

Thai-Chinese culture caused the decline of Thai elite

[The survival of the fittest]¹ in is all about hardworking. It happened in 1767. The timing was perfect for some real serious social transformation in Siam. [It is the moment when King Taksin became the king of Thonburi. He who started his career as a general leader, helped the independence of Siam from Burmese invasion in 1767 which claimed by the destruction of the capital city Ayutthaya in the process. He established new city, Thonburi, to be the new capital and crowned himself as an supreme leader.]² Taksin became the king who invented his own legend. [The king himself is a son of a Chinese immigrant.]³ And the fact that he is Thai-Chinese, will later lead to the Chinese immigrant domination in year to come. [During King Taksin regime, he enthusiastically encouraged trading activity of Chinese immigration.]³ Thenceforth, Thai-Chinese role in Thai economy and society were increasingly demanded recognition in both political and cultural term. The result is Thai landlord which once hold absolute power in the past, now experienced the difficulty to hold their power. They became less influence over society because, due to the Thai-Chinese trading activity, money was gradually contributed more to common people. And the fact that many [Thai-Chinese turned to agriculture middleman business which accessed more seller to the market,]⁴ Thai land owners were no longer in charge of regulating live stock prices anymore. It can be argued that the rise of Thai-Chinese as a new economical power counterbalanced with Thai landed aristocrat. As a result, It can be concluded that Thai-Chinese culture linked to the causes of the decline of Thai old political power for many reasons.

¹ Darwin uses the phrase "survival of the fittest" in chapter four of *On the Origin of Species* to describe the process of natural selection.

The term "Fittest" refers to biological trait, behaviour or whatever gives advantage of a certain kind over its rival to survive.

² Craig J. Reynolds (1976). *Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History, with Special Reference to Nineteenth-Century Culture Change*. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, doi:10.2307/2053979.

³ Skinner, G. William. "Chinese assimilation and Thai politics." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 16.02 (1957):.

⁴ Pongsapich, Amara. "Some Theoretical Consideration on Chinese Entrepreneurs and Their Dominant Role in Responding, to the Thai Development Ideology." *anaSoutheast Asia* (1994): 265.

First, Thai-Chinese might be better at money making than Thai elite. It is an encounter of culture. [Most Thai-Chinese are descendant from Chinese immigrant who came to Thailand with nothing.]¹ They built themselves up by hardworking. It is their culture to be independent and not only rely on heritage wealth. This tradition obviously can be found in many today Thai-Chinese families. For example, Tan Passakornnatee [President and CEO of the Ichitan group, launched the first Oishi Japanese Buffet restaurant branch in Bangkok]² He clearly declared on stage in AppliCAD's SolidWorks Innovation Day 2015 workshop that ["After I died, I will donate 90% of my fortune to my foundation, Tan Pun foundation". "I will only teach how to make money to my children until they can find one by themselves"]³, he added. This demonstrated the tradition of hardworking and self-dependence of Chinese culture. Unlike most [Thai old elite family who could receive a huge number of salaries just by born in the right family with a high-royal surname.]⁴ Even though these examples are not always true in every Thai-Chinese family but it can be argued that, [the legacy of hard working of Thai-Chinese ancestor will not go away from people perception]⁵ any time soon. And the fact that [Thai-Chinese culture promotes the ability of hard working,]⁶ Thai-Chinese descendant are almost always better at money making than Thai elite descendant which will lead to the transference of power in generation to come. In the past it was almost impossible for individual to overcome landlord who owned a large number of lands, resources and work forces. But it is very obvious today that the capability of hard working can rise against those old regime power. According to Forbes.com, 9 out of 10 Thailand richest are Thai-Chinese.

¹ *The Economic Development of South-East Asia (Routledge Revivals): Studies in Economic History and Political Economy C. D. Cowan* Routledge, Nov 27, 2555 BE

² Takeshita, Y. "Intercultural Communication between Thai and Japanese People: A Survey in Bangkok." *INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES* 15.3 (2006): 150.

³ "คิดอย่างตัน ไม่มีตัน" ประสพการณ์ดีๆ จากคุณตัน ภาสกรนที youtube video. Published by user 'AppliCAD TH' on Oct 24, 2014

⁴ <http://www.crownproperty.or.th> official government report on Crown Property Bureau

⁵ Buki, Lydia P., et al. "Chinese immigrant mothers of adolescents: Self-perceptions of acculturation effects on parenting." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 9.2 (2003): 127.

⁶ Ke, He. "Culture Gap and Performance Management—Case Study on FIS of PSU."

[Dhanin Chearavanont, owner of CP empire, is a Thai-Chinese. Chalerm Yoovidhya, red-bull empire, whose grandfather is Chinese immigration. Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi, beverage tycoon. Chirathivat family, Krit Ratanarak, Vanich Chaiyawan, Prasert Prasarttong-Osoth, Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, Thaksin Shinawatra.]¹ All of these multi millionaires are Thai-Chinese except for one, [Bhirombhakdi family who also have Chinese lineage but not the family origin.]² [Their collective wealth crosses, according to forbes.com, over \$100 Billion.]¹ This indicated that Thai-Chinese are better at money making and have much more influence over Thailand economy than Thai elite. The result is Thai-Chinese power overrides Thai old economic power. Their ability of hardworking brought about a huge financial success. And the fact that 'money is power' was widely accepted in today world, it gave them much more power over Thai aristocrat. More money can be linked to more connection, more workers, more resources and more everything which led to the great decline of those who once, in the past, held absolute power in Thailand.

Second, Thai-Chinese political role and economic power will superpose with Thai elite position. It is the dissension of interest between Thai-Chinese political power and old Thai political power. [Thailand has been a constitutional monarchy under a parliamentary democracy system since 1932]³. But the fact that [Thailand still has been influenced from royal family]⁴ was still affective one way or another. [The King of Thailand is the head of state and head of the ruling Royal house]⁵. Their representative still sit there in the parliament to represent the benefit of the elite for centuries. In which their main [supporter are the rich and the middle class mostly in Bangkok and the south of Thailand.]⁶

¹ www.forbes.com top 100 richest person in Thailand

² Lao-Hakosol, Wilaiporn, and John Walsh. "The Village Farm Resort and Winery." *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases* 3.2 (2014): 179-186.

³Ginsburg, Tom. "Constitutional afterlife: The continuing impact of Thailand's post political constitution." *International journal of constitutional law* 7.1 (2009): 83-105.

⁴Evers, Hans-Dieter. "The formation of a social class structure: urbanisation, bureaucratisation and social mobility in Thailand." *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 7.02 (1966): 100-115.

⁵McCargo, Duncan. "Network monarchy and legitimacy crises in Thailand." *The Pacific Review* 18.4 (2005): 499-519.

⁶ Office Election Commission of Thailand <http://www.ect.go.th/th/> // http://www.ect.go.th/th/?page_id=494 Thailand election data

They was known as a democrat political party. However, as the new power of Thai-Chinese in politics skyrocketed, [they are more engaging in political movement.] ¹ The power of Thai-Chinese was undeniably concerning Thai elite position. According to Long, Simon (April 1998). "The Overseas Chinese" *Prospect Magazine exact word* , [Chinese influence is much more pervasive and subtle throughout the city. The Chinese control more than 80 per cent of companies listed on the stock market. Kukrit Pramoj, the aristocratic former prime minister and distant relative of the royal family, once said that most Thais had a Chinese "hanging somewhere on their family tree." In Thailand it is said that 50 ethnic Chinese families controlled most of the country's business sectors or 81 to 90 percent of the overall market capitalisation of the Thai economy.]² Thai-Chinese new political power tend to pose danger to the ruling Royal house position in the parliament because they [represent the working class and lower middle class.]³ They are demanding for [change in term of economic policy which was once used to protect the interest of the Thai aristocrat.]³ The example was very clear in today Thailand. Former Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra. [He is a Thai-Chinese who A telecommunications billionaire, first prime minister in Thailand's history to lead an elected government through a full term in office and founded Shin Corporation in 1987,]⁴ that made him one of the richest person in Thailand. [He joined politics and formed the Thai Rak Thai Party in 1994] ⁵ where it represents the interest of the poor. [He used the policy called populism policy which benefit the poor such as promote small and medium-sized enterprises and universal healthcare coverage.]⁶

¹ Phongpaichit, Pasuk, and Christopher John Baker. *Thaksin: The business of politics in Thailand*. NIAS Press, 2004.

² Long, Simon (April 1998). "The Overseas Chinese" *Prospect Magazine*. *The Economist* (29). Retrieved 7 May 2012.

³ Forsyth, Tim. "Thailand's Red Shirt protests: popular movement or dangerous street theatre?." (2010): 461-467.

⁴ BBC Asia-Pacific Profile: Thaksin Shinawatra

⁵ Hicken, Allen. "Party fabrication: Constitutional reform and the rise of Thai Rak Thai." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6.3 (2006)

⁶ Phongpaichit, Pasuk, and Chris Baker. "Thaksin's populism." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38.1 (2008): 62-83.

Populism is a doctrine that appeals to the interests and conceptions (such as hopes and fears) of the general population, especially when contrasting any new collective consciousness push against the prevailing status quo interests of any predominant political sector.

This posed a great threat to the elite because he took the money which suppose to use for supporting the rich or improving the capital city to help poor people. But some people argued that by using [populism policy, it caused a huge financial weight for the country and because it is the rich people who pay the most taxes, they should have more benefit from it, not the poor. Furthermore, his populism policy was accused as the attempt to rise more vote without responsibility for financial budget of the country.]⁰ However, [Thaksin Shinawatra won the election in 2001]¹. Since then, [he continued changing the law to benefit toward the poor to gain more supporter.]⁰ During the process, the aristocrats were up set by his action and finally [he was overthrown in a military coup on 19 September 2006.]² His party was outlawed and he was banned from political activity. The age of political conflict between the elite and the poor defined the modern day Thailand. It can be contented that the power of the thai elite was remarkably unstableilized by the rise of the increasing role of Thai-Chinese in political power like never before. And the fact that Thaksin Shinawatra still has many supporters which was uncommonly repeated when his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra won the election in 2011, made the position of Thai old political power even more fragile.

However, some people debated that [these social phenomenas not only happened in Thailand. It is a normal social progress and is all about the class warfare that is a universal resonance that took place all over the world.]³ Basically it is just an conflict between the upper class who once held absolute power against the new middle class who gains power by capitalism. But it is not this obvious in other nations. It is true that it is a social phenomena that happened around the world but in other nations, not all top 10 richest persons are half native-Chinese. [Korea, Japan, Malaysia, for example, do not have all half Chinese taking over the richest list.]⁶

⁰Phongpaichit, Pasuk, and Chris Baker. "Thaksin's populism." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38.1 (2008): 62-83.

¹ Phongpaichit, Pasuk, and Christopher John Baker. *Thaksin: The business of politics in Thailand*. NIAS Press, 2004.

² Maisrikrod, Surin. "Learning from the 19 September coup: advancing Thai-style democracy?." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2007): 340-359.

³ Rose, Christopher. "CDMA codeword optimization: Interference avoidance and convergence via class warfare." *Information Theory, IEEE Transactions on* 47.6 (2001): 2368-2382.

It can be indicated that in Thailand, Thai-Chinese are, unlike other nations, somehow inseparably linked to Thai history in term of both sociology and politics. Or can be said that Thai-Chinese was a true all Thai story. Not the other way around.

In conclusion, The reasons of the decline of old Thai elite are caused by the rise of Thai-Chinese, not only in term of politics but also culture. The competency of Thai-Chinese industriousness was, as the way it is, won by Thai in many ways. And without King Taksin genius, Thailand wouldn't be the country where the rise of Thai-Chinese, where the rise of ordinary people who have never gave up to their own faith, and the people who dare to rise against those social superior took place. It can be argue that, Thai culture left a void for Chinese culture where it promotes the of ability of hardworking and dedication to take over.

⁶ www.forbes.com top 10 richest person in Korea, top 10 richest person in Japan, top 10 richest person in Malaysia

Reference

- ¹ Darwin uses the phrase "survival of the fittest" in chapter four of *On the Origin of Species* to describe the process of natural selection. The term "Fittest" refers to biological trait, behaviour or whatever gives advantage of a certain kind over its rival to survive.
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- ⁴ Evers, Hans-Dieter. "The formation of a social class structure: urbanisation, bureaucratisation and social mobility in Thailand." *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 7.02 (1966): 100-115.
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- ⁶ Office Election Commission of Thailand <http://www.ect.go.th/th/> // http://www.ect.go.th/th/?page_id=494 Thailand election data
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