

## Communicating the Soft Power of Thailand's Cultural Heritage through Traditional Sport (Thai Chess)

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### Abstract

This study interpreted communication, soft power, art, culture, and traditional sport regarding Thai chess, also called “Makruk.” The objectives are 1. To study soft power in Thai chess. 2. To understand soft power's role and communication style on the Thai chess board. 3. To study trends or possibilities in the sport of Thai chess as a soft power, a kind of power. The research is mixed methods. From a sample of 543 people, research tools include questionnaires, interviews, and a study of historical documents. Evaluation with computer programs for social research found the answers to the question asking for places or sources people who are interested in chess know about chess, as follows: Thai people under 18 years old and 19–29-year-olds know about chess from school, accounting for 47.89%. And 38.70%, aged 30–49 years, know from movies/movies. They account for 25.00% of those aged 50–59 years, known from family members. Accounting for 15.03 percent, those aged 60 and over are knowledgeable about Thai chess from their school days. Additionally, 6.13 percent of people of all age groups love Thai chess as it is a traditional sport. Thai chess has a long history of being a soft-power game and began to be competed around 1952. For objective 2, the study found that age does not have a significant effect on the facial expressions, gestures, and emotions of the opponent. The results were significant at the 0.05 level, with a p-value greater than 0.05, indicating nonverbal communication. Additionally, the players' personalities were found to communicate their traits. 3) Thai chess should be promoted because it has its own unique identity. It's a sport that reflects the strategy of organizing troops for war. It cleverly simulates battlefield situations on the board and also highlights the role of soft power in arts, culture, and traditions.

**Keywords:** communication; soft power; culture; traditional sport; Thai Chess (Makruk)

## Introduction

In this specific case, it is crucial to understand the role of a traditional sport (Thai chess) from the perspective of communication, soft power, and culture. The social context of chess has been significantly developed over the past century. Once known as “The Game of the King” due to being related to the royal family and nobles. Nowadays, this game has become a world-class phenomenon that can be accessible to people of all ages from the books of life (Matthew & Natasha, 2016). As for Thai chess, it has a deep-rooted history in Thailand, connecting with the “Jaturong” of ancient Indians. Playing chess can represent Thai culture the way it does other cultures. Chess reflects the country's hierarchical structure as seen in different roles and values, which are set for each piece on the board. According to legends, the Indian King invented chess to end disputes and fights without blood (Murray, 1913). Thai chess (Makruk). Is a traditional sport that refers to activities that are played for fun, recreation, or to compete. Like any kind of chess, Thai chess players use skills in planning, analyzing, and predicting with imagination to overcome opponents. The researcher promotes communication of the soft power of cultural heritage through the art of Thai chess. It is important to help push soft power to be a selling point of Thai culture and add value to the economy. A mechanism must be created to develop a soft power strategy for the entire system. There must be a proactive and continuous foreign policy combining hard power and soft power to create smart power, which requires cooperation from the entire government sector. The private business sector and the public sector should agree to go in the same direction to promote the Thai economy to grow sustainably (Vongstapanalert et al., 2024).

In Thailand, there are chess competitions for the Royal Cups for “His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn and Her Majesty the Queen” and for “Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn,” organized by the Thai Sports Association Under the Royal Patronage (T.S.A.). T.S.A. has a vision: “Develop Thai sports to meet standards to strengthen Thai social and economic stability” (Thai Sports Association Under the Royal Patronage, n.d.) is a gathering place for chess masters and Thai chess competitors from every region in Thailand. The reason why there are so many Thai chess competitors is that in Thai society, traditional sport (Thai chess) is a special thing that is not only a game but also reflects the transformations in the history, culture, and society of Thailand. It reflects how to design workpieces with different hierarchies, reflecting the social structure that is buried with respect for the elderly and those who are in a powerful position. In addition, the strategic phenomena behind this are education and reflecting the Thai philosophy of war. Playing board games is not just an intellectual exercise but is also blended with traditions and

culture. Chess is not only a hobby but a cultural invention and a tool to promote social relationships, which often see groups of chess players in various areas throughout Thailand (Basham, 1986).

In the context of communication, soft power, culture, and traditional sports (Thai chess) can be comprehended through storytelling and film. Soft power means the power to use military or economic power to pressure others to conform to the use of soft power, which relies on the attraction of others. (Supapich, 2022). Films reflect the history, politics, strategies, gender issues, psychology, and aesthetics of the board game. For example, in the Western context, chess that appears in movies or series is another interesting part. Most chess movies, including *The Seventh Seal* (1957), *Dangerous Moves* (1984), *Bobby Fischer Against the World* (2011), *Long Live the Queen* (1995), and *The Queen's Gambit* (2020). Movies about chess are not only entertaining, but they also help to encourage more people to become interested in chess. Chess is a game that requires deep analytical thinking. Learning about chess therefore helps people develop better analytical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Based on the importance of the traditional sport of Thailand, this study intends to delve deeply into communication, soft power, and culture, investigate the role and style of soft power in Thai chess, and explore the trends or possibilities of using soft power to promote the traditional sport of Thailand through well-planned policies.

## Research objectives

The research questions include

1. Is Thai chess a soft power?
2. Is soft power in Thai chess considered a form of persuasion power?
3. Does Thai chess have communication contexts?

This study's research objectives include:

- 1) To study soft power in Thai chess sports.
- 2) To understand the role and style of soft power communication on the Thai chess board.
- 3) To study trends or possibilities in Thai chess sports based on soft power.

## Literature Review

### Thai Chess the Traditional Sport

Thai chess is a board game that has been popular in Thailand for a long time. It is believed that the origin originated from India and was widespread in Thailand about 1,000 years ago. The main idea with historical plausibility is that chess originated in India. Chess was developed from an ancient Indian game called Chaturanga, which refers to an army consisting of four forces: elephants, horses, chariots, and foot soldiers. (Chula Radio Plus, 2021) And from India to Thailand, there is a possibility that 1) From India, passed through the Indian subcontinent in a period similar to the reign of King Ashoka the Great (Prachot, 2023) 2) India went to China and down to the south, namely Southeast Asia, according to the book A Short History of Chess by Davidson (1981), but this route is less impactful. Because there was a change in playing chess in China called Xiang Qi (Ma, 2020; Remus, 2003). 3). From India, chess went to Persia and other continents. Chess played in Persia is called Jadtrance (Prachot, 2023).

Thai chess is believed to be influenced by India. Though many countries in Southeast Asia play chess, such as Cambodia, where it is called Ouk Chaktrang, with similar playing methods, differences can be found in the names of chess pieces and chess moves (Watcharakirin, 2023).

Thai chess has a form and rules that are like international chess, but it has different subtleties. One of the outstanding details of Thai chess is placing chess pieces on the board. The meaning of different chess pieces can be profoundly explained by the book titled Legend of Thai Chess: Royal Writings of Krom Phraya Damrong Rajanupab Vajirayan Library Edition. Cited in the writings of Dr. Prakob Boonthai (Boonthai, 2011), the book describes that in playing the four-sided Indian board game, “Khun” is as valuable as a king or the leader of the army, while “Rua” or boat is referred to as the rook, “Cone” is refer to as the elephant army, “Horse” refers to the navy, “Pawn” refers to the army or infantry.

Therefore, it can be said that the pieces in Thai chess are culturally and geographically influenced; for example, a rua or boat is common in Thailand due to abundant rivers and canals as the main transportation mode. Likewise, Khun was a common name for a king in the Thai context in ancient times. Inherited from the Indian roots, which are very close to the original, the names and moves of some pieces on the board, such as cones and face-up pawns, have been changed (Basham, 1986; Murray, 1913).

Names of various chess pieces in Chaturong. First of all, it needs to be added that the Chaturong board has 64 turns, just like in Thai and international chess. Currently, there are 6

types of chess pieces in Chaturong: 1) Raja, or king in Thai, is the leader of the army, who, if attacked, will hold. Is the defeated party on that board? 2) Mantri or Senapati is a montri or minister in Thai. This one on the European side has evolved into Queen, meaning a queen instead, and has surprisingly much higher walking power if compared to the original Montri. It is even a symbol of woman empowerment. 3) Gaja or in Hindi is often called Hathi, meaning elephant. In Europe, it has developed into other animals with various names. For example, in England, an archbishop is a bishop. In France, it would be a royal joke. In Germany, it's a runner, which probably means a messenger. In Russia, it is still an elephant. 4) Ratha, or chariot, is often used in Europe as a fortress. Except in Russia, it's a ship. Thailand also uses it as a boat. 5) Ashva in Hindi is often called Ghora, meaning horse. It is the most iconic piece and can be said to be the symbol of the game of chess. And the special thing is in chess, every nation has the same way of playing chess. Although the details are slightly different 6) Padati means foot soldier. Which Thai language will we use as pawns? Because shellfish were used to playing in the past. (Chula Radio Plus, 2021)

On the other hand, in international chess, “Cone” is equal to the bishop, and “Med,” or general, is equal to the queen (Toytovich, 2020).

The layout of Thai chess pieces reflects the structure of the ancient Thai army, which includes “Khun”, “Horse”, “Boat”, “Cone”, “Med”, and “Pawn” where “Khun,” or king is considered the supreme commander of the army. The queen and generals lead the army. As for soldiers, horsemen and sailors are the main fighting forces. In addition, Thai chess reflects Thai culture and history, such as the moves of sailors. The use of the names of Thai chess pieces reflects the role of nobles in ancient times who were protectors of the land. Thai chess is, therefore, more than just a simple board game; it also represents Thai history and culture (Watcharakirin, 2023).

Thai chess focuses on winning the game using strategy through traditional tactics. It's like war in a real field. There are threats, exchanges, and repeated attacks, while bait is used to trap the opponent in Thai chess. Tactics include deception, harassment, clinging, oppressing, constricting, and overlapping tricks. Like any other kind of chess, Thai chess is thus a representative image of a war game on the board. In addition, Thai chess and chess pieces are often used as symbols to represent planning, strategy, or fighting. Thus, Thai chess is classified as a game that requires various conceptual skills, combining memory, calculation, prediction, and creating images in the brain in advance (Watcharakirin, 2023).



Figure 1. Thai chess (Thai Culture, n.d.)



Figure 2. A giant playing chess in room 129, a mural depicting the Ramayana. The area around the balcony is Wat Phra Sri Rattana Satsadaram. (Prachot, 2023)



Figure 3. “Chaturong” chess in the early period of India which is assumed to be the prototype of Thai chess. (Prachot, 2023)



Figure 4. Nakhon Chum Inscription is one important piece of evidence to know the story of chess in Thailand during the Sukhothai period. (Prachot, 2023)

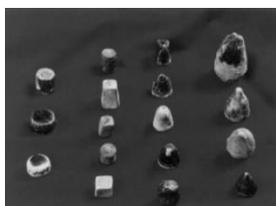


Figure 5. The chess pieces are coated in brown and green. Produced from a kiln source in Buriram Province, Khmer art, approximately 16th–18th Buddhist centuries (Image from a book on the art of porcelain in Thailand). (Prachot, 2023)



Figure 6. Horse and green and white coated pellets were found from the Tao Thuriang source. Mueang Si Satchanalai Sukhothai Province Approximately 19th–20th Buddhist century. The chess pieces at Si Satchanalai are found in a wide area starting from the palace grounds. Foothills of Phanom Plerng to the Aranyika area the residence of the Aranyawasi monks. (Prachot, 2023)



Figure 7. Somdet Phra Wanrat (Chai) accepted an invitation to be a chess practice partner for Somdet Phra Piya Maharat. (Prachot, 2023)

Thai chess was influenced by Persian and Indian traders (Chulalongkorn University, 2023) Using methods to effectively communicate the art of Thai chess as a powerful tool, it is important to bring out the strengths and characteristics of Thai culture that are intrinsic to the game of chess, such as fun, flavor, fulfillment, flexibility, and friendliness. These elements can be emphasized through various dimensions of Thai soft power, including art, art education, architecture, and communication.

In a study titled “Chess and Other Board Games as South Asian Soft Power: A 4000–year–old tradition” at the International Conference on Heritage as Soft Power by Raghavan, Raamesh Gowri et al. (2019) found that chess games are the ties that unite nations or cultures to overcome differences. Chess also serves as a bridge between cultures, reflected in the importance of international competition. The power of the game of chess is also reflected in the number of religious taboos against it. The soft power of chess also manifests itself through trade networks in which merchants travel abroad.

Prior literature mentions that soft power is used differently in mass communication and network communication as opposed to public diplomacy. From the perspective of public diplomacy, soft power or smart power is an important tool for creating acceptance of public diplomacy. Soft power or smart power for public diplomacy requires an understanding of the role of trustworthiness (Nye, 2008). Unlike soft power in public diplomacy, soft power from the perspective of mass communication has the important role of generating widespread voluntary compliance through communication processes in producing “soft power.” One important factor is mass communication technology, which can increase state capacity by strengthening the ability to disseminate messages to the public. Moreover, by increasing the large–scale influence of mass media, the production of soft power can reduce important obstacles (Warren, 2014). Soft power in mass communication can be utilized more effectively through powerful networks (Zaharna, 2007). At present, it can be found that soft power policies have interstate relationships, not at the single–state level, but through a complex, multi–level network, and rely on each other. Governments and diplomats must therefore learn to operate within these networks. With profound changes from the modern world towards the postmodern world of images and soft power, the importance of non–governmental organizations (NGOs) and new media coincides with their important role and function in public diplomacy. Participation was representative of the broad spectrum of civil society. This is reinforced by the effective use of new media. It may help states better achieve their public diplomacy goals. NGO participation in public diplomacy campaigns helps countries move beyond

image–building. Additionally, it also defines concepts and values and builds broader relationships with the international public (Yang, 2014).

In a study, three issues were summarized about promoting Thai chess: the history and artistic development of Thai chess. It makes known that the development of the art of Thai chess has been played continuously since the Sukhothai period until the present from the evidence, such as the discovery of “Sangkhalok” (old ceramics) chess pieces and enameled chess pieces from the Wiang Ka Long site in the Sukhothai period (Srikokcharoen & Unaromlert, 2010). The record of playing Thai chess in the Ayutthaya period was made by Mr. Turpin, who came to Thailand during the reign of King Narai. Turpin described that Thai people widely liked to play Thai chess. The artistic value of Thai chess can be described in three aspects: first is the value of the wisdom in creating the game of Thai chess; second is the value of the art of Thai chess to a person physically, mentally, or emotionally in daily life; and third is the value of Thai chess art to society.

The study of Srikokcharoen and Unaromlert (2010) mentioned that various Thai literature stories have contents related to playing Thai chess, thus reflecting the inherent artistic, cultural, linguistic, and communicative values of Thai chess. Thai identity, language, and cultural values can be described in expressions, communication, and literature related to the art of playing Thai chess and artistic values from the art of human chess performance.

### **Soft Power in Thai Chess**

The soft power concept was introduced in the year 1990 by Joseph Nye, (Nye, 1990) political scientist, and former Harvard Dean, and became popular and widely debated in academic circles. Joseph Nye underlines that after the Cold War, America must change the policy of using hard power, or the Proxy War, which America has warned to reduce the expansion of the Soviet Union. At the ending phases of the Cold War, he presented the usage of soft power in conjunction with military policy (Nye, 1990). Currently, soft power is a policy in various regions. It will be found that soft power comes from 3 sources: culture, which attracts other people to pay attention; political values such as democratic governance and human rights and government policies that are revealed to the world It will make people aware of what is happening in the country. Including the foreign policy that is expressed, which can affect others and has an impact on the country as well. (Nye, 2018). Later, this concept was applied across various disciplines and implemented in various cultures.

According to Joseph Nye, (Bangkokbiznews, 2022), power can be partly explained as cultural influence or the use of cultural power that persuades people or groups to follow. It further

can be described as cultural values of people in society or implication of foreign policy. Soft power is not just the distribution of cultural power, but it also implies taking into account the income stream imported into the country, such as Korea, which has a goal in the name of the Hallyu plan with an annual plan by exporting Korean series, cosmetics Korean beauty standards, and Korean artists, allowing people in many countries to be open to Korean culture, travel industry, and products (Bangkokbiznews, 2022). Recently, in the year 2022, the soft power policy of Thailand was set after having a newly elected government. Thailand established an organization called THAACCA (Taka) based on the principles of Kocca in Korea to support and push the Thai soft power with a comprehensive policy for mutual funding, investment, and freedom of expression in creative industries, including Thai contemporary art, design, craftsmanship and fashion, sports, food, movies, music, and festivals (Pheu Thai Party, 2023).

### **Communication and Culture**

According to David K. Berlo (Berlo, 1960), the process of communication involves the communication source, the encoder, the message, the channel, the decoder, and the communication receiver. In terms of communication and culture, soft power can be better explained using Professor Suraphon Wirunrak's expressions from an online seminar on soft power. He described soft power as the characteristics and nature of "cool, soft, charm, belief, aesthetics, relationship, friendship, persuasion, and integration (Wirunrak, 2022). In the study of Thikumporn lamrerai and Kanchana Kaewthep (2012), Communication is referred to as the concept and process that were described as important in generating and reflecting the identity of traditional sports such as Thai boxing, which is locally termed Muay Thai. Culture in its broad sense can be used to explain art, fine arts, art performance, and relationships between human groups based on their characteristics. In addition, culture provides opportunities for learning about others, which requires the art of communication to make it successful and meaningful.

In 2018, Thailand's Ministry of Culture proposed and registered the "Khon" (traditional mask performance) program as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, which was recognized and registered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on December 15, 2018, making Thailand the 109<sup>th</sup> country in the world that has been registered in the intangible cultural heritage of humanity (Workpoint Today, 2018). In 2019, Thailand proposed the registration of the "Thai Massage" program as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, which was considered and registered as well by UNESCO (Thailand-BBC News, 2019) on December 12, 2019. In 2021. Furthermore, Thailand proposed and registered the "Nora" (the

traditional costumed performance from southern Thailand) as an intangible cultural heritage, which was considered and registered by UNESCO on December 16, 2021 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2021).

From the initial study of soft power, it was found that many countries have created soft power industries entirely from government policies and exported them to various countries to create values that make different countries interested and able to follow along. Similar to Korea, China, and India. Thailand has a long history of arts and culture. Traditional sport (Thai chess) plays an important role in the history of arts and culture. Thai chess includes the enjoyment of Thai chess players and viewers. Evidence of Thai chess in arts and culture can be found in the Thai chess legend book *Royal Writings of Krom Phraya Damrong Rajanupab Vajirayan*, Library Edition, cited in the writings of Dr. Prakob Boonthai (Boonthai, 2011); *image of a giant playing chess in room 129, a mural of the Ramakien story; murals around the balcony Wat Phra Sri Rattana Satsadaram* (Prachot, 2023); *Nakhon Chum Inscription*, one important piece of evidence to know the story of chess in Thailand in the Sukhothai period (Prachot, 2023); *photograph of Somdej Phra Wanrat (Chai) accepting an invitation to be a chess practice partner of Somdet Phra Piya Maharat (King Rama V)* (Prachot, 2023). Until now, there has been a Thai chess competition for the Royal Cup, with participants from all genders, all ages, and every year.

Therefore, from the literature reviewed above, this research focuses on the attraction and communication of Thai chess as soft power and the way to promote the soft power of Thai chess in the future.

## Conceptual Framework

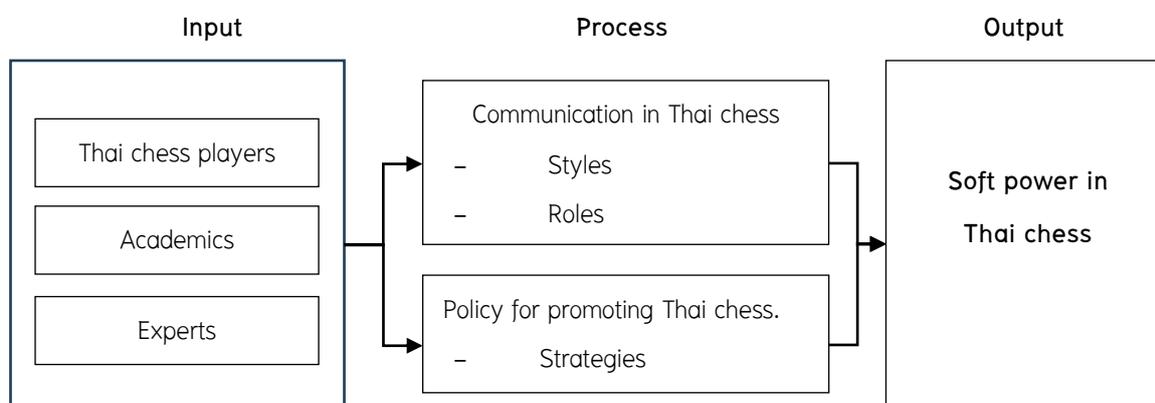


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Soft Power in Thai Chess

## Research Methodology

The researcher used mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative methods, to achieve in-depth information on the soft power communication of Thai cultural heritage through a traditional sport (Thai chess).

### The research process includes the following:

1) Study information by reading literature reviews about soft power in Thai chess. Soft power communication patterns on the Thai chess board and the trend or possibility in Thai chess is a type of soft power.

2) Design demographics and key informants at the deep level.

2.1 The population and sample group are people interested in Thai chess. At the 2022 Royal Cup Thai Chess Competition in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Pak Kret Royal Irrigation Department Nonthaburi Province and the Royal Thai Chess Cup (Shingu Royal Cup of Thailand), 530 people, used Taro Yamane's formula to calculate the size of the population responding to the questionnaire, setting the Margin of Error at 0.05 (Yamane, 1973).

2.2 Key contributors at the deep level are 13 academics, selected from a wide range of experts in history, political science, anthropology, music, archaeology, education, architecture, communications, cultural studies, fine arts, and music, following the guidelines of Miles and Huberman (1994) and selected randomly according to the objective, following the guidelines of Michael Quinn Patton (Patton, 2002).

3. Survey historical documents, archives, and sites to read documents and watch documentaries to get the most complete information according to the guidelines of Mogalakwe (2006) and Scott (2006) (cited in Wanchawee, 2021). The historical archives and sites include the National Library Sirindhorn Anthropology Center; Vachirayan Hall Library; Thammasat University Library; Silpakorn University Library; Bangkok National Museum; Sawankhalok National Museum Sukhothai Province; and Naresuan University Library.

### Research Tools

Questionnaire: The questionnaire was used to assess its consistency. The reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha value) showed a high reliability of 0.97. The questionnaire was administered to participants interested in chess at the 2022 Royal Cup Thai Chess Competition in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, organized by the Pak Kret Royal Irrigation Department in Nonthaburi Province and the Royal Thai Chess Cup (Shingu Royal Cup of Thailand).

Interview form: Interviews were conducted with 13 experts specializing in history, political science, anthropology, music, archaeology, education, architecture, communications, cultural studies, and fine arts.

Study historical documents from 9 locations: the National Library and Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, Samut Vachirayan Hall, Thammasat University Library, Silpakorn University Library, Bangkok National Museum, Sawankhalok National Museum in Sukhothai Province, and Naresuan University and culture by visiting the archives and watching national documentaries to get the most complete information.

### **Data Collection**

The primary sources of data collection include questionnaires, interviews, and surveys from reading historical documents. The research received permission from the Human Research Committee, Faculty of Liberal Arts Shinawatra University in July 2022, after which preliminary data collection began in August–October 2022, and field research was conducted in May. 2022–June 2023 and results summarized in December 2023.

### **Data Verification**

In the questionnaire section, the researcher checked the information together with the informant to see if there was any unclear information. The researcher will complete the inquiry.

In the interview section, the researcher sent the interview form to the experts who would be interviewed to read before conducting the interviews and requested permission to record images and audio before conducting the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using a social analysis computer program to find percentages, frequencies, and one–way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to see the relationship between Thai chess players in each age group.

Qualitative data analysis Information obtained from studying documents. A descriptive content analysis method was used for the data obtained from the interviews. A theory–based analysis method was used. Afterward, data were compiled, classified, and interpreted to draw relationships and conclusions. Research questions were answered according to research objectives.

## Research results

Objective 1. The research results found that Thai chess can be a soft power because Thai chess is a traditional sport that both children and adults love, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** shows the frequency and percentage of respondents' reasons for knowing about Thai chess, divided by age group.

Age (years)	The reason why you know about Thai chess		
	Known from family members	Known from school	Known from movies/movies
Under 18 years	52(33.99)	125(47.89)	43(37.07)
19–29 years	43(28.10)	101(38.70)	26(22.41)
30–49 years	20(13.07)	11(4.21)	29(25.00)
50–59 years	23(15.03)	8(3.07)	9(7.76)
60 and up	15(9.80)	16(6.13)	9(7.76)
<b>Total</b>	<b>153 (100.00)</b>	<b>261(100.00)</b>	<b>116(100.00)</b>

Military experts said that Thai chess competitions began around 1952, after World War II. Competitions were held throughout. There is a golden chess competition. Each arrangement depends on the budget. Therefore, Thai chess has a long history of being a soft power.

Objective 2. The research results found that the role and communication style of soft power on the Thai chess board. Because it is an expression of the opponent's facial expression, gesture, and emotion, it is considered to be communication for the other party to know about winning and losing and is considered to be nonverbal communication, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** shows the frequency and percentage of respondents' opinions on the facial expressions, gestures, emotions of the opponent, which is considered to be a means of communicating to the other party about winning and losing, divided by age group.

Age (years)	The expression of the opponent's facial expression/gesture/emotion is considered to be a communication for the other party to know about winning or losing.	
	Yes	No
Under 18 years	135(38.35)	85(47.75)
19–29 years	126(35.80)	44(24.72)
30–49 years	38(10.80)	22(12.36)
50–59 years	31(8.81)	9(5.06)
60 and up	22(6.25)	18(10.11)
<b>Total</b>	<b>352(100.00)</b>	<b>178(100.00)</b>

And because age does not affect the opponent's facial expression/posture/mood. It is considered to be communicating or showing the other party whether they will win or lose. This means that Thai chess can use facial expressions to trick or intimidate opponents, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** One-way Anova analysis of Thai chess players' expressions of facial expressions/gestures/emotions of their opponents is considered to be communication or showing the other side's knowledge of winning and losing, divided by age group.

Anova: Single Factor

#### SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Under 18 years	2	220	110	1250
19–29 years	2	170	85	3362
30–49 years	2	60	30	128
50–59 years	2	40	20	242
60 and up	2	40	20	8

## ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	13960	4	3490	3.496994	0.101112	5.192168
Within Groups	4990	5	998			
<b>Total</b>	<b>18950</b>	<b>9</b>				

*\*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.*

In addition to communicating facial expressions, postures, and emotions, chess experts say that the characteristics of each Thai chess player can also communicate the mental characteristics of the players. For example, someone who is cruel, cruel, and callous will move chess hard, can't let it pass, and walk like you're dying. If anyone is calm, that walker would walk in a more cold-blooded manner, like he was slowly slaughtering each piece, dripping blood, slowly, slowly squeezing him to death. If that gambler is a kind person who will walk and teach and speak beautifully, he will be able to win.

Objective 3. The research findings identified trends and potential for Thai chess to serve as a form of soft power. Political science experts suggest that promoting Thai chess should be allocated a budget for initiatives such as introducing Thai chess in schools. This could encourage children to engage in sports activities if they do not have classes after school. Who would be interested in playing chess? For the Interprovincial chess competition, prize money is provided. Participants incur travel expenses to compete for a significant cash prize. People of all ages participate in the competition, including children who are interested in the game. Chess is a game that requires critical thinking, making it appealing to children who enjoy mental challenges. However, the state does not seem to be very interested in promoting the competition. There should be an improvement in the prizes. Communication experts also say that Thai chess has its own identity. We must start building the importance of Thai chess in the community. It also encourages youth to become interested in chess by promoting policies with local administrative organizations. and introduced into the Thai education system. From the study of historical documents, it was found that Thai chess is a sports game that started from the royal court and then spread to the people. Like "Thai boxing," Thai chess is a sport that reflects the tactician's ability to organize troops for war.

## Discussion

Results from research objective: “To study soft power in Thai chess sports”, it was found that Thai chess is a traditional sport both children and adults in Thailand, including those abroad love the historical perspective of Thai chess. The concept of Thai chess culture can be considered a symbol of Thai culture and heritage. It can act as a medium for spreading Thai culture and values, which contributes to the soft power of Thailand through the influence of Thai chess culture, which is a unique historical and cultural element of Thailand, able to promote Thai culture and traditions throughout the world. It can create interest and curiosity about Thai customs and traditions. This will help strengthen the cultural influence of Thailand. Thai chess, which is a cultural element unique to Thailand, can promote Thai culture and traditions throughout the world. It can also create interest and curiosity about Thai traditions. This will help strengthen the cultural soft power of Thailand.

International competition and cultural exchange promote the organization of international Thai chess competitions. Thailand can promote understanding and cross-cultural exchange through the game, which not only promotes Thai culture but also creates a good image of the country abroad. Moreover, Thai chess is a tool for building relationships with other countries. It can promote a stage for competition cooperate with other countries peacefully, and communicate the values of Thai cultural traditions to audiences around the world. This will influence their perception of Thailand, which is in line with the sports association’s vision, Thai Sports Association Under the Royal Patronage, to “develop Thai sports to meet standards to enhance social and economic stability in Thailand” (Thai Sports Association Under the Royal Patronage, n.d.) and is consistent with research on “Soft Power and Thailand’s Cultural Selling Points” by Vongstapanalert et al. (2024), which found that it is important to help push soft power to be a selling point. Thai culture and adding value to the economy A mechanism must be created to develop the soft power strategy for the entire system, developing both the industry and the people. There must be a proactive and continuous foreign policy. Combining hard power and soft power to create smart power requires cooperation from the entire government sector. The private business sector and the public sector agree to go in the same direction to promote the Thai economy to grow sustainably.

Results from research objective 2: “To understand the role and style of the Soft Power communication on the Thai chess board”, it was found that understanding the role and style of the soft power communication on the Thai chess board can provide crucial insights. In the context of

being a power that influences and transmits power to other countries, this was because it is communicated through international participation. Thai chess can serve as a platform for international participation. By organizing international Thai chess competitions or promoting the game around the world, Thailand can promote cross-cultural understanding and exchange. This not only promotes Thai culture but also creates a good image of the country abroad, which contributes to soft power. The cultural representation of Thai chess, with its unique rules and gameplay, embodies intelligence, analytical thinking, and enjoyment, and has its own cultural identity. This can increase the attractiveness of Thai culture to foreigners and influence their perception of Thailand, which is consistent with research on “Communicating national identity in Muay Thai” by Dr. Thikamporn lamrerai, which found that Muay Thai used to have a high status during the traditional era until the beginning of the Rattanakosin before it becomes low. In the lower-class culture of Thai society today, this research gives weight to the important issue of whether elites have used Western media to build the Thai nation and investigates why Muay Thai was chosen as an identity maker to create Thainess (lamrerai and Kaewthep, 2012), and it is consistent with research on “Development of Executive Function Skills for Undergraduate Students of Education Program by Using Board Games” by Prasarn (2023), which found that 1) Board games develop wit and creativity. Board games with easy-to-understand rules are fun and help develop thinking, planning, and using careful, flexible thinking. There was interaction in groups that participated in the play. 2) Results comparing the ability to manage cognition, emotion, and behavior after studying students in the Education Program in Science and Thai Language show that there is an average after studying flexibility of thinking. The initiative aspect, the aspect of memory that is used, and the planning aspect were significantly higher at the .05 level.

Results from research objective 3: “To study trends or possibilities in Thai chess sports in the base of Soft Power”, it was found that to study trends or possibilities in Thai chess sports in the base of soft power, definitely for Thailand. This was because Thai chess acts as a cultural ambassador. It can promote Thai culture and values, promote international participation, and create a good image of the country as a form of communication of Thai chess through gameplay and international promotion. Thai chess effectively conveys the cultural richness of Thailand and is one of the trends in world society. This is because the government has promoted arts and culture, which are the heritage of Thailand, to be soft power through promotion from the community. It has become a local, provincial, and national culture, leading to the promotion of Thai chess as a culture at the international level. According to UNESCO’s guidelines for promotion, it is an

intangible heritage, which corresponds to a part of UNESCO's mission, which is protecting world cultural heritage and promoting diverse cultures (UNESCO, n.d.).

Research Question 1: Is Thai Chess Soft Power? Thai chess is a cultural heritage that has an extensive history, which creates meaning and strength for society in the country until it becomes a cultural influence. In addition, Thai chess creates cultural values that are interesting in the same direction (Prachot, 2023). If a traditional sport (Thai chess) is not consistent with cultural issues or resources available, it cannot have soft power. There must be crystal clear objectives to be achieved through Thai chess.

Research Question 2: Is soft power in Thai chess considered a persuasion power? From this study, it became known that the power of persuasion, or soft power, enables the resources or culture of Thai chess as a traditional sport palatable to other countries. Literature offers four guidelines for implementation to be successful: absorbing resources or culture to be inserted into the target group linked to lifestyles and preferences, creating selling points by creating interesting media, creating a memorable image, and presenting trends and situations to connect with the perceptions of interested groups. This is consistent with an interview with an expert who spoke about soft power in Thai chess. Thai chess should create an interesting selling point and quickly lead to soft power.

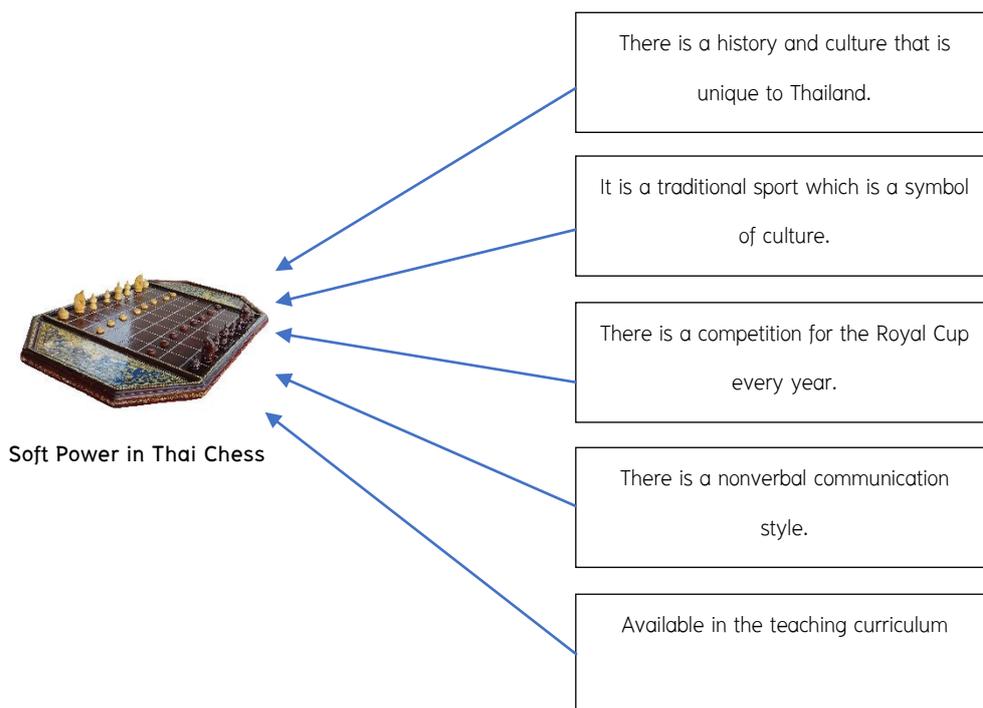
Research Question 3: Does Thai chess have communication contexts? Thai chess, as a traditional sport, is considered to have persuasive communication power. From this study, readers know and understand more about the power of persuasion. Moreover, from this research, it is possible to look at Thai chess in the additional communication context as follows: nonverbal (emotions, thoughts, and intentions), military strategy concept model, and competition and public relations aspects.

There are trends or possibilities for communicating the soft power of Thai chess as a traditional sport to the larger public inside Thailand and overseas. Nonverbal communication plays an important role in spreading the art of Thai chess in the form of persuasive power. It has the attractive appearance of a chess set. The research confirms the importance and relevance of communication theories in connection to soft power, culture, and traditional sports by literature as well. Playing chess expresses the body language of the players and the surrounding cultural context. They all contribute to gestures, facial expressions, and non-verbal messages, using nonverbal cues such as hand gestures, facial expressions, and positioning during a chess match. Playing Thai chess reflects cultural norms and values. Thus, it helps to strengthen the gentle

power of Thai cultural identity. The study also finds interviews with experts in political science, history, archeology, military science, communication, fine arts, and music, which stated that Thai chess is very beneficial to a better understanding of communication, soft power, culture, and traditional sport (Thai chess). This is consistent with Table 3. The expression of the opponent's facial expression, gesture, and emotion is considered communication or showing the other party's knowledge of winning and losing. This is consistent with the research question regarding communication context.

### New knowledge from research

This research provides an innovative insight and interdisciplinary look at Thai chess or “Makruk” as a traditional sport from across disciplines including communication, soft power, and culture. Thai chess as a traditional sport renders a symbol of Thai culture and heritage and is perceived as an important cultural heritage of the country. It can act as a medium of communication and dissemination of Thai culture and values, which contribute to the soft power of Thailand. Further, Thai chess has emerged as a unique historical and cultural element of Thailand. From this perspective, one can promote Thai culture and traditions throughout the world while creating interest and curiosity about Thai customs and traditions.



## Conclusion

This study found that 1) Thai chess tournaments for general and international audiences can increase the attractiveness of Thai culture to foreigners and influence their perceptions of Thailand. Moreover, Thai chess is a form of soft power for Thailand, it can act as a cultural ambassador to promote Thai culture and values, promote international participation, and create a good image of the country because the Thai government has promoted art and culture as the heritage of Thailand using this soft power through promotions from the community. 2) The role and communication format of the Thai chess game can be done in the context of being an influential force and transmitting the power of culture. Thailand to foreign countries Thai chess can serve as a platform for international participation by communicating through international participation. Thailand can also promote cross-cultural understanding and exchange by organizing international Thai chess tournaments. Or promote games both domestically and abroad. It not only promotes Thai culture but also creates a good image of the country around the world. In terms of cultural representation, Thai chess as a traditional sport has unique rules and gameplay, showing intelligence, and analytical thinking. And the fun aspect between players and competitors. Which has its own cultural identity. It also transmits the values and traditions of Thai culture to audiences around the world. 3) Thai chess as a traditional sport can join the bandwagon by mentioning its relevance and impact on local, provincial, and national cultures, which leads to the promotion of Thai chess. To be a culture at the international level According to UNESCO's promotion guidelines Such an inheritance is considered an intangible inheritance. This is in line with UNESCO's mission to protect the world's cultural heritage and promote diverse cultures.

## Recommendations and Future Research

### 1. Suggestions for implications.

Results from research objective 1: “To study Soft Power in Thai chess sports” found that from the perspective of the historical background of traditional sport (Thai chess), Thai chess can be considered a symbol of Thai culture and heritage. Therefore, Thai chess can act as a medium for spreading Thai culture and values, which creates the soft power of Thailand in the historical, and cultural context.

Results from research objective 2: “To understand the role and style of the Soft Power communication on the Thai chess board” found that Thai chess can be used to promote intercultural communication, cultural uniqueness, and traditional values of Thailand. Thai chess can

be used as a soft power to influence the perception of Thai cultural excellence and historical narratives around the world. It is important to promote Thai chess through government agencies responsible for the promotion of soft power to present Thai chess for its potential as a UNESCO intangible heritage.

Results from research objective 3: “To study trends or possibilities in Thai chess sports in the base of Soft Power” found that Thai chess, which is an important cultural heritage of Thailand, has the potential for soft power communication. Since this study focuses extensively on soft power in Thai chess, it deals with historical and ethnographic processes of soft power. It’s surprising how long the sport of Thai chess has existed. This study recommends that the Thai government should develop policies to promote soft power in the cultural sector, which currently lacks a clear definition.

## 2. Suggestions for future research

This article is part of the main research work. Therefore, there is limited scope for study regarding soft power in Thai chess. What the author proposes are things that should be studied further for those interested in the future, including:

1. The impact of Thai cultural symbols and communication after the plan to promote culture to the world and cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.
2. The role of Thai chess in promoting intercultural communication and promoting the cultural identity and traditional values of Thailand.
3. The potential of Thai chess to contribute to the soft power of the country and its influence on the perception of Thai cultural excellence and historical narratives around the world.
4. The promotion of Thai chess through government agencies responsible for the promotion of soft power to present Thai chess for its potential as a UNESCO intangible culture.

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