

Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai and Identity Construction through Cremation Volumes

Published from 1957 to 2014

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Abstract

This study analyzed identity construction through the cremation volumes of Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai that were published from 1957 to 2014. Cremation volumes, which are unique to Thailand, are books composed as memorials to the deceased and distributed at Buddhist funerals. The study found that in the cremation books published during the period 1957-1992, when the Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai did not feel accepted by Thai society, the only aspect of Chinese identity they revealed was that of the Chinese names of the deceased and their parents. Other aspects of Chinese identity did not appear; instead, the focus was on Thai and Northern Thai identity. Later, from 1993 to 2014, as the Thai Chinese became more accepted by Thai society, they increasingly disclosed their Chinese identity through detailed biographies of ancestors, Chinese language characters, specific positive Chinese characteristics of the deceased, and the use of pictures portraying Chinese traditions.

Keywords: cremation volumes, Thai Chinese, Chiang Mai, Chinese identity, Chinese Thai

Introduction

In the 1940s, Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram, then Prime Minister of Thailand,¹ fearing that economic domination by Thai Chinese might develop and affect the stability of the country, adopted nationalist economic policies regarding ethnic Chinese people in Thailand.

¹ Plaek Phibulsongkram was Prime Minister of Thailand twice, from 1938-1944 and 1948-1957.

For example, the Chinese, who had occupied the country's rice trading industry for 50 years, were forced to sell their rice mills and rice trading businesses to the government. Moreover, laws were announced to prevent Thai Chinese from having certain occupations, such as fishing and working as government officials (Songprasert, 1976). In addition, Chinese newspapers were shut down as the government claimed that they inspired patriotism toward China and antagonism toward Japan, a Thai ally at that time. The government referred to the Chinese in Thailand as "a dangerous people." This xenophobic attitude could be seen clearly when Luang Wichit Wathakan, the brainpower behind Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram (Siripaisan, 2007), in July 1938, compared the Thai Chinese to the Jews in Europe and recommended that they be dealt with in the same way that Hitler had done (Songprasert, 1976).

Subsequently, world politics entered the period of the Cold War – the conflict between the so-called free world (led by the United States) and communism (led by the Soviet Union). When the Communist Party took power in 1949, China was viewed as a threat to Thailand because of its close geographical proximity. This was especially true in 1957 under the dictatorship government led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat when Thailand was allied with the United States in resisting communism (Eaksittipong, 2010). In addition to the closing of newspapers (Pimthong, 2016), Chinese schools were closely observed, and during the period 1948-1966, as many as 104 were closed (Eaksittipong, 2010).

It is clear that powerful people and the Thai government viewed the Thai Chinese with suspicion for more than 50 years. This resulted in an identity crisis among Thai Chinese not only in Bangkok, but also in Chiang Mai, the country's second-most prosperous province. Chiang Mai became a restricted area for foreigners in 1943, and thus the Thai Chinese living there had to migrate to other provinces.² At the same time, Thailand eliminated the Chinese associations known as *Angyii*,

² An example is the case of Thaokae Awo or Chu Osathaphant, a Cantonese Chinese who owned various businesses in Chiang Mai, such as gold, gun, alcohol tax, opium tax monopoly, had to move with his family to Thung Maha Mek in Bangkok for one year (Khananaphon, 2008).

which had been formed by overseas Chinese as a means of mutual support.³ Moreover, some schools were accused of being affiliated with these associations and were closed, disrupting the lives of Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai.⁴

From 1993 onwards, however, this hostile policy slowly began to change because of the end of the Cultural Revolution as well as China's market-oriented policy and its gradual economic growth. At the same time, the Thai Chinese were becoming successful in business, bureaucratic, and political realms, and they started to reveal their Chinese identity instead of trying to cover it up as before.

The change in the expression of Thai Chinese identity can be studied from various kinds of historical evidence, such as Chinese newspapers, shrines, and oral history interviews. However, one type of important historical evidence that has been overlooked is that of cremation volumes. These books are written as memorials of the deceased and are distributed at funerals. They usually contain the life history of the one who passed away, some writings by their loved ones, and other contents perceived to be useful to the readers who may or may not participate in the funeral. This is a gesture of love and respect and a way to make merit for the deceased by disseminating knowledge.

Over the years, the extent to which Chinese identity in Chiang Mai was disclosed in cremation books changed in line with local and national contexts. During the earlier period, the Thai Chinese chose to conceal their identity and demonstrate their Thainess instead. However, from 1992 onwards, they were proud to reveal their identity. This change

³ These associations or societies, according to Chia (2020), are "remembered as mafia-like organizations, with connections to the Chinese triads that rule the gambling dens in Cambodia. However, the *Angyii*'s' political significance and dealings with the economic underworld were fragments of the multi-faceted role they played in the lives of overseas Chinese. They acted as trade unions, welfare associations, racketeers, and transfer agents. Most surprisingly, by the end of the Cold War, many had transformed into legal entities, as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and philanthropic foundations."

⁴ Wimon Suttasiri, a vendor at Warorot Market recalled, "While I was enjoying my studies, the school was closed. I have heard senior people say that Police General Phao Siyanon ordered the elimination of the Chinese associations in Chiang Mai. Chinese vendors who founded the association and donated money to help Hua Ying Schools were accused of being a part of a mafia. They were banished to Nakhon Sawan and Phichit (Apavatjrut, 2009).

leads to the following research questions. How did the Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai construct their identity in cremation volumes from 1957 to 2014? What are the differences in which Chinese identity was disclosed in these books during each period? And what are the factors and contexts of those differences?

In this research project, 45 cremation books that were published from 1957 to 2014 were studied. The historical research approach was used to identify and analyze important issues by considering the period of time related to the changing contexts. Cremation volumes are strong evidence of the change in the identity of Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai.

Identity Building through Cremation Volumes from 1957 to 1992

Cremation volumes comprise a literary tradition that is unique to Thailand. The practice of presenting cremation books to guests attending funerals and cremations began during the reign of King Rama 3 (1824-1851) (Nana, 2018) and became more prevalent in the era of King Chulalongkorn, also known as Rama 5 (1868-1910). The first cremation volume in Thailand, published in 1880, contained Buddhist prayers and was presented at the joint funeral of Somdej Phra Nang Chao Sunandha Kumarirat, the king's wife, and their daughter, Princess Kannabhom Bejaratana, who died together in a tragic boating accident. Ten thousand copies were printed to be offered to all monks in Thailand (Chapaisalsin, 1999). Originally, publishing a cremation volume was not easy, since the sponsor needed to have sufficient money, manpower, and prestige (Harnnapha, 1963), which only the royal family and upper-class people had. However, late in the reign of King Rama 5 and at the beginning of King Rama 6 era (1910-1925), there was a rapid increase in the number of printing houses, making the publication of cremation volumes less costly and more popular among all classes.

Although the publishing of cremation volumes began in Bangkok, it gradually spread to other parts of Thailand, including Chiang Mai. From 1957 on, the first Chiang Mai people who started sponsoring and distributing cremation volumes were upper-class people, such as

government officers and merchants. Some of these people were Thai Chinese. Nevertheless, in the years 1957-1992, their Chinese identity was not revealed in the cremation volumes, apart from brief mention in the biography of the Chinese names of the deceased and their parents, which clearly reflected Chinese identity. For instance, the cremation volume of Mrs. Ki Limtrakul mentions that in 1937 she migrated from Suphan Buri province to open a tobacco curing business in Chiang Mai (Nernhard, 2005). Her Chinese identity appears only in the brief sentence: "Mrs. Ki Limtrakul is the daughter of Mr. Ku and Mrs. Hia, who are from Damneon Saduok, Ratchaburi province" (Phra Panyananthamuni, 1968). The names Ku and Hia are Chinese, not Thai names. The rest of the volume focuses on her generosity, such as her continuous contributions to the Chiang Mai community.

Similarly, the cremation volume of Kingkaew Wiboolsanti emphasized her donations. Her Chinese background could only be detected in the reference to her ancestors, who had moved from Bangkok to Lamphun because of the intervention of the *chao mueang*, or city ruler, who thought that Chinese people could contribute to the city's prosperity. The sentence reads:

At that time, the Lamphun *chao mueang* was granted an audience with King Rama I (reigned 1782-1809) in Bangkok. Impressed by Bangkok's prosperous trade, made mainly by Chinese people, he requested the King to allow some Chinese people to move to Lamphun and open businesses there. King Rama I responded positively by convincing the Ounchanum family, headed by Pho Thao Yunam and Mae Thao Bunnak, to move to Lamphun to start their business (Chotmanto, 1966).

Similarly, the cremation volumes of people in the Nimmanaheminda family reveal very little of their Chinese identity. The cremation volume of Pisut Nimmanaheminda, published in 1985, focuses on his work as chairman of the Bank of Thailand and manager of the Exchange Equalization Fund. The only sentence that reveals his Chinese identity is one that mentions the names of his parents: "Mr. Pisut Nimmanaheminda,

the son of Mr. Ki and Mrs. Kimhor Nimmanaheminda, was born on 23 May, 1915" (*Anuson nai ngan phraratchathan phloeng sop nai Pisut Nimmanaheminda*, 1985).

Chinese identity was revealed only minimally during this period because it was viewed negatively for a number of reasons. One was fear of Mainland China, which became communist in October 1949, when the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong defeated the Kuomintang Party of Chiang Kai-Shek and took power in China. Mao changed the country's name to the People's Republic of China and governed through communism. Moreover, during the year 1966-1976, China was in midst of the Cultural Revolution. The Communist Party supported the Red Guard, a sociopolitical movement consisting of high school and university students who engaged in extremely violent acts, including public humiliation and physical abuse of their elders and teachers. The Red Guard was founded to suppress those who supported capitalism and those who opposed the policies of the party. The Communist Party destroyed ancient cultural sites of China and demolished public and private properties that they viewed as capitalistic or "bourgeois" (Chokmukda, 2012).

The second reason the Chinese were viewed negatively was that Thailand was an ally of the United States in opposing communism. The Cold War, which began around 1947 between the United States and the communist block led by the Soviet Union, affected the allies of each. The Thai government put pressure on Chinese people in Thailand through such measures as the closing of suspected newspapers and schools, the compulsion to sing the Thai national anthem in Chinese schools, an increase in foreigners' registration fees from 200 to 400 baht, and an act to oppose communism (Skinner, 2005).

In 1978, however, after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the opening of China's economy to the outside world, the Thai state put less pressure on the Thai Chinese. In addition, in 1980 the government adopted order 66/2523, granting amnesty to communist cadres, which led to the decline of the Communist Party of Thailand and its insurgency, and eventually to the end of the war between the Thai military and the

CPT (Suksaranchit, 2015). However, the Thai Chinese remained cautious and continued to present their Thainess in order to be safe and create a good image. Concerning Thainess, it has been defined in various ways, including being loyal to the Nation, the Religion, and the King. Thus, being a good Buddhist could enable an unaccepted person to become accepted. The cremation volume of Rueang Nimmanaheminda contains a journal written by Kimhor Nimmanaheminda (Rueang's mother). She wrote to Rueang before his journey overseas to further his studies. The journal explicitly portrayed Ruang's and the family's devotion to Buddhism.

Today is the first day of 1937 and it is your important day as you made a vow to be a Buddhist in the *wihan* of Wat Ketkaram before noon. Since you have to leave home to study abroad, I hope you realize that our family has been Buddhist for a long time. Buddhism will help guide you to live your life in a proper way in the future (*Anuson nai ngan chapanakit sop nai Rueang Nimmanaheminda*, 1992)

Another example is the cremation volume of Kraisri Nimmanaheminda, which focused on the funeral ceremony conducted in the Lanna⁵ tradition, thus portraying how much he supported Lanna traditional culture. The publication emphasized Kraisri Nimmanaheminda's hard work to preserve local art and culture (Payomyong, 1992).

Identity Building through Cremation Volumes from 1993 to 2014

From 1993 on, there was an obvious change in the cremation books of Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai as they began to reveal their Chinese identity. The significant factors behind this change include important

⁵ Lanna or Lan Na (the Kingdom of a Million Rice Fields) was a Buddhist state during the 13th-18th centuries. The kingdom was centered in present-day northern Thailand. In 1775, it became part of Siam under King Taksin of Thonburi, and Siam's tributary state under the succeeding Chakri Dynasty (1782-present). Under Siamese suzerainty, Lanna was divided into five principalities, namely Chiang Mai, Nan, Lampang, Lamphun, and Phrae (Terwiel, 2011; London, 2019).

development on both the world and national levels. In China, after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978, his successor Deng Xiaoping instituted an economic revolution by releasing the production capacity and opening up the country. China absorbed resources for production from the outside and believed it was the way to modernize socialism (Chokmokda, 2012). When China opened, its huge labor and consumption market enabled the country to become economically powerful very rapidly. Thus, the Thai view of China changed dramatically; after having been viewed as an evil communist country, China became a gigantic export market with which the Thai wanted to have contact. Thus, the image of the Thai Chinese also became more positive (Suksaranchit, 2015).

As the Thai Chinese succeeded in businesses, they endeavored to become politicians to protect and advance their businesses. From 1993 on, there were many Thai Chinese who played important roles in Thai politics. The most famous and highly-accepted Thai Chinese politician was Chuan Leekpai. He was elected representative of Trang province to the national parliament in 1969 and was re-elected nine consecutive times. He eventually became Thailand's prime minister in 1992.⁶ Another example is Banharn Silpa-archa, a Chaozhou Chinese. He started in business as a construction contractor in Suphan Buri province. He was elected representative for seven consecutive times from 1976 to 1995. He then became the Thai prime minister in 1995 (Kampitak, 2016).

The success of these and many other Thai Chinese politicians shows that Thai Chinese have become accepted and welcomed in Thai society. Banharn Silpa-archa, as prime minister in 1996, built the Dragon Descendants' Museum to celebrate the 20th year of the relationship between Thailand and China. This museum is intended to serve as a knowledge resource for those interested in Chinese ethics in living their lives (Kampitak, 2016).

⁶ Chuan Leekpai, a third-generation Thai Chinese (ethnic Hokkien) from southern Thailand, served as the Thai prime minister from 20 September 1992 to 19 May 1995 and again from 9 November 1997 to 9 February 2001 (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2005). He is presently President of the National Assembly of Thailand and the Speaker of the Thai House of Representatives.

In 1993, more Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai became successful politicians, as can be seen in the number of the representatives elected that year. Before 1993, those who were elected were from a small number of Chinese families in Chiang Mai, namely the Chutima family (Suwit Pantaset, Thongdi Itsarachiwin and Kraisorn Tantipong), the Nimmanaheminda family (Sukit Nimmanaheminda, and the Shinawatra family (Boonlert and Suraphan Shinawatra) (Methiphokpong, 2008). In 1993, candidates from more Chinese families were elected. For instance, Sraphol Kietchayakorn, who was elected representative for many times, was descended from a Chinese merchant who owned a large grocery store in Chom Thong district (Nernhard, 2012). In addition, Surapong Tovichakchaikul from the Tovichakchaikul family who owned a business in Warorot Market was also elected in 1996. Another family was Buranupakorn, who began a grocery business at Warorot Market that later sold traditional clothes and wood crafts (Khananaphon, 2008). This family played a very important role in local administration. In 2001, Pakorn Buranupakorn was elected representative (Methiphokpong, 2008). After the Thai Chinese succeeded in local administration and politics in Thailand, Chinese heritage was seen in a more positive light. The Thai Chinese then revealed their identity openly in the cremation volumes.

The Influence of the *Lod Lai Mangkon* Drama

The presentation of the *Lod Lai Mangkon* drama on Channel 7 in 1992 was an important turning point in Chinese identity. It is the story of penniless Chinese immigrants in Thailand who toiled day and night, governed by a sense of diligence and ethics, to finally achieve financial success. In the past, Chinese identity had been presented negatively in Thai literature and dramas. The Thai Chinese were mainly depicted as villains, gangsters, or comedians who could not pronounce Thai correctly (Tejapira, 1994). However, the main lead role in *Lod Lai Mangkon* was a Chinese person who proudly showed his Chinese identity in an acceptable way. For instance, his frugality meant that he would be wealthy in the future. Moreover, the drama showed that

he loved Thailand; even when he was so ill that he nearly died, he held a Thai baht coin in his hand and gazed at the likeness of the king on it. After the drama was broadcast the radio program, "Smile Radio," asked Thai Chinese in the audience to phone in and tell their Chinese family names. Countless people responded and revealed Chinese family names (Tejapira, 1994).

The changing political, economic, and social situation in China and Thailand as well as the relationship between the two countries have gradually changed the image of Thai Chinese in Thai society in a positive way. The cremation volumes published in Chiang Mai clearly show that Thai Chinese in this province have presented their identity in a way that is very different from the past - they increasingly show their Chinese identity openly with pride, as will be discussed below.

The Emphasis on the Biography of Chinese Ancestors

From 1993 on, cremation volumes of Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai reveal more details about their Chinese identity, including the biographies of their ancestors, their Chinese and family names, and facts about their migration from China or their relatives in China. The cremation volume of Mr. Khai Apavatjrut, the owner of the Xing Guong shoe store in Warorot Market, told of the migration of Thai Chinese to Thailand and Chiang Mai and his biography, which was related to Chinese history in order to show his pride in being Chinese.

Aoiangkhai was born on 1 January, 1919. He was the youngest son of the Aoiang family, which was a merchant family. His father's name was Aoiang Yiangong. His mother was Khoo Huiklang. Of more than 100 Chinese families, most had one-syllable family names. Aoiang was one of the few families that had a two-syllable family name. "Aoiang" means the sun. It was written in Chinese history that Aoiangsun, one of the ancestors of this family, was a philosopher in the Tang Dynasty (*Chak Yieopheng su Chiang Mai: Chiwit lae phonngan khong nai Khai Apavatjrut*, 1997).

Similarly, the cremation volume of Kwang Rieothianchai, founder of Tara Company Limited, Chiang Mai Tara Phan CO., LTD, and Mazda Chiang Mai CO., LTD, revealed his pride in his Chinese identity as follows:

Dad followed traditions strictly. He never forgot important Chinese and Thai days. He paid respect to the ancestors properly. He reminded us that we must not forget our roots. It can be seen clearly why Dad had happiness and prosperity throughout his life (*Prawat khun Kwang Rieothianchai*, 1995).

The Use of Chinese Language in Cremation Volumes

In many of the later cremation volumes, Chinese language was used in some passages, especially in the biography of the deceased. Most of these biographies were journals written by the deceased while they were alive, such as the biography of Yongsiang Saeung. He wrote his story in Chinese and his descendants translated it into Thai (*Chiwaprawat khong khaphachao Yongsiang Saeng*, 2006). He had migrated from Shantou and started his business by opening a grocery and a stationary store in Chum Saeng district, Nakhon Sawan province.

Another example is found in the cremation volume of Kwang Rieothienchai which contains the handwritten thank-you note in Chinese that he had written for his friends when they visited him while he was hospitalized (*Prawat Khun Kwang Rieothianchai*, 1995). The presentation of the Chinese script written by *Khun* Kwang shows his pride in his Chinese identity as well as his ability to maintain Chinese culture through the use of language.

The Emphasis on Gratitude, Diligence, Patience, and Frugality

Before 1993, typical positive Chinese characteristics of the deceased such as gratitude, diligence, patience, and frugality, were sometimes presented in cremation volumes. From 1993 on, these characteristics were mentioned much more often. For example, the cremation volume of Ladda Pantapa, quoted her view of gratitude. "Nowadays, people no longer care about gratitude. As for me, I never forget if someone

helps me. I will try to repay them. This is very important for a good life" (*Chiwaprawat Khunnai Ladda Pantapa*, 2008).

In addition to gratitude, other characteristics of Thai Chinese that were always mentioned were frugality and industriousness. An example can be seen in the cremation volume of Chakching Saetang, who owned Srichaipanich which sells toys and plastic products on Wichayanon Road.

Dad was frugal like other Chinese people. One pot of boiled rice would last for three meals. On Chinese New Year, we ate chicken and duck. Then we made stew with the leftover duck, as well as chicken, duck eggs, and pork belly. When there was no meat left, we added vegetables, and we could eat the Chinese vegetable soup for two weeks. Dad worked very hard because he wanted his children to be highly educated (*Thiraluk ngan chaopanakit sop nai Chakching Saetang*, 2002).

Similar characteristics are described in the cremation volume of Amporn Wangpreedalertkul, a Chinese woman who after starting her business in Sukhothai province, began to sell eyeglasses and watches in Chiang Mai in 1968.

Throughout her life, Amporn Wanglertpreedakul always had perseverance. She was a good role model for her children and grandchildren. She was hardworking and grateful to her parents. Until the end of her life, she taught her children to be good people for society (*Duai rak yingyai khun mae Amporn Wangpreedelertkul*, 2013).

The Construction of Both Thai Chinese and Local Identity

From 1993 on, the cremation volumes of Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai still focused on Thainess and their identity as local Chiang Mai people. Both characteristics seem to have become part of Chinese identity which allowed the Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai to feel more at ease. As discussed earlier, Thainess has been constructed to include loyalty to the Nation, Religion, and Monarchy. The cremation volume of Khai Apavatjrut described him as a faithful Buddhist.

As he had strong faith in Buddhism, Mr. Khai was ordained at Wat Saenfang in July, 1986 when he was 70 years old. His Buddhist name was Abhasaro Bhikkhu, which means a person who has character. Throughout his life, he wanted to be ordained (*Chak Yieopheng su Chiang Mai: Chiwit lae phonngan khong nai Khai Apavatjrut*, 1997).

The Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai, especially those whose relatives received a royally-sponsored cremation, also paid respect to the royal family. It can be seen in the cremation volume of Apa Prathom Ueatrongjit, a businessman who was the distributor of Thai-Denmark milk, Foremost milk, and Oyster brand fish sauce in Chiang Mai (*Thiraluk ngan phraratchathan phlaeng sop apa Prathom Uatrongchit*, 2007).

Although most Thai Chinese were presented in the cremation volumes more frequently as Thai than as local Chiang Mai people, some were remembered for using their local Lanna identity as a way of connecting with the people in the area. An example can be seen in the cremation volume of Pakorn Buranupakorn, a famous local politician in Chiang Mai who owned a teak furniture factory.

While he was a politician, he was constantly meeting people. He always practiced Lanna traditions; for example, he spoke the northern dialect whenever he went upcountry and wore traditional northern clothes. His image was that of a local politician in local clothing (*Anuson ngan phraratchathan phloeng sop nai Pakorn Buranupakorn*, 2013).

Lanna identity was also presented in the cremation volume of Ladda Pantapa, which stated that she was on the board of Satri Si Lanna cultural association, which works to preserve and promote Chiang Mai culture and tradition. "Mom was always chosen to be on fundraising committees and worked in many other sections. She was always willing to do the work she was assigned if she had time and could do it" (*Chiwaprawat khunnai Ladda Pantapa*, 2008).

The Use of Activity Pictures to Portray Chinese Identity

During this period, we can also observe that pictures were included in cremation books to show the activities of the Thai Chinese, as well as their traditions and cultural practices. The cremation volume of Thongyoo Towiwat is a good example. She began her business in Prachin Buri province and later moved to Chiang Mai and ran a large rice milling business (*Thiraluk nuang nai ngan chapanakit sop khun mae Thongyoo Towiwat*, 2002). Her cremation volume includes pictures of her while she and other Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai were celebrating the 53rd anniversary of the People's Republic of China. Other examples can be found in the cremation volume of Khai Apavatjrut, where he is photographed standing next to the Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Chiang Mai and at the 11th anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Chinese Merchant Association (*Chak Yieopheng su Chiang Mai: Chiwit lae phonngan khong nai Khai Apavatjrut*, 1997). Social relationships and connections with high-ranking Chinese diplomats and the Chinese association as well as participation in important national events of China were presented to show their pride in their Chinese identity.

Conclusion

The cremation volumes of the Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai from 1957 to 2014 show an obvious change in the extent to which Chinese identity was revealed. From 1957 to 1992, Thai Chinese seldom revealed their Chinese identity because they were not well accepted in Thai society and because China was a communist country. At the same time, Thailand was allied with the United States in opposing communism during the Cold War. Consequently, Thai Chinese were viewed negatively. This research found that Thai Chinese in Chiang Mai avoided revealing their Chinese identity in the cremation volumes, but chose to show their Thainess and their feeling of being part of the Chiang Mai community. However, from 1993 onwards, they began showing their identity more openly. This change was due to the end of the Cultural Revolution,

the opening of China, and the economic growth in the Chinese market economy. China soon became one of the world's economic superpowers eclipsing its communist image. Concerning Thai contexts, the Thai Chinese were successful in doing business both at the local and national levels and became the elites in the bureaucracy and the political sphere. The broadcast of *Lod Lai Mangkon* drama in 1992 was another turning point of Thai Chinese identity in Thailand - from being viewed as a villain, mafioso and comedian to a hardworking, patient, wealthy person. Moreover, Thai Chinese were good at doing business and were grateful to their ancestors' birthplace as well as to Thailand. All of these factors contributed to the change in which Thai Chinese identity was expressed more openly and with pride. Aspects of Thai Chinese identity found in the cremation volumes in this period include the presentation of the biographies of Chinese ancestors in more detail, use of the Chinese language, descriptions of typical positive Chinese characteristics, being both Thai and local Chiang Mai people, and the use of pictures showing their Chineseness in traditions, culture, and social activities within the Thai Chinese community.

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