

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THAILAND

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Introduction

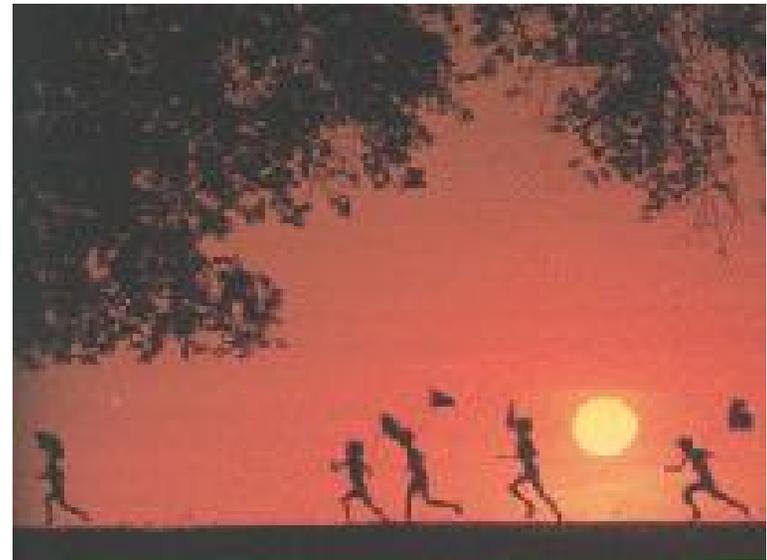
General Characteristics of Thailand



Introduction

Geographical Structure of Thailand

- The Northern Area
- The North-Eastern Area
- The Central Area
- The Southern Area



Introduction

History of Thailand

- 11th-12th centuries Khemer Empire
- 1238 first Thai Kingdom “Sukhothai”
- 1438 Ayuthaya Kingdom was created
- 1687 first diplomatic relationship with Europe, France
- 1767 Burma sovereignty was began
- 1782 The monarchy was re-established
- 1932 Constitutional Monarchy was established
- 1933 instead Kingdom of Siam, renamed as Thailand
- 1963-1973 repressive military regime by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn
- 6 October 1976 massacre in universities, 700 were students killed
- December 1991 present constitution was promulgated
- 1992 Black May, army attack against pro-democracy protesters, 48 died 44 missing



Glance at Thai Culture

General Evaluation about Thailand

Power Distance:	64	22 nd of 53 countries
Individualism:	20	40 th of 53 countries
Masculinity:	34	44 th of 53 countries
Uncertainty Avoidance:	64	30 th of 53 countries
Long-term orientation:	56	8 th of 23 countries

Glance at Thai Culture

Power Distance

<i>Question (abridged)</i>	<i>Exec.</i>	<i>White Collar</i>	<i>Difference</i>
External signs of a boss's status(a bigger car, expensive office furniture, high quality clothing) are important to him/her to maintain his/her authority over the workers (strongly agree + agree)	76%	59%	17
A clerical worker's status is (slightly + much) higher than a manual workers	53%	67%	14
Difficult for a subordinate to come to work in a bigger car than his/her superior (strongly agree + agree)	31%	40%	9
Need to pay respect to the boss outside work, e.g. on Sunday in a shopping mall	68%	74%	6

Glance at Thai Culture

Power Distance

- White-collar workers clearly put more emphasis on hierarchical relations than their bosses (the executives) themselves do. The white-collar workers feel a higher need to pay respect to their superior outside work.



Glance at Thai Culture

Individualism

<i>Question (abridged)</i>	<i>Exec.</i>	<i>White Collar</i>	<i>Difference</i>
I expect the company to provide assistance and help with housing	56%	81%	25
with education for my children	55%	72%	17
with health care	95%	100%	5
with unforeseen financial problems	63%	74%	21
Working for an automobile company, coming to work in a car of another make is difficult (strongly agree + agree)	41%	59%	18
Decisions are most often made by groups or teams of people	71%	60%	11
When performance improves seriously, the company rewards the individual responsible for it	40%	40%	8
reward the group or team responsible for it	42%	37%	5

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Individualism

- When someone is offered a higher salary elsewhere, he/she would tend to stay with the present company out of loyalty.

- I strongly agree 5%
- I agree 48%
- I disagree 42%
- I strongly disagree 5%

Glance at Thai Culture

Individualism

- People with lower salaries feel a higher need for assistance from the company in the domains mentioned in. They expect more assistance from the company in various domains.



Glance at Thai Culture

Time Orientation

<i>Question (abridged)</i>	<i>Exec.</i>	<i>White Collar</i>	<i>Difference</i>
The past is an important yardstick for future decisions (strongly agree + agree)	73%	96%	23
The future is already determined, whatever we do or try	19%	33%	14

- Temporal orientation: The past is much important as a yardstick for future decisions. It means they are more traditional and/or less western.



Glance at Thai Culture

Time Orientation - The 'getting acquainted' period

- Before you do business with someone, do you wish to spend some time in order to know the individual personally (family, education, social background, etc.)?
 - no, not at all 9%
 - yes, a few minutes 32%
 - yes, one or two hours (e.g. having lunch together) 28%
 - yes, a few weeks 18%
 - yes, a few months 13%
- Business lunches where good food is served in a nice restaurant are an element in my relation with business partners
 - yes, very frequently: two times a week or more 2%
 - yes, frequently: approx. once a week 10%
 - yes, but more rarely: approx. once a month 50%
 - yes, but very rarely: a couple of times a year 32%
 - no, almost never 6%

Glance at Thai Culture

Face Saving and Harmony

<i>Question (abridged)</i>	<i>Exec.</i>	<i>White Collar</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Continue with the first appointment at the expense of your second appointment	28%	47%	19
A superior criticising me will avoid direct criticism, make me feel indirectly that something was wrong	17%	26%	9
When I disagree with a superior, I will tell him so (almost always + most of the time)	50%	59%	9
When criticising a subordinate I will avoid direct criticism, make him/her feel indirectly that something was wrong	27%	29%	2

Glance at Thai Culture

Uncertainty Avoidance

<i>Question (abridged)</i>	<i>Exec.</i>	<i>White Collar</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Bringing a foreigner to work for our company is felt as a serious threat or a difficulty to cope with	24%	48%	24
I would prefer a higher paid, short-term job over a lower paid, long-term job	46%	38%	8
I save a substantial percentage of my income for			
my own future purchases (home, car)	94%	92%	2
my children	79%	68%	11
my grandchildren	39%	52%	13
helping other relatives when needed	70%	77%	7
The influence of American lifestyle and values is			
a threat that should be fought	3%	11%	8
a positive influence that should be encouraged	23%	15%	8
an opportunity but only if combined with our culture	68%	58%	50

Glance at Thai Culture

Masculinity

<i>Question (abridged)</i>	<i>Exec.</i>	<i>White Collar</i>	<i>Difference</i>
I prefer a large car which is fast and luxurious over a small car which is economic and pollutes less	48%	33%	15
Women and men must be equal with respect to professional ambition and career-orientation (strongly agree + agree)	94%	85%	9
When the wife has a successful career, the husband can stay at home and take care of the children (strongly agree + agree)	30%	30%	0
I will go to my office to finish a task over the weekend (frequently + sometimes)	75%	81%	6
I would be willing to sacrifice part of my yearly vacation if needed (almost certainly + reluctantly)	74%	77%	3

Glance at Thai Culture

Interpersonal Space

- A. When a male colleague at work wants to show me his affection and sympathy, he touches my arm or shoulder
- yes, often 9%
 - yes, but rarely 50%
 - no, almost never 41%
- B. When a female colleague at work wants to show me her affection and sympathy, she touches my arm or shoulder
- yes, often 10%
 - yes, but rarely 33%
 - no, almost never 57%

Glance at Thai Culture

Interpersonal Space

- Do not touch your Thai colleagues or partners unless you are absolutely confident that doing so is appropriate.



Glance at Thai Culture

Gift giving

- Managers give gifts to subordinates in our company
 - à yes, frequently 11.5%
 - à yes, but rarely 77%
 - à no, almost never 11.5%
- Workers give gifts to their superiors in our company
 - à yes, frequently 7%
 - à yes, but rarely 77%
 - à no, almost never 16%
- It is important to give gifts to business partners to establish and maintain good relations with them
 - à I strongly agree 25%
 - à I agree 64%
 - à I disagree 11%
 - à I strongly disagree 0%

Glance at Thai Culture

General Conclusion: Recommendations for Westerners

- Be as punctual as traffic conditions in Bangkok allow you to be, and do not use traffic consistently as an excuse for arriving late.
- Allow for some small talk to establish a relationship before talking business; socialise extensively when there seems to be a need for it and accept that business discussion may only be initiated at a later stage.
- Be very patient when business appears to be stalling, and persevere for a long time before drawing the conclusion that it is best to abandon an otherwise promising project.
- Do not be surprised when some of your Thai interlocutors appear to be very Westernised (mainly Americanised), but do not infer from there that Thai values are regressing. Do not infer from meeting executives that all Thai people are as Westernised as some of those might be.
- Acknowledge the importance of events that happened in the past in making decisions for the future, and be aware that the Thai may feel slightly less in control of the future than most Westerners.
- Do not touch your Thai colleagues or partners unless you are absolutely confident that doing so is appropriate.
- Never yell or shout at anyone, even when things seem to go terribly wrong.
- Allow for less than perfect knowledge of English, and express yourself in a way that reduces the risk of misunderstandings and confusion.

Glance at Thai Culture

General Conclusion: Recommendations for Westerners

- Be sure never to cause loss of face, even in seemingly innocuous cases like cutting short an appointment or meeting, etc.
- Establish and maintain informal networks of people you can rely on inside the company as well as outside; the latter may involve exchanging well-chosen gifts with business partners.
- Do not create an atmosphere in the company where workers feel tightly controlled by a suspicious management, or where there is open competition between the workers.
- Do not neglect the external signs of your own social and professional status, even outside the workplace, and respect those of others.
- Do not make decisions without extensive prior consultation in order to ensure that your decision will meet with a broad consensus.
- Be aware that your social and family background contribute to establishing the impression people will have of you.
- Be aware that workers expect assistance from the company in various domains, as if they were part of a large family.
- Do not underestimate the professional role of women (do not rely on what is said about women in Asia generally).
- Introduce foreign elements (people as well as ideas) with caution, particularly at the lower professional levels.
- Expect more traditional, less Western attitudes at lower professional levels and outside Bangkok.

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THAILAND

