

**Revealing China's Hegemonic Project in Thailand:
How the Confucius Institute Furthers the Chinese State's International Ambitions**

by

Ruji Auethavornpipat
B.A., University of Victoria, 2011

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the operations of the Confucius Institute in contemporary Thailand. By the end of 2012, there were already 400 Confucius Institutes around the world, 13 of which are in Thailand. It took the Confucius Institute less than a decade to rapidly expand around the globe. Despite its putative neutral objective of promoting Chinese culture and language globally, this thesis argues that the Institute is closely affiliated with the Chinese government, and is in fact part of the Chinese government's broader hegemonic project. I define hegemony as dominance that rests on generally based consent and is established by social forces occupying a dominant role within a state that are projected outward on a world scale. I look at three aspects of hegemony: the negotiation of norms, the conferring of common interests and mutual benefits to members, and the lived social experience through selective and dominant cultural symbols. This thesis presents empirical data that was collected during three months of field research in Thailand in 2012. It shows that the Confucius Institute attempts to create a norm of international harmony which has its roots in the Chinese government's domestic policy to construct a harmonious society by 2020. Furthermore, this thesis illustrates that students and people who are involved with the Confucius Institute perceive their participation as resulting in mutual benefits that are "real." Their perceptions are related to international policies that show Thailand as benefiting by subordinating to China's political and economic dominance. Lastly, cultural public events organized by the Confucius Institute demonstrate how hegemony is a lived social experience for participants.

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Chapter One

Is China Seeking Hegemony or Not?

Thanks to its pursuit of peaceful development, China has undergone profound changes. It has made remarkable achievements in development, made major contribution to world prosperity and stability, and is more closely linked with the rest of the world.”

White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development
China’s Information Office of State Council
September 11, 2011

Introduction

In 2011, China released its foreign policy of Peaceful Development, charting its course of actions in the international community. It was a significant and strategic approach to international relations by the Chinese government, providing the direction for China’s interactions with and contributions to the world.¹ In November 2012, President Hu Jintao emphasized that China would continue to advance peace and development through its foreign policy and was committed to strengthening friendship and cooperation with other countries.² The Chinese government further claimed that:

The central goal of China's diplomacy is to create a peaceful and stable international environment for its development. In the meantime, China strives to make its due contribution to world peace and development. It never engages in aggression or expansion, never seeks hegemony, and remains a staunch force for upholding regional and world peace and stability.³

¹Chinese Information Office of State Council, *White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

²China Central Television (CCTV), *Hu Jintao: China’s Policy will be based on Peace and Development*, <http://english.cntv.cn/program/newshour/20121111/103072.shtml>

³ Chinese Information Office of State Council, *White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

Although the Chinese government asserted its position was to not pursue hegemony, this research project seeks to argue otherwise. By examining the Confucius Institute, a Chinese government-affiliated organization, responsible for promoting the Chinese language and culture globally, and is among China's most prominent organizations engaging with cultural activities in other countries, this study will show that the Confucius Institute is not only an educational institute simply promoting Chinese culture and language, but is also an organization that essentially aligns its operations to further the Chinese government's hegemonic goals.

While many studies have focused their analysis of the Confucius Institute on the use of Chinese culture and the economic rise of China,⁴ few have provided an in-depth assessment of the practices of the Confucius Institute at the ground level. As Sharp states, "little of this literature [on Confucius Institutes] is based on actual evidence of activities of Confucius Institutes."⁵ In addition, the Confucius Institute is a new organization, established in 2004, that rapidly spread to 108 countries by 2012. A study of the detailed practice of the Confucius Institute in Thailand will shed light on the motivations behind the Chinese government's promotion of Chinese culture and language in Thailand. This thesis will be the first to analyze the Confucius Institute in Thailand based on evidence gathered during three months of qualitative field research in 2012. It addresses the following questions: Does the Confucius Institute operate along lines which further the

⁴ See, for example, Kurlantzick, Joshua. *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007; Li, Xin and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, (2010): 69-89; Huang, Yanzhong and Sheng Ding, "Dragon's Underbelly: An Analysis of China's Soft Power." *East Asia* 23, no.4 2006: 22-44; Zhao, Hongqin and Jianbin Huang, "China's Policy of Chinese as a Foreign Language and the Use of Overseas Confucius Institutes." *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 9 (2010):127-142.

⁵ Allan Sharp, "Confucius Institutes Adopt a Sage Approach to Cultural Understanding," *Asian Currents*, May 2010: 3.

Chinese government's hegemonic policy and if so, how? What messages, ideas and norms are being disseminated in Thailand, and how does the Thai population experience these norms, as well as the activities of the Confucius Institute? These questions will be answered by applying two theoretical frameworks, hegemony and soft power, both of which will be explained in subsequent sections.

Previous scholarship has discussed the Confucius Institute by applying the concept of soft power, which is defined as the power of attracting and co-opting someone to do something without coercion.⁶ However, this thesis will augment the debates by linking soft power to the larger process of hegemony. This approach captures and makes sense of the nature of the Confucius Institute's new position in Thailand's educational system, where the Institute exercises its ability to inculcate certain positive views from and about China as well as spread highly selective Chinese cultural symbols. In this thesis, I draw on key works by Antonio Gramsci, Robert Cox, Robert Koehane and Raymond Williams to define hegemony as dominance which rests on generally based consent that is manifested in the acceptance of new ideas. Hegemony is established by social forces occupying a dominant role within a state that is then projected globally. I look at three specific aspects of hegemony: the negotiation of ideas; the conferring of common interests and mutual benefits to members; and the lived social experience through dominant and selective cultural symbols. In addition, I will show that the Confucius Institute's attempts to create a norm of international harmony in Thailand has its roots in China's domestic policy to construct a harmonious Chinese society by 2020. Furthermore, this thesis shows that students and individuals involved with the Confucius

⁶ See Ding, Sheng. "To Build A "Harmonious World": China's Soft Power Wielding in the Global South." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 13, no. 2 (2008): 193-213.

Institute perceive their participation to result in mutual benefits that can be understood in international terms. Lastly, I argue that cultural public events organized by the Confucius Institute are a venue for Thai participants to experience highly selective and dominant Chinese cultural symbols. Through case studies of cultural events, I show that attempts are made to further the image of a harmonious relationship between Thailand and China and provide benefits for people who participate.

Before an in-depth conceptualization of hegemony and soft power is presented, I will offer background information on the Confucius Institute and show that international concerns surrounding the organization increasingly make the Confucius Institute a compelling organization to study for understanding contemporary Chinese hegemonic strategies.

The Confucius Institute, Its History and Rapid Expansion

The Confucius Institute is a non-profit organization whose primary function is to promote Chinese culture and language worldwide. It is affiliated with the Chinese government.

The Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom have drawn from the similar experiences of the UK's British Council, France's *Alliance Française*, Germany's Goethe Institute, and Spain's Cervantes Institute.⁷ By December 2012, there were 400 Confucius Institutes established within universities and more than 500 Confucius Classrooms operating within primary and secondary schools in 108 countries.⁸ There are currently 13 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius Classrooms in Thailand. In addition, 400

⁷ Sheng Ding and Robert A. Saunders. "Talking Up China: An Analysis of China's Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language," 19.

⁸ Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, *Confucius Institute Selected in the "Top Ten news 2012 for International Cultural"* by Xinhua News Agency, <http://english.jsjyt.gov.cn/news/keynews/folder612/2013/01/2013-01-082608.html>.

universities from 76 countries are currently applying to set up Confucius Institutes. In 2009, the Institute provided 9,000 Chinese language courses and facilitated more than 7,500 cultural exchange activities involving at least 3 million participants.⁹ The Institute has expanded so fast and vigorously that the Chairman of the Goethe Institute, Klaus-Dieter Lehman remarked that it took the Confucius Institute only eight years to popularize its Institute whereas similar organizations from the UK, France, Germany and Spain underwent several decades to achieve the same goal.¹⁰

The Confucius Institute was first launched in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan, but the first fully functioning branch was opened in Seoul, South Korea, in November 2004. The Confucius Institute is managed directly through its Headquarters in Beijing, China, and is a direct sub-organization under the Beijing-based Office of the Chinese Language Council International or Hanban (汉办). Established in 1987, Hanban and the Confucius Institute Headquarters claim to be affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education. Furthermore, Hanban's membership includes officials from twelve Chinese state ministries and commissions including the General Office of the State Council,¹¹ Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture.¹²

⁹ Confucius Institute Online, *Introduction*, http://college.chinese.cn/en/node_1979.htm.

¹⁰ Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, *Confucius Institute Selected in the "Top Ten news 2012 for International Cultural"* by Xinhua News Agency, <http://english.jsjyt.gov.cn/news/keynews/folder612/2013/01/2013-01-082608.html>

¹¹ The General Office of the State Council is the chief administrative authority in China.

¹² Confucius Institute of the University of Sydney, *The Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban)*, http://sydney.edu.au/confucius_institute/partners/hanban.shtml. The twelve members are General Office of the State Council, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Overseas Chinese Affairs of the State Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Culture, State Administration of Radio Film and Television (China Radio International), State Press and Publications Administration, State Council Information Office, State Language Committee.

Hanban is also actively involved in formulating policies and sponsoring activities around Chinese language studies, cultural exhibitions, and cultural exchanges.¹³

In addition, “the core focus of Hanban is on enhancing the mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and other peoples of the world, promoting economic and trade cooperation, as well as scientific, technological and cultural exchanges.”¹⁴ Specifically, the chief stated objective of the Confucius Institutes is to promote Chinese culture and language to non-Chinese people by using the existing educational infrastructure within primary, secondary and postsecondary educational establishments. Hanban is also in charge of creating development plans, establishing and evaluating Confucius Institutes, approving annual project proposals including budgets and financial statements of Confucius Institutes worldwide, dispatching Chinese directors and teaching staff, and offering training programs for management teams and teachers.¹⁵ During 2006, the rate of increase of Confucius Institutes globally was such that there was a new Confucius Institute opening every four days. Hanban further estimates that by 2020, there will be 1,000 Confucius Institutes around the world and by 2010, there will be 100 million non-Chinese studying Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language worldwide.¹⁶

The Confucius Institute is typically created through partnerships between two academic institutions: one Chinese and one foreign. According to Article 19 in the Constitution and By-Laws of Confucius Institutes, any legally registered organization or

¹³ Hongqin Zhao and Jianbin Huang, “China’s Policy of Chinese as a Foreign Language and the Use of Overseas Confucius Institutes,” *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 9 (2010):129.

¹⁴ Confucius Institute of the University of Sydney, *The Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban)*, http://sydney.edu.au/confucius_institute/partners/hanban.shtml.

¹⁵ Confucius Institute Headquarters, *About Confucius Institutes*, http://english.hanban.org/node_7716.htm.

¹⁶ Hongqin Zhao and Jianbin Huang, 129.

corporation that already has “resources to conduct teaching, educational and cultural exchanges, and public service”¹⁷ where there is “a demand for learning the Chinese language and culture”¹⁸ can apply for permission to establish a Confucius Institute. Article 20 indicates that international partners or applicants have the responsibility of taking the initiative to launch an application for the establishment of a Confucius Institute. However, James Paradise asserts that Hanban and universities in China also actively seek out institutions that have not taken the initiative, and usually organize field trips abroad to negotiate with foreign partners.¹⁹ Falk Hartig has described Confucius Institutes in Germany that the initiative can occur on both sides. In several cases, German universities were approached by one or multiple Chinese universities advising “its German partner that it could be helpful to set up a Confucius Institute.”²⁰ In the case of Thailand, an Institute director at Suriyan University informed me that his Institute was established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and was the result of “mutual collaboration” between Chinese and Thai universities. Another Institute director told me that the Hanban Thailand Office and the Chinese embassy provided her university with a list of suggested Chinese universities, leaving it to the university to initiate establishing a Confucius Institute. It can be seen that the Confucius Institute has expanded very quickly in a short period of time. Its rapid expansion has raised concerns

¹⁷ Confucius Institute Headquarters, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes*, http://english.hanban.org/node_7880.htm.

¹⁸ Confucius Institute Headquarters, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes*, http://english.hanban.org/node_7880.htm.

¹⁹ James F. Paradise, “China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing’s Soft Power,” *Asian Survey* 49, no. 4 (2009): 652.

²⁰ Falk Hartig, “Confucius Institutes and the Rise of China,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 17, no.1 (2012): 7.

around the globe. The next section presents international concerns surrounding the Confucius Institute.

International Concerns Surrounding the Confucius Institute

This section provides an overview of how the Institute has raised concerns internationally despite its putative neutral role in promoting Chinese language and culture. Due to its rapid global expansion and close affiliation with the Chinese government, many scholars have raised political and academic concerns related to Confucius Institutes. Don Starr states that Confucius Institutes in Europe are perceived as having “an improper influence over teaching and research, industrial and military espionage, surveillance of Chinese abroad and undermining Taiwanese influence.”²¹ In Sweden, some academic staff at Stockholm University urged for an end to the current arrangement of the university’s Confucius Institute and for the separation of the Confucius Institute from the university.²² They argued that the Chinese Embassy in Stockholm was using the Confucius Institute to implement political surveillance, enact covert propaganda, and discourage research on politically sensitive topics. Despite the Institute’s director refuting the alleged claims, the issue was brought up in the Swedish Parliament where Confucius Institutes were criticized and compared to Mussolini’s Italian institutes of the 1930s.²³

In Australia, lobbyists were concerned that “the integrity of public education is being compromised by opportunities for a foreign government to promote views outside of the school curriculum for school students.”²⁴ Similar views can be found in Canada

²¹ Don Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe: The Confucius Institutes," 79. *European Journal of Education* 44, no. 1 (2009): 79.

²² *Ibid.*, 79.

²³ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁴ Sonya Bryskine, “State Government in Australia Debates Confucius Institute,” *Epoch Times* (Canada), October 13, 2011, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/australia/state-government-in-australia-debates-confucius-institute-62817.html>

and the United States. Jim Bronskill argues that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) “acknowledges the agency devotes considerable effort to keeping an eye on monitoring Chinese operatives.”²⁵ In 2008, the Vancouver Sun newspaper considered the Confucius Institute at British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) as “spy outlets” for the Chinese government.²⁶ In the United States, Peter Schmidt argued that the Confucius Institute threatened academic freedom.²⁷ In sum, there are many political and academic concerns surrounding the presence of Confucius Institutes set up within education systems around the globe. In Thailand, there has not been a similar public outcry towards the Confucius Institute. However, I apply these concerns to the case of Thailand as I had originally set out to examine the connection between the Confucius Institute and the Chinese embassy in Thailand, and whether it operates to expand its influence within the Thai education system. As will be argued in the following chapters, scholarly concerns about the broader impact of the Confucius Institute are justified because the Confucius Institute in Thailand operates along lines which further the Chinese government’s policy. The ways in which the Confucius Institute functions in Thailand to create the norm of harmony and confer mutual benefits, as well as generate a new way of viewing China, can be understood by applying the conceptual frameworks of hegemony and soft power, which is explained in the next section.

²⁵ Jim Bronskill, “CSIS Say: Confucius Part of Chinese Bid to Win over Western Hearts,” *Canadian Press*, May 28, 2007, <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/359845634?accountid=14846>.

²⁶ Vancouver Sun, “Has BCIT sold out to Chinese propaganda?” *Vancouver Sun*, April 2, 2008: <http://www.canada.com/vancouvernews/news/westcoastnews/story.html?id=179b4e77-f0cf-4608-a8b7-a9943116f489>

²⁷ Peter Schmidt, “At U.S. Colleges, Chinese-Financed Centers Prompt Worries about Academic Freedom,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 17, 2010: 2.

Theoretical Frameworks

Hegemony: Norms Negotiation, Common Interests Formation and Lived Social Experience

This thesis argues that the Confucius Institute carries out functions that fit with Chinese government policy; this process can be seen as part of a hegemonic strategy. This section provides a brief understanding of the concept of hegemony as originally articulated by Antonio Gramsci.²⁸ While Gramsci's notion of hegemony is based on class domination, in turn based on material and physical production, I will expand his concept to include consensual dominance which depends on the acceptance of new ideas and social relations. Specifically, this thesis will conceptualize three aspects of hegemony: the negotiation of ideas or norms; the formation of common interests and mutual benefits; and the lived social experience through dominant and selective cultural symbols. This thesis argues that the Confucius Institute positions itself to use Chinese culture and language to create a positive impression of China and to promote friendly relations with other countries in order to further its political and economic goals.

The first aspect of hegemony, which is the formation of new ideas and norms, will be explained through Antonio Gramsci's articulation of hegemony. Gramsci's ideas are useful because he clearly links political rule to the role of new ideas and ideologies as well as the creation of common interests. The concept of hegemony first appeared in 1926.²⁹ He refers to hegemony of the proletariat as the moment when the proletariat becomes the leading and dominant class, succeeds in creating a system of alliances, and mobilizes the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois

²⁸See Gramsci, Antonio, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

²⁹ Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 443.

state. This system of alliances also requires gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses and emphasizes the political, moral and intellectual conditions which are necessary to bring about revolution in Italy.³⁰ For Gramsci, political leadership very much depends on the existence of intellectual and moral leadership.

The hegemonic class, thus, becomes the dominant class that is in control of the nation.³¹ With the hegemonic class in control, the state can become an “ethical” state by maximizing the interest and expansion of the leading class. This is also called the hegemonic moment, which marks a complete fusion of economic, political, intellectual and moral objectives introduced by one fundamental group and other allied groups through “the negotiation of ideology.”³² Furthermore, hegemony requires a collective will and “it is through ideology that this collective will is formed since its very existence depends on the creation of ideological unity which will serve as a ‘cement.’”³³ Gramsci’s meaning of ideology is a thought that has psychological validity and is able to organize and mobilize human masses. Ideology also creates the ground for humans to move and acquire consciousness of their position or struggle. It can be arbitrary and polemical as it creates individual movement or struggle.³⁴

The role of idea and ideology in creating individual movement or struggle is important as an integral process in hegemony. Gramsci emphasizes that ideologies can “spread through the whole of society determining not only united economic and political

³⁰ Chantal Mouffe, “Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci,” in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 178.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

³² *Ibid.*, 196-199.

³³ *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 376-7, quoted in *Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed David Forgacs, (London: Lawrence and Wishard, 1988), 199.

objectives but also intellectual and moral unity.”³⁵ The hegemon thus controls and manipulates the thinking or belief among different social groups through new ideas and ideologies “in such a way as to make them unite into a single political subject.”³⁶ Not only does new idea or ideology create subjects but it also “organize[s] the human masses” and “serve[s] as the informative principle of all individual and collective activities.”³⁷ Therefore, a new idea or ideology creates the subjects of hegemony and make them act at the same time. Gramsci further stresses the significance of the material and institutional structure for the spreading of ideology which is made up of “hegemonic apparatuses [such as] schools, churches, the entire media and even architecture and the name of the streets.”³⁸ As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the importance of creating new hegemonic ideas as stressed by Gramsci can help explain the operations of the Confucius Institute as an educational institution invested in promoting certain positive ideas such as China’s harmonious relations with Thailand.

For the goals of this research project, Gramsci’s ideas on hegemony need to be taken out of the material and historical condition at the time of his writing, and applied to the contemporary roles of the state and institutions in international relations more broadly. Rather than reducing hegemony to simply one class or single state dominance based on material productions and military capabilities, hegemony can be applied to the international level by expanding the definition of production to include social relations and ideas. Robert Cox states that:

³⁵ Chantal Mouffe, “Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci,” 181.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

Production...is to be understood in the broadest sense. It is not confined to the production of physical goods used or consumed. It covers the production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social relations, morals and institutions that are prerequisites to the production of physical goods.³⁹

He further asserts that the reciprocal relationship between production and power is important because this definition of production allows for the analysis of power in social relations, which gives rise to particular social forces that constitute the bases of power. Consequently, the bases of power can shape foreign outlook and world order. Similar to Gramsci, Cox perceives that hegemony emerges as an expression of generally based consent manifested in the acceptance of ideas, supported by material resources and institutions, and established by social forces occupying a dominant role within a state that are projected outward on a world scale.⁴⁰ In other words, hegemony is “not just the dominance of power but a special kind of dominance that involves some concessions to the interests of other powers such that all (or most) can regard the maintenance of the order as being in their general interest and can define it in terms of universality.”⁴¹ Thus far, hegemony is understood as dominance which is based on the negotiation of norms and the acceptance of ideas. The concept is also taken out of its context of material and physical production to include the production of ideas and social relations at the international level in which particular social forces constitute the bases of power that shape foreign outlook. This first aspect of hegemony will also be applied specifically in

³⁹ Robert Cox, “Production, the State, and Change in World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History,” in *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s*, eds E-O Czempiel and J.N. Rosenau (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1989), 39.

⁴⁰ Robert Cox, “Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 2(1981): 139, 141.

⁴¹ Robert Cox, “*Production, the State, and Change in World Order*,” 42.

Chapter Three of this thesis, which discusses the Confucius Institute's attempt to create the idea of China's harmonious relationship with other countries.

The second aspect of hegemony which is used in this thesis is that of the creation of common interests and the offering of mutual benefits to the members in the hegemonic process. The maintenance of the hegemonic order constituted by general interests and shared economic and political aims is termed by Gramsci as historical bloc.⁴² Historical bloc is established by common norms and ways of thinking about the world order that can transcend an inter-state arrangement to become a social order. Adam Morton points out that hegemony filters through structures of society, economy, culture, gender, ethnicity, class, and ideology.⁴³ As part of the historical bloc, the interests of the subordinate, allied, and opposing classes, or those of states, are absorbed and neutralized, preventing them from opposing the hegemonic state.⁴⁴

At the inter-state level, the dominant state formulates an order based on a broad measure of consent and functions according to general principles that allow it to retain its dominant position while offering some prospects of satisfaction to the less powerful state.⁴⁵ This satisfaction is guaranteed by offering allied states collective benefits as an incentive for accepting hegemonic leadership. Moreover, Mark Brawley asserts that discussions on hegemony should be reoriented in order to consider the hegemon as a provider of "club goods—goods that confer collective benefits on the members, where

⁴² Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 418.

⁴³ Adam Morton, "Social Forces in the Struggle over Hegemony: Neo-Gramscian Perspectives in International Political Economy," *Rethinking Marxism* 15, no.2 (2003): 157.

⁴⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, quoted in *Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed David Forgacs, (London: Lawrence and Wishard, 1988), 428.

⁴⁵ Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 7.

participation is limited to members.”⁴⁶ Under this framework, the hegemonic status of a state is bestowed upon the hegemon through its relations and consent of other less dominant state.

As hegemony involves the relations between two or more different groups of actors, Robert Keohane argues that “[t]heories of hegemony should seek not only to analyze dominant powers’ decisions to engage in rule-making and rule-enforcement, but also to explore why secondary states defer to the leadership of the hegemon.”⁴⁷

Therefore, the notion of club goods or collective interests and benefits explains why secondary states may align themselves with the stronger state.⁴⁸ In hegemonic stability theory, Snidal claims that “the presence of a single, strongly dominant actor in international politics leads to collectively desirable outcomes for all states in the international system.”⁴⁹ At the same time, hegemonic powers utilize their capabilities to maintain the international environment they prefer. Accommodation of the hegemon may be rooted from a real sense of shared interests and benefits.⁵⁰ In sum, hegemonic stability theory is a power-as-resource theory which connects state capabilities to its behaviour of providing collective benefits. The outcome will reflect “the potential power (tangible and known capabilities) of actors.”⁵¹

⁴⁶ Mark Brawley, “Hegemonic Leadership: Is the Concept Still Useful?” *Connecticut Journal of International Law* 19, no.2(2004): 347.

⁴⁷ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984) 39.

⁴⁸ Neal Jesse, Steven Lobell, Galia Press-Barnathan and Kristen Williams, “The Leader Can’t Lead when the Followers Won’t Follow: the Limitations of Hegemony,” in *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons: Why Secondary States Support, Follow, or Challenge*, eds Neal Jesse, Steven Lobell, Galia Press-Barnathan and Kristen Williams (California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 13.

⁴⁹ Duncan Snidal, “The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory,” *International Organization* 39, no. 4 (1985): 579.

⁵⁰ Neal Jesse, Steven Lobell, Galia Press-Barnathan and Kristen Williams, “*The Leader Can’t Lead when the Followers Won’t Follow*,” 13.

⁵¹ Robert Keohane, *The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and Changes in International Economic Regimes*, 137.

The strategy of distributing “club goods,” termed hegemonic strategies by Ulrich Beck, can be seen in the relationship between China and Thailand through the Confucius Institute.⁵² This approach offers an understanding of the willingness of the partners to reduce competition and conflict in the international arena, and to promote the cooperation for the establishment of hegemony. This is achieved by “situating hegemony within the national context on the one hand and yet making it exceed this same context on the other, that is, by dictating to other states a form of international ‘cooperation’ based on national presupposition.”⁵³ Consequently, successful hegemonic strategy requires the mobilization of the population not only within the hegemonic state but also in allied states. Therefore, the second aspect of hegemony used in this thesis is understood in the creation of common interests and the provision of collective benefits. It explains why secondary states follow the leadership of a hegemon. The notion of providing club goods will be central to the discussion of activities of the Confucius Institute in Chapter Four.

The next and last process of hegemony applied in this thesis is that hegemony is a lived social experience achieved through the use of dominant and selective cultural symbols. Culture is seen as a critical hegemonic strategy. As argued by Raymond Williams, hegemony is “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living...It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society...It is in the strongest sense a ‘culture,’ but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes.”⁵⁴ In addition, Donald Kurtz indicates that

⁵² Ulrich Beck, *Power in the Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 198.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁵⁴ Raymond Williams, “Selection from Marxism and Literature,” in *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, eds. Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry Ortner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 597.

“hegemonic agents can engage in political or cultural practices simultaneously [and that] culture is a political product” in which the agents in hegemony are committed to educating people, developing culture, and obtaining consent to the rule of a hegemon.⁵⁵ Kurtz also argues that based on Gramsci’s idea, culture may be the product of various media and art forms which can be used strategically as hegemonic instruments to direct the beliefs and actions of the subordinate or allied groups and states.⁵⁶ Thus, the use of culture through selective cultural symbols is critical to understanding the Confucius Institute’s public activities which are a means to create a positive view of China and of its relations with other countries. The Confucius Institute’s strategy of using dominant cultural symbols becomes part of the participant’s lived social experience which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

This section has provided the conceptualization of hegemony in three aspects. Firstly, hegemony rests on consent and is the negotiation of ideology and norm as well as the acceptance of new ideas. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony has also been expanded from material and physical production to include the production of social relations and ideas. The second aspect of hegemony is the maintenance of the hegemonic order, based on the creation of common interests and the provision of mutual benefits among different groups of people within states and between states. Common interests and mutual benefits offer an understanding of why secondary states follow the leadership of the stronger state that is then able to maintain its preferable international order. The last aspect of hegemony includes the use of culture to direct certain beliefs among people and other states. The use

⁵⁵ Donald V Kurtz. "Hegemony and Anthropology: Gramsci, Exegeses, Reinterpretations," *Critique of Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (1996): 108-109.

⁵⁶ Donald V Kurtz. "Hegemony and Anthropology," 115.

of dominant and selective cultural symbols becomes the lived social experience for people in secondary states. These three aspects are important and useful in understanding the operations of Confucius Institutes in creating the norm of international harmony, providing collective benefits to participants, and organizing cultural events that present selective Chinese cultural symbols. It is also a form of dominance based on consent, the acceptance of new ideas and the use of culture. This ties the concept of hegemony to the notion of soft power, which will be discussed in the following section.

Soft Power

This project uses the concept of hegemony to understand the relational power between Thailand and China as well as to manifest the place of the Confucius Institute within contemporary Thailand. The previous section illustrated that constituting hegemony depends on the acceptance of ideas, offering collective interest, and experiencing selective and dominant cultural symbols. The strategies used in constituting hegemony include agenda setting, attracting, and co-opting other groups of people. These strategies are also found in the exercise of soft power. Previous studies of the Confucius Institute have only identified the Institute's mission to increase China's soft power internationally. For instance, Huang and Ding argue that the global expansion of the Confucius Institute and China's commitment to "international cultural interaction bodes well for China's soft power."⁵⁷ In contrast, this thesis seeks to present a theoretical argument that the concept of soft power is in fact part of the larger process of hegemony. In other words, the process of creating hegemony, especially through the use of ideas and culture, is one of the main principles of soft power. Craig Hayden states that "soft power is a translation of

⁵⁷ Yanzhong Huang, and Sheng Ding, "Dragon's Underbelly: An Analysis of China's Soft Power," *East Asia* 23, no.4 2006: 27.

Gramsci's hegemony thesis into a relatively value-neutral concept for policymakers."⁵⁸ He recognizes that the conceptualization of soft power is rooted in Gramsci's notion of hegemony as "[the] elites can sustain domination over a class differentiated society—where elites make their own ends commonsensical, or even *desirable* by the dominated."⁵⁹ Hayden's emphasis on hegemonic dominance being desirable is central to Joseph Nye's articulation of soft power.

Whereas hard power depends on coercion and threats, and extortion through payments, Nye defines soft power as based on attraction and cooptation.⁶⁰ He describes it as an indirect way to influence the outcome a country desires in world politics. In achieving soft power, Nye argues that it is important to set the agenda and attract others rather than to use the threat of military force or economic sanctions. In addition, the power of cooptation tends to be connected to other intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, as well as policies that are considered legitimate or having moral authority.⁶¹ In brief, soft power rests on agenda setting, attraction and cooptation. Nye further argues that in the global information age, politics become a competition for attractiveness, legitimacy, and credibility, enhanced by domestic and international values and policies. The success of each player results in their ability to share information, as well as to become an important source of attraction and power.⁶²

⁵⁸ Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts* (UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁰ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 2.

⁶¹ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 31.

According to Nye, one source of soft power is culture, which he defines as the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society. He further argues that when a country's culture has attractive values or its policies promote values and interests that others can share, that country can increase the potential of obtaining its desired outcomes. Thus, it can increase its soft power, making it attractive to others internationally.⁶³ Some scholars however, such as Xin Li and Verner Worm, have found Joseph Nye's sources of soft power inadequate, especially for the study of China.⁶⁴ Joshua Kurlantzick argues that "for the Chinese, soft power means anything outside of the military and security realm, including not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also more coercive economic and diplomatic levers like aid and investment..."⁶⁵ Thus, Li and Worm consider the international image of China as another source of soft power.⁶⁶ They argue that China's international image is significant in setting the agenda and exercising soft power at the international level. David Harvey specifies, "China was also opened up, albeit under strict state supervision, to foreign trade and foreign investment, thus ending China's isolation from the world market."⁶⁷ As a result, international image is important for contemporary China. This is because China under Mao was an isolated country whose domestic politics were driven by Communist ideology, compared to the post-Mao era where China began integrating into the international system and the global economy.⁶⁸ These two sources, culture and international image, are important to understanding the

⁶³ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁴ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, (2010): 73.

⁶⁵ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 6.

⁶⁶ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, (2010): 73.

⁶⁷ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121.

⁶⁸ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise," 83.

Confucius Institute as an organization which expends considerable effort to show Chinese culture as attractive to different groups of people. In addition, the Confucius Institute also contributes to improving China's international image, showing it to have friendly and close relations with other countries. Chapter Five will show that Confucius Institute's cultural events are an important venue for the exercise of soft power that is part of the larger hegemonic process.

To reiterate, the notion of soft power as shown in this section clearly depends on the ability to set an agenda and achieve an outcome through attraction and cooptation. The processes of attracting and co-opting other groups of people or countries to achieve a goal is in fact part of the larger process of hegemony. As shown, hegemony is a consensual domination that rests on accepting new ideas and norms and satisfying the member through collective benefits. Hegemony also becomes a lived social experience through selective cultural symbols that are well received by other groups of people. In other words, the nature of hegemonic formation includes the techniques found in soft power which include attracting and co-opting other groups of people through consensual means.

Summary of Thesis

This thesis argues that the Confucius Institute in Thailand operates along lines which further the Chinese government's policy. It will show that the Confucius Institute's activities can be understood by applying the concepts of hegemony and soft power. Before presenting research results, Chapter Two will discuss the methodological approaches to this research project. This chapter will introduce qualitative research methods of interviewing, participant observation, and content analysis, and discuss how

they were used during three months of field research in Thailand in 2012. Chapter Two will also engage in the discussion of my role as a researcher and the debate of the researcher's positionality; I argue that I am both an insider and outsider researcher.

Chapter Three will closely look at the first aspect of hegemony, the process of norm creation, and will analyze the hegemonic discourse of harmony as internalized by the employees of the Confucius Institute. This chapter will demonstrate that the discourse of harmony is a clear resonance of the Chinese government's foreign policy to construct "the harmonious world." Findings reveal various tactics employed by the Confucius Institute employees in order to create harmony and strengthen diplomatic relations between Thailand and China.

Chapter Four will look at the second aspect of hegemony: the creation of a hegemonic order constituted by general interests, shared economic and political aims, and collective benefits. This chapter looks at how the Thai population is brought into this hegemonic order through the view of China's booming market, and the economic benefits for oneself as well as Thailand and China. Specifically, this chapter will examine the strategy of the Confucius Institute in producing the image of China's rising economy that is perceived to bring real benefits for those who are involved. This chapter will also show that providing collective benefits is part of the Chinese state's policy to construct "the community of interests."

Chapter Five will present the third aspect of hegemony which involves living through social experience that is guided by dominant and selective Chinese cultural symbols. It will show the experience of the Thai population at cultural activities organized by the Confucius Institute. This chapter demonstrates hegemony as an

enjoyable experience that is formulated through dominant values and meanings, shown through two case studies of students' participations in the Chinese Bridge national speech competition in Bangkok in June 2012. Furthermore, the concept of soft power is applied to analyze the use of Chinese cultural symbols at public events. These highly selective cultural symbols are introduced to the Thai population as a way to create certain positive ideas about China and exercise China's soft power in a non-threatening way.

Chapter Six will discuss whether the Confucius Institute is a successful hegemonic project in Thailand. It will summarize major findings, explain limitations of this research project and suggest further research on the Confucius Institute. This thesis hopes to be a foundation for further research into the operations of the Confucius Institute. It also expects to contribute to a better understanding of the Confucius Institute's position within Thailand's education system and within the Chinese government.

Chapter Two

Understanding the Confucius Institute through Qualitative Methods

This chapter introduces the methodological approaches used to collect, analyze and understand data in this research project. It discusses the processes involved in fieldwork and begins with a justification for choosing qualitative methods of interviewing, participant observation and content analysis. The chapter then describes fieldwork preparation, research methods in application, participant recruitment and data analysis. More importantly, this chapter assesses the importance of my positionality, and argues that although I am Thai and has prior knowledge to local customs and environments in Thailand, I became an outsider when I approached the Confucius Institute as access to the research site was denied several times. This boundary thus placed me in the position of both an insider and outsider at different occasions during fieldwork.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Getting There: Methodological Approach

This section will explain the reasons why I chose to use qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviewing, participant observation and content analysis in this study. This research project utilizes a qualitative ethnographic method as a way to collect data about the experiences of the people who are involved in the activities of the Confucius Institute in Thailand. Qualitative research method is preferred because this study seeks to understand Thai students and teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the Confucius Institute in classes and at public events. These are the best methods to answer my questions about the political roles of the Confucius Institute because gathering data through these methods is an effective way to access participants' perspectives

towards the Confucius Institute's operation. Bruce Berg and Howard Lune summarize that qualitative research can provide information about "the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things."¹ It is very useful for understanding the meaning people have created about their world and their experiences at a specific time and in a particular context when they interact with their social world. Furthermore, qualitative research "emphasizes validity in one's research as opposed to quantitative research which stresses the importance of generalizability, reliability, and replicability in one's study."² A qualitative ethnographic method is appropriate and useful for understanding and interpreting research participants' experiences with the Confucius Institute's classes and activities because it allowed me to understand the participants' insight about their involvement with the Confucius Institute. In addition, the research methods in this project specifically illuminate how participants experience the Confucius Institute's activities as part of China's hegemonic project.

This study uses interviews, participant observations, and content and document analysis, which are some of the methods commonly associated with ethnographic methodology. According to John Creswell, ethnography is "a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system."³ It normally involves a prolonged observation of the group through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the everyday lives of the study group. However, Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson indicate that the ethnographic method is not necessarily used in a standard

¹ Bruce Berg and Howard Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc, 2012), 3.

² Steven Taylor and Robert Bogdan, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings* (New York: Wiley, 1984), p 5-8.

³ John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (USA: Sage Publications, 1998), 58.

manner and its meaning can vary. They state that ethnography often means “an integration of both first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture.”⁴ I use ethnographic methods including semi-structured interviewing, participant observation, document analysis, and content analysis, in order to enhance the validity of results through triangulation. For example, in Chapter Three, I triangulate the norm of international harmony, which emerged as a strong and common theme after I coded the interviews, through observations at public events, and through the discourse of Chinese foreign policy found in recent documents.

The majority of results from this study come from interviews. Interviewing may be defined simply as a conversation between two or more people with the objective of gathering specific information. This study employs semi-structured interviewing which uses a set of predetermined questions or an interview guideline and is flexible enough for me to follow up on the additional and unexpected issues during the interview session. Furthermore, Brian Rathbun argues that interviewing “is often the best tool for establishing how subjective factors influence political decision-making, the motivation of those involved, and the role of agency in events of interest.”⁵ In other words, interviewing is an excellent method for establishing the individual’s motivations and preferences as well as the rationales behind such actions, especially when the participant’s actions are influenced by multiple variables or circumstances.

⁴ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.

⁵ Brian Rathbun, “Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities,” *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, eds David Collier, Henry E. Brady, Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 686.

Another method of data collection that I used in this study is participant observation, which is “the explicit use in behavioral analysis and recording of the information gained from participating and observing.”⁶ This method is widely used by qualitative researchers. The researcher interacts with research participants and immerses himself into their everyday life setting. Bernard argues that participant observation has two important advantages as a research tool. Firstly, it decreases the level of reactivity among research participants because it is less obtrusive when compared to interviewing. Another advantage is that due to its low reactivity among people being studied, it can provide an insightful understanding of what takes place at the research site without the researcher’s intrusion; thus, I can be more confident of the research results.⁷ Participant observation has a very powerful tool in this project, especially for capturing the nature of students and teachers’ experiences, specifically at the Confucius Institute’s public events.

Content analysis is the third method that this study uses. According to Berg and Lune, content analysis is “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings.”⁸ Specifically, content analysis includes document analysis, a method that allows me to collect empirical evidence by obtaining written records such as policy documents, reports, statistics, manuscripts, magazines and other visual materials.⁹ I use document analysis in this project because of several of its advantages. One advantage that document analysis has is that using already publicly available records raises fewer ethical

⁶ Kathleen Dewalt, Billie Dewalt, and Coral Wayland, “Participant Observation,” in *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, ed H. Russell Bernard (California: Sage, 1998), 259.

⁷ H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, 148.

⁸ Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 349.

⁹ Jenet Johnson, H.T. Reynolds and Jason Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2008), 266.

problems than observation and interviews because it allows for the study of a social group or institute without establishing direct and personal contact.¹⁰ Thus, document analysis can provide me with a bigger and more complete picture of the research problem. In particular, print materials and visual data such as the Confucius Institute magazines and other print materials such as brochures about Chinese cultures and events show how the Confucius Institute presents itself in the public domain, for public consumption. With the three methods of collecting data chosen, the next section will discuss the researcher's preparation for field research.

Fieldwork Preparation

The fieldwork for this research project started in May 2012. However, having no previous fieldwork experience, I needed to acquire the skills required to carry out qualitative research methods in Thailand. In February 2012, I carried out a test interview at a local Chinese language school in Victoria, BC, Canada. I did not know anyone who worked for local Chinese school and originally planned to schedule an interview with either a school principal, administrator or teacher. I sent the principal an email but she stated that she was busy and could not participant in an interview.

On my second effort, I paid a visit to the school. On that day, the principal who is a Chinese-Canadian was talking with another Chinese teacher at the moment and came to greet me. I mentioned my research project and successfully scheduled an interview for the following week at three o'clock before their after-school activities. On the day of our scheduled interview, I arrived at the school ten to fifteen minutes early. When the time came, the front gate was still locked and there was no way of entering without climbing

¹⁰ Jenet Johnson, H.T. Reynolds and Jason Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, 290.

over the fence. I decided to wait and observe distantly from a coffee shop across the street. She was late but as soon as the front gate was unlocked and I saw students being dropped off by their parents, I prepared to leave and bought one cup of hot coffee for me and one cup of hot black tea for her. I finally walked into her office which was also used as a classroom. I greeted the principal and offered her the black tea. She instantly said, “that is what I need.” Her statement was a confirmation for me that she was in a better mood and happier to answer my questions.

The interview took approximately forty-five minutes. Besides interviewing the school principal, I tried to observe as many Chinese cultural artifacts, symbols and activities as possible. Upon leaving the school, I picked up a Chinese newsletter in front of the school, made my way back to the same coffee and started writing out my observations on the school and interviewee as my field notes at full length. Although this was a glimpse of what I would do in Thailand for three months, it showed how delicate the work was of securing an interview with a high-ranking person. In addition, I learned greatly from this experience as similar circumstances occurred during my field research. Some research participants refused to participate, and I frequently had to convince them by establishing a certain degree of interpersonal contact. I mostly relied on the use of interpersonal skills with participants such as administrators and directors who seemed very busy and were likely to refuse to schedule an interview.

Another skill that is very important for this project is Chinese language training. I am fluent in both Thai and English. Nonetheless, without my advanced training in Mandarin Chinese, this research project would not have been possible, because all language teachers and many directors at the Confucius Institute are from China and the

majority of them do not speak English or Thai fluently. I started my formal learning of the Chinese language at the University of Victoria in September 2007 and spent one year in Shanghai, China until July 2010. During my one year there, I also familiarized myself with Chinese customs and that allowed me to further sharpen my interpersonal skills which became very useful when approaching Chinese research participants. My Mandarin Chinese proficiency is now at the high intermediate level, and I was able to carry out my research in Chinese. Occasionally, when complicated issues were mentioned during field research, I compensated for my ineffective Chinese language skills by asking for an explanation either in simpler Chinese, Thai or English. Overall, my fieldwork preparation provided me with the confidence to conduct the actual field research in Thailand, which is discussed in the following section.

Getting in: Methods in Application and Participant Recruitment

This section discusses how I applied semi-structured interviewing, participant observation and content analysis as research methods during my fieldwork. From May to early August 2012, I chose to visit four Confucius Institutes in Bangkok, Chachoengsao and Kanchanaburi provinces as well as one Confucius Classroom in Chantaburi province as shown in figure 1. These sites were selected for this study because they were situated in the same area of central Thailand and were easy to reach, compared to the locations in the remote area in the north or south of Thailand. In addition, each location organized public events at different times throughout the year so it was convenient for me to travel to and from each venue. The fieldwork began at a Confucius Institute in Chachoengsao province because I am most familiar with the setting of the province and know the university where a Confucius Institute was established. I recruited the participants at all

five locations by walking into their office, introducing my research project as well as myself as a Thai master's student studying in Canada, and handed out my business cards that have the University of Victoria logo, departmental affiliation and contact information.

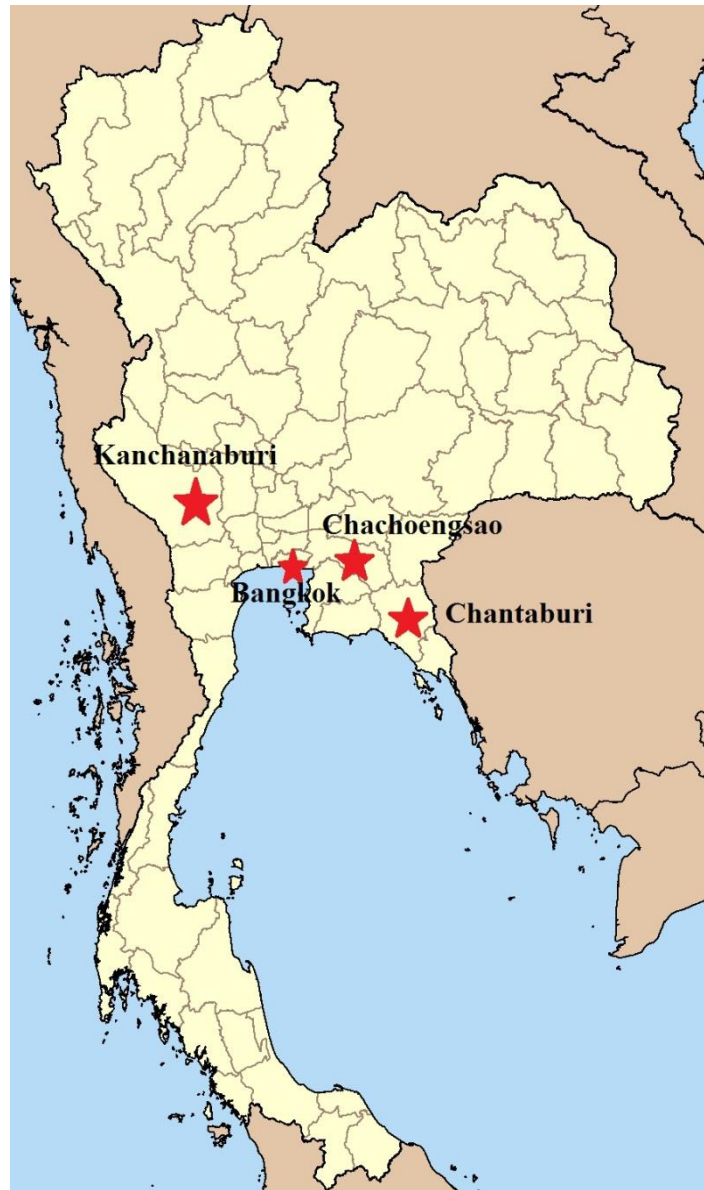


Figure 1: Map of Thailand marked with the locations of research sites, Kanchanaburi, Bangkok, Chachoengsao and Chataburi (from left to right).

Research participants included Confucius Institute directors, Chinese language teachers, administrators and students. I conducted fourteen interviews with four directors, two administrators, five teachers, one Thai government official and two students. I was interested in interviewing Confucius Institute directors because they are the decision-makers within each institute. They also receive policies from Hanban and provide the future direction and activities that the Confucius Institute will carry out. I interviewed administrators because they implement policies and guidance that are received from directors. Their perspectives are valuable in examining how they view their responsibility within the Confucius Institute. Chinese language teachers are the carriers of messages and are able to formulate certain views of China either in classes or at cultural events among students who are the receivers of these messages. Teachers and students are important in this research project because they provide the perceptions of how Chinese culture and language is promoted in Thailand. The views among Thai government officials are also as equally important because Chinese language and culture is officially promoted and I wanted to hear their arguments for supporting Chinese language and culture, and how they perceive the operation of the Confucius Institute in Thailand.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for data coding process. The majority of interviews took place in an isolated room at various Confucius Institute offices. The location was mutually agreed upon by the participant and me in order to allow them to speak comfortably and freely as well as to protect the respondent's confidentiality. The rest of interviews occurred outside the Confucius Institute office.

For example, a Thai government official was interviewed on an empty bus on the way to the airport to pick up Chinese exchange teachers; one interview with a student took place at a restaurant; and one interview with a Chinese teacher was at a wayside shelter as a way to be away from his coworkers and Chinese director. The length of interviews range from thirty minutes to one and half hours but most interviews were approximately an hour long. The names of respondents, affiliated universities and locations have been replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity and confidentiality.

During the interview, I used participant observation to record the respondents' presentation of themselves, interaction with me and particular reaction to the interview questions. Observations were made at the Confucius Institute offices in order to note the architecture of the Confucius Institute building, selected cultural symbols and decorations. However, I used participant observation the most at public cultural events that I attended throughout my field research. I attended five cultural activities: a national Chinese language speech competition (*Hanyu Qiao*); two Dragon Boat festivals at two Confucius Institutes; a Chinese medicine public talk; and a singing contest. Participant observation is a good way of examining and understanding attendants' feedback and behaviours at cultural events organized by the Confucius Institute. Moreover, these activities are the outreach programs that seek to include the general Thai population rather than only students. At these events, I used an unstructured-interviewing method to talk to several participants and hear comments about the activities. I observed the behaviour and reactions of event attendants in order to illustrate how receptive Thai citizens were when they were publically introduced to Chinese culture and what strategies were used in order to attract people into experiencing Chinese culture.

The last method that I used during field research was document analysis. At each visit to Confucius Institutes and cultural events, I gathered promotional print materials such as Confucius Institute magazines, textbooks, flyers and internal reports. I collected magazines easily as they were normally on the bookshelf in the office and visitors were welcome to take them home. I was able to collect fourteen magazines in total; half of these were sent from the Headquarters in China, and the other half were published in Thailand specifically for domestic distribution. Each Confucius Institute is equipped with a small library so textbooks can be lent to anyone. Flyers were normally collected at cultural events; however, I also found them on the bookshelf in the office. It was more difficult to obtain internal reports because they were not for public distribution. However, the Thai Confucius Institute director and administrators at one location were kind enough to allow me to make a photocopy of some documents. Internal reports are useful because these reports contain the Confucius Institute's self-assessment in terms of its performance as an organization.

Although these research methods were very useful for gathering data for this research project, it does not mean that I was able to obtain all the information that I needed whenever I wanted. My ability or inability to gain access to research sites or to information raises the issue of my positionality as both an insider and outsider researcher while conducting field research, which is discussed in the following section.

Not Getting in: Ruji as an Outsider and Insider Researcher

This section examines the researcher's positionality as both an insider and outsider in this research project. David Hellowell argues that it is important for researchers to have the ability to stand outside one's own writing and be reflexive about it because this

positionality can create high quality scholarly works.¹¹ Thus, I argue that although I am conducting field research in a familiar setting in Thailand, and I am of Thai-Chinese descent, I remain as an outsider when it comes to studying the Confucius Institute. This is important because at cultural events, I might be accustomed to Chinese cultural symbols and customs as I lived in China for a year. However, by being reflexive, I can also observe these symbols and customs that seemed common sense to me and be critical of how the Confucius Institute utilized them.

A researcher's positionality poses various debates such as the argument of how an insider researcher may be better than an outsider researcher at accessing data and the targeted participants of the research. An insider is defined as "one [who] has monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge...by virtue of one's group membership or social position."¹² In other words, the insider is "an individual who possesses *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community and its members."¹³ In contrast, the outsider is a non-member who is not familiar with the setting and people that one is researching. In terms of the debate, on the one hand, the outsider researcher argues that their ability to stand back from the participant's group allows them to collect data that is more valid.¹⁴ On the other hand, the insider researcher supports their position by indicating that their ability to adapt to familiar settings assists the flow of information including behaviours, opinions, and views, which is less likely to be concealed if the researcher is defined as a

¹¹ David Hellowell, "Inside-out: Analysis of the insider-outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research," *Teaching in Higher Education* 11, no.4 (2006): 483.

¹² Robert Merton, "Insider and Outsider: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 1(1972): 15.

¹³ David Hellowell, "Inside-out," 484.

¹⁴ John L. Aguilar, "Insider Research: An Ethnography of a Debate," in *Anthropologists at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of One's Own Society*, ed Donal A. Messerschmidt. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 15.

member of the group. Therefore, the validity of the results is enhanced. In a recent contribution to this debate, David Hellowell asserts that “the researcher should be both inside *and* outside the perceptions of the ‘researched.’”¹⁵ While the researcher is being reflexive of one’s positionality, he or she should not only present results as evidence for an argument but also enthusiastically interpret the experience in the field.¹⁶ The final result should be the reflexive knowledge that “provides insights into the workings of the world *and* insights on how that knowledge came to be (emphasis in original).”¹⁷

Although I am from Thailand and was conducting research in my home country, my positionality should be considered as an insider-outsider when I approached the Confucius Institute. Having lived in Thailand until recently, I am familiar with local Thai customs which allowed me to approach research participants more easily, especially Thai directors and administrators at the Confucius Institute. When I introduced myself to the Thai directors and administrator, I understand that as a younger person, I should always be polite and give them respect (*wai*) every time I come and leave the Confucius Institute office. I played the role of a young, humble and well-mannered student that they are used to seeing each day at work when a student approaches them. I expressed myself as being eager to learn more about the participants’ work and roles within the Confucius Institute. I found that most of the time the act of giving respect facilitated easier access to the Confucius Institute.

However, when approaching the Confucius Institute as an organization, the line between an insider and an outsider was carved much more clearly because the Confucius

¹⁵ David Hellowell, “*Inside-out*,” 487.

¹⁶ Bruce Berg and Howard Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 205.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

Institute is affiliated with the Chinese government and universities. Researching the Confucius Institute can easily become about researching “their” organization where internal information should not be given or publicly disclosed. Thus, at several occasions, I was an outsider although I repeatedly mentioned my Chinese family background and experience in Shanghai. My background did not facilitate better access to the Confucius Institute, in contrast to my experience at my test interview in Victoria. Being an outsider to the organization also meant that I encountered the problem of gaining access to the information I wanted for my research. For example, internal information such as Confucius Institute conference materials at the Headquarters in Beijing, the amount of annual funding the Institutes receive from Hanban, or annual strategic plans were difficult or impossible to obtain. When I visited the Confucius Institute in Kanchanaburi province, I saw the 2008 Confucius Institute conference material in the library that I intended to borrow. I asked the Chinese director if she had the latest conference material, she said no, and as soon as she saw I was holding the 2008 conference material in my hand, she took it back right away and directly told me this was inside information and not for public disclosure. Another time, I found access increasingly difficult to obtain as I asked the same Chinese director if I could see some teaching materials. We happened to be standing by a printer in the office and the Chinese director randomly grabbed a small booklet containing Chinese vocabularies and textbooks from the top of the pile on the printer before she handed them to me. It illustrates that the director did not want to provide carefully selected materials that would be useful to my research project. Her reluctance to cooperate in this study increased over time, and by the second week, the atmosphere at the office had become very negative. One of the teachers told me that the

Chinese director would not be happy if she saw him talking to me during our interview session. Another Chinese teacher who greeted me very openly and with the biggest smile during my first visit would no longer look up to me from her office desk to greet me during the second week. That second week marked the end of my research in Kanchanaburi because I was almost entirely denied access. After this incident, I decided to go back to the Confucius Institute in Chachoengsao, because everyone there was much more welcoming, receptive and helpful with my project.

In comparison, Muriel Zhou completed her PhD dissertation on the partnership between the Confucius Institute and local schools in the United States. Prior to her degree completion, she had worked for a Confucius Institute as an assistant to the Managing Director for at least two years. She wrote that “my experience gave me some advantages in conducting this research (it made me “a person of foresight” on this research topic and equipped me with a unique perspective)...”¹⁸ My fieldwork experiences illustrate clearly that although I was granted a certain degree of access to the Confucius Institute to obtain some specific information that was not publicly available, access could have simply been denied because I am not part of the Confucius Institute.

In spite of being denied access, in Kanchanaburi, my fieldwork experience in Chachoengsao demonstrated my insider positionality after I spent almost two months of conducting participant observation with the directors, administrators, teachers and janitors there. On July 21, 2012, the Confucius Institute in Chachoengsao organized a singing contest. The administrators, teachers, directors were at the event location from

¹⁸ Muriel Zhou, “School-University Partnerships in Teaching the Mandarin Chinese Language: The Confucius Institute Experience” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2011), 35.

eight in the morning until at least six in the evening. Chinese teachers from other campuses who were two or three hours away also came to set up and make sure the event ran smoothly. I was told that it was their busiest event of the year. My fieldwork period was also coming to an end and one of the administrators who always made me feel welcomed at the office decided it was a good time to have a casual evening out. He was kind enough to extend an invitation to me. I believe this casual evening out was a way of rewarding themselves for hosting a successful event with a large participant turnout, but also making me feel more an “insider” than I had experienced until then.

The university is only five minutes away from the famous Saithong beach that many people enjoy visiting on the weekend to relax and play seawater activities. We decided to meet around nine at this particular restaurant by a beachside road that served very special and cold beer that turned slushy when the bottle was opened. As I walked to the restaurant, the night was windy and filled with warm breeze from the ocean that would make my skin sweaty and sticky. When I arrived at the restaurant, I found them already sitting, having seafood dishes and slushy beer at the white granite table, as shown in Figure 2.

This night was significant for me as a researcher because the research participants allowed me to be more than a young researcher and at the same time, I was happy to make them my friends. Everyone including me seemed to be more open about talking and asking about our personal lives and experiences. While I was attempting to be subtle in asking my research questions over the beer and seafood dishes, personal stories came out. For example, one female administrator talked about her crazy former boyfriend who stalked her everywhere including the Confucius Institute office, and how the Thai

director had to come down to ease the situation when the crazy boyfriend came into the office and started a serious and loud argument. Another example was how a male administrator was telling me he got into a recent car accident near the university. I mostly listened to their stories and laughed along with their jokes that night. It was also around this time that I felt comfortable enough to add them on my personal facebook account. I also realized that it was a good idea to maintain contact with them in case I need to clarify the content of the interview or seek their insight for my future research project. To this day, we still talk casually and check each other's updates on facebook.



Figure 2: Slushy Beer Night with Confucius Institute administrators (from left to right: Heng, myself, Fah's boyfriend, Fah, Chan's friend and Chan). Permission was obtained to use this photo.

My fieldwork ended in August 2013. I came back to Canada to organize the data that included interview voice clips, visual materials and field notes. All interviews and

cultural event notes were transcribed and coded with a qualitative data analysis program called MAXQDA. The program allowed me to organize all data into patterns and themes by creating codes in one single location. Visual materials such as Confucius Constitutes magazines and annual reports that cannot be imported into MAXQDA were also organized by the same codes that were set up in the program and manually coded by using sticky notes.

Overall, I enjoyed the fieldwork experience. I feel that field research was a success despite being denied access to information several times. I conducted a sufficient numbers of interviews to identify patterns and themes for analysis. Although internal reports were difficult to obtain, I gathered enough print materials to analyze and to use for triangulation. The research tools and triangulation between different sources of data improved research results in this thesis and led me to make particular conclusions about the operations of the Confucius Institutes and its hegemonic operations. For example, in the following chapter, different sources of data were triangulated and I demonstrate that Princess Sirindhorn is a key figure in the activities of the Confucius Institute despite the fact that I was not granted access to observe the events where she presided. Thus, the research methods I chose were effective in gathering information about the Confucius Institute and its hegemonic project in Thailand.

Chapter Three

The Hegemonic Production of Norms: Harmony, Chinese Foreign Policy and the Confucius Institute

In June 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao discussed his notion of building a “harmonious Asia” at the summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organization where leaders from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan together performed the symbolic action of planting a tree to represent the goal of the summit.¹ The idea of building harmony is nothing new in the history of China. It can be traced back to the thinking of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and Mencius (372-289 B.C.).² However only recently has it become a significant and principal policy for the Chinese government to achieve harmony domestically and internationally.

This chapter argues that although the Confucius Institute has the objective of spreading Chinese culture and language, it embraces an important role in constructing harmony internationally which can be seen among the employees and students within the Confucius Institute. The creation of harmony as a norm is linked to the discussion of hegemony because it is the production of norms which is rooted within China and projected outward on to the world. This chapter shows how the Chinese government perceives China’s domestic stability as requiring harmony within China and abroad. Through the analysis of interviews, policy documents and print materials obtained during field research, this chapter argues that the operations of the Confucius Institute replicate and further the Chinese government’s policy to create harmony. Specifically, this chapter

¹ Yusheng Wang, “It’s All about Harmony,” *Beijing Review* 49, no. 27 (2006): 16.

² Sheng Ding, “To Build A ‘Harmonious World’: China’s Soft Power Wielding in the Global South,” in *“Harmonious World” and China’s New Foreign Policy*, eds Jean-Marc Blanchard and Sujian Guo (UK: Lexington Books, 2008), 107.

asserts that the Confucius Institute's discourse of building harmony is a reflection or furthering of a hegemonic norm within China, a hegemonic norm that is a strong reflection of the Chinese government's domestic policy being projected outward on an international scale. This chapter begins by describing that the norm of harmony emerges within China and is projected internationally. This chapter will then offer a case study of Princess Sirindhorn in order to show her place in the creation of harmony as part of the Confucius Institute's activities and how her position reinforces the Chinese government's hegemonic projection of harmony. In addition, this chapter provides two case studies of Confucius Institute employees to illustrate the internalization of the norm, of harmony in their duties at the Confucius Institute.

Tracing Harmony: China is Calling for a Harmonious China, Asia and World

The notion of harmony has been extensively emphasized by the Chinese government in the 2011 White Paper called China's Peaceful Development. This policy document is a key document as it provides the direction for the Chinese government's interaction with other countries. It is widely distributed to Chinese embassies and consulates around the world³ and is available on the Internet and on Xinhua News Agency, which is the central news agency of the People's Republic of China. I obtained this document from the website of the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok.⁴ Jean-Marc Blanchard and Sujian Guo argue that the rationales behind the promotion of the concept of a harmonious world are an attempt by China to deal with the "China threat" image which perceives China's political, military, and economic advancement as a danger to the world order and

³ Examples include the Chinese Embassy in Ireland, Kuwait and South Africa as well as Chinese Consulate in Toronto, Canada and Houston, USA.

⁴ Embassy of the People's Republic of China, *China's Peaceful Development*, <http://www.chinaembassy.or.th/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

international system dominated by the United States and western powers.⁵ The endeavour to reduce the “China threat” notion began after Zheng Bijian, Chairman of China Reform Forum, coined a term peaceful rise (*heping jueqi*) in 2003 to explain China’s recent rapid development. After that, Wen Jiabao, the Premier of Chinese State Council who was then serving as the head of the Chinese government, also endorsed the idea of “peaceful rise” in his speech at Harvard University in December 2003.⁶ However, Sujian Guo asserts that there was a continued disagreement on the use of the term in the Chinese government and academia because the term “rise” could be misinterpreted and boost the perceived threat to the *status quo* powers, especially the United States. Thus, President Hu Jintao changed the term to advocate for “peaceful development” in 2004 instead.⁷

Published by the Information Office of the Chinese State Council, the policy of China’s Peaceful Development aims to pursue international peaceful environment while creating harmony domestically. It also establishes a firm position for China’s new foreign policy in creating a “harmonious world” with other countries by stating that:

China's foreign policy aims to uphold world peace and promote common development. China advocates the building of a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity and works with other countries in pursuing this goal.

It further elaborates the rationale behind promoting this idea of building harmony:

⁵ Jean-Marc Blanchard and Sujian Guo, “Introduction,” in *“Harmonious World” and China’s New Foreign Policy*, eds Jean-Marc Blanchard and Sujian Guo (UK: Lexington Books, 2008), 4.

⁶ Guoli Liu, “*The Dialectic Relationship between Peaceful Development and China’s Deep Reform*,” 28.

⁷ Sujian Guo, “Introduction,” in *China’s “Peaceful Rise” in the 21st Century: Domestic and International Conditions*, ed Sujian Guo (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 2.

The world has been believed to be a harmonious whole in the Chinese culture ever since the ancient times. This belief has a lasting impact on the thinking and acts of the Chinese nation, which is an important value that the Chinese people follow in handling interpersonal relationships, the relationship between man and nature and relations between different countries... This belief calls for the fostering of harmonious family bond, neighborhood harmony and good interpersonal relationships. Under the influence of the culture of harmony, peace-loving has been deeply ingrained in the Chinese character.

The above statement illuminates the perspective on harmony that originates within China and is expanded to the handling of interstate relations. Domestically, the Chinese government has aggressively promoted the creation of a harmonious society due to its internal problems that have been caused by the country's rapid economic growth. In October 2006, the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party passed a document called, *Resolution on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society*.⁸ After that, "the construction of a harmonious society became the central theme of China's economic, social, and political activities."⁹ China expects to achieve a harmonious society by the year 2020.

However, even when internal peace and stability is maintained, China will not be able to reach its goal of a harmonious society by the year 2020 if an international peaceful environment is not also achieved.¹⁰ Liu asserts that Chinese leaders completely

⁸ Central Department Central Committee of CPC, *Resolution on Harmonious Society Published*, <http://www.idcpc.org.cn/english/events/061019.htm>.

⁹ Ai Guo Han, "Building a Harmonious Society and Achieving Individual Harmony," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 13, no.12(2008): 143.

¹⁰ Guoli Liu, "The Dialectic Relationship between Peaceful Development and China's Deep Reform," in *China's "Peaceful Rise" in the 21st Century: Domestic and International Conditions*, ed Sujian Guo (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 18-19.

understand that a confrontational foreign policy would disrupt China's growth and even threaten the Chinese Communist Party's position in power. For instance, if China experienced a blockade and isolation enforced by the United States, in the time of conflict, Chinese maritime trade would come to a stop entirely. Then, the flow of oil would end and the Chinese economy would be paralyzed.¹¹ Therefore, Liu emphasizes that "a peaceful diplomacy is the only correct choice for China in the era of globalization."¹²

As illustrated by Liu, China's deep reform with an objective of building a harmonious society and external peaceful environment are interrelated and mutually supportive. China has placed further emphasis on building a harmonious Asia and a harmonious world. In April 2011, President Hu Jintao delivered a speech at the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) which urged forum attendants to move "towards common development and a harmonious Asia."¹³ The Forum is a non-profit international organization that hosts high level forums for leaders in government, business, and academia to share visions on important issues in the region. It is committed to "promoting regional economic integration and bringing Asian countries even closer to their development goals"¹⁴ while building consensus in Asia and deepening Asian cooperation. As part of his attempt to create a harmonious Asia, President Hu Jintao stresses the common characteristics and traditions which belong to "the people of Asia" and that these common traditions should be upheld. He laid out several common traits

¹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Make Money, Not War," *Foreign Policy*, no. 146(2005): 47.

¹² Guoli Liu, "The Dialectic Relationship between Peaceful Development and China's Deep Reform," 36.

¹³ Hu Jintao, "Towards Common Development and a Harmonious Asia" (Hainan, China, April 15, 2011), Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2011, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t816535.htm>.

¹⁴ Boao Forum for Asia, *Background*, <http://english.boaforum.org/gyltbjjsen.jhtml>.

among people in Asia. For example, the people of Asia share the spirit of seeking self-improvement and development achievement through the efforts of the industrious and talented Asian people; they possess an open and inclusive sense of learning from each other; and lastly, Asians belong to one family and they have a solidarity of spirit and assisting one another in times of difficulty.¹⁵

China's domestic reform and development does not only depend on Asia being peaceful and stable but also on the whole world to have a harmonious environment. The White Paper of China's Peaceful Development in 2011 proposes that a harmonious world can be achieved politically, economically and culturally. Politically, efforts should be carried out by respecting every country as equal members of the international community, following the United Nations role in handling global affairs, adhering to international law, democracy, harmony and creating a win-win situation instead of the zero-sum game in international affairs. Economically, different countries should cooperate with each other in order to accomplish a win-win condition that benefits all parties and at the same time aims to establish an international multilateral trading arrangement that is fair, open and equitable to all. Culturally, the following strategy should be implemented and it is worth quoting at length:

Culturally, countries should draw on each other's strengths, seek common ground while putting aside differences, respect the diversity of the world, and promote progress in human civilization. Dialogues and exchanges among civilizations

¹⁵ Hu Jintao, "Towards Common Development and a Harmonious Asia" (Hainan, China, April 15, 2011), Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2011, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t816535.htm>.

should be encouraged to do away with ideological prejudice and distrust, and make human society more harmonious and the world more colorful.¹⁶

The quote above indicates that Chinese policy is grounded in a notion that cultural exchange can eliminate prejudice and distrust, and that culture can make the world more harmonious.

This section has traced the idea of harmony in international policy to internal campaigns within China. The idea of harmony has been utilized and powerfully extended by the Chinese government to apply to the people of Asia as a region and of the world. The following section shows how ideas of international harmony and friendship are present in the activities and thinking of the Confucius Institute's directors, teachers, and students. In particular, I present a case study which demonstrates how the Confucius Institute attempts to create harmony through Princess Sirindhorn, who is part of Thailand's most revered institution, the monarchy. Various points of views among the people who are involved with the Confucius Institute are also presented in order to illustrate how they perceive the Princess' involvement.

Case Study: Princess Sirindhorn, China's Best International Friend

“传承文明 增进友谊”
(Pass on Civilization, Promote Friendship)
Princess Sirindhorn's calligraphy
Presented at the Confucius Institute Headquarters

Princess Sirindhorn's extensive involvement with the Confucius Institute can be considered as part of the hegemonic project of creating international harmony as a norm.

This section shows that the Confucius Institute takes advantage of her highly revered

¹⁶ Information Office of State Council, *China's Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

position within the Thai society, as well as her personal interests in China and Chinese culture as a way to strengthen harmony and friendship between Thailand and China. In Thailand, the Thai government strongly promotes the institution of the monarchy and has placed it at the epicentre of Thailand's national identity.¹⁷ Thus, the case of Princess Sirindhorn offers a perspective of how the highly revered position of the monarchy is used by the Confucius Institute.

Prior to the establishment of Confucius Institutes in Thailand, Princess Sirindhorn's roles in the public services were already extensive. As well as her teaching career in Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy where she received her ranking of "General" and title of "Professor," the Princess' royal duties include attending important public ceremonies, receptions, and visits within Thailand and abroad. She has fulfilled many of the "Royal Duties Assigned by Their Majesties the King and Queen"¹⁸ in philanthropic organizations and foundations. For instance, since 1977, Princess Sirindhorn has been the Executive Vice-President of the Thai Red Cross Society and the Executive Chairperson of Royal development and environmental conservation project called the Chaipattana Foundation. She promotes higher education through the Anandha Mahidol Foundation and preserves Thai culture through the King Rama II Foundation.¹⁹ She is also known to provide basic education for schoolchildren in remote border areas, assists the handicapped to achieve independent living, and advocates nutritional campaigns for the well-being of Thai citizens. Due to her prevalent charitable initiatives,

¹⁷ David Streckfuss, "Kings in the Age of Nations: The Paradox of Lèse-Majesté as Political Crime in Thailand," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no.13(1995): 446.

¹⁸ Royal Secretariat, *Biography of H.R.H Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn*, <http://www.sirindhorn.net/HRH-biography.en.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.

the private sector and many associations present her with money and resources for her project implementation. In addition, Princess Sirindhorn established the Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Charity Fund, which aims to improve people's living conditions, including those affected by natural disasters.²⁰ These public and philanthropic activities also contribute to her status as a highly revered member of the Royal Family by Thai citizens.

The Princess' royal duties also extensively involve her in the activities of the Confucius Institute. The calligraphy quoted at the beginning of this section was drawn and presented by Princess Sirindhorn during her visit to the Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing in July 2010. In the Thai version of the Confucius Institute magazine, a Confucius Institute Director who is Chinese but fluent in Thai, Professor Zhou, writes about Princess Sirindhorn's visit to Shanghai and Beijing. This magazine article demonstrates how Chinese strategies of creating harmony internationally are brought down to an accessible level in the Confucius Institute's publications. Professor Zhou's writing exhibits how the Princess is interested in Chinese culture and is a good friend of China. The article is entitled "Princess Sirindhorn, Thai-Chinese Relations Never Deteriorate." By using the Thai royal language, which is used only when addressing the monarchy,²¹ Professor Zhou writes:

On July 20, 2010, during the period of commemorating the 35th year anniversary of Thai-Chinese relations, the honourable Princess Sirindhorn paid a visit to the World Exposition in Shanghai in the midst of 35 degrees Celsius weather. Her

²⁰ Royal Secretariat, *Biography of H.R.H Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn*, <http://www.sirindhorn.net/HRH-biography.en.html>

²¹ In Thailand, a different form of Thai language is used to address the members of the royal family. The usage of the Thai royal language also depends on a member's rank within the royal family.

Royal Highness, an old friend of the Chinese people, viewed various Chinese exhibition halls. Princess Sirindhorn listened to the presentation attentively while writing down notes in her notebook intermittently. Her visit to the People's Republic of China is the 32nd time since 1981 and Her Royal Highness reminisced about her experiences of her visits to China by saying "relations never deteriorate" in Mandarin Chinese to describe the relationship between her and China. It leaves the people with a profound impression every time they follow her footsteps to "the Land of the Dragon."

Professor Zhou further writes that Princess Sirinhorn has greatly developed the two countries' relations that "will not fade away." The article then moves on to discuss Princess Sirindhorn's hard work in studying Mandarin Chinese since 1980 and indicates that she is able to speak Chinese fluently and read and understand classical Chinese poetry. It also talks about her various skills in Chinese arts such as writing calligraphy, playing the Erhu, a Chinese musical instrument, drawing and oil canvas painting. The article also glosses over her published works and research about China. She has published forty works, which can be categorized into nonfiction books about her experiences in China, self-composed literature, and Chinese poetry translations.

Professor Zhou also describes the Princess' involvement in the operation of the Confucius Institute. He writes under a new subheading, "Princess Sirindhorn Puts Her Heart and Support in the Development of the Confucius Institute," and explains that during her visit to the Confucius Institute Headquarters:

Her Royal Highness praised Hanban for developing and creating resources for teaching and learning language, as well as for the success of each Confucius

Institute. In addition, she wrote calligraphy in Chinese characters “传承文明 增进友谊” [Pass on Civilization, Promote Friendship].

He further explains Princess Sirindhorn’s continuous support for the establishment of Confucius Institutes and her attentiveness to the learning of Chinese language in Thailand. According to Professor Zhou, due to the promotion by the Princess and by important people in Thai society, the learning and teaching of Chinese language has grown tremendously. In the concluding paragraph, he writes:

Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has been generally accepted by the population of Thailand and China and is praised widely. She has significantly contributed [so much] that [no one is] comparable in terms of cultural exchange between Thailand and China and the promotion of Thailand-China relations.²² Princess Sirindhorn is like a victory flag for the mission of Thailand-China relations advancement. On March 17, 2000, the Chinese Ministry of Education presented the “Chinese Language and Culture Friendship Award” to the Princess.

As explained by Professor Zhou, Princess Sirindhorn is a well-known figure in China. Her regular visits to China are also reported in the wider circle of Chinese society. For example, in April 2013, Peking University described that her visits were so frequent that “it [was] like ‘visiting relatives.’”²³ In addition, Princess Sirindhorn’s story of being one of China’s best international friends was also published in Thailand’s best-selling newspaper, *Thairath*. It was reported on October 31st, 2009 that:

²² Exact translation of this quote is, “She has significantly contributed so many benefactors that are not comparable in terms of cultural exchange between Thailand and China and the promotion of Thailand-China relations.”

²³ Peking University, *Princess Sirindhorn: PKU’s Best International Friend*, http://www.oir.pku.edu.cn:8082/html/News___Event/People/2013/0423/19784.html.

Princess Sirindhorn was praised and esteemed by the Chinese people to be the second “best friend in the world.” She was voted by the Chinese people and received more than two million votes. Thai citizens utterly rejoiced over her being presented with this honour. Before that, she was presented with the designation of “goodwill ambassador” and had made relations between Thailand and China very close after visiting every single province of the enormous China.²⁴

This newspaper article demonstrates the discourse used in the mainstream Thai media to portray Princess Sirindhorn as having a significant role in creating a strong friendship between Thailand and China, which is the result of her involvement in promoting Chinese culture and language. It further illustrates that the Chinese state’s attempt to build harmony internationally by giving the Princess the award is welcomed and accepted in Thailand. The excerpt embraces the notion of good relations between Thailand and China and indicates Thai people “rejoiced” over the Princess’ recognition.

The point of view that Princess Sirindhorn’s involvement in the promotion of Chinese language and culture results in the increasing interest among the Thai population, was echoed in an interview with a Chinese teacher at a Confucius Classroom in Chantaburi Province. In my interview with Peng, she discussed why more and more Thai people were studying the Chinese language. She said:

I think there are a couple of reasons [why Thai people study Chinese]. The first one is that the Royal family member Princess Sirindhorn and the Royal family, they like [it]. Especially Princess Sirindhorn. She regularly goes to this and that

²⁴ Thairath, *China Voted Online Princess Sirindhorn is Best Friend*, <http://www.thairath.co.th/content/royal/43573>.

school to see how they are learning [Chinese]. She supports the learning of the Chinese language.²⁵

Peng's interview suggests a high level of familiarity with the Princess' support for the Confucius Institute. Pictures of Princess Sirindhorn are also frequently featured in many Confucius Institute magazines. In fact, Princess Sirindhorn is the honorary advisor for the magazine and the Chinese Ambassador Guan Mu holds the title of magazine advisor. Many pictures, especially the ones which involve Princess Sirindhorn's presence at Confucius Institute ceremonies, would either show the Princess inscribing calligraphy or standing next to Ambassador Guan Mu and Confucius Institute Director Professor Zhou, whose office is in charge of magazine publication. As Figure 3 shows, Princess Sirindhorn is on the cover of a Confucius Institute magazine where she is wearing a Thai traditional pink silk dress with Chinese jade bracelets and holding a Chinese paintbrush during her visit to the Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing. She is smiling and seems to enjoy writing calligraphy, “传承文明 增进友谊” (*chuanchengwenming zengjinyouyi*) or “Pass on Civilization, Promote Friendship” in English. The Princess' calligraphy—both the topic and the act of writing it—further reinforces the discourse found in the Chinese government's policy document of China's Peaceful Development, which states that cultural exchanges can enhance friendship, thus, harmony.

²⁵ Exact translation is, “And then, towards Chinese language, she supports [it].”



Figure 3: Princess Sirindhorn on the cover of a Confucius Institute magazine. She is writing calligraphy, “传承文明 增进友谊” (“Pass on Civilization, Promote Friendship”) during her visit to the Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing, 2010.

Not only is her visit to the Confucius Institute Headquarters significant as portrayed in the magazine, but her presence at various Confucius Institute offices in Thailand is also perceived to be very important among directors and government officials. Princess Sirindhorn normally presides over the unveiling ceremony where new Confucius Institutes are established. For example, in my interview with a Thai Confucius Institute Director, Kanchana explains the protocol before the Princess officially opens a Confucius Institute:

In 2008, we had to complete and decorate the building and the surrounding area, which took about one year. When we started performing activities, we gradually did the ones we could do. In 2009, we had to have the official opening ceremony. It was not only about activities, we had to accommodate the ceremony and receive Princess Sirindhorn. The area had to be well prepared. Because other Confucius Institute offices may not have the actual building like us, we had to take care of the garden and the trees. Everything had to be ready. It became very difficult.

Kanchana's point of view clearly shows the highly respected position of the Princess in Thailand as she had to prepare her office very well in order to receive the Princess.

Similarly, the Provincial Administration Organization, which is the local government that sponsored the construction of the above Confucius Institute office with funds of approximately \$1.66 million, sent an official named Dusadi to inspect the building.

Dusadi is from the Department of Religion, Education and Culture. In my interview with her, she indicated that:

It [the office building] deserves the honour because Princess Sirindhorn unveiled the building. It was not a waste that we supported [this project] because Princess Sirindhorn was received.

In Thailand, Princess Sirindhorn carries out many royal duties which involve the promotion of the Confucius Institute. In order to commemorate the 30th anniversary of her first visit of China, the Confucius Institute at Maha Chakkraphat University invited the Princess to deliver a keynote lecture which was titled, “A Visit to the Nation of the Dragon.” It was reported on the website of the Confucius Institute Headquarters that:

On May 12th 1981, Princess Sirindhorn made her first visit to China, becoming the first member of the Thai royal family to visit China. Since then, the Princess has visited China 33 times in the past 30 years. Her Royal Highness greatly promoted the development of the friendly relationship between Thailand and China and made important contributions to the promotion of the Chinese language in Thailand.

Princess Sirindhorn’s involvement with the Confucius Institute and the development of Thailand-China relations has also been noticed by then Chinese Vice-President and current President Xi Jinping during his visit to the Confucius Institute at Maha Chakkraphat University in Bangkok in December 2011. His speech was recorded on the Confucius Institute Headquarters website which stated:

Youth are the future of a country, and the hope of a nation, and Princess Sirindhorn personally inscribed the Chinese saying [at Maha Chakkraphat University’s Confucius Institute] for “the burden is heavy and the road is long” to reflect her earnest expectations for the young generation. Youth of China and

Thailand shoulder the burden of the historically important task of carrying forward and developing Sino-Thai friendship, and I hope that Thai youth will widely persevere in studying and mastering Chinese language and culture, never ceasing to advance their understanding and knowledge of China, and to protect, carry forth, and advance Sino-Thai friendship for generations to come.²⁶

From the report, the Headquarters writes that “there wasn’t a single empty seat in the hall which could hold over 2,000 people.”²⁷ This part of his speech specifically addressed the students who were in the audience. Xi directly referred to the Princess’ inscription which symbolically describes the strengthening of the Sino-Thai relationship as a long process. According to Xi, youth are also important in developing the friendly relations between Thailand and China and he hoped that Thai students would not stop learning Chinese language and culture in order to advance Sino-Thai friendship. This excerpt evidently demonstrates how Xi Jinping attempts to create international harmony by referring to Princess Sirindhorn’s expectation of Thai youth who should follow her footsteps to strengthen the relations between Thailand and China. He further said:

I am very happy to have this opportunity to come and see all of you at the Confucius Institute at Maha Chakkraphat University...I am also aware that Princess Sirindhorn, who commands great respect among the people of Thailand, graduated from the Faculty of Arts of this university. As I entered the university campus today and visited classrooms replete with the feel of Chinese culture, the strong atmosphere of Sino-Thai cultural exchange left a deep impression on me.

²⁶Confucius Institute Headquarters, *Speech Made at the Welcome Ceremony at the Confucius Institute at Maha Chakkraphat University*, http://english.hanban.org/article/2011-12/27/content_399497.htm.

²⁷ Confucius Institute Headquarters, Xi Jinping Visits the Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand on December 24, http://english.hanban.org/article/2011-12/25/content_399472.htm.

The above section of the speech shows the repetition in alluding to the Princess and reinforces her highly revered position in Thailand. It attempts to legitimize the act of developing Sino-Thai relations through the already established and well-respected institution of the Thai monarchy. Then Vice-President Xi Jinping concluded his speech that:

China and Thailand have enjoyed over a thousand years of friendly relations as close neighbours, and the peoples of both countries commonly share feelings like those of a family, and it is the common desire of the peoples of both China and Thailand to pass down Sino-Thai friendship for generations to come. I also bring with me the sincere desire of the Chinese government to develop Sino-Thai friendship and cooperation...Over the past two days, I met with Princess Sirindhorn and have come into contact with Prime Minister Yingluck and other government and parliament leaders as well as friends from all sections of society, exchanging views on bilateral relations and other issues of common concern, and the visit was a complete success. I believe that China and Thailand will forever live in harmony, and that the two countries are good neighbors, good partners, good friends, and good relatives who always stand together in times of need.

The speech above clearly demonstrates that the theme of friendship between Thailand and China is a recurring topic and Xi repeatedly refers to Princess Sirindhorn's involvement in the promotion of Chinese culture and language as well as in the strengthening of the Sino-Thai relations through a language that strongly emphasizes friendship and feelings of family. Xi's speech was delivered to approximately 2,000 people who were mostly students from different universities. Referring repeatedly to the

Princess in the speech can be considered an act of promoting acceptance among the Thai population to further develop international harmony by illustrating that Thailand's most revered institution, the monarchy, has already taken the initiative to achieve positive Sino-Thai relations.

This section has presented a case study of Princess Sirindhorn, whose personal interests in China and Chinese culture have been utilized by the Confucius Institute. It can be seen that her royal public activities and connections with the Confucius Institute, as well as the promotion of the Chinese language and culture, have been repeatedly emphasized as an act of strengthening Thailand-China diplomatic relations based on friendship and harmony. After presenting two brief case studies, this chapter concludes by discussing how Princess Sirindhorn's extensive role in the development of the Confucius Institute and Chinese culture in Thailand contributes to an understanding of Chinese hegemonic strategies in Thailand.

Case Study: Director Wang, the Informal Ambassador

The case study of Director Wang provides an insight into how international harmony is created as part of the Confucius Institute's operations. Director Wang has been a director of the Confucius Institute at Suriyan University since 2010. He is from Zhejiang province and received his master's degree in international education program administration from a university in China. He speaks with a Chinese accent that is commonly found in many regions of the lower Yangtze River in southern China. He also speaks very good English, which is uncommon among my Chinese research participants. He always wears short sleeve shirts and long slack pants on weekdays at the office. He wears glasses and is in

his mid-30s. His facial expression and voice are neutral but he seems kind and calm all the time, making him an approachable director.

In my interview with him, he illustrates how he has prepared for his job and his mission in Thailand. Mr. Wang described the application and selection process for the director's position. It was not a very complicated process for him. He was selected by his home university as a candidate to be interviewed by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) to see whether he was qualified and knew enough about "our [Chinese] culture, knowledge, communication or language and our administration experience." He had to undertake a two-month training program in order to strengthen his teaching, cultural knowledge and administrative skills. I asked about what he perceived as his mission in Thailand. He explained:

Firstly, we are just like informal ambassadors: informal, not formal, not official. My first job is [for the Institute to be administered well],²⁸ to have a good relationship with the Thai side. To have a good...work together...how to combine our strength together...to do our events and teaching together, that is the primary task. So right now I am satisfied with our job here. So the Thai side, the Thai director and also the Chinese teacher and the Thai staff, we have very good relationship I think. So firstly, that is our first job...

His perspective shows that his primary task is to come to Thailand and foster good relations with Thai people. His duty of being an informal ambassador and demonstrating the good relations between Thailand and China is illustrated though his formal attire that he regularly wears to public events. He normally wears a pin of the Thai and Chinese

²⁸ Exact quote is, "My first job is to do a good administration."

flags on his blazer jacket when he attends a public event. For example, Figures 4, 5 and 6 show he wore the pin to the national Chinese speech contest (*Hanyu Qiao*) in Bangkok. Thai and Chinese event staff also wore the exact same pin. I asked one of the Thai security guards where he got it from. He informed me that Hanban gave the emblem to him so he could use it at events organized by the Chinese embassy.



Figure 4: Director Wang (second from left) at the national level Chinese language speech contest in Bangkok in June 2012. In this picture, he is wearing the Thai and Chinese flags pin and also a tie imprinted with Suriyan University logo.



Figure 5: A close-up picture of a Thai and Chinese flags pin.



Figure 6: Director Wang is taking a picture with the first prize winner at the singing contest hosted by his Confucius Institute in July 2012.

Most importantly, Director Wang thinks Chinese directors and volunteer teachers should be able to explain to the students and event participants at the Confucius Institute about “the real China” that is not from the textbook “but here [at the Confucius Institute] is the real one. A real one and also the real China...real Chinese.” He further thinks that “we should know that it is time to show...a good opportunity to communicate in a friendly and easy way to show a real China [and] a real Chinese.” I asked him what the real China is, he vaguely states, “it is not a fixed image. I think it is just everything. Any field. A real one.” From this conversation with him, it shows his other mission in Thailand which is to communicate with people in Thailand what he perceives as an authentic image or culture of China. An interview with him reveals his perception of China. In his opinion:

China is rising up. You know not only the economy. Firstly the economy but also the culture. As a country, many things need to [be] shown to the world and influence the world. So China needs people all over the world to know more [about] China and learn [about] China...Someone especially in the foreign countries so they don't have misunderstandings about China. In the feeling they may be...they will...how to say it...resist anything about China....It needs to...other countries to understand China, to accept China that it's rising. And accept its influence but not resist.

His perception of China evidently shows a picture of China that is rising, becoming stronger and ready to influence the world. It also shows that if people learn more about China and Chinese culture, there will be no misunderstanding and people will accept China's influence. Director Wang believes that the Confucius Institute “will not force

someone to accept” those ideas about China but China and Thailand “should know [about] each other so that we can mutual[ly] understand [each other] and... have better relationship.” Lastly, the direction of his mission and duty in Thailand has been reaffirmed by Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping when he visited Thailand in 2011. Director Wang told me that “he [Xi] encouraged us. To me, that means, the central government, the Chinese government, the higher level of the leaders also know the Confucius Institute and support our program.” The attempt to create harmony internationally will also be illustrated in the next section through a case study of a Chinese teacher whose name is Yang.

Case Study: Yang *Laoshi*, the Peaceful Volunteer Teacher

Yang is a very friendly and talkative volunteer teacher (老师, *laoshi*) who was sent to Thailand from China in 2010. She came from a small city in western Yunnan Province, southern China. On the day of the interview, she was wearing a white polo shirt with the Confucius Institute logo on the pocket and a knee-length skirt. Yang speaks fluent Thai and started teaching Chinese to foreigners in 2001. She told me that the main reason she was involved in teaching Chinese was that she liked to be friends with foreigners.

Similar to Director Wang’s perspective, Yang considers the operations of the Confucius Institute as a peaceful way to communicate with the world. It is “a door that is open to the world” for the world to see “[what] Chinese people look like, what is Chinese culture, what is society like in China, [what the] Chinese government [is like]. This is good for the country [when] China and other countries become friends... .” In addition, she continues to use the word “friend” when she further elaborates that the Confucius Institute is a door that one can use to understand China and it is a famous institute both

inside and outside China, “especially, the Chinese government wants the whole world and foreigners to know a lot about China and Chinese culture so that we can be good friends.”

In my interview with her, she stated, using a mix of English and Chinese:

China is possibly a dangerous country for them [other people]. Some people have this kind of thinking: they just think that “China is now becoming bigger and then can come back to bully us.” It is not like that. Actually Chinese people do not like war. Chinese people like harmony and peace. Peaceful. Chinese people like peace and friendliness. As an ancient Chinese dynasty, Confucius thinking was used to deal with a country’s affairs.²⁹ *Yiheweigui* [以和为贵] [means being] peaceful is very important. We want to be friends with every country. Don’t start or throw war, just peaceful and the culture and the volunteer. It is like dispatching us, Chinese volunteers. Chinese teachers [to] come...through the culture [in a] peaceful way.

The phrase, *yiheweigui* (以和为贵) that she uses, can be translated in English in many ways. For example, harmony is precious or peace is the most valuable. Her interview shows that she perceives since the ancient time that Chinese people have been ingrained with the characteristics of being peaceful or harmonious and being a Chinese teacher is a peaceful way to communicate to the world about China and Chinese culture. Yang is a clear example of the Confucius Institute staff who internalizes the rhetoric as well as message of creating friendship and harmony in her duties.

²⁹ Exact translation is, “Then, Chinese ancient dynasty, they use the thinking of Confucius to deal with a country’s affairs.”

Before she was finally sent to Thailand, she had to go through three months of training organized by Hanban. The training took place at Nankai University in Tianjin. Hundreds of volunteer teachers were separated into small different rooms where they were trained in teaching skills and methods. They were also trained to have international communication skills in which “we [the volunteer teachers] should be aware of what we do, Thai manners, what they like and do not like to do, what we should and should not do. We have to do whatever makes Thai people feel ‘*sabaijai*’ (สบายใจ, literal meaning is comfortable at heart).” She also learned “the spirit of a volunteer” at the three-month training camp. Yang described that “the spirit of a volunteer” includes being “peaceful, friendly, voluntary, responsible not just for yourself. It’s also for your Thai students and for the motherland.” She further explained that being responsible as a teacher also counts as being responsible for China. Nonetheless, for her, being a good teacher also includes being a good model citizen living abroad. She stated that:

We come here [to] represent all Chinese so we need to notice [what] we do because what you do in each other’s presence [is] for [the] Chinese. If you do something not good, some people in Thai[land], in the eyes of Thai people, they will think Chinese people [are] not good. We don’t like it. So we must notice that...Simply, if you are a Thai person going to China, you certainly will notice what you do positively and negatively. Otherwise, Chinese people will look down on you. We, the Chinese, are the same here.

Yang’s perspective on her proper conduct of being a model Chinese citizen involves an image making in which she should act well in public places so other people will not have any misperception about China and Chinese citizens.

Yang's viewpoint is also found in teacher training documents. For example, the Manual for Chinese Volunteer Teachers in Thailand (published by Hanban Thailand Office), which I obtained from a Confucius Classroom in Chantaburi province provides several examples and rules of how to positively represent China and Chinese citizens. Besides providing basic Thai language phrases and working condition requirements, the manual shows what one should and should not wear when one is working or attending public functions after school. For instance, when instructing, male teachers should not wear sneakers but only leather shoes. The shirts need to be ironed and sleeves should not be rolled up but should come down to the wrists. Trousers should be regular slacks and not casual pants. Female teachers should tie their hair up and wear formal slacks or skirts covering their knees, and jeans are not acceptable. Their shirts should be buttoned up properly and cannot be sleeveless. After school, male teachers should not wear sleeveless tops. Female teachers should not wear short shorts and singlets or wide-neck open tops. Lastly, when attending public functions, it is inappropriate for colleagues to appear intimate. When having noodle soup, one should use chopsticks to put the noodles onto the spoon before putting them in the mouth and do not lift the bowl up to sip the soup. The manual provides proper code of conduct for the volunteer teachers when they are in Thailand and it is what Hanban perceives as appropriate for representing proper conduct in Thailand and among Thai people. It is also a way to make Thai people feel *sabaijai* and consequently, develop friendly relations and harmony between Thailand and China. The fact that this manual which is published specifically for Chinese volunteer teachers in Thailand exists suggests that the Hanban Thailand office aims to create a certain level of conformity through proper clothes and actions among the teachers so they do not upset

Thai citizens with Chinese customs that may be unfamiliar to Thai people. Consequently, without making Thai people feel disturbed or offended, this conformity can create harmony, and increase support for the larger hegemonic project, through the clothing, behaviours, and attitudes of Confucius Institute's employees.

Assessment:

This chapter has illustrated that China requires a peaceful environment for its development internally and this policy is projected outward internationally. This supports the discussion of hegemony as outlined in the previous chapter which conceptualizes hegemony as non-coercive domination based on acceptance and negotiation of new ideas and norms. This negotiation of new norms involves the Chinese government's extensive efforts to create international harmony. The Confucius Institute's attempt to generate a positive picture in Thailand-China relations by utilizing Princess Sirindhorn's involvement fits with the principal policy of the Chinese government to build harmony internationally. Princess Sirindhorn's engagement with the activities of the Confucius Institute has been captured as a symbol of good relations between Thailand and China, and demonstrates how the elites of the two countries are cooperating together to achieve harmony. In addition to her image of involving greatly in royal public and philanthropic services, her contribution facilitates the negotiation of the norm of harmony among the population of Thailand in such a way that cannot be questioned and criticized by the public due to the application of lèse majesté statute. Article 112 of Thailand's criminal code states that whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years.³⁰ David

³⁰ "Questions and Answers Concerning Article 112," http://article112.blogspot.ca/2011/03/112_30.html

Streckfuss argues that “the Thai state has intensely promoted the institution of monarchy and used the charge of *lèse majesté* to suppress its critics, despite growing support for democratic principles, a booming economy, and a general ‘desacralization’ of society in most other respects.”³¹ Therefore, the Thai monarchy has been strongly placed at the epicentre of Thailand’s national identity and unquestionably recognized as the most revered national institution. Due to the inviolable and highly respected position of the Thai monarchy in Thailand, Princess Sirindhorn’s promotion of the Confucius Institute also generates legitimacy for the operations of the Confucius Institute in Thailand and the symbol of good relations between Thailand and China.

In addition, Hanban requires directors and volunteer teachers to go through training before they can be sent to their host country. This process produces the agents of hegemony who “tend to represent and direct the interests of those in power.”³² Furthermore, they are the ones who seek to secure support from the masses and establish the alliances necessary for a hegemonic formation that is united through the acceptance of new ideas. Based on the case studies of Director Wang and a volunteer teacher, Yang, we can see they internalize the norm of harmony and see their mission in Thailand as developing good relations between Thailand and China. They, as well as Princess Sirindhorn, have become participants in the project to produce hegemony through social relations and negotiation of norms. In other words, they can generate harmony at the grassroots level. In sum, I have shown that an attempt to promote good friendship with Thailand through policies and promotions within the Confucius Institute is an extension

³¹ David Streckfuss, “Kings in the Age of Nations: The Paradox of *Lèse-Majesté* as Political Crime in Thailand,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no.13(1995): 446.

³² Donald Kurtz, “Hegemony and Anthropology: Gramsci, Exegeses, Reinterpretations,” *Critique of Anthropology* 16, no.2(1996): 108.

of the Chinese government's policies to negotiate and shape the norm of harmony internationally. The next chapter discusses another aspect of Chinese hegemonic strategies enacted through the Confucius Institute. In particular, I discuss the constitution and maintenance of the hegemonic order based on the generation of general interests and collective benefits that are perceived to be real. I do so by examining a speech contest organized by the Confucius Institute on the topic of China's booming economy and the Confucius Institute's magazines which attempt to create the perception that China's rising economy may bring collective benefits to those involved. The following chapter also presents how a "community of interests" is formed by analyzing the thinking about collective benefits through the interviews with the Confucius Institute staff, Thai government officials and students. I then show that the interests of the allied groups are so absorbed and neutralized that it prevents them from challenging China's hegemony.

Chapter Four

Jumping on the Bandwagon: The Confucius Institute's Role in Legitimizing the Idea of a Community of Interests

In the afternoon of July 11, 2012, ten days before the singing contest at Suriyan University's Confucius Institute, I went to my old junior high school hoping to see how the teachers were training their students for the competition. Interestingly, I could not observe the students' training as they were not there. However, I wrote the following in my notebook:

Rumour has it that if a student receives the highest score on a test or wins the first prize at events organized by the Confucius Institute, "they" will come to that student's school and set up a Confucius Classroom. I was having a conversation about my research project with my English language teachers who previously taught me and knew me well. After hearing about my research topic, a Chinese language teacher, who was a student intern from Suriyan University, told me she heard that a provincial school in the neighbouring province of Chantaburi had a Confucius Classroom established for them because their student won a competition. She further told me the Confucius Classroom there was equipped with computers that allowed students to study Chinese language online and live all the way from China. The rumour spread in the office and was unquestionably taken to be true by many teachers as they went along to say how they wanted a Confucius Classroom and told me they would get in touch with the president of a local Chinese association for his help. At the same time, during our conversation, another Chinese language teacher was looking at the website of Suriyan

University's Confucius Institute. On the website, she noticed an announcement of a teacher's training program that would send successful applicants for training in China. She said she really wanted to go and her coworker encouraged her to leave her work just for this experience.

Fieldnotes written by Ruji Auethavornpipat
July 11, 2012
Chachoengsao Province, Thailand

Most of the rumours did not turn out to be true as I went on to carry out my investigation at the Confucius Classroom in Chantaburi. However, this rumour is of the utmost importance to understanding the operations of the Confucius Institute because it illuminates the perception, held among Thai government officials, students, and teachers of a larger issue of benefits. It shows how, if a person jumps on the “bandwagon” or follows the trend of learning Chinese language, and taking classes at the Confucius Institute, they would receive benefits from being part of this phenomenon.

The prevalence of rumours associated with success through language training demonstrates how Thai participants in the Confucius Institute's activities understand the potential benefits which may come from their participation. Their stories, whether they are intentionally or unintentionally discussed, help to construct the perception of a convergence of common interests between Thailand and China, and among people who are involved with the Confucius Institute. This convergence of interests is also termed a community of interests by a former Chinese official, Zheng Bijian.¹ The appearance of mutual benefits and the allure of shared interests are crucial to hegemonic processes.

¹ Bijian Zheng, “From China's ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Building Communities of Interest,” *New Perspective Quarterly* 28, no. 4(2011): 23.

Mutual benefit is a critical element in the processes of generating consent and of persuading different groups of people or states to be part of the hegemonic order. This chapter addresses the notion of common interests and mutual benefits and shows how these are central to the role of the Confucius Institute in furthering Chinese hegemony. This chapter argues the Confucius Institute is an organization that generates mutual benefits, which are perceived to be real for its members, through the promotion of Chinese culture and language. Furthermore, this chapter argues the Confucius Institute generates the notions of common interests and mutual benefits in a way that strongly reflects the Chinese government's foreign policy of constructing a community of interests based on perceived shared interests and mutual benefits.

This chapter first describes the idea of a community of interests, and shows how it has become central to policies of the Chinese government such as the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Social and Economic Development, which was published in 2011, and the 2011 White Paper on China's Peaceful Development. Furthermore, through analyzing the Confucius Institute's activities and the discourse found in the Confucius Institute magazines, this chapter illustrates that the process of building a community of interests is achieved through practices at the Confucius Institute. Based on interviews with a Thai government official and students on the topic of why they support and are involved in the Confucius Institute's activities, this chapter also shows that the idea of perceived common interests and benefits is internalized by them as they participate in the activities organized by the Confucius Institute. Specifically, their interviews illustrate the perspective that they consider their involvement to result in collective benefits not only for themselves but also for Thailand and China.

Achieving a Community of Interests as the Goal for the Chinese Government

Whereas Chapter Three demonstrated that a norm of international harmony is heavily stressed by the Chinese government in policy and within the Confucius Institute, this chapter first shows that the idea of expanding common interests and achieving communities of interests has been adopted as the official policy of the Chinese government.² The term, community or communities of interests, was introduced by Zheng Bijian in 2011. Until recently, Zheng was the Executive President of the Central Party School in Beijing, an advisor to China's leaders, and a chief ideologist of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Zheng also introduced the term, China's peaceful rise, in 2002 which has gained significant and widespread attention among academics and Chinese leaders.³

Zheng articulates that different countries may take a different path of development, therefore, each country may have different or conflicting interests. For him, China is in need of stability internally and peace and cooperation abroad. In addition, cooperation between different countries can unify each country peacefully. He states that because China's peaceful rise does not depend on China's domestic conditions alone, he proposes a new approach in which "China should build on its 'convergence of interests' with other countries and devote its efforts to building 'communities of interests' in various fields and at various levels."⁴ According to Zheng, due to globalization, the interests of different countries are interwoven and related as one country's misfortune, action or crisis may spread to or affect the course of development in other countries. He thus indicates that common interests "should be considered as 'common spaces,' or, in

² Ibid., 25.

³ Ibid., 23.

⁴ Ibid., 23.

more economic jargon, ‘global public goods.’”⁵ It is clear that for Zheng, common interests are seen in economic terms. In addition, Zheng states that a solid foundation of constructing communities of interests can be established if each country considers the stability of other countries and that of international systems in their own interest. Friendly relationships and cooperation with neighbouring countries should be deepened in order to maintain peace and stability, as well as promote prosperity and development. As for its relationship with developing countries, China is committed to increasing traditional friendship and common interests by advocating “commonly beneficial ‘win-win’ situation of the multilateral trade system” and “South-South cooperation.”⁶

Common interests and mutual benefits are also greatly emphasized in the 2011 Chinese foreign policy document of China’s Peaceful Development. This key policy document is important as it guides the direction of China’s interaction with other countries. Thus, it is useful for understanding China’s actions in Thailand. The document begins with a strong statement that “China has declared to the rest of the world on many occasions that it takes a path of peaceful development and is committed to upholding world peace and promoting common development and prosperity for all countries.”⁷ It also symbolically utilizes the historic and world-renowned Silk Road as an example to illustrate that China has traditionally and historically pursued common interests and benefits with other nations by stating that it is “a road of trade, cultural exchanges and peace, which testifies to the pursuit of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation

⁵ Ibid., 24-25.

⁶ British Chamber of Commerce in China, *China’s Twelfth Five Year Plan (2011-2015)-the Full English Version*, <http://www.britishchamber.cn/content/chinas-twelfth-five-year-plan-2011-2015-full-english-version>

⁷ Information Office of State Council, *China’s Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

with other peoples by the ancient Chinese.”⁸ With this historic significance and connection between China and the rest of the world, the policy further states that China seeks to integrate itself with the rest of the world by deepening its opening-up strategy and strengthening exchanges and cooperation. It further indicates that due to the current economic globalization, “countries of different systems...at various development stages are in a state of mutual dependence, with their interests intertwined. This has turned the world into a community of common destiny in which the members are closely interconnected.”⁹ Thus, it is clear that China extends a community of interests globally in which different countries “find opportunities to cooperate, expand areas of cooperation, and improve common interests.”¹⁰ This chapter illustrates through case studies that the Confucius Institute is a primary example of one of the areas for cooperation where the discourse of common interests is prevalent.

There is also a particular and important way in which China aims to accomplish and emphasizes common interests. The policy document points out that:

[China] pursues both its own interests and the common interests of mankind and works to ensure that its own development and the development of other countries are mutually reinforcing, thus promoting the common development of all countries.

The above quote shows that China has its own interests which are aligned with the common interests of other countries. This also fits into the discussion of hegemony as

⁸ Information Office of State Council, *China's Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

⁹ Information Office of State Council, *China's Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

¹⁰ Information Office of State Council, *China's Peaceful Development*, <http://th.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t856665.htm>.

presented in Chapter One that hegemony includes the presence of a dominant state which leads to collectively desirable outcomes for other states in international politics.

In sum, this section has illustrated the strong emphasis that the Chinese government has placed on formulating the notion of common interests in its foreign policy. According to the Chinese government, its own interests are interconnected with the common interests of other countries and this will create peace and stability. More importantly, this community of interests will be achieved through China's opening-up strategy and cooperative relationship with other countries. The next section shows how China's opening-up strategy is implemented by using the Confucius Institute. By analyzing Confucius Institute's speech contest and magazines, I show how China creates the positive perception of a booming economy so that the Thai state and students have a positive perception and perceive the economic benefits to be real. These perspectives among the Thai government and students allow for an understanding of how a community of interests is constructed because it shows that the interests are intertwined and their participation in Chinese language and culture can benefit themselves personally, as well as benefit the countries of Thailand and China. The following section presents a case study of the Confucius Institute organizing a speech contest where the theme is China's rising economy. As part of its efforts to construct a community of interests where participants feel they can receive collective benefits, the Confucius Institute selectively publishes contestants' speeches which emphasize China's rising economy, and illustrate the potential benefits of economic growth for Thailand.

Case Study: The Confucius Institute and the Creation of a Community of Interests

The previous section has illustrated that for China, the construction of a community of interests depends on the convergence of interests among different countries. Specifically, common interests are often seen in economic terms. In theoretical terms, the notion of common interests and mutual benefits is part of the shared view of a world order in which the secondary state and its population follow the leadership of the hegemon because they perceive their benefits to be real. In practice, in Thailand, the Confucius Institute has contributed to building this community of interests because it helps to create the perception of an attractive booming Chinese economy. This section presents a case study of the Confucius Institute's practices in creating a positive perception about China's economy as well as a community of interests.

On December 23, 2010, the Confucius Institute at Maha Chakkrabat University collaborated with the Chinese department of the university to organize their third Chinese language speech contest. There were twenty-four participants from fifteen universities across the nation who took part in this contest. On the event day, the theme of the contest was written on the stage background. It was written in Chinese as "China's Rapidly Advancing Economy," but in Thai as "China in the Position of World's Economic Leader" (经济腾飞的中国, *jingji tengfei de zhongguo* which could also be translated as "China's Booming Economy"). In a write-up of that speech contest in the January 2011 Confucius Institute magazine, which I obtained from the Confucius Institute's bookshelf at Suriyan University, one of the contestant's winning speeches was published. The magazine chose to include Worawit's speech. Worawit is a fourth year Chinese business student and his speech provides a particular perception of the Chinese economy. He

started his speech with the following:

To mention contemporary China, everyone knows very well that China is a country that is [still] developing. At the same time, it is a country that can successfully organize the Olympics. Its [level of economic] development has never been seen anywhere before. The diligence, perseverance and sweat of the Chinese people have led China to become a mighty country in the present.

The beginning of Worawit's speech views that although China is a developing country, it is strong enough to successfully host the Olympics and Worawit thinks that the Chinese economy develops in a rapid and unprecedented way that makes China a great country. As part of his speech, he also mentions his experiences in China which shape how he perceives the Chinese economy:

When I was studying in Xiamen, I had the opportunity to travel to different places. Those places showed the development and advancement in the Chinese economy that is rapid and good...I went to a trade fair in Shanghai. I think this trade fair, organized by the Chinese government, was so successful that it exceeded the expectations of people worldwide. It also proved the success of the economy of China.

This part of his speech reinforces his view of the fast development of the Chinese economy. It also disseminates the message that the Chinese economy is very successful and recognized by different people globally. He further says that "China has a very important role in developing the world's economy." He concludes by connecting his speech to development in Thailand:

I believe the continual development [of] the Chinese economy will definitely

bring more opportunity for [Thailand's] development.

By linking the perception of the booming Chinese economy to the world's economy as well as the development in Thailand, Worawit's speech clearly illustrates his perception that the Chinese economy will bring the opportunity of development to those who participate. Although he did not win the competition, his speech was the one that was selected and published by the Confucius Institute. The publication of this speech helps to reinforce the idea of a community of interests, wherein convergences of interests are achieved by connecting China's booming economy to the possible development of Thailand. The notion of a community of interests also fits into the discussion of hegemony in which collective benefits are perceived to be real.

Two months later, the Confucius Institute decided to publish the winner's speech in an article in the March 2011 issue. In this article, the editor provides comment which states, "after we selected a speech for an article [on the topic of China's in the Position of World's Economic Leader], [we] received very good feedback from readers. [So we have] publish[ed] another speech of a student from the speech competition." The speech they chose was written by Thitima. In her winning speech, she indicates that:

Contemporary China is completely different from China thirty years ago. Since Deng Xiaoping initiated his policy of opening up the country to foreigners, China has developed very fast. In the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, I had the opportunity to see the exhibition of China and discovered that there was a comprehensive progress... Isn't this the proof that China has a rising economy?

By "comprehensive progress," Thitima refers to not only to the economy but also to modern and fashionable clothes, high class named brand products, and bullet trains in

China. Her speech reaffirms the attractive and positive perception of China and its economy that is articulated in Worawit's speech. Both speeches depict China as having an economy that is rapidly growing and connected to other countries. In particular, Worawit's speech presents an opinion that joining the rising Chinese economy will bring further development to Thailand. In other words, his speech converges the interests of China and Thailand in economic terms.

The view of Worawit is similar to Thai government officials that I interviewed. Dusadi and her superiors perceive these collective economic benefits to be realizable and thus, their views can explain the reason why secondary states are interested in becoming part of the hegemonic order. Dusadi is a government official from the Department of Religion, Education and Culture, Provincial Administration Organization (PAO) in Chachoengsao province. I asked her why the Thai government is interested in supporting the Confucius Institute. She replied:

This is the vision of the highest management level of PAO [Provincial Administration Organization]...Chief Executive of PAO sees that Chinese language will be the language used a lot in the economy. He recognizes its importance [because] China will rule the world's economy. We can tell this from appliances and electronics. Most of them come from China...He sees that we are in Asia and in Asia, [China] is the economic giant...

Dusadi's department supported the building of a Confucius Institute office with the budget of \$1.66 million in 2006. During the interview, she mentions that:

We collect [money] from the taxpayers and PAO is a big organization...If any organization requests some funding in the event they don't have enough, and if

PAO considers [a project] to be the face of Chachoengsao province and [it] directly benefits the population and the province..., we never object.

Dusadi's duties at the office include considering the PAO's decisions around public funding before it is finalized by the head of the department. Her point of view clearly indicates that the PAO will fund a project that they think will benefit the population and the province. It shows that they attach great importance to the view that China will be the world's economic leader. Similar to the two speeches presented in the Confucius Institute speech competition, Dusadi thinks that the Thai government's participation in supporting the Confucius Institute will result in benefits for Thailand. It also clearly shows the view of the Thai government that it is interested in receiving collective benefits from the Chinese economy, thus, following the leadership of a hegemon through supporting the Confucius Institute. The perspectives presented by the speeches and by Dusadi all show the construction of a community of interests where Thailand's potential benefits are linked to China's rising economy.

In addition, Confucius Institutes staff have the view that the Confucius Institute and the promotion of Chinese culture can generate collective economic benefits for Thailand. For example, Yang, the friendly teacher discussed in the previous chapter, believes that the exchanges and communication between Thailand and China will significantly create mutual benefits in the economy because the two countries are trading partners, and China is the third largest importer of Thai commodities.¹¹ Their comments are echoed clearly in a quote by Confucius Institute Director Wang which nicely summarizes dominant trends of thought within the Confucius Institute: "if [people] learn

¹¹ The Thai Government Public Relations Department, *Industry*, <http://thailand.prd.go.th/ebook/inbrief/page.php?cid=8>.

the Chinese language, that can help them strengthen this relationship [between Thailand and China] and [Chinese language learning] also results in better communications, so that in the future business and the economy will benefit a lot from this. So this benefit is mutual benefit...” The idea of shared economic and political interests is also present among Confucius Institute’s students whom I interviewed in Chachoengsao province. In the next section, I show how the students internalize the thinking about common interests, and show how they think participating in the Confucius Institute’s classes and activities, and supporting the Confucius Institute results in benefits for them at a personal level as well as for Thailand and China at a national level.

Case Study: Leng and Ae, and Their Perceptions of Collective Benefits

Leng, a 19 year-old male student who is studying at Suriyan University in Chachoengsao province, is a third generation ethnic Chinese and a Thai national. He told me that his family’s Chinese ethnicity had never been mixed with Thai blood. He is from Chachoengsao province and is currently living with his family in a town that is 30 minutes away called Bang Pakong. His mother’s family speaks a Chinese dialect called *Teochew* (潮州话) and his father’s side speaks the *Hakka* dialect (客家话). He specifically told me that one of many reasons he chose to study Mandarin Chinese is to continue “his ancestors’ culture.” Although his interests in studying Chinese include preserving his family’s Chinese culture, an interview with him illustrates that studying Chinese is a much more complex issue that is related to world order and peace and is based on common and mutual benefits for Thailand and China. Similar to the articles published in the Confucius Institute magazines presented in the previous section, his

views clearly show that he perceives Chinese language training will lead to economic benefits for both Thailand and China.

Since he was young, he had always studied English language. He generally likes studying languages but he wanted to know more about Asian languages so he decided to take Chinese because according to him, it is “the principal language of Asia.” Leng explains that the Chinese language has “influence” because Chinese culture has spread to many countries in Asia including Korea and Japan. He further explains that China has now opened its country, maintained a stable economy, and bought US bonds, and that makes China “one of the world’s most influential countries.” For him, Mandarin Chinese will benefit both Thailand and China. He notes:

In my opinion, the first benefit [for Thailand] is economic benefits because China and Thailand are closer than Thailand and America. China is closer to Thailand than England. They can communicate faster and Chinese people like Thai products. For example, Thai fruits that they may have but do not taste good or [Thai fruits] they may not have....In China, they really like mangosteens and import a lot from Thailand. Above all, Thailand having more people who are able to communicate in Chinese will greatly stimulate our economy. [As for China], they want to come and open the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] market. I heard they are building a deep-sea port in Guangxi province in order to receive products from ASEAN directly...

His interview evidently indicates his opinion that there are common economic interests for both Thailand and China. In fact, Leng hearing about a deep-sea port in Guangxi that would directly import products from ASEAN further shows his thinking of how

Thailand, as an ASEAN member, benefits from China. He further explains how China and Thailand can benefit from their relations with each other:

China will have more alliances... Like I said, economic and political benefits.

China will have more voice. For example, if there is any disagreement, there will be more countries supporting [China's position].¹² It will be easier to bargain if Thailand has China or China has ASEAN....

The above quote suggests that Leng does not consider collective benefits only in economic terms but also in political terms in which Thailand and China can cooperate if issues arise. He goes on to indicate that:

If the ASEAN countries have China as a big brother and as a protective shield, when there is war, the opposite side will be afraid to invade because they have a lot of military prowess and that may be beneficial to Thailand too because Thailand has a lot of ethnic Chinese and from what I see there are not many countries that have an ethnic Chinese population. For example, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. At least, these ethnic Chinese populations can be the foundation for forging relations.

This quote further reinforces his view of benefits in political terms and reveals his perception that the ethnic linkages between Thailand and China can be used to strengthen Sino-Thai relations. However, it also shows that he thinks Thailand should follow the leadership of China and that Thailand can benefit from China's military prowess. For him, the Chinese language is also very important on a personal level because it can be a tool for him to approach his family members. He tells me that his family's Chinese

¹² Exact translation is, "For example, if there is any disagreement, there will be more countries supporting China's negotiation."

ethnicity has never been mixed with Thai ethnicity and his relatives do not like to talk to their nephews and nieces who cannot speak Chinese. At the same time, he mentions that there are many Chinese people who have settled in Thailand and become a Chinese-Thai person and if Thailand wants to tighten its relations with China, one should learn Chinese. As a result, according to his view, there will be more people who know Chinese to bridge better relations with China.

A similar perspective is also expressed by Leng's good friend, Ae. Ae is a 19-year old student from Krabi province in southern Thailand who is majoring in Chinese. His father's family members are ethnic Chinese but he does not have any information about his Chinese ancestors. He decided to take Chinese because his father works on and fixes audio systems and speakers. Since he was young, Ae had been exposed to old Chinese records and classical Chinese music that he could not understand the lyrics of, but thought they sounded very beautiful. The first year he came to Suriyan University, he did not know many friends and people so he attended the Confucius Institute's Dragon Boat Festival as a way of making friends. Because that event left him with a good impression and he made many friends there, he told me that he participates in almost every cultural activity organized by the Confucius Institute.

According to Ae's perspective, the promotion of Chinese culture and language also leads to common interests between Thailand and China, which he feels includes economic benefits and good relations between the two countries. He notes:

There is already the Confucius Institute as the centre for good Sino-Thai relations that sends teachers to teach or give knowledge to Thai people. It is also the centre that generates good Sino-Thai relations...It seems like there are many Chinese

people who want to study Thai language and culture too and on the Thai side, there is also the study of Chinese culture and language for the purpose of exchanging and learning about each other. It is like building a friendship bridge. In addition to the cultural aspect, we depend on each other for the economy and technology because if Thailand had no exports, other countries or economies would not survive either... The fruits that Thailand exports to China generate high income... because my Chinese mate told me that although there are the same fruits in China, they are not as delicious. So when Chinese people come to Thailand, they buy a lot of fruits...

Ae's perspective suggests that the Confucius Institute is the centre for strengthening Sino-Thai relations. He also views Thailand's economy and income as dependent on exporting fruits to China. In addition, his interview illustrates what China would gain from the promotion of Chinese culture and language in Thailand:

Of course, China would receive benefits because many Thai people are interested in the Chinese language. When Thai people receive [Chinese language training] here, they are able to understand China better. After understanding China better, we know each other better just like becoming very good friends. Making friends requires knowing each other before. But when you do not know one another well, a representative has to be sent to spread the knowledge for each other... The representative is the Confucius Institute.

His point of view further stresses the position of the Confucius Institute in strengthening the relations of the two countries. His view also internationalizes the discourse of harmony and friendship found in Chinese foreign policy. Moreover, Ae feels that China

and Thailand knowing and learning about each other can create benefits in other areas for both countries, as illustrated by the following interview dialogue:

Ruji: When the two sides know more about each other, then what happens?

Ae: It has effects at the national level. When two sides are better friends and know more about one another, we can have conversations, conversations in every aspect such as business, economy, technology, various development, export, trade, every aspect [of] society. Thai people and Chinese people, how should I call it, coexist and live peacefully.

Ae considers that the benefit of the two countries becoming good friends can result in development in other areas such as in the economy, technology and society. He also thinks that people from Thailand and China can live together peacefully after the two countries understand more about each other. Ae goes on to talk about how China could collaborate with ASEAN and resolve maritime disputes by negotiation. Moreover, an interview with him demonstrates how he feels he can personally benefit from learning Chinese culture and language. I asked whether he will be working in the area of Chinese language after his study. He informs me that:

Ae: I think, studying Chinese, I want to be an interpreter.

Ruji: For whom?

Ae: Maybe more likely for various organizations. But I emphasize wanting to be an interpreter because I can utilize my knowledge and ability to the utmost.

Ruji: Are there any other jobs that you want?

Ae: A tour guide. I can take Thai people to China. It depends. I am still thinking about it.

The above dialogue shows that Ae's perceived benefit on a personal level includes him securing an employment which specifically requires the Chinese language. He then brings up an interesting point about the job market for people who have mastered the Chinese language:

My upper-year friends, fourth-year students who have recently graduated. It is like this. There is a high demand for Chinese language speakers and [employers] quickly accept people with Chinese language skills. Actually those graduates, before their graduation, there were companies that came and scheduled interviews here at the faculty. I don't remember the companies but they directly recruited [students].

His perspective demonstrates that he can benefit from knowing the Chinese language as he may be in a better position to secure work, as there is a high demand for Chinese speakers in Thailand. Ae's discourse is similar to Leng's interview. The conversations with them illuminate how the perceived interests between the students, Thailand and China converge on economic, political and diplomatic terms. In other words, China's community of interests is constructed by them within their personal community at home, and at the university. Their interviews also show that they view an international community of interests as positive when both Thailand and China benefit from the promotion of the Chinese language and Chinese culture. Besides achieving common economic interests, they also think that a good friendship will emerge between the two countries because Thailand and China will understand each other better.

The responses of Leng and Ae can also be understood through the concept of hegemony. Hegemony creates common interests and confers collective benefits to the

members so that the members can perceive the leadership of the hegemon as desirable as they are satisfied with the constant flow of collective benefits that are thought to be real. The notion of common interests in the concept of hegemony further explains why the Thai population and Thailand are interested in following the leadership of the hegemon. The case studies have shown the perception of the booming Chinese economy that is created as part of the Confucius Institute's activity and this perception allows Thai citizens to think of the possible benefits they may be able to obtain after potentially joining in the rising Chinese economy through a Chinese language training and participating in the Confucius Institute.

Assessment

The first case study of this chapter looked at publications arising from the Confucius Institute's speech contest in December 2010 in the January and March 2011 Confucius Institute magazines. The speech contest, with the theme "China's Rapidly Advancing Economy," suggests the Confucius Institute's deliberate attempt to inculcate the view that China is the leader of the world's economy in its Thai language publications. The two published speeches clearly depict the booming economy which is strong in the eyes of world citizens and is thought to bring further development for Thailand. The Confucius Institute's decision to publish these speeches can be considered an effort to create the perception of a booming Chinese economy, which can potentially confer collective benefit to those who participate. This point of view is also present in Thai government officials as they discuss how their support for the Confucius Institute will benefit the population and the province. The same perspectives are also shown in the students' interviews about Chinese culture, economy and common interests.

Leng and Ae's interviews illustrate clearly that they think the promotion of Chinese language and culture can lead to the formulation of common interests at a personal level and between Thailand and China. The obvious feature of common interests as shown by their perceptions is economic benefits for both Thailand and China. But at the personal level, Leng desires to preserve his family's Chinese culture and tradition, and Ae is interested in understanding beautiful classical Chinese music and securing a job after graduation. The point of view that Chinese culture promotion in Thailand can contribute to mutual economic benefits was expressed by research participants. These perspectives show the community of interests is accepted, internalized, and replicated by Thai government officials and students, and by staff involved in the operation of the Confucius Institute.

The interviews with Leng and Ae have demonstrated that common interests for Thailand and China are closely related to the notions of peace and harmony that were discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, the economic, social and cultural benefits that are seen as shared by Thailand and China are also part of the discourse of harmony that the Chinese government emphasizes and projects internationally. The promotion of Chinese language in Thailand essentially represents the "friendship bridge" that will strengthen Sino-Thai relations to the extent that China is perceived to become Thailand's "big brother" and a protective shield in case of conflict. Although Leng and Ae did not participate in the speech contest hosted by the Confucius Institute at Maha Chakraphat University, their notions about common interests as part of their participation in the Confucius Institute, Chinese culture, and economy demonstrate a

consistent and strong pattern in which they perceive their collective benefits to be real not only for themselves but also for Thailand and China.

The notion of common interests and benefits demonstrated in this chapter can be understood by using the hegemonic stability theory as previously presented in Chapter One. The principle of the theory is that the hegemonic state offers club goods or collective benefits to its members and they are the reason why the secondary state follows the hegemonic state. These common benefits should also be the desirable outcome for all members including the hegemon. In addition, the hegemonic state is able to use common benefits as incentives for the secondary state to cooperate. Consequently, it can create an international order and maintain the external environment that it prefers by assuring a sufficient flow of benefits to smaller states. Moreover, the support for hegemony is rooted from a *real* sense of perceived shared interests and benefits. The empirical evidence in this chapter clearly illustrates the elements of hegemonic stability theory—common interests and benefits are perceived as real and obtainable by creating a positive view of China's rising economy.

At the beginning of this chapter, the rumour spread at the office of my old junior high school shows that participants believe the shared benefits for those involved in the Confucius Institutes activities are real. Leng and Ae's perspectives illuminate how benefits at the personal level are related in their thinking to Thailand and China's economic and diplomatic interests. More importantly, their comments closely echo the attempt of the Chinese government to set an international order and norm which is based on cooperation, harmony and peace.

The next chapter discusses the third aspect of hegemony which is a lived social experience through dominant cultural symbols, by examining the Confucius Institute's public events. Chapter Five presents two case studies of the Chinese Bridge national speech contest in Thailand and illustrate how the Confucius Institute organizes its activities to enhance China's soft power in order to create a positive and attractive image and culture of China. It also demonstrates how an exercise of soft power is part of the larger processes in hegemony by showing that culture is used to positively influence participants' thinking about China and subtly results in participants' subordination to the Chinese state.

Chapter Five

“Happy Chinese Language”: Hegemony Through Lived and Enjoyable Experience

“We should bring Chinese culture to the world, develop cultural soft power compatible with China's international standing, and increase the influence of Chinese culture in the world.”

President Hu Jintao
Chinese Communist Party 90th Anniversary Gathering
July 1, 2011

The above quote is part of Chinese President Hu Jintao’s speech at the Chinese Communist Party 90th Anniversary Gathering on July 1, 2011.¹ In this quote, it is clear that Hu associates the global expansion of Chinese culture with China’s influence and international soft power. For Hu, soft power or the power of attracting and co-opting people in order to achieve China’s goals is a legitimate international political strategy. This chapter examines the exportation of Chinese culture in the form of public cultural events organized by the Confucius Institute from a framework which recognizes the importance of soft power such events generate. Through an analysis of participant observation and print materials gathered in Thailand in 2012, this chapter argues that public events hosted by the Confucius Institutes are an exercise of soft power that attempt to positively change the perspectives of participants towards China, and socialize them to an image of a beautiful, traditional and contemporary China under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

¹ Hu Jintao, “Speech at Chinese Communist Party 90th Anniversary Gathering,” (Speech, China, July 1, 2011), University of Southern California US-China Institute, <http://china.usc.edu/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=2469>.

This chapter also links these public cultural displays to China's broader hegemonic aims as these public events allow participants to experience Chinese culture through highly selective and dominant cultural symbols in a pleasant manner. As discussed in Chapter One, constituting hegemony for the ruling class needs to be desirable for the subordinate or allied groups. The emphasis on hegemonic dominance being desirable is central to the articulation of soft power as it formulates culture and international image that is considered attractive, thus desirable, for other groups of people or states.² Moreover, culture is a critical part of hegemony because culture can be used strategically to influence beliefs and actions of the subordinate or allied groups of people or states. Thus, public events organized by the Confucius Institute are hegemonic in that they require Chinese culture to be attractive and shared among participants so that through their participation, they come to experience the selective cultural symbols as presented by the organizers as positive and desirable. According to Raymond Williams, culture is one of the most effective ways for people to accept soft power, thus as part of hegemony, through living and experiencing it on an everyday level. The lived social experience of participating in Confucius Institute's events, I argue, is crucial to the exercise of soft power initiatives executed through the Confucius Institute in general.

This chapter describes China's hegemonic strategies as observed at an important public Confucius Institute's event, the 2012 Chinese Bridge national speech contest. It analyzes the strategies used by the Confucius Institutes at these events through the use of Chinese cultural symbols. It examines the experiences and reactions of the participants to the symbols displayed. I also show that enjoying Chinese culture at public cultural

² Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts* (UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 38.

events can nonetheless lead to a subtle submission to the political rule of the Chinese state. In addition, this chapter illustrates that the organizers attempt to promote a positive image of good Sino-Thai relations, through using cultural symbols, delivering a speech, and giving out free gifts. Lastly, although there is an effort to emphasize Sino-Thai friendship and benefits for participants, the end of this chapter demonstrates that the effort to achieve harmony may achieve the opposite effect of causing dissatisfaction for some participants involved in the activities. Before I describe how the social experience of attending the Chinese Bridge national speech contest helps promote soft power, the next section first explains the institutional capacity of the Confucius Institute which is supported by the Chinese government. A summary of the institution of the Confucius Institute is relevant to the discussion of hegemony because hegemonic dominance needs to be supported by material resources and institutions in order for the hegemon to carry out its goal. In other words, without the financial support of the Chinese government, the Confucius Institute may not be able to function to its full capacity and enact soft power as a strategy to facilitate its rapid expansion in Thailand and the world.

Confucius Institute's Financial Capacity and Public Events

According to Robert Cox, hegemony does not only rest on the consensual dominance manifested in the acceptance of ideas but also on “material resources and institutions.”³ Material and institutional capacity is significant for the Confucius Institute to carry out its activities and public events. Without this capacity, the Confucius Institute may not be able to operate as fully as it is now because as shown below, Confucius Institutes' operations are not profitable. This section shows that the Chinese government spends a

³ Robert Cox, “Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 2(1981): 139, 141.

large amount of money to support the operations of the Confucius Institute in Thailand and globally. Moreover, the financial support is used to organize public cultural events in order to attract an increasing number of participants. For instance, the Confucius Institutes and Hanban attach great importance to successfully organizing public events such as the global Chinese Bridge speech competition. In the summer of 2011, 118 contestants from 68 countries gathered in Hunan Province, China to compete in the 10th annual Chinese Bridge speech competition. The competition is for university students and includes delivering a speech, answering cultural knowledge questions about China, and putting on a cultural performance. Each year students who study Chinese apply for the preliminary contests in their country or region. The winners are awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to China to take part in the final international competition. The first prize winner participates in a summer camp in China, also free of charge.⁴ The competition has been held every year since 2002 when only 49 finalists from 21 countries participated. This illustrates a very rapid expansion of interests and networks of Confucius Institutes around the globe. As stated in the September 2011 issue of the Confucius Institute magazine, in the past 10 years, 100,000 students participated in the overseas preliminary contests from over 70 countries across the world.

The scholar David Shambaugh notes that, during the first year of establishment, a Confucius Institute receives a start-up funding of \$100,000 from Hanban with the hope that its foreign partners can provide a local matching fund.⁵ Every year each Confucius Institute is required to submit an annual proposal which explains all activities that it plans

⁴Confucius Institute at the University of Cape Town, *The Chinese Bridge*, http://www.confucius.uct.ac.za/coursesoffered/chinese_bridge/.

⁵ David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 246.

to organize in order to receive funding from Hanban. Shambaugh also indicates that, in general, a Confucius Institute would receive \$100,000 to \$250,000 per annum. In 2006, the total official budget that Hanban provided was only \$44.3 million. The amount of funding has been continuously increasing until present. In the period of 2007 to 2011, the annual sum of funding was raised from \$61.3 million to \$164 million as illustrated in Table 1.⁶ It is also interesting to note that with the increased amount of money provided to Confucius Institutes globally, the number of participants who attended public activities and events dramatically increased as well. Statistics from Hanban Annual Report which I obtained from the Hanban website indicates that in 2006, they could attract only 220,000 people worldwide. The number continues to grow as seen in Table 2 and in 2010, approximately 5 million people participated in activities organized by the Confucius Institute around the globe.

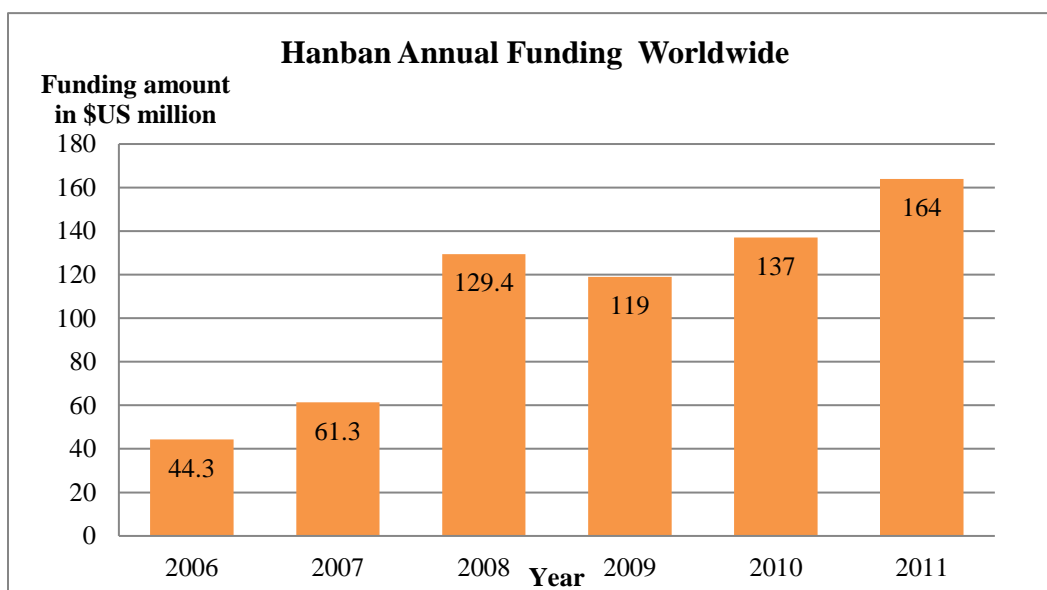


Table 1: Hanban Annual Funding Worldwide

(Source: Hanban Annual Reports)

⁶ Hanban Annual Report 2011 as cited in Yang, Alan H. and Michael Hsiao, “Confucius Institutes and the Questions of China’s Soft Power Diplomacy,” *China Brief* 12, no.13 (2012), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39592.

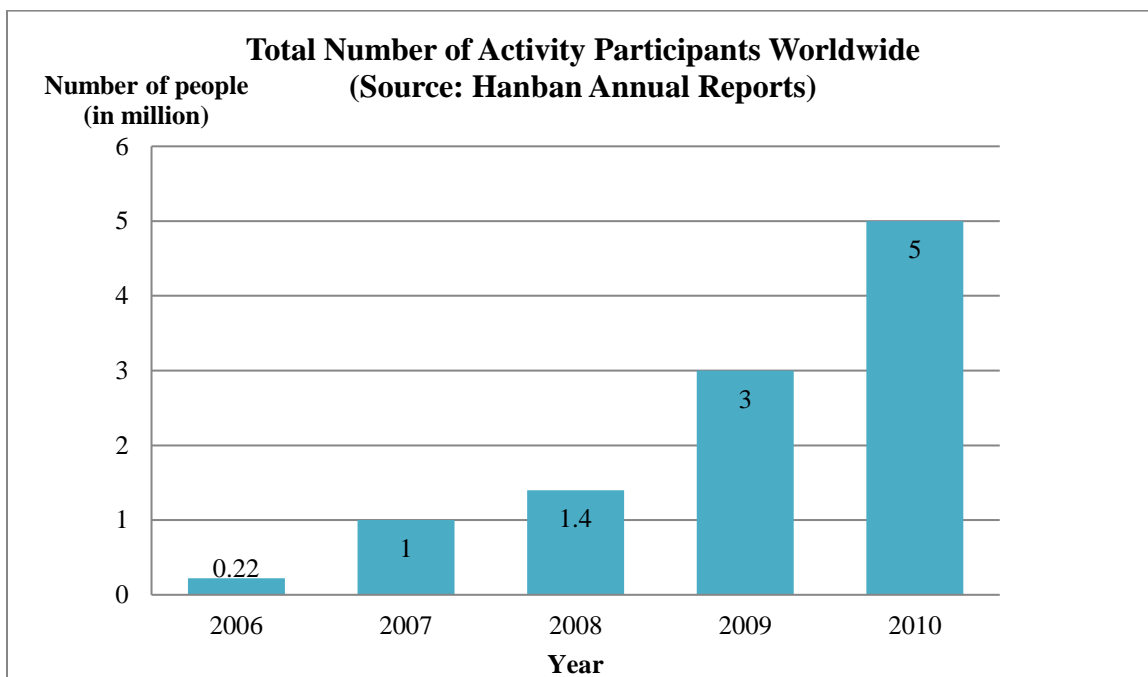


Table 2: Total Number of Activity Participants Worldwide
(Source: Hanban Annual Reports)

Hanban Executive Director Xu Lin states that Hanban plans to provide its financial support for only three years after a Confucius Institute is established and foreign partners would have to absorb the operating costs thereafter.⁷ Xu notes that some Confucius Institutes cannot assume its operations on their own, therefore, Hanban is obligated to continue to provide more funding. She also claims that Hanban struggles to secure its financial allocation from the Chinese Ministry of Education as there is a criticism that a large sum of money is being provided to foreigners while there are so many poor Chinese.⁸ In the case of Thailand, the Confucius Institute at Suriyan University is an example of a dependent agency that cannot operate without Hanban's

⁷ David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, 246.

⁸ David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, 246.

assistance after three years. An official document I obtained from the Chachoengsao Provincial Administrative Organization states that in 2006, it allocated almost \$1.66 million, which exceeded Hanban's fund. However, the Confucius Institute is still not able to generate enough profit to operate on its own. The provincial government's funding was utilized for constructing three elegant and beautiful Chinese pavilions with a spacious garden and a large pond on an area of 8,000 square metres. The office makes a good impression on people who pass by, as Dusadi, a provincial government official who inspected the building after it was completed, informs me that, "It is a beautiful imitation from China, which is valuable. People who have not been to China, when they are in this area, it is as if they are in China. It is like we are in the Chinese atmosphere." Her quote suggests that the Confucius Institute at Suriyan University places an emphasis on building elegant Chinese pavilions as a way of producing the "Chinese atmosphere" in the area, rather than using the funding for educational purposes.

According to two internal reports that I collected from the Confucius Institute at Suriyan University, the Institute could only generate \$10,000 and \$20,587 in revenue in 2010 and 2011 respectively. The sources of income came from the university's internal funding, academic activities, and local donation. The income that this Confucius Institute receives is clearly not sufficient when compared to its spending on numerous public events which are organized all year round. I was informed that the amount of financial support allocated to each location depends on the number, scale, and success of activities. The same reports indicate that its funding from Hanban in 2010 was \$110,350. In 2011, Hanban allocated \$60,236 for the annual budget with an additional financial support of \$36,175 to organize a special exhibition project called, "Chinese Culture Experience

Corner.” In its 2010-2011 academic year, the Confucius Institute at Suriyan University spent \$47,293 for 16 events, which exceeded its income in 2010. In addition, during its 2011-2012 academic year, it organized a total of 18 events and spent approximately \$49,547 in total which was much more than its annual income in 2011.

In 2012, it received \$86,860 from Hanban in order to be used for the 2012-2013 academic year. From these internal records, it can be inferred that the Confucius Institute generally receives a large amount of money to organize public events all year round, and it requires financial resources that exceed its generated income in order to do so. These figures suggest that Hanban and the Confucius Institute place a strong emphasis on organizing public events. It also illustrates one characteristic of hegemony which depends on material and institutional capacity. In this case, Hanban’s global funding comes from the Chinese Ministry of Education. Its worldwide funding also represents the strength of the Chinese government’s financial and institutional support for the operations of the Confucius Institute. Furthermore, despite the low level of profitability of the Confucius Institute, the Chinese government’s generous allocation of funds suggests that the government attaches great importance to public cultural events which are an exercise of soft power.

The next section offers two case studies of the participants at the Chinese Bridge national level speech contest in order to illustrate that these public events are a significant venue for participants to experience dominant and selective Chinese cultural symbols. The first case study shows that the strategies used in a student’s training for the speech contest are part of the student’s experience under what is perceived to be authentic, good, and acceptable Chinese culture. The second case study focuses on the use of soft power

through attractive Chinese cultural symbols to draw in participants to partake in the Confucius Institute's activities and positively influence a view of China.

Case Study: Bow, the Authentic Chinese Culture Performer

On June 8, 2012, I woke up around five o'clock to travel to Bangkok to join a group of approximately 350 people to watch and participate in the Chinese Bridge speech competition. Today was a competition at the national level organized by the Hanban Thailand Office and Thailand's Office of Higher Education. Last year's winner from Thailand was sent to compete internationally in Beijing and was awarded first prize and a yearlong scholarship to study in China. This year, the winner will be sent to compete in China again.

Four days prior to the event, I noticed a pink traditional Chinese dress that looked like a Chinese opera costume at the Confucius Institute of Suriyan University. It was hanging in the Chinese teachers' office and I had never seen it there before. I asked one of the Thai administrators, Heng, what the dress was for. He told me that Director Wang would be taking a group of students to a speech competition on Saturday. I came to learn that a student named Bow was participating in the competition and had been practicing her speech and two cultural performances for the competition. Bow is a fourth generation Chinese-Thai who comes from southern Thailand. Her parents own a local business selling ceramic ware in Chachoensao. She informed me that her teachers selected her to enter the competition because she had a more standard Chinese accent in comparison to the other two candidates.

Director Wang and another teacher, Huang, had used their time to coach Bow personally. Wang took charge of coaching her and Huang was responsible for recording

the practice so Bow could watch and improve her performance. The theme of this year's competition was "My Dream of China" (我的中国梦).⁹ She had to compete with sixteen other contestants who came from across the country. Her speech talked about how she started learning Mandarin Chinese and could not differentiate the sounds of "c," "s" and "z" at first. She also talked about how she went to China, got upset when she lost her luggage, and then how the police helped her find it. Her speech revealed that the assistance received from the police made a good impression on her. However, what caught my attention was when she practiced her two cultural performances.

The two cultural performances were a Chinese fan dance and traditional opera singing. Director Wang and Huang even taught Bow how to stand, walk, and smile like a Chinese opera singer outside of their regular office hours. After practicing her speech, she put on the traditional Chinese pink dress and Director Wang showed her how to walk in China's classical period (古代, *gudai*). He led the practice and Bow followed his footsteps. However, Wang was not convinced that he had trained her enough so he prepared several online VDO clips for her to watch and learn from professional Chinese singers. He prepared three clips of the same song: the first one was a professional singer wearing a pink dress very much like hers singing on a Chinese television show; the second one was a six-year old girl singing also in a pink dress; and the third one was a middle-aged professional Chinese opera singer wearing a modern black outfit. We sat down and watched the clips several times (see Figure 7) and Wang told her to repeat what she saw in the clips which included the way the singer walked, sang and smiled. After that, Bow watched the VDO clips while practicing at the same time. The training finished

⁹ It can also be translated as "My Chinese Dream."

around six o'clock in the evening, leaving Bow two more days until the competition to memorize the content of her speech, fan dance choreography, and the lyrics of the traditional Chinese song.



Figure 7: Director Wang (left) and Bow (right) at the practice. Bow is wearing a pink traditional Chinese dress and learning her fan dance from Wang and a professional opera singer in the VDO clip.

Director Wang asked her to study the gesture, hands and legs movement, and facial expression found in the VDO clips. She watched the clips and practiced over and over again until the session was finished. The strategy of imitating professional Chinese cultural performances employed by Wang became a good source for showing what was perceived to be authentic Chinese culture for the speech competition so that Bow could impress the judges and audience. The process of choosing “good” or authentic Chinese culture started when Bow was selected by her teachers for having a more standard Chinese accent than the other two female students. Furthermore, the imitation of Chinese culture during the practice and competition leads to the perpetuation and reproduction of

Chinese culture outside China that is highly selective. The VDO clips, picked by Wang, illustrate what is considered a good example of authentic Chinese culture that is expected to be publicly accepted and enjoyed by the audience and judges from various Confucius Institutes in Thailand. Afterwards, each contestant would highlight their Chinese cultural skills at the competition in Bangkok.

The process of practicing cultural performances becomes the lived social experience for the participants who need to observe and perform what is perceived to be good Chinese cultural art forms. These art forms are selected by the trainers and in this case, by Confucius Institute Director Wang. The imitation of these art forms is considered as an attempt to show dominant cultural symbols as they are thought to be acceptable and authentic by the judges and the audience. Bow's practice demonstrates the aspect of hegemony that is a lived social experience through selective and dominant cultural symbols. It becomes Bow's lived experience as she puts on the Chinese traditional pink dress and masters the fan dance and opera singing in a way that is considered authentic and appropriate for the competition.

Bow's training is also connected to an exercise of soft power in terms of China's image-making. As presented in Chapter One, culture and international image are the sources of soft power. In this case, Bow's traditional cultural performance contributes to producing an image of a traditional China because while showing the VDO clips of professional performers, Director Wang trained her to walk and sing the same way he thought a Chinese person would walk and sing during the Chinese classical period. Her performance as the portrayal of a traditional China was viewed by 350 people. Furthermore, as soft power rests on attraction and cooptation, Bow has been attracted to

perform this image of a traditional China for the audience at the competition. In fact, Bow's position in the competition caused her to become the user of soft power not only for the Confucius Institute but also for herself as she hoped to win a scholarship and an all-expenses-paid trip to China. The next case study further reinforces the use of soft power by the Confucius Institute among the wider circle of other participants who were in the audience at the speech competition. It also shows that culture is used strategically to influence an image and thinking about China. In addition, it demonstrates that cultural events can lead to the subtle submission to the Chinese state and may generate some dissatisfaction for some participants in the process.

Case Study: Hyperactive Participants and Free Souvenirs at the Chinese Bridge Speech Competition

This case study shows that the national level speech competition, Chinese Bridge, in Bangkok is an example of cultural events that socialize participants to the positive and common knowledge of China. It further reaffirms the Confucius Institute's exercise of soft power discussed in the preceding section. Specifically, this case study shows that the Chinese Bridge speech competition uses Chinese culture to introduce the audience to selective cultural symbols and an image of a beautiful, traditional and contemporary China under the rule of the Communist Party.

The Chinese Bridge speech competition was hosted at Ratchada City Hotel, in an area that Huang said was the new Chinatown and where overseas Chinese and Chinese restaurants could be found. I went with a group of teachers and students from Suriyan University. The moment we got out from our vans, I noticed a banner that said, "Welcome" in three languages: Thai, Chinese and English. The steps leading up to the reception area were covered with red carpet and red Chinese lanterns. The reception area

was organized to show a Hanban-published series of Chinese textbooks. The exhibited titles included, “Happy Chinese Language,”(快乐汉语) “Touching Chinese Language,” (สัมผัสภาษาจีน) and “Enjoying with Chinese Language”(เพลิดเพลินกับภาษาจีน).

The event hall was located on the right hand side of the textbook exhibition. At the hall entrance, the left corner was decorated with plastic bamboo plants with baby panda dolls hanging on them, and was also used for a picture-taking area. As I counted, the organizers arranged approximately 350 seats. Most of the attendants were university students, some of whom appeared to be ethnic Chinese-Thai. Yellow and red balloons representing the colours of the Chinese flag could be found all over the event hall. The stage was decorated with red Chinese lanterns hanging from the ceiling. From the stage, the audience could see logos belonging to Thailand’s Office of Higher Education and Hanban. A large Chinese flag was put up vertically on the right corner of the stage and a Thai flag of the same size on the left corner, although a projector screen hindered the view of the Thai flag and covered most of it. The venue was cooled by air conditioning as it was the hot season in Thailand. It was a cool and comfortable atmosphere. At the same time, it felt very formal as the Chinese male security guards, Thai hotel employees, and Chinese event helpers were all wearing suits with Chinese and Thai flags pins, and the Chinese female staff were all wearing traditional Chinese *qipao* dresses. A small breakfast box containing a piece of bread, cookies, and orange juice was served shortly after the event started.

What caught my attention was when the organizers allowed the whole audience to take part in the question and answer session. Questions were about China and Chinese culture and anyone with the right answer would receive small gifts. The prizes ranged

from stuffed panda dolls, pictures showing strikingly mystical-looking Chinese famous places like Huangshan Mountain (see Figure 8), to calendars attached with a red Chinese knot and with exotic pictures of China's world cultural heritage sites such as Chengde Mountain Resort in Chengdu and the Summer Palace in Beijing. However, only one of the audience members would receive the gift after providing the correct answer to each question. There were many questions, for example;

1. When did Beijing become the capital city of China?
2. Which festival is famous among the Dai (or Tai) minority group in Southern China?
3. What do pandas eat?
4. Where are the terracotta warriors?
5. What is the traditional house in Beijing called?
6. How many years has the People's Republic of China (PRC) been established as of 2009?
7. What is the name of the national Chinese flag?

These questions served as an introduction to China among the audience. This activity represented an effort by the organizers to promote what should be known about China and Chinese culture. Interestingly, the second question was strategically chosen because the Dai minority group in Xishuangbanna, southern China, actually shares very similar traditions and cultures with Thailand. For instance, the dominant religion of the Dai minority and Thai people is Hinnayana Buddhism, and the language of Dai minority is from the same language family that is used by many groups of people in Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. In addition, the answer to the question was Water Splashing Festival or

Songkran Festival which is popularly celebrated in Thailand. This particular question serves to highlight the close cultural connection between Thailand and China.

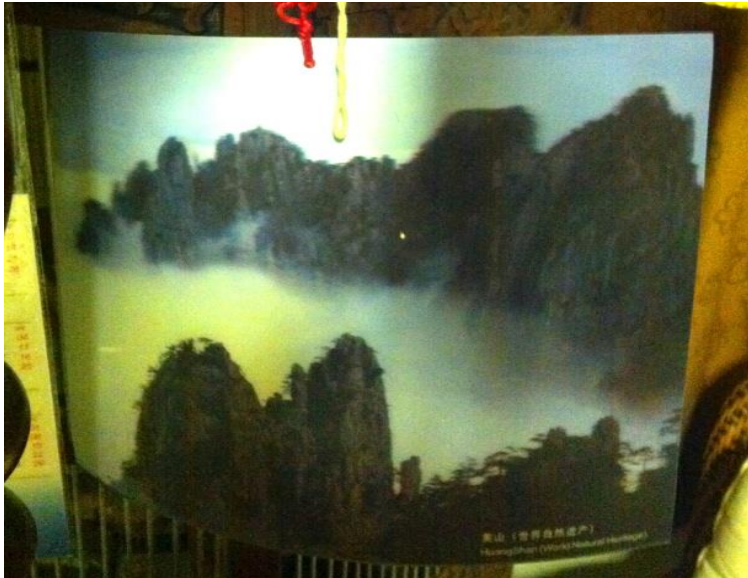


Figure 8: An example of a gift given at the event. It is a picture of the mystical-looking Huangshan Mountain.

The reaction among the audience in the hall after hearing this question was fast, responsive, and enthusiastic as numerous participants raised their hands while jumping up and down in order to get the event organizers' attention so that the microphone would be given to them and they could win the prize (see Figure 9). By the third question, most people in the audience had already raised their hands and were screaming for the microphone even before the host had a chance to pick a person to answer the question. As the audience became more and more excited, the host's voice got louder and louder when reading out the questions. The activity became more intense. While many kept screaming out to the staff who had the microphone and jumping up and down to get their attention, one girl hastily grabbed the microphone out of the coordinator's hands and yelled out the answer before the host could pick her. Most girls fought for the microphone so they could win the most popular prize that day—a cute stuffed panda doll.



Figure 9: Hyperactive participants are raising their hands and fighting for the microphone from the staff. Many are not in their seats.

As the event was coming to an end, the host asked the audience to sit down. The security guards asked people who were at the book exhibition to return to their seats as Chinese Ambassador Guan Mu was on his way to deliver a closing speech. The hall was completely silent by the time the ambassador arrived at the hotel. Upon his arrival, he took his time to view the book exhibition with Madam Pang Li, Executive Director of Hanban Thailand Office. After about five minutes, the hall was still filled with silence. Guan Mu finally made his grand entrance to the hall after the host told everybody to rise, and played music that sounded very militaristic. It suddenly reminded me of the soldiers marching in front of the Forbidden Palace in Beijing on Chinese National Day. Afterwards, the host asked everyone to enthusiastically (热烈, *relie*) welcome Guan Mu

onto the stage. He delivered his speech in Chinese with a very firm, strong, and terse voice. There was also a Chinese translator who translated his speech into Thai for the audience members who did not understand Chinese. Mu began his speech by recognizing the cooperation between different organizations involved in the event planning, and described the competition as intense and fierce. His speech is important as it not only refers to the competition itself but also to the theme of harmony between Thailand and China. In his speech, Mu said:

Thailand and China are situated near each other. Similar culture, ethnicity, and friendly relations are shared by the two countries. They share similar culture and ethnicity. Thailand and China are good neighbours, partners, friends, and relatives who have gone through happiness and suffering together for a long period of time. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations thirty-seven years ago, Thailand and China have continuously increased [cooperation in] policy, economy, culture, and exchange between the two countries. The cooperation between Thailand and China in Chinese language teaching has already become a good exchange of friendship for the two countries.

It is clear that Ambassador Guan attempted to affirm the close links and friendship between Thailand and China to the audience at the beginning of his speech. Furthermore, he recognized the importance of each contestant whom he described as:

An eagle with strong wings that is flying high in the sky above the abundant and fertile land of Thailand. You are becoming the pillar in developing Thai society and economy. Everyone will also fly to the vast land of China...to strength Sino-Thai friendship.

Guan clearly attempted to mobilize the participants to strengthen the Sino-Thai friendship. In addition, he mentioned Princess Sirindhorn as a way of legitimizing the act of improving friendship in order to further mobilize the Thai population. He stated that:

I also need to praise Princess Sirinhorn who is highly respected by the people of Thailand...She has introduced Chinese history and culture to the Thai people. She also uses her fluent Chinese and creates friendship with Chinese people across the country. She makes a great contribution to the two countries' cultural exchange and development. She is a model for the Thai and Chinese people.

The ambassador concluded his speech by referring to Thailand's Prime Minister Yingluck's recent visit to China. He indicated that the promotion of Chinese language would help the people in Thailand and China understand each other more deeply, and that the efforts from the two sides would generate good Sino-Thai relations and friendship, which would last a for a long time. His speech emphasized the positive friendship and cooperation of both countries and further attempted to mobilize the population to embark on the mission of strengthening these ties as well.

Ambassador Guan Mu's strong emphasis on harmony between Thailand and China is also reflected in the previous winner of the 2008 competition, Kanokwan, who is now studying on a scholarship in China that she received from participating in the competition. She writes in the internationally distributed Confucius Institute magazine:

Through "Chinese Bridge," I came into contact with Hanban and through Hanban I got the opportunity to pursue my postgraduate studies in China. I never expected that. I have six siblings and I am the first one to make it to graduate school....To my surprise, other classmates turned out to be participants in the

2008 “Chinese Bridge” competition. The classmates are from Egypt, Russia, the United States, Spain, South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. We study together, live together, and we learn about each other’s culture and customs...

Kanokwan’s view emphasizes a world in which people from different countries live in harmony. In the magazine, her view also illustrates that the competition can result in friendship among participants.

The event officially ended after Ambassador Guan Mu’s speech. The organizers let people stay longer at the venue. Many teachers and friends of contestants were taking pictures with the winners and contestants. A lunch box with fried rice or garlic pork was provided to anyone who registered their name on a sheet of paper. The teachers and students from Suriyan University and I left the hotel around one o’clock in the afternoon to make our way back to Chachoengsao Province. This case study illustrated a venue where soft power is exercised wherein the organizers attempt to generate positive and common knowledge of China through cultural symbols, pictures, and a question and answer session. The Chinese Bridge speech competition also allows the event participants to live their experiences through selective Chinese cultural symbols as presented by the organizers. At the same time, the Chinese ambassador inculcates the view of the harmonious relationship between Thailand and China by referring to the Princess and the Prime Minister’s connection to China. The organizers also provided immediate collective benefits such as food, a scholarship as the winner’s prize, a trip to China, and souvenirs for the participants. The next section provides an assessment of the event which connects the three aspects of hegemony: norms creation, collective benefit, and lived experience.

Assessment:

The Chinese Bridge speech competition is one of the most important annual activities for the Confucius Institutes and Hanban in Thailand because the scale of this event is very extensive and inclusive: seventeen contestants participated across the country, and government officials from the Chinese embassy, Hanban, and Thailand's Office of Higher Education also attended. It also involved participation from more than three hundred people in the audience. More importantly, public events such as this competition is a venue where soft power is exercised. Dominant and selective Chinese cultural symbols were seen as soon as a person walked towards the hotel entrance. These symbols included red lanterns, red and yellow balloons, traditional red Chinese knots, and a designated corner that was decorated with plastic bamboo plants and panda dolls. They were found in many places throughout the venue. For example, red lanterns were used repeatedly to decorate the hotel entrance, event hall entrance, and the stage. Moreover, each contestant was required to deliver a speech about their Chinese dream in which many referred to their positive experiences in China. This was an excellent way for the audience to fantasize about China as contestants talked about delicious Chinese food, beautiful tourist attractions, and Chinese friends. Thus, the speeches created an attractive image of China through cultural symbols which included the gifts handed out to the audience. In addition, contestants were required to enact cultural performances that were considered authentic and acceptable for the audience and the judges.

At the same time, the organizers used a strategy to involve the whole audience in the question and answer session, awarding souvenirs to the winners. It was a creative method to socialize the audience to general knowledge about China. The questions about the establishment of the PRC, the capital city of China, and the name of the national

Chinese flag in particular introduced the audience to the modern China under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party. In addition, the act of handing out gifts such as stuffed panda bears and mystical-looking pictures of Chinese tourist attractions further reinforced the process of romanticizing China that had already begun through the contestants' speeches. They made China more attractive and as a result, the audience would take a piece of a beautiful China home with them. These gifts were also an exercise of soft power as they positively constituted reality about China that the organizers selected to show the participants.

In addition, the norm of international harmony was subtly emphasized at the event as logos of Hanban and Thailand's Office of Higher Education were present on the stage. Although the projector screen hindered the view of the Thai flag, Thai and Chinese flags were hanging on each side of the stage to illustrate the cooperation and harmony between Thailand and China. The Thai flag covered by the screen suggests that the organizers did not pay enough attention to the presentation of the Thai flag. However, it symbolically shows that harmony does not need to include equal relations between different groups of people. The Chinese thinking of Confucianism views a harmonious society to be based on five cardinal relationships, such as that of ruler and subject.¹⁰ These relationships require one group to be subordinate to the other. Thus, the unequal relationships in harmony also fit into the concept of hegemony as the stronger state establishes its dominance over the subordinate and allied group.

In addition, staff were wearing Thai-Chinese flag pins on their clothes. The closing speech delivered by Ambassador Guan Mu undoubtedly sought to stress the good

¹⁰ David Elstein, *Beyond the Five Relationships: Teachers and Worthies in Early Chinese Thought*, *Philosophy East & West* 62, no.3 (2012): 375.

friendship and cooperation between Thailand and China. It referred to the highly revered Princess Sirindhorn, and involved the mobilization of the Thai and Chinese populations to take part in strengthening Sino-Thai relations by considering the Princess as a model. However, Ambassador Guan Mu's presence at the competition demonstrated the subtle domination of the audience in relation to his position. Everyone was required to be silent and wait patiently as he made his way to the event hall. The audience was asked to silently stand up when he approached the event hall as a way of showing him respect. It was a subtle way to make the audience observe and recognize the importance of his position and his presence at the event.

Collective benefits were also distributed at the event. Each contestant hoped to win so that they could go on to compete at the global level in China with all expenses paid and ultimately obtain a scholarship to study at a graduate level. Immediate common benefits were also provided to the audience by providing breakfast and lunch boxes. The organizers also gave out souvenirs and gifts to the audience members who could answer questions about China correctly. In the end, the remaining souvenirs were handed out to anyone who stayed and had lunch at the hotel. The case studies presented in this chapter have illustrated the place of the Confucius Institute in furthering Chinese hegemony through an exercise of soft power in which participants experience the articulation of a harmonious Sino-Thai relationship, the provision of collective goods, and the presentation of dominant and selective cultural symbols.

Although the strategy of giving out prizes excited the audience and attempted to create good relations with participants, this does not work all the time. For instance, the singing contest at Suriyan University utilized the same strategy of providing food to

sixty-eight contestants and at least two hundred people in the audience. The event started at nine in the morning and finished around five in the evening. The audience left the venue with countless empty water bottles on the floor. A Thai Confucius Institute Director Kanchana told an administrator, Heng, to take pictures of the garbage and put them on the website. He did not end up taking those pictures but he told me that she was not impressed. He paraphrased her and said, “We gave so much and look what they gave us.” This statement suggests the dissatisfaction with the efforts made to satisfy event attendants whether through providing food, prizes or souvenirs, but that the participants may not have given back enough for the relationships between them to be considered reciprocal and harmonious. The Confucius Institute Director’s statement further seems to illustrate the disappointment in the failure of the strategy of providing free food and souvenirs. In other words, the provision of club goods as a way to strengthen the relations between the Confucius Institute as a representation of China and Thai participants may not always be successful. Therefore, although efforts were made to confer mutual benefits and generate good public relations, it can also generate dissatisfaction between event organizers and participants.

This chapter has presented the last set of research results in this thesis and concluded by showing the connections of the three aspects of hegemony at the Confucius Institute’s cultural events. In addition, it has presented an exercise of soft power that is seen as part of the larger process of hegemony. The next chapter summarizes major findings of this research project, discuss limitations of this study, and provide suggestions for further research into the Confucius Institute.

Chapter Six Conclusion

Is the Confucius Institute a Successful Hegemonic Project?

This study explored the operations of the Confucius Institute in Thailand and showed its operations that are closely connected to the policy of the Chinese government. It is an important topic because of the phenomenal growth of the Confucius Institute across the globe. By the end of 2012, there were approximately 400 Confucius Institutes and 500 Confucius Classrooms in the world. In Thailand, although the Confucius Institute entered the country only recently in 2006, and there are currently 13 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius Classrooms. In his closing speech at the Chinese Bridge speech contest, Ambassador Guan Mu indicated that more than 3,000 schools had already started teaching Chinese and at the present, around 800,000 people are studying Chinese in Thailand. In addition, he stated that Hanban has dispatched 1,284 volunteer teachers to Thailand “upon the request of Thailand’s Ministry of Education” and due to “the demand in Thailand.” These impressive numbers suggest the continuing expansion and success of the Confucius Institute and Chinese language both in Thailand and the world. This thesis has argued that this expansion allows for a certain kind of political relations, that involves creating bases of support among various participants such as government officials, students, and Confucius Institute employees through hegemonic strategies. This thesis has shown that this hegemonic project is particularly successful among Thai government officials, students and Confucius Institute staff, and that their thinking about harmony and collective benefits, and participation in cultural events further feeds into and strengthens the hegemonic project.

Summary of Findings

Due to international concerns raised surrounding the growth and impact of Confucius Institutes worldwide, I originally set out to explore the connection between the Confucius Institute and the Chinese government, as well as the place of the Chinese government in Thailand at the beginning of this project. Previous literature on the operations of the Confucius Institute did not address the Confucius Institute's activities on the ground level, nor its impact on participants. This research project is the first to study the practical, day-to-day operations of the Confucius Institute, the first to study the Confucius Institute in Thailand and to tie it to China's international political ambitions. I hypothesized that the Chinese government assists in the promotion of the Chinese culture and language through the Confucius Institute as part of a broader project of expanding the influence of China and Chinese culture. My research findings confirmed my initial expectation. Through qualitative methods, I explored how the Confucius Institute employees, students, and event participants experienced Chinese culture and language as part of the Confucius Institute's activities. I found that the Confucius Institute operates to further the goals and policies of the Chinese government.

In Chapter Three, I showed that the Confucius Institute spends considerable efforts to inculcate a positive view of international harmony through its magazines, directors, and teachers. The Confucius Institute magazines have extensively used Princess Sirindhorn as a symbol to disseminate the image of good Sino-Thai relations, portraying her as a model figure in improving the friendship between Thailand and China. The monarchy is one of the most highly revered institutions in Thailand. Due to the inviolable and highly respected position of the Thai monarchy in Thailand, Princess Sirindhorn's

promotion of the Confucius Institute legitimizes the operations of the Confucius Institute in Thailand.

The harmony between Thailand and China is also important for Confucius Institute Director Wang who considers himself an informal ambassador. He states that his mission in Thailand includes developing good relations between Thailand and China. This view is similar to a Chinese teacher whose name is Yang. She learned “the spirit of a volunteer” during the three-month training in China. She internalizes the norm of harmony and peace and is conscious of her conduct in Thailand as she attempts to represent other Chinese citizens and make Thai people feel *sabaijai* or comfortable at heart. Making the locals feel *sabaijai* is also a strategy to avoid creating conflict or discomfort due to unfamiliar cultural customs, and can further create positive relations between the two countries. These three case studies also fit into the discussion of hegemony as Chapter One defined one aspect of hegemony as the negotiation and acceptance of new ideas and norms. These three examples illustrated that the Confucius Institute operates to produce an idea of the good relations between Thailand and China, and this is echoed in the Chinese government’s foreign policy of China’s Peaceful Rise.

In Chapter Four, I have illustrated through my case studies that the Confucius Institute organized a speech contest which required contestants to positively deliver a speech about China’s economic rise. The Institute selected two speeches to be published in its magazines. In his speech, Worawit depicted China’s economy as continuously growing. He felt that the expanding Chinese economy would bring development to Thailand. Two months later, the winner’s speech was published. Similar to Worawit, Thitima’s speech mentioned the fast growth of the Chinese economy. Publishing both

speeches in the magazines demonstrates the Confucius Institute's efforts to create the perception of a booming Chinese economy among readers in Thailand. The view that the benefits can be conferred to Thailand after participating in the Chinese economy as promoted by the Confucius Institute was also present among Thai government officials and students. Dusadi thought that the funding allocated to the construction of the Confucius Institute office would result in the benefits for her province and people. Leng and Ae similarly felt that their participation in the Confucius Institute and with China would provide them benefits at a personal level as well as for Thailand and China. These case studies can also be understood through another aspect of hegemony, which is the creation of common interests and the provision of mutual benefits that are perceived to be real among members who participate in the hegemonic relations. These members bandwagon or participate in the hegemonic order because they perceive a real sense of shared collective benefits.

In Chapter Five, I examined the annual Chinese Bridge national speech contest in Bangkok. I described how Director Wang selected performances which were understood as good and authentic examples of Chinese culture, and took the time to personally train a student in how to dance, walk, and act like someone from the Chinese classical period. The training reinforced what the Director perceived to be authentic and good examples of Chinese culture for the competitor to practice and perform at the speech contest.

Similarly, on the day of the event, organizers used Chinese cultural symbols such as red lanterns, plastic bamboo plants attached with panda dolls, and red Chinese tied knots for decorations. Female staff wore Chinese traditional *qipao* dresses. Prizes were gifts such as panda dolls, calendars attached with a picture of Chinese tourist attractions

and mystical-looking pictures of China's world heritage sites. The event used Chinese cultural symbols in an exercise of soft power. The event used Chinese culture as soft power because it was shared and was seen as attractive by participants. The event exposed the audience to the China that is full of traditional culture and beautiful world cultural heritage sites. The presentation of the Thai and Chinese flags on stage and the Thai-Chinese flags pins that the event staff had on their clothes also contributed to creating a positive picture of Sino-Thai relations.

Producing the image of positive Sino-Thai relations is also linked to the first aspect of hegemony in which the Confucius Institute attempts to create the notion of harmony between Thailand and China. The presence of the Chinese Ambassador at the event facilitated a subtle dominance as the host asked the audience to wait patiently, stand up silently and welcome him enthusiastically as he made his way into the event hall. The event encapsulates the importance of the lived experience of the participants in the hegemonic process, and the importance of dominant and selective cultural symbols in helping reinforce the hegemonic order.

The experiences of Thai government officials, students, Confucius Institute employees, and event attendants as illustrated in this thesis show an understanding of the Confucius Institute's operations which can be summarized by Zhongpi Pan:

China's impact on the world order, in both system-shaping and norm-construction, is dynamically changing with the development of China's engagement in and benefit from world order. Recently, China has become a promoter of world order, not only proactively providing both regional and global public goods, but also gradually cultivating a new international image as a

responsible, constructive and expectable nation. China has been regarded by most Asian nations as “a good neighbor, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a nonthreatening regional power.”¹

Consequently, this thesis shows that the Confucius Institute has important roles in facilitating the Chinese government’s international goals of creating international norms, providing collective benefits, and producing a positive image of China.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations to this study. Firstly, this thesis includes a small sample size of the Confucius Institutes in Thailand. There are currently thirteen institutes in total and I was able to visit four Confucius Institutes and one Confucius Classroom. In total, two denied access. In addition, I did not gain access to Hanban Thailand Office and obtain Hanban’s specific policies in Thailand. However, data from interviews and observations from the three research locations were triangulated with different sources of data that did not require access to research sites. For example, interview results were triangulated with data from Confucius Institute magazines and public cultural events. Therefore, the triangulation of data from different sources allowed me to improve the research results and make a general argument about the activities of the Confucius Institute in Thailand.

In addition, this thesis looked at one of the aspects of hegemony which creates the view of perceived collective benefits, generating satisfaction among members who follow the leadership of the hegemon. As a result, it did not focus on gathering results which specifically showed the counter-hegemonic strategies which the dissatisfied participants

¹ Zhongpi Pan, “China’s Changing Image of and Engagement in World Order,” in *“Harmonious World” and China’s New Foreign Policy*, eds Jean-Marc Blanchard and Sujian Guo (UK: Lexington Books, 2008), 56.

may use. Specifically, I did not obtain data which explains why participants may be dissatisfied with the Confucius Institute and therefore, withdraw their support from the hegemonic order.

Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis has examined the operations of the Confucius Institute at the ground level and shown the activities of the Confucius Institute through observations and the perspectives of people who are involved. Their insights reveal how participants perceive the Confucius Institute in Thailand. While this thesis provides a detailed study of the Confucius Institute's activities as carried out in Thailand, future studies can focus on the centralized policy planning of Hanban. The view of Hanban will reveal the direction that the Confucius Institute will embrace in the future. Future research can analyze the dialogues among Confucius Institute directors at the annual Confucius Institute conference in Beijing in order to reveal how these directors assess the work of the Confucius Institute globally.

In addition, future research may focus on different counter-hegemonic strategies that people who are involved may use to oppose the positive views promoted by the Confucius Institute of Sino-Thai relations or of China, or towards the operations of the Institute in general. This perspective can illustrate how Chinese foreign policy, despite its attempt to create positive views in Thailand, may receive negative reactions among the people who do not want to become part of the hegemonic order. Thus, future studies can answer the question: What are the counter-hegemonic strategies that dissatisfied participants use to oppose the operations of the Confucius Institute? Although the study of counter-hegemonic strategies can add to an additional understanding of the Confucius

Institute, in the thesis, the operations of the Confucius Institute demonstrated that the promotion of Chinese language and culture is a very complex issue that is not limited to education in Thailand. Chinese culture and language, as shown, is closely linked to China's international ambitions in constituting its hegemonic position through projecting its domestic norm of harmony internationally, conferring collective benefits to China's allied members, and extending its soft power influence in the world.

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