

## **The Factors Contributing to the Changes of Tai Lue Culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China**

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**Abstract:** The abstract on the factors contributing to the changes of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China has the objectives of studying the history of Tai Lue, Sipsongpanna, China, the current state and the problems concerning Tai Lue culture at Jinghong, the factors contributing to the changes of the Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China. This research is a qualitative research with the population and sample group within Jinghong area in Sipsongpanna Province, People's Republic of China. The tools used within this research consist of surveys, observations, interviews, and group discussions. The data was analyzed through the idea of globalization, structural-functional theory, cultural diffusion theory and cultural ecology theory. The data is presented through descriptive analysis. From the study, it was found that Tai Lue culture can be categorized into the following: before the spreading of Buddhism into Jinghong City: before the year 300, people were not permanently settled into a specific place. They move around according to their hunting pattern which later on transitioned to practice traditional farming along with the belief in ghosts and spirits. When Buddhism spread into Jinghong City: during the year 301-1949, Buddhism had spread into Jinghong and created 3 level of culture; primary level culture which consist of clothing and housing, middle level culture which consist of language and art and high level of culture which consist of beliefs the new era (1950 present). Tai Lue in Jinghong had gone through 3 major changes: the first time is in 1958 when there was a huge leap in development all around the country; the second time was during the cultural revolution in the People's Republic of China the third time was when the People's Republic of China opened up their country. The current status and the cultural changes of Tai Lue that is the most visible is the original style of housing where the houses were raised above the ground to commercial buildings for rent. The problems concerning Tai Lue culture are the lack of acceptance the refusal of practice and the refusal of passing on the culture. The main factor that contribute to the changes of Tai Lue's culture is the government's politics and policies. The factor that contribute the least to the changes in Tai Lue's culture is technology. Although, technology started to play a role in the society but isn't contributing to the cultural changes.

**Key words:** Factors to the changes, Tai Lue culture, Republic of China, technology started to play, cultural changes, problem

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Tai Lue is one ethnic group that resides in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna Province, People's Republic of China. Thai Lue has a unique history and culture that has been passed down alongside the history of the People's Republic of China. Tai Lue called themselves "Lue" or "Tai Lue". The language that they used is from the Lue family. From the Tai Lue history written by Zhaotao (1981) and Liang (1983) Tai Lue has been living in this same area as an agricultural society. They have been really unified,

since the time of Khun Juang who was the first king of Jinghong. Part of the Tai Lue people had moved to stay in other area. Tai Lue people spread themselves up all across Asia. Thailand has the majority of Tai Lue. Other cities with where Tai Lue's people resides are Myanmar, Lao PDR., Vietnam and India, respectively. Tai Lue tends to carry on and maintain their own identity no matter where they are Inya (2015).

Due to the fact that the Tai Lue ancestors had been living in Sipsongpanna for a very long time they had built beautiful culture ever, since Buddhism had spread from

Indochina to Sipsongpanna. Buddhism had merged with the existing local religion which had formed the Tai Lue culture in the area (Cuiwei and Yan, 2013). Tai Lue culture has a unique and outstanding characteristic. Even though they are living together with other group of people with different culture, the Tai Lue people can still preserve their own culture and tradition. Tai Lue culture is a very interesting culture in their clothing, spoken and written language, outstanding architecture and the belief in ghost and spirits which has been passed down to the present time. However, Tai Lue culture had gone through different changes to fit in with the society in each era as well as the trend of globalization that brought in capitalism and technology and caused the people to adjust their way of life. The cultural changes of Tai Lue in Jinghong City the capital of Sipsongpanna is really apparent due to both the internal and external factors.

These changes have a lot of impacts to the livelihood of Tai Lue people in the area such as their way of life their occupation and their culture. The government also has to put in more consideration in their development plan to make sure that the culture is developing alongside the preservation and restoration which are important context. The changes have to be suitable with the society in each era.

From the rational and importance mention above the researcher saw the importance of the Tai Lue culture which plays an important role to Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China and therefore developed an interest to conduct the study on "The Factors Contributing to the Changes of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China" by studying the history, the current situation and the problems concerning Tai Lue's culture. The study also covers the factors contributing to the changes of Tai Lue's culture in Jinghong, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China.

#### **Objective of the study:**

- To study the history of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China
- To study the current status and the problems concerning the culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China
- To study the factors contributing to the changes of Tai Lue's culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research on "the factors contributing to the changes of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City,

Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China" is a qualitative research with the goal of studying the history of Tai Lue, the current status of Tai Lue and the factors contributing to the cultural change in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China. The researcher had chosen purposive sampling as a way to choose three sample groups from a Tai Lue village in Jinghong City consisting of local government leaders, academics, elders and religious leaders. The practitioners are the sub-district headman in Jinghong and the related people are the people from outside who came and do business inside the city. The tools consist of observation notes and group interviews to collect the data. The data was then analyzed using globalization idea, the structural-functional theory the cultural diffusion theory and the cultural ecology theory and presented using descriptive analysis.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The thesis on "the factors contributing to the changes of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China" shows the following results. The history of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna Province, People's Republic of China. The history of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna Province, People's Republic of China can be categorized into 3 eras.

Before the spreading of Buddhism into Jinghong prior to the year 300. During this period, people had no permanent settlement. They move around the area according to their hunting patter which later on transitioned to do traditional agriculture. People grew cotton and wear Phatoong (traditional piece of cloth wear as skirt) used silver as decorations, believed in ghost and house spirits, city spirits and forest spirits. There are no written history during this period. The story has been passed down through words of mouth. There was a development in a form of pictures using bamboo trees and tamarind's seeds as a way to calculate and share the resources.

After Buddhism had spread into Jinghong City during the year 301-1949. There was a communication between the Chinese and the Tai Lue people. The productions were for household consumption and for selling. The culture is based on the three following cultural steps: outstanding and important the primary culture consist of clothing; clothing shows the way of life of Tai Lue people starting from the daily clothing to the clothing worn to the religious ceremonies or festivals which was not very different. Tai Lue clothing was simple, easy to wear and allows for good air flow. The raw materials that are used to make clothing distinguished the

different classes within the society. Silk was worn by people in the higher status, linen was worn by government officers and farmers while slaves only wear cotton. The general clothing for Tai Lue women consist of wearing a vest on the inside, body fit shirt on the outside and wearing "pha sin" or traditional skirt. Both men and women would wear white cloth around their heads. As for men they wear shirts without collars, buttons are in the middle of the shirts, wear long and big pants. Most young boys are novice and wearing monk robes. Housing: most Tai Lue people build their houses on the side of the "Mekong River" close to one another. The houses were raised above the ground. The materials for building the house changes from era to era. The architecture can be categorized into 3 eras: the first era where the pillars of the houses were built using bamboo. The floor, the wall and the roof were built with grasses. The second era: hard wood were used to build the pillars and the main structure of the house. The floors, the walls and the roofs were built using homemade clay tiles. The third era: the houses were built using wood, stone, bricks and tiles. The houses were mainly raised from the ground where both the two floors can be used. There are three functions of the house: the first function is the ground floor is used to raise livestock and storage. Women used the first floor to weave while the men used the space to do handicraft works. The second floor belongs to the owner of the house. The area around the house was used to raise livestock, growing fruits and vegetables.

The middle level culture consist of language: Tai Lue have both written and spoken language consisting of vowels and consonants. The language is passed down within the families and temples. Tai Lue language was well-known from the record of the teachings of lord buddha and other kind of records on different knowledges. The mural painting on the wall of the temple in Tai Lue are paintings that tells the story of Buddhism, the myths and folklores of the traditional religion and the daily lives of Tai Lue people. The colors used in the paintings are all natural. As for the performances used in the ceremonies or festivals the most unique one if the peacock dance. The dance imitates the behavior of the peacocks which according to the Tai Lue belief are sacred animals that is connected to the story of Lord Buddha. Most performers are male wearing peacock's feather.

The high level culture of Tai Lue consist of important beliefs of ghost and spirits. Before every activity, Tai Lue people normally pay respects to the spirits in order to ensure the success. The belief in the spirits involves paying respect to the ancestors and the supernatural beings which includes: the house spirits, the town spirits, and forest spirits in different occasions. The owner of the

house will set up an alter in their houses the town spirits, a spirit house will be built in the center of town. As for the forest spirits, a spirit house will be built near the nearest forest of the village. Tai Lue people believe that the spirits can bring both the good and the bad. Therefore, there is normally a spirit doctor overseeing the ceremony in worshipping or contacting with the spirits. This person is also act as a witch doctor healing sick people who got sick because of the spirit's doing.

**Present 1950:** This is the age of modernization. This era is well-known for its development in technology, science and economy. It is also the age centering around education, politics, economy and tourism of Sipsongpanna. The Tai Lue culture had gone through 3 huge changes during this period. The first period is in 1958 where the production had gained a giant leap throughout the country. The second time was during the cultural revolution in China. The third time is in the year 1978 when China opened up the country which is an important part of the history of Tai Lue in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China. The current status of Tai Lue culture in Jinghong, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China.

When considering the current status of the Tai Lue culture in Jinghong, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China it was found that according to the actual phenomenon, Tai Lue culture had changed in in the following aspect from small changes to big changes.

Housing: even though the location of the houses is still close to a river and built right next to one another just like in the past the livelihood of the Tai Lue people had changed dramatically. From the houses that were raised above the ground to tall buildings in order to lease out the rooms to generate more income the materials were also changed according to the technology and the reduction of the forest area. Tai Lue people are now relying on the new kind of materials such as iron, stone, cement, sand and tiles (Paw, 2016).

In terms of the belief in spirits, even though these belief has been around for a long time, it can still be seen in current days. Many changes had taken place but the belief in paying respect to the spirits still exist especially in the older generations who still hold the practice as part of their mental anchor. Even with the new innovations and technology those technology and knowledge cannot provide many answers. When there is nowhere else to turn to people still resort back to the belief in spirits. Even though there are fewer people who belief in spirits today the belief still hasn't faded and will continue to exist along side the Tai Lue people in Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna.

Arts such as paintings and drawings had gone through the changes in each era to a newer story of the present. The technology in arts also changes the types of colors used by importing the colors from other countries. The mural paints also shifted from ideal concepts to more realistic arts in combination with the ideology from other countries. The important dance of Tai Lue, the peacock dance also shifted from male performers to female performers. The dance imitates the behavior of the peacocks; the jump and the spreading of the tail feather. The original costume was not aimed at beauty. Today, both the dance and the costumes are adapted to show more gentleness and flexibility. The adaptation came about to encourage tourism.

Clothing has clearly shows the livelihood of the Tai Lue people in the past. Currently, the everyday clothing of the Tai Lue people no longer shows their identity. The clothing of the Tai Lue people had adapted from using traditional clothing more modern ones in order to fit in with the changing era and society. Clothing for festivals and ceremonies are normally made from silk, Synthetic fabrics, chiffon and polyester. Most of the clothing were ready-to-wear clothing and are purchased from the markets. There are more varieties of clothing with the styles borrowed from the neighboring countries such as Thailand. Not all the clothing had changed. Some of the aspect still maintains the identity of the Tai Lue people; especially amongst the older generations who still wear traditional Tai Lue clothing in their daily lives. Moreover, Tai Lue people still put an effort in preserving their clothing culture.

For language, people now use both the old and new Tai Lue language. In the religious text, textbooks for the novice and older generation still use the old Tai Lue language. On the other hand, newspaper, television other sources of media, signs and government offices all use new Tai Lue language. Even though kids today don't have to get ordained in order to go to school like in the past and have to study with the Hun kids with textbooks in Hun language, textbooks on Tai Lue language can still be found (Tao Su Yong, 2016).

**The factors contributing to the Tai Lue culture:** The factors contributing to the Tai Lue culture are as follows, ranking from important to less important factors: the factors concerning the politics and government's policies. The government's policies to expand the city by buying the land from Tai Lue people in Jinghong, the Province development policy by developing tourist sites and the education policy that forces people to finish middle school. The Chinese revolution during 1966-19796 had an

impact on the cultural changes in Tai Lue in Jinghong on clothing. Due to the support of the government in tourism, Tai Lue people are now wearing more modern clothing to expand their business opportunity. Tourism had imposed the adaptation of the traditional Tai Lue clothing to please the tourist rather than preserving the traditional style. In terms of housing, the policy on buying land from the Tai Lue people by the government caused the changes in housing from traditional houses to tall buildings. For language, the enforcement from the government in getting people to finish middle school at the minimum causes Tai Lue people to become more interest in Chinese language than the Tai Lue language. During the Chinese cultural revolution, many Tai Lue arts were destroyed. Tai Lue people were forced to abandon their traditional art form in order to fit in with the modern era. The revolution also caused many beliefs to disappear.

As for the tourism economy, Jinghong is one of the tourist destination. The development of the city for tourism had impact the Tai Lue cultural changes. Due to capitalism, Tai Lue put more value on clothing in their prices and good quality more than on the Tai Lue identity. The tourism economic development had caused the Tai Lue people to build more modern houses in order to generate more income as a place where tourists can come and stay. In terms of the language, Tai Lue people also uses more Chinese language to create tourism economy for themselves and their families to have a better and more modern quality of life. The new technologies that had come in also became more important than the traditional beliefs.

For the values, Tai Lue people will deny and neither accept nor practice Tai Lue culture. Tai Lue people are now wearing modern clothing in order to blend in and show off their modern taste. The housing that is built in the Hun style can provide them with more income and the space can be more functional. Today, Tai Lue people use Chinese more than before, since Chinese allows them to learn about more various modern subjects and can use to communicate with other people on a daily basis. Many Tai Lue people believe their arts and dance are old-fashioned and useless and therefore try to adapt them to be more modern. In regards to the belief, Tai Lue people give more importance to science and technology which can solve their daily lives problem quicker than their traditional belief.

The environmental factor where many Hun people are integrated into the communities while the village themselves are trying to become cities had also caused the cultural change. Apart from the clothing that had

changed to fit in with the changing society the forest, land and agricultural land had changed with the reduction of the materials that can be used to build house. The houses are now built in a more modern way instead of building houses that are raised from the ground using the materials that can be found from the forest. Tai Lue people have to switch from using Tai Lue language to using Chinese language to communicate with other people within the community. The transition from a rural community to a more urban community had caused with Tai Lue's arts to change in response to tourism which is one of the activities that help generate income for the communities. The beliefs in spirits and gods has faded out due to the fact that there are Hun people living together with the Tai Lue people and the Tai Lue people is taking in Hun Culture as oppose to their own culture.

For the family aspect, the parents don't see the importance of the Tai Lue culture which led to the lack of the passing on of the culture until the culture itself had changed. Tai Lue families now don't dress in Tai Lue traditional clothes at home and the family encourage the use of Chinese. Tai Lue families also don't pass on the arts, since their lifestyle is now under capitalism. For the beliefs, Tai Lue families no longer interest about the beliefs or passing on to the future generation.

In regards to the new technology that came into Tai Lue society that contribute to the changes in Tai Lue culture. Due to the technology, clothing can be produced more quickly and with more varieties. The press had broadcast modern clothing to the Tai Lue people and had caused the Tai Lue people to change their clothing to more modern style rather than preserving their own culture for the housing.

### **CONCLUSION**

Tai Lue culture, Jinghong, Sipsongpanna, People's Democratic of China have a long history and background and can be divided into 3 periods: before Buddhism was spread into Jinghong City, before the year 300 which was the time when people had no permanent settlement but moved around based on the hunting pattern and later on shifted to do traditional agriculture while maintaining traditional beliefs. After Buddhism had spread into Jinghong City, during the year 301-1949. Tai Lue people started to interact with Chinese people. Tools began to be used for agriculture. The agricultural produced were aimed at both internal consumption and selling. Tai Lue culture in Jinghong, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China is based on 3 cultural bases: primary culture which consist of clothing and housing middle level culture which

consist of language and arts and high level culture which consist of beliefs. Present 1950: this is the era of modernization. It is well-known that this is the era in which the policies were focused on the development of technology, economy and the strive to become the center for education, politics, economy and tourism. Tai Lue culture had gone through 3 major changes: the first time was in 1958 where the whole country enter a "giant leap", the second time was during the cultural evolution of China and the third time was when China opened up their country.

From the current status and the cultural problem of Tai Lue, Jinghong City, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China, the country have had changes in many dimensions: clothing, Tai Lue people changed from wearing traditional Tai Lue clothing to Hun's clothing or more modern clothing to fit in with the changing era and society; housing, the Tai Lue housing had changed starting from the materials that were used in the houses due to the influence they received from the Hun people. However, the belief in terms of the location of the housing is still there; language, Tai Lue possess both spoken and written language and consist of both the old and new Tai Lue language. Today, some old people still use the language but not so much for the middle age people, teenagers and children. Currently, Tai Lue people have to interact with people from the outside and many kids entered into the education system which forces them to have to use Hun language both in their education and communication; arts that are important to the Tai Lue people, mural paintings had changed according to the era, from telling Buddhist story to more modern stories. The ideology also changed from being more abstract to realistic. As for the dancing and the performance of the Tai Lue people the peacock dance that was an imitation of the peacock behavior consisting of the jumping and the spreading of the tail-feather was change to a more subtle and gentle dance. The costumes were also redesigned to be more elegant the belief, Tai Lue has the belief in spirits which still exist nowadays especially amongst the older generation. The youth and the middle age people, however have less faith in spirituality. The ceremonies concerning the spirits had been changed to become more suitable to the current era.

The factors that contribute to the changes of the Tai Lue culture in Jinghong, Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China consist of both the internal and external factors. In other words, the types of culture that had been affected by both the internal and external changes can be ranked from most affected to the least affected: Housing, belief, arts, clothing and language. As for the factors that contribute to the changes can be

ranked from the factors with the most impact to the factor with the least impact: politic and policies, tourism economy, values, environment, family institution and technology.

- Future research should do a comparison between Tai Lue culture in Jinghong, Sipsonpanna, People's Republic of China and Tai Lue culture in other countries

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The suggestions on applying the result of the study:

- This research can serve as suggestions in preserving Tai Lue culture to other parties, communities or government
- This research can serve as a direction in developing Tai Lue culture and the development of tourism in Sipsongpanna, People's Republic of China

#### **Suggestions for further study:**

- Future research can be done on other kinds of Tai Lue culture or in other areas

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