various academic sectors that had been initially funded by PRC government.

## Constructing Borderless Integration: Language Education

As bring old-timers and newcomers together or to be integrated as a part of borderless integration, is to unify the language; thus, Chinese language education seems significant than ever before.

It is important to bring up a small part of history about the Chinese language education had been heavily suppressed in Thailand as of 1919 until 1975 by the time Thailand and China started to rebuild the trade activities before we talk about the case example in Phitsanulok, because it will make a clearer image for us to know how essential the language education for Chinese immigrant was as it is in today's topic, particularly at that time the Chinese language education was considered as a delocalization movement of old-timers that had directly threatened to Thailand national security. In Skinner's (1957) words, in spite of the popular myth about the "unchanging Chinese," the descendants of Chinese immigrants have been assimilating to Thai society since the beginnings of Chinese settlement in Siam (p. 237). After 1919, the scale of Chinese school came under tight control from the Thai government, especially the hours of Chinese language courses had largely been cut down while the numbers and hours of Thai language courses were compulsorily added up. The students had to read and learn the Thai language for at least 25 hours a week, but learning Chinese could not be surpassing 6 hours, and all the textbooks used by Chinese schools must be censored and approved by the Siamese Ministry of Education before it is using on teaching purpose, according to Chen (2016).

In the past, the Thai-zation of the local-born Chinese was rapid, and only those who were first generation migrants could still retain their "pure" Chinese identity (Suryadinata, 2013, p. 283). Especially in the Cold War period, Thai government imposed regulations of anti-communism, one of the regulation is the prohibition of learning and teaching Chinese language. Since the October 1976 coup, Chinese secondary schools have been closed down, and Chinese primary education has been shortened from six to four years (Suryadinata, 2013, p. 283). In Phitsanulok, due to the Chinese schools were closed, old-timers had to go to the St. Nicolas Catholic church to study because that was the only place offered education for the Chinese. Since then, especially for Hakka people, have started moving out and settled around the church.

After a couple of decades, since 2013, the largest number of VISA extensions approved by the Thai government for Chinese people was for Chinese language teachers, reported by Lertpusit (2018). In February 2016, there was 3,488 Chinese staff in the academic field (p. 80). By 2019, there are now 124 Chinese volunteers sent either by Qiao Ban or Han Ban working in seven provinces as Chinese language tutors, including Phitsanulok, the other six provinces being Uttaradit, Sukhothai, Kamphaeng-Phet, Phichit, Phetchabun, and Loei.

Back to Phitsanulok, a language volunteer expressed that teaching Chinese to locals was not the only mission, but the bigger task was to showcase the "new face" of new Chinese generations and Chinese youths. Besides, teaching language as bringing Thailand more civilization in the name of Confucianism was the attitude

### Location of Hakka ethnic community

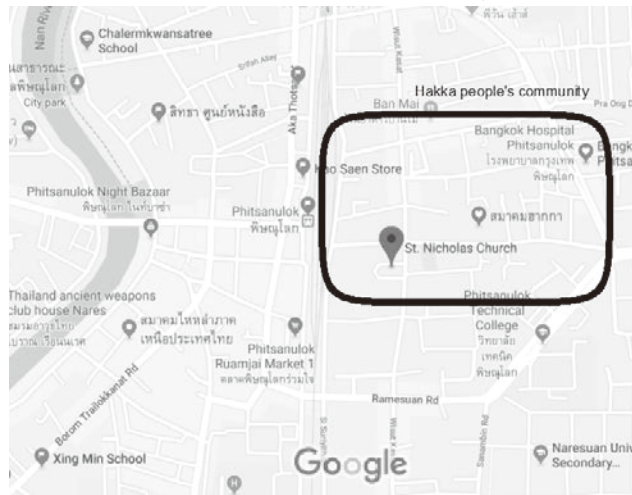


Figure 5: Location St. Nicholas Church, and the Hakka's association was established at the northeast of the church, shown as ฮากกาหอจอก, which means Hakka association in the Thai language. Based on Google Maps, edited by author

carried by the Chinese language volunteers as of the time when they came here. On the other side, the local Thais queried why China has to teach Confucianism to every other country, even to someplace that people are holding a different view of value to it. No matter how nice looking the propaganda was made, the idea of Confucianism is still different from a religion like Buddhism; thus, it is hard for using it to persuade others to truly trust you by jointly acknowledging it as a common value<sup>(9)</sup> (W.J.H. personal communication, 2019).

For newcomers working as Chinese language teachers, there are two trainings that every volunteer is required to take. The first one, known as the induction training, which was held in February of each year, mainly focused on teaching volunteers the basic and necessary knowledge of Thailand, including training volunteers to be able to speak and read the basic information in the Thai language. The second called on-the-job training that is held each May, lasting for two months until July. Volunteers were gathered around in a ball hall by senior volunteers then greeted each other by the first day of the training. Highly official members in certain local Chinese Associations will be joined as well with all the volunteers. "We will play some ice-breaking game and add each other's contact information. It was like an orientation", said J.X. The volunteers from either Han Ban or Qiao Ban need to know how to sing the main theme song, called "Han Yu Zhi Hua Sheng Kai," which was a metaphor of the flower of Chinese language is blossoming. "Han Yu" is a wide universe, which shares the homonyms of the Chinese language in Chinese called "Han Yu." The national song will be sung before the main theme song of the volunteer.

(9) The interview was proceeded on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in the Chamber of Commerce of Phitsanulok.

Volunteers were living inside of Xingmin school, where it seems likely a mini Chinatown were provided everything information in Mandarin or from the mainland, television, books, party-magazines, even imported cooking materials. The environment made volunteers felt this place was more like their home rather than living in a foreign country. Wherever they are, they can participate in the New Year's ritual of a major overseas Chinese organization, take photos with officials, hearing and making the same speeches in the national language, watch folklore dances, and have their donations noted in newspapers (Nyiri, 2001, p. 648).

Volunteers will gather around every year during the festival season, such as the Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and several other times. The higher officials from Chiang Mai Embassy would join with volunteers to celebrate together, and someone practiced outstanding would be elected among all the volunteers to make a speech as an annual summary—recommendation conference, similar to the celebration for all the contribution that volunteers had made up to now while reinforcing the solidarity of volunteer community. All the activities that volunteers participated in were keeping bringing them back to the enclave community—which inside of the campus, a “visionary China.” When their Chinese identity was being weakened in the process of migration, the borderless links could extend their original identity and cement it, to finally delocalize them from being fully integrated.

It does not matter how unskilled the volunteers speak the Thai language, and for those who were not able to speak a word, it is still easy to live up inside the campus, not because their dormitory, which funded directly by Han Ban, had been settled here, but almost every staff who is an ethnic Chinese individual in Xingmin school can speak Mandarin fluently without an accent. All volunteers from the mainland were working next to the office for all the ethnic Chinese staff. The principal who sits in the ethnic Chinese office was not legitimated or qualified to manage any affair of volunteer office, so the volunteers could have more privacy to communicate expectations and plans for all the teaching courses. All the ethnic Chinese individuals were seldomly invited for the activities that volunteers could join.

There was barely interaction among these two offices as they were in everything different, but ethnicity and language, and sometimes old-timers seem may or may not be needed, but they were not outcasted, the historical reconnection on an emotional level as repeatedly redraw their Chinese identity when they were working here. As well as the Chinese associations, even though old-timers had gradually lost their influences since their descendants have been assimilated from Chinese to Thai, the PRC still attended to create the emotional reconnection with them, since the network linked by the old-timers still locally remain strong which regards as a helpful sector for Belt and Road Policy. Thus, for the old-timers, finding the balancing point to keep themselves stand in the best interest instead of being overconsumed by the borderless integration had become something imminent but had to give reaction to.

## Finding the Balancing Point: Xingmin School and Hong Kong, Taiwan

Xingmin Chinese school is a public primary school originally established in 1922 funded by Seven Overseas Chinese Associations Joint Agency<sup>(10)</sup>, which was originally established based on Phitsanulok Foundation that was mentioned in previous chapters. The headquarter of the joint agency was built inside the Xingmin school's campus at the central square. According to the field investigation, the function of Xingmin Chinese school was not only an educational institution but also contributed to benevolence occasionally on behalf of joint agency as a charitable organization when a natural disaster occurred in Phitsanulok. However, more prominent is its neutrally political orientation pertinent to mainland China, Hong Kong, as well as Taiwan, as what the school's gist has been written—unite overseas Chinese individuals.

To achieve this goal, maintaining the balancing point among these three regions to prevent itself from falling into any sensitive and intractable—"take side situation," which likely to be politically disturbed to any side, Xingmin has been carefully operating its action on every step was made. Anything regard to politics is a taboo for Xingmin school as what had been written into the school's discipline—helping members within appropriate range and context, except for those concerned with politics.

Being politically neutral was not a simple job; several activities were marked down in the school's history chiefly held by Xingmin school, and the joint agency indeed showed us how hard the balance was kept. In 1996, the institution celebrated Hong Kong's return to the mainland at the Toning Restaurant by holding a banquet while also hosted another celebration to welcome the Chinese Consul General in Chiang Mai, Liu Yongxing, and welcomed him and visit local overseas Chinese individuals. China was hit by a flood in 1998; the institution mobilized all sectors to raise 610,500 Baht and gave it to the Chinese Consulate General in Chiang Mai to help the victims on the mainland. In 1999, again at Toning restaurant, along with a tree planting activity for celebrating the King's birthday, the institution organized the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, while raised 200,000 Baht for supporting the victims in Taiwan who had suffered from earthquake, and the donation was later sent to disaster relief department of Taiwan.

Although school's slogan had changed as mainland China changed politically shows the close affiliate with mainland China which ostensibly follows through where the mainland leads to since the Chiang Mai Embassy had been acting as a nearby "supervisor," simply because it is the opinion that mainland China had been dedicating from a long time ago and trying to make itself as only legitimate China with internationally acknowledged. Nevertheless, it is more interesting to see is that the school badge considered the spirit of the

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(10) Totally 300-400 students were enrolled in Xingmin school in 1922. In 1939, the Chinese language education not only in Phitsanulok but in whole Thailand were strictly limited or even canceled, the name of Xingmin school was changed to "Anleiwei school" by former government, then everything was recovered until 1945 as well as the Chinese language curriculum.

Xingmin School had remained the same as before the end of WWII, which speaks of something hidden—political neutrality. The badge comprised of blue color at the top indicates the eternal blue sky, and the plum blossoms in red color represent the national flower of the Republic of China with a white background. Nevertheless, what had been written on the brief history of the school said the red color signifies strong commitment, and the white signifies fairness and purity and friendliness, but when the moment of these three colors was painted within the same frame, it considerably looks similar with Taiwan's national flag.

One of the reasons could be the long-lasting friendship between Taiwan and Phitsanulok. Here Chinese had deep and strong roots in Phitsanulok society, and by that time, most of the students studied or graduated from Xingmin School were the descendants of Chinese families because parents hoped their children are able to know their mother tongue and culture. Thus, the circular relationship built within Xingmin school's alumnus was gradually consolidated by more and more alumnus graduated and joined into the bigger Chinese community as most of the outstanding celebrities worked the business and political spectrum came from Chinese families. Therefore, in a bid to make achievement furthermore without being directly and obviously seen by the public as political purpose, those alumni built up the "Xingmin Alumni Basketball Team," which later became the most significant athletic milestone not only in the sporting arena but also had been politically profound in Phitsanulok. In the year 1956 and 1958, at the birthday celebration of the former President of Taiwan Nationalist Party, Chiang Kai-shek, the Phitsanulok basketball team was invited to participate in two friendly tournaments in Taiwan and received special commendations awarded by Chiang Kai-shek. After the basketball team returned, their overwhelmed reputation had cheered the whole of northern Thailand for a long time.

### Finding the Balancing Point: Xingmin School and China

Maybe not as far-reaching and ingrained as the relationship with Taiwan, but the work that China had done equilibrated the preference of Xingmin as well as Phitsanulok, but not in the sports arena, but in larger scale on retailing, commercial of the agricultural exhibition, and more pragmatic as considering Phitsanulok as the crossing point of the economic corridor in Indo-China region.

Since 1999, the Zhejiang province has officially been cooperating with Phitsanulok. According to Takahashi (2013), sister city exchanges between Phitsanulok and Zhejiang were carried out in fields such as culture, tourism, education, agriculture, and industry. This was part of the development of the Indochina crossroads and was positioned as an investment, commercial preparation, and environmental development. Especially the provincial governor of Phitsanulok at that time, had a keen interest in the Indochina crossroads economy and investigated how to promote commerce and investment. Another point is the outstandingly high salary of people in Zhejiang that they were expected to spend on tourism in Phitsanulok. In addition, there is a business opportunity in connecting Ningbo Port in Zhejiang to Da Nang Port in Vietnam by going through Phitsanulok in the East-



West Economic Corridor. On the other hand, the Phitsanulok Chamber of Commerce seemed to be interested in doing business with Myanmar due to the advantage of excessive export rather than being overwhelmed by China.

As reported by Takahashi (2013), in 2007, the Chinese capital officially entered Phitsanulok. There was a move to build a cargo truck parking lot by purchasing 50 rai<sup>(11)</sup> of land near the Indochina crossroads for 200 million Baht. The intention of Chinese investors is to use the North-South Economic Corridor to transport goods. Kunming was trying to use the port of Bangkok through the North-South Economic Corridor to catch up with the economy of the coastal cities of China. Since then, there has been no big move of Chinese business or investment seen in Phitsanulok; the only commercial activities from China were a small business and retailing, which were displayed in commercial exhibitions. In 2011, from September 9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, the prefectural office took the lead, and an international product exhibition was held along with tourism promotion. Products from China, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia were sold. Another retailing exhibition called the 2013 Indochina Product Exhibition was held from June 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013; not only Phitsanulok province, but also Uttaradit, Phetchabun, Tak, and Sukhothai participated in selling agricultural products. There were in total more than 1000 stores from China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Malaysia scheduled to exhibit. These five provinces will be cooperated as a “cluster” to do business with China. So far, the cluster has built up a relation with five provinces in China, namely, are Yunnan province, Shanxi province, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Shantou, and Zhejiang.

Strengthening the soft power in Phitsanulok will involve the Xingmin School as a cultural center. Since 1975, the first official volunteers had been dispatched by the year that Thailand-China had rebuilt the diplomatic relations, while most of the old-timers were high officer-holders in Xingmin schools, such as principal or department director. The recruiting routine and disciplines which have not changed for a decade. Some conventions have been even kept until now.

In order to maintain friendly connections with the ethnic Chinese, free invitations of visiting Beijing and Shanghai historical sites for a week would be sent to community leaders; all the fees and expenditures were covered by the Chinese government. Expressed by a community leader in POCA, “they only let you see the brightest side of the biggest city, although we know there are many embarrassing places that they also should have let us see”<sup>(12)</sup> (P.G. personal communication, 2019).

The old-timers had clearly seen what the donor want. Thus, in order to recompense the kindness, in 2004, after Chen Shui-bian was re-elected president of Taiwan, this led the masses to believe that Taiwan would be moving to independence. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the Anti-Secession Law has passed by the 10<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, 27 associations, such as the Seventh Overseas Chinese Federation of Phitsanulok, the Overseas Chinese Association, the Thai-Chinese Development Cooperation Association of

(11) A unit in Thailand. Mainly used for large scale land such as farmland or forest in suburbs. 1 rai = 1600 square meters.

(12) The interview was proceeded on October 11st, 2019.

Phitsanulok, and the Hainan Association of Northern Thailand, jointly stated that in the face of “dangerous Taiwan independence” separatist activities, the Chinese government’s initiation of the legislative process and formulation of the Anti-Secession Law was very necessary and timely (Newssina, 2005). In addition, the “One Belt One Road” policy initiated by Xi Jinping in 2013 was also supported and appreciated by the Chinese associations in Phitsanulok (The Consulate General of the People’s Republic of China in Chiang Mai, 2016).

In addition, the Phitsanulok Overseas Chinese Association, which is known as an association for all speech groups, was built up right after the Hainanese Association was formed after WWII from 1946 to 1947. As of 1949, the PRC government has been keeping a close relation with POCA as well as other different associations in Phitsanulok, and the Consulate General of the People’s Republic of China in Chiang Mai (Chinese Embassy of Chiang Mai) works as the information gathering center which officially functions as the highest authority above all the associations. If anything, especially regarding national affairs, happens in Phitsanulok, the Chiang Mai Embassy will be the first institution to contact, and vice versa, all the Chinese associations in Phitsanulok are led by the Chiang Mai Embassy<sup>(13)</sup> (P.G. personal communication, 2019).

## Conclusion

This article explains why the Chinese governmental policies was designed to unify the new Chinese immigrants (newcomers), and the ethnic Chinese (old-timers) who have been living in overseas over generations. The article begins with a description of the history of the old immigrants, and then describes the differences between the new immigrants and the old immigrants, and the conflicts between them. How to integrate the new and old immigrants to contribute to the soft power of state has become the main purpose of the borderless integration. The purpose of traditional national integration is to make the domestic society of multi-ethnic state with a more stable environment, but the purpose of borderless integration is to internationally complete the integration of new and old immigrants is to expand China’s overseas soft power. Through my three-month field survey in Phitsanulok, I found that the government’s policy is to promote the borderless integration of new and old immigrants through three pillars, cultural construction, education and social software. Cultural construction is based on the promotion of Confucianism; education is to enhance Chinese language education overseas; social software is to use a unique smartphone application to strengthen the connection between the state and immigrant individuals. The results of the fieldwork also confirmed that my initial hypothesis was wrong. The state policy is not to strengthen the country’s soft power through the state-owned enterprises, but to through individual volunteer activities in overseas.

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(13) The interview was proceeded on October 11st, 2019.

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