Title: The transmission of the Chineseness (through understanding the meaning and religious symbols) to the descendants of the Chinese in Thai society.

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Abstract

The research entitled “The transmission of the Chineseness to Chinese descendants in Thai society through the understanding the meaning and religious symbols” aims to investigate the existence of Chineseness in Thai society focusing on the transmission patterns and how Chineseness being transferred to the young Chinese generation born in Thailand, which include the transfer of knowledge and understanding of the meaning of important Chinese festivals and traditions, problems related to the transmission of Chineseness, and the factors supporting the success of the transmission of Chineseness. This study is an applied research integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. The data used in this study were collected by distributing questionnaire to 282 secondary students in Samutsongkram and an in-depth interview with 30 Chinese people. The findings are as follows:

1. The majority of the research participants still have their belief and faith in gods and sacred or holy items.

2. Most of the Chinese still pay their respect to gods on Chinese Sabbath Days as well as to their ancestors on Cheng Meng Day.

3. Chinese New Year and Chinese Autumn Festival are two Chinese traditional practices inherited to every Chinese family in Thai society. However, these practices can be varied among families.

4. Chinese New Year, Chinese Autumn Festival, Vegetarian Festival, Moon Festival, God’s Thanks Giving Day, and Fifth Moon Festival are among the most important festivals which the young Chinese generation agreed that these festivals should be inherited to the next generation.
5. Most of the research participants have their knowledge and understanding of the meaning of Chinese New Year, Chinese Autumn Festival, Vegetarian Festival and God’s Thanks Giving Day. However, Fifth Moon Festival and Moon Festival are the two festivals with the least understanding related to their meaning.

6. The transmission patterns of Chinese festivals and traditions are varied. They can be either direct or indirect, such as giving explanation to the young generation about the importance of these festivals, the reasons why paying respects should be made, the information regarding the types and numbers of offerings used for each festival, direct practice by the young generation, demonstration by the old on how these traditional practices should be conducted, and encouragement of the transmission of Chineseness to the next generation. Paying respect to gods, Chinese New Year, Chinese Autumn Festival and Vegetarian Festival are directly inherited to the young generation by giving them directions on how to conduct these religious practices by themselves. However, Fifth Moon Festival, Moon Festival, and God’s Thanks Giving Day are indirectly inherited to the young generation by giving them demonstrations.

7. The problems regarding the transmission of the Chinese thoughts, belief, traditions, and festivals to the young generation relate to social, cultural and economic factors as well as individuals’ belief and thoughts. For example, some people believe that the Chinese traditions do not relate to present day’s lifestyle or the young generation fully adopt the new culture and neglect their own culture or tradition.

8. The factors supporting the success of the transmission of Chineseness are accurate information given by the old to the young generation, a refining process in a family, encouragement of the sense of Chineseness to the young generation, the importance of the transmission of Chineseness to preserve Chinese identity, and the right understanding that culture is for the community not for an individual. Then the existence of Chineseness can be achieved through a full cooperation of all the Chinese.