



KING LING COLLEGE

S5 GRAND TOUR REPORT

5E Group 2

DESTINATION: CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

DATE: 17-21 MARCH 2016

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Introduction

From 17 March-21 March, we went to Chiang Mai, which is the largest city in northern Thailand, for 5-day interflow and exploration. With long engagement into a city which differs from ours like poles apart, we have definitely gained a lot of inspirations and insights. Within the five-day trip, we have investigated into the local culture and made comparison with ours, attempting to find out the divergences or analogies as to learn deeply about the culture.

Chiang Mai is a city of approximately 800 years of history, yet it still has a long way to be a fully developed and modernized city. Monarchy still exists in Thailand. It is a religion-based city where religion is indivisible from Thais' daily routine. During the five days trip, we have laid our eyes mainly on the food culture, social structure, economy structure and landscape. The following will be the investigation results of our trip.



Figure 1 Group photo in Chiang Mai

Methodology & Result

1. Simple Observation

By having simple observation, we have briefly figured out the divergences between the living styles of Hongkongers and Thais, especially in the aspects of food culture and living environment.

Where will be the best scenic overlook? Probably the sky will be. Generally, Thailand is a place which beyond 5E's anticipation. Half an hour before we landed, we looked down on the land that we were going to spend five days on .We have found out that a large portion of land is used as farmland, while over 60% of the non-rural areas are despaired. The first conclusion we have drawn is that Thailand is not as modernized as Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the antique buildings still mesmerized us.

On the first day of our trip, we went to a traditional Thai restaurant to enjoy our dinner as well as to lay our first step on the dinning culture of Thailand. Every dinner set was shared by five of our classmates. Most of the dishes are fried or seasoned, in a way that some of us might find it too heavy. That is the second conclusion we drawn---Thai cuisine are usually heavy in taste, but it is still acceptable for us.



Figure 2 Dinning in a traditional Thai restaurant

2. *Communications with the locals*

Having direct conversation with the locals is the most pursuing way to understand a country's culture. It is a pity that we did not have much time to have in-depth communication with the locals as we are not able to master Thai. Still, for some occasions, such as bargaining price in the market, we attempted to use simple Thai to show our sincerity in buying the products. We usually bargain to an amount of 70% of the original price. On the basis of the experience, we surmised that products in the market are often overpriced, with a space for bargaining.

At the very beginning of the trip, our Thai tourist guide warned us as if we would unconsciously insult someone when we offended the tradition, which we found a little bit creepy and reluctant for acknowledgement. As we have mentioned that religion is indivisible from Thai's daily routine, they believe the theory of heaven and the hell. The Thai believe in invultuations which curse can be made to someone to make them irrational and sick. Some Thai will use the dead body of unborn babies to make a curse which they considered as the most powerful spirit. By the acknowledgement of that, we kept track on our behavior to prevent making any mistake to be made naturally or unconsciously.



Figure 3 Our flight to Thailand

3. *Worshipping in the temple*

On the last day of the trip, we have visited 4 temples with unique building style. The temples are usually chromatic with intense golden hue, heavily-decorated and with absolute solemnity. Most of us worshiped profoundly and whole-heartedly in the sake of our academic result and good health. We felt by heart that the Buddhism is the core value of many of the Thai. They believe that Buddhism is neither a religion nor a kind of belief. Buddhism is a kind of philosophy that enlightens people to be able to face the adversities in life and go with the flow of life. We had conversation with a monk named K.K. He told us about his life of which both of his parents were gone in his very young age. Yet, he did not seem devastated or upset when he was recalling the ordeal, on the contrast he was grateful that he had found his adoptive parents. That is an invaluable lesson for us, in which we were all inspired by the philosophy.



Figure 4 Temple in Thailand

Literature Review

1. Introduction

Chiang Mai (เชียงใหม่) is the biggest city in northern Thailand founded in 1296 . Base on the Travelers' Choice Destinations award, Chiang Mai is ranked in 5th place in Asia and in 24th place in the World . With its popularity, it is not difficult to infer that it has an amusing culture that attracts so many tourists except its strategic location. The purpose of this literature review is to find out the views of different author on the divergences between Hong Kong and Thailand.

2. Divergences

Religion

In Thailand, around 95% of the population are Buddhist, with a small percentage of Muslim . In Chiang Mai, there are over 300 Buddhist temples such as the Wat Chiang Man and Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep. Buddhism is the most popular belief in Thailand. Thai visit the Buddhist temples very often to lotus money ANF flowers . Also, in the morning, the citizens will give food for the monks due to their respect to the monks and Buddhist.

While an author (Hilary Cadigan) stated that monks only chant in the country and people blindly admiring Buddhism, without knowing what they are saying.

On the other hand, in Hong Kong, although there are only around 43% of the people are religious¹, the types of religion are quite a lot. While two of the most popular are Christianity and Buddhism. Po Lin Monastery is a significant symbol for the Buddhist in Hong Kong. In addition, Taoism and Confucianism also existed in Hong Kong quite commonly.²

Comparing both, Buddhism exists in both Chiang Mai and Hong Kong, while Christianity is much more common in Hong Kong. It is very difficult to find a Christian Church in Chiang Mai comparatively.

¹Internations,

<https://www.internations.org/hong-kong-expats/guide/15908-culture-shopping-recreation/religion-in-hong-kong-15922>

²GOV HK, <http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/religion.pdf> Nov 15

Cuisine

According to the author of aswetravel³, it is rare to see people eating Thai cuisine alone. Also, there is no specific food for breakfast, lunch or dinner which they can enjoy the cuisine they like in the 3 meals. At the same time, Thai people believe that wasting food will bring them bad luck, as a result, they seldom waste food. Spicy food are also their favourite.

While in the city known as 'World Food's Fair', Hong Kong, there are cuisine from all over the world. Yet there are still some special food. For instance, wontons (also named chāo shǒu) and 'wing sand chicken' are the favourite of many Hongkongers⁴. The cuisine style of Hong Kong is affected by many countries especially the Western countries and China.

Comparing both, the types of cuisine in Hong Kong varies a lot more than the one in Thailand. While both have their own unique taste which may be difficult for each other to accept. Although both Chiang Mai and Hong Kong are in Asia, the food culture is not the same, both own their own significance.

3. *Conclusion*

In general, countries in Asia tend to have a similar culture, yet with the differences of history and weather, some differences can be explained easily by reasons. All the above research and results required investigations and we will learn more about it in the 5-day trip of Chiang Mai.

³Sofia, <http://www.aswetravel.com/understanding-thai-food-culture/> April 3 11

⁴Gavin, <http://www.chinahighlights.com/hong-kong/food-restaurant.htm> December 2 15

Cultural Exchange

The 4th day visit brought us not only fun memories but more importantly, the lesson that taught us to be thankful for what we have taken as granted. The 'venue' of this lesson was the Children's Home. It was the first time for nine of us to visit an orphan home outside Hong Kong and the experiences was beyond description.

Despite the fact that all of us had our duties, such as cooking and painting walls for them, during the visiting time, we grabbed the chance to gain as much knowledge as we could. We had communicated with some of the orphans there. Being asked whether they go to school everyday, the children's answer was 'no'. During the conversation, we had also discovered that many of them failed to speak fluent English, the younger children even didnt know English at all. This was one of the things that we found shocked. In addition, we had shared our daily lives with each other. Most of their time spend inside the living areas without getting the opportunity to go out like we do. Their major work is help cook and to enjoy playing. Although they do not receive as much as education as the Hong Kong children, most of them did a far better job to take care of themselves. The Children's Home has provided them footing for their future. The children will leave here when they are 18 years old. Sometimes during the hoildays, the orphans who were lived there will come back and have lessons with for the younger children there. Even they are not as fortunate as we are, they didn't put the blame on others but treasure the current lives instead.

We thought that we would be the one who brought blessing to the children orginially, yet it turned out that, we had gained more than they did. Knowing more about their situations and their positive attitude towards life, our personal values have changes as well. From being selfish, to learn that how to be thankful, from blaming life for unfortunate, to treasure what we are having.

Other than having conversations, cooking for them had enabled us to learn about their food culture as well. Prawn toast was one of the dish that we had made for them. In fact, it was very similar to the food in Hong Kong, some of us we studied Technology and Living in Form 3 had also learnt how to cook this in the lessons too. Though spicy is Thais' favourite, some of their dishes are quite similar with

ours.

This was an invaluable chance for every single one of us. Going to a trip does not only mean to play, learning their culture and bringing experiences back is of paramount importance.



Figure 5 Visit to Viengping Children's Home

Cultural Review

Culture-- Religion

We had exposed ourselves in a Buddhist country for five days, of which we had acquire more in-depth knowledge about the religion than reading description from books.

Despite visiting temples, going to the Buddhist University was the best approach for us to know more about Buddhism in Thailand. The university student K.K, who is a monk, told us that Buddhists exists in different parts of the world with slightly different treatments from the ordinary citizens.

Before the lesson in the university, we all thought Buddhism is a religion. To our surprise, Mr. K.K told us it is all about philosophy instead.

Being a monk, believing in the theory of Buddha, could help save people from mental suffering and bring people a peaceful mind. Buddhism also stresses on karma, which people will eventually bear the responsibility for what they have done in life. As a result, Buddhists should not hate anyone.

In order to save people from suffering, The Buddhists in Thailand often follow the practices such as meditation. It includes sleeping meditation, standing meditation and sitting meditation which is a healing method for the Buddhists. By practicing this, people can refrain from anger, pain and feel carefree instead. Certainly, it may not be what we agree with, yet this is a unique culture for Buddhism.

In addition, Thai pay a lot of respect to not only the Buddha, but also the monks in the city. Every morning the monks will go on the street to beg for alms without requesting the citizens personally. In the hope of being blessed and protected by Buddha, almost every citizen is more than pleasant to do so. On the contrast, in the morning, Hongkongers will chase after every second to deal with their heavy workload, seldom do they take a look on the surrounding, let alone offering food for others.

Although around 50% of the Hongkongers have their own religion, such as Christianity, they would mostly go to the churches during weekends instead of the morning of weekdays. It has shown that religion is much more important in

Thailand than in Hong Kong.

The grand tour trip offer an opportunity for us to immerse into the Thais' culture, where religion is a big part of it. Being a nonreligious, hardly do I have chance to take part in religious activities, maybe that will be a trigger for me being a religious person in the future, as I sense the power of religion.



Figure 6 Monk's talk

Photograph Analysis

On The Mountain

The mountain commands a fine prospect which is beyond our expectation. The wind is roaring that we can barely grab our phones to record the best moment we spent on the trail.

The day was exhausting yet the most impressive. We spent more than two hour reaching the checkpoint located in the mountainside. The fresh air, like fresher than ever that we could be able to find in Hong Kong, was surrounding us as the huge trees do. Laughter echoes in the valley even the sun could be able to hear that. Certainly, annoyances were exiled from our mind by the beauty of nature. From the check point, we look down on the cityscape where we believe nowhere could replace. Nothing could distract us from the glamorous view.



Figure 7 Hiking in Thailand

The cloud-capped mountain, despite the laughter, was surrounded by scream and shout as some of us have height fright. The sweet moment that we held our hand together on the trail marked an important milestone of 5E—the “sublimation” of our friendship. Standing on the cliff with no fences and by just 1 meter away, fear seems did not bother. By the purest friendship that we might have in our entire life , no one gives any complain for the tiredness.

In The Temple

All kinds of religion are means to strengthen ones mental durability, for which even people are suffering, they have the courage to resist it by the belief.

In Thailand, we feel the power of religion.

The last day was the hottest, recording 42 degree Celsius in the city. Nevertheless, we have to meet the constraint in the temple— walk in with bare-foot. Stepping on the melting ground, we could not help knitting our brows, yet making every endeavor to finish the meditation. In spite of the reason that we are afraid of the bad luck would be brought about, another reason rose when we saw the monks standing under the blazing sun, sweating but keeping a bold front. That is the power of religion, enable someone to stand firm in a very tough situation. The monks are not the only examples, we hear from many Buddhist Thais' experience. They seldom complain about life. They believe those are the trials which means to be happening, and they try to seek way out. 95% of the population in Thailand believe in Buddhism, of which we feel the firmness of them in the face of adversities.



Figure 8 Blessing by the monk

Conclusion

Hal Borland had once said 'no winter lasts forever, no spring keeps it turns'. Yet, , the happiness during the 5 days trip would never fade away from 5E's hearts.

Playing while learning is crucial during a trip. In fact, visiting another country with the whole class is an invaluable memory which we would probably never have it again. We played hard during the 5 days, we had also successfully learnt and sort out solutions for many of our questions.

From the weather to the culture, Chiang Mai varies a lot from that of Hong Kong. Through communicating with the locals and experiencing the culture, we understand more as part of the global village. Despite the fact that we were not fond of every custom in Thailand, none of us want to leave from this 'teenage dream' with all our friends. However, it did past like a dream and we returned to Hong Kong.

Furthermore, we had found out that most of the statements of the authors in the literatures that we have read, match with those we had experienced in Chiang Mai. Thailand is a country that worth exploring and we would like to go it again if we have the opportunity.

The weather was hot, the sun was shining, yet the hospitality of Thais was the thing that truly warm us. Knowing their culture is not enough, learning from the goods is definitely of paramount importance. We had surely gained a lot outside the classroom.

Reflection

Day 1

17 April 2016, is the beginning of our journey. We, the 5E students of King Ling College, started to record our irreplaceable memories of the unique five days.

Around twelve o'clock, we gathered at the airport and had a briefing. It was ordinary and had nothing special until the airplane took off. Everything changed.

Some of us were frightened by the height during the flight. We were nervous because of the coming sight. We were excited about the Thailand's night. After landing, heat came along with the wonderful sunset. It was hard to adapt to the weather which is totally different from Hong Kong. However, with our passion for Thailand, anything could be overcome.

After running all the procedures, we first went to enjoy our dinner. This dinner was the most special meal we had in Thailand. The reason behind this claim was that it could only be enjoyed by the royal family in Thailand. To have this meal, we needed to sit on the floor but not chairs. It was a brand-new experience for us because sitting on chairs when having meals is Hong Kong's etiquette. Yet, no matter how we were sitting, it did not affect our joy in having the delicious dinner and watching the traditional Thai dance shows.

After the meal, we went to the night market. This period of time was not for us to shop, but to experience the cultural differences between Hong Kong and Thailand as well as learning how to communicate with the locals.

Although the journey of the first day was simple, it took us with the new experience and the grateful time. It would be the precious for us forever and was the best start of our grand tour.

Day 2

The second day of the tour commenced with a challenge of height and perseverance. During the 3 hours on Chiang Mai's highest mountain 'Doi Inthanon', we were like experiencing life. At first we stuck our tiny steps onto our tour guide's footprints. As we got higher, we faced steep slopes, rough stairs, howling wind and intimidating height. At that time we have all known we must have each other's back in order to go on together. After we survived all difficulties along the way to the summit, the struck of standing on top of a mountain was more rewarding than passing a uniform test. Trees slid out of our sights. Sunshine bathed our body. Soil-scented air cleansed our breath. We saw pieces of grassland connecting the mountains to the sky, and exotic giant stones standing still like the guardian of their mountain. There is nothing that could make us feel better than conquering our limits by our own feet, together.

Following hiking was visiting the prominent King and Queen's Pagodas. We were all stunned by the florid architectural style of the buildings. We walked pass a exquisitely designed flower garden along to a long and wide staircase. Up there, gorgeous mosaic wall paintings featuring Thai people's life gave us a glance of Thai art culture. We were glad to be there to observe Thai people's fealty and respect to the royal family as revealed from every detail of the pagodas. The social harmony, sense of belonging, and the mental connection between citizens and the King in Thailand were rare and too luxurious to exist in Hong Kong. We were totally smitten with the happiness of staying in Thailand.

The happy hours went so fast like eternity had come to an end in a second. We had strove, sweat, smiled, and seen the beauty of Thailand. Much to our dismay, the second day of the tour drew the curtains with a memory of hardships and enjoyment.

Day 3

There was only one word for me to express my feelings about today -- marvelous. We went to Maetaman Elephant Camp, followed by visiting Kayan village and, at last, Chiang Mai Night Safari. The animal shows were really amazing and the visit of Kayan village was a real eye-opener for me.

Getting excited for the elephant show, we tried to calm ourselves down by sitting down on a bench. The show began with a roar of a elephant. A few elephants walked slowly in front of me. I could never imagine that I could see an elephant in such a close distance. They roared. They drew. They jumped. Everything done by the cute elephants were amazing. What impressed me most was that an elephant held brush to draw a picture. What was even more stunning was that the painting drawn by an elephant was way better than mine. I was amazed by these elephants.

The next destination was the Kayan village. The Kayan women had to wear heavy neck coils. I have tried wearing once. The coils were really heavy. I could hardly imagine the women there wearing such a heavy coil while doing the housework. The tour guide, Ms. Da, showed us what the Kayan do to earn money. They weaved with an old-fashioned machine. Their weaving technique has become a culture of the Keyan.

Lastly, we went to Chiang Mai Night Safari. We first enjoyed an animal show performed by various kinds of animals, including porcupines, tigers, lions and many other animals. Later we had a guided tour by the zoo keeper. The zoo keeper patiently introduced the animals, which we have never heard of their names before. Lastly, we enjoyed a traditional dance performance of Thai by a group of transsexuals. Their performances were charming.

All the performance were undoubtedly amazing, but a question arose deep in my heart: isn't it unfair to the animals kept in the zoo? We, the audiences, enjoyed their performance a lot. However, are they really willing to be kept in zoo forever? Perhaps they would like to enjoy freedom too. Sometimes, we can even hear news about animals being beaten by zoo staff. In my opinion, animals should stay in the wild such that they can enjoy freedom, unless those animals which are facing the danger of extinction. By doing so, the animals can enjoy what they want most.

Day 4

Taking cooking class during the grand tour would be one of the most unforgettable experiences. We were never much of a hand at cookery, but we did enjoy the time of cooking some authentic northern Thailand cuisines.

Before stepping into the kitchen, we had to step in the farmland first. Our cooking tutor, Ms. Ning, asked us to put on a farmer hat and wear an apron. We found ourselves hilarious when we looked into the mirror because we look like non-professional farmers.

Ms. Ning had introduced many well known Thailand herbs to us. They play an important role when it comes to seasoning of Thai foods. Those are basil, lemon grass, scallion, mint and lime fruit. Ms. Ning even asked us to try the fresh herbs. To my surprise, it tasted sweet and refreshing. I believe that not many people can have the chance to taste the herbs once they were picked off from plants.

After visiting the farmland, it was time for us to cook. We have cooked 3 dishes together. To cookery freshmen, like us, we spared no efforts in cooking these 3 Thai cuisines. We had put in our mind and soul, trying to make the best use of the ingredients as well as the tutorials from Ms. Ning. Our first dish was the famous tom yum kung soup. It had to be noticed that the tom yum kung soup is in fact quite spicy which did not suit the appetites of us. However Ms. Ning kept claiming that the tom yum kung soup would not taste good without adding enough chili. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to control the amount of chili in our soup.

Even until now, we can still remember the exotic taste of tom yum kung soup. Having a chance to learn cooking in Thailand is a meaningful and precious experience.

Day 5

It was the last the day of this grand tour. The striking joy in the past four days have pushed our expectation of this day to be the highest, in order to get a perfect ending of the trip. In day 5, the main schedule was to visit several temples in Chiang Mai.

The first destination was to visit Wat Chedi Luang Worawihan and Wat Chedi Luang Buddha. On the way to temples, we listened to Ms. Da, our tour guide, and got some information of where we were going to visit. After the happening of earthquake in the 16th century, part of the temple was damaged. Then, we visited Wat Phra Singh.

We visited the temple and some of us worshipped the Buddha. We all made some wishes and wrote them on a long yellow paper. The visit to the temple made our mind calm and relaxed. Ambling in the area around and inside temple gave us time to think our lives: to think what we want and what we have done in the past. Maybe Buddhism is not pursued by most of us, but we all respected this well-known 'religion'. The experience of the visit to Thai's temple taught us a lesson, to respect each other, no matter what religion we have.

Besides, we went to Mahamakut Buddhist University and met Phra K.K.. He gave us a class of Buddhism for an hour. In the first topic 'what is Buddhism', we were surprised that Buddhism is not a religion but a philosophy. What is more, K.K. taught us how not to be suffered in life. Meditation is one of the ways in Buddhism. The class last for an hour, but the lesson has given a great lesson on our mindset. As a student, the meaning and way to live have sedum be thought by us. However, in this last day, we considered it again.

At the last, we went to Wat Phra Doi Suthep. After visiting 3 temples areas, thinking that things in Wat Phra Doi Suthep would be more or less the same, However we are wrong.. We got flowers and candles inside and worshipped with a ceremony having religious meaning. We walked around a golden tower and recited Buddhist sutras. This must be one of the most special activities in this trip.

With the last photo taken on the top of the Wat Phra Doi Suthep, we went to airport and ended our trip. Maybe the trip is not the most perfect tour ever, but this was one of our unforgettable experiences where we spend days together.

Appendix

Subject(s)	Person in charge
Introduction, Methodology, Photograph Analysis	Brian Chan
Cultural Exchange, literature analysis, Conclusion, Bibliography	Candy Tsoi
Reflection	Kelda Ng (Day 1) Cindy Lo (Day 2) Philip Leung (Day 3) Ellie Lam (Day 4) Peter Leung (Day 5)
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Link of video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czSmOI15YAY>

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