



Exploring Chinese Culture through the Examination of Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province

Kamontip Rakkiattiyod

Chinese Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Phetchaburi Rajabhat University, Thailand

E-mail: kamontip.rak@mail.pbru.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2733-5483>

Received 19/03/2025

Revised 16/04/2025

Accepted 17/05/2025

Abstract

Background and Aims: This research aims to analyze Chinese culture through Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi province, with a specific focus on analyzing the cultural dimensions, beliefs, and traditions that characterize the lifestyle of the Chinese community. The Chinese sanctuaries in this region serve not only as sites for religious ceremonies but also as essential institutions for the preservation and dissemination of Chinese cultural heritage to the local community and future generations.

Methodology: The research employed qualitative methodologies, which included in-depth interviews with community leaders, shrine custodians, and relevant stakeholders, as well as systematic observations at prominent Chinese shrines situated in Phetchaburi Province. The findings suggest that Chinese shrines play a pivotal role in fostering community cohesion and serve as venues for cultural activities, such as the commemoration of the Chinese New Year, the Vegetarian Festival, and ceremonies honoring ancestral veneration.

Results: The shrines function as cultural learning centers that exemplify the synthesis of Chinese and Thai cultures, as demonstrated by their architectural styles, rituals, and linguistic components, thereby highlighting the cultural diversity inherent in Thai society. This study underscores the significance of Chinese shrines as vital representations of cultural preservation and promotion, operating at both local and national dimensions.

Conclusion: The study's findings advocate for the preservation of Chinese sanctuaries as essential cultural heritage sites and for establishing sustainable cultural learning centers within the framework of a multicultural society.

Keywords: Phetchaburi; Chinese Culture; Chinese Shrines

Introduction

Culture is a fundamental force that influences the distinctive methods of life of communities and national identity, as per Geertz, C (1973). Particularly among Thai-Chinese communities whose progenitors migrated during earlier waves of settlement, Chinese culture has





had a profound influence in Thailand. The longstanding Chinese presence in Phetchaburi Province makes exploring this cultural integration more compelling.

According to Chen, J., & Gao, L. (2019), Chinese shrines are not only religious centers but also dynamic cultural institutions that preserve and transmit collective memory, values, and heritage within this context. These shrines serve various functions, including serving as sites of sanctuary, community education venues, and spaces for intergenerational cultural exchange. They are essential to the comprehension of how local communities maintain and adapt their Chinese cultural identity, as they house rituals, preserve oral histories, hold traditional festivals, and support the transmission of art, language, and values.

Thai academicians have investigated various aspects of Chinese shrines throughout the nation. The significance of these spaces as sacred cultural spaces in Bangkok was emphasized by Nilsangwandecha, J. (2018), while architectural symbolism and cultural continuity were emphasized by Rujirasirikul, M. (2021) in Chiang Mai. Thammachong, N. (2013) investigated the economic and social roles of the Chinese shrines in Photharam Ratchaburi Province, while Tanrattanapong, T. (2023) studied attitudes and beliefs towards the City Pillar Shrine in Bor Yang Sub-District, Muang District, Songkhla Province. Thakolprajak, S., & Numtong, K. (2017) conducted a survey and collected Chinese cultural knowledge from Joss Houses in Thailand using Thailand's Internet Database, highlighting these places as informal learning centers that promote cultural literacy among young people. Nevertheless, the majority of this scholarship concentrates on historically significant Chinese communities or large urban centers. Despite the rich Chinese heritage of Phetchaburi, there is still a lack of academic investigation into the potential of its shrines as community-based learning centers. Scholars have not thoroughly examined how these sanctuaries support cultural education, particularly through grassroots, regional methods. This discrepancy underscores the necessity of a more location-specific investigation that recognizes the distinctive contributions of Phetchaburi to the preservation of Chinese culture.

The objective of this investigation is to determine the function of Chinese sanctuaries in Phetchaburi Province as active sites of cultural education and heritage preservation. It examines how these monuments function as platforms for the transmission of Chinese-Thai cultural knowledge across generations and how they contribute to the preservation of hybrid cultural identities in a multicultural Thai society.

Objectives

To analyze Chinese culture through Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province.





Literature Review

This section examines the primary literature concerning Chinese shrines in Thailand, with a particular emphasis on their educational, cultural, and social importance in Phetchaburi Province. Additionally, it considers the broader implications of shrine preservation in a contemporary context and emphasizes the voids in current research.

2.1 The Cultural Influence of Chinese Shrines on Thai Society

The Thai-Chinese community has long relied on Chinese sanctuaries in Thailand as religious and cultural institutions. They serve as venues for the performance of traditional rituals, the veneration of deities, and ancestral worship, all of which significantly contribute to the preservation of Chinese identity (Wang, Y, 2013). The integration of Chinese values into the Thai sociocultural milieu is reflected in the fact that these shrines are not only religious venues but also symbolic sites for cultural negotiation and adaptation (Liu, H., & Lin, C, 2020; Lee, M, 2021). Recent studies have underscored this fact.

2.2 Cultural Hubs—Shrines in Phetchaburi Province

In Phetchaburi Province, numerous Chinese shrines are profoundly ingrained in the community's life.

- Phra Lak Mueang Shrine, a central religious institution for local rituals, is one of the most notable examples.
- Pung Tao Kong Shrine, a central location for the organization of significant community festivals and events.
- Goddess Tubtim Shrine, a site that seafarers visit for protection and favors.

In addition to being essential for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, these monuments also facilitate intergenerational learning and preserve ritual traditions.

2.3 Community Potential in the Vicinity of Shrines

The physical, social, economic, and organizational dimensions of community life are all influenced by the Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi.

- Physical Characteristics: Shrines are frequently situated near community landmarks, such as rivers and markets, and their architecture is influenced by traditional Chinese aesthetics. These features include curved roofs, red tones, and dragon motifs (Tan, J, 2015). Their accessibility further emphasizes their status as communal gathering spaces.
- Social Issues: Zhang, X. (2017) posits that sanctuaries serve as cultural gathering places where festivals such as the Vegetarian Festival and Chinese New Year encourage community unity. Additionally, these events offer young individuals the chance to engage with their heritage in a more immersive manner.





- **Economic Concerns:** Festivals benefit adjacent businesses, including eateries, shops, and vendors, by attracting local and regional visitors (Lee, M, 2021). Additionally, certain shrines reinforce their broader community role by providing scholarships to local youth, which is a form of educational support.

- **Community Structure Around Shrines:** Community-based committees are typically responsible for the coordination of events, the maintenance of shrines, and the preservation of cultural heritage. These communal endeavors guarantee active community engagement and long-term sustainability (Liu & Lin, 2020).

2.4 Comparative Perspectives, Challenges, and Gaps

Despite their significance, Chinese shrines face challenges such as generational disconnection, urban development pressures, and limited state support. Chan, M., & Sim, H (2022) have emphasized that younger generations may experience a lack of connection to traditional shrine practices, which could pose a threat to cultural continuity. Additionally, the commercialization of cultural festivals may diminish their original significance.

In contrast, shrines located in urban areas such as Bangkok or Phuket frequently receive additional funding and attention as a result of their tourism-related functions. In contrast, shrines in Phetchaburi frequently operate with restricted resources and depend significantly on the involvement of the local community. This discrepancy highlights the regional variations in the preservation and promotion of heritage, which necessitates additional investigation.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this research, "Exploring Chinese Culture through the Examination of Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province," is to examine the function of Chinese shrines as cultural learning centers within the Thai-Chinese community. The conceptual framework shows how three main parts work together: (1) the role of Chinese shrines, (2) how cultural knowledge is gained, and (3) the traits of the local community. The data acquisition and analysis are also guided by this framework.



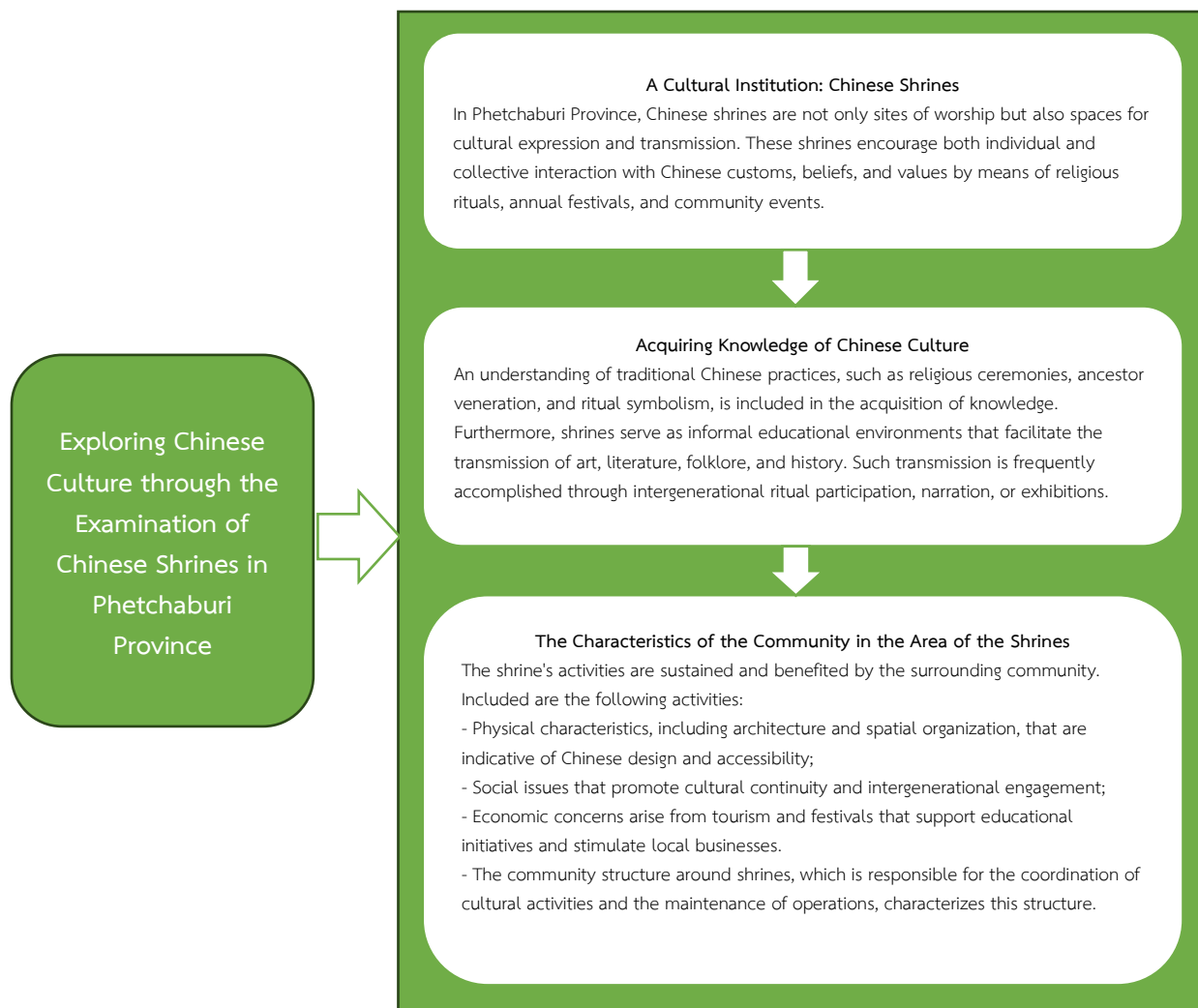


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This investigation uses an analytic induction methodology (Patton, M. Q., 2002) to explore the role of Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province as educational institutions for the Thai-Chinese community.

1. Research Instrument Design

The research tools were created to match the qualitative research approach and the goals of the study, which aimed to explore how Chinese shrines could help communities in Phetchaburi Province learn about culture. The instruments were designed to accommodate three primary



methods of data collection: documentary research, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation.

Documentary Research Checklist: A checklist was created to facilitate the systematic review of academic articles, historical documents, and previous studies that are pertinent to the Thai-Chinese community, Chinese cultural heritage, and Chinese shrine architecture and activities (Creswell, J. W., 2013).

The design of the non-participant observation form aimed to gather data on architectural elements, religious rituals, spatial utilization, and cultural events. It was designed to ensure that data were collected systematically across all eight districts, utilizing field observation protocols that were adapted from Angrosino, M. (2007).

Semi-structured Interview Guide: The interview queries were open-ended and formulated by themes that were pertinent to the research objectives. They addressed subjects including the perceived value of shrines, the significance of shrine activities, cultural transmission, and community engagement. The guide was created by the methodology proposed by Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009).

2. Methodology for Instrument Construction

The instruments were developed through a multi-step process:

Literature Review: The instruments were developed after conducting a comprehensive examination of theoretical frameworks and prior research in the fields of cultural anthropology, community studies, and heritage education.

Expert Consultation: Three experts in the fields of qualitative research, Chinese studies, and local community development reviewed the draft versions of the observation form and interview guide.

Pilot Testing: To evaluate the precision, relevance, and data richness of the instruments, they were pilot-tested at a Chinese shrine in Phetchaburi that was not included in the final sample. Based on the feedback received from the pilot test, modifications were implemented.

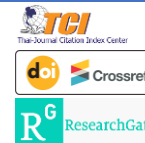
3. Research Instrument Quality Assessment

The subsequent procedures were implemented to guarantee the reliability and validity of the research instruments:

Content Validity: Three academic experts assessed the instruments for the extent of content coverage and their alignment with the research objectives. The content validity of all items was satisfactory, as evidenced by a score of 0.67 or higher on the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC).

The study adhered to Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985) criteria for qualitative trustworthiness, which encompass credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.





Data from various sources (documents, interviews, and observations) were compared to implement triangulation.

Reliability: The consistency of observation was confirmed by comparing the notes of two independent observers who visited one of the shrine sites. A high degree of accord in the recorded data guaranteed the reliability of the observation form.

4. The quality of Instruments

Expert evaluations, pilot testing, and congruence scoring deemed the instruments to be of very high quality. The shrine communities in Phetchaburi Province were determined to be suitable for the collection of rich, in-depth qualitative data that is pertinent to the physical, social, and cultural dynamics.

Results

Objective: To analyze Chinese culture through Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province.

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the cultural and spatial context of Chinese heritage in Phetchaburi Province. The fieldwork involved gathering data from 29 Chinese shrines spread across multiple districts. The results indicate that these shrines play a substantial role in the community structure, economic impact, social functions, and physical characteristics. This article presents significant patterns across the shrines and provides an analysis of these elements.



Distribution of Chinese Shrines by District in Phetchaburi Province

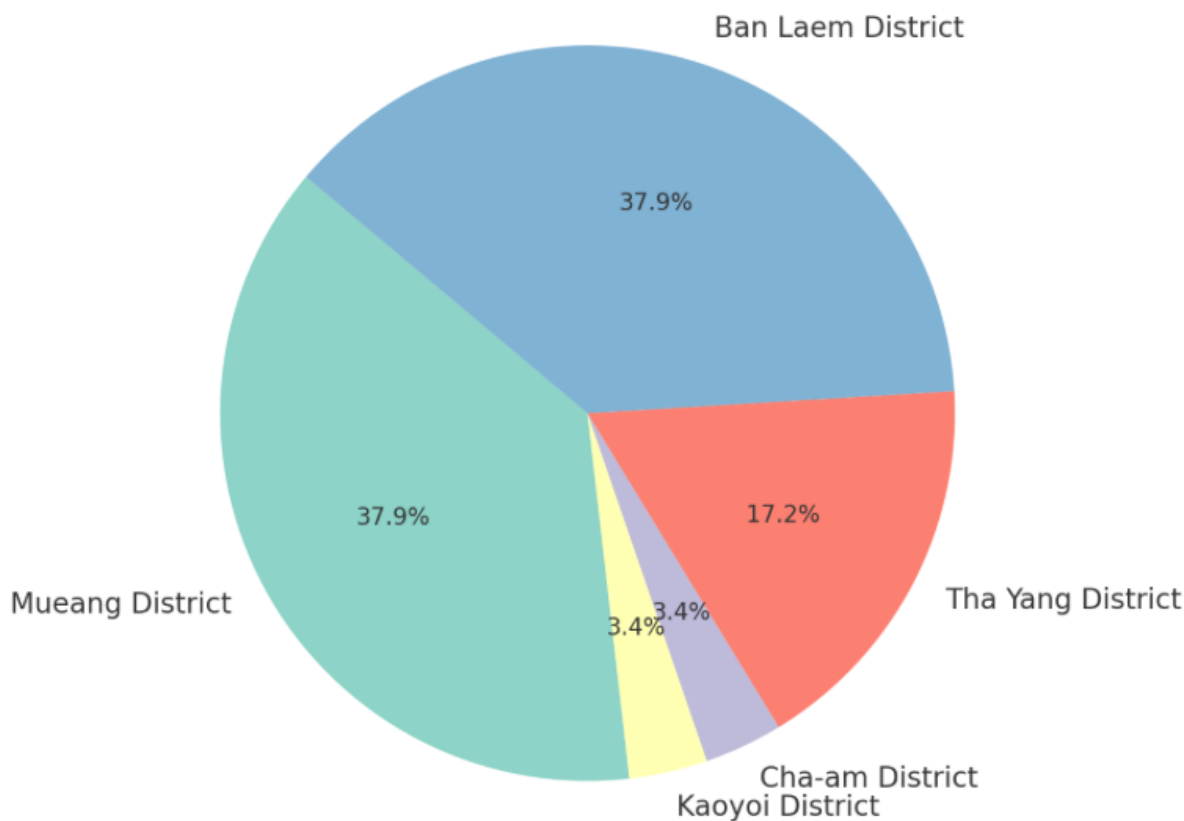


Figure 2 Shrine Distribution by District

The subsequent list comprises the names of the shrines:

1. Ban Puen Shrine (三寶佛堂)
2. Ton Pho Gate City Shrine (城隍古廟)
3. Tu Lao Yi Shrine (玄天上帝)
4. Heng Jia Shrine (Tai Sia Hok Chao) (大聖古廟)
5. Wat Lat Shrine (Lao Bueang Tao Shrine) (老本頭廟)
6. Pun Tao Kong Sam Peng Phetchaburi Shrine (三聘老頭)
7. Phor Khun Ban Mai Shrine (萬蓮本頭公)
8. Hok Siu Keng Chinese Shrine (Phanitch Hokkien) (學善善堂)
9. Poo Salika – Jaomai Thapthim Shrine (Pun Tao Kong) (本頭公廟)



10. Phor Sue Shrine (Qing Shui Zu Shi) – Phetchaburi Chinese Association (佛丕華僑公會)
11. Sawang Sanphettharam Foundation, Phetchaburi Province (佛丕洋樂明典善壇)
12. Phor Khun Sala Dan Kaoyoi Shrine (Pun Tao Kong) (本頭公)
13. Phor Khun Khao Yai Cha-am Shrine (大山佛祖)
14. Thapthim Shrine, Tha Yang (呈央水尾聖娘)
15. Phor Khun Guan Yu Tha Yang Shrine (碧武里府塔央關帝廟)
16. Phor Khun Khun Thong Tha Yang Shrine (他甲添本頭公廟)
17. Phor Sue Tha Yang Shrine (老本頭公廟)
18. Pun Tao Kong Nong Jok Shrine (本頭公廟)
19. Tai Sia Shrine: Hok Heng Tua Chinese Shrine, Ban Laem (大神佛祖廟)
20. Phor Fah Shrine, Ban Laem (老本頭公廟)
21. Hud Jow Shrine, Ban Laem (大聖廟)
22. Wat Uttaming Shrine, Ban Laem (三寶公)
23. Kwang Gong Shrine, Wat Nai Klang (協天大帝)
24. Lao Pun Tao Kong Shrine, Wat Laksanaram (本頭古廟)
25. Guan Yu Shrine, Wat Laksanaram (忠義堂)
26. Guan Yin Bodhisattva Shrine: Guan Yin Shrines, Phet Suwan Shrines (觀世音菩薩)
27. Guan Yu Shrine, Bang Tabun Subdistrict, Ban Laem District (協天大帝)
28. Hai Tang Ma Shrine, Ban Laem District (天後聖母)
29. Pun Tao Kong Shrine, Ban Laem District (本頭公廟)

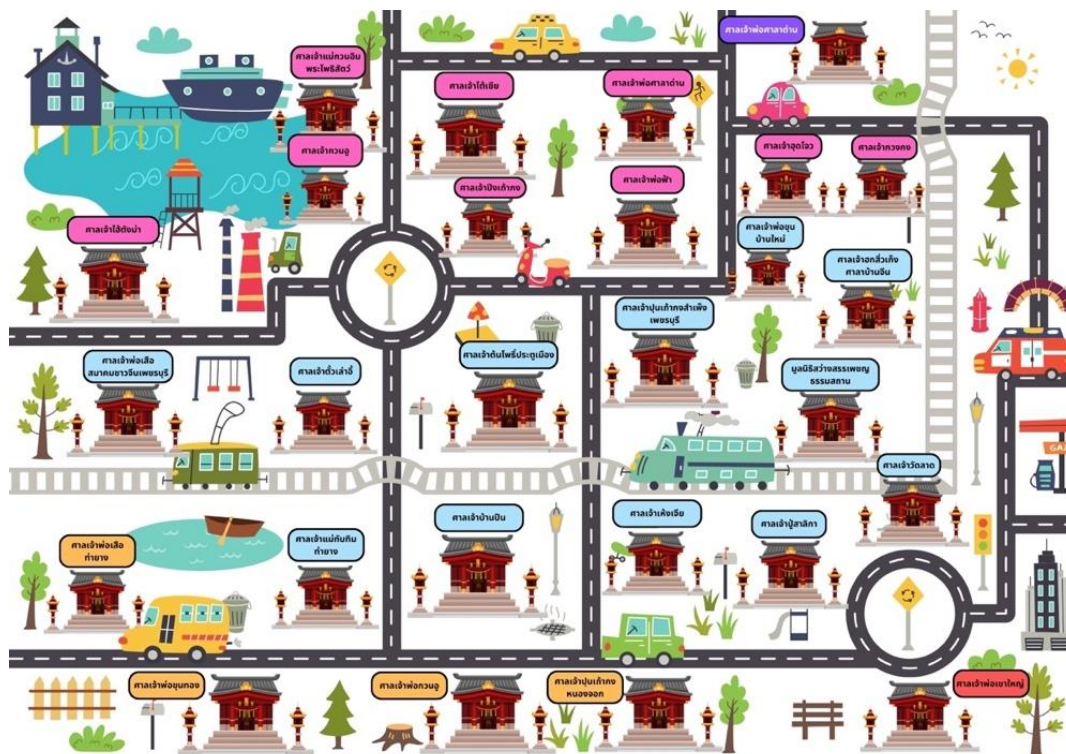


Figure 3 Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province

Field Research and Interviews with Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province: An Examination of the Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province

1. Physical Characteristics

The Shrines of Chinese origin located in Phetchaburi Province display distinctive architectural characteristics that embody a unique combination of traditional Chinese design and local Thai influences. The intricate design and adornment of these sanctuaries cultivate a sacred ambiance that reflects the faith and convictions of the community.

Architectural Characteristics:

Traditional Chinese Architecture:

- The majority of Shrines feature multi-tiered, sloped roofs in a pagoda style, adorned with dragon statues or graceful phoenixes at the apex, which symbolize prosperity and harmony.
- Chinese artisans have transmitted their genuine craftsmanship through generations, exemplified by materials such as vibrantly glazed ceramics, stone, and intricately carved wood.

Surrounding Area and Layout:

- According to the principles of feng shui, Shrines are often located in peaceful areas next to communities or water bodies like rivers or canals, reflecting the belief in the presence of positive energy.
- The Shrine's grounds frequently function as a venue for various events, including lion dances, ceremonies, and significant festivals.

Decoration and Motifs:

- Paintings or carvings that depict Chinese legends, including representations of divine conflicts or auspicious creatures like dragons, phoenixes, and tortoises, frequently adorn the walls of the Shrines.
- Decorations frequently use red and gold to symbolize wealth and fortune.

Essential Components of the Shrines:

Altar:

- Located at the heart of the sanctuary, the altar features statues of venerated deities, including the Goddess of the Sea, Guanyin, and the God of War, Guan Yu.
- The altar meticulously arranges incense, candles, and various offerings such as fruit, food, and joss paper.

Lamps and Auspicious Flags:

- Red lanterns are suspended throughout the Shrines, signifying illumination and the expulsion of malevolent entities.
- Chinese characters inscribe auspicious flags to enhance positive energy for visitors.

Incense Burners and Worship Areas:

- Rituals and ancestral veneration typically place incense burners in front of the altar.
- The Shrines' custodians and the surrounding community demonstrate their dedication by meticulously maintaining these worship areas.

Environment and Landscaping:

Gardens and Green Spaces:

- Quiet gardens adorned with trees and vibrant flowers often surround Chinese Shrines, fostering a serene atmosphere conducive to meditation.
- Certain gardens may incorporate statues of auspicious animals or small fountains, in alignment with beliefs aimed at promoting positive fortune.

Community Event Spaces:

- Certain Shrines offer designated areas for community gatherings or events, including performances of Chinese opera and cultural festivals.

Conclusion: The architectural context of Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province elegantly integrates genuine Chinese artistic and cultural attributes with regional influences. These sanctuaries serve not only as sacred spaces for religious observance but also as embodiments of the community's rich cultural heritage, illustrating a harmonious interplay between art, culture, and quotidian existence.



Figure 4 Hud Jow Shrine, Ban Laem (大聖廟)

2. Social Issues

The Chinese Shrines located in Phetchaburi Province function not solely as places of worship but also as significant social and cultural hubs. They play a crucial role in cultivating relationships between the local Chinese community and the Thai populace. The societal function of these Shrines underscores their significant role in unifying individuals, promoting communal solidarity, and shielding cultural identity.

The Societal Function of Chinese Shrines :

Community Center:

- Chinese Shrines function as pivotal gathering places for the Chinese community, especially during notable festivals such as the Chinese New Year, the Vegetarian Festival, and Ancestor Worship ceremonies.

- These are venues where individuals congregate for social engagements, including fundraising initiatives for those in need, the organization of community events, and the facilitation of charitable donations.

Promoting Unity within the Community:

- Shrines play a pivotal role in fortifying relationships among community members by facilitating participation in various activities, such as preparing meals for the Vegetarian Festival, performing lion dances during the Chinese New Year, and staging Chinese opera performances.
- These assemblies bring together individuals of diverse ages and social standings, promoting mutual understanding and harmony.

Preservation of Cultural Values:

- Chinese Shrines serve as important venues for the elderly to transmit traditions, beliefs, and customs to younger generations. This includes instruction in appropriate rituals, traditional culinary practices, and the sharing of Chinese legends.
- They play a pivotal role in preserving Chinese cultural identity within the community, engaging in activities that emphasize virtues such as filial piety and reverence for elders.

Relationship Between the Chinese and Thai Communities:

- Chinese Shrines offer opportunities for the Thai community to participate in a variety of activities and festivals, such as Chinese New Year rituals and the Vegetarian Festival.
- The integration of Chinese and Thai cultural practices within ceremonies and events fosters mutual understanding and collaboration between the two communities.

Unique Social Attributes:

Community Leadership:

- Community leaders, such as Shrine custodians and Shrine committees, frequently oversee Chinese Shrines, assuming essential responsibilities in orchestrating activities, administering operations, and upholding order within the Shrines.

Diversity of Participants:

- In addition to local Chinese residents, individuals from Thailand and vacationers of diverse backgrounds also engage in Shrines activities, thereby fostering a socially heterogeneous environment.

Ethical Education:

- Chinese Shrines advocate for moral values, including gratitude, unity, and mutual assistance, through their affiliated activities, thereby harmonizing with religious and spiritual principles.

Conclusion: The social function of Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi illustrates their multifaceted roles as spiritual and communal centers. They not only fulfill religious functions but also promote community cohesion, safeguard cultural heritage, and facilitate the integration of Chinese and Thai cultures. These Shrines play a significant role in fostering tranquil coexistence and promoting the sustainable development of a multicultural society in Phetchaburi.



Figure 5 Chinese New Year at Ton Pho Gate City Shrine (城隍古廟)

3. Economic Issues

The Chinese Shrines located in Phetchaburi Province significantly contribute to the local economy, impacting a range of economic factors. These Shrines catalyze economic activities by hosting festival events, thereby enhancing tourism and bolstering local enterprises. This illustrates the correlation between faith and economic development within the community.

The Economic Functions of Chinese Shrines :

Promotion of Tourism:

- The Chinese Shrines located in Phetchaburi draw the attention of both Thai nationals and international visitors, especially during significant festivals such as the Chinese New Year and the Vegetarian Festival.

- Tourism associated with Shrines, encompassing architectural visitation, engagement in rituals, and attendance at Chinese opera performances, contributes to the economic sustenance of the community.
- Shrine festivals, which include rituals and Chinese New Year celebrations, stimulate economic activity through the sale of cultural products like incense, vegetarian cuisine, and souvenirs.

Local vendors experience a rise in sales of food and festival-related merchandise.

Supporting Local Enterprises:

- The demand for festival-related products and services leads to the prosperity of businesses associated with shrine activities, such as floral arrangements, incense production, and event services.
- Local stores and restaurants in proximity to Shrines experience advantages from the influx of tourists and worshippers.

Community Fundraising:

- Shrines frequently conduct fundraising initiatives by soliciting gifts during festivals, with the revenues allocated for shrine maintenance and the support of public welfare projects, including aid for underprivileged community members.

Economic Impacts on the Community:

Job Creation and Income Generation:

- Events held at the Shrines generate transient employment opportunities, including the recruitment of personnel for event organization, Chinese opera performances, and festival preparations.
- Small enterprises in the region, including souvenir stores and dining establishments, derive advantages from the influx of visitors.

Economic Circulation within the Community:

- Shrines serve as pivotal hubs for fostering local economic circulation, especially during significant festivals.
- Contributions and philanthropic endeavors within Shrines serve as a reliable source of revenue, thereby facilitating both economic and social initiatives.

Local Development Through Shrines Activities:

- The funds raised are frequently designated for the enhancement of local infrastructure, which includes the restoration of roads, the creation of public spaces, and the establishment of educational scholarships.

In conclusion, Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi play a substantial role in bolstering the local economy by attracting tourism, facilitating festivals, and providing support to local enterprises.

Their relationship with the local economy exemplifies the function of Shrines as cultural hubs that promote sustainable economic development within the region. In addition to fulfilling religious requirements, these Shrines promote economic activity and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.



Figure 6 Celebrate Chinese New Year in Phetchaburi

4. Community Structure Around Shrines

The Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi function not solely as places of worship but also as community centers, wherein diverse organizations engage in the preservation and enhancement of these sacred sites. The composition of the community exemplifies the active engagement of various organizations in fostering cultural promotion and unity.

Community Elements within Chinese Shrines :

Immigrant Chinese Individuals and Their Descendants:

- The Chinese community, especially those originating from the Guangdong and Fujian provinces, constitutes the principal demographic surrounding the Shrines. Numerous individuals continue to preserve Chinese traditions by engaging in rituals and participating in shrine activities.

- The descendants of Chinese immigrants assume pivotal responsibilities in the preservation of cultural beliefs, the maintenance of the Shrines, and the organization of various activities.

Community Leaders and Shrines Committees:

- Community leaders make up Shrine committees, which are responsible for managing the Shrines, ensuring smooth operations, and organizing events.
- Leaders engage in collaboration with diverse community organizations, including efforts to secure funding for the development and preservation of the Shrines.

Devotees:

- Individuals who hold conviction in the potency of Chinese deities and the sanctity of the Shrines are integral to the practices of worship and ritual participation.
- This demographic encompasses local Chinese, Thai-Chinese, and Thai individuals who honor the tenets of the Shrines' beliefs.

Local Business Proprietors:

- Small businesses, such as retail establishments and dining venues, populate the vicinity surrounding the Shrines, catering to both worshippers and tourists.
- These entrepreneurs are instrumental in bolstering the local economy and invigorating the community during the Shrine's festivals and events.

The composition of the community surrounding Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi reflects a harmonious collaboration between Chinese descendants, community leaders, worshippers, and local business proprietors. This diversity of engagement plays a pivotal role in the preservation, advancement, and expansion of the Shrines while simultaneously augmenting their social and economic functions.



Figure 7 The community surrounding the Chinese Shrines of Ban Laem

The Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province are important places for prayer, but they are also important for culture, society, and business. They strike a nuanced equilibrium between safeguarding historical traditions and interacting with contemporary Thai society. These sanctuaries link diverse cultural practices, foster local economic growth, and fortify community bonds. The Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi are essential to the cultural fabric of the region, as they contribute to the harmonious coexistence of both Chinese and Thai cultures. This harmony is evident in the physical characteristics, social roles, economic influence, and community structure.

This investigation emphasizes the significance of these shrines in the development of the spiritual and material lives of their communities, emphasizing their role in the preservation of Chinese heritage, as well as the promotion of economic vitality and intercultural exchange.

Discussion

This research, "Exploring Chinese Culture through the Examination of Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province," has investigated the multifaceted function of Chinese shrines as cultural, social, and economic institutions in a Thai-Chinese context. The results emphasize the significance of these monuments in the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of community development. The findings of this section are critically analyzed, the broader implications are contemplated, and the research's primary constraints are examined.

Physical Characteristics



The architectural elements of the Chinese sanctuaries in Phetchaburi are distinctive in that they combine traditional Chinese symbolism with Thai aesthetics. Their design, which is characterized by curved rooftops, crimson and gold decor, and symbolic iconography, enhances both spiritual and cultural engagement. Not only are these physical spaces aesthetically significant, but they also serve as platforms for public gatherings and cultural transmission. This architectural uniqueness is indicative of a syncretism that may be distinct from shrines in Bangkok or Phuket, where urbanization frequently influences more modern or commercialized designs. Further reinforcing their spiritual and cultural resonance are the monuments' placement near water bodies and the adherence to Feng Shui principles.

Social Issues

The research substantiates the function of shrines as intergenerational social centers, where community values are reinforced through educational activities, rituals, and festivals. These events foster a sense of unity among Thai-Chinese descendants and provide opportunities for the education of younger generations in the field of culture. Elders and community leaders serve as informal educators in this context, thereby bridging the cultural divide between the past and the present. Nevertheless, the shrines in Phetchaburi maintain a more localized, community-centered role, contrary to larger urban shrines that may attract national or international visitors. Such an approach arguably makes cultural transmission more intimate, but it also makes it more susceptible to generational shifts and urban migration.

Economic Issues

The research determined that Chinese shrines make substantial contributions to local economies by facilitating fundraising for public initiatives, supporting nearby businesses, and enticing visitors during significant festivals. These results are consistent with recent regional studies (Lee, J, 2021) that show how religious festivals in Southeast Asia act as catalysts for microeconomic growth. However, the seasonal nature of these festivals hinders their consistent economic influence throughout the year. Furthermore, the absence of formal institutional support or younger successors raises concerns regarding the organization's long-term sustainability, as it is reliant on volunteer-led management.

Community Structure Around Shrines

The structure that envelops shrine communities—which includes local residents, youth, travelers, and descendants of Chinese immigrants—exemplifies a collaborative model of cultural preservation. The preservation of traditions and the organization of events that involve various social groups are the primary responsibilities of shrine committees. This decentralized model may result in inconsistencies in preservation strategies and varying interpretations of cultural authenticity, although it encourages community participation. Comparative research with shrine





networks in urban centers like Bangkok indicates that formal institutional support and government funding may improve preservation efforts; however, they can also introduce top-down control that restricts grassroots agency.

Constraints of the Research

The geographical scope of this investigation is restricted to Phetchaburi Province, which may not accurately reflect the diversity of Chinese shrine practices encountered throughout Thailand. The visibility of shrine activities and economic impact may have been influenced by the seasonal nature of data collection, which is often centered around significant festivals. Additionally, community pride or social expectations may influence interviewee responses, potentially introducing bias due to their idealized perceptions of cultural continuity.

Future Research and Broader Implications

This research adds to the discussion about religious heritage and culture in Southeast Asia by looking at shrine practices in relation to preserving heritage and involving the community. In the future, comparative studies that examine shrines in more commercialized or international contexts (e.g., Bangkok, Phuket, Penang) could enhance comprehension of the ways in which localization, modernization, and tourism influence the function and perception of Chinese shrines. There is also the potential for longitudinal studies to explore the manner in which cultural knowledge is either retained or transformed over the course of generations.

Conclusions

Exploring Chinese culture through the Chinese sanctuaries of Phetchaburi Province provides valuable insights into the traditions, beliefs, and lifestyles of the local Chinese-Thai community. Although these shrines are predominantly religious in nature, they also function as dynamic centers for the transmission of cultural traditions across generations. This observation is consistent with Smith, J., (2020), who underscores the importance of religious spaces as critical platforms for the preservation and dissemination of cultural identity within communities and the same Ninsanguandechea, J., (2018) states that They built shrines according to their own language group to pay respects to the gods they worshipped. The shrines can be regarded as religious centers and sites of religious significance that embody the cultural symbolism that substantiated the establishment of Chinese communities in the region. They exhibit the beliefs and rituals that are emblematic of this tradition.

The findings of this study, based on interviews and field observations, indicate that participants, especially younger people, can gain a more profound understanding of cultural values and practical knowledge of rituals by taking part in activities at shrines, such as honoring ancestors, celebrating Chinese New Year, and worshipping deities. These observations are in





accordance with Wang, L., & Li, J.,(2018), who contend that participating in cultural activities fosters the development of intercultural knowledge and promotes intergenerational cultural continuity.

Additionally, the shrines' visual and architectural characteristics—such as ornate rooftops, dragon motifs, red-and-gold color schemes, and symbolic elements that are anchored in Feng Shui—act as potent educational instruments that captivate learners and enhance their cultural engagement. Similar to Liu, Y., Zhang, H., & Chen, W.,(2019), cultural symbols that are incorporated into art and architecture have the potential to improve both learning outcomes and interest, particularly among younger audiences.

This investigation has yielded several significant conclusions:

1. Cultural learning is experiential, derived from communal celebrations, storytelling, and rituals that offer immersive and meaningful educational experiences. Shrine sites are examples of these experiential learning environments.
2. Shrine architecture's visual symbolism functions as a catalyst for cultural engagement, fostering a passion for Chinese heritage, particularly among young people.
3. The effective transmission of values and traditions within the community is facilitated by intergenerational participation, which reinforces cultural continuity.

Policy Implications:

To enhance the educational opportunities in Chinese sanctuaries, we recommend that educational institutions and local governments work together.

- Incorporate shrine-based learning into community education programs by utilizing festivals, rituals, and traditional arts as opportunities for experiential learning.
- Collaborate with shrine committees to coordinate cultural workshops, guided tours, and school field visits that are consistent with the objectives of the curriculum.
- Offer financial and logistical assistance for events that promote intercommunity dialogue, inclusivity, and cultural understanding.

In summary, this investigation underscores the multifaceted function of Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province, which serve as not only sacrosanct religious landmarks but also as essential hubs for community development and cultural education. By promoting harmonious coexistence within Thailand's multicultural society and preserving Chinese heritage, stakeholders can support these monuments as educational and cultural assets.

Recommendation

1. Recommendations for Practical Implications

1.1 Promotion of Chinese Shrines in Phetchaburi Province as Cultural Learning Centers





It is advised that initiatives be implemented to establish and advance Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province as cultural learning centers. These endeavors would offer the general public, travelers, and researchers the opportunity to access information regarding historical and cultural heritage. Organizing exhibitions on the history of Thai-Chinese communities, conducting cultural and artistic seminars, and organizing educational cultural excursions are among the recommended activities.

1.2 The Thai-Chinese Community's Contribution to Cultural Preservation and Transmission

The Thai-Chinese community in Phetchaburi Province should be provided with assistance to ensure that their cultural heritage is preserved and transmitted to the broader public. Initiatives that are recommended include the organization of cultural festivals, the exchange of personal narratives and community experiences, and the collaboration with public and private sectors to elevate Chinese sanctuaries as sustainable educational centers.

1.3 The Development of Digital Media to Promote Chinese Shrines and Culture in Phetchaburi

It is recommended that digital media, including websites, mobile applications, and online documentaries, be developed and produced to disseminate information about the function of Chinese shrines and the importance of Chinese culture in Phetchaburi Province to both domestic and international audiences.

2. Recommendations for Further Research

2.1 Research on Thai-Chinese Youth Activation in Historical and Artistic Preservation

Additional research should investigate the role of Thai-Chinese adolescents in the preservation and transmission of their communities' cultural heritage. This investigation encompasses an analysis of their motivations and the identification of effective strategies for involving the younger generation in the preservation of cultural identity.

2.2 A Comparison of the Functions of Chinese Shrines in Different Regions of Thailand

In order to investigate the functions of Chinese shrines in Phetchaburi Province in comparison to those in other regions of Thailand, comparative research is encouraged. These studies would enhance comprehension of cultural diversity, preservation strategies, and community involvement in various socio-cultural contexts.

2.3 Examining the Influence of Digital Technology on the Promotion of Chinese Culture

Additional research should evaluate the potential and influence of digital technologies, including mobile applications and social media platforms, on the promotion of Chinese culture within local communities. The sustainability and efficacy of these digital strategies should also be assessed.





References

- Angrosino, M. (2007). *Doing ethnographic and observational research*. Sage.
- Chan, M., & Sim, H. (2022). *Cultural continuity and change in East Asian religious practices*. Singapore: Heritage Studies Press.
- Chen, J., & Gao, L. (2019). Chinese shrines as cultural heritage: A study of religious practices and community identity. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 78(3), 321–336.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Lee, J. (2021). Religious festivals and microeconomic stimulation in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Cultural Studies*, 15(2), 102–118.
- Lee, M. (2021). Economic contributions of Chinese temples to local communities. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 58(2), 145–162.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Liu, H., & Lin, C. (2020). The role of Chinese shrines in cultural identity and heritage preservation. *Asian Cultural Studies*, 47(1), 78–94.
- Liu, Y., Zhang, H., & Chen, W. (2019). Cultural symbols in architecture: Enhancing cultural learning and public engagement. *Journal of Architectural Studies*, 15(2), 123–135.
- Ninsa-nguandechea, J. (2018). Chinese shrines: Faith in Thai society. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 37(1), 45–70.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Rujirasirikul, M. (2021). *Chinese shrines in Mueang Chiang Mai: Styles and concepts of religious artworks of the overseas Chinese between the late 19th century to the late 20th century* [Master's thesis, Silpakorn University].
- Smith, J. (2020). Religious spaces as cultural transmitters: Exploring the role of sacred sites in community identity. *Cultural Heritage Review*, 12(4), 45–67.
- Tan, J. (2015). Architecture and symbolism in Chinese temples: A case study of Southeast Asia. *Journal of Asian Architecture*, 19(3), 305–322.
- Tanrattanapong, T. (2023). The City Pillar Shrine and Chinese community beliefs in Songkhla. *RUSAMILAE Journal*, 44(2), 82–99. <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/rusamelae/article/view/268933>





- Thakolprajak, S., & Numtong, K. (2017). Survey and collection of Chinese cultural knowledge of joss houses in Thailand through Thailand's internet database. *Chinese Studies Journal*, 10(2), 87–125.
- Thammachong, N. (2013). *The economic and social roles of the Chinese shrines in Photharam Ratchaburi Province* [Master's thesis, Rangsit University].
- Wang, L., & Li, J. (2018). Cultural activities and their impact on youth engagement in traditional heritage. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(3), 98–112.
- Wang, Y. (2013). *Chinese religious practices and their influence on community development*. Beijing: China University Press.
- Zhang, X. (2017). Community engagement and social cohesion in Chinese temples. *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 42(4), 201–220.

