

Culture and Commerce: China's Soft Power in Thailand

*Kornphanat Tungkeunkunt**
Thammasat University, Thailand

Abstract

In recent years, China's soft power has become a matter of much discussion as a crucial component of Chinese foreign policy. In Thailand, Chinese influences are increasingly evident. This can be seen from the large number of Confucius Institutes established in Thailand, the growing number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand, Thai students studying in China, the inauguration of the China Cultural Centre in Bangkok and the introduction of Chinese media into Thailand. This article examines the growing presence of China on a global scale, with a particular focus on the context of Thailand. It argues that the increasing Chinese influence in Thailand is largely driven by the historical background of Sino-Thai relations, by Thailand's economic interests as well as by the role of ethnic Chinese communities in Thailand.

Keywords: *Soft Power, China, Thailand, Culture, Commerce*

1. Introduction

Recent literature shows that the implementation of the Confucius Institute (CI) programme is part of China's soft power policy and aims to raise the nation's international profile along with its increasing economic role in the world, despite the controversy about China's cultural expansion abroad serving its own national interest (Guo, 2008; Lo and Pan, 2014; Leung and Du Cros, 2014; Gil, 2015). Evidently, the CI debate has drawn scholarly and critical attention on how China's soft power should be perceived.

Developed by Joseph Nye, the term "soft power" describes the ability to shape the preference of others through appeal and attraction. Whereas hard power is exercised through military and economic forces, soft power relies on the attractiveness of a nation's culture, political values and foreign policies (Nye, 2004: 5, 11). In the case of China, officials and scholars went beyond Nye's traditional definition of soft power and interpreted

the concept in their own, broader terms.¹ Kurlantzick (2007: 6) notes that Chinese soft power includes more coercive economic and diplomatic levers such as aid, investment and participation in multilateral organisations. Lai and Lu (2012: 30) broaden the term “soft power” to include multilateral diplomacy, economic diplomacy and “good neighbour” policy. In a speech given to members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), former President Hu Jintao and current President Xi Jinping highlighted several methods by which China could exert influence through soft power.² The concept of soft power proved highly popular among Chinese leaders, scholars and journalists, as can also be judged from its prevalence in Chinese media (Li, 2008: 287). It therefore played a crucial role in shaping China’s international political strategy.

Despite the significance of this notion in the case of China, the context that either generates or hinders the growth of soft power is understudied. Ferguson (2003) noted that not all non-traditional forces, such as cultural and commercial goods, can influence world affairs. For instance, it does not make sense to say that children all over the Islamic world love the United States just because of American fast food and pop culture. In this sense, Li Mingjiang (2011: 1-18) challenges the received idea about how the resources of power are used: culture, ideology and values can be used for coercion, and military and economic strength can be used for attraction and appeal. In this light, the study of the economic, political, social and cultural context of a host country should be encouraged as a crucial step to better understanding and assessing China’s soft power.

Drawing on empirical data including academic literature, official and media reports, and interviews with the people involved, this article examines the growing presence of China on a global scale, with a particular focus on the context of Thailand – an influential player in Southeast Asia and an ally of the United States – as a case study of Chinese diplomatic practices. The paper also argues that the increasing Chinese influence in Thailand is also driven by the historical background of close Sino-Thai relations, by Thailand’s economic interests as well as by the role of ethnic Chinese communities in Thailand. In other words, the context of Thailand as a host country facilitates the existence and functioning of China’s soft power. To detail the environment that enabled the considerable progress of China’s soft power, this article begins with the historical canvas that shaped Sino-Thai relations. In a second stage, it examines the expansion of China’s soft power due to non-governmental or people-to-people activities (e.g., tourism), and the increasing use of policy tools (such as education and media) for public diplomacy. Finally, it presents a few challenges and expressions of China’s soft power in Thailand, strongly reflecting the role of Chinese governmental organisations and their ties with Thailand’s ethnic Chinese communities.

2. From Alienation to Engagement: the Historical Background of Sino-Thai Relations

China and Thailand have a long history of close economic and cultural ties. Since the fourteenth century or earlier, there has been evidence of Chinese settlements in Thailand. Traders, artisans and literati played a crucial role in the introduction of Chinese culture to Thai society, including Chinese pottery decoration, and the translation of classical Chinese literature. In the modern era, the tributary system inevitably collapsed and was replaced by modern diplomacy. After the last tribute to China in 1854, there were no formal diplomatic relations between the two countries until the Sino-Siamese Amity Treaty in 1946.

Despite the century-long vacuum of formal diplomatic framework, trade, migration and cultural exchange between the two countries still carried on. Due to its rapid economic development since the mid nineteenth century, Thailand required a considerable number of labourers for commercial trade, production and construction (Suehiro, 1989). This opportunity encouraged massive waves of Chinese immigration to Thailand. Since the late nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants spawned a sizable community and became the largest minority in Thailand. Undeniably, Chinese immigrants in Thailand have become dominant forces that shape Sino-Thai relations, a trend that is widely recognized by both Chinese and Thai officials and epitomized in the expression “China and Thailand are kith and kin” (*Zhong tai yi jia qin*).

Aware of the potential power and influence that China could exert on the region, Thailand repeatedly tried to avoid establishing diplomatic relations with China. It feared that the Chinese government would interfere in Thailand's internal affairs due to the huge number of Chinese residents in Thailand who had come to dominate Thailand's economy, especially during the growing sentiment of Chinese nationalism in the twentieth century (Chinvanno, 1992). After the Second World War, the Thai government finally decided to establish official diplomatic relations with China in January 1946, as the latter's position on the international stage had become that of a victorious nation.

However, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Thai government perceived the rise of Communism as a threat to national security. Thus, Thailand became aligned with the US and recognized the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan. The US believed that the most powerful weapon to spread communist ideology were overseas Chinese people residing in host countries. Considering the atmosphere of the Cold War and the fear of Communism in Thailand due to the presence of huge Chinese communities, the Thai government strived to control the ethnic Chinese as well as Chinese education and media in Thailand. Under the Phibun regime,

Thailand publicly pursued anti-Communist policies. This led to the massive arrest of many Chinese leaders and newspapermen, while the total number of enrolments in Chinese schools in Thailand decreased considerably, as did the number of schools themselves (Skinner, 1958).

When Sarit Thanarat established the military absolutist regime in Thailand in 1958 after overthrowing the Phibun government in September 1957, the US-Thai relations reached a peak. The years of his dictatorship, as well as that of his associates and successors, can justifiably be called the “American Era” of modern Thai history (Anderson and Mendiones, 1985: 3). A number of other anti-communist policies were also implemented by the Thai military government,³ with the generous financial and military support of the US. Trade and cultural exchanges with China were interrupted, since the Thai government decided to ban all trading with the PRC along with the import to Thailand of all cinematographic films and publications originating from the PRC.

As international relations stepped into a new phase, US foreign policies dramatically shifted. In 1969, Richard Nixon declared the Vietnamization Policy abandoning Vietnam to its own fate. This policy had tremendous impact on Thailand’s attitude to Communist powers such as the PRC. At first, the Thai government fought against the Communist Party of Thailand, which was backed by the CCP. But given that Thailand and China shared the same concerns on Vietnam’s affairs, Thailand was forced to adapt its foreign policy to that of the PRC. Forced by domestic and international constraints, the Thai government established diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1975 (Chinwanno, 2010).

Since the late 1970s, China and Thailand have forged a close and friendly relationship (Storey, 2011). Especially after the rise of China as a major world power and as the world’s second largest economy, trade and investment in China has received special attention. Cultural and commercial exchanges have also been widely promoted in Thailand. H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has paid numerous visits to China, both officially and privately. The Chinese government sent a pair of giant pandas as a gift of friendship to Thailand.

Normally, Thailand’s foreign policy is to strike a balance between the US and the PRC. However, since the coup d’état in May 2014, Thailand has been ruled by a military junta, drawing widespread international criticism. The Thai junta government predictably leaned towards China in order to obtain Beijing’s recognition of its legitimacy. This dependence has strengthened the alliance between Thailand and China in economic and security matters, especially in those where both authoritarian governments share the same perspectives. Significantly, year 2015 marked the 40th anniversary of Sino-Thai diplomatic relations, which saw the flourishing of closer ties between the two countries in many spheres, including military cooperation.

3. Thai Tourism and the Clash of Cultures

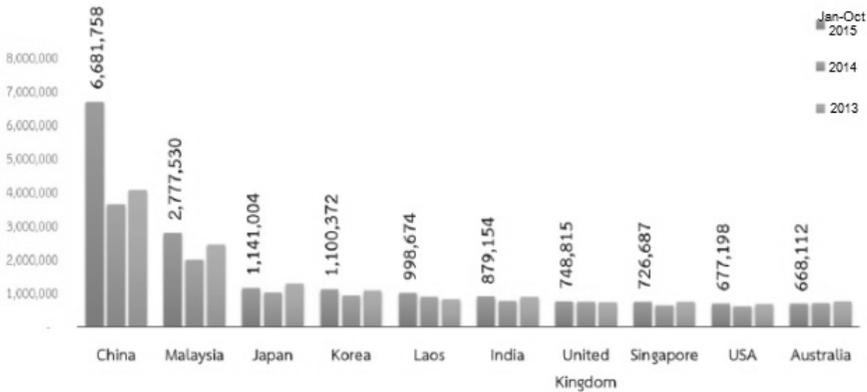
In recent years, tourism industry in Thailand has dramatically changed, and Chinese influence has become increasingly evident. Indeed, tourism is an outstanding part of non-governmental sources of China's soft power. Tourism is vigorously supported by the Thai government, as it is an important sector of the Thai economy, and the contribution of Chinese tourists to this sector has become increasingly prominent.

Thailand's reputation as the most popular tourist destination in Southeast Asia for Chinese tourists is largely due to the low-budget Chinese film "Lost in Thailand" (*Taijiong*), which unexpectedly broke China's box office record. "Lost in Thailand" tells the adventures of its Chinese protagonists and is set mostly in Chiang Mai – a city in northern Thailand. The film was released in China in mid-December 2012, and was in theatres until mid-January 2013. Unbelievably, it grossed around USD200 million at the Chinese box office, with more than 30 million Chinese viewers within only a month (*Zhongguo Wang*, 2013).

Thanks to the unprecedented popularity of "Lost in Thailand", an overwhelmingly larger number of Chinese tourists were motivated to visit Thailand, the top destinations being Bangkok and Chiang Mai, the two locations where the filming takes place (Bloomberg, 2013). Moreover, the expansion of direct flights from many Chinese cities to the main touristic destinations in Thailand has greatly facilitated travelling for Chinese tourists, in addition to the visa-on-arrival facilities, the short travelling distance, and a high value-for-money factor. Therefore, it is not surprising that Thai authorities should speak highly of the Chinese director of this groundbreaking work that has helped boost Thailand's tourism. Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra received Xu Zheng, the director of this film, at the House of Parliament in March 2013.

From a broader perspective, the number of Chinese people travelling abroad has grown tremendously in recent years. Thanks to rising incomes, a less restrictive passport regime and softer spending limits, China is now the world's largest outbound tourist market (*The Economist*, 2013). In addition to sightseeing, shopping is the main focus of Chinese outbound trips. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Chinese tourists have overtaken the US and Germany as the world's biggest spenders on travel, spending a record USD102 billion on international tourism in 2012, a 40 per cent rise compared to USD73 billion in 2011 (CNN, 2013).

According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Thailand received 22.3 million overseas tourists in 2012. This figure included 2.7 million tourist arrivals from China, accounting for 12.1 per cent of the total. In 2013, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand has reached 4.7 million,

Figure 1 Number of Foreign Tourists Visiting Thailand

Source: TAT, 2015.

accounting for 17.8 per cent of the total. Due to this impressive 68.8 per cent increase compared to 2012, China has replaced Malaysia as Thailand's main destination for overseas tourists (TAT, 2014). Since 2013, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand have ranked among the highest, and so was the growth in numbers of Chinese tourists. By October 2015, 6.6 million Chinese tourists had already visited Thailand that year. By the end of 2015, it is estimated that the total number of Chinese tourists will reach 8 million (TAT, 2015).

Undoubtedly, activities and services in Thailand are largely shaped by the preference of Chinese tourists. During Chinese New Year, the TAT launched a series of campaigns targeted at Chinese tourists. With the support of the Ministry of Culture, it promoted "Happy New Year" activities in popular shopping areas in Bangkok. The premises were decorated in Chinese style by hanging red lanterns, Chinese food was sold, and Dragon and Lion dances were performed. In addition, the international airports of Thailand now incorporate more Chinese signs and offer services in Chinese to accommodate Chinese tourists. Moreover, King Power and Naraya – the favourite stores of Chinese tourists – prefer to hire shop assistants who can speak Chinese. Shopkeepers in the Weekend Market now usually speak basic Chinese in addition to English.

Nevertheless, the growing presence of Chinese tourists does not necessarily have a positive impact; it can also cause negative impressions. In spite of the economic advantages, the arrival of Chinese tourists brings "culture shock" to some local residents, especially in Chiang Mai, a large city yet long known for its tranquillity. It is reported that the blockbuster success of "Lost in Thailand" brought a sudden influx of Chinese tourists, whose

behaviour caused Chiang Mai residents to complain. While many people working in the tourism industry are delighted by the influx, 80 per cent of 2,200 Chiang Mai residents polled by Chiang Mai University said that they were highly displeased with Chinese behaviour (*Chiang Mai CityNews*, 2014). The survey and numerous comments on social media blamed Chinese tourists for committing offensive acts, including littering, spitting, queue-jumping, flouting traffic laws when driving, riding bicycles, or parking their cars, and relieving themselves in public areas. Some restaurant owners complained about their Chinese customers filling up doggy bags at buffets.

The rising anti-Chinese sentiments in Chiang Mai can be seen in radical Facebook pages that circulate reports of inappropriate behaviours of Chinese tourists. These pages show that in Chiang Mai University, a travel hotspot for Chinese tourists, known for its beautiful scenery and free entrance,⁴ Chinese visitors flooded the premises, disturbed lectures and student activities, and camped overnight on campus. It is reported that Chinese tourists dressed up in the university uniform were arrested for violating university regulations that prohibit non-students from wearing it (*Bangkok Post*, 2014). In response to the controversial issue of whether Chinese tourists should be allowed on campus, Chiang Mai University decided to capitalise on them by charging visiting fees to reduce the amount of foreigners visiting the institution. Visitors must also take designated tram tours, and are admitted to only certain parts of the university.

Following another sensational report about the inappropriate behaviour of Chinese tourists, the latter were banned from entering Wat Rai Khun, a magnificent white temple located in Chiang Rai, northern Thailand. The report claimed that some Chinese tourists were unable to use toilets appropriately. The ban was ordered by angered temple founder and Thai National Artist Mr. Chalermchai Kositpipat. Half a day later, he cancelled the ban and allowed Chinese tourists into the temple, but on the condition that their tour guides would clean the toilets if Chinese tourists were to make them dirty (*Bangkok Post*, 2015).

While the misbehaviours of Chinese tourists are widely discussed and deplored in Thai social media, a public intellectual based in Chiang Mai, Nithi Eiwsiwong, noted the passive silence by which local Thais reacted to such scenes. Nithi Eiwsiwong questioned why locals do not immediately intervene and ask Chinese tourists to refrain from offensive acts instead of talking behind their backs. He further explained that Thai people are more likely to opt for gossip rather than face-to-face communications to put pressure on anyone who breaks the social order. This mentality, however, only works within a small community but fails to apply to modern society, especially to temporary visitors. Visitors may leave Thailand before they become aware of gossip, or worse, when gossip turns into radical social pressure that

makes tourists uncomfortable and afraid of ever returning to Thailand again (Eiwsriwong, 2014).

The poor reputation of Chinese tourists abroad has also drawn the attention of Chinese authorities. Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang criticized the “uncivilized behaviour” of his fellow citizens, and stressed the need for better behaviour when travelling so as to protect China’s image abroad. Also, the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) issued new guidelines of travel etiquette and international practices for tourists, with helpful illustrations. This move confirms that the policies of the Chinese government aim to improve its people’s capacity to learn from international experiences.

4. Chinese Language Education and Culture: the Growing of Confucius Institutes and the Establishment of China Cultural Centre

While tourism is merely what could be called the non-governmental or “people-to-people” side of China’s growing presence in Thailand, the Chinese government also attempts to expand its cultural influence across Southeast Asia by using policy tools of its public diplomacy. In this respect, Chinese education is significant, as it is an aspect where Thailand desperately needs assistance from China.

The Chinese government has made a clear and calculated move to develop Chinese education in Thailand. In 2004, representatives from the Chinese and Thai Ministries of Education (MOE) began to discuss the revision of cooperation framework between the two countries. In 2005, the Thai Minister of Education, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary, visited the China National Office for teaching Chinese as a foreign language or Hanban, an institution affiliated to the Chinese MOE. Both parties further negotiated the cooperation framework to promote the learning and teaching of Chinese language in Thailand.

Thailand also recognized the indispensable role of Hanban in the development of Chinese learning and teaching in Thailand. In 2006, the Thai MOE and Hanban signed a cooperation framework for the development of Chinese language teaching and learning in Thai higher education institutions in Bangkok. This framework stated that Hanban would help Thailand develop Chinese curriculum and Chinese language textbooks as well as E-learning materials to be used by Thai schools, and would increase the number of volunteer Chinese teachers sent to Thai schools to 500 a year starting from 2006 (Bureau of International Cooperation, n.d.).

Following the Framework of Cooperation in 2006, China and Thailand concluded an Agreement on Educational Cooperation between the MOE of the two countries in Beijing in 2009. This agreement, witnessed by the Chinese

Premier and the Thai Prime Minister, aimed to enhance the friendly bilateral relations between the two countries in the field of education (OHEC, 2010: 115-118).

Moreover, Thailand's Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) addressed the need for assistance in the field of Chinese education during the meeting with Hanban in May 2010. It was reported during the meeting that there were 615,270 students learning Chinese in Thailand, including 532,795 students at primary and secondary education levels, 56,365 students at vocational education level, and 26,110 at tertiary education level. The report strongly confirmed the increasing demand for Chinese language learning among Thai students, the problem of the shortage of qualified Chinese language lecturers in Thailand, and the need to develop multi-media for Chinese language teaching and learning made available to a larger number of Thai learners of Chinese language. In this regard, the OHEC considered it was necessary to seek academic cooperation and asked Hanban to send Chinese experts to develop multi-media teaching and learning, testing methods for the evaluation of the linguistic competency of Thai teachers teaching Chinese language, and to provide scholarships and training to Thai teachers of Chinese language through further studies in China or through the participation in short-term training courses (OHEC, 2010: 175-179).

A decade later, it is unsurprising that Thailand is now home to 13 Confucius Institutes (CIs) and 11 Confucius classrooms (CCs),⁵ both affiliated to state-run institutions (except for the more recent one, Maritime Silk Road CI). Thailand welcomes more than 8,000 Chinese volunteers, more than any other country in Southeast Asia. The CI project, initiated by Hanban, is introduced as a non-profit educational institution devoted to providing scope for people all over the world to learn Chinese language and culture, and as a platform for cultural exchanges between China and the world (Hanban, 2015a). These objectives are in accordance with the values that the Chinese government claims to stand for in its peaceful rise.

As a Hanban programme, the CIs are established as joint ventures between Chinese partner institutions and local institutions. Thailand's first CI was established in 2006, receiving its initial operating funds of USD100,000 from Hanban. The local Thai university was responsible for premises, relevant equipment and facilities. Each CI has a joint committee, whose directors come from both countries: one Thai and one Chinese. The Chinese director and instructors, recommended by a Chinese partner university, are appointed and paid by Hanban with two/four-year tenure. Chinese volunteers, though appointed by Hanban, receive no salary but instead are granted a living allowance with one-year tenure on average. Textbooks used in CIs are also imported by Hanban, and are strong conveyors of Chinese culture. Therefore, the funding, personnel and curriculum of the CI are controlled by Hanban.

Nevertheless, host universities also need to self-finance their CI programme in addition to Hanban's financial support.

In order to apply for annual funding from the Chinese government, CIs need to draw up executable plans for annual projects and budget proposals, summarizing the efficacy reports of annual projects and final financial accounts, and submit them to Hanban for examination and approval (Hanban, 2015b). Although each institute has the freedom to design its own programme, most activities organised by CIs must conform to Hanban's objectives in order to secure financial support. Therefore, despite

Table 1 Lists of CIs in Thailand in 2015

<i>Local Thai University</i>	<i>Chinese Partner University</i>
<i>Bangkok Metropolis</i>	
Chulalongkorn University	Peking University
Bansomdej Chaopraya Rajabhat University	Tianjin Normal University
Suan Dusit Rajabhat University at Suphanburi	Guangxi University
Kasetsart University	Huaqiao University
Maritime Silk Road CI* (located at the premises of Dhurakij Pundit university)	Tianjin Normal University
<i>Eastern Thailand</i>	
Burapha University	Wenzhou Medical College and Wenzhou University
<i>Northeastern Thailand</i>	
Khon Kaen University	Southwest University (<i>Xinan Daxue</i>)
Maharakham University	Guangxi University for Nationalities (<i>Guangxi Minzu Daxue</i>)
<i>Northern Thailand</i>	
Mae Fah Luang University	Xiamen University
Chiang Mai University	Yunnan Normal University
<i>Southern Thailand</i>	
Prince of Songkla University	Guangxi Normal University
Prince of Songkla University at Phuket	Shanghai University
Betong Municipality	Chongqing University

Note: * Established in 2015.

Source: OHEC, 2010: 205-213.

the large number of CIs in Thailand, their activities, aimed at promoting Chinese language and culture, include, for example, Chinese culture Open House, Chinese music/dancing performances, training courses on Chinese calligraphy, and talks on Chinese language and culture. Unfortunately, research is not a top priority of CIs in Thailand.

Scholarships are part of the CIs' appeal. Each year, a great number of Thai students apply for scholarships to the China Scholarship Council (CSC) via Thailand's CIs in order to study in China. According to the 2010–2011 annual report of the Chinese MOE, Thailand ranked fourth among countries sending students to China after Korea, the United States, and Japan (China Association for International Education, 2014). Moreover, the Chinese government awards grants to 200 Thai officials and school principals for classroom observation and cultural visits to China every year.

Thailand is not the only country to receive Chinese assistance in the development of Chinese language learning and teaching. Indeed, this practice is now global. There are currently more than 400 CIs and 600 CCs in over 100 countries. Unlike other cultural organisations subsidised by their governments, such as Britain's British Council, Germany's Goethe Institut, and France's L'Alliance Française, which operate independently and in their own premises, CIs operate within established local institutions, arguably perceived as the reflection of China in overseas education. The role of the CI, especially in the US, has engendered considerable debates among scholars. Marshall Sahlins, an anthropologist at University of Chicago, argues that the mission of CIs involves the promotion of the political influence of the Chinese government, as guided by the propaganda apparatus of the party-state (Sahlins, 2013). According to Sahlins (2014), it is a threat to the principles of academic freedom and integrity that underlie the system of higher education, including the recruitment and control of academic staff, the choice of curriculum, and the freedom of speech. In response to Sahlins's critique, Edward A. McCord, CI director at George Washington University, denied such claims and contended that the CI, though supported by Hanban, remains independent in operation and management (McCord, 2014). Nevertheless, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) cites Sahlins's article and joins the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in recommending that universities cease their involvement in CIs unless they can ensure that Hanban will not interfere with core academic values (AAUP, 2014). So far, a few universities have ceased their collaboration with CIs, such as McMaster University in Canada, the University of Lyon in France, University of Chicago in the US, and Stockholm University in Sweden (*South China Morning Post*, 2015b).

Apart from this controversy, scholarship also addressed the role of CIs in the exertion of soft power in particular countries/regions, showing the

complexities of how CIs were operated and perceived.⁶ In Thailand, the development of CIs is in direct relation to Chinese education in general. First, because of the pro-assimilation policies implemented by the Thai government over several decades, Chinese education in Thailand was completely interrupted and had become defunct in the 1950s (Skinner, 1957). Tejapira (1997) argues that after May 1992, when Thai political culture led to a more pluralistic and democratic society, this new environment gave rise to the “renaissance of Chinese cultural awareness” among the Thai-Chinese population, as many were keen to learn about their ancestors’ language and culture and regained their ethnic consciousness. Publications on Chinese culture became best-sellers, and novels on the life of the ethnic Chinese in Thailand were adapted into popular television series.

In addition to this new cultural awareness, Chinese language learning was also encouraged by the rise of China as a major world power and as the world’s second-largest economy. This phenomenon has encouraged the study of Chinese language, and Chinese speakers are urgently required to meet the increasing demand engendered by trade between China and Thailand. The support to Chinese education received from China through Hanban and the CI programme is therefore timely, and an excellent option for Thailand in the pursuit of Chinese teaching and learning.

Moreover, according to Nguyen (2014), the activities of CIs in the Mekong region play an important role in connecting China and overseas Chinese communities in the region. In Thailand, the growing numbers of CIs are strongly facilitated by the enthusiastic response of the ethnic Chinese communities, one of the largest overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. The fact that the Maritime Silk Road CI – the first of this kind in the world – was launched in Thailand can be attributed to the active role of Chao Khun Thongchai, a reverend abbot from the Buddhist temple of Wat Trai Mit in the heart of Bangkok’s Chinatown. Chao Khun Thongchai is also a well-known patron of the Romchatra Foundation, whose aims are to encourage, develop and promote education in Thailand. According to Dr. Wasana Lertsin, the Foundation Secretary, prior to the Maritime Silk Road CI Chao Khun Thongchai sponsored the establishment of the first global Confucius classroom at Wat Tri Mit School in 2006. A passionate advocate of Chinese education, Chao Khun Tongchai therefore gained public support from both the local community and Hanban (L. Wasana, personal communication, 9 August 2015).

Finally, despite the controversial debates on CIs, the CIs in Thailand remain silent, and still compete with one another for support from the Chinese government. Indeed, academic freedom is not the main concern of Thai scholars, due to the practices of self-censorship that are the legacy of the military dictatorship regime and that have long been rooted in Thai academia.



The unveiling ceremony of the world's first Maritime Silk Road CI on 24 June 2015 (Source: The Romchatra Foundation, 2015)

As long as financial support from China is received, such practices of self-censorship will be pursued for the sake of mutual benefits. Nor are we likely to witness any criticism regarding the issue of academic freedom.

In addition to CIs, China's soft power initiative to broaden the appeal of Chinese language and culture includes the establishment of the China Cultural Centre (CCC) in Bangkok. The CCC is said to be part of the Chinese Ministry of Culture's plan for cultural reform and development to strengthen cultural exchanges with people abroad and promote Chinese culture. It is claimed that the CI and the CCC are very different platforms. While the former, established in the host university's campus, deals with student affairs and focuses on teaching Chinese language, the latter is located in its own venue, hosts more diverse activities, and provide a broader curriculum (*South China Morning Post*, 2015a).

The establishment of the CCC in Thailand – the first such centre in Southeast Asia – began in mid-December 2007 when the Chinese ambassador to Thailand and the Thai Minister of Culture signed an agreement for the founding of the centre. To celebrate the 35th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Thailand, a groundbreaking ceremony for CCC in Bangkok was held in November 2010. Finally, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra attended the opening of the CCC on 21 November 2012.

The CCC in Bangkok is the world's largest centre of its kind, located opposite the Chinese embassy. Exhibitions, performances and training courses



China Cultural Centre in Bangkok (Source: Courtesy of Sa-nguan Khumrunroj)

on Chinese language, opera, dancing, painting, calligraphy and Taichi are held regularly for anyone interested in Chinese language and traditional culture (*Zhongguo Xinwenwang*, 2012). The Centre's annual major event is the celebration of Chinese New Year, which has clearly shown that Beijing perceives the ethnic Chinese worldwide as cultural agents, whose cultural practices can be used to push China's soft power (*Renmin Wang*, 2015). Moreover, the ethnic Chinese communities in Thailand are encouraged to participate in cultural activities that engage with contemporary pop culture, such as singing contests and film screening (China Embassy, 2014).

5. A New Force in the Marketplace: Chinese Media in Thailand

In addition to the establishment of CIs and the CCC, the Chinese government has heavily invested in numerous media outlets. Chinese leaders have addressed the importance of enhancing the international outreach of Chinese media to build China's national image. This effort becomes obvious in Thailand, as can be seen from the launching of the CCP-funded newspaper, the Thai edition of Xinhua news Facebook page, and the improvement of Thai-language China Radio International.

Chinese newspapers have been published in Thailand since the early twentieth century. They initially aimed to provide extensive coverage of commercial and financial news to the business community. However, with overseas Chinese in Thailand becoming actively interested in developments in Mainland China, these papers became a tool to mobilize political movements

in Thailand about political struggles in China (Skinner, 1957). Therefore, Chinese newspapers became highly politicized, each promoting a particular Chinese nationalist political ideology (Chantavanich, 1997).

In the 1950s, the anti-Communist policy initiated by the Thai government led to the crackdown on pro-CCP newspapers in Thailand. The remaining Chinese newspapers were subjected to self-censorship and maintained their neutral or pro-Kuomintang (KMT) attitudes. News coverage on developments in Mainland China was forbidden. This alienated and forced China to disappear from Thai society. But following the normalization of Sino-Thai relations, the pro-CCP tone has risen dramatically. It is no exaggeration to say that Chinese press in Thailand is directly affected by the relationship between Thailand and China, and complicated by the landscape of world politics.

Today, there are six Chinese dailies in Bangkok including *Xingxian Ribao*, *Yazhou Ribao*, *Xin Zhongyuan*, *Jinghua Zhongyuan*, *Shijie Ribao* and *Zhonghua*. Publishers are reluctant to release figures about their circulation. Most revenues of these papers purportedly come from advertisements and public announcements of Thai-Chinese businessmen who want to be outstanding in Chinese society. Except *Shijie Ribao*, which is funded by the KMT, other dailies hold neutral or pro-CCP attitudes. In addition to Chinese dailies, there is a Thai-Chinese bilingual magazine titled *Student Chinese-Thai Monthly* and run by a retired Thai-Chinese professor. This monthly magazine aims to promote Chinese language and culture learning for Thai beginners. So far, Chinese press in Thailand has been heavily self-reliant for matters of fundraising, printing, production and distribution to survive in the marketplace.

In an attempt to enhance its influence, China has seen an opportunity to boost up news coverage on China's developments and to promote its image internationally in the Thai marketplace. The *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, the official newspaper of the CCP, officially launched its overseas edition in Thailand in December 2012. More than 300 Thai and Chinese representatives from political, business, cultural and educational circles, as well as Thai and Chinese journalists, attended the inauguration ceremony in Bangkok. The Chinese Ambassador to Thailand, Guan Mu, gave a speech at the ceremony, stating that the *People's Daily (Thailand Edition)* is part of Sino-Thai bilateral exchanges and cooperation. This newspaper will be a new window through which Thai people can understand China (*Xinhua*, 2012).

The *People's Daily (Thailand edition)*, the first overseas publication of the *People's Daily* in Southeast Asia, is a Thai- and Chinese-language monthly magazine, published on the 18th of each month. It is positioned as a high-end magazine targeted at readers in Thai political, business, cultural, and academic circles. The contents are selected articles and photographs from the *People's*

Daily overseas edition, as well as related news and reports on Thailand and Southeast Asia.

In addition to the *People's Daily* (Thailand edition), Xinhua News Agency, the official press agency of the PRC, has launched its official Facebook page in Thai in 2015. The page provides comprehensive and breaking news for Thai users interested in the Chinese perspective. Obviously, much of the contents are news coverage about China's developments and accomplishments, such as China's high-speed train and official visits of Chinese leaders to foreign countries and international organizations.

The inauguration of media operated by the CCP is not a new practice in Thailand. China Radio International (CRI), a Chinese state-run radio station, has been broadcasting in Thai since 10 April 1950. Once critical of the Thai government – an ally of the US at that time – for being against Communist China in the Cold War era, CRI shifted its position in a manner that is consistent with the Chinese government's new global policy. Thai-language CRI is now committed to “introducing China and the world to the Thai, and promoting understanding and friendship between Chinese and Thai people.” It offers news reports and produces a variety of feature programmes in cooperation with Thai university broadcasting stations at institutions such as Chulalongkorn University, Naresuan University and Mahasarakam University (CRI, 2014). CRI's overseas office in Bangkok claims that its popularity is such that it receives more than 6,000 letters from listeners each year.

A matter in need of reassessment is the effectiveness of China's official media policy. The *People's Daily* and the CRI are the most representative and authoritative Chinese media to promote China's image and influence internationally. Their agenda is demonstrably to “propagate” a positive impression about China. However, Thai people can acquire knowledge about China through other channels, such as Thai/Western news agencies and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, which can reveal different sides of the stories. Recently, serious problems in China – rampant corruption, environmental pollution, natural disasters and food security issues – have been reported in the Thai media and widely discussed in Thai society. More importantly, news coverage from Chinese official media of the disputes between China and other neighbouring countries including Southeast Asian nations makes China appear more aggressive than amicable. Whether China's official media can challenge the existing media in Thailand and prove effective in creating a better impression of China among Thai people remains to be seen. Nevertheless, it can be said that the burgeoning of official Chinese media in Thailand expresses a shift of Thai attitudes towards China from alienation to acceptance. Since the end of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, and China's implementation of its “good neighbour” policy in the 1990s, Thailand has become more open to Chinese media, unlike in the early days.

6. Capital Challenge: When old Chinese Meet New China

While the Chinese government expands its cultural influence smoothly, the increased penetration of Chinese capital is meeting resistance. In other words, China's commercial expansion in Thailand differs from its cultural expansion policies in that Chinese economic forces may face challenges from local capital⁷ and media.

Despite being descendants of Chinese immigrants, many Thai-Chinese appear to respond to the PRC capital with some reluctance. The proposed China City Complex in Bangkok, a hub for the export of Chinese commodities, has caused anxiety among Thai small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Thai SME entrepreneurs, mostly descendants of Chinese immigrants, perceived this Chinese mall as a threat. Its cheaper goods and strong financial support from China would, they feared, hurt small Thai businesses throughout the supply chain from manufacturing to wholesale centres and community shops (*Bangkok Post*, 2011). Therefore, Thai SME entrepreneurs called for the withdrawal of the project. In addition to Thai SME entrepreneurs, Business and Trade Association proposed to the Thai government a number of measures to protect Thai goods and Thai entrepreneurs. Also, the Thailand-China Business Council warned Thai businessmen to prepare for the incoming capital from China (*Bangkok Business*, 2014).

In contrast to concerns raised by SME entrepreneurs about the PRC capital, the Thai-Chinese who avidly participate in business/Chinese associations soon mastered how to gain from the rise of China. In early days, business associations included the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (TCCC) that acted as a central organization that allowed Thai-Chinese businessmen to exchange information, and as a representative to protect their interests when dealing with the Thai government or related authorities. Likewise, Chinese associations including speech-group and regional associations were formed to protect the special occupational interests of their members (Skinner, 1958). More recently, these associations have developed their networks across kinship, speech-group, and regions in a global context. Such a transnational network suggests that these associations function and operate beyond national borders (Liu, 1998). Exclusive interviews of prominent figures in the TCCC mention promoting group visits to China and holding business talks with Chinese entrepreneurs to establish relationships and explore new business opportunities. The TCCC also organizes campaigns to attract younger Chamber members and raise awareness about the significance of the Chinese language, which is an important tool to strengthen business ties with China as well as with other Chinese communities worldwide. This is the current new mission of the TCCC (*Taiguo Zhonghua zongshanghui jikan*, 2010-11).

Empirically, the relationship between Thailand's business associations/ Chinese associations and the PRC is also marked by the formal acceptance of China's political values. These associations declare their adherence to the One China Principle and support China's decision to turn the anti-Japanese war Victory Day (3 September) and the Memorial Day for Nanjing massacre victims (13 December) into new national days (*Xinhua*, 2014a). Such instances show that these associations are following Beijing's line for their economic interests in China. Although some Thai-Chinese SME entrepreneurs, who are descendants of Chinese immigrants, may be concerned about the influx of China's capital, so far there have been no violent anti-China campaigns, protests or riots in Thailand. Perhaps, ethnic Chinese are so successfully integrated into Thai society that Thai people feel less antagonistic toward China, and are therefore able to tolerate Chinese capital. On the other hand, in other Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia that have border conflicts with China and where ethnic Chinese are less integrated, indigenous people tend to be more sceptical of the expansion of China and capital.

Recently, the Thai junta government has approved the China-Thailand Railway development project. Chinese authorities claim that the railway will help develop transportation infrastructure, create jobs, and improve people's living standards in Thailand. The project is scheduled to be finished by 2018, and will bring an additional two million Chinese tourists to Thailand every year (*China*, 2015). However, the project details are not finalised, especially the project's loan interest rates that were offered to Thailand. This caused several national interest concerns among the Thai population. It was suggested that the Thai government should analyse and evaluate the railway project more carefully to ensure the reliability of China's high-speed rail technology, and the worthiness of Thailand's investment (*Matichon*, 2015). Whether the China-Thailand Railway will become a win-win plan, as China has claimed, remains to be seen.

7. Reflection and Conclusion

This article draws on Thailand as a case study of the practices of China's soft power, and attempts to examine areas where China has made considerable progress. There are indeed numerous signs of the expansion of China's soft power in Thailand, such as the growing number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand, the rapid success of CIs now found in Thailand (despite criticism of the role of the CI in many countries), the increasing number of Thai students studying in China, the inauguration of the China Cultural Centre in Bangkok and the introduction of China's official media, such as the *People's Daily* Thai edition, into Thailand. Empirical evidence demonstrates that in the case

of Thailand, the salient achievement of China's soft power strongly relies on the policy tools of the Chinese government. Therefore, it can be argued that the notion and practice of Chinese soft power departs from Nye's original definition, as sources of Chinese soft power mostly are governmental than non-governmental. Moreover, it can be said that the increasing influence of China is largely driven by a historical background of Sino-Thai relations, Thailand's drastic need to boost economic growth, and the cultural ties with China of ethnic Chinese communities. To conclude, one can argue that China's ability to appeal abroad depends not only on its own policies, but also on the host country that is the target of China's soft power.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Professor Liu Hong and Dr. Charlotte Setijadi, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, for the opportunity to join the panel titled "Beyond Fixed Geographies: Diaspora and alternative conceptions of Southeast Asia". The author also thanks Tamthai Dilokwittayarat, Pongkwan Sawasdipakdi, Peera Charoenvattanukul, Phakin Nimmannorrownong, and Kanya Poopak for assistance with methodology, and the anonymous reviewers whose comments greatly improved the manuscript.

Notes

- * The author is a lecturer of History at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University (Thailand). This article is based on a paper presented at the Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA) Conference held in Kyoto on 12-13 December 2015. <Email: kornphanat@gmail.com>
- 1. An examination of the Chinese Soft Power Forum (*Zhongguo Ruan Shili Luntan*), an official platform where Chinese can study and practice soft power, supported by Beijing University, *Renming Wang*, and the CCP *Xinwen Wang*, shows that this term is understood in China in a variety of ways.
- 2. For more details on Hu's speech, see *Xinhua*, 2007; and for Xi's speech, see *Xinhua*, 2014b.
- 3. Prior to Sarit's regime, there was an informal relationship between Thailand and the PRC. Under the leadership of Phibun, the Thai government first strongly supported anti-Chinese policies but later dropped its hostile attitude towards the PRC. This became evident when in 1955 Phibun sent a secret group of official delegates to visit the PRC. One interesting story related to this visit is that Phibun sent the two children of his close friend (Sang Phathanothai) to China to live as the adopted children of Zhou Enlai in order to maintain this secret relationship. One of the two children Sirin Phathanothai wrote a memoir about her life as a child hostage in China in a book titled *The Dragon's Pearl*.
- 4. Chinese tourists usually like to visit universities with beautiful campuses when travelling in China and abroad. It is reported that many prestigious universities

- in China and overseas, such as Beijing University, Ewha Womans University in Seoul, and Harvard in Boston are receiving a huge number of Chinese tourists.
5. Generally speaking, a Confucius Institute (*Kongzi Xueyuan*) is affiliated to a university, while a smaller scale Confucius classroom (*Kongzi Ketang*) is affiliated to primary or secondary schools.
 6. For example, Hartig (2012), using German CIs as a case study, reveals that CIs are connected to the rise of China and are a unique member of the family of national culture institutes. Schmidt (2013) finds that the CI project resonates with Canada's multicultural project.
 7. Arguably, local capital refers to that of the Thai-Chinese who have come to accumulate and consolidate their wealth under the patronage of the Thai ruling class including elites, officials and the military. In the era of Thailand's economic development during the late 1950s-1970s, they played an important role in the evolution of modern industry under the shadow of the military (Suehiro, 1989).

References

- AAUP (2014), "On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes", accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes/>>.
- Anderson, Benedict R.O'G., and Mendiones, Ruchira C. (eds) (1985), *In the Mirror: Literature and Politics in Siam in the Modern Era*, Bangkok: Duang Kamol.
- Bangkok Business* (2014), "Thunchin thalak ASEAN, chi Thai prab okart [Chinese capital penetrating ASEAN, warning Thailand to seek opportunities]", 10 May 2014, accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://www.dtn.go.th/filesupload/9-11_May_2014.pdf/>.
- Bangkok Post* (2011), "Chinese mall 'a threat'", 20 January 2011, accessed 24 May 2014 at <<http://www2.bangkokpost.com/business/marketing/217254/chinese-mall-a-threat/>>.
- Bangkok Post* (2014), "Chinese tourists invade CMU", 3 March 2014, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/learning-from-news/397926/chinese-tourists-invade-cmu/>>.
- Bangkok Post* (2015), "Chinese tourists banned from temple", 9 February 2015, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/easy/470184/chinese-tourists-banned-from-temple/>>.
- Bloomberg* (2013), "Chinese Tourists Lost in Thailand Mean Record Hotel Stays", 3 January 2013, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-01-03/chinese-tourists-lost-in-thailand-boosts-hotels-southeast-asia.html/>>.
- Bureau of International Cooperation, the Thai MOE (n.d.), "Framework of Cooperation between China National Office for teaching Chinese as a foreign language (HANBAN) and the MOE of the Kingdom of Thailand on cooperation in Chinese language training", accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.bic.moe.go.th/th/images/stories/MOU/framework/th-hanbaneng.pdf/>>.
- Chantavanich, Supang (1997), "From Siamese-Chinese to Chinese Thai: Political Conditions and Identity Shifts among the Chinese in Thailand", in Leo Suryadinata

- (ed.), *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 232-259.
- Chiangmai CityNews* (2014), "Survey shows Chiang Mai Residents Unhappy with Chinese Tourists", 24 February 2014, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.chiangmaicitynews.com/news.php?id=3302/>>.
- China* (2015), "China-Thailand railway project kicks off", 20 December 2015, accessed 25 December 2015 at <http://www.china.org.cn/business/2015-12/20/content_37357772.htm/>.
- China Association for International Education (2014), "2013 nian quanguo laihua liuxuesheng jianming tongji [Statistics of foreign students in China in 2013]", accessed 4 March 2015 at <www.cafsa.org.cn/research/show-1500.html/>.
- China Embassy (2014), "2014 Taiguo Zhongguo dianyingzhou duanxun [Message about 2014 Thailand's Chinese Film Festival]", 16 December 2014, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.chinaembassy.or.th/chn/mgzgwhzx/t1219645.htm/>>.
- Chinvanno, Anuson (1992), *Thailand's Policies towards China 1949-1954*, London: Macmillan.
- Chinwanno, Chulacheeb (2010), *35 pi kwamsamphan thang karnthut thai-chin por.sor: 2518-2553* [35 Years of Sino-Thai relations, 1975-2010], Bangkok: Openbooks.
- CNN* (2013), "Chinese travelers the world's biggest spenders", 12 April 2013, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/05/travel/china-tourists-spend/>>.
- CRI* (2014), "Phak phasa thai [Thai-language]", accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://thai.cri.cn/401/2010/02/03/21s169623.htm/>>.
- Eiwsriwong, Nithi (2014), "Nakthongthiewchin Aiya [Chinese tourists, oh my]", *Matichon*, 24 March 2014.
- Ferguson, Niall (2003), "Think again: power", *Foreign Policy*, No. 134 (March-April), pp. 18-24.
- Gil, Jeffrey (2015), "China's Cultural Projection: A Discussion of the Confucius Institutes", *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (April), pp. 200-226.
- Guo, Xiaolin (2008), "Repackaging Confucius: PRC Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Soft Power", *Asia Papers Series*, Stockholm, Sweden, accessed 13 October 2015 at <http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2008_guo_repackaging-confucius.pdf/>.
- Hanban (2015a), "About Confucius Institute", accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm/>.
- Hanban (2015b), "Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes", accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://english.hanban.org/node_7880.htm/>.
- Hartig, Falk (2012), "Confucius Institutes and the Rise of China", *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March), pp. 53-76.
- Kurlantzick, Joshua (2007), *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lai, Hongyi, and Lu, Yiyi (eds) (2012), *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Leung, Chi-Cheung, and Du Cros, Hilary (2014), "Confucius Institutes: Multiple Reactions and Interactions", *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (August), pp. 66-86.

- Lertsin, Wasana (personal communication, 9 August 2015).
- Li, Mingjiang (2008), "China Debates Soft Power", *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (December), pp. 287–308.
- Li, Mingjiang (2011), "Introduction: Soft Power: Nurture Not Nature", in Mingjiang Li (ed.), *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 1-18.
- Liu Hong (1998), "Old Linkages, New Networks: The Globalization of Overseas Chinese Voluntary Associations and Its Implications", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 155 (September), pp. 582-609.
- Lo, Joe Tin-yau, and Pan, Suyan (2104), "Confucius Institutes and China's soft power: practices and paradoxes", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, DOI:10.1080/03057925.2014.916185.
- Matichon (2015), "Achan witsawa chula chamlae rotfai thai-chin [Chulaongkorn university lecturers unveiling Thailand-China railway]", 27 November 2015, accessed 25 December 2015 at <http://www.matichon.co.th/news_detail.php?newsid=1448525451 2/>.
- McCord, Edward A. (2014), "Confucius Institutes in the U.S.: Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom; Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend", accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/files/response-to-sahlins-6.pdf>>.
- Nguyen, Van Chihn (2014), "Confucius Institutes in the Mekong Region: China's Soft Power or Soft Border", *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December), pp. 85-117.
- Nye, Joseph S. (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- OHEC (2010), *Yutthasat songserm karnriankarnsorn phasachin nai Thai* [Strategy on promoting Chinese teaching and learning in Thailand], Bangkok: Bangkok blog.
- Renmin Wang (2015), "Zhongguo yi chunjie tuijin zhongguo ruanshili [China uses Chinese New Year to push China's soft power]", 25 February 2015, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/0225/c157278-26591871.html>>.
- Romchatra Foundation (2015). *Chinese Diamond Crown Jewel International Pra Prom Mungkalajarn's Scholarship Year 2015*, Bangkok: Romchatra Foundation.
- Sahlins, Marshall (2013), "China U", *The Nation*, 29 October 2013, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.thenation.com/article/176888/china-u#>>.
- Sahlins, Marshall (2014), "Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware", *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 12, Issue 46, No. 1 (November), accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://japanfocus.org/-Marshall-Sahlins/4220>>.
- Schmidt, Heather (2013), "China's Confucius Institutes and the 'Necessary White Body'", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 647-668.
- Skinner, G. William (1957), *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Skinner, G. William (1958), *Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Thailand*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- South China Morning Post (2015a), "China to expand soft power push through overseas cultural Centres", 13 February 2015, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1711418/china-expand-soft-power-push-through-overseas-cultural-centres/>>.

- South China Morning Post* (2015b), "Swedish university severs ties with Confucius Institute", 10 January 2015, (<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1677976/swedish-university-severs-ties-Confucius-institute?page=all>): accessed 4 March 2015).
- Storey, Ian (2011), *Southeast Asia and the rise of China: The search for security*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- Suehiro, Akira (1989), *Capital Accumulation in Thailand, 1855–1985*, Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies.
- Taiguo Zhonghua zongshanghui jikan* [Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce Quarterly] (2010–2011), Vol. 4, No. 10.
- TAT (2014). "Sarub Sathanakarn Nakhongthiew Makkarakom-Thanwakon 2556 [A summary of the tourist situation, January–December 2013]," January 2014, accessed 25 December 2015 at <<http://newdot2.samartmultimedia.com/home/details/11/222/22950/>>.
- TAT (2015), "Sarub Sathanakarn Nakhongthiew Thulakom 2558 [A summary of the tourist situation, October 2015]" , 24 November 2015, accessed 25 December 2015 at <<http://newdot2.samartmultimedia.com/home/details/11/222/24839/>>.
- Tejapira, Kasian (1997), "Imagined Uncommunity: The *Lookjin* Middle Class and Thai Official Nationalism", in Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid (eds), *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 75–98.
- The Economist* (2013), "Chinese tourists mind your manners", 6 November 2013, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2013/11/chinese-tourists/>>.
- Xinhua* (2007), "Hu Jintao calls for enhancing 'soft power' of Chinese culture", 15 October 2007, accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/15/content_6883748.htm/>.
- Xinhua* (2012), "*Renmin Ribao* haiwaiban Taiguo yuekan chuangan [The *People's Daily* launching overseas edition (Thailand) monthly magazine]", 18 December 2012, accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2012-12/18/c_124114401.htm>.
- Xinhua* (2014a), "Taiguo qiaojie yonghu zhongguo queli kangzhan shengli jinianri he guojia gongjiri [The Thai-Chinese support China to plan national days on Nanjing Massacre, anti-Japanese war victory]", 11 March 2014, accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/2014-03/11/c_119720656.htm/>.
- Xinhua* (2014b), "Xi: China to promote cultural soft power", 1 April 2014, accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/01/c_125941955.htm/>.
- Zhongguo Wang* (2013), "Lost in Thailand: New box office record with 1 bln grossed", 4 January 2013, accessed 4 March 2015 at <http://www.china.org.cn/video/2013-01/04/content_27577256.htm>.
- Zhongguo Xinwenwang* (2012), "Tongxun: zoujin Mangu Zhongguo wenhua zhongxin [Approaching the China Cultural Center in Bangkok]", 21 November 2012, accessed 4 March 2015 at <<http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2012/11-21/4347931.shtml>>.

