

The Interweaving of Education and Identity: Chinese Identity in Thai Chinese Literature and the Changes in Chinese Education

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Abstract: The study assesses the evolution of Chinese-language literature produced by Sino-Thai authors, analysing the influence of education and cultural identification on their writing across varying historical periods. This research examines specific literary works from mid-20th century to 21st century to comprehend literary reactions to significant Thai sociopolitical changes, including Thai-ification initiatives, school closures, and the revival of Chinese education post-1980. The study categorises literature into storylines of cultural preservation, identity conflict, and nostalgia, ultimately finishing with themes of hybrid identity transition. Literature acted as a repository for memory while simultaneously redefining the identity of Chinese individuals in Thailand. Educational themes such as school closures, textbooks, and multilingual instruction serve as crucial symbols for belonging and transformation. The research enhances diaspora and literary studies by emphasising a comparatively overlooked corpus and suggesting a chronological framework for comprehending literary evolution in relation to political and cultural shifts in Thailand. Future investigations are urged to examine multilingual and multinational comparisons.

Keywords: Sino-Thai Literature, Chinese-language Education, Cultural Identity, Diaspora Narratives, Thai Chinese Writers.

Received: 24-03-2025

Accepted: 26-05-2025

1. Introduction

Literature functions as the principal medium for people of the Chinese Southeast Asian diaspora to investigate enquiries regarding their identity, encompassing cultural legacy and ethnic origins. The Sino-Thai minority has produced a substantial corpus of literary

works in Chinese that encapsulate their experiences during social movements (Mills, 1939). From the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century, Chinese education (华文教育 Huawen Jiaoyu) in Thailand significantly contributed to the formation of Chinese identity. Sino-Thai authors utilise education in their narratives not merely as an instructional tool but as a symbol of cultural endurance and preservation through collective history (Lu, 2025).

Chinese-language schools functioned as vibrant hubs disseminating cultural aspects during their formative years. A partnership between clan groups and merchants funded educational institutions that taught Mandarin, Chinese classics, and Confucian principles, thereby preserving Chineseness for immigrant populations and their descendants (Wang, Wang, & Gao, 2023). The traditional Chinese educational system contributed to the emergence of writers in early Sino-Thai cultural history, as numerous authors were educated in these institutions, resulting in their works mirroring Chinese literary traditions. These authors, through their essays, extol education as a means to sustain cultural memory and maintain relationships among Chinese expatriates (Wang, 2020).

Political transformations fundamentally altered the environment in Thailand throughout the mid-twentieth century. The proliferation of nationalistic movements after the 1930s resulted in increasing calls for the Chinese populace to adopt Thai customs (Day, 2024). In the 1950s and 1960s, the government imposed stringent limitations on Chinese-language instruction, leading to the closure of numerous Chinese schools as assimilation programs were implemented. Sino-Thai literature began to explore themes of loss, fragmentation, and identity crisis. Authors recorded the deterioration of Chinese education as the severance of a crucial cultural link between writers and their heritage (Tang, Liu, & Durlofsky, 2021).

The repression did not eradicate Chinese identity, which evolved into various forms during that period. The Chinese language and culture began to regain its prominence and public interest following Thailand's establishment of formal diplomatic relations with China in 1975 and China's subsequent economic expansion. Chinese education began to resurface through private tutoring and extra learning as Confucius Institutes were founded. Contemporary Sino-Thai authors depict Chinese education as a means of cultural and economic advancement, rather than as a contentious domain as characterised in earlier periods (Huang et al., 2023).

The transformation of Thai-Chinese culture involved writers composing in Chinese who grappled with the intricate relationship between education and the preservation of identity. The works of Sino-Thai authors depict historical events while critically assessing educational methods that preserve culture and facilitate assimilation and cultural exchange. Chinese education in Sino-Thai Chinese-language literature serves as a crucial instrument for examining how diaspora populations build their identities (Kim, 2020).

1.1. Scope of the Study

This study examines the portrayal and development of Chinese identity in Thai Sinophone literature from the mid-20th century to 21st century, specifically highlighting novels authored in Chinese by individuals of Chinese heritage in Thailand. This research examines how these literary works express fluid, hybrid, and intersectional identities in relation to changing socio-political situations, assimilation policies, and intergenerational dynamics within the Sino-Thai community. The analysis is confined to specific Thai Sinophone novels that explore themes of male dominance and emasculation,

female empowerment, interethnic interaction, and cultural ambivalence. The study does not encompass the entirety of Thai literature concerning Chinese communities, nor does it examine Sinophone literature from other Southeast Asian nations. Moreover, it emphasises narrative methods and identity discourses over language or stylistic examination. This study analyses literary representations from various historical epochs—specifically the nationalist period of Phibunsongkhram, the development-oriented administration of Sarit, and the democratising movements of the 1970s—to elucidate how literature serves as a discursive arena for the ongoing negotiation and redefinition of intricate Sino-Thai identities.

1.2. Research Gap

Although research on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia is comprehensive, it predominantly emphasises overarching social, economic, or political integration processes. Literary studies frequently prioritise Thai or English works by Sino-Thai authors, resulting in a relative neglect of Chinese-language literature. Current scholarship on Chinese-language literature from Thailand often examines themes of nostalgia or migration, although rarely systematically explores the interconnected subjects of education and identity. Furthermore, research addressing Chinese education in Thailand frequently approaches it as a historical or social subject rather than a literary theme. Insufficient attention has been devoted to the creative representation of education by Sino-Thai writers as a dynamic, contested, and symbolic domain where identity is both maintained and transformed. Moreover, there has been scant diachronic study examining the evolution of literary depictions of Chinese schooling over various political eras in Thailand's history. This study bridges the gap by integrating literary analysis with historical contextualisation, concentrating on the portrayal of Chinese schooling by Sino-Thai authors writing in Chinese. This fosters a more profound comprehension of the function of language, education, and literature in preserving diasporic identities amid evolving socio-political circumstances.

1.3. Research Questions

- How is Chinese education depicted in Sino-Thai literature written in Chinese across different historical periods in Thailand?
- In what ways does Chinese-language education influence the construction and transformation of Chinese identity in the works of Sino-Thai writers?
- How do Sino-Thai writers use the Chinese language itself as a literary tool to negotiate cultural preservation, assimilation, and hybrid identity?

2. Historical Context: Chinese Language and Education in Thailand

2.1. Early 20th Century: Flourishing Chinese Schools and the Linguistic Foundations of Sino-Thai Writers

The early twentieth century was a pivotal era in the development of Chinese identity within the Chinese diaspora in Thailand. During this period, Chinese immigrants, predominantly from southern provinces like Guangdong and Fujian, formed dynamic populations in Bangkok and other significant cities. Despite their varied linguistic roots, predominantly speaking Teochew, Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese dialects, the Chinese community in Thailand prioritised the preservation of a cohesive cultural and educational framework. The creation of Chinese-language schools (华文学校 Huawen

Xuexiao) was pivotal in serving as essential institutions for cultural preservation and identity formation (Wei, 2022).

Thai Chinese authors obtained their initial formal education at these institutions, enabling them to create Chinese literature. Communication within familial and communal contexts generally occurred in dialects like Teochew and Hokkien, although educational institutions advocated for the usage of Mandarin (国语 Guoyu) and Classical Chinese Wenyan Wen (文言文) (Rébay, 2021). Educational programs in Chinese schools in Thailand adhered to the curriculum frameworks of Chinese institutions, imparting language skills with Confucian ethical principles, Chinese history, and traditional literary expertise. Healy illustrates how Sino-Thai authors cultivated their literary awareness by engagement with Mandarin/Classical Chinese for formal writing, while employing vernacular dialects in everyday communication (Tobin, 2021).

Clan associations (宗亲会 Zongqin Hui) and merchant guilds financed Chinese schools by their collective financial contributions from the Chinese diaspora in Thailand. Most educational institutions utilised Chinese-imported texts, instructing students to memorise Confucian classics, lyrical literature, and moral concepts (Gevorkyan, 2022). The pedagogical approach enabled pupils to engage with a literary heritage emphasising formal quality, embodying classical features, and fostering a connection to China as a cosmic civilisation. Standard literary Chinese writers predominated in the literary output of Sino-Thai authors due to their desire to align with wider Chinese cultural and literary norms (Desgrais & Guichaoua, 2010).

Sino-Thai writers, via training in Mandarin and Classical Chinese, cultivated the capacity to engage with Chinese literary works from around the globe. Proficiency in Standard Chinese enabled Sino-Thai authors to engage in literary transformations in China, encompassing the late Qing reformist literature and the early May Fourth New Culture Movement. Although Thailand had not yet had a direct influence from the vernacular Chinese (白话文 Baihua Wen) movement at this time, it assimilated Chinese philosophical concepts that permeated across China, even as authors adhered to traditional stylistic conventions (Curčić et al., 2020).

2.2. Post-1950s: Thai Nationalism, Educational Suppression, and the Literary Response of Sino-Thai Writers

The years after 1950 marked a pivotal juncture for Chinese diaspora communities in Thailand, as they experienced significant educational and cultural progress. Thai nationalism led to the implementation of “Thai-ification” programs by the government, which vigorously promoted a singular national identity while suppressing any anticipated foreign influences. The newly established policies primarily aimed at Chinese-language education, which had previously attained significant success (Wang, Derakhshan, & Zhang, 2021). The political developments instigated by Sino-Thai writers who composed in Chinese underwent significant transformations in cultural exchange, accompanied by a corresponding evolution in literary production, while their sense of identity faced considerable modifications. The primary aim of Thai-ification programs was the conviction that strong ethnic identities, particularly those associated with China, threatened national unity. The government enacted formal decrees that reduced the number of Chinese educational institutions, restricted Chinese-language instruction, and mandated Thai language and nationalist material across all educational facilities (Kot et al., 2020). Chinese educational institutions became legally obligated to register

with the state, while their instructional activities were required to adhere to several regulatory standards, including the employment of Thai administrators and the use of Thai as the primary language of instruction for certain topics. Many Chinese educational institutions were compelled to close when they either refused or were unable to comply with the new regulations (Bhat & Rajeshwari, 2022).

The Sino-Thai populace, along with aspiring authors, had significant social repercussions as a result of these enacted measures. Chinese educational institutions sever essential links between young Sino-Thai students and their cultural and literary legacy. The systematic instruction of Chinese language and literature would have enabled a greater number of young individuals to achieve proficiency in classical texts and literary Chinese composition (Zhao & Zhu, 2021). The disappearance of the Chinese language jeopardised the essential quality of Chinese-language literary creation among Thai authors. The resilience of Chinese-language literature is significant, although the numerous challenges it encountered post-1930s. The contemporary Chinese authors preserved a literary legacy that may have otherwise vanished entirely (Wu & Bhengsri, 2023). Chinese diasporic writers chronicled the adversities encountered by their communities while preserving cultural and emotional narratives that endured as remnants of memory. Their writings protected Thai-Chinese cultural legacy from political aspirations by illustrating the diverse dimensions of this identity during an era when government entities sought to consolidate everything into a singular national identity (Jirajarupat & Yinghua, 2023).

2.3. 1950s–1970s: Suppression of Chinese Education and the Struggle of Sino-Thai Writers

The era spanning the 1950s to the 1970s saw the most intense phase of state-sponsored assimilation measures targeting the Chinese population in Thailand. The Thai government, motivated by Cold War apprehensions and concerns regarding communist infiltration, escalated limitations on Chinese-language education, building upon previous Thai-ification initiatives. A multitude of Chinese schools were either completely closed or compelled to reorganise in accordance with Thai nationalist principles, which included obligatory Thai-language education (Souriyavongsa et al., 2013). For Sino-Thai authors, particularly those composing in Chinese, these decades presented significant hurdles, profoundly altering the landscape of literary creation and cultural preservation. The writers had to address practical implementation challenges anyway. The declining population of literate Chinese youngsters in the Sino-Thai community has placed Sino-Thai writers in a precarious literary position. Numerous authors opted to revise their language, transitioning from intricate classical forms to accessible contemporary Chinese prose (white language), influenced by patterns from Taiwan and Hong Kong (Wang & Webb, 2025). Sino-Thai authors began to develop hybrid literary styles by integrating Thai cultural components with Chinese literature, while preserving historical substance in their works to reflect the community's multifaceted experiences throughout that period. During this period, the declining literary landscape altered the roles that Sino-Thai writers served within their community. The writers transcended their roles as mere artists and became guardians of collective history (Jiang et al., 2021). Rather than only offering fictitious storylines, these authors employed their works to preserve their worldview, as well as linguistic traditions and cultural practices that opposed government portrayals of national identity. Minor publishing companies, alongside Chinese community newspapers and literary

journals, preserved Chinese cultural spaces under tight operational conditions while simultaneously fostering Chinese expression (Embong et al., 2022).

2.4. Post-1980s: Revival of Chinese Education and the Renewal of Sino-Thai Literary Expression

Chinese-language education in Thailand began to revive in the post-1980s era due to shifts in international politics and China's ascending global status. The reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China in 1975, along with China's economic liberalisation in the late 1970s and 1980s, altered Thai perceptions of Chinese culture and language (Chang, 2020). The shift in political sentiments has elevated the economic and diplomatic significance of Chinese language abilities, moving away from their previous perception as primarily a political danger. The contemporary social milieu has become favourable for the revival of Chinese educational institutions and the resurgence of literary endeavours by authors associated with the bell tradition. Nationalist tactics throughout the Cold War compelled Thailand to suppress Chinese identity; however, the emergence of pragmatic politics in the 1980s signalled a resurgence of Chinese identity (Tang, Liu, & Durlowsky, 2020). The Thai government recognised the strategic benefit of fostering a connection with China as it evolved into a significant emerging nation. The growing influence of China and expanded economic links are perceived as detrimental to the acquisition of valuable Chinese language skills. The onerous regulations that encumbered Chinese institutions in prior years facilitated opportunities for expansion. The creation of new private educational institutions introduced bilingual education programs that integrated Thai and Chinese into the Thai education system. Chinese language departments at Thai universities had a rise in enrolment among Thai students and ethnic Chinese students (Putra et al., 2024). Writers influenced by China navigated a novel literary environment that arose following a resurgence, contrasting sharply with decades of repressive authority. A new generation of readers emerged, possessing greater proficiency in simplified Chinese and modern Mandarin than in traditional Chinese. The authors who had previously faced constraints found new avenues for their work, which began to influence the literary world (Wang et al., 2024).

Sino-Thai authors established their linguistic conventions in their literary compositions during this period. Veteran writers continue to hold traditional literary Chinese and classical references in high regard; nonetheless, modern Mandarin has emerged as the predominant literary medium for contemporary authors (Duangmanee & Waluyo, 2024). Contemporary Sino-Thai authors created innovative literary forms that amalgamated Thai with Chinese linguistic features, using diverse modern Chinese literary tendencies such as realism, postmodernism, and diaspora themes. Electronic access and publication exchanges enabled Sino-Thai writers to enhance their literary comprehension through Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and subsequently Chinese mainstream literary works (Li & Gong, 2022).

3. Major Themes in Sino-Thai Chinese-language Literature

3.1. Education as Cultural Preservation in Sino-Thai Literature

The preservation of culture in Sino-Thai literature mostly relies on education as its essential base. Throughout the functioning of Chinese schools, cultural memory

developed as a refuge that safeguarded identity and maintained tradition, while also serving as an educational institution amid political tyranny, enforced assimilation, and generational transformation. Sino-Thai writers employ educational imagery in their Chinese compositions to illustrate the continuity of their culture and their commitment to their Chinese ancestry. The narratives delineate three fundamental pillars that uphold the preservation of Chinese cultural heritage: the educator, the textbook, and the traditional Chinese curriculum (Kittitornsakul, 2021).

Literary works illustrate Chinese schools within the society through metaphors that portray them as the essential foundation of China-Thai culture. Chinese schools offer more than mere literacy training; they function as community hubs, transmitting culture with moral education. In the context of fostering Thai cultural identity, these institutions functioned as secure environments that facilitated the public expression of Chinese traditions. In these works, teachers are depicted as knowledge facilitators, transcending their traditional roles, as they possess moral rights and act as custodians of cultural heritage (Elo, Täube, & Servais, 2022). In numerous literary depictions, Teacher (老师, Laoshi) figures endure significant sacrifice by adhering to Confucian values, neglecting educational modernisation trends, and striving for the assimilation of the Thai. Educators need students to adhere to curricula that emphasise traditional educational resources. The students are observed to learn the Confucian Analects by rote memorisation, as they commit Tang period poetry to memory and engage in traditional calligraphy while studying Chinese history and ethical studies. The educational activities function as essential links to the sophisticated cultural legacy of Confucianism. Literature frequently depicts pupils kneeling to study and transcribe the “Three Character Classic” (三字经, Sanzi Jing) while honing their calligraphy skills, exemplifying Sino-Thai educational customs (Selmanović et al., 2020). The Chinese textbook (课本, Keben) functions as a prominent motif in Sino-Thai literary composition. Authors characterise textbooks in their writings as vessels that encompass language teaching alongside repositories of cultural knowledge. Members of the Chinese-Thai community conceal their textbooks during governmental inspections, perceiving them as historical familial artefacts despite evident indications of wear. The initial Chinese primer a kid obtains is transmitted over generations, with its worn pages safeguarding a legacy of cultural endurance (Darvin & Norton, 2023).

3.2. Tension and Conflict in Sino-Thai Literature: The Split Between Cultural Roots and Social Mobility

The primary focus of the China-fifth literary work centres on the perpetuation of Chinese culture through education in response to Thai societal calls for reform. Identity issues emerged as a significant concern for the parents of the Chinese dynasty following nationalist movements, as they faced the dilemma of either preserving traditional values through Chinese schools or enhancing their children’s prospects via Thai-language education. Literary works depict this internal conflict through profound familial dynamics and misinterpretations amidst the emotional upheaval of diverse generations and individuals (Arkilic, 2020). Immigrant parents from the first and second waves are deeply committed to maintaining their ancestral language and cultural heritage. New generations immersed in Thai society consistently regard educational attainment through Thai norms as essential for attaining their objectives. In numerous narratives, children seek enrolment in Thai public education, recognising

the advantages of proficiency in the Thai language for employment prospects and social integration (Baser & Ozturk, 2020).

3.3. Nostalgia and Loss in Sino-Thai Literature: Mourning the Decline of Chinese Education

Following the closure or transformation of Chinese educational institutions, Sino-Thai literature profoundly articulates themes of nostalgia and loss. Thailand regards Chinese education as its primary safeguard against assimilation and the erosion of Chinese identity through cultural amnesia and dilution. Writers focused on China characterise the closure or marginalisation of these Chinese educational institutions as a significant cultural loss resulting from these political developments (Johnston et al., 2020). The author used potent metaphors and evocative words, such as a withering tree (枯萎的大树), to articulate a prevalent lament on the preservation of Chinese culture. A crucial role of metaphors enables writers to articulate the extent of this loss comprehensively. In various literary works, a singular picture of a withered tree is consistently evident. The metaphor signifies a cultural disruption, as educational institutions are eclipsed by the presence of dynamic educational centres (Bukh, 2021). An ancient tree that once shaded the school grounds now displays its barren limbs, leaving the leaves mute regarding the flawed era of cultural vitality. In the absence of educational security, Chinese culture in Thailand risks extinction, like to a lifeless tree. Sino-Thai writers depict the decline of education in Chinese culture by illustrating its effects throughout multiple generations. The need for roots among adolescent protagonists is ambiguous, as they encounter their cultural history solely through fragmented narratives and vanishing traditions. In the absence of Chinese education, the link between the present and the past deteriorates due to growing generational distance, resulting in a fractured relationship between generations (Ha & Fry, 2021).

3.4. Identity Reconstruction in Sino-Thai Literature: Embracing the Hybrid Self

The representation of identity and Chinese education in Sino-Thai literature experienced a notable transition during and following the 1990s. Sino-Thai authors distinctly portray modern topics in their literature, reflecting fluid multicultural identities rather than the previous emphasis on dissident resistance centred on cultural opposition. Individuals take pride in identifying as Sino-Thai (泰国华人, Taiguo Huaren), since this designation signifies a dual cultural background that amalgamates Thai identity with Chinese lineage (Ha & Fry, 2021). Chinese education has evolved from a focus on cultural preservation to a framework that fosters cultural enrichment, cultivates individual capabilities, and drives economic advancement. Social shifts in Thai society encompass enhanced relations between Thailand and China, China's rise as a worldwide power, and an increasing awareness for multiculturalism among the Thai populace. Earlier Sino-Thai literary works depicted Chinese identity as a source of conflict for characters navigating between Chinese and Thai cultures (Li & Gong, 2024). In literary works, authors portray protagonists caught between different cultural realms, grappling with internal dilemmas of allegiance, and confronting language loss and cultural alienation. Beginning in the 1990s, the fictional representation of Thailand began to evolve. Contemporary literary works link Chinese education to personal self-discovery as well as intellectual advancement. Studying Chinese historical records, philosophical writings, and literary texts enhances literary characters' understanding

of their identity and role within the global cultural timeline (Onishchuk et al., 2020). The association with Chinese heritage does not influence an individual's core Thai identity. Contemporary authors depict their characters as Thai citizens who exhibit steadfast patriotism while honouring their Chinese heritage. Thai-Chinese Identification allows individuals to utilise an enhanced sense that they regard as empowering. Metaphors in literature have evolved since the 1990s. Rather than depicting lifeless trees and missing lighting, earlier writers illustrated bridges alongside meandering rivers or lush gardens to signify the triumph of mixed identity. Operatory metaphors express interconnected actions while conveying declining conditions. Individuals refrain from regretting the past as they concentrate on forging a new identity that energetically seeks to transcend it (Liu, 2023).

4. Representative Sino-Thai Chinese-language Writers and Works

4.1. Overview of Sino-Thai Literary Development

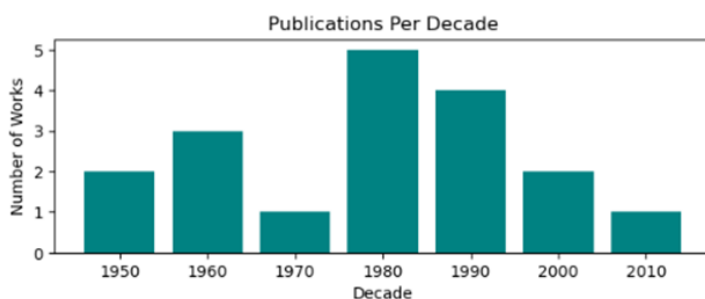
In the early 1900s, Chinese immigrants in Thailand established several clan associations and temples, which facilitated the creation of significant Chinese educational institutions. These institutions established the basis for the execution of cultural protection efforts. Wang Liang(王良) and Lin Shaochuan(林少川) emerged as distinguished authors of imaginative works and essays, lauding both traditional Chinese values and formal education at the same era. The educational environment emerged as a prevalent theme in his literature, as members of the Chinese community acknowledged that linguistic guidance underpinned the preservation of cultural identity (Lu et al., 2022).

The 1930s present a challenge to this prosperous era as the Prime Minister's actions initiated a Thai nationalist movement aimed at assimilating minority groups into the majority. The demands of Thai nationalist politics motivated China-Thai writers to create narratives that conveyed both yearning and dissent, alongside profound inner turmoil. From the 1950s to the 1970s, writers Jhuang Mingli (庄明理), Deng Dazi (邓达志), and Jio Huanan (萧焕) elucidated how the presence of Chinese education and community was diminished to expand the state's limits within Chinese-language educational institutions (Li & De Costa, 2023). The fall of Chinese cultural self-regulations is reflected in metaphorical symbols, such as abandoned schools with silent bells and rapidly diminishing trees. During this period, literature illustrates significant losses through narratives portraying the emotional struggles of youth who opposed their heritage or cultural customs. The educational and cultural influence of China began to strengthen following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and the People's Republic of China in 1975. The economic and cultural expansion in China throughout the 1980s significantly enhanced the state of Chinese language instruction (Zhao & Lai, 2023). The transition period between traditional and modern Chinese literature is shown by authors Tan Zhen, Chen Ding, and Li Yi. The author demonstrates via his creative works that bilingualism, coupled with cultural integration, creates strategic opportunities. The study of Chinese is often perceived as irrelevant to economic advancement and global networking prospects. Numerous contemporary Sino-Thai authors (1990s-present), like Cai Rixin (蔡日新), explore themes of hybrid identity and transnational belonging in their works. Contemporary

Chinese language instruction in literature is now characterised as cultural learning rather than an imposition of ethnic affiliations intertwined with political elements. The characters in these texts exhibit a dual affiliation with “Thai-Chinese” identity, integrating their Thai nationality with their Chinese cultural heritage. Contemporary narratives illustrate that Chinese educational institutions function as flourishing centres that prepare students for the exigencies of globalisation (Thomas, 2020).

Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of Sino-Thai literary works since the 1950s, highlighting the increasing publication rates over the years until the 2010s. The literary output of Thai Chinese authors surged significantly in the 2010s as writers began to reassess their Chinese identity and cultural narrative traditions. The 2010s exhibit sustained literary production, although publication levels diminished during the 1990s and 2000s.

Figure 1: Sino-Thai Literary Works.



4.2. Early Period Writers (1950s): Defending Cultural Identity

During that historical period, the Chinese immigrant community prioritised education as the cornerstone safeguarding its cultural heritage, prompting numerous writers to utilise literature to express their endorsement of this ideology. Historical circumstances yielded two prominent individuals, Chen Li and Ni Changyou. In their efforts, Chinese schools functioned not merely as educational institutions but as spiritual sites for cultural preservation. Wang Liang crafted his short stories in rural educational institutions, depicting educators as moral exemplars who imparted Confucian tenets, Chinese history, and classical literature to their pupils (Pokharel, 2020).

Lin Shaochuan articulated the apprehensions faced by Chinese immigrant families with greater candour. The author illustrated via his works a profound examination of the necessity for individuals to preserve their familial heritage while adapting to contemporary political circumstances. Lin’s writings indicated that Chinese culture would endure as long as the youth preserved their ties to the Chinese language and ethical ideals (Li, Sriruksa, & Yamcharoen, 2024).

4.3. Suppression Era Writers (1950s–1970s): Narratives of Loss and Conflict

The era spanning the 1950s to the 1970s represented a particularly arduous phase for the Sino-Thai community. The accounts of Chinese mental suffering at that period are derived from the writings of Tan Zhen, Chen Ding, and Yishe. Zhuang Mingli composed short stories depicting vacant school edifices to illustrate

the profound despair associated with the erosion of Chinese heritage, utilising symbolic imagery such as muted bells and desiccated trees. Deng Dazi examined familial disputes arising from young Chinese Thays, who, having acquired Thai-Keval education, increasingly distanced themselves from their home language and traditional customs (Green, 2020). The principal characters in his works exhibit psychological struggles between criminality and emotional solitude, alongside fragmented relationships that symbolise broader societal tensions. Jio Huanan expressed profound concern on the internal conflict experienced by the students who committed two homicides, since they outwardly adopted Thai social norms while preserving their Chinese heritage at home. Numerous identities inside their roles currently embody the psychological burden faced by many adolescents influenced by China at this time (Saleh, 2020).

4.4. *Revival and Transition Writers (1980s–1990s): Rebuilding Identity*

The instruction of the Chinese language in Thailand underwent a gradual rebound post-1975, facilitated by improved diplomatic connections with China and the expansion of Chinese worldwide influence. The authors of this age curtailed optimism in their literary works by concentrating on themes of reconstruction and ethnic hybridisation. The literary transformation emerged through the works of three authors: Lin Zuoming, Li Xu, and Wu Jiyue. Chen Ruxian's works particularly esteemed adolescent engagement in Chinese education as an indicator of advancement. The author saw bilingualism as a strategic asset that facilitated social and economic growth in Asia during his global influence. The approach of Chinese school education will now function as a pathway to future wealth (Paramita et al., 2022).

Lynn Kineen authored narratives that together conveyed his personal recollections of Chinese ancestors, emphasising their efforts to acquire their ancestral language and traditions, despite the severance of ties with his homeland in the past. His writings demonstrated the reclamation of identities that surfaced following years of prior suppression. Huang Huizhen's articles illustrate the difficulty faced by Sino-Thai youngsters in reconciling Chinese and Thai traditions. Through her characters, she illustrates how Thai folks navigated seamless transitions between their indigenous environments and Chinese cultural spheres to embody the oneness of their cultural identities (Thomas, 2020).

Table 1 presents chosen works by Sino-Thai authors to examine identity transformations alongside the role of education and the preservation of cultural heritage. The chosen texts analyse the developmental aspects of Thai-Chinese identity formation in the context of Thailand's educational reforms.

Table 1: Thai Sinophone Literature Depicting Sino-Thai Society from 1950s (Partial)

Publication year (B. E.)	Book Title	Author	Thai Soap Opera Adaptation
1950-1956 (estimated Period of Composition.)	一个坤銮的故事 Story of Khun Luang	Tan Zhen	N/A
1953 (began releasing on newspaper) 1963 published book (B.E.2496, 2506)	座山城之家 Tycoon's Home	Tan Zhen	N/A
1954	三聘姑娘 Girls in Sampheng Street	Chen Ding	N/A
1960	夜航风雨 Night Voyage in the Storm	Li Yi	N/A

Publication year (B. E.)	Book Title	Author	Thai Soap Opera Adaptation
1965 (B.E.2508)	侨领千金 Daughter of Leader in Chinese Community	Chen Li	N/A
1956 (began releasing on newspaper) 1965 published book (B.E.2499,2508)	破壁舍歪传 Legend of Pobi She	Co-writing by 6 writers, Yishe, Yifei, Bijin, Shenmu, etc.	N/A
1962 (B.E.2505)	祖父的丧事 Grandfather's funeral	Ni Changyou	N/A
	波折 Not Smooth		
1973 (B.E.2516)	灰色的楼房 Grey House	Wei Deng (pseudonym Shi Qing)	N/A
1973 (began releasing on newspaper) 1980 published book (B.E.2516,2523)	花街 Hooker's Street	Nian Lamei	N/A
1980 (B.E.2523)	陋巷 Mean Alley	Yan Bi (pseudonym Ba'er)	N/A
1970-1976			
(began releasing on newspaper) 1982 publish book (B.E.2513-2519,2525)	就医 In hospital	Yan Bi (pseudonym Ba'er)	N/A
1980-1989 (releasing on newspaper) (B.E.2523-2532)	化了冤仇成亲家 Enmity turn into Marital Relatives	Lin Zuoming	N/A
1964(began releasing on newspaper) 1983 publish book (B.E.2507,2525)	风雨耀华力 Yaowarat in the Rainstorm	Co-writing by 10 writers, Yishe, Yifei, Bijin, Lihong (Nian Lamei), etc.	Homonym (1995,B.E.2538)
1981 (B.E.2524)	火磨人家 Rice Mills Home	Li Xu	N/A
1986 (B.E.2529)	光华堂 Guanghua Hall	Li Xu	N/A
1986 (B.E.2529)	侨领半正传 Qiaoling: A Semi-official Life	Wu Jiyue	N/A
1988,2000 (B.E.2531,2543)	岔道口 Intersection	Liu Yang	N/A
1988 (B.E.2531)	轻风吹在湄江上 (合集) Collection: Slight Wind below Chao Phraya River	Co-writing by 8 authors, Si Magong, Meng Li, Zheng Fu, Cheng Bowen, Nian Lamei, etc.	N/A
1988 finish writing and get reward (1996 selected to Collection: short story of Chen Bowen) (B.E.2531,2539)	咆哮森林 (《陈博文短篇小说自选集》 Roaring Forest (from Collection: short story of Chen Bowen)	Chen Bowen	N/A
1989 (B.E.2532)	阿叔 Hi,Uncle	Liu Yang	N/A
1989 (B.E.2532)	泰华短篇小说集 Collection: Short Story of Sino-Thai Literature	Fang Siruo	N/A
1970-1976 (began releasing on newspaper) 1990 published book (B.E.2513-2519,2533)	湄河之滨 The Chao Phraya Shore	Yan Bi (pseudonym Ba'er)	N/A
1990 (B.E.2533)	赤贫儿女 (金银树) Collection:Poverty(Gold-Silver Tree)	Lin Wenhui, Maocao, Lin Zuoming, etc.	N/A
	沸腾大地 Boiling Earth		
1990 (B.E.2533)	一家亲 Family	Ba'er	N/A
1990 (B.E.2533)	湄南河畔的故事 The Chao Phraya River Story: Collection of short story of Nian Lamei	Nian Lamei	N/A
1993 (B.E.2536)	黑腊肠 Evil Sausage	Nian Lamei	N/A
1993 (B.E.2536)	黎毅短篇小说集 1956-1992 Collection: Short Story of Li Yi 1956-1992	Li Yi	N/A
1995 (B.E.2538)	大自然的儿子 Collection: The Son of Nature	Zeng Xin	N/A
	迷失鸟 Lost Birds		
1996 (B.E.2539)	阿莲的爱情 A· Lians· Love Story	Zheng Fu	N/A
1996 (B.E.2539)	生死之交 Damon and Pythias 杏坛悲歌 Sad Melody for a Teacher (from Collection: short story of Chen Bowen)	Chen Bowen	N/A

Publication year (B. E.)	Book Title	Author	Thai Soap Opera Adaptation
1996 (B.E.2539)	自然短篇小说集 Collection: Short Story of Ziran	Ziran	N/A
1996 (B.E.2539)	泰华微型小说集 1996 Collection: Sino-Thai Mini Novel 1996	Si Magong	N/A
1997 (B.E.2540)	姚宗伟短篇小说集 Collection: Short Stories of Yao Zongwei	Yao Zongwei	N/A
1997 (B.E.2540)	双喜临门 Double Bliss	Zhou Tianxiao	N/A
1998 (B.E.2541)	倪长游文集 Collection of Ni Changyou	Ni Changyou	N/A
1998 (B.E.2541)	姚宗伟文集 Collection of Ni Changyou	Yao Zongwei	N/A
1998 (B.E.2541)	曾心文集 Collection of Zengxin	Zeng Xin	N/A
1998 (B.E.2541)	大地之变 The Changing Earth	Chen Bowen	N/A
2002 (B.E.2545)	蓝眼睛 (微型小说集) Blue Eyes(Collection of Mini novels)	Zeng Xin	N/A
2007 (B.E.2550)	花车文集 Collection of Hua Che	Hua Che	N/A
2010 (B.E.2553)	戏里戏外 Collection of Mengling's Mini-Novel	Meng Ling	N/A

5. Changes Reflected in Literature over Time

5.1. Early Literary Expressions of Educational and Cultural Commitment

Fifteen Chinese writers in the early 20th century utilised the Chinese language to articulate how education preserved cultural traditions through the establishment of Chinese school education. The novelist Si Magong and Chen Bowen depicted Chinese schools as significant institutions that transcended mere academic environments, serving as venues where community members accessed educational resources pertaining to values, historical knowledge, and associated memories. During this period, the literature illustrated education as a crucial element that preserved Chinese culture while the people integrated into Thai society.

Through narratives and essays, educators emerged as ethical and cultural guardians, imparting Confucian morality, instructing traditional Chinese literature, and preserving the TOUCHU and Hokkin dialects. The profound importance of education is manifested in several interpretations, where textbooks are seen as sacred artefacts and historical schools are perceived as spiritual sanctuaries. The preservation of cultural knowledge and language was the primary concern amidst economic hardship and political turmoil for Chinese immigrant families, who made educational choices regarding their children's enrolment in Chinese schools.

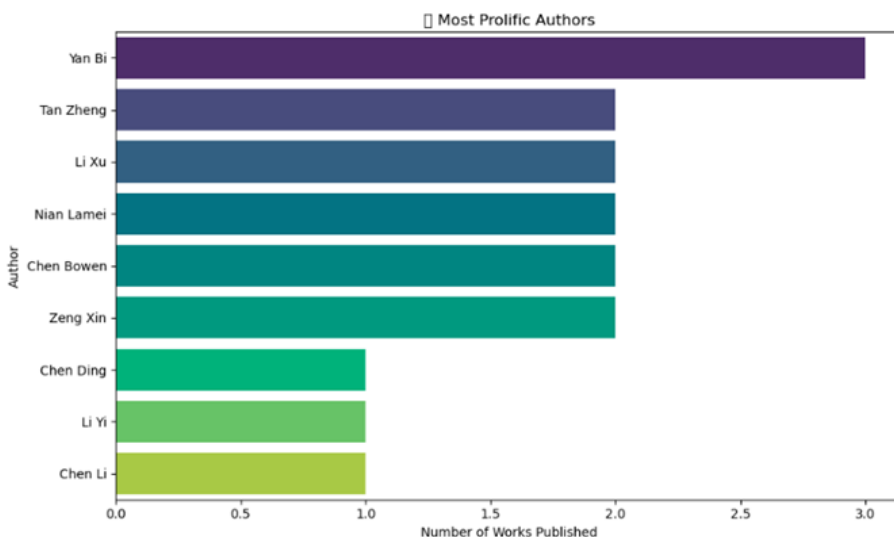
5.2. Shifts in Literary Depictions during Political Suppression

The nationalist political measures of the 1970s and 1950s spurred significant changes in China-tailed literature, as Thailand enforced educational policies to repress the Chinese language and mandated cultural assimilation. The political climate prompted Chinese writers in Thailand to embrace an alternative perspective by documenting internal strife rather than focussing on disintegration and the preservation and celebration of identity. During this period, Chinese literature illuminated the realities of school closures and institutional disintegration inside Chinese society. Chinese educational sites are now depicted as derelict structures or repurposed areas, contrasting with earlier favourable representations and symbolising the generational social and cultural disconnection. During this period, literary characters grappled with dual identities, balancing their ancestral

Chinese practices with their new existence as Thai citizens of subsequent generations, who became integrated into mainstream society while facing cultural alienation.

Figure 2 illustrates the chronological progression of Sino-Thai literary works from 1950 to 2010, with chosen publications and writers. The literary production about identity, education, and cultural hybridity persists intermittently over the whole period depicted in the chart. The initial literary works appeared in the 1950s, followed by a hiatus until the late 20th century, when a resurgence of Sino-Thai writing occurred in the 2000s and 2010s. The depiction of time illustrates how authors have revitalised their emphasis on Sino-Thai identity through literature since the 1950s, coinciding with Thai society's increasing interest in Chinese ancestry amid modern socio-political transformations.

Figure 2: Chronological Development of Sino-Thai Literary Works.



5.3. Contemporary Literary Reflections on Identity Reconstruction

Beginning in the late 1980s, Sino-Thai literature composed in Chinese started to embody a new and more optimistic phase: the restoration of identity within a multicultural and economically globalising Thailand. Authors include Chen Li and Chen Ding, together with Nian Lamei, depicted people who traversed both Thai and Chinese cultures with growing assurance. Rather than highlighting cultural detriment, their narratives extolled bilingualism, shared competencies, and the reintegration of Chinese heritage as an esteemed component of both personal and communal identity. In these tales, Chinese education is no longer regarded as a means of resisting assimilation, but rather as a kind of enrichment—providing cultural depth, business prospects, and reintegration into a broader Asian and global network.

Significantly, contemporary Chinese literature acknowledges the flexible and changing nature of identity. Varnas openly identify as Thai-Chinese (泰国华人, Taiguo Huaren), embracing both identities without perceiving them as conflicting. This literary trend signifies a shift from prior narratives of trauma and loss, embodying a process of personalisation, dialogue, and progressive cultural amalgamation. Consequently, current China-tailed

writing serves as a compelling testament to the adaptability and evolution of the community over generations.

6. Discussion

The connection between education and identity is distinctly evident in the creative works of Chinese-influenced literature authored by Thai-Chinese writers in Chinese. The literary works of Thai-Chinese authors depicted the detached recollections of Chinese educational establishments and contemporary representations of cultural hybridisation, documenting historical transformations in Thai politics and Chinese communities in Thailand. Literature serves as a repository of memory, where language, education, familial discord, and the preservation of cultural legacy are consistently evident as forms of resistance. Nian Lamei posits that Thailand functions as a symbolic instrument for preserving cultural traditions beyond the confines of formal educational methodologies. The Chinese communities in Thailand coordinated their primary activities via educational institutions that reinforced Confucian values, traditional texts, and the coherence of the Chinese language. In the mid-20th century, writers depicted educators and classrooms as bastions of moral authority by highlighting reverence for Chinese textbooks. These texts served as tangible pieces that linked youngsters to their cultural heritage, despite the heritage being under threat of endangerment.

A new tension emerged in literary works because to Thai-ification efforts that arose in the 1930s. In *The Last Classroom*, Chen Li chronicled the repressive measures imposed on Chinese-language schools through his fictionalised narrative of resistance. Thai Chinese families faced a challenging dilemma, needing to choose between attending Chinese schools to preserve cultural legacy or enrolling in Thai public schools to enhance their societal prospects. Su Chengde elucidates this emotional dichotomy in *Dual Identity* by narrating the experiences of teenagers who grapple with internal conflicts between their cultural heritage and national identity, as well as between traditional customs and contemporary advancements. Following 1980, the Thai perception of Chinese residents enhanced, leading to a nuanced resurgence of Chinese cultural and ethnic traditions. Literature reflected this transformation. Chen Li's *Daughter of Leader* in Chinese Community and Li Yi's *Night Voyage in the Storm* provide fresh insights on China's educational system, portraying it as a source of both economic opportunities and cultural development. Novels and essays currently illustrate the resurgence of Mandarin language education, private Chinese instruction, and study abroad programs as markers of cultural multimodalism. The literary portrayal illustrates Thai Chinese characters embracing their mixed heritage through a constructive acceptance of education, which they now perceive as a multifaceted attribute rather than a simple dichotomy. A recurring theme in these pieces illustrates pervasive disadvantages through the depiction of decaying school buildings, neglected chalkboards, and lifeless trees. A significant number of group members perceive a profound loss following years of identity policies, articulating this deep collective trauma. Nian Lamei and Yan Bi illustrate cultural erasure by portraying abandoned educational sites, conveying the loss of cultural history through desolate, silent structures. Literary devices elucidate how migratory memory utilises tangible educational resources, such as schools and library texts, as sites of emotional significance.

The alteration in tone is especially evident in 21st-century writing. Wei Deng (pseudonym Shi Qing) (*Grey House*) and Lin Zuoming (*Enmity Turned into Marital Relatives*) exemplify

this new phase of identity transformation. Their characters frequently traverse the historical dichotomies of Chinese and Thai cultures, navigating a more intricate matrix of the issues at hand. Education, in these situations, is not a conflict zone, but a realm of renewal - a venue where identity can be amalgamated, restructured, and examined. They explore how literature might transition solely from preservation into a realm of creative hybridity.

7. Conclusion

Research investigates Chinese language publications, literary development related to China, identity formation, cultural adaptation, and alterations in educational subjects. Literature serves as a significant medium to convey the diverse narratives of the Thai Chinese community through examination throughout many historical epochs, emphasising notable authors and books. Literature preserved its function as a safeguard of cultural heritage from 1940 until 1980. Li Xu, in conjunction with Kinter, utilised her work to demonstrate that Chinese language instruction preserved its foundations from the Chinese dynasty amidst the rising influence of Thai nationalism and cultural assimilation. Chinese schools were portrayed as embodiments of heritage preservation through their texts and educators. These texts illustrate the emotional toll resulting from cultural erosion impacting the community amid ongoing state integration attempts.

In the late 20th and 21st centuries, Thailand embraced multiculturalism and economic openness, prompting changes in literary themes. Three notable authors, Chen Ding, he, and Tan Zheng, depicted education as a strategic conduit that facilitates learning and serves as a counterforce to his creative endeavours. Bilateralism with hybrid identity development has arisen as a necessary term to illustrate the growing capabilities of Thai Chinese individuals. Throughout this period, literary works exhibited an optimistic perspective on cultural tradition, portraying it as a prospective asset rather than present impediments. Evidence indicates that China-related literary works have amplified worldwide trends from 2010 to the present, while China's expanding commerce sector and the proliferation of Chinese language education have heightened interest in studies pertaining to global recognition. The Chinese writings of Chinese-tailed authors offer comprehensive historical and cultural insights into the experiences of Thai Chinese individuals. Communal literary works demonstrate communal growth by showcasing their endeavours and intentional cultural integration attempts, as well as their commitment to cultural identity. In the Chinese language, three authors examine the evolution of society through various perspectives on ethnic diversity in Southeast Asia.

7.1. Limitations and Future Directions

This study, alongside its educational and identity analysis and cultural commentary, offers fundamental insights into the evolution of Chinese-language literature influenced by China, despite the emergence of numerous significant constraints. Acquiring primary literary material presents significant challenges. Literary works by Sino-Thai authors, whether published locally or disseminated through community networks, are insufficiently documented, rendering them difficult to locate in conventional public archives. The study certainly excluded specific demographics due to researchers' inability to access their perspectives, particularly those residing in rural areas or belonging to older generations. The inquiry focusses exclusively on written Chinese-language literature, disregarding Thai-language works by ethnic Chinese authors. The incorporation of multilingual

materials in future studies on hybrid identity expressions should be obligatory, as Thai Chinese writers commenced their publishing endeavours in Thai post-1980s.

This research highlights a thematic and historical interpretation of chosen authors and could be enhanced by more profound formalist or comparative literary studies. Future study may be enhanced by conducting interviews with contemporary authors, examining educational curricula that include Chinese-language materials, or investigating reader reception across several generations of Thai Chinese individuals. Furthermore, a comprehensive examination of gender representation, regional disparities (e.g., Bangkok versus Southern Thailand), and digital literary modalities may provide additional insights.

Ultimately, comparative analysis of Sino-Thai literature with those of other overseas Chinese communities—such as those in Malaysia, Indonesia, or the Philippines—could elucidate transnational tendencies and unique national trajectories in Chinese diasporic literature.

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