"AN ACCIDENTAL MATRIARCHY":
A SPECIAL CASE OF A LEADING SINO-THAI WOMAN IN BUSINESS

by
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Declaration

This thesis is the author's own work, unless otherwise acknowledged.

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26 September 2003
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This study traces the history of the Sino-Thai businesswoman Tongpoon Wanglee (1905-71) and the development of her Poonphol Group, which became by chance a matriarchal branch of the Wanglee family rice trading and banking businesses in Thailand. She was the first senior businesswoman in the family and, after her husband’s assassination in 1945, revived and expanded the Poonphol Group (dealing with the manufacture and import-export trade of agricultural products, real-estate, construction; etc.). Additionally, this business expanded laterally to contribute to the main Wanglee business empire, serving as an ancillary division to support its growth and diversification. Thus, they have a shared history, in terms of both family and business ties.

The Poonphol Group was unusual in its management style, since it was run by a matriarch, with some assistance from both her Lamsam family as well as her Wanglee in-law family. This runs counter to the Chinese tradition of favouring the male line and male leadership, and different from the practice of the majority of other Sino-Thai family businesses before and after World War II. Later, after her death, although the Poonphol business leadership reverted to the patriarchal character typical of other businesses, especially Chinese and Sino-Thai businesses, there still existed female managers of small branches of the business empire, both via her daughters, Praphai Bisanbutra and Saisukhon Wanglee, and her granddaughters, Pimpraphai Bisanbutra and Pimphaka Wanglee. As such, Tongpoon’s matriarchal character served as an important turning point for subsequent female business involvement in the Wanglee family. In this regard, I examine the factors which led to Tongpoon’s achievements, and whether gender difference was a hindrance to her business management in any way.

In addition to tracing the development of the matriarchal leadership of the Poonphol Group, related issues like gender and kinship ties, negotiation and networking by women, and the concept of Sino-Thai identity and ethnicity in the changing Thai political, social and economic settings are explored.

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Illustration No. 1 - Tongpoon Wanglee: The Founder of The Poonphol Group

Tongpoon Wanglee (1905-1971)

(Poonphol Group, 1992:9)
Chapter 1
Introduction

While most Sino-Thai women's histories, especially in pre-World War II period, are confined to the conventional Chinese female role imported by the Chinese migrants, with the cultural expectations of them being mothers, wives and housewives within the home, the case of Tongpoon Wanglee's (1905-1971) leadership in a business empire represents, to a certain extent, a break in tradition. In fact, this was an accidental matriarchy.

The accidental matriarchy occurred within the Wanglee family, which has been a prominent, Sino-Thai business family for more than a century. Matriarchy, according to The Australian Oxford Dictionary (Moore, 1999), is defined as "a society or family system governed by females, especially mothers". Sino-Thai, is defined as descendants of Chinese ancestors residing in Thailand and holding Thai citizenship. In the traditional Sino-Thai and Chinese patriarchal systems, men are valued as heads of the family, of business, and of society, and women are looked upon as being subservient to men. In this regard, a matriarchy within the usual Sino-Thai patriarchal way of doing business is an anomaly which came about by chance. The main reason for Tongpoon’s leadership in business and her success in expanding a business empire after her husband’s death was because she happened to be in the right place at the right time. Here, I propose to ask four primary questions. First, to what extent was Tongpoon’s career achievements due to her Chinese family background? Second, to what extent did she exploit the patriarchal system to develop her own business? Third, is gender still an important factor in determining who holds power and how power is used? And finally, did gender make a difference in the management of the business?

To date, most studies on gender in Thailand tend to employ the terms male-dominance and sometimes, female-dominance, rather than patriarchy or matriarchy. Examples include the

1 Perhaps the first question that arises when we talk about “matriarchy” is whether such societies ever exist – one in which women are publicly recognized as being equal to or more powerful than men. For more details, see Pranees Wongseth (2001), Phet lae wattanatham [Gender and Culture], Bangkok: Sinlapawattanatham Co. Ltd., p. 3-7.
works of Thomas A. Kirsch (1982), Amara Phongsapich (1986), Kornvipa Boonsue (1992), H. Gardiner and O. Gardiner (1991), and Suwadee Tanprasitpatana (1999). However, patriarchy/matriarchy have more precise meanings than male/female dominance since they also incorporate the position of the father/mother, another meaning not present in the idea of male/female dominance. Male dominance may apply to any business or other situation, but a position where the eldest male of the family is also the business head is better called a patriarchy. Therefore, in view of the expanding, upper-class Sino-Thai business circle which presently has both male and female leadership, depending on family inheritance, I am inclined for clarity to use matriarchy/patriarchy to describe the business management of a Sino-Thai family such as the Wanglee family.

Recently, scholars in the field of gender like Jiemin Bao (1998, 2001, 2003) and Kanchana Kaeothep et al (n.d.) have also begin using this distinction to clearly designate the difference of gender roles in society. Bao employs the term patriarchy in her works on pre-1949 Chinese migrant families as well as on contemporary Sino-Thai marriages, whereas Kanchana et al.‘s work discusses gender theories and practice, especially the divisions of labour within the family in Thailand by using the term patriarchy for Thai society. However, in this thesis, Bao’s works will be given more emphasis because I am focusing on Sino-Thai business management.

The Wanglee Family Group of Companies is the fruit of four generations of entrepreneurial effort, following the arrival in Thailand (or Siam, which was Thailand’s name before 1939) from Swatow of a Teochiu Chinese immigrant in the late nineteenth century. In Thailand, the family’s business started with milling and the export of rice. Today, the Group is active in insurance, agriculture, agri-industry, construction, real estate and land development. The export of agricultural products has remained the mainstay of the family’s business activities.

The history of this Wanglee family business empire will be examined, since it consists of two streams of business – the main, patriarchal Wanglee Group and the sub-grouping, briefly matriarchal Poonphol Group, whose ownership belonged to Tongpoon, the third generation

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2 The country’s name was changed to “Thailand,” (literally meaning, “land of the Thais and land of freedom,”) during the Thai nationalist policy of Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram (1938-44, 1948-57). For more details, see David Wyatt (1984), Thailand: A Short History, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, p. 243-275. However, to avoid confusion, the present name of the country, Thailand, will be employed throughout this thesis.
daughter-in-law of the family, and the central subject of this thesis. Tongpoon’s story is important because after the violent death of her husband in 1945, she expanded her business of importing cosmetics as well as male and female clothing, which she had previously established as an interest, to become a business empire of agri-business, land development, warehousing, construction and much more. The matriarchal character of the Poonphol Group began with the leadership of Tongpoon, before returning to the more usual patriarchal character after her retirement due to ill health and subsequent death, with her sons, Suwit and later, Sukit, replacing her as head of the Poonphol Group of Companies as well as assuming the role as President of the Wanglee Group. The very successful Wanglee Group is one of the Sino-Thai families which retain much of the generally conservative Chinese traditions of business management (Supphalak, 1996: Phanni, 1986: 158-159), and it is interesting to see how this one generation of matriarchal leadership of the Poonphol Group existed within the Wanglee business. Thus, the Wanglee family business is the best case study for exploring, as well as comparing and contrasting, the matriarchal character of Tongpoon and her Poonphol Group in relation to the patriarchal character of the Wanglee Group.

This thesis will be divided into eight chapters. After this introduction, Chapter 2 will serve as a prelude, briefly describing the evolution of the overseas Chinese in Thailand, how they became “Sino-Thais,” and how they operated within the Thai environment. Chapter 3 will outline the relevant gender relations in Chinese, Thai and Sino-Thai business societies. Since the Sino-Thai business community is more Chinese than Thai, it is therefore largely patriarchal. Chapter 4 will concentrate on the broad picture - the origin and development of the Wanglee “Family” business empire, tracing the Wanglee family empire through the three generations which preceded Tongpoon’s time, from the origins of first generation Tan Tsu Huang (1841-1920) and the Wanglee branch in Thailand, through second generation Tan Lip Buay (1881 – 1930), to third generation Tan Siew Men (1904-1945), as well as an analysis of the patrilineal character of Wanglee family business management. Chapter 5, which is the main focus of the thesis, will discuss Tongpoon Wanglee and her relations with The Poonphol Group, 1942-1971, from its establishment to the revival and expansion of the business. The following questions arise. How did she do it? What were her sources of help? Were her “Chinese” roots and the changing Thai social structure that gave Thai women more freedom and more rights among the
factors in her achievement? Moreover, what were her relations with the Wanglee Group once she had decided to pursue a business career? All these factors will be taken into consideration. Chapter 6 will discuss other female business counterparts during Tongpoon’s era to show that there existed other cases similar to Tongpoon’s and that all of them shared a similar path to business success. Business traditions, especially in terms of gender limitations, were not necessarily hindrances for women’s success in business. Chapter 7 will focus on the management of the Poonphol Group in the post-Tongpoon period, through the management of second generation Poonphol Group, headed by her eldest son, Suwit Wanglee, signifying the transfer of the leadership to the male line after Tongpoon’s death. However, it was also during this post-Tongpoon period that there arose female managers holding secondary positions within the business group. As such, the management of the Poonphol Group in the post-Tongpoon period was a patriarchy with reduced male-dominance. Finally, Chapter 8, which is the conclusion, will address the main issues raised in this thesis.

In terms of methodology, the research employed both primary and secondary sources available both in Canberra, Australia and in Bangkok, Thailand. Following initial research in Canberra, primary sources are mostly obtained from my three months fieldwork in Bangkok from December 2002 to February 2003. Part of the task there was to look through the company’s corporate publications, as well as related cremation books, theses, stories and interview articles in newspapers and magazines unavailable in Canberra, most of which are written in the Thai language. The task was carried out by working at the National Archives of Thailand, and through library research and talks with scholars at Thammasat University and at the Centre of Chinese Studies, Chulalongkorn University. In addition, I conducted interviews with Wanglee family members. Here, a quantity of unpublished personal information was revealed. Aside from primary sources, I also relied on secondary sources for background information on gender issues, stories of the overseas Chinese in Thailand, as well as the history of the Wanglee family itself. Research for this part was conducted primarily in Canberra, using both Thai and English language texts as well as Thai language paperback books about the success of the general Sino-Thai business families.3

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3 Thanawat Saphhaibun, a journalist specializing on Sino-Thai family tycoons (members of the Wanglee family being included), wrote many Thai language paperback books on the topic. Initially, I had planned to interview him. However, ever since he resigned from The Nation Group and become an independent writer, contacting him was very difficult. Thus, my only source of information from him was through his publications, such as the articles he
For this study, there were several key sources which I have relied heavily upon. For instance, in terms of primary sources, *Dutnawa klang mahasamut* [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration], written by Khunying Chamnongsri Hanchanalash (1995, 1998 revised edition), is the first detailed history of the Wanglee family in Thailand. Chamnongsri is a member of the Lamsam and Wanglee family, thus a close relative of the Wanglee family. She provides a thorough, family account of the family itself. Another major source of information has been the 50th Anniversary of the Poonphol Group (1992), the first complete story of the origin and development of the Poonphol Group to 1992. Earlier, studies on the company existed only in the form of brief references in business newspapers and magazines. 50th Anniversary of the Poonphol Group is therefore beneficial since it contains the company’s corporate profile, providing details of company matters such as the origin of the company, details of the board of management, business expansion, developments and joint ventures, as well as a summary of Tongpoon’s management and contribution to society at large; etc.

Aside from the above documentary sources, interviews were also considered important primary accounts. For this research, I interviewed several of Tongpoon’s relatives. Among the key ones which I have relied heavily on are Pimpraphai Bisanbutra and Khunying Chatchanee Chatikavanich. Both are relatives of Tongpoon and have careers in business. Therefore, not only did I have the opportunity to obtain information on Tongpoon, but also on the essence of being a Sino-Thai businesswoman. Pimpraphai is the granddaughter of Tongpoon, born from Tongpoon’s eldest daughter, Praphai. She was said to be very close to her mother and grandmother (Chammongsri, 2003 and Pimpraphai, 2002a). In addition, she is also considered the historian of the family. She was a former lecturer at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) and also studied Thai history in great depth. She has published two


The transliteration and transcription of Thai words in this thesis follow the Romanization Guide For Thai Script (1982) by the Ratchabandittayasathan (Royal Institute, Thailand), Bangkok: Prayurawong Company Ltd., unless in cases where the English spelling has already been determined.
books on the Sino-Thais – one on Sino-Thai culture titled *Samphao Siam: tamnan chek Bangkok* [Siamese junks: the legend of the Chinese in Bangkok] (2001), and the other *Nai Mae* [Mother] (2003), a book about female business entrepreneurs in her paternal Sino-Thai family, the Bisanbutra family. With regard to the Wanglee family, she also assisted Chamnongsri with the information for writing up *Dutnawa klang mahasamut*. Chatchanee is also a close relative to Tongpoon, being Tongpoon’s niece. Formerly, she headed the Loxley Company, a branch of the Lamsam business. Although she married out to the Chativanich family, she was still considered a fourth-generation Lamsam. What is interesting here is the fact that though Pimpraphai and Chatchanee had married out into other families, they still work for their own natural families.

However, like other studies, this study has limitations. As usual in research, there is the problem concerning the reliability of the source materials used. Particularly, this limitation can be applied to cremation books as well as interviews with family members, for they only provide the family perspective.

Cremation books (or *nangsu ngan sop*), distributed during the cremation ceremonies of major persons like high-ranking officials, famous business people, or members of royal families, may be selective in themselves. When printing became popular in the early twentieth century, books of this kind then became a valuable and memorable source, and have become a long-practiced custom since then (Suehiro, 1996:13-14). Cremation books are beneficial. They record the life and career of the deceased, which is a part often missing in the general history if the person was not an important figure of the country. Particularly, if the person was an ordinary woman, she would be left out in mainstream male-dominated history. Many cremation books are kept at the National Library and other important libraries in Thailand, as well as at the Library of Wat Bowon-niwet and the Library of Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, who encouraged their production. Some cremation books are also available at the National Library of Australia.

Normally, a cremation book consists of three sections. The first section contains condolence messages written by both relatives and friends of the deceased. The second section provides a biographical sketch of the deceased and recalls his/her good deeds and contribution to Thai society. The third section then often concludes with a series of articles or stories written by
or about the deceased. The beginning and ending parts of the cremation books that I have used are very useful in the study of the history of Thai society, and are equally valuable in the study of Sino-Thai capitalists, for they supply information not otherwise readily available publicly. These accounts not only provide information about the deceased but often, talk about the political, social or economic situation at that time as well. However, cremation books can also be misleading at times. Cremation books, as eulogies, often tend to be hagiographic in nature. Being from a family member perspective, the contents often praise and over-emphasize the positive traits of the deceased, ignoring the negative factors. Regarding the deceased, nothing if not good: a good case of the Latin phrase, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

Interviews with family members, while being fruitful, are also subject to being personal views. During the interview, the family members would share stories and experiences they have known, most of which are not written down, being oral histories passed from one generation to the next. Therefore, new information is obtained. However, like cremation books, interviews also have a negative side, for they provide a personal, one-sided view of the family. Most of the time, the family members would speak in the best interest of the deceased and the family, to uphold or preserve the family’s good reputation. Interviewing many family members might help restore balance to the narrative, but one should never be certain of removing this limitation, especially in Chinese and Sino-Thai families, who place high priority on trust, cooperation and love among family members.

Thus, judgement on the researcher’s part as to which information to trust is necessary. In this regard, I have sought the opinions of Wanglee-family specialists, mainly Thai University scholars like Supphalak Pornkulwat, a sociologist at Thammasat University; and Phanni Bualek, an economic historian at Kroek University, as outsiders of the family, to provide balance. Both of them have researched and written about the Wanglee family business as well as other Sino-Thai business families.

Supphalak Pornkulvat’s MA thesis (1996) from the Faculty of Sociology and Humanities, Thammasat University, titled “*Phattanakan kan damnoen thurakit lae kan thamrong ekkalak thurakit baep chin: koranee suksa song trakun*” [“Business Development and the Preservation of Chinese Business Identity: A Case Study of Two Business Families”], is a comparison on the
Chinese family business management of the Wanglee and the Chokwattana (consumer goods) family businesses. She demonstrates the family-oriented structure of the Chinese family business.

Phanni Bualek has also carried out several studies on Thai capitalists groups in the twentieth century, most of whom are Sino-Thai. Among her works useful for this thesis include “Kan toep to lae kan phattana khong nai thun thanakhan phanit nai thai (2475-2516)” [“Growth and Development of Thai Banking Capitalists (1932-1973)”] (1985), an MA thesis (History) from Chulalongkorn University; Wikho nai thun thanakhan phanit khong thai, B.E. 2475-2516 [Analysis of the Thai Capitalist Group, 1932-1973] (1986); and Laksana khong naithun thai nai chuang rawang B.E. 2457-2482 bot rian chak khwamrungrot su sokkanattakam [Character of Thai Capitalists during 1914-1939: Lessons from success to failure] (2002).

In summary, there exist several sources of information on the Poonphol Group. However, each source has its own advantages and disadvantages because of the availability of private information but also because of the problem of possible bias. The solution is to employ all sources, filling in gaps, conducting interviews of family relatives and those close to Tongpoon, and comparing and contrasting the information obtained with the perspective beyond the family. We then can have some supportive evidence to carry out the first complete analysis of Tongpoon and the Poonphol Group.

Finally, I do not claim that the historical portrayal of Tongpoon presented here can be used as a generalisation for all Sino-Thai women in business. Cases vary, according to individual background and experiences. However, in my opinion, Tongpoon's story does shed some light on the relationship between gender, culture, economics and power. It reflects an unusual historical instance of a Sino-Thai woman's leadership and advancement in business, as well as her exploitation of Chinese customs and male networking within the Wanglee patriarchal family business to benefit her business. How did all these factors work together? The following chapters will tell the story.

**********
Chapter 2
A Brief History of the Overseas Chinese in Thailand

Introduction

Thailand's economy is dominated by a small number of family empires, most of which were founded by Thais of Chinese descent and significantly expanded in the new economic climate following World War II (Suehiro, 1996). In some cases, the founders of these vast commercial, industrial or financial empires originally came from situations of extreme poverty in China. In this respect, it will be useful to give a brief overview of the origin and development of the Chinese in Thailand and in the economic affairs of the country, for it dates back many centuries. By doing so, we shall see that most of the story focuses on the role of the Chinese male entrepreneurs. The history of the overseas Chinese in Thailand is thus a male-centered account.

Settlement in Siam/Thailand

Male migration

The Chinese have had a long history of association with Thailand. This could be traced back to Ayudhya (1350?-1767) times when Chinese were hired by the court as craftsmen or skilled labourers, or even earlier, to Sukhothai (1238?-1438?)\(^5\) when Chinese started to trade through the Thai-China state tributary system. At that time, the Thai state had monopolized trade on strongly hierarchical or sakdina lines and had absolute control of the economy. The Chinese

\(^5\) There exist differences in opinion about the exact time period of the Ayudhya and Sukhothai eras. Therefore, I rely on the date taken from Wyatt (1984:309, 312-313) and put “question marks” beside these dates to indicate my uncertainty. For more details, see David Wyatt (1984), Thailand: A Short History.
first came in as itinerant traders, selling and buying goods, and then returning to their homeland (Yiphan, 2002:3-5).

Later on, large-scale Chinese migration flowed into the country as well as to other neighbouring countries within the Southeast Asian region. Among the later different waves of Chinese immigration were two major influxes. The first large-scale arrival took place in 1782 under the reign of King Taksin (1767-1782), a half-Teochiu, half-Thai monarch (Skinner, 1957). Having assumed the monarchy after leading the Thai army in defeating Burmese invaders after 1767 and moving the capital to Thonburi (part of present-day Bangkok), Taksin encouraged the migration of Teochiu Chinese, who belonged to his dialect group. Many of them served in the court and became known as chinluang or “royal Chinese” (Skinner 1957:21).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were reports of several thousand Chinese migrants entering the country each year. According to H.S. Hallet, an Englishman who visited Thailand in 1884, “The Chinamen in Siam [Thailand] seem ubiquitous. Half of the population of the Menam delta - the Bangkok area - is Chinese and very few of the people are without some trace of Chinese blood in them” (Coughlin, 1960:14). Later, there was a second great influx of Chinese, who came in as common labourers, from 1918 to 1955. This was a period of massive construction of the railroad and other parts of the infrastructure for Thailand’s modernisation (Skinner, 1957).

There were several reasons behind the increase in overseas Chinese migration into the country. Most of these Chinese immigrants came from the maritime regions of South China (particularly from the provinces of Guangdong and Fukien which comprise several language groups) (Skinner, 1957:35-41), where access to the sea and trade influences along the ports were

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6 The Burmese had sacked Ayudhya in 1767. Thus, King Taksin had waged war to drive the Burmese out of the country. In addition, he had also freed Chiang Mai from the Burmese and annexed areas of Laos. It was believed that many of his soldiers were overseas Teochiu Chinese from his hometown (Wyatt, 1984:139-142). For more details, see David Wyatt (1984), Thailand: A Short History.

7 This modernisation of the country could be seen as the result of the country’s Westernisation in early twentieth century. Thailand was situated in the midst of danger and influence from colonialism in Southeast Asia. In a way, Westernisation of the country was seen as the solution to escape colonisation and catch up with the developments in neighbouring colonies. For more details, see G.W. Skinner (1957), Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
among the factors encouraging immigration. Other reasons included economic adversity, internal chaos upon the fall of the Manchu Empire by the end of 1911 and the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912, natural disasters, and intolerable living conditions at home. Moreover, these immigrants were attracted by better opportunities overseas - higher wages, better living conditions, work, expansion of business experience, education, adventure, and more.8

At the time, the Chinese tended to associate themselves with regions of China and regional languages rather than with China itself. This practice continued in Thailand and the various language groups became important points of identity.

Female migration

In terms of Chinese female migration, this did not occur until at a much later date (around the early twentieth century). Initial Chinese immigration to Thailand, like early phases of immigration to all Western countries, was predominantly male. Prior to the 1911 Chinese Revolution, families seldom followed the migrants overseas. As claimed by writers like G.W. Skinner, Richard Coughlin, among others, one of the reasons was that the migrant himself had every intention of returning to China once he had made his fortune overseas (Skinner, 1957:176; Coughlin 1960:23). Further, women were looked upon as a hindrance to their husbands and the husbands needed the wives to remain in China to look after their in-laws and their children. Often, remittances by male migrants were sent back to support the entire extended family as a symbol of support and care by the absent husband. In addition, migration of Chinese women (not counting those illegal migrants who were often sold as prostitutes to Thailand due to family poverty) was restricted by the lineage councils in the emigrant areas of South China and considered unacceptable in the villages for fear of the loss of the family line in China (Ta Chen, 1923:84; Landon, 1941:52; Skinner, 1957:126).

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8 The most obvious of these is the question of wages. The Chinese abroad invariably received higher wages than their brethren in the same occupations at home, although the fact should be borne in mind that the Chinese at home have a comparatively lower cost of living and are able to get along with lower wages. However, as mentioned above, most of these Chinese migrants wanted to escape from the poor economic, social and political hardships in China and sought “new lives” (Coughlin, 1960:20-22).
However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, with the Chinese Revolution and the subsequent political unrest in China, followed by Chinese female migration restrictions being lifted, migration of Chinese women to Thailand slowly increased (Skinner, 1954:161, 243-244). Many were wives left by their husbands in China who used their conjugal connection (and the fact that they wanted to escape from their strict mothers-in-law) to migrate abroad. Some were prostitutes who came in search of work. During that time, ninety percent of the female immigrants were already married and sixty-four percent of them belonged to the fifteen to forty-four years old age group (Loh Siew Jing, 1996:65). Evidence for this was taken from early twentieth century official data - namely, following the introduction of the new Household Register Record (around 1919), during King Vajiravudh’s (Rama VI – 1910-1925) reign (Loh Siew Jing, 1996:65). In the first year (1921-1922) for which immigration by sex was recorded, only fifteen percent of the Chinese immigrants were females (Skinner, 1957:190). The proportion steadily increased thereafter (Skinner, 1957:190). Using Bao’s (2003:135) data, \(^9\) migration of Chinese women peaked between 1919 and 1937. However, from 1937-1945, due to restrictions on Chinese movement and economic activity during the first term of the government of Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram (henceforth referred to as Phibun) as well as the subsequent Japanese occupation in Thailand during World War II, the number of Chinese women migrants decreased. Nonetheless, the decline in Chinese female immigrants did not necessarily mean the decline in the overall Chinese women in Thailand, for the emergence of the Sino-Thai community and the birth of children in Thailand, often the product of the intermarriage between Chinese male migrants and Thai local women, helped promote the number of Sino-Thai women.

Chinese immigration to Thailand was not a continuous process. The last wave of migration that took place was between end of World War II and before the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949. After 1949, both the Thai and Chinese states imposed strict rules restricting migration. No substantial number of Chinese immigrants arrived in Thailand again, until the economic boom in the mid-1980s (Bao, 2003:128-129).

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Interruption

During the early stages of Chinese migration, once settled and working in Thailand, Chinese male immigrants (whether already married or single) often married with local women. The shortage of single Chinese women in Thailand thus limited the immigrants' options to marry. Initially, they had but two choices - to return to China for a bride, or to marry a local woman. The convenience of arranging local marriages, as compared with the expense and difficulty of bringing a wife from China, encouraged intermarriage with the Thais (Coughlin, 1960:76-79). Many immigrants, with wives in China whom they were unable or unwilling to bring to Thailand, readily intermarried with the Thai, setting up two branches of the family - one in China and the other in Thailand (Coughlin, 1960:76-79). Many prominent Sino-Thai businessmen today trace their origins to such Sino-Thai unions. And as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, the Wanglee family is one such example.

Later, as the Sino-Thai community developed, marrying Sino-Thai women, often second-generation at this stage, became another option for Chinese immigrants or Sino-Thai men. However, these Sino-Thai women were often sought and won by Thai elites and in some cases, by those Sino-Thai men of better-off families. Thus, a few Chinese merchants' daughters found they had acquired new "worth" and desirability in Thailand, largely because of their sex/gender and the fair skin colour (Skinner, 1958:8). A wealthy family would seek a spouse from a family in a similar social and economic position, preferably situated in complementary business activities, while families occupying lower places in society would try, through marriages with families better situated, to improve their own life chances (Bao, 2003:133-135).

Furthermore, among the Chinese and Sino-Thai people, marriages also took place between the different Chinese language groups as well. Generally speaking, marriage within the same language group was strongly preferred. Language used within the home was the main barrier to intermarriage among language groups, but differences in customs and tradition also played a part (Coughlin, 1960:77-79). However, exceptions to the rule have occurred, primarily because of the disparate sex ratios in Thailand among the various language groups, but also because of increased freedom in the choice of marriage partners, greater opportunities for
intimate contact with those of other language groups, business advantages and networks – all of which lead to more and more language group intermarriage (Coughlin, 1960:77-79). Marriage between the Wanglee family, who are Teochius, and the Lamsam family, who are Hakkas, is an example. Tongpoon Lamsam, our main object of study in this thesis, had married Tan Siew Men Wanglee. Marriages occurred between other members of the two families as well. Both the Wanglees and the Lamsams are among the largest business families that have roots in the pre-World War I era, and have established close links with each other in terms of the intermarriages among their family members. In turn, these links contributed to the solidarity of business roots and influence, as well as the expanding engagement in many similar business sectors, mainly banking, rice milling and exporting, shipping ports, and import-export trade (Kroekkiat, 1981b:15).

Circumstances began to change by early twentieth century, a period when there was an increase in Chinese women immigration. By the late 1920s, most of the male immigrants were married, and over a third of all male immigrants were bringing their wives with them (Landon, 1941:213). Immigration of whole families was not uncommon. Unmarried male immigrants and those Sino-Thai men could by then more easily find wives among China-born or those Sino-Thai women (Landon, 1941:213). Intermarriage with Thai women was becoming less common, at least in Bangkok and other areas of Chinese population (Coughlin, 1960:76).

This increase in Chinese women migration was confirmed by King Prajadhipok (Rama VII – 1925-1935) in his memorandum to Dr. Sayre in July 1926 (Batson, 1984:294). According to Batson (1984:294),

The king said that in the former days, the Chinese married Siamese [Thai] women and became very good Siamese citizens. Since the Chinese revolution, however, the situation changed. The Chinese brought their wives from China, and were determined to remain Chinese; thus, "...We lose a source of good and industrious citizens, and with the new ideas in China filtering through, it becomes a latent danger."

Suwadee states that "The king further expressed his opinion that Siam [Thailand] should begin to consider restricting the influx of Chinese female migrants, because it would be harmful
to Thai society if the Chinese married among themselves" (National Archives of Thailand Personal Papers 2.42/91, quoted in Suwadee, 1989:180). As Suwadee (1989:179-180) remarks, the increased proportion of women among Chinese immigrants led to the “unassimilation” of the Chinese men in Thailand. Some Chinese prostitutes even gave up their trade and married Chinese men. G.W. Skinner further adds that this female migration trend continued well into the postwar years, for after World War II, “about half of the male migrants in Thailand brought wives from China, and other China-born residents returned to China to marry or bring back to Thailand wives they already had there” (Skinner, 1954:244). Thus, the rising number of female migrants as well as those second-generation women born in Thailand means that the sex ratio have become more balanced (Bao, 2003:136), although at the cost of the development of a separate Chinese society within Thai society.

**Economic life and opportunities**

The later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were generally periods of Western mercantile expansion into the Far East. Thailand felt the effects of this commercial revolution more intensely after 1855 when the Bowring Treaty between Thailand and Great Britain was signed. This treaty, negotiated by Sir John Bowring, British governor of Hong Kong, ended the previous isolation of Thailand from commercial intercourse with the West; there was a fear of subjugation by Western powers which dated back to the late seventeenth century. Eventually, the treaty led to unrestricted trade with the West. Henceforth, the activities of Chinese immigrants gradually changed from that of simple traders or labourers to essential middlemen between Western importers and exporters on the one hand and the Thai peasant population on the other hand. Given their ability to speak both the Thai and English languages, Chinese shopkeepers and traders could act as importers of Western manufactures for the Thai local population in Bangkok. At the same time, they could also act as exporters of local products such as tin and rubber to the West (Skinner, 1957:116-120). Thus, these Chinese served as a link between the Western manufacturers and Thai consumers. Moreover, other opportunities also opened for the Chinese. As rice production rose, new careers opened up for the Chinese as rice traders, moneylenders, barge operators and rice-mill owners.
In addition to the opening of Thailand to free trade, the 1893 repeal of the Chinese government edict prohibiting emigration also fostered immigration to Thailand. In the past, Chinese rulers had long been dissatisfied with overseas Chinese migration. Migration to foreign lands had been suppressed by the emperors of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1616-1911) Dynasties (Landon, 1941:198). Intending migrants could be punished by death. The Chinese have always held the notion that they were a superior race (Ta Chen, 1940:18; Bao, 2003:130). It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, under intense pressure from Britain as a result of the Nanking Treaty (1842) following China’s loss in the Opium War (1840-42), as well as under later pressure from other European nations, that China opened five ports and allowed Westerners to recruit Chinese migrant labourers. One such port, Swatow (Santou), where most of the Teochiu language group lived, became one of the busiest ports for exporting Chinese labour. In 1893, during the Qing Dynasty, the migration ban was officially lifted. Foreign relations improved. From 1894 onwards, Chinese diplomatic missions were ordered to look after the interests of the overseas Chinese migrants (Landon, 1941:198).

The successful economic absorption of the Chinese immigrants into Thailand was not surprising. Many had brought with them skills or crafts with which they could utilize. Some brought commercial experience, which enabled them to participate actively in the Chinese business community in Thailand (Coughlin, 1960:21-22). Coughlin details this advantage of the Chinese immigrants by drawing evidence from personal observations and interviews with these immigrants, as well as from The Statistical Yearbook of Siam, 1935-37 regarding the occupations of incoming male Chinese aliens.

Personal observation and the questioning of immigrant Chinese shows that while many were farmers in China, a good proportion were in other occupations. Some were fishermen or boatmen, a considerable number were artisans – carpenters, basket-makers, masons, tinkers, tailors – others in China had been marginal traders or small merchants… data collected from official publications supports the conclusion that the majority of immigrants were small traders or laborers, perhaps in addition to being farmers; it is not uncommon for farmers in China to have some craft or trade whereby they were able to make up for their insufficient agricultural incomes (Coughlin, 1960:21).
Many scholars like Kasian Tejapira, Sarasin Viraphol and Jamie Mackie have also raised Chinese traits as being one of the factors for Chinese business success. Chinese traits in this context will be defined in terms of a group of Chinese characteristics shared by the Sino-Thais in Thailand. These include the traditional values of hard work and family centeredness (Kasian, 1997:76), the determination to succeed in the host society (Sarasin, 1972:11) and the reliance on family business structure (Mackie, 1988:234) of the Chinese.

In terms of traditional Chinese values, Kasian says that there has been a widely held image of the traditional Chinese immigrant as having entrepreneurial virtues of diligence, hard work, obedience, patience, self-reliance, discipline, determination, self-denial, business acumen, friendship, family ties, honesty, shrewdness and modesty since ancient times (Kasian, 1997:76). These traits are based on Confucianism, viewed here as a storehouse of popular values. The central tenets of Confucianism are based on the four virtues of sincerity (xin), benevolence (jen), filial piety (hsiao), and propriety (li). The philosophy and the traditions Confucius wished to encourage, recover, and uphold can be described as “hierarchical, authoritarian, patrilineal, and embodying a strict sexual and generational division of labor” (Andors, 1983:12). This Confucian element remains strong in Chinese tradition both within and outside China (Liu Shu-hsien, 1996:111).

The drive to success of the Chinese immigrants is another cultural factor. There were numerous cases where the poor Chinese transformed into wealthy entrepreneurs mainly through individual efforts. “From rags to riches” was a one-time popular slogan. As Sarasin stated:

Although most Chinese were poor and illiterate at home, they came from a culture which put a high value on hard work and thrift... From the start, they had phenomenal success in competition with the local peoples whose cultures, developed in a rich tropical environment, placed a much lower rating on the value of diligence and material gain (Sarasin, 1972:11).

From this quotation, one can draw the conclusion that differences in the climate of the two countries – China and Thailand – had led, in this case, to the economic advantage in
Thailand of the Chinese over the Thais. The Chinese immigrants came from a country with a temperate climate but poor land, where huge amounts of labour resources and hard work were required. On the other hand, Thailand is a tropical country with a benign environment. Therefore, the work required for survival was not as demanding as in China. However, arriving in Thailand, the Chinese, who were once accustomed to hard work, thus had the working experience advantage (especially in terms of labour) over the more relaxed Thais and were more able to pursue whatever work they were faced with.

In a way, Chinese tradition runs counter to the tradition of the more relaxed lifestyle of the Thais. The Thais placed more value on government service and service to the king than on trade per se. Thais who had ability and education rose above the peasantry and sought careers as government officials, not as traders and merchants. For the Thais, social prestige and position were valued more than wealth (Coughlin, 1960:21-22). Trade was in the hands of royal and noble monopolies. Especially prior to the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, trading was an activity reserved for the upper echelons of society. Even taking this fact into consideration, the members of the nobility still relied on the Chinese merchants to operate the businesses in which they had invested, as will be discussed later. This is a form of patron-client tie. The Chinese merchants had the trading skills and experience which the Thais lacked. Besides, the members of the Thai nobility were more interested in the investment and the profit gained, rather than doing the business themselves. The Chinese, on the other hand, were materialistic, concerned principally with the acquisition of wealth as an end in itself or as a means to social position. For the Chinese, social status is defined largely in terms of wealth and business leadership.

With regard to the Chinese reliance on “family business structure”, it is important to ask the question why is it that while both the state and the indigenous business class were economically “weak”, the Chinese were “strong” (Mackie, 1988:234). Mackie (1988:234) argues that family business structure based on mutual help and trust could be said to be one of the reasons which contributed to Chinese economic success. Here, I would further add that the Chinese have always had to think of the future of their family descendants and would reserve the accumulated capital for them. As Walwipha (2002) stated, capital accumulation is what makes the thrifty Chinese and their descendants richer and richer. The Thai tradition tends to use money for display of social status as opposed to a base for future wealth.
However, possessing the qualities of “Chineseness” mentioned above is not of itself adequate for business success in Thailand. Though it cannot be denied that culture has a role in business success, the government as well as political and economic conditions in the country are equally important. Once settled in Thailand, many Chinese merchants became subject to the patron-client ties of the Thai state, a system whereby the Chinese would rely on the power of the state for protection, trade monopolies and channels to expand their business, while the expertise in trade and shipping of the Chinese were used to the state’s advantage of bringing income into the country, as well as using the Chinese as revenue agents and the King’s merchants. Many of the Chinese were later bestowed Thai official titles. Some even offered their daughters in marriage to the King or high state officials to foster closer connections with the state (Skinner, 1957).

This patron-client relationship continued after the 1932 abolition of the absolute monarchy. The 1932 Revolution not only destroyed the absolute monarchy, but also changed the relative position of the dominant capitalist groups. Initially, the new government had the idea of promoting the Thai people’s participation in profit-making industries instead of paddy cultivation, the so-called nationalism of the Thai state. However, in the prevailing economic environment, the Thai people had no capital funds to successfully undertake business activities in competition with foreign economic powers. Thus, the government itself was forced to become directly involved in significant industries in place of individual Thais. The state’s economic involvement resulted in the rise of a bureaucratic capitalist group, who replaced the nobility in the economic system and eventually controlled these enterprises. Political power shifted from the king to new political leaders, who were by and large members of the People’s Party. The role of the Privy Purse Bureau in the country’s economy was generally taken over by new state enterprises, although they still retained some economic influence.

The government set up a large number of state and public enterprises. Major existing manufacturing plants, which were formerly operated by the European and the Chinese, were also taken over by the government and consolidated into new state enterprises. European and Chinese capitalists suffered reductions in their economic influence during the process of expanding state control over business activity. However, the basic structure was somewhat similar to the
previous period during the years of absolute monarchy, with Chinese as tax farmers for the King. The new political leaders appointed influential Chinese capitalists to the posts of managing director of the companies and made them shareholders of state and public enterprises, as well as entrusting the business management to Chinese experts.

Sungsit Phiriyarangsan (1983) coined the term “bureaucratic capitalism” (*thun-niyom khun-nang*), to explain this new relationship between the Thai leaders and Chinese business elites between 1932 and 1960. This mutual relationship survived through different styles of government, from the early constitutional monarchy, through the military dictatorship regimes, to the present-day civilian governments. Specifically, bureaucratic capitalism had its origins in the nationalist economic policies undertaken from the late 1930s by Phibun and Pridi Phanomyong (henceforth referred to as Pridi), one of the leaders in the 1932 Revolution and the Finance Minister during the first Phibun government.

Bureaucratic capitalism refers to the process whereby political leaders, military leaders, and politico-bureaucrats act as directors and shareholders in state-sponsored companies, their own companies, and joint ventures with foreign and Chinese groups. Bureaucratic capitalists differ from private capitalists in two distinct ways. First, they usually hold control over the disposal of the economic earnings produced by a company either out of proportion to their shareholding, or in spite of the fact that they have no equity at all. This is due to the political power of the bureaucrats. Secondly, the economic earnings obtained from a company are utilized for the purposes of bolstering the bureaucrat’s political power rather than expanding and improving the firms’ production capacity. In other words, the rise of bureaucratic capitalism is a direct result of the predominance of the “bureaucratic polity” in Thailand, in the absence of a representative democratic polity at the time, and which determined the development pattern of domestic capitalism. This pattern developed more widely and intensely after the early 1950s, when the second Phibun government developed its model of “the Thai economy for the Thai people”. Under this slogan, fifty new state and public enterprises were set up in almost all economic fields (Sungsit, 1983). Many of the big Sino-Thai companies and capitalists grew out of this bureaucratic capitalist setting.
Thus, part of Chinese economic success in Thailand could be explained by dependence on the government, whether the government at that particular time was the king, the military regime or the civilian government. According to Hamilton and Waters (1997), there were generally three distinct, historical phases of Chinese economic development in Thailand. Each phase required the Chinese to respond by reconstructing the nature of their ethnicity as compared with the Thai majority (Hamilton and Waters, 1997:261-262). The first period dated from the eighteenth century and ended in 1932. During this time, the earlier Thai kings (Rama I-V) centralised control over the economy and encouraged an economically and politically powerful Chinese minority (Hamilton and Waters, 1997:265-268). The second period was the military regime, which came after monarchical rule in 1932, and was the time of “pariah entrepreneurship” (Hamilton and Waters, 1997:271-272). Here, interests between the military regime and the Chinese traders created a structural situation where ethnic oppression on the one hand and economic privilege on the other worked to achieve a stable relationship between the Thai bureaucratic elites and Chinese businessmen. The third period began gradually in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thailand came under the control of a series of civilian governments. This third period could be described as a “global capitalist period” because it was during this time that there was the creation of Chinese business networks and joint ventures between China and the Southeast Asian region (Hamilton and Waters, 1997:275-277). This led to the economic boom during the 1980s and 1990s.

Considering the patron-client relationships practiced at different stages in history, the Thai state, regardless of its form of government, realised that they could not “Kill the geese that lay the golden eggs” (Mackie, 1996:xxvii). Banning the Chinese was like harming themselves, since the Chinese controlled (and continue to control) the economic means of the country. This would only cause harm and danger to the country and the people they ruled, as well as themselves. However, at times there existed anti-Chinese policies, which further complicated the situation.
Anti-Chinese Periods and the Benefits of Patron-Client Ties

Sometimes in Thailand, policies towards the Chinese were tolerant and therefore beneficial to their well-being and trade. At other times, they proved to be more negative. Anti-Chinese sentiment in Thailand started with the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI - 1910-1925) and subsequently, during the rule of Phibun (1938-44, 1948-57).

With the death of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V – 1868-1910) in 1910, Thai attitudes towards the Chinese altered. With the reign of Rama VI, the Chinese were no longer viewed as an important resource within the country. Rather, they were being branded as the dangerous “Other,” first as “Oriental Jews” and later as “communists”. Around 1914, faced with a troubled domestic economy in Thailand and the revolution which toppled the Qing Dynasty in China in 1911, Rama VI referred to the Chinese as the “Jews of the Orient” in an essay of this title (Vajiravudh, 1914). This idea had its roots in the anti-Semitic movements in Europe at that time, and was a notion completely opposite to that of his father’s (Rama V) policy. As Bao (2003:135) said, “Rama VI made Chinese migrants, whom his father had deliberately imported, the target of his nationalism, rather than complained about the influence of Britain, which controlled ninety percent of Thai trade at that time”. Following the footsteps of Rama VI, Phibun also developed many nationalist policies discriminating against the Chinese, such as attempting to ban the Chinese from entering certain professions and reserving these specifically for the Thais, the banning of Chinese schools, restriction on Chinese education, promotion of Thai culture, regulating the commercial sector with the object of bringing commercial activities under government control; etc. These policies were designed to hinder the economic activities and dominance of the Chinese and promote Thai nationalism (Skinner, 1957:218-266).

Despite these anti-Chinese policies, Chinese business success still continued. In actuality, the government, particularly during the Phibun regime, needed revenue from Chinese businesses (Skinner, 1957; Sungsit, 1983:76-82). Policies then became flexible. As mentioned earlier, links with government (mostly in the form of patron-client ties) and with other Chinese families/networks (especially in the form of marriages) enabled the Chinese to secure their business interests and in many instances, find channels for further business expansion.
Conclusion

The history of the overseas Chinese in Thailand is predominantly a male-centered account. Chinese men have had a long history of settlement and economic influence in Thailand. The late nineteenth-early twentieth century in Thailand was a period of great change, with the opening of Thailand to free trade as a result of the 1855 Bowring Treaty, the 1893 repeal of the Chinese government edict prohibiting emigration, the Chinese providing an economic role in place of the Thais who were indifferent to trade and more interested in government positions and social prestige. For these reasons, Chinese men were able to employ their economic opportunities, use their Chinese entrepreneurial virtues as well as develop patron-client ties with the Thai state and its bureaucratic members to enhance their economic activity, leading to economic success. On the other hand, the story of the Chinese women in Thailand is unavailable. Aside from information about their migration to Thailand in the early twentieth century to join/accompany their husbands or in some cases, to become prostitutes, little is known of them. Details about the economic roles of these Chinese women, especially their female descendants (Sino-Thai women), who were often the result of the marriage between the Chinese and local Thais, were completely unrecorded. As will be seen in the following chapter, this lack of information is due to the constraints of society, especially the Chinese gender influence on Sino-Thai business culture, viewed as largely patriarchal.

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Chapter 3
Gender Relations in the Sino-Thai Business Community

Introduction

Gender, by definition, refers to "socially constructed understandings of sex roles and of feminine and masculine norms and behaviours" (Schubert, 1991:3). Gender relations in the Sino-Thai business community, particularly before World War II, were predominantly patriarchal, which literally means rule by the father. Sino-Thai businesses, especially family businesses, were inclined to adopt the Chinese rather than the Thai gender roles. This was because the Sino-Thai business community operated in the conservative mould of the Chinese family-oriented business structure and management, which depended on patriarchal leadership. Despite early twentieth century urban developments in Thailand giving more flexibility and freedom to women (for example, to work outside the home), pre-World War II Sino-Thai women of business families were still bound to their normal roles and duties of being a wife, mother and housewife once married. The position of Sino-Thai women in the Thai society of the period is in contrast to the generally freer position of Thai women of Thai parentage. Thus, this chapter will serve as a background to Tongpoon's life and career, by showing the social and cultural constraints of her society. It will address the notion of "gender" and also its treatment in modern Sino-Thai studies.

The Notion of “Gender” in Different Societies

The Patriarchal Nature of Chinese Society

Chinese society is traditionally patriarchal. Family is regarded as a keystone of society (Coughlin, 1960:79). The Chinese family is a tight organization based on a Confucian ideology with a definite role and status for each person and clear-cut rules and obligations governing relationships between family members.
Patrilineal descent (family identity descending through the male line), patrilineal inheritance (inheritance through the male line), and patrilocal marriage (living with the male’s family after marriage) are hallmarks of the Chinese family. Chinese kinship is noted for recording patrilineal genealogies, tracing descent through fathers and sons, and ignoring the whereabouts of daughters’ descendants (Skinner, 1997:59-60). Daughters are expected to marry exogamously, that is, marry out of their natal village, leaving their own patrilineal family to join their husband’s family (Bossen, 2002:224). They are considered as eventually belonging to another family (their husband’s family). Therefore, they often received unequal treatment in the family, compared to the sons, whether in terms of food shares in the family (reserving meat and good food for the men, while leaving the vegetables and remainders for the women), education, work, inheritance, love from parents; etc. Women are regarded as assuming an inferior status and destined for the menial role of daughter-in-law.

Skinner refers to Chinese society as having a “thoroughly male bias” (Skinner, 1997:59). Men are dominant everywhere, at home and in society at large. Women have been “socialized” to accept their devaluation, restricted roles, psychological reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and a subordinate position within the communities and society (Wolf, 1974:157-172). Within the society, the family is characterized by a hierarchy of authority based on gender, age and generation, with young women at the lowest level, subordinate to the “father-husband-brother-son”. The family is also characterized by well-defined family roles, with father as “breadwinner” and decision-maker and mother as compliant wife and housewife (Ngan-Ling Chow, 1996:251-264). Confucian values dominate the Chinese social behaviour of those from all walks of life, regardless of rich/poor or high/low status. Women are excepted to act according to the rules and beliefs of society. They must follow “the three obediences” – to the father before marriage, to the husband after marriage, and to the son as a widow – and “the four virtues” – propriety in behaviour, speech, demeanour and employment (Wolf, 1974:159).

In addition, the Chinese value the importance of having an extended family, usually consisting of the nuclear family, the husband’s paternal family, and the relatives of the husband. However, this so-called “networked family” (Unger, 1993:42) is still very much patriarchal in nature. The eldest male, often the father, is the head of the family. After the father’s death, the eldest son would then assume the leadership position and continue the role as father of the
family. Where sons of ability were lacking, it was not unusual for the head of the family to adopt a promising boy from outside the immediate family to groom for a leadership role.

The Relative Flexibility of Gender Roles in Thai Society

Unlike the Chinese patriarchal system, Thai gender culture is a complex of mixed, intersecting patterns. Anthropologist Van Esterik in Materializing Thailand (2000) posits that Thailand has a palimpsest gender culture in which newer discourses co-exist with older ones, leading to “multiple contested gender statuses and ideologies, not a single hegemonic system” (Van Esterik, 2000:61). She considers that Thai culture is a mixture of three historical influences - (1) an indigenous Southeast Asian notion of gender complementarity/bilateral kinship (2) an “Indianised Hindu-Buddhist” patriarchal culture based on the notion of masculine-feminine hierarchy (3) more recent twentieth century Western influences modifying traditional Thai gender views (Van Esterik, 2000:14, 28, 99-100). As such, she says there is no single theory about gender relations in Thailand. Rather, gender roles tend to be flexible, depending on circumstances, as will be discussed below. The significance of these three influences will be examined in the following.

On the first factor, scholars of Southeast Asia (Keeler, 1987; Errington, 1990; Reid, 1992) have long pointed to the “relatively high status” of women in this area as an important feature which both underlies the region’s uniqueness and distinguishes it from other regions like South and East Asia. Women’s relatively high status in Southeast Asia has been viewed in terms of autonomy in the home and control of economic resources. This is characterized as the regional predominance of gender complementarity/bilateral kinship systems which “place equal emphasis on female and male links” (Cook and Jackson, 1999:12).

Along this line of thinking, scholars of Thai affairs have tried to highlight the continuity between Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia (Hanks and Hanks, 1963; Nithi, 1992). Wives often manage household finances, such as among the patrilineal Lisu community in northern Thailand (Hutheesing, 1990), and dominate retail trade, like in Java (Brenner, 1995:24) and in the Philippines (Milgram, 1998). There is also indirect evidence in history books portraying Thai and Chinese women in business in Thailand, mostly involved in petty trade. According to
Constance Wilson’s findings on the activities of women in Bangkok in 1883, the ratio of Thai women in minor trade as compared to Chinese women is thirty-nine to five, or about eighty-nine percent of the total women in trade (Wilson, 1989:87). This indicates the then relative freedom of Thai as opposed to Chinese women. Chinese women were traditionally expected to stay within the home. On the other hand, Thai women had secure positions as market sellers, itinerant hawkers of foodstuffs, and proprietors of small shops specializing in dressmaking, hairdressing, and other services for women (Coughlin, 1960:3, 118). Thai women were thus an important part of the national economy, but it may also be argued that gender complementarity does not necessarily lead to equality or to equality of recognition of gender contribution to the family or to society. Besides, the Buddhist religion dominant in Thailand relegates them to an inferior position.

Secondly, Van Esterik claims that Thailand is an “Indianised Hindu-Buddhist” society “built more on models of gender hierarchy than gender complementarity” (Van Esterik, 2000:28). While it may be argued that Van Esterik’s characterisation of Thai society as “Indianised Hindu-Buddhist” may be seen as too broad a generalisation, nevertheless, the social dominance of the Thai version of Theravada Buddhism, not unmixed with animism, cannot be ignored. Religion, regarded as a key component of Thai identity, is regularly employed in books on Thai gender to account for the position and condition of Thai women as being subordinate to men (Van Esterik, 2000:62). Male authority, privilege, and mobility are believed to be obtained by following the customary Buddhist rites of passage. Through short term of monkhood, a man is traditionally viewed as being transformed from a “raw man” (khon dip) into a “complete person” (khon sombun) (for example, Kanchana et al., n.d.:14-15). This means that he has reached the stage of “maturity,” and is able to undertake leadership in the family and state. Women, on the other hand, are not allowed to enter monkhood, for they are considered unclean in Buddhist terms. A Thai woman’s marriage symbolizes her becoming a “complete person” (by marrying a complete man) (Kanchana et al., n.d.:14-15). She is subject to being “a mother of the house” (mae ban), occupying the roles of wife, mother, and housewife. All these are perceived as essential ingredients of Thai womanhood. The paradox here is that although women are unable to obtain ordination to or recognition of equality by the Buddhist religion, they nevertheless support the monkhood on a day to day basis by gifts and food offerings. The male lay contribution is more remote and generally limited to occasional gifts of money and goods.
Ordination also emphasizes the status of the son in a family, since an ordained son is believed to be able to add to his parents' store of merit. Ordination in the past was also crucial for an ordinary man to gain an education. Apart from religious purpose, the literacy provided at the temple/wat could also provide knowledge in the fields of astrology, herbal medicine, folk arts etc. (Suwadee, 1999). Daughters, on the other hand, could not be ordained. Daughters therefore had to observe the domestic tasks of their mothers. Such a dichotomy of male/female knowledge enhanced the idea of male dominance and female subordination in the household. Women were made to accept that their "man" – father or husband – was more educated and, thus, was more suited to being a family leader (Suwadee, 1999). The traditional gender relations thus were reinforced by education and a family orientation favouring men.

Religion was also reflected in the laws of the state. The family law of the early Bangkok period (Rattanakosin Era),\(^\text{10}\) which forms part of "The Three Seals Law" (*Kot Mai Trang Sam Duang* – 1350-1805 AD.) (Suwadee, 1999), emphasized the Thai man as the head of his family. Thus, he could consider his wife/wives and children as his assets. This means that the husband, as "owner," obtained the right to sell or give away his wife/wives and children with or without their consent. The law, in addition, emphasized the inferior value of female work and stated the superiority of male labour. The value of men in the *sakdina* system had been set higher than the women's. In case of divorce, the law ruled that a husband should have greater claims on the common property accumulated during their marriage (Suwadee, 1999). And despite later modifications in the law which abolished the ownership of women, giving them claims of property and promoting female education, among other things (Suwadee, 1999), the traditional pattern of gender relations has very much prevailed through time. Such a pattern put females in a lower and disadvantaged position vis-à-vis males (Suwadee, 1999; Kanchana et al., n.d.:21, 23).

Both Kanchana et al. and Suwadee make the strong case that the strict legal and religious regulation of women existed in the past, especially before World War II. Khin Thitsa, among Thai feminists, also blames Buddhism for Thai women's subordination. "Buddhism provides a moral framework for man's hierarchical precedence over women, in as much as it sanctions polygyny and all beliefs and practices which devalue the female sex" (Khin Thitsa, 1980:7).

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\(^{10}\) The Rattanakosin Period was founded in 1782 by King Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty. To date, the dynasty has produced nine kings reigning 221 years.
"Buddhists believe that birth as a woman indicates bad *karma* or dermerit (*baap*) from past lives" (Khin Thitsa, 1983:24). She argues that Buddhism, along with its Hindu influences, devalues the contribution that women make and condemns them to inferiority (1980:20). It might be said that Khin Thitsa is going too far in attributing support for polygyny to modern Buddhist sanctions. Darunee and Pandey (1987:126-132), who initially objected to this sort of characterization of Buddhism, however go on to argue that Buddhism in pre-modern Thailand was patriarchal, indicating that this patriarchal aspect of Buddhism helped to oppress women in the past and may continue to do so in the present.

Nonetheless, the concept of Buddhism as a dominant ideology also poses problems. Not every Thai is a strict follower of Buddhism outside the temple walls. Scholars take the texts to be straightforward accounts of Buddhism and the status of women and do not take into account differences in authorship, time, class background, expectations and interpretations. Buddhism and gender relations may need to be reinterpreted in the context of the modern material world.

Finally, Van Esterik’s proposed third influence on Thai culture is the idea that Western influences on gender were also introduced into Thailand in the twentieth century. Though Thailand was never colonised, the country borrowed selectively from Western understandings of gender which typically circles around the issue of male domination and female subordination within society. This is the Euro-centric view, whereby society is said to be male-dominated. Men are the “breadwinners,” providing for the family. Women, on the other hand, have roles as mothers, wives, and housewives. This perception must be seen as the result of the urbanisation and industrialisation of European society and not necessarily applicable to the highly decentralised and agricultural nature of Thailand at the time. Though the Western concept of personality is believed to be based on the notion of individuality, the social and cultural constraints of Thai society, especially the kinship systems, reflect and reinforce gender inequalities (Maynes, Walter, Soland and Strasser, 1996:10).

With the mix of influences affecting Thai gender culture, Van Esterik points to the flexibility of perceptions of Thai gender. She says that the Thai gender system is distinctive from the Euro-centric view of male dominance and female subordination as well as different from the Southeast Asian view of gender complementarity/bilateral kinship system. For instance,
conflicting representations of strong, competent women, particularly as warriors\textsuperscript{11} in the Thai national narratives, exist side-by-side with evidence of inequality and discrimination against women, without cancelling each other out. “Representations are not easily separated by region or class, but reflect something of the palimpsests of Thai women, past and present, throughout the country” (Van Esterik, 2000:61). Thus, Thai gender culture is a complex of intersecting patterns. The essence of Van Esterik’s argument is that Thai gender norms are not fixed, but flexible, highly contextualised within specific ‘times and places’ (kalathesa) (Van Esterik: 2000:40), according to what is considered proper in that particular situation. There is within Thailand a great variability by region, class, ethnicity, and time period that in daily life, Thai men and women are required to move between differently structured gendered contexts (Van Esterik, 2000:40).

As such, Van Esterik’s work contains both strengths and weaknesses in the exploration into gender relations and gender representations in Thai contexts. In terms of the value of her work, Van Esterik contributes to yet another perspective of looking at Thai gender culture. Her focus on the Thai concept of kalathesa (Van Esterik, 2000:36) pinpoints the fact we should not overlook constructions of essentialised Thainess put forth by the Thai state and media. These are considered proper, socially accepted conduct within Thai society and must therefore be taken into account in any analysis of gender representations and practices in Thailand.

However, Van Esterik’s work does have flaws and requires further study. For instance, with regard to the three influences on Thai gender culture discussed, she did not mention which influence is the dominant factor or how they were balanced to one another. Taking the issue further, I suggest that the Confucian philosophy imported by the overseas Chinese in Thailand as well as the sakdina or hierarchical nature of Thai society also need to be included among the key influences on Thai gender culture. In fact, kalatinesa is considered to be part of the awareness of the hierarchical tradition. This view seems to be supported by the Thai scholar Nithi, who says that Thai society ranks reputation and prestige as being more important than economic position (Nithi, 1992:47-49).

\textsuperscript{11} Examples of these Thai female warriors include Queen Srisuriyothai of Ayudhya (1548-1569) who fought against the Burmese; Khunying Muk and Khunying Jan (1785) who also fought against the Burmese; Khunying Mo who saved Nakhon Ratchasima from the Lao army during the reign of King Rama III; Queen Chamadevi of Lanna who counted menstrual blood among her weapons.
Moreover, despite possessing relative gender flexibility, it must be observed that Thai society overall still tends towards male dominance. Suwadee (1989) has pointed out that socio-economic changes helped promote the position of women. These changes might be seen to include the social changes in women’s education and rights since the early 1900s and especially after democratization in the 1970s. As well, economic opportunities with Thailand’s increasing engagement in world economy during the late 1950s and early 1960s as a result of the industrialization policy of the Thai government during Prime Minister Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat’s era (September 1957, 1958-1963), and the introduction of the 1975 United Nations International Women's Year which led Thailand to implement several plans for women’s advancement were important factors. Nonetheless, these positive changes did not really make women equal to or higher than men in terms of social status. Bao has confirmed this point by saying, “Socio-economic upward mobility has provided these women with power and freedom, but this power has not necessarily brought about egalitarian gender relations” (Bao, 1999a:102).

In general, they are still “victims” of the male-dominated rules of society, viewed as being subordinate to men in various ways, whether at home or at work. Though there might be individual cases of women outranking men, they are only a small minority of the general population.

It could then be said that Van Esterik possesses a limited knowledge of Thai society in addition to a limited knowledge of the Thai language. Many of her ideas came from general discussions with female academic friends (Van Esterik, 2000:17-18). In addition, Van Esterik did not employ any Thai references in her work (as evident in her bibliography), which in turn gives her a narrow view of Thai culture and society. Thus her tendency is to remain on the surface of things, to which she so often refers, rather than provide deep insights. Therefore, it must be argued that her perceptions of the position of females in Thai society are potentially limited.

The Patriarchal Nature of the Sino-Thai Business Community

In parallel with the prevailing Thai attitudes discussed above, gender roles in the Sino-Thai business community are patriarchal. Chinese culture values the family, especially the
extended family. The Thais, on the other hand, place more emphasis on the nuclear family consisting of the father, the mother and the children, rather than the extended family. In terms of the Sino-Thai business community, it is more Chinese than Thai since it borrows the Chinese practice of extended family associations and family-oriented business management. The business is like a family. The Sino-Thai business community is viewed as a materialistic community interested in gaining wealth. The most senior male, often the father, is the head of the business. Other male family members have the task of being “breadwinners” of the family, while women are considered wives, mothers and housewives within the house.

As a historical background, the overseas Chinese settled and established a Sino-Thai community in Thailand. The term “Sino-Thai” is problematic in itself for there are many ways of being a “Sino-Thai”. As demonstrated below in Figure 1, there were Chinese male migrants who married Chinese women and produced pure Chinese offspring in Thailand, Chinese migrants marrying the local Thais and producing ethnically mixed offspring, or even marriage among those of ethnically mixed themselves producing further hybrid offspring - all of these offspring are called Sino-Thais.

**Figure No. 1 – The Different Ways of Being Characterised as a “Sino-Thai”**

| Chinese migrant father + Thai mother | --- |
| Chinese migrant father + Chinese migrant mother | | |
| Chinese migrant father + ethnically mixed mother | | |
| Chinese migrant mother + Thai father | | |
| Chinese migrant mother + ethnically mixed father | | | Sino-Thai offspring |
| Ethnically mixed father + Thai mother | | |
| Ethnically mixed mother + Thai father | | |
| Ethnically mixed father + ethnically mixed mother | --- |
Thus, for clarity, in this thesis, Sino-Thai will be defined as descendants of the Chinese ancestors residing in Thailand and holding Thai citizenship. In this case, I define Sino-Thais as those who have some Chinese ancestry, regardless of whether they can or cannot speak Chinese. In fact, many younger generations of today often cannot speak Chinese. However, they are still very much aware of their Chinese ethnicity as well as the Chinese culture and its practices within the family, which have been handed down through several generations. Many Sino-Thais of younger generations observe and practice Chinese customs and beliefs. They celebrate Chinese New Year and worship their ancestors. In some families, though the children cannot speak the Chinese language, they are accustomed to addressing their parents and/or grandparents in the Chinese rather than the Thai form. At the very least, they are, in one way or another, influenced by their “Chinese roots”. But, as Bao (1999a:100) stated, “When lukchin [Sino-Thais, often second generation Chinese children onwards] identified themselves as khonchin, “Chineseness,” they were identifying with ethnic Chinese in Thailand rather than Chinese living in China (Bao 1999a:100).

Over a period of time, contact in Thailand – its people and surroundings – has inevitably produced changes among Sino-Thais. Many have a well-ingrained cultural pattern of adaptation and flexibility. Culturally and socially, this group has learned to accept Thai ways without, however, losing attachment with “Things Chinese”. As Skinner has suggested, this is “creolization”, the so-called cultural and social dualism of the Chinese (Skinner, 1996). Skinner (1996:51-52) views a creolized society as, “[the] case constituted a discrete and stable community alongside of, but clearly distinguishable from, Chinese as well as indigenous society. In each instance, the cultural mix of Chinese and indigenous elements had stabilised into a “tradition”, and the language of daily use within the community – while clearly influenced by Chinese in grammar as well as lexicon – was an indigenous-based creole.” “...they moved not into indigenous society but into the intermediate “third social system”, where assimilation to indigenous society was inhibited.” (Skinner, 1995:65). Although Skinner applies this term only to the three creolized Chinese societies in the Philippines, Java and Malaya, it is also illuminating

12 However, exceptions to this generalisation do exist. For instance, Bao (1999b:63-77) describes Chinese wives as not being so flexible in their expectations to their husbands’ behaviour of adopting minor wives. But many Thai wives, especially in present time, also do not tolerate such behaviour. Thus, cases vary, depending on the individual, family, social status and class; etc.
to employ the term for the Sino-Thais, who, in my view, are seen as not fully assimilated into Thai society nor are they perceived as being identical to the Chinese in mainland China.

The main reason Skinner did not include Thailand in his creole typology was because he believed in the persistent myth that the overseas Chinese in Thailand would be completely assimilated by the fifth generation (Skinner, 1964:89). Since the Thais and the Chinese share many similarities such as outward physical appearance and cultural practices, it might be said that the migrant Chinese might find himself more at home in Thai society than in the more ethnically and culturally different countries to the south. Skinner defines assimilation as “when the immigrant’s descendant identifies himself in almost all social situations as a Thai, speaks the Thai language habitually and with fluency, and interacts by choice with Thai more often than with the Chinese (Skinner, 1973:383). However, Skinner’s views reflect the then efforts and policy of the Thai state in implementing various laws regarding education, citizenship, available vocations and land ownership rights on the Chinese who had not assimilated, in order to foster Thai nationalism and Thai identity. This approach overlooked the reproduction of Sino-Thai ethnic identity in the Thai social context. Skinner did not seem to realise the ambiguity of Sino-Thai ethnic identity constructed by influences of Buddhist and Confucian morality. This is essential to understand gender differences in Sino-Thai economic and family behaviour. In addition, the Chinese influences of philosophy, art, literature, architecture, language, cuisine; etc. that have integrated into Thai culture have largely been ignored in the assimilation theory (Bao, 2001:273-274). Furthermore, Skinner did not distinguish between concepts of external and internal assimilation, whereby the former refers to behaving Thai, while thinking in the Chinese mode, whereas the latter refers to being Thai in both behaviour and thought. In many cases, external assimilation was practiced by the overseas Chinese in Thailand whereby under certain circumstances, they were required to behave like the Thais for their own benefits.

For instance, since the early twentieth century, many Sino-Thais had changed to Thai names, but they still retained much of the Chinese family practice of ancestor worship, filial

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13 The change to Thai names occurred during Rama VI’s time (1910-1925), as part of Westernisation as well as the Thai nationalist policy. It helped promote assimilation and a smoother transition into Thai society. After a few generations of settlement in Thailand, the overseas Chinese had changed to Thai names. As Skinner (1958:229-230) pointed out, “A Thai name is almost a prerequisite for study in a Thai school, for close business contact with the Thai government, or for social intercourse with the Thai elite. The use of a Thai name is especially good as an
piety; etc. Many also did not use a bona fide Thai name, but rather, a Thai given name and a transliterated surname, or in some cases, a surname beginning with the word sae (a Teochiu word for surname) followed by a transliterated surname. Thus, their Chinese ethnic origins are still being expressed.\textsuperscript{14} Usually, there exists a difference between the Sino-Thai surname and the real Thai surname, for the former often incorporates longer syllables and is often associated with words denoting wealth and success. Thus, some elements of Chinese ethnicity are present in Sino-Thais’ chosen Thai surnames.

Contrary to Skinner’s expectations, during and after the 1980s economic boom when Chinese business reached its height, there was an “awakening” of attachment with China. As many scholars in the year 2001 have pointed out, the Chinese now have “alternate identities” (Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun, 2001a:4, 7-8) or a hybrid image of working and negotiating with times for when to be Chinese and times for when to be Thai, using this identity to their maximum advantage. Though some Sino-Thais may be more Chinese than the others, depending on their family upbringing and personal experience, they are still influenced by the Chinese tradition, one way or another.

While many people of Chinese origins in Thailand have adopted a merged identity, the business interests of major Chinese commercial families favour the retention of a more directly Chinese culture. Particularly in terms of the Sino-Thai business community, it is very much patriarchal since it operates in a Chinese family context.

The major institution within Chinese business has been the family. The family is “the source of funds, contacts and managers”. Despite rapid diversification and international expansion in recent decades, family domination has been maintained and did not radically alter. The founder-patriarch usually dominated for as long as he lived (Brown, 2000:6).

Challenges in business call for collective assistance within and between families and make gender roles in the Sino-Thai business community more patriarchal than otherwise. Family-oriented business structures require patriarchal leadership. The Sino-Thais, being conservative in business, would not risk other models of business management other than the one inherited down by their Chinese ancestors. They have their succession pattern of business inheritance and the business itself to manage. In other words, the definition of patriarchy could be extended to mean retaining control of the family business, in addition to the male patriarch leader.

In the face of the influences of Thai relative gender flexibility and the “softening” of the hierarchical structure of society, capitalist development, nation-state evolution, and globalization, gender positions are changing. With recent developments, gender inequality has diminished through time. However, for the Sino-Thai business families, while some are more conservative and follow the strict Chinese patriarchal family system, others are more aggressive and flexible at expanding their business, and thus are likely to be employ professionals outside the family to assist them. The key question is what each family perceives as best for the business, and in most Sino-Thai family companies, they tend to follow a Chinese family-oriented business management style.

Modern Sino-Thai Studies

In general, modern Sino-Thai studies, both academic and popular, are male-dominated, with little mention on the female element. As Ann Maxwell Hill stated in 1998, “Our lack of information on women in the overseas Chinese community is symptomatic of the general neglect by researchers...” (Hill, 1998:60).

In recent decades, studies of Sino-Thai men have gone beyond political, economic and identity aspects, and have begun to deal with the cultural experiences of Sino-Thai businessmen – namely their life histories. Academic literature on ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia is beginning to examine the once neglected cultural aspects of Diaspora life, but not in as great detail as non-
academic, popular paperback books written in the Thai language. The latter presents the always attractive “from rags to riches” story of many successful Sino-Thai business tycoon families in Thailand. Briefly, these migrants first came in as coolie labourers. Later, due to their hardworking, thrifty and determined character, considered to be unique “Chinese” qualities, they saved enough money to start their own businesses. In due time, these Chinese men turned into Thai capitalists. They formed patron-client ties with the Thai state, dating back to the early Rattanakosin period. In recent decades, events such as the normalization of Thai relations with China in the late 1970s, the decline of the Communist Party of Thailand in the early 1980s which minimized the Communist threat in the country, and the East Asian economic success which has been explained in some official quarters as being attributable to a distinctly Chinese (specifically, Confucian) set of value – all these factors have confirmed the dominance of the Sino-Thai entrepreneurship in the Thai economy (Hong Lysa, 1998:334). In this respect, Nithi (1994:92-94, cited in Montesano, 2001:138) gives chek, once an abusive word to categorize the Chinese in Thailand, a new meaning - the trading expertise skills. Nithi calls this a “merchant culture” (watthanatham pho kha), contributing to the economic boom which Thailand had enjoyed in the previous decade. As such, a more positive, economically-related sense is also attached to the terms of lukchin, khonchin, chaochin – all of which denote the Chinese, specifically the Chinese in Thailand.

Aside from stories about Sino-Thai men, there has also been an increasing awareness of the issue of Sino-Thai women within this past decade. Contemporary scholars like Cristina Blanc Szanton (1983, 1988, 1989), Ann Maxwell Hill (1998), James Ockey (1999), Jiemin Bao (1999a, 2001) and Richard Basham (2001) are among the few who question this male-dominated side of Sino-Thai history and attempt to fill the gap by shifting their focus to the study of Chinese female migrants and their younger generations in Thailand who have become Thai nationals, the so-called Sino-Thai women. However, all of the above scholars except Ockey, who wrote on “godmothers”¹⁵, focus on issues of identity and ethnicity by raising one aspect of the life of these

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¹⁵ Godmothers or chaomae, in Ockey’s work, are the mafia-type female leaders associated with illegal activities. Most often, they have influential male supporters, often state officers, to help their work flow smoothly. For more information, see James Ockey (1999), “God Mothers, Good Mothers, Good Lovers, Godmothers: Gender Images in Thailand,” The Journal of Asian Studies, 58, No. 4, November 1999, p. 1033-1058.
women in Thailand and drawing linkages to the formation of their identity. As Bao (2003:128) added, "...the existing literature writes women out of diasporic encounter and gender out of identity formation. We know little about diasporic Chinese women except in the context of kinship or inter-ethnic marriage". Thus, there is little or no coverage of their direct activities in the economic sphere. While their roles as wives, mothers and homemakers may have had an important economic component in the family, women as doing business in their own right has been overlooked in the past. Paperback books about Sino-Thai businesswomen and their Chineseness in promoting economic success are slowly emerging.

Conclusion

In sum, "gender" roles in the Sino-Thai business community in Thailand, especially before World War II, are patriarchal. Gender roles in the Chinese system are patriarchal. In the Thai system, gender is argued in recent times as being "a context-sensitive process, constructed through interaction with others... expressed as kalathesa, knowing how time, space, and relationships between people intersect to create appropriate contexts – that allow for a flow of multiple gender identities" (Van Esterik, 1999:277-278). However, since the Sino-Thai business community operated in a conservative style of Chinese family-oriented business structure and management, patriarchal leadership was required. Despite early twentieth century developments giving more flexibility and freedom to women (for example, to work outside the home), pre-World War II Sino-Thai women of business families were still bound to their normal roles and duties once in the house. Business is a central determinant for the Sino-Thai business community, and they would not risk other forms of business management if not necessary. Thus, there exists gender inequality in both the Sino-Thai business society and Sino-Thai literature on the business world. Together, they all demonstrate sexual inequality and tell us about the limits of society. Therefore, there is also a need to study Sino-Thai women in business, especially their association in male-related activities (according to the rules of society), for examples are present, especially in contemporary Thai society, but sad to say, are hardly discussed. To illustrate a clearer picture of the patriarchal nature within the family and the business, Chapter 4 will focus
on the main Wanglee family stream, before comparing it with the atypical matriarchal character of Tongpoon and the Poonphol Group in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4
The Origin and Development of the Wanglee “Family” Business Empire

Introduction

“Family” is a complex and value-loaded term, often meaning more than simply the nuclear family consisting of parents and their children. It can go beyond the nuclear family to include distant as well as close relatives. This extended family is often the type of family structure employed by the Chinese. In this way, the Chinese recognize the existence of “clans” (Suehiro, 1996:156), defined as an association of families with the same surname and a common ancestor. Thus, it is no surprise that with their entrepreneurial skills, the Chinese also incorporate this family structure into their business, in some cases forming family business empires.

In Thailand, the “family system” has become the blueprint of many Sino-Thai businesses. A family business is like a company run by the family and its members, and functions in a family-like manner (Cushman, 1991:16). Early Chinese migrants brought this way of doing business with them from China and applied it to their businesses in Thailand. By later generations, the changing social, economic and political developments in the country led to some necessary adaptations in the management and structure of the business in order to ensure its survival and expansion. Still, these businesses have tried their best to maintain the Chinese family tradition handed down to them by their ancestors, since doing business in this fashion has always been a way of life of the Chinese, both within China and overseas.

The Wanglee family business is an example of a Sino-Thai business which tried to retain its family-oriented structure, while at the same time, has also adjusted the business to harmonize with changes in society. Thus, this chapter is designed to study the growth and development of the Wanglee family business, amid the economic, trading, as well as social and political conditions of society since the family’s settlement in Thailand. In telling the story of the family business under several generations of leadership prior to the third generation leader Tan Siew Men’s assassination in 1945, I will consider the importance of the Chinese family ideology and
its patriarchal nature, as well as consider the mechanisms of Thai society as key factors in promoting the family’s business expansion and success. In this respect, I propose to briefly discuss the meaning and character of a Chinese “family” business and the necessary adaptations required for business survival and expansion in face of the changes in society and economy, before proceeding to portray how these factors played a part in the development of the Wanglee business. In turn, the Wanglee family foundation discussed in this chapter will serve as a prelude to understanding our main study of the Poonphol Group, which is part of the Wanglee chain. For after 1945, the role of Tan Siew Men’s widow, Tongpoon, shifted from being a normal housewife to becoming a businesswoman, managing the Poonphol Group.

The Role of Family in Chinese Business

Definition & Origin

The idea of managing a business in family-style, referred to as kongsi (in Chinese) or rabop khropkhrua (in Thai) business, occurs when there is a dependency structure and family relationships are evident. Here, large and cohesive groups of related people are bound together by loyalty and mutual obligations in order to work collectively for the family business. This perpetuates the old Chinese clan system. In this way, they felt more comfortable doing business with their family in a foreign country, for they could trust their family rather than the outsiders whom they hardly know. As Somdee Hongpaisarnwiwat (1988:105) says:

The first generation of Chinese immigrants in Thailand had tried their very best to preserve their Chinese identity. The family structure still adhered to the original Chinese tradition of religious practices and beliefs, the use of the Chinese language, Chinese moral principles and Chinese beliefs. Members of the family collectively own the family business, which is considered central to the family. They work in a kongsi system, although the management of the business lies in the hands of the father, who is the head of the family...
The family organization manages the business. In many cases, the Chinese business has no distinct existence outside the family. Jennifer Cushman (1991:27) states that it is like "a corporation in the sense that members derive benefits from jointly-owned property and shared resources; they also join in corporate activities on a regular basis...members of a lineage are highly conscious of themselves as a group in relation to others whom they define as outsiders... recruitment is strictly regulated ". In her book *Family and State: The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-mining Dynasty 1797-1932*, which deals with the the Sino-Thai Na Ranong tin-mining business family in southern Thailand (and its alliance with the Thai state for business advantages), Cushman discusses the nature of the family business as a complex kinship structure, extending beyond "merely an ad hoc arrangement of disparate family members" (Cushman, 1991:16). Family business is of a corporate nature in which family members participate in the business and rely on each other’s trust as family members/relatives. They trust the management of the business to the family members/relatives rather than outsiders. This is what holds them together in a shared business participation environment.

*Character of traditional Chinese family business*

The family business imitates the general Chinese family, which is considered to be the central and most important institution for the Chinese people. Like the Chinese family, the Chinese business operates by patriarchy and patriline (Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun, 2001b:33). In other words, the most senior male (often the father) is the head of the house and the business, and inheritance is through the male line. In fact, the family clearly demonstrates the inheritance pattern and identity within the business (Supphalak, 1996:13).

The father assumes a “patriarchal authority,” governing both the family and the business (Supphalak, 1996:15). He is the central figure to whom every family member must listen and comply with his orders. He solves all the family/business problems as well as looking after the welfare of each and every family member. In the case of a larger business, if the children are still too young to work, the family might decide to hire a longju, or a business assistant, to help. Often, this longju is a man of Chinese descent whom the father trusts and regards as part of the family. Most of the time, the longju and his family (especially his son) would live and work with the family business for all their life. The longju’s son would inherit his father’s position and work as the next longju in the next generation of the family business (Pimpraphai, 2002a).
Yet, every child in the family is expected to contribute to the family business, one way or another. Everyone is considered as being an owner of the business, which belongs to the whole family. Moreover, working for the family business could be seen as following the Chinese doctrine of filial piety. It is one form of repayment to the family for one’s birth and upbringing. In this regard, age and seniority determines the role each family member plays, while sex clearly narrows the roles (Supphalak, 1997:7). There is a clear distinction between the duty of the two sexes.

Working in a family business is quite different from working outside. Here, the family members are considered as being owners of the business. If it is a small business, external employees are not needed. However, in a big business, assistants are employed. Often, the Chinese family tends to hire fellow Chinese or descendants of Chinese, rather than Thais, for the former are seen as being more hardworking than the latter, as mentioned earlier. In addition, the Chinese feel more at ease working among themselves. In return, these labourers receive fixed wages as opposed to family members who do not receive fixed wages, for they “live on the family”/kin ngoen kongsi (Supphalak 1996:14) for their accommodation, food and other living expenses. The amount of money given to these family members also varies according to the status of each member (i.e. the hierarchical rank in the family) and the overall profit of the business.

In a Chinese family, sons are valued more than daughters for the continuation of the family line, working in the business, as well as upholding the tradition of ancestor worship (Leslie and Korman, 1989; Supphalak, 1997:7). The eldest capable son inherits the father’s position as head of the family and business, while the younger sons receive equal shares of the inheritance, work for the family business, and in many instances, develop new lines of business to help expand the business empire. Thus, from their childhood years, the sons grow up in a business atmosphere, trying to specialize in the trade. They are expected to help their parents with the business. They are trained to take care of customers, do financial statements for goods, as well as buy raw materials. Often, each son will be trained for a particular job, so as to be accustomed to the task when he becomes an adult. Sometimes, the sons are also sent away to be trained in financial matters or trade tactics outside the family (Supphalak, 1996:14).
Besides the sons, daughters also contribute to the family business, although indirectly. In the traditional Chinese family, daughters are not expected to work in the family business. They have the primary role of preparing themselves to become wives and mothers of their future husbands' family. Often, within a Chinese family tradition of arranged marriages, the parents would seek a spouse with similar or higher social status for their children, in order to help contribute to the growth of the business (Thoreilli and Sentell, 1982:37). For instance, marriage between business families is used to expand or consolidate common business interests. Forming "Chinese business cliques" via marriage (Skinner, 1958:183-186; Kroekkiat and Kunio, 1983: 361) in order to accumulate capital, gain control of several lines of business, and/or gain monopoly in a particular trade is a common practice. In addition, marriage with a Thai state official's family in order to establish links with the state, which in turn could help promote channels for business development, is not unusual. Thus, marriage is an extension of business practice. In fact, it can be seen as dynastic marriage. In practice, both the sons and daughters may marry into other useful families.

Adaptations of traditional Chinese family business to changing circumstances

In the face of economic, social and political changes in society, it seems that business adaptation, expansion and the development of economic influence are key requirements for business to utilise, both in terms of management, structure and connections with government (Supphalak, 1996:15). Particularly in big businesses, there have been adaptations in three main areas.

First, in later years, the importance of business management required the employment of management expertise and new technologies (Kroekkiat, 1981b:33-34; Supphalak, 1996:15). Depending on personal judgement and risk-taking as in the old days (generally first generation) were not enough. Thus, big businesses often sent their family members abroad, normally to the West, to obtain the necessary advanced skills and technology to bring back to improve the

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business. At the same time, they also tried to employ skilled specialists to assist with the business.

Second, business expansion and a strong financial base were necessary (Kroekkkiat, 1981b:11-35), since a business without any changes would ultimately collapse in the rapidly changing world of competition. In this regard, expansion can be divided into two types – horizontal integration and vertical integration (Supphalak, 1996:16). Horizontal integration is the expansion of the business into related fields to increase their economic power. On the other hand, vertical integration is the expansion of the business to cover the whole production and distribution process – from obtaining raw materials, to production and distribution. This will then allow the business family to have a monopoly in that particular trade. Normally, big businesses expand both horizontally and vertically. However, to do so requires a strong financial base. Therefore, most big businesses often tried to have power in a commercial bank, often by serving in the board of management of a bank, or in many cases, set up their own financial institution or insurance company, in order to have enough money to invest (normally, by using the savings of the institution’s customers) in further business expansion.

Third, with the state regulating the economy, support from the state (in the form of patron-client ties in which both parties benefit from the alliance) is required for protection of their business position and/or as a tool for business privileges and expansion (Cushman, 1991). At times when the state policies were against the Chinese - for instance, during the anti-Chinese periods of Rama VI, who inveighed against the economic influence of the Chinese “Jews of the Orient”, of Rama VII, who feared the marriage between female Chinese immigrants and the Chinese in Thailand would lead to their isolation from society, as well as the subsequent Phibun regimes - relations with some powerful state officials were needed to help negotiate with the state in order to protect Chinese business interests. At other times when state policies favoured Chinese business, ties with the state were used to the business’s advantage in order to seek further business interests and expansion.

However, there also exist risks in this state-business alliance, for unexpected changes from one form of government to another can in fact harm the business. Friends of the King during the constitutional monarchy could be targets of the soldiers of the military regime, or
allies of one military regime can become enemies of another military regime. Hence, businesses had to learn to be flexible in this kind of relationship. For, while some businesses were able to play "a two-faced game", others were not and some had to flee the country during the period of an unfavourable government (Yiphan, 2002:4-5).

In spite of the risks involved, state-business arrangements were beneficial to businesses, for economic power then lay in the hands of only a small group consisting of mainly businessmen and the state (which includes politicians, state officials and soldiers). Together, these two parties sought economic privileges and trade monopolies in the business world. This in turn led to an imbalance in economic power because the smaller businesses and the general population, who have little bargaining power, had to suffer and be dominated by this state-business alliance.

The Wanglee "Family" Business

The Wanglee empire is an international company which appears to have originated in Hong Kong and spread to other parts of Asia.

The Wanglee branch in Thailand is a Sinc-Thai family business empire which retains the Chinese family business structure. The family is of the Teochiu dialect, the main Chinese language group among the Sino-Thais in Thailand. What started off as an import-export trade in rice and other commodities between China and Thailand in the first generation became a family empire which spanned five main economic sectors, namely rice mills, international trade (import-export), banking, insurance and shipping by the end of World War II. It should be mentioned that in subsequent generations in Thailand, the Wanglee family not only employed horizontal and vertical integration methods into their business expansion, but had also relied on the support from their Chinese business networks and to a lesser extent, the state. Unlike the other Sino-Thai businesses, the Wanglee relied on their own Chinese network rather than the government in doing business.
Stories about the Wanglee family are not hard to find. They built power and prestige in the Chinese community through their clan ties and their distinguished social position as leaders of the Chinese associations, leading them to become one of the Big Five rice traders\(^\text{17}\) who dominated the Thai rice industry in the 1930s and 1940s. Therefore, they have been much studied, given the importance of the family in the rice trade since the early years of the twentieth century as well as the involvement in leading the Thai-Chinese Association or the Chambers of Commerce. In fact, so far, up to three consecutive generations of the family, from second to fourth generation, sat as president in chambers of commerce and trade associations in Thailand.

The Origin of First Generation Tan Tsu Huang (1871-1920) and the Wanglee branch in Thailand

Tan Tsu Huang was the founder of the Wanglee branch in Thailand, although there are differences of opinion as to the origin and route the Wanglee family took from China to Thailand. Some sources state they came directly from China to Thailand, whereas others suggest that Thailand was their third port of call. The two stories are outlined below.

The first version of the Wanglee family history is told by Khunying Chamnongsri Hanchanlash (1995, 1998 revised edition), a relative of the family, in *Dutnawa klang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration]*, which is a cremation book of fourth generation Suwit Wanglee (1928-1994). This story is also told by Choi Chi-Chueng (1993) and Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown (1994:171-172). The story goes back to the rags to riches story of Tan Tsu Huang’s father, Tang Huang Yong, or Xuanyi, later nicknamed Hook by close associates. Born in 1815 in China, he found Thailand to be the *u kao u nam*, meaning a source of wealth. He was the one who planted the seeds in Thailand to be harvested later by his descendants, as his nickname Hook, meaning “seeds”, suggests (Chamnongsri, 1998:43-44).

Born to a poor farmer’s family and uneducated, Hook, as a young man, later moved from Choukow, his home village in the Chenghai county, in search of fortune in the nearby busy and enterprising port of Zhanglin. All these areas are within the present-day province of Guangdong.

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\(^{17}\) The Big Five rice traders included the Wanglees (Nakhonthon Bank Group), Lamsams (Thai Farmers Bank group), Iamsuris (Kamon Kij Group), Bulasuks (banks and insurance companies, among them The Bank of Asia, Bangkok Bank of Commerce, Thai Commercial Insurance Company Limited, The Bangkok-Thonburi Insurance Company Limited, as well as other major industries) and Bulakuns (Mahboonkong Group). For details, see Akira Suehiro (1996), *Capital Accumulation in Thailand, 1855-1985*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, p. 110-111.
in South China. He started work as a fisherman. Later, Hook moved to Hong Kong and joined his fellow clansmen to work as a sailor on ships owned by the Yuenfa Company, the earliest shipping company in Hong Kong, founded by the Gaos clan of Chenghai city (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:97). In 1842, the same year that the Nanking Treaty between China and England resulted in the relaxation of state control of trade in China and the beginning of foreign investment as well as business prospects and advantages, Hook and five or six other friends invested their savings in chartering a junk (a Chinese sailing ship) to carry cargo between Southeast Asia via Hong Kong and Swatow, to Shanghai and other coastal ports in northern China. This period of British involvement served as a period of opportunity for Hook because there was free trade in China, and because the British, after colonizing Hong Kong in 1842 following the First Opium War, transformed the colony from a fishing village to a port and a free-trade city.

Like most sailors at that time, Hook and his associates relied on the wind for their trade routes and timetable.18 In winter, they relied on the northeasterly winds to blow the ship south to Hong Kong from Zhanglin port; in summer, they relied on southeasterly winds to blow north to Tiensin, another nearby city. The products he bought for trade were mainly brown sugar which was plentiful in China. In the British colony of Hong Kong, Hook found out that Thai rice had become the primary import there. Thus, he used the money from the sale of brown sugar from China to import Thai rice from Hong Kong to China, because there was a rice shortage in China. This marks the beginning of the rice trade, which contributed greatly to the growth of the Wanglee family. He eventually saved enough to buy his own junk and, over time, increased the number of junks in his fleet (Chamnongsri, 1995:46-47).

In 1851, having accumulated sufficient funds, Hook rented an office in Hong Kong and established the Kin Tye Lung company, which started as an import-export business. Its main function was to sell Chinese local products in foreign ports and to buy rice from Thailand to sell in China (Guangdong) and Hong Kong. Later, the company also acted as a commission agent in Hong Kong, serving as an intermediary for overseas labourers to remit their incomes back home.

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18 The need of merchants and sailors in wind-driven ships to have to spend several months in port selling their wares, buying a return cargo, and awaiting the semi-annual change of monsoon direction was considered one of the reasons for the relatively large population of Southeast Asian maritime cities. For details, see Anthony Reid (1992), "Economic and Social Change, c. 1400-1800" in The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, From Early Times to c. 1800, Volume 1, Nicholas Tarling (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 476.
This was the mother company, later to branch into subsidiary companies all over Southeast Asia. By the end of the nineteenth century, Kin Tye Lung’s associate companies were established in Bangkok (Wanglee Company), Singapore (Tan Seng Lee Company, later renamed Tan Guan Lee Company), Swatow (Tan Wan Lee Company and Kien Lee Company) and Saigon (Kien Guan Lee Company) (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:98-99). The Wanglee Company in Thailand was established in 1871 by his eldest son, Tan Tsu Huang (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:98; Chamnongsri, 1995:50, 83; Brown, 1994:171). This is the first version of the family origin story.

The other version of the story is as follows. G.W. Skinner (1957:137) and Akira Suehiro (1996:111) say that the Wanglee group was founded by Tan Tsu Huang, who came directly to Thailand around 1865 as “a penniless Teochiu lad of twenty”. Suehiro derived this version of the story from Skinner, who got it from the grandchildren of Tan Tsu Huang, whose names were not given, though presumably they belonged to the third and fourth generations of the Wanglee family in Thailand.

This story has it that Tan Tsu Huang first engaged in shipping between China and Bangkok, before moving into trade, setting up the Hang Huang Lee shop in Bangkok around 1870 “to import silk from China and all classes of European piece goods for the local market” (Suehiro, 1996:111) and export rice to China and Hong Kong. Over the years, he extended his business operations vertically into the rice industry, establishing his first rice mill in 1874. By the early 1900s, he owned and operated at least two large-scale rice mills in Bangkok. In addition, he also expanded his business networks in the region by establishing similar trading companies in China, Hong Kong, Swatow, Singapore (Phanni, 1985:90), and Vietnam. It is believed that he used the Kin Tye Lung trading network as a foundation. Despite some confusion mentioned earlier in its founding history, the Kin Tye Lung Company in Hong Kong had business connections with the Wanglee group. However, personal relations between them are still unclear.

In considering the two stories, there appear to be some inconsistencies of detail and date between the two versions. However, the essence of the two stories is the same. The only difference is whether “the penniless lad” is actually Tan Tsu Huang or his father, Hook. As noted above, both versions originated in the process of collecting data from the relatives of the family,
which can be considered as a form of primary source. Nevertheless, all these are based on oral histories, which can be misleading as they are subject to variation, being passed down from one generation to the next. In any event, each story is fascinating and interesting in its own right, and it does not really matter which one is true for the two versions of the story later intersect and become uniform. The important thing is that the family has existed in Thailand in some form for more than a century.

Of the various versions of the family history, that of Chamnongsri (1995, 1998 revised edition) is probably the most accurate, being the first complete, detailed biography of the Wanglee family. Chamnongsri is Tongpoon’s niece and is very close to the Wanglee family. Moreover, she was raised in the Wanglee house by her maternal grandmother, as her mother died while she was still young (Chamnongsri, 1998:155). As such, she represents an excellent source of oral family history.

In producing her work, Chamnongsri employed both the Chinese and Thai sources of evidence. She received information from family members both in China and in Thailand, which is a strong point of her work. She traces the family’s history over four generations, providing some in-depth stories not mentioned in other books. Previous works on the Wanglee family are all brief accounts, whether in the Thai language such as like the works of Phanni Bualek (1985, 1986), Sirilak Sakkriangkrai (1980), and Supphalak Pornkulwat (1996, 1997), or in the English language such as those of Skinner (1957), Suehiro (1996) and Choi Chi-Chueng (1993). However, Chamnongsri’s account is different since being a member of the family gives her an advantage over the other writers.

Irrespective of the origins of the Thai branch of the Wanglee family, Tan Tsu Huang arrived in Thailand at a time to take advantage of the major changes in the Thai economic environment resulting from the implementation of the Bowring Treaty, enacted in 1855 between Sir John Bowing (1792-1872), the Governor of Hong Kong as the representative of the British Government, and King Mongkut, (Rama IV - 1851-1868). This marked a new era of free trade for the Thai economy.\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) The Bowring Treaty replaced the relatively unsuccessful Burney Treaty of 1826 with King Nangklao (Rama III - 1824-1851), although its objectives of the freeing of Thai trade were essentially the same. For further details, see
Before 1855, Westerners could not compete with the Chinese, as they lacked equal commercial rights as well as additional privileges and protection. The aim of the treaty was to eliminate the advantages that the local traders had over the Western merchants, so that Western commerce with Siam [Thailand] would be profitable. The treaty of 1855 secured these objectives for the first time, and it was followed by similar treaties between Siam and all the major trading states of Europe and America. Thereafter Westerners enjoyed consular protection, extraterritorial privileges, and freedom to trade at all seaports, to rent/buy property and reside in Bangkok, and to travel to the interior (with passes). Above all, high duties were abolished and a maximum limit of 3% placed on import duties (Skinner, 1957:100).

It could be said that prior to the Bowring Treaty, Thai international trade had mainly been handled by the king, the royal family, high-ranking officials, and Chinese merchants. Trade was based on a monopoly on certain goods granted by the King to individuals, usually members of the royal family (Suehiro, 1996:17). After the Bowring Treaty, conditions moved in favour of the British, and the Thai court felt that they had been forced to accept an unequal treaty. However, King Mongkut was farsighted in that while he was active in introducing Western culture and science into Thailand, he was at the same time very worried about the political future of Thailand, especially the danger of the country becoming colonised. Seeing the fate of neighbouring countries being subject to colonisation by the French or British, Rama IV thus decided to comply with the British demands peacefully, rather than let them take aggressive action later on. Thus, the Bowring Treaty was seen as the right decision for both parties (Skinner, 1957:100-101). As Hong Lysa (1984:69) said, “Whether it be for good or ill, the treaty forms a benchmark in the economic evolution of the country”.

Free trade exploited by aggressive European traders led to the expansion of international trade and furthered “connectedness” of Thailand with the rest of the world. Thailand adopted the role of rice producer to the international market. Thai village cultivators were able to respond to this change quickly, by for example changing from weaving their own cloth to becoming exclusively rice or cash crop farmers, and buying cheap European cloth in return. They thus in turn depended on the world market. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the telegraph line

installed by the Thai government in 1875, the introduction of steam ships, the abolition of slavery in Thailand and the freedom of labour during Rama V's reign - all these led to Thailand's expansion and connection with world trade (Phanni, 2002:32-33).

Phanni Bualek (2002:34), a Thai economic historian, says that although the Bowring Treaty led to the growth of investment in Western-style business enterprises, creating an opportunity for development of industrial capitalism, the capitalist forces that the treaty represented did not completely replace the traditional pattern of economic transactions. The local capitalists, being mainly Chinese, lacked the political power at the time to bring this development about themselves. They had to rely on the patronage of the traditional elite in order to build their economic base, for in the traditional structure of the country, political and economic resources belonged to the monarchy. The Chinese capitalists in Thailand were therefore tied to the traditional elite through the tax farming system, joint economic ventures with the royalty and nobility, and through loans which they had obtained from the Privy Purse. On the one hand, the Chinese were entrepreneurs; on the other hand, they were government servants. Because of the nature of capital accumulation, the local capitalists were unable to change the basic structure of the economy and society. The very foundations of economic structure and tax system were put in place by the ruling elite. The persistence of the sakdina society prevented the country from moving on to industrial capitalism where the bourgeoisie would be able to be the dominant class (Phanni, 2002:31-32).

With regard to the Europeans, the benefit of the Bowring Treaty was access to the Thai market for European goods with low tariffs. The downside was that the Thai produce was almost totally agricultural and mostly rice, not saleable in Europe at that time and very bulky for its value. The Europeans thus had to establish a three way trade system, of trading European manufactured goods into Thailand, Thai rice to Asia, and Asian goods, porcelains, spices and fabrics etc, back to Europe. In this way, the Chinese trading patterns were essential to the development of European trading interests (Skinner, 1957:102-103).

The Bowring Treaty therefore benefited the Chinese as well as the British in many ways. These benefits and their effect on Tan Tsu Huang will be considered in the following.
First, European innovation and enterprise expanded the Thai economy and the Chinese were quick in learning Western technologies so as to compete with the Europeans. In this regard, Tan Tsu Huang did the same thing. While many Chinese were *compradore/middle-man* who served European companies and benefited from their technology, partial profits, and business channels in order to foster their own business, Tan Tsu Huang was an independent businessman but nonetheless benefited from technological improvements. He shifted from milling rice by man-power to steam-powered mills, realizing that they led to quicker processing and better quality output. As Skinner (1957:105) points out, “The stakes were so high that the Chinese had every incentive to learn fast. The superiority of steam mills was obvious, and so the Chinese rented and later bought them, small ones at first, and hired Western (usually Scottish) engineers to run them”. Tan Tsu Huang did not stop at steam mills but went further in installing electric lights in his mills as soon as they became available in the 1880s. The mills could then operate day and night and employ two shifts, leading to double the output to make his investment pay better. Tan Tsu Huang was said to be the first miller to install mills with electric lights in Thailand. His two mills - Long Heng Li and Kieng Li Chan - were the most advanced rice mills in the country at that time (Phanni, 1986:58).

European mills in Thailand were forced to keep up with their Chinese competitors or close down. In the end, the pioneering European mills were abandoned or passed into Chinese hands. Thus, the Europeans lost to the Chinese the biggest prize of all in Thailand. The Thais themselves declined to compete (Skinner, 1957:102-103).

Secondly, the Chinese also invented a new method of making white rice around 1890. The Chinese were the first to initiate this innovation, reducing the popularity of “cargo” rice as people turned to buy and consume white rice, which cost more than cargo rice in the international market (Skinner, 1957:104). Indeed, Westerners had to learn this technological innovation from the Chinese. In this regard, Tan Tsu Huang, like other Chinese, was among the first rice millers in Thailand to produce white rice (Phanni, 1986: 58).

Thirdly, there was a possibility for vertical expansion in the rice business - a tactic of the Chinese the Europeans did not think about. The Chinese were bright and had shown a determination to control the rice trade in Thailand. They entrenched themselves in the industry
from cultivator to exporter, and the largest Chinese miller-traders had close contacts with the Thai elite and the state (Skinner, 1957:104). Similarly, like these Chinese merchants, Tan Tsu Huang organised the whole rice business - buying of paddy, milling, and export - into one entity (Phanni, 1986:58). The control of the rice industry was in Chinese hands. The Europeans were in no position to secure their own source of paddy, for its collection was in the hands of Chinese middlemen.

Through the *compradore* system, the Chinese middlemen became men of great power. They had several advantages – ability to speak Chinese, Thai and some English, familiarity of the local market, as well as connections with retailers and distributors, which made it virtually their own “Chinese monopoly”. Europeans, on the other hand, faced initially with Chinese commercial dominance, had no choice but to hire these Chinese middlemen. They found themselves at a disadvantage, whether in terms of the insufficient knowledge of the local market or inability to deal directly with retail merchants. They spoke neither Thai nor Chinese and had limited and indirect sources of trade information. Being cut off from any important role in retail or internal trade, the Europeans had to depend on the Chinese, who were effectively their principal competitors.

Fourthly, the major foreign markets for Thai rice were in Singapore, Hong Kong, and South China, where the importing firms were largely Chinese. They controlled the rice market in the region, blocking European business entry into the market. By the 1880s, Chinese millers were exporting on their own account to Chinese importers abroad. The advantage enjoyed by the Chinese was that they were able to use this free trade system and connection to the world as the basis for the expansion of their trade, opening up their trading network, especially later to the Western world. In other words, they were able to turn the advantages given to the British into privileges and opportunities for themselves (Skinner, 1957:105). Their greatest advantage – intimate knowledge of the Asian market and connections with Chinese retailers and distributors – remained virtually a Chinese monopoly. In this regard, Tan Tsu Huang’s Hang Huang Lee company engaged in trading networks between China, Hong Kong, Swatow, Singapore (Phanni, 1985:90) and Saigon (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:98-99). Apart from rice, Tan also imported other goods like Chinese silk and European products received from the British colony of Hong Kong into Thailand - all under the brand name “Seng Long” (Skinner, 1957:104; Phanni, 1986:58).
Fifth, an indirect advantage of the Bowring Treaty benefiting the Chinese in Thailand was that the Europeans could not break into the rice industry mainly because the Chinese preferred working for the Chinese. The majority of the labourers in the rice mills were Chinese. These labourers preferred working for their fellow Chinese rather than foreigners, or the Thais. This benefited Tan Tso Huang’s business, whereby the labourers, whether working in the rice mills or in the import-export sector, were Chinese, especially those of his dialect group or even from his home village. They might even be his distant relatives working as labourers for him. The business operated on a system of trust and dependence on each other, in a family style of management (Phanni, 2002:36).

The Chinese merchants in Thailand, for their part, had every reason to be pleased with developments. The stimulus of European shipping, the introduction of European capital and large scale commercial efficiency, as well as the worldwide connections of the European commercial houses led to a tremendous increase in the volume and value of foreign trade. While the specifically Chinese proportion of the trade decreased somewhat, the absolute increase in trade made the Chinese part of the trade increase greatly, and in addition, the Chinese were able to secure employment and income from their central role in European trade patterns (Skinner, 1957:102-103).

As a direct consequence of the Bowring and other treaties, Tan Tso Huang later became a French subject because of the commercial advantages this conferred. Following the Bowring Treaty between Thailand and Britain in 1855, similar treaties were enacted with the other Western nations. The treaty between French and Thailand was ratified in 1856. According to the Franco-Siamese (or Franco-Thai) treaty, French citizens and subjects would enjoy the extraterritorial rights of being subject to a French rather than a Thai court in Thailand. In addition, they were also entitled to free trade opportunities, a maximum of three percent tax on import duties, and the right to purchase/rent land in Thailand (Thongthong, 1998:266-267). Given the small number of European people in Thailand at that time to benefit from this treaty, the treaty nations, especially France, had registered other Asians, especially the Chinese in Thailand, to become their subjects (Thongthong, 1998:269). The French wanted to expand their economic influence in Thailand. What better ways than to extend the privilege to the Chinese community in Thailand (Pimpraphai, 2002a)?
Tan Tsu Huang enjoyed French privileges in Thailand, particularly with regard to the maximum three percent tax on import duties and the right to rent land in Thailand. In terms of the latter advantage, Clause four of the treaty (Thongthorng, 1998:268) stated that French citizens and subjects were not allowed to hold land in Bangkok and within 200 sen\textsuperscript{20}/eight kilometres of the Bangkok surrounding areas if they had not resided in Thailand for a minimum of ten years. Instead, they could only rent land. However, in the areas beyond this limit, they could buy/rent land without any condition. This restrictive policy of land ownership, which applied to the citizens and subjects of France as well as the other European countries who signed the treaty with Thailand (Thongthorng, 1998:267-268), was aimed at avoiding speculation in the sale of land in Thailand so as not to lose control of the territory, especially the area considered to be the trading centre, to foreign domination. Tan Tsu Huang was able to rent an area around Huay Chung Long (also called the “steamship port,” currently situated at the Klong San area near Thongthammachat Temple in Thonburi) to set up his trading business (Supphalak 1996:121). Moreover, it is probable that Tan Tsu Huang also enjoyed French privileges in the French colony of Vietnam, for he later set up a company in Saigon (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:98-99) in order to expand his trading network.

In addition, Tan Tsu Huang’s status within the Chinese community in Thailand was one of leadership and respectability. Business growth and community contribution went hand-in-hand, leading to success. He increased his status among the Chinese community there because the Wanglee family acted as a leader of the Chinese community and because their rice trading business was considered big and important in Thailand at that time. Therefore, in 1899, he and the other forty rice mill owners in Bangkok established the Rice Mills Association of Bangkok (Phanni, 1986:58; Chamnongsri, 1998:124) in order to set a uniform standard for the price of rice and the amount in each rice bag for export to Chinese and Southeast Asian markets. This improved the quality of rice and the economic well-being of the Chinese rice mills in general, and led them to go beyond the Europeans in dominating the rice market (Phanni, 1986:58; Chamnongsri, 1998:124).

\textsuperscript{20} Sen is a unit of length equivalent to forty metres. See Domnern Garden and Sathienpong Wannapok (1999), Phochnanukrom Thai-Angrkit [Thai-English Dictionary], Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., p. 504.
Aside from his business career, in private life, Tan Tsu Huang had a wife and children established in both China and Thailand – both of which were called “home” (Chamnongsri, 2000:1). This is typical of the first generation Chinese migrants. Immigrants often married Thai/Sino-Thai women, established homes and raised families in the new land, while continuing to support wives and children in China. Eventually, many immigrants retired permanently to China, sometimes with their Thai families, sometimes without them. In the latter case, a generous monetary settlement might be made for their wives and children in Thailand, and not infrequently the business so carefully built up by the immigrant during his lifetime was turned over to his Thai descendants (Coughlin, 1960:22-23). Back in China, Tan Tsu Huang had a well-to-do Chinese wife named Lao Sok Chia. In Thailand, he also married Nu Posayanond, a daughter of a wealthy Sino-Thai, bureaucratic family. The origin of this family could be traced back to the Chinese migrant trader, Lo Sae Posayanond, who later became a bureaucratic capitalist serving the Thai state. Many of Lo Sae’s descendants also became state officials.

However, while married into a bureaucratic capitalist family, Tan Tsu Huang, unlike other Sino-Thai families, was not a bureaucratic capitalist serving the state (for example, being tax farmers) and depended on state power to help foster his trade. Tan Tsu Huang advanced his business career by other means. First, he relied on the Chinese networks both locally and internationally. In Thailand, he engaged in business associations with the other Chinese businessmen in order to promote his rice trade and to build his reputation within the Chinese community. Internationally, he established the Wanglee family regional trading networks in China and in the Southeast Asian region. The Wanglee surname originated from the Teochiu word Huanglee, referring to the profits or interests incurred (Chamnongsri, 1995:105). In business terms, Wanglee would mean the profits incurred from Tan Tsu Huang’s business. Second, he also had links with the state. Though the Wanglee family had claimed that they had limited ties with the state and instead employed “their family networks” to foster their own trade (Chamnongsri, 1995), it is without doubt that Tan Tsu Huang’s marriage to the Posayanond

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21 It is suspected that Lao Sok Chia came from a well-to-do family because she had very small feet. Foot binding was the traditional Chinese practice of the daughters of most well-to-do families. For details, see Khunying Chamnongsri Hanchanalsh (1998), Dutnawa klang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration], a cremation book of Suwit Wanglee (1928-1994), revised edition, Bangkok: Nanmee Books, p. 126-127.

22 Chamnongsri’s remark of the Wanglee family’s limited ties with the state is also reiterated in Phanni Bualek (1985), “Kan toep to lae kan phattana khong nai thun thanakhan phanit nai thai (2475-2516)” [“Growth and
family was an indirect link to the state, which helped protect his business interests. Taking the
issue further, his role in the Chinese association also led him to have some contacts with Thai
state officials as well.

Towards the end of his working lifetime, Tan Tsu Huang did not remain in Thailand, but
retired from business and returned to China in 1904 before his death in 1921. Tan Lip Buay, his
second son, inherited his business in Thailand. Here, it should be noted that Tan Tsu Huang had
five children altogether. Figure No. 2 shows Tan Tsu Huang’s family, which include his wives,
children and in-laws. His first son, Tan Lip Heung, was an adopted son. Tan Tsu Huang’s eldest
son from his Chinese wife, Lao Sok Chia, died at a very young age. This adopted son was loved
and respected as the eldest son of the family, mainly taking care of the business in Hong Kong at
that time23 (Chamnongsri, 1998:124, 131). In Thailand, Tan Tsu Huang also had four other
children - two sons and two daughters - with Nu Posayanond. Apart from Tan Lip Buay, the
eldest son in Thailand, there were Tongyu and Pcok, who later married into the Lamsam and
Bulasuk rice-trading families respectively, in order to establish business links for the Wanglee
family, as well as Tan Lip Tong, the youngest son, who married a Chinese woman in China, but
who later died there at the age of twenty-six (Chamnongsri, 1998:127-128).

23 Most of Tan Lip Heung’s descendants stayed in Hong Kong. However, there is also a descending line in
Singapore and a line of his daughter in Thailand, the Setthapakdi family (Chamnongsri, 1998:127).
Figure No. 2 - The Family Tree of Tan Tsu Huang (first generation Wanglee leader)

Tan Tsu Huang + Lao Sok Chia -----------eldest son died

--------- Tan Lip Hueng (adopted son) + Khowsi
       + Tae Chuk Seng
       + Lip Boong Eng

+ Nu Posayanond ----------- Tan Lip Buay + Heng Siew Ngi
        + Cham

----------- Tongyu + Ung Yuk Long Lamsam
----------- Pook + Lo Tek Chuan Bulasuk
----------- Tan Lip Tong + Si Ngang Chue

+ = married to
---- = the children

It seems that Tan Tsu Huang always considered himself as Chinese. As stated by his granddaughter Chamnongsri (Chamnongsri, 1998:124),

...Tan Tsu Huang never thought of himself as a Thai. Even though Thailand is the land which led to his stability and is the land in which four of his children were born, in his mind, Thailand meant nothing more than an office where he needed to spend most of his lifetime. When work is done, it is time to go back home and rest.

Though Tan Tsu Huang learned to speak Thai and used it for trade communications and connections with the Thai people and government, as well as in his marriage with Nu Posayanond, his Sino-Thai wife, he felt more comfortable conversing in the Teochiu dialect, his maternal tongue. Though he came to Thailand, he occasionally travelled to and from China. It should be mentioned that the architecture of his residence in Thailand was also Chinese in style.²⁴

²⁴ The Chinese symbol of the Wanglee family was the Chinese style mansion at Thonburi, along the Chao Phraya River Bank. It was built in 1881, during the reign of Rama V. In the past, the Wanglee mansion was the centre of meeting for all the Wanglee members and their relatives. Many family members grew up in this house, whether
As Supheng Chanthawanit (1991:17) claims, the Teochius in Thailand have a saying about *sa sua* or three mountains, as significant matters for their life.

The first is *cho sua* meaning their dream of becoming *chao sua* or tycoon. The second is *tung sua*, or the desire to return to their Chinese homeland. The third is *ngi sua* or the Don Temple Cemetery, where most of the Teochius in Thailand were buried if they could not be buried back in China with their relatives.

Hence, as Coughlin (1960:22) says, it is common for the Chinese to return to their homeland towards the end of their life, leaving the business in the hands of their descendants in Thailand.²⁵

Tan Tsu Huang was rich and did not forget his Chinese origins. He went back to China to help his Chinese relatives and fellow villagers, and shared his well-being with them by helping them develop, especially in terms of education. There, Tan Tsu Huang dedicated his ability and money in the social development and restructuring of Choukow, his home village. He built a new village nearby, developed the old village, built two new schools with assistance from his educated brother Tan Tsu Hoong, built various roads and bridges to improve communications, as well as helped the needy people. Those who had problems came to see him, whether they lacked enough money to start a family or engaged in a dispute which needed his help in settling (Chamnongsri, 1998: 107-108). This shows that his Chinese ties were very strong. As Chamnongsri (1998:125-126) stated,

members of the Wanglee themselves, or their close relatives through marriage like the Lamsams and Bulasus. Today, this house is used for special events such as ancestor worship, where the family members would gather together (Chamnongsri, 1998:101-105, 127-128).

²⁵ However, cases vary from family to family. For instance, there are examples of Tan Tsu Huang’s counterparts like Khaw Soo Chaeng of the Na-Ranong family (Cushman, 1991), who was engaged in the tin-mining industry in the South of Thailand, and Ung Yuk Long Lamsam (Thanawat, 2000) of another rice-trading family of the time, both of whom remained and died in Thailand, with occasional visits back to China to reunite with family and relatives back there. For more details, see Jennifer W. Cushman (1991), *Family and State: The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-mining Dynasty 1797-1932*, Craig J. Reynolds (ed.), Singapore: Oxford University Press; and Thanawat Sapphaibun (2000), *Rua chiwit chao sua luat mangkorn trakun Lamsam [The Life Boat of the Chao Sua from the Lamsam Family]*, Bangkok: Krung Thep Thurakit Publishing Company Ltd.
...education... is like a debt (*bun khun*) that cannot be forgotten...the voice and eyes of the villagers showed pride when speaking of the first and only school in the village built during the time when the majority did not have the opportunity to read and write. Later, which was about a hundred years ago, the Choukow people were able to read and write, thanks to *chao sua* [Tan Tsu Huang] and Tan Tsu Hoong, his educated younger brother. Both had dedicated and carefully examined the standard and quality of the teachers, as well as developed the school curriculum to make it more developed and efficient. The school which he had set up in Choukow had developed according to the changes in each period, with the patronage of the Wanglee family - from a small house within the house [Wanglee house] compound to Seng Tek School within the Wanglee family ancestor worship temple to Choukow primary school to present-day Choumui school, a government school with both primary and secondary education.

Second Generation Tan Lip Buay (1881 -1930)

After Tan Tsu Huang’s return to China in 1904, Tan Lip Buay, his second son, succeeded to the business. However, the succession did not follow the normal primogeniture one of father to eldest son, because the first son was an adopted son from a remote branch of the local descent group in China (Supphalak, 1997:11).

Tan Lip Buay was born in 1881, during the reign of Rama V (1868-1910). He can be said to be the first “Thai” member of the Wanglee family in Thailand (Chamnongsri, 1998:135) since he was born in Thailand and had a Sino-Thai mother who also held Thai citizenship, although he was a French subject under the extraterritoriality laws of the time, a nationality adopted for purely commercial reasons. Yet, he was raised in the Chinese manner. His father, Tan Tsu Huang, had a family rule that his sons must be Chinese educated. Thus, when the sons were six to eight years old, Tan Lip Buay and his brother Tan Lip Tong were sent back to live with their father’s Chinese wife in China and to attend the school Tan Tsu Huang had built for the children of his Choukow village, his hometown. They used the family temple for ancestor worship as a temporary school under the supervision of his brother, Tan Tsu Hoong, who was Tan Lip Buay’s uncle. Because his childhood and adolescent years were spent back in China, Tan Lip Buay really only went to live and work permanently in Thailand as an adult (Chamnongsri, 1998:136-138).
Tan Lip Buay was the first member of the family to be able to own land in Thailand, under the 1909 Land Title Law. Ownership of what is now the Wanglee house at Thonburi was given to Tan Lip Buay and his brother, Tan Lip Tong. In *Dutnawa klang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration]*, evidence of the ownership certificate of the land where the Wanglee house was built clearly states that the ownership belonged to “Chinese Tan Lip Buay big brother Chinese Tan Lip Tong [younger brother] French subjects”. In later versions of the land ownership certificate, the word “Chinese” no longer appears. There seems to have been no change of surname at that time, so the Tan surname mentioned in this land ownership certificate was still in use (Chamnongsri, 1998:136).

Like Tan Tsu Huang who benefited from being a French subject, his sons also benefited from the advantage of land ownership in Thailand with the implementation of a new Franco-Siamese Treaty signed in 1906 and effective from 1 August 1907 (Thongthorng, 1998:267). There was, at the time, a great deal of friction between Thailand and France on the application of the laws of extraterritoriality, to the point where any persons of Asian descent in Thailand other than the native Thai citizens were claimed by Britain or France as nationals of their colonies. This treaty corrected land ownership conditions in Thailand, giving to Asian French subjects the right to own land in Thailand without any conditions. French citizens were still subject to the old treaty of 1856. The former treaty which allowed the Asians in Thailand to register as French subjects and received extraterritorial rights as well as the maximum three percent tax on import duties, was considered as taking advantage of the Thais. This new treaty arose in return for the abolition of extraterritoriality privileges and the maximum three percent tax on import duties privilege for Asian French subjects, and the fact that they would be under Thai rather than French laws and courts (Thongthorng, 1998:270-272; Thaemsuk, 1979:100-104). This led Thailand to be free from being economically disadvantaged by European dominance and to revive the declining power of the Thai legal system. In return, as a diplomatic counter, Thailand yielded the three Cambodian provinces of Siemriep, Battambong, and Sisophon to France, which was increasing and solidifying its dominance within the region (Thaemsuk, 1984:7).

Tan Lip Buay returned to Thailand to settle permanently in 1904, having married in China in the meantime and having had at least two children. But that year, his father also retired to live in China, handing over the business in Thailand to Tan Lip Buay as well as leaving his Sino-Thai
wife, Nu, with the children in Thailand (Chamnongsri, 1998:113-119). During Tan Lip Buay’s first years of management, he received help and guidance from the longju, an old, trusted employee who used to work during his father’s time. In addition, he was also assisted by trusted employees who followed him from China to Thailand. They were like his relatives, belonging to the larger Wanglee family. They ate and slept on the premise and were given food. All their basic necessities were provided for (Chamnongsri, 1998:139). In this fashion, Tan Lip Buay served as the father of the “family” – both his own family and the extended family, which included relatives and workers in the business.

In terms of business, Tan Lip Buay’s period can be considered as a period of expansion of his father’s business. He managed the Tan Huang Lee Company and changed its name to the Wanglee Company. In the rice business, he set up three additional rice mills, thus increasing the total from two to five rice mills (Chamnongsri, 1998:139). By the 1920s, the Wanglee group was the third largest in terms of production capacity. Choi Chi-Chueng, (1993:140) best described the scene.

In 1919, the European capitalists had “de-invested” in the rice industry in Siam [Thailand] completely. On the other hand, some groups of Chinese capitalists had expanded their activities during the rice crisis in 1911 until World War I and before the government change in 1932 from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, there existed only 3 families who together controlled 50% of the rice industry in Bangkok - the Wanglee Group headed by Tan Lip Buay, Lo Joo Long Group headed by Lo Tek Chuan Bulasuk, and Ma Chin Seng Group headed by Ma Lap Kun Bulakun.26

In terms of the import-export trade, Tan Lip Buay started to expand his own rice trade as well as other commodity trading networks by setting up additional branches of his own Wanglee Company in China and Southeast Asia, with the Wanglee company in Bangkok as the corporate headquarters. Initially, he cooperated with Tan Lip Heung, who was considered his half-brother in Hong Kong, to set up a company in Singapore for the import of rice. This business was run by

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his half-brother, who later became the founder of the Wanglee family branch in Singapore. Similar patterns also occurred in East and Southeast Asia (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:141).

In addition, around this time, he also set up a financial section of the company to assist in the currency exchange operations of the company, as well as set up a ship and goods insurance section in order to protect against any damage which might have occurred during shipment. In essence, he was big enough to carry his own insurance. In 1912, after the Chinese Republic was established, Tan Lip Buay set up branches of the Remittance Agent of the Wanglee Company in Bangkok, Swatow, Singapore, Penang, Saigon and Hong Kong in order to manage the circulation of capital. In this case, it was a “double expansion”. After the end of World War I in 1918, Tan Lip Buay set up the Huang Lee Chan Company to exchange and remit currencies overseas. In terms of his expansion, on the one hand, Tan Lip Buay expanded the Wanglee family business overseas, creating his own network, with the Wanglee family in Bangkok as the parent company. His relatives managed the associate companies overseas, but there existed both business and personal links between them. They were intertwined. On the other hand, the Wanglee founded their own separate companies where original partners of Kin Tye Lung held no shares (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:99-101,141). The Wanglee group under Tan Lip Buay’s management established its own business network which competed directly with Kin Tye Lung, the business’s earlier partner (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993: 99-100; Brown, 1994:171-172).

Moreover, since the time of Tan Tsu Huang, the Wanglees had always been associated with sea transport by hiring steam ships to conduct import-export trade. Tan Lip Buay developed, expanded, and upgraded the shipping sector of the Wanglee business by becoming an international representative in Asia of the Norwegian Asia Line, the Thoresen Company of Norway, called in Asia the BK Steamship Company, in 1919. This had more than ten steamships running along two routes – one was the Bangkok, Hong Kong, Swatow, Singapore, Malaysia and Burma (Myanmar) route; the second was the Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Japan route. It opened up the Wanglee company to a wider international network, fostering quicker and smoother communication for East Asia and Southeast Asia trade (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:101).

Tan Lip Buay faced a difficult period during Rama VI’s (1910-1925) reign when the King branded the Chinese as “Jews of the East”, and during the Great Depression in 1930 which
resulted in severe economic contraction for four years, recovering in 1934. Though World War I did not directly affect the Thai nation as did World War II, the war had quite an effect in terms of the decline in exports. But Tan Lip Buay was able to lead his business safely through these hard times. He was cautious in managing his business and the family’s social position. In terms of business, he was careful with its expansion and he depended mainly on his Chinese networks both inside and outside the country. In terms of his social position, he continued his father’s footsteps by upholding and increasing the Wanglee reputation (Phanni, 1986:58-59), as will be discussed later. He also probably came into close contact with the Thai royal family and state officials before the 1932 abolition of the absolute monarchy, although detailed stories about the connection between the Wanglee family and the Thai state were disclosed only during his son Tan Siew Men’s era. Though Rama VI exercised a policy of Thai nationalism and strict control towards the Chinese, there were flexible channels, for the King and his state officials realized the importance of the Chinese to the economy. With all this, by the 1930s the Wanglee group had undoubtedly become the largest private business group in Thailand.

In terms of social contributions, Tan Lip Buay’s role was no less important than his father’s in building up the social reputation of the family. In 1906, he founded and chaired the Tian Hua Hospital, a hospital designed for the overseas Chinese in Thailand (Suehiro, 1996:121). In 1910, Tan Lip Buay, in association with other Chinese traders (namely, Ung Yuk Long of the Lamsam family and Kho Hui Chiya of the Koh Mah Wah Group), had set up the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Siam in order to protect the trading rights of Chinese traders, later to become the Chinese Trade Association during Tan Siew Men’s era, before transforming to the present-day Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce during his grandson, Suwit Wanglee’s time onwards (Suehiro, 1996:122). 27 Tan Lip Buay served as president there for two consecutive terms from 1914-1918. In addition, Tan Lip Buay also founded and became president of the Rice Mills Association, a newer version of the association set up by his father in 1899 (Phanni, 1986:58).

27 When Siam changed its name to Thailand in 1939, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Siam changed its name to Chinese Trade Association of Thailand and registered under the law in 1945. Another twenty-two years later, around 1976-1977, it changed its name again to Chinese Trade Chamber of Thailand. Later, during the leadership of Prime Minister General Kriangsak Chommanan, it was renamed Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which is its present name today. Despite this name change, the main function of this association remained the same - to protect the rights and privileges of Chinese traders in Thailand. For more details, see Channongsri (1995), Dutnawa klang.
Besides the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Siam, Tan Lip Buay also helped his fellow Chinese in several other ways. In 1912, he set up the Tai Hong Gong to help collect and bury the bodies of poor Chinese migrants who died without relatives in Thailand (Phanni, 1986:59). During the 1911 Chinese Revolution, he set up the China Aid Association to raise funds to help the Kuomintang (KMT) fight the revolution and win. In 1922, he set up a fund to raise money to help the China during a natural disaster (Phanni, 1986:59).

Moreover, Tan Lip Buay also followed his father’s footsteps with regard to his family life. He continued the polygamous tradition of having a Chinese wife and then a Thai wife, but in each case, the Thai wife was Thai in citizenship but actually Sino-Thai in ethnicity. Father and son both preferred Sino-Thai wives to ethnic Thai wives, since Chineseness was still important to them, in terms of traditional family practice, Chinese ancestor worship, Chinese women subordination to men, raising the children in the Chinese style of filial piety, hard work, thrift and so on (Chamnongsri, 1998:153-158). If the Thai woman was not from a well-to-do noble family that could help the Chinese merchant’s business, marrying an ethnic Thai commoner was seen as a downgrade of one’s position. According to Confucian Chinese tradition as noted by Phanni (2002:461), the Chinese, if able to choose, would tend to marry upwards - whether to a daughter of a powerful Thai state official or a Sino-Thai woman of Chinese descent. Chineseness is seen as coming from the same land and being able to understand each other easily. If the Chinese man gets a Sino-Thai daughter of a well-to-do merchant/bureaucratic family as his wife, all the better, since he not only feels more comfortable understanding one other, but also the fact that he can use his father-in-law’s business connections and support with the family business (Phanni, 2002:461). The case was true of Cham, Tan Lip Buay’s wife, who was the daughter of a wealthy family living in the Sampeng Chinese district in Bangkok (Phanni, 2002:153). Here, it is expected that Cham was Sino-Thai in origin. She lived among the Chinese but she also tended to be more Thai than Chinese in her manners, as recorded by her granddaughter, Chamnongsri (Phanni, 2002:153-154). But irrespective of her exact origin, Tan Lip Buay could use his in-law’s connections in business. In addition, he also used his sister’s connection – Tongyu, who married Ung Yuk Long Lamsam, to establish business ties and connections with yet another Sino-Thai rice-trading family partner. The Wanglee family had maintained a close relationship
with the Lamsam family through matrimonial ties. The Lamsam family was one of the leading rice millers which had its origins in the teak business in northern Thailand. Ung Yuk Long Lamsam, then the second generation Lamsam leader, extended his father’s business line by opening overseas branches in Singapore, Hong Kong, Swatow, and Shanghai in order to directly export rice and other goods from Thailand. He also moved into the rice milling industry. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Lamsam family’s business enjoyed rapid growth (Valaya, 1997:26-27).

From his marriages, Tan Lip Buay had altogether eight children, all of whom had contributed to the family business one way or another. He had five sons from his Chinese wife Heng Siew Ngi, namely Tan Siew Boong, Tan Siew Men, Tan Siew Ting, Tan Siew Or, and Tan Siew Kia. In addition, he also had two sons and one daughter born from Cham, his Sino-Thai wife, namely Sa-nguan, Chalit, and Kitti (Supphalak, 1997:22). Tan Siew Boong and Tan Siew Kia helped with the business in Hong Kong. The rest of the sons worked for the business in Thailand. As for the only daughter, Sa-nguan, she followed her aunt’s footsteps in helping to consolidate the business ties by marrying Chulin Lamsam. His son, Tan Siew Men, also further strengthened the ties between the two families by marrying Tongpoon Lamsam. Ties with the Bulasuk, yet another big rice-trading family, were also present, with Tan Siew Ting marrying Songsri Bulasuk and Kitti marrying Vilai Bulasuk (Chamnongsri, 1998: 150). The Bulasuk family started the trading business (import-export) in Thailand, before Lo Tek Chuan, the second generation Bulasuk family leader, extended the business to the rice industry, after having worked and gained experience in the Wanglee-owned rice mill for several years. In addition to establishing his own rice mills, from the late 1930s, Lo Tek Chuan also actively moved into the banking and insurance businesses. Since Lo Tek Chuan’s wife, Pook, was Tan Tsu Huang’s daughter (Figure No. 2), his daughter Vilai, born from his other wife, was Kitti Wanglee’s wife, and his relative Songsri was Tan Siew Ting’s wife (Figure 3), the Bulasuk family business had had close relations with the Wanglee Group, and hence with the Lamsam Group, even in the post-war period (Suehiro, 1996: 114-115). Together, these intermarriages between the Sino-Thai business families yielded business benefits, leading to the consolidation and expansion of the business base and networks. Both the Lamsam and Bulasuk families later became the Big Five, along with the Wanglee, in dominating the rice industry in the 1930s (Suehiro, 1996:120). This profited and helped expand the family business network.
Figure No. 3 – The Family Tree of Tan Lip Buay (second generation Wanglee leader)

Tan Lip Buay + Heng Siew Ngi -------- Tan Siew Boong + Khow Khuang Hua
+ Eng Su Ngek
+ Ieng Si
+ Chiu Siew Kieng
+ Li Cho Chu

-------- Tan Siew Men + Heu Koong Heng
+ Tongpoon Lamsam

-------- Tan Siew Ting + Ng Sok Eng
+ Songsri Bulasuk

-------- Tan Siew Or + Ung Yu Tek
-------- Tan Siew Kia + Hieng Mieng Chang

+ Cham -------- Sa-nguan + Chulin Lamsam
-------- Chalit + Payom
-------- Kitti + Vilai Bulasuk

+ = married to
---- = the children

Bold denotes business marriages.

From here, it is clear that the Wanglee family in its second generation had secured as well as extended the necessary linkages needed for their business’s well-being. In terms of Chinese networks, Tan Lip Buay had expanded his reputation among the Chinese community and business colleagues via his involvement in social organizations as well as trade associations, the extension of business networks in the region, and the establishment of further business family networks through his marriage, his sister’s marriage, as well as his children’s marriages to the Sino-Thai merchant families. At the Thai state level, his role in the trade association undoubtedly led him to have contacts with state officials. At the international level, he built links with Western business in the shipping industry. Under his leadership, the Wanglee family business had expanded its economic power both locally and internationally.
The final years of Tan Lip Buay were spent in Thailand. In August 1930, Tan Lip Buay contracted tuberculosis and died in the same year. At that time, he was also said to have served as president of a trade association.²⁸ After his death, Tan Siew Men, his second eldest son born from his Chinese wife, succeeded him. Here again, the principle of primogeniture was modified. Unlike his generation whereby succession passed to the eldest natural son rather than the adopted son, in his children’s generation, succession was based on ability rather than seniority. In this case, the father who was the leader of the business brought in the sons at a young adult age to help with the business and supervised their performance. Whoever he thought performed well, he would let that son be his helper, and slowly transferred the business to him one part at a time until he was able to manage it all. However, all these were under the initial supervision of the father and the long ju. Everyone in the family and family business would know that this son was the chosen one. There might then be a will written later, towards the end of his life. This was for legal purposes. For the other sons, they were also given jobs and shares in the business but the power lied with the chosen family business heir. Tan Siew Boong, his first son, was not as good in business as his brother was (Supphalak, 1997:11). Thus, Tan Siew Boong did not become the family and family business leader but received other property instead, playing a minor role in the family business in Hong Kong. His younger brother, Tan Siew Men, who became the third generation Wanglee leader, is an important figure in this thesis not only because he developed Tan Tsu Huang’s business into a vast commercial complex, as will be seen later on, but more importantly for this study, he was the husband of Tongpoon and the registered owner of the Poonphol Group, our main study focus.

Third Generation Tan Siew Men (1904-1945)

Tan Siew Men was born in 1904 in China, the year his father left for Thailand. The second son of Tan Lip Buay and Heng Siew Ngi, Tan Lip Buay’s Chinese wife, Tan Siew Men received his education in China and then in Hong Kong before coming to Bangkok to help with his father’s business at the age of twenty-one. He and his brother, Tan Siew Ting, were the middle two out of five brothers born from the same mother who came to help their father with the

²⁸ This trade association appears to be different from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Siam which he had founded and served for two terms from 1914-1918, during the World War I period, as mentioned earlier. Its exact name is not known. See Chammongsri (1998), Dutnawa kiang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration], revised edition, p. 143-144, 248.
business branch in Thailand (Chamnongsri, 1998:213), for the two sons born from Tan Lip Buay’s Thai wife, Chalit and Kitti, were both too young to handle the business at the time.\(^{29}\)

Though he migrated from China, in Thailand, Tan Siew Men was still exposed to many of the same Chinese customs in Thailand as his predecessors. During his early years at work, Tan Siew Men was under the supervision of a long ju, Tan Lip Buay’s “close man”. Every evening, he would need to report his work’s progress to his father. In fact, this Chinese tradition was one of the hereditary traditions within the Wanglee family, being passed down even to Tongpoon’s Poonphol Group (Chamnongsri, 1998:234). As will be discussed in the next chapter, Tongpoon was the last person to practice this tradition within the Wanglee family.

Tan Siew Men helped with his father’s work until 1930, when his father died, and he then assumed leadership of the family and the business. At that time, he was only twenty-six years of age. His father, Tan Lip Buay, noticed his talents and capability in business dealings compared to Tan Siew Men’s elder brother, and thus promoted him to a leadership role. It should be said that he had succeeded to the position at a very crucial and complex period, starting with the 1930 Great Depression, to be followed by the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy and the installation of a constitutional monarchy, the anti-Chinese policy under the Phibun regimes (1938-42, 1948-57), the China-Japan War, and World War II and the Japanese occupation of Thailand.

The Great Depression was a difficult phase because the price of rice dropped nearly fifty percent. Most of the rice mill owners and rice traders went bankrupt. Tan Siew Men was quick to respond to the situation by deciding to temporarily close down some of the rice mills to keep the business going (Chamnongsri, 1995:87-89). Under his management, the Wanglee business

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29 Both Chalit and Kitti were still at primary school, before being sent to Hong Kong to further their studies. It should be noted here that Tan Lip Buay was flexible with the Chinese tradition, particularly with regard to his children’s education, for he sent his children to study in places other than back to his home village in China; that is, to the British colony of Hong Kong. Later, Kitti was given the chance to further his studies in England. Kitti was the first Wanglee family member who was Western-educated. As for the Tan Lip Buay’s first, fourth, and fifth sons, born from his Chinese wife, Heng Siew Ngi - namely Tan Siew Boong, Tan Siew Or, Tan Siew Kia - the fourth and fifth sons later migrated to Hong Kong and looked after the Wanglee business branch there. Only the first son, Tan Siew Boong, stayed on and took care of the business in Swatow. For details, see Chamnongsri (1998), Dutnawa klang mahasamat [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration], revised edition, p. 213-214.
continued to operate at a reduced level, avoiding the closure suffered by many others. However, it took the Wanglee family no less than five years to recover from the Depression (Chamnongsri, 1998:149).

Tan Siew Men then expanded the rice business. The management of four rice mills during the time of the Great Depression later expanded to eight rice mills as the rice market recovered, with the total ability to mill the rice up to 1, 150 kwian daily (Phanni, 1985:92-93). As Supphalak (1996:124) adds, this is evidence that in the 1930s the Wanglee was one of the principal rice trading groups since it had up to eight rice mills and had the greatest production capacity during that time.

In July 1933, Tan Siew Men also reorganized the headquarters of the Wanglee Remittance Agent in Bangkok to become a modern bank - the Wanglee Chan Bank. Shareholders were mainly relatives in Bangkok, Swatow, and Hong Kong. This bank became a separate business from the Wanglee Company, the original family business. In addition, in September 1933, Tan Siew Men also set up the Luang Lee Insurance Company Ltd, which used to be a small division of the Wanglee Company. In both businesses, management was shared between Tan Siew Men and his brother, Tan Siew Ting (Supphalak, 1996:124-125). The style and purpose of management was the same - to cater for family needs. These were family owned companies designed to provide trade credits and insurance services exclusively to their own rice exporting enterprise - a horizontal expansion.

Moreover, to foster international trade, Tan Siew Men expanded the shipping business into several other parts while at the same time, continuing his father’s connection by serving as

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30 Sornthong (1969:58-60) said that the collapse of the merchants during the time of the Great Depression included such people like Kim Seng Li, Phra Phisansupaphon, Phraya Chotukrachasetti, Luang Athorn, Phra Phiboonphattanakan. These merchants formerly expanded their business “aggressively”, trying their luck and were in competition with one another. This led to the bankruptcy of their businesses. The Wanglee family, on the other hand, was careful with such business expansion and did this with careful consideration and reconsideration time and again. For more details, see Sornthong (1969), Chiwit khong prathet thai: sen luat yai khong Siam [Life of Thailand: Main Bloodstream of Siam], Bangkok: Saraipai, p. 50-60.

31 Kwian is a unit of capacity, whereby 1 kwian = 2000 litres, or equivalent to 1, 122 kilograms. Therefore, 1, 150 kwian = 1, 290, 300 kilograms of rice. See Mary Haas, 1964.
agent for the Norwegian shipping company. The Wanglee was also an agent of the China Siam Line (Brugard Kiosterd & Co., Dramen, Thoresen & Co. Ltd. Hong Kong). This was the only shipping company owned by the Chinese during that time. In addition, it was also an agent in other businesses like the Menam River Towage & Lighter Co. Ltd., Dramen Norway, China Siam Wharf and Godown Company in Bangkok (Phanni, 1986:63-64). Under Tan Siew Men’s leadership, the Wanglee business was also an agent for purchasing and shipping between Swatow, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Penang and Rangoon. It operated not only in Asia but in the United States of America and Europe as well (Phanni, 1986:59-60).

In accordance with Thai law concerning business registration in the country and in order to simplify the tax collection process, Tan Siew Men had registered each of his businesses separately in the “company limited” form (Phanni, 1985:94; Ukrit and Patcharee, 1989:33). Like other Chinese businesses at that time, Tan Siew Men also exploited the holding company structure to pioneer rapid business diversification, developing new interests and increasing the scope of operations with a profusion of separate companies. The use of the holding company structure was to balance conflicting interests of each company (Brown 2000: 20).

However, in 1939, the Wanglee integrated these businesses into a single corporate organization by setting up The Wanglee Group of Companies Limited. In turn, the firm had five sectors – rice mills, international trade, shipping, banking and insurance. The total value of its assets amounted to approximately twenty million baht during World War II (Phanni, 1986:63-64). This marked the emergence of one of the largest private enterprises in Thailand at this time (Phanni, 1986:63). Here, Tan Siew Men did much to preserve and at the same time, expand the family business empire.

It could be said that Tan Siew Men expanded his business during the Great Depression successfully because he invested in a variety of inter-linked businesses, rather than just focus on a single business. Managing a single business could be dangerous in the sense that if the business collapsed, everything falls as well. Like other successful businesses able to overcome the crisis
during his time, Tan Siew Men expanded into Western rice markets, closer involvement with the state, direct investment in China, and the establishment of modern financial institutions (Suehiro, 1996:112, 110-116; Phanni, 1986:63-64). But to achieve this expansion, both internal and external networks were needed to promote and uphold his businesses.

Locally, Tan Siew Men made connections with other Sino-Thai business families, the Chinese community in Thailand and the Thai state (Chamnongsri, 1998:217; Phanni, 1986:63). In terms of links with business counterparts, Tan Siew Men established business relations with other Chinese business colleagues within the circle of his family relatives through intermarriage or with other Chinese merchants like the joint ventures of the Bangkok Commercial Bank and the Phra Nakhon Thonburi Insurance Company Ltd. in 1944. Nevertheless, the Wanglee only invested in a small portion. These companies were not part of the Wanglee Group (Phanni, 1986:66).

Tan Siew Men’s influence within the local Chinese community was also indispensable to both his business and to the Chinese community itself, in the period from the 1930 Great Depression right up to the end of World War II. He was the founder and chairman of several other institutions like the Teochiu Association and the Rice Mills Association. He was on the managing board of the Red Cross Association. He was managing director of Puy Eng School, Po Tek Teung Association for the Deceased, Tien Hua Hospital and Seng Tek School, a school founded under government policy (Phanni, 1986:3-4). Most importantly, he became President of the Chinese Trade Association. He acted as leader of Chinese business in Thailand as well as leader of the Chinese community there. During his term, he faced many political challenges and crises to protect the rights and privileges of his fellow Chinese, to the point that he died in office in 1945, at the end of the Japanese Occupation and the loss by Japan in World War II (Wanglee family, 1972:3). (This will be discussed below.)

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32 Among the big businesses that were able to overcome the Great Depression were the Big Five rice-trading group of the 1930s and 1940s - namely, the Lamsam, Wanglee, Bulakun, Bulasuk, and Lamsuri families. For more details, see Suehiro (1996), *Capital Accumulation in Thailand, 1855-1985*, p. 116-118.
Moreover, Tan Siew Men was also very much involved on the edge of Thai politics at that time. Politics and business were greatly inter-related during his era. In 1932, which was the period of the People's Party (*Khana Rasadorn* or *Khana Rat*) which overthrew the absolute monarchy and replaced it with a form of constitutional monarchy, the Wanglee family no doubt suffered some effects since it was one of the oldest Chinese business families and the dominant player in the rice trade. Old state monopoly and patronage were abolished and new connections needed to be made (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:287). He established close relations with the state as head of The Chinese Trade Association who was respected by the Chinese community, shifting his allegiance through different governments, from Pridi Phanomyong (leader of The 1932 Revolution and the subsequent People's Party),\(^{33}\) to the different Prime Ministers - Phraya Manopakonnitithada (1932-33), General Phraya Phahonphonphayuhasena (1933-1938), Phibun (1938-1944) and Khuang Aphaiwong (1944-45) (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:121; Phanni, 1985:99-101; Supphalak, 1996:127-128). In spite of his support of the government, anti-Chinese policies implemented by the Thai state made life difficult for the Chinese in Thailand. In 1938, the first Phibun military regime began, supporting Thai nationalism and publicly discriminating against the Chinese influence in Thailand.

Discrimination against the Chinese took a wide variety of forms – outright exclusion from certain occupations and industries, requirements that specified proportions of capital, management, or labour in private firms be indigenous, restrictive quotas on business licenses, foreign exchange allocations, and university places, insistence on the exclusive use of national language in schools and official transactions, etc. Nominally non-discriminatory policies but affecting specific industries or sectors of the economy, which happened to be Chinese, were also employed (Owen, 1992:476). Landon (1941:219-259) provides the best summary discussion of measures directed against the Chinese, as well as other foreigners before World War II. For instance, one direct effect on the Wanglee business was the creation of the government-controlled Thai Rice Company with the avowed purpose of ending Chinese control of the rice industry. The Thai Rice Company was to buy, mill, and export rice in direct competition with Chinese companies. The plan was an ambitious but premature one, and from the very beginning, the

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\(^{33}\) Pridi did not become a Prime Minister right after the coup. He was Finance Minister during the first Phibun government (1938-1944), before later becoming Prime Minister for a short period from 24 March - 21 August 1946. For more details on Pridi's state involvement, see Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker (1995), *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 120-125.
Company found itself dependent upon Chinese know-how and labour. In this respect, in compliance with the government's nationalist policy, the Wanglee Group under the leadership of Tan Siew Men had decided to rent out some of its rice mills to the Thai Rice Company, as well as operating the remaining rice mills and then selling the produce to the company, since at that time, the price of rice was very low and was regulated by the state (Phanni, 1985:92-93). Therefore, for practical considerations, government policies were also flexible and not as severe as they appeared to be, considering the economic dominance of the Chinese in Thailand and the fact that the Phibun government needed revenue from Chinese businesses (Skinner, 1957).

Tan Siew Men thus continued to play a dominant role in the modern sectors of Thai as well as other Southeast Asian economies. In Thailand, Tan Siew Men served as President of The Chinese Trade Association during the periods from 1932-1936 and 1942-1945. This was a position where he acted as ambassador to promote the good relations between the Thai state and the Chinese community and business groups. As stated (Poonphol Group, 1992:6),

This position [President of The Chinese Trade Association] was very important since the Chinese in Thailand and the local Thais still had a cultural gap between them. Moreover, the Chinese had pioneered much of the economic activity within the country as well as controlled the major businesses in Thailand. Therefore, the state had to strictly monitor the business activities of the Chinese. The President of the Association in turn had the duty of establishing good ties and relations between the government and the Chinese business so as to allow the smooth operation of the Chinese business in Thailand. At the same time, he also had to make sure that these businesses support and coincide with the economic and social changes and conditions within the country, according to state policy. Tan Siew Men was able to fulfill his duty successfully, as evident in the fact that he was elected as President of the Chinese Trade Association for four terms, a duration of eight years in total [1932-1936, 1942-1945].

In this regard, there was business cooperation between these two parties. This is a patron-client form of tie where both parties were dependent on one another and the government realized that they cannot kill the goose that lays golden eggs, as Mackie (1996:xxvii) says. For instance, in cooperation with the military regime, they had set up the Asia Bank and the Agricultural Products Company. During World War II, people became refugees from war areas and there
were scarcities of food and goods, especially in the outer provinces. Chinese merchants in cooperation with the state had set up a company to try to meet this demand but it was still not enough. This lasted up until the end of World War II, just before Tan Siew Men’s death in 1945. The state had him manage the business, but the profits went to them. Tan Siew Men had complied with this arrangement in order to develop better relations with the state. This business was not part of the Wanglee chain, and it later collapsed (Phanni, 1986:64-65).

Internationally, business networks and political links were equally important. Besides the Wanglee family’s (Thai branch) own network and expansion, the Kin Tye Lung Company and its network also ultimately came under the network of the Wanglee Group, making the group more influential. Kin Tye Lung’s leading role declined and was usurped by its associate company in Bangkok. This was due to the Great Depression, when the company was dependent on the world market. To cope with the crisis, the partners in the Kin Tye Lung Company agreed to dissolve the old partnership and established a new one. Control of Kin Tye Lung gradually shifted into the hands of the Wanglee family in Thailand as a result of restructuring. The company now concentrated on two main areas - 1) commissioning agency work in the import-export of rice, sugar and other commodities, and 2) as a shipping agent. Its former remittance business was given to the Wanglee Company Hong Kong branch, managed by Tan Siew Kia, the youngest son of Tan Lip Buay. Today, public attention is given only to the Wanglee family and their company. Kin Tye Lung is remembered only as an associate of the Wanglee company, a clear reversal of roles (Choi Chi-Chueng, 1993:103).

In addition, in order to improve bilateral relations and trade prospects between China and Thailand, Tan Siew Men was appointed in 1932 as Chinese trade representative by the Chinese Nationalist government, acting as an official of China based in Thailand.⁴ Later, during the

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⁴ The story behind Tan Siew Men’s official appointment was the fact that the Kuomintang government announced that the import goods into China exceeding more than twenty yuans must receive permission from the Chinese trade representative stationed in that country. Thailand lacked one at that time so the Thai government nominated Tan Siew Men, who was then the President of Chinese Chamber of Commerce, as the Chinese trade representative to Thailand. See Chamnongsri (1995), Dutnawa klang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration], p. 217.
election of the Parliament in China, he was once again elected and had to travel to attend the Parliament in Chungking, China for several months (Phanni, 1986:62). Thus, relations with China fostered his business there too.

Alongside these expanding networks, the management style of the Wanglee Group right up until this point remained a family style of management typical of the Chinese custom and practice (Supphalak, 1996, 1997; Chamnongsri, 1995, 1998; Phanni, 1985, 1986; Suehiro, 1996). It was controlled by the family, and its character was patrilineal and patriarchal. Shareholdings were and are still limited to the Wanglee family. They have their own Wanglee family network in East as well as Southeast Asia (Phanni, 1986:64). Their influence spanned throughout the region, especially in places where there existed large communities of Chinese residents.

In terms of family life, Tan Siew Men also followed the polygamous tradition of his ancestors. He had a Chinese wife back home, Heu Koong Heng, but she died at a very early age (thirty-five years). He also married his cousin, Tongpoon Lamsam, when she was twenty years old (Suehiro, 1996:119). During that time, marriage within the family was not strange. For one thing, wealth would not be dispersed, and the marriage helped to retain and solidify the family lineage. This type of marriage also added to business linkages and networks, because Tongpoon’s father was a member of the Lamsam clan, another rice-trading family and owner of the present-day Thai Farmers’ Bank.

However, at the age of forty-one, on 16 August 1945 (immediately after the Japanese surrender), Tan Siew Men was assassinated in the compounds of the Chinese Trade Association where he served as President. Tan Siew Men had been involved in politics and in the activities of the Chinese Trade Association, particularly helping both the Chinese back in China during the Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945), and the Chinese in Thailand during the Japanese occupation. He tried to reduce the harsh demands placed on the Chinese in Thailand during World War II. He was said to be two-faced, as many other Chinese at that same time had been (Chamnongsri, 1998:200). Publicly, he served the Japanese and did as they ordered. However, behind their

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back, he also secretly helped his fellow countrymen. As Chamnongsri (2000:1) described Tan Siew Men’s reaction to the Japanese occupation in Thailand,

Among the more dramatic and tragic episodes are those of its entanglements with wartime politics during World War II when imperial Japan used Thailand as the springboard in the invasion plans of Burma... It was a time of conflicting loyalties when double-faced games of intrigues were played for variegated reasons - survival, patriotism, financial gains, political necessities and even humanitarianism. As president of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the then scion of the family played a Schindler-like role when the Chamber was forced to ship rice to Japanese garrisons in Malaya and to recruit Sino-Thai labourers to build the Death Railway.

This confusion in his position later led to his unfortunate death. It remains a puzzle whether the assassination was the act of the Japanese who found out about this strong Chinese nationalism or the act of the Chinese nationalist underground movement who mistakenly thought he had sided with the Japanese and was a Chinese traitor (Thanawat, 2002a; Chamnongsri, 1998:175-200, 203-211). Chamnongsri nonetheless believed that the assassins were underground Chinese nationalists. As she (Chamnongsri, 2000:4) said,

Most relatives of my generation in Thailand were too young to really grasp implications of the tragedy at the time. It receded in our memories as we all grew up without learning much more about the matter. Many of us, myself included, came by the simplistic idea, garnered here and there, that he was killed for his collaboration with the Japanese in the conduct of some commercial transactions and the recruiting Chinese-Thai laborers for the Death Railway, the assassination team being members of one of the many Chinese secret societies then operating in Bangkok.

At the time of his assassination, Tan Siew Men had thirteen children born from his two wives - one from his Chinese wife and twelve from Tongpoon. His children in Thailand were all too young to succeed the business - the eldest son being only sixteen years of age (Chamnongsri, 1998:228). Thus, the family business was taken over by Tan Siew Men’s younger brother, Tan Siew Ting. Chamnongsri (2000:3) clearly portrayed the tragic moment.
For more some 50 years, the unsolved mystery of my uncle’s ... death at 4.30 on that afternoon of August 16, 1945, had remained like remnants of an invisible thorn in the minds of historians of Sino-Thai politics, and on the conscience of many others beside. His widow, Tongpoon, was so deeply hurt that she never touched upon the subject. Turning her back on it with a steely determination, this up-to-then housewife directed all her mental and physical energy toward the rebuilding of her husband’s diminished fortune and the salvaging of his businesses against the tumultuous background of Thailand’s political turmoil and the post-war world’s down-trodden economy.

With Tan Siew Men’s death, Tongpoon became the leader of her family and had to revive her own business to support her family.

Nineteen forty-five can thus be considered the turning point of the character of Wanglee family business. With Tan Siew Men’s death, the Wanglee family business was then divided into two entities - the original Wanglee business and the extended Poonphol Group. Both had their own unique business culture and identity. The original Wanglee business was patriarchal. On the other hand, as will be seen in the next chapter, the extended Poonphol Group, which belonged to Tongpoon, the third-generation daughter-in-law of the family, was more matriarchal in its way of doing business.

Conclusion

In sum, the Wanglee Group follows the Chinese “family” tradition in terms of patriarchy and patriliny. The business developed from the foundations of the rice trade as well as the import-export business laid down by first generation Tan Tsu Huang in the late nineteenth century, into a large business complex, spanning into rice industry, international trade, shipping, banking and insurance by the time of third generation Tan Siew Men towards the end of World War II. In this regard, each generation had maintained and expanded the family business, using established family networks with the other Sino-Thai business families in Thailand through several marriages (particularly with the Lamsam and Bulasuk rice-trading families), family
network overseas, the local Chinese community, as well as state connections as their supporting bases.

It should also be observed that this patriarchal tradition not only existed within the Wanglee family business, but also appeared in almost all literature on other Sino-Thai business families in general. Specialists on the Chinese in Thailand like Skinner, Coughlin and Suehiro focus on male business leaders. In fact, this can be termed a blindness in the literature on the subject of the Chinese in Thailand.

In terms of the Wanglee family business, what happened to the extended Poonphol Group managed by Tongpoon? Tongpoon represents a change from the normal business operation within the Wanglee family (Supphalak, 1997:12-13). Her story should also be told. How did she come into business and how did she make a "difference" to the Wanglee Group? Was her management similar to the Wanglee Group? What kind of supporting network(s) did she use? Was the Poonphol Group's female leadership restricted only to Tongpoon during her lifetime and then returned to the normal patriarchal system or had it been retained, working on a succession from mother to eldest daughter? Finally, did Tongpoon and her Poonphol Group represent continuity or discontinuity with the main Wanglee business stream? All these questions are to be answered in Chapter 5, where I will attempt to examine the role of female business management in the Wanglee family, a topic not well documented in the literatures.
Map No. 1 – The Origin of the Wanglee Family in Guandong Province, China

--- 1 → 2 → 3 = initial trading route of the Wanglee family founder before arriving in Thailand around late 1860s-early

(Chamnongsri, 1998:26)
Illustration No. 2 – The First Three Generations of Wanglee Leaders

First Generation Wanglee Leader
Tan Tsu Huang (1871-1920)

Second Generation Wanglee Leader
Tan Lip Buay (1881-1930)

Third Generation Wanglee Leader
Tan Siew Men (1904-1945)

(Channongsri, 1998:82, 134; Wanglee family, 1972)
Chapter 5
The Poonphol Group under Tongpoon’s Management, 1942-1971

Introduction

Though family is still an important institution in the Chinese business structure, it has, in recent times, been undergoing adaptation in response to changes over time and in the surrounding environment. Examples include the modification in business management and structural expansion, as well as selective paternal leadership succession within the Wanglee family business. And as I will demonstrate here, there also exists a further change - the development of a new “matriarchal” business line in parallel with the Wanglee patriarchal line. This is the Poonphol Group under the management of the daughter-in-law of the family, Tongpoon Wanglee.

Tongpoon (1905-1971) should be seen as marking a new era for the Wanglee family business. She was the “first businesswoman” of the family (Chammongsri, 1995:223). In 1942, she had set up a small business, The Bulphol Company, to import fashion items. This company was the foundation for the later Poonphol Group. The business was not as effective as it should have been since Tongpoon was working part-time in addition to being a wife and mother to twelve children. Moreover, the business operated under World War II conditions, which greatly disturbed trade. However, after her husband’s (Tan Siew Men) sudden death in 1945 requiring her to support her immediate family, Tongpoon was determined to revive and manage this unsuccessful business full-time. During this period, the war had ended and the economy started to recover. The business proved successful, for towards the end of her lifetime in 1971, what was once a small business turned out to be a large and stable business empire spanning a wide array
of trade and industry-related businesses consisting of agri-business, bonded warehouse, warehousing and private shipping ports, construction, land development, real-estate, and other related businesses. How did Tongpoon manage and expand the business successfully? Like the Wanglee family business mentioned in the previous chapter, were factors such as kinship networks, Chinese tradition, and the favourable Thai social structure among the prime factors in promoting her career?

The origin and rise of the initially female-managed Poonphol Group is therefore worth exploring. Although the Poonphol business is under the general umbrella of the patriarchal Wanglee Group, it is interesting to examine this line of matriarchal leadership which once operated in parallel with the main Wanglee Group, and at the same time, also contributed to the business diversity and influence of the Wanglee Group.

A Brief Biography: From Tongpoon Lamsam to Tongpoon Wanglee

Tongpoon, born on 15 March 1905, was the fourth of the seven children born to Ung Yuk Long Lamsam. She was a child of the marriage between the two prominent rice-trading families during that time. Her father, Ung Yuk Long (1879-1939), was the second-generation leader of the Lamsam family (and later the founding family of the present-day Thai Farmers' Bank). Her mother, Tongyu Wanglee, was the daughter of Tan Tsu Huang, the Wanglee family founder (Poonphol Group, 1992:8). Thus, Tongpoon was also a close relative of the Wanglee family.

Tongpoon had several brothers and sisters, several of whom assisted her with the Bulphol business and its revival after her husband’s death. She had three brothers and three sisters born from the same mother, Tongyu. Like Tongpoon, most of them helped strengthen and expand the family’s business ties by marrying either into Chinese merchant families or the families of Thai state officials. To have a clearer picture, the sons and daughters of Ung Yuk Long Lamsam and Tongyu Wanglee, as well as their marriage partners (Thanawat, 2000:41), are listed below.
In addition, Ung Yuk Long also had children born from his other wives (Thanawat, 2000:41). They were Ki Choi, a son, and Yindee Lewchalermvongse, a daughter - born to Chun; Ki Sen and Ramin, sons, and Kliewwan Wongchinsri, a daughter - born to Chien. However, since these half-brothers and sisters of Tongpoon did not play any role in her business, I will not go into detail about them.

Within the Lamsam family, the children were raised in an entrepreneurial environment (Pimpraphai, 2002a). Everyone was expected to contribute to the business from when they were young. The sons would help their father work in the family business, while the daughters would help their mother look after the household and the family finances. As Khunying Chatchanee Chaikavanich, the daughter of Chote Lamsam (later the third-generation Lamsam family leader) and the niece of Tongpoon, said about the family tradition (Valaya, 1997:28-29),
Within the Lamsam family, we all love to work. There is no distinction between private life and career life. We all grew up in a working (business) environment. From a small kid to an elderly adult, everyone has their own “duty” given to them according to age and aptitude. For the Lamsams, aside from the men who are hardworking, the women are all hardworking as well.

In this regard, Tongpoon grew up in a trading environment. Pimpraphai (2002a) recalls the story of her grandmother, describing how the young Tongpoon, along with her elder sister, Chuang, would both help their mother keep a record of the family finances, take care of the household, as well as look after their fellow brothers and sisters. At the dinner table, Tongpoon would also listen to business discussions between her father and her brothers, mostly involving trade problems and business tactics.

However, according to the Chinese tradition practiced in the Lamsam family during Tongpoon’s time, daughters were placed at a disadvantaged position compared to the sons. At the dinner table, they could listen to business discussions but could rarely make comments. In addition, nutritious food – mainly meat dishes – was reserved for the males in the family. Women would normally eat vegetable dishes and the leftover meat dishes. Moreover, they were provided with little education compared to the men. All this was because they were women, considered inferior to men. According to the Chinese tradition, women will one day be married off into another family and will no longer contribute to the welfare and prosperity of their paternal family (Valaya, 1997: 49). Tongpoon had once asked her father to provide her with a higher education, but her father refused, seeing little importance in girls’ education (Chamnongsri, 1998:224-225).

Thus, with limited education, Tongpoon had to depend on listening to business discussions at the dinner table. She also had sources of inspiration within her family which she looked up to – namely her grandmother and her aunt (Pimpraphai, 2002a). Both were seen as helping their husbands in their trading businesses.

Both Tongpoon’s granddaughter, Pimpraphai (2002a), and her niece, Chatchanee (2003), confirmed the story - saying that the Lamsam family had at least two businesswomen in its early
family history. One was Tsu Hu Yin, Tongpoon’s grandmother. Tsu Hu Yin was a daughter from a Chinese wealthy family, who married Ung Lamsam (Ung Miao Ngian – 1854-1913), the founder of the Lamsam family in Thailand. They were married in China and then migrated to Thailand together. In Thailand, Tsu Hu Yin helped with her husband’s initial business. She was known to have “assisted industriously in his teak business. She was capable of managing the business while Ung Miao Ngian was away” (Thanawat, 2000:39). As Chatchanee added,

Tsu Hu Yin was good-hearted, caring and helped her husband with the business in the timber shop as well as tending the house. She was a major support and a source of inspiration for her husband to build up his fortune and become a well-known merchant. She was considered a lady who had perfectly fulfilled her duty as a wife (Valaya, 1997:197).

Aside from Tsu Hu Yin, Tongpoon also looked up to her aunt, Noei Leearpon. Noei was the daughter of Ung Lamsam and Tsu Hu Yin. She had to help her mother with the household tasks and finances. Later, she married Lee Tek Ker, from a well-known rice-trading family, operating their business in Swatow, Hong Kong, and Bangkok. After marriage, Lee Tek Ker invested in fourteen of his own ships for use in the rice husk trade. Noei was also involved in managing this investment, although according to the Chinese tradition, daughter-in-laws were prohibited from being involved in the management of the husband’s family business (Pimpraphai, 2002b:8-9). Pimpraphai describes Noei and her business talents in Tamrap Nai Mae [Mother’s Recipe] (2002b), the cremation book of Khunying Fuang Chalitarporn, the daughter of Noei. Drawing information from Noei’s close relatives, Pimpraphai (2002b:9) says,

Noei had a high ability in trading skills since she helped her parents at a very young age. She once told her children and grandchildren with pride that she used to ride on horseback from Sri Racha to buy land at Sattahip. This land now is part of the present-day Naval Base. Later, when Tsu Hu Yin, her mother, became blind, she was in charge of the Lamsam family household. At the same time, she also helped her husband sell husk to power plants, until they became rich and owned a shipping port, rice mill, and warehouse business of their own.

Thus, it could be said that one of the reasons Tongpoon had engaged and had excelled in business was because she looked up to her paternal relatives as her role models.
While Tongpoon’s granddaughter and niece use these family stories as examples of Tongpoon’s aptitude for business, in the absence of other evidence, they may be seen as post-hoc explanations of her success.

Tongpoon later married Tan Siew Men Wanglee, her cousin, in 1925 (Poonphol Group, 1992:8). This was seen as further strengthening both the family and business ties, because both the Lamsam and the Wanglee were considered to be the “Big Five” in the rice trade in the 1930s-1940s, along with the Iamsuris (Kamon Kij Group), Bulasuks (banks, insurance companies, and other major industries) and Bulakuns (Mahboonkrong Group), as previously mentioned in Chapter 4. Like many other women during her time, once married, Tongpoon became a housewife, looking after her husband and the children. They had twelve children altogether (Chamnongsri, 1998:214 and Wanglee family, 1972:5). Figure No. 5 depicts Tan Siew Men and Tongpoon’s family, as well as Tan Siew Men’s other daughter who was born from his deceased Chinese wife and presently lives in China.

Figure No. 5 – The Family Tree of Tan Siew Men (third generation Wanglee family leader) and Tongpoon Lamsam

Tan Siew Men Wanglee + Heu Koong Heng ------ Tan Ei Yieng

+ Tongpoon Lamsam ------ 1) Praphai Bisanbutra
                      2) Suwit Wanglee
                      3) Supapan Kam
                      4) Sukit Wanglee
                      5) Surapong Wanglee
                      6) Saisukhon Wanglee
                      7) Supachai Wanglee
                      8) Suchart Wanglee
                      9) Suthep Wanglee
                     10) Sujin Wanglee
                    11) Surajit Wanglee
                    12) Supot Wanglee

(Wanglee family, 1972:4; Chamnongsri, 1998:299)

Aside from assuming the roles of a wife, a mother, and a housewife, Tongpoon had always wanted to be involved in the trading business. However, because her father had always opposed the idea of women in business, she was not allowed to play any part in it (Pimpraphai,
2002a and Chatchanee, 2003). But, this idea remained in her mind. After seventeen years of marriage, her dream came true with the establishment of The Bulphol Company.

The Origin of The Bulphol Company - 1942

The establishment of the Bulphol Company Limited (referred to as Yonghua Uhang Kongsi in the Chinese language) took place in 1942. At the beginning, the business began as an interest for Tongpoon, as Pimpraphai said (2002a). By this time, most of her children were old enough to be independent and attended school. Thus, she had some free time from her normal housewife role to pursue her business career, which started off as the importation of cosmetics as well as male and female clothing.

50th Anniversary of The Poonphol Group (1992:13) states that there were initially seven people on the company’s list of founders, mostly relatives of Tongpoon. Others not on this list of the company’s founders were shareholders, who consisted of members of the Wanglee family as well as relatives and friends of the family – namely, the Lamsam (her paternal family), Visuttipol (through her friend, Cha-oum Visuttipol), Bulasuk (her cousin from her mother’s side) and Chaisanien (her eldest sister, Chuang Chaisanier) (Poonphol Group, 1992:13; Phanni, 1986: 64; Pimpraphai, 2003a). The initial registered investment capital of the Bulphol Company was 100,000 baht (possibly equivalent to 4,000,000 baht at present) (Poonphol Group, 1992:12). With this investment, it appears that the company was of significant size, even at its establishment.

Although legal documents as well as various family history sources indicate that Tan Siew Men had established the business, the reality was that it was Tongpoon who had set up the business under her husband’s name (Pimpraphai, 2002a; Sukit, 2002), using her husband’s capital and support. Although she was the one who managed the business, business dealings of the company were easier under Tan Siew Men’s name (Pimpraphai, 2002a).
Both Pimpraphai (2002a), the granddaughter, and Sukit (2002), the son, stated that Tongpoon was the actual founder and manager of the company. Though according to the company’s registration, there was a list of founders and shareholders of the company, these people were actually holding “floating shares” (or dummy shareholders) (Pimpraphai, 2002a; Poonphol Group, 1992:13). They were not involved in the management of the business. Their names were listed as shareholders to make the registration of the company appear good in legal terms. They did not invest in the company, since Tongpoon and Tan Siew Men had wanted the company to belong solely to their own family. During the company’s establishment, Tongpoon’s sons and daughters were still too young to be on the management board. Thus, relatives were put on the management board until Tongpoon’s children were old enough, at which time the list of shareholders were changed to the names of Tongpoon’s children after the children’s return from their studies abroad (Poonphol Group, 1992:13).

There were several reasons for the establishment of the Bulphol Company. One reason was to fulfill Tongpoon’s ambitions to go into trade. Her husband set up the business on her behalf. This allowed her to avoid criticism and to give credit to her husband, because it was considered inappropriate for a daughter-in-law in a big Chinese family to help with the family business of her in-laws. This would be seen as an interference in family matters and the source of gossip among the large group of relatives. The wife’s place was considered to be in the house. Besides, the Wanglee business was a shared family business and if she worked there, she might be seen as abusing the position of her husband who was the Wanglee family leader.

Another reason for its establishment was for the Bulphol Company to serve as an ancillary business to support the diversification of the Wanglee family business. By early 1940s, the Wanglee Group under Tan Siew Men’s management had developed into a large business complex, spanning into rice mill, banking, insurance, shipping and international trade (Poonphol Group, 1992:226; Phanni, 1986:64), and the Bulphol Company could be seen as another area of operation for the Group.

Still, another reason for the existence of the Bulphol Company was to provide security for Tongpoon’s children. As claimed in Wanglee family and business documents (Dutnawa klang
Tan Siew Men also bought undeveloped land around the outer suburbs of Bangkok using his own capital as another source of security for his family. This type of land investment was a practice typical of the Chinese. Walwipha (2002), a historian of the Chinese in Thailand at Thammasat University, remarks that the Chinese in Thailand were in a better financial position than the general Thai population since the latter knew how to use capital by investing in land, a form of capital accumulation. Suehiro (1996:94) also confirms this point by stating that the advantage of land investment was that returns exceeded other business investments from the early 1900s.

In terms of business management during that time, Tongpoon managed the company with assistance from the Wanglee longju given to her by Tan Siew Men to help, for the longju had more experience in doing business than Tongpoon, who was new in the field. As stated in 50th Anniversary of The Poonphol Group (1992:13),
The business character of the Bulphol Company Limited during its early years was merely minor trade... It almost had to close down at that time since Tan Siew Men was largely responsible as the General Managing Director of the Wanglee Company Limited. So for the management of the Bulphol Company Limited, Longju Sui Iam, who worked for the Wanglee Company Limited, came and assisted (Tongpoon) with the business.

The longju Sui Iam, her assistant, became an important part to Bulphol Company at the time and Tongpoon arranged for the education of his son, Tiep. Tiep was later adopted by Tongpoon and given a place in her business.

During the company’s initial years, Tongpoon was still working part-time (Poonphol Group, 1992:13). It was agreed between she and her husband that her main duty was to look after the household, her husband and children. Although she had set up the business, she still had to be a housewife, since according to the Chinese tradition, being a good housewife was the virtue of a woman. Thus, the business was not operating efficiently because it was not taken seriously and nor was the trading environment as favourable as it should have been, given Japanese trade domination during its occupation in Thailand (Poonphol Group, 1992:13).

However, although the Bulphol Company was publicly considered part of the Wanglee Chain in name and reputation in order to conform to the Chinese kongsi tradition of doing business, the capital flow, profit as well as losses of the company were nonetheless separated from that of the main Wanglee business (Pimpraphai, 2002a). For one thing, the Wanglee members did not want to interfere with Tongpoon’s personal business. For another thing, they probably felt that the business would not be profitable, given its neglect in its first years of establishment. Thus, the Bulphol Company under the Wanglee umbrella is therefore, in some ways, a paradox. How can an individual business be considered part of a collective family business when the management and incomes are separated? While an unusual arrangement, it allowed the Poonphol Group to benefit from the reputation and influence of the Wanglee association while retaining independence of action.
Effects on business after Tan Siew Men’s death in 1945

Things changed after Tan Siew Men’s death. The mainstay, whether for the Wanglee family and business or for his own family consisting of his wife and children, disappeared.

Wanglee Group

In terms of the Wanglee family and business, succession went to Tan Siew Ting, his younger brother and the eldest in the family at that time (Phanni, 1985:102). Tan Siew Ting took temporary leadership to await the ultimate appointment of his brother’s eldest son, Suwit, who was still young and studying at that time (sixteen years old).

Tan Siew Ting came into the Wanglee leadership role during the decline of the Thai economy after World War II. Under his leadership, he was trying to hold on to the family’s wealth and resources rather than engage in expansion like his predecessors (Phanni, 1986:158-159). Although the period from 1948-1951 could be seen as a trade expansion period, where many old merchants as well as newer ones formed joint ventures and depended on patron-client ties with state officials in order to expand and solidify their businesses, Tan Siew Ting did not expand or diversify the Wanglee business structure. The Wanglee business still maintained its own trade and management, whether in terms of family-oriented structure, the agri-business trade, banking, insurance, and other businesses related to this trade. The only change he made to the business was the expansion of two additional businesses after 1947. However, these were joint investments with business acquaintances and relatives of the family - a slow, conservative style of expansion, yet also considered a stable move (Phanni, 1985:102).

Bulphol Company

For Tan Siew Men’s own small family, things changed completely after the death of Tan Siew Men. Tongpoon’s simple life was no longer possible after 16 August 1945. She could not stay at home as a housewife, cooking and looking after her husband and the twelve children, as
well as pursue her interest in managing her small Bulphol Company with the assistance of the Wanglee longju and the advice of Tan Siew Mer. When Tan Siew Men died, he had left insufficient personal assets to support the family. Tongpoon found out that their assets were limited savings, land that was useless at that time due to its distant, undeveloped location, and the neglected Bulphol Company (Chamnongsri, 1998:223).

Tongpoon needed money to support her family (Chamnongsri, 1998: 224). The Wanglee family was only supportive of she and her family to a certain extent, since it had to look after the big, extended family. Thus, Tongpoon was instantly put into the leadership role in her own immediate family. Her job was to provide for it, since her children were all still young and studying. As Chamnongsri (1998:176) summarises from Sukit, one of Tan Siew Men and Tongpoon’s sons,

> When their father was shot with an 11mm. gun 11 times, the eldest child... Praphai (Bisanbutra) was only 18 years old.
> Suwit, the second, was 16 years old. For Supot, the youngest... was a little over 5 years. Sukit... could only recall the time when he received the news while his brothers and sisters were playing near the front gate of the Wanglee house in Thonburi. Someone later took them to the Central Hospital.

With the death of her husband, Tongpoon therefore had to revive the Bulphol business and transform herself into a full-time businesswoman. There were several reasons for this.

First, she needed money to send all her twelve children to study abroad – for both secondary and tertiary education (Chamnongsri, 1998:224). She sent them to Hong Kong to first learn the Chinese language, and then later to Europe and the United States for higher degrees. In this regard, Tongpoon placed a great deal of importance on good and high-

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36 Tongpoon sent her children to Hong Kong instead of the normal practice by older generations of sending the children back to China. This was because her Chinese mother-in-law, Tan Siew Men’s real mother, migrated from China to live with her eldest son in Hong Kong. Thus, the children stayed and were under the supervision of their grandmother and uncle because the relatives in China might not be as close to Tongpoon as the relatives in Hong Kong. Besides, they might be too old to look after all the children. In this regard, Tan Siew Men’s brothers also sent their children to stay in Hong Kong with their mother as well. As such, they lived in the environment of a big extended family in Hong Kong, similar to the families in China and Thailand.
level education for all her children, especially her sons. Tongpoon was a "modern" woman who did not strictly follow the Chinese tradition of banning education for daughters. She sent her daughter to study overseas, which was not a common practice for the Chinese family at that time. This might be due to her own educational experience. She received little education, just enough to be able to read and write. But for Tongpoon, apart from the company and land designed as sources of security for her children, she believed that education was an investment for her children as well (Chamnongsri, 1998: 224).

Tongpoon could not draw out money from the main Wanglee family business (Chamnongsri, 1998:223). The bank and insurance companies belonged to the large, extended Wanglee family. It is the "extended family business", with shareholders not only in Bangkok, but also those Wanglee members from Hong Kong and Singapore as well. Thus, Tongpoon could not draw capital from there. There was thus a gap between the immediate family and the extended family. Moreover, once her husband died, her importance within the family declined. She was the daughter-in-law, not the daughter, of the family. However, ill-treating Tongpoon would be a disadvantage to the Wanglees, given that Tongpoon was still respected as the wife of the former Wanglee leader who had greatly contributed to Wanglee business expansion. Also, it might affect the good relations between the two business families and other related familial networks, since Tongpoon was originally from the Lamsam family.

Second, the house Tongpoon had lived in no longer belonged to her (Chamnongsri, 1998:225). After Tan Siew Men’s death, she was transformed from an owner to a temporary resident. The house at Thonburi, which served as the residence for the Wanglee family leader and his family since the time of Tan Lip Buay, was handed to Kitti, Tan Siew Men’s half-brother (Chamnongsri, 1998:225). This was probably due to the fact that Tan Siew Ting already had his own house and did not want to move. Though ownership was transferred, Kitti and Tan Lip Tong’s descendants agreed to allow their sister-in-law and her children to stay on for up to thirty

Hong Kong offered a better opportunity for education than China. There, one learned both the Chinese and English languages. If the children were to stay in China, they would only be taught the Chinese language at the school built by their great-grandfather, Tan Tsu Huang, the Wanglee founder.

For more details, see Chamnongsri (1998), Dutnawa klang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration, revised edition, p. 225-226 as well as Chapters on Tan Lip Buay (p. 135-160), Tan Siew Men (p. 213-221), and Tongpoon (p. 223-235).
years. However, Tongpoon probably felt uneasy and reluctant to bother them. She wanted money to buy a new house for her family, as she later did by building a house in the late 1950s, once she had the business going well and had accumulated enough money. This house was built on the once useless, undeveloped land she had bought at Thung Mahamek (Chamnongsri, 1995:153-154).

For all these reasons, whether for the difficulty of finding money to support her children, or the suspicion that she might have problems with her in-law relatives, Tongpoon transformed herself into a businesswoman and revived the Bulphol Company.

There were several advantages for reviving the Bulphol Company. First, she wanted to build some kind of security for her children. Though her children could work for the Wanglee family business according to Chinese business family practice, the business was not large enough to cater for everyone’s needs. Having a business of their own was more secure. Second, she might feel that it was not worth closing down the business she had established, though only as an interest, but with her husband’s consent. Tan Siew Men probably saw some sort of talent in Tongpoon and Tongpoon wanted to prove this ability, by raising the family with the money from the business. Unfortunately, since Tan Siew Men was no longer the leader of the Wanglee Group, borrowing the Wanglee longji to assist with the Bulphol business was no longer appropriate. Thus, Tongpoon had to manage the business herself.

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37 This suspicion of tension and internal conflict between Tongpoon and the Wanglee family could not be proven, since Chamnongsri’s account has limitation. Being a cremation book, it sometimes does not tell the true story, as previously mentioned in the Introduction of the thesis. The story must appear good publicly, containing mostly positive facts. This is the first rule of the cremation book. Thus, we can never be sure whether Tongpoon’s ascendency to business was only because she had to raise her twelve children, or also due to the fact that she had problems with the in-law relatives.
Economic Environment

The post-World War II period reopened positive prospects in the Thai economy. The absence of European businesses and colonial powers after World War II, alliances between the businessmen and Thai state officials, as well as the early 1950s Asia-wide economic boom brought about by the Korean war were all positive factors promoting business within the country.

First, the war and Japanese military rule destroyed the traditional economic interests of the European trading houses and colonial banks in Thailand. Their established intra-Asia trade, finance, and information networks were destroyed to the extent that they would not be easily restored after the close of the war (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:123,139). In 1944, when the Phibun government collapsed, Chinese groups began to prepare for the reconstruction of their economic base as the end of the war approached. At the end of the war, they quickly attempted to restore and expand their economic interests in various fields (Suehiro, 1996:154). Thus, they resumed their economic power, as well as filled the trading vacuum left by Westerners and subsequently, the Japanese.

When the Europeans eventually returned to Thailand, they found that major industries, especially in the commercial and financial sectors, which they had previously controlled, were now dominated by either Chinese or by Indians. Many subsequently withdrew from Thailand or sold out to rising local entrepreneurs. Thus, the wartime economy created many new opportunities for local enterprise. Thailand’s domestic capitalists seized these opportunities and expanded their trade into new line of businesses such as manufacturing, banking, retailing, and importing (Suehiro, 1996:173).

Second, the economic nationalism policy implemented during the second Phibun regime (1948-1957) ran counter to the increasing state-business alliances, or bureaucratic capitalism, which had taken place previously (Suehiro, 1996:169). While the new Phibun government
laid down the policy of economic nationalism as a containment of Chinese influence, its effectiveness was limited because some senior members of the administration handled its implementation differently. They promoted joint ventures between the government and private businesses as in the past, largely because the former lacked the necessary trading skills and experience required. Thus, they used state funds to boost businesses managed by private Chinese-origin entrepreneurs. The businessmen benefited from this arrangement in the form of capital injections, political protection, and sometimes monopolistic privileges (Suehiro, 1996:169-172). Thus, the intended economic nationalism plan did not result in state capitalism. As Pasuk and Baker (1995:125) remarked,

> Many of the politicians gave up the idea of attempting to slay the monster of emerging capital. Instead, they mounted the monster's back and directed its fire against their enemies.

Third, the early 1950s Asia-wide economic boom brought about by the Korean war provided a further boost to Thailand's domestic capital (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:122). The Chinese business community cooperated to create new business combinations which were larger and stronger than the family firms in the past, both at the local and international levels (Suehiro, 1996:169). In addition, along with the Korean war boom came American involvement in Thailand. As the United States developed its cold war strategy between 1947 and 1950, Thailand came to play a part. By 1950, the United States was deeply involved in its opposition to communism in Indochina. Thailand became important in American policy-making, mainly as a strategic base for American military operations in Indochina. To achieve these policy aims, the United States took an interest in the internal affairs of Thailand. The American policy-makers believed that the best recipe for resistance to communism was strong conservative government and economic growth based on private capital. The United States therefore supported the Thai military leaders and helped them consolidate their hold over the government. The United States also pressed these leaders to embark on economic development programs based on support for private capitalism (Hewison, 1989:89-90).

In this regard, Tongpoon was able to employ this business opportunity to her advantage. Along with the other Chinese businesses, Tongpoon took over import activities vacated by
European firms. She restored the Bulphol Company and engaged in the import-export trade, but with less competition, especially from the former colonial trading partners, during the post-war period. Chamnongsri (1995:227) notes how Tongpoon was among the first few local companies during this initial post-war period to be involved in the trade by importing consumer products. In addition, she also had links with the state via her family relatives. Here, it should be noted that the major businesses of modern Thailand stem from enterprises which were first founded or first began to grow during this post-war period. Most of these businesses were initially in trading and retailing, and their owners were said to be second and third generation Sino-Thais (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:140). Tongpoon was considered one of them.

Business Structure

Tongpoon started the revival of the Poonphol Company by building a small wooden building within the compound of her house to serve as the company office. The business started off with import-export trade, as her husband had intended it to be. By engaging in this business, Tongpoon could make use of both her Wanglee and Lamsam family networks in terms of introductions and assistance since both had experience and connections in the field. In terms of imports, she used the company to import consumer products from Singapore to sell in Thailand. In terms of exports, the business bought local agricultural products like cotton and green beans as well as finished product like cloth and processed jute and exported them (Chamnongsri, 1998:226-227). It was mainly a trading company.

In addition, Tongpoon rented a wharf in the front of the Wanglee family house, which is situated close to the Chao Phraya River, in order to build a warehouse and start a pawnshop business. She was the second to start this type of business in Thailand, the first being the Kiengsiri family (Chamnongsri, 1998:227). This was a small business whereby her customers could borrow money by depositing their goods as collateral in the shop. Among the goods which Tongpoon’s customers brought included paper, bronze, insecticide, clothes, bicycles (The Poonphol Group, 1992:14), as well as agricultural produce like cotton, green beans; etc.

Here, it should be noted that the history of female pawnbrokers dates back before the 1932 abolition of the absolute monarchy. This was initially an interest typical of many wealthy
women in Thailand, especially the wives of the Sino-Thai/Chinese chao sua (business tycoons) families as well as those from Thai aristocratic families (Pimpraphai, 2002b:76-77). This was a small, private business known only to the local community of the area where each pawnbroker lived. They were not set up as business companies as Tongpoon had done later.

Thus, immediately after the post-war period, Tongpoon was engaged in the import-export trade and the pawnshop business. However, doing business requires initial investment, which Tongpoon lacked. In particular, there must be sufficient liquidity within the pawnshop business, in order to advance money to her customers. Chamnongsri (1998:227) records that Tongpoon had to obtain a loan from the Government Savings Bank to operate them, because she did not wish to sell her land which had low value at that time. In addition, she only had a very minor share in her paternal family business (the Lamsam family), which was of little use to her (Phanni, 1986:19, 51-52).

As well, the Wanglee and the Lamsam families gave limited assistance to Tongpoon financially. The Wanglee family did not assist Tongpoon with the finance of the company. However, in order to obtain the Government Saving Bank’s loan, Tongpoon needed to rely on the Wanglee to guarantee the loan, since the Bulphol Company was considered part of the Wanglee Chain and the fact that the Wanglee family had a better credit and reputation than Tongpoon, who was a newcomer in the business world at that time (Pimpraphai, 2002a). In terms of the Lamsam family, her two elder brothers, Chote (Ung Pek Lim – 1901-48) and Chulin (Ung Teck Lim – 1904-65) Lamsam, provided some financial and moral support as well as advice to her during her business revival period. However, financial assistance was limited since the Lamsam family during the late 1930s-early 1940s was at the stage of building up and restoring their own business, which went bankrupt under their father, Ung Yuk Long (Chamnongsri, 1998:227-228), due to the destruction of its businesses in Shanghai as well as the other overseas branches as a result of the Sino-Japanese War. Ung Yuk Long was assassinated by the Aungyi group, the Chinese secret society in 1939, and it was then the task of Chote and Chulin as the two eldest sons of the family to revive their business (Yiphan, 2002:134).

Given the above problems with both the Wanglee and Lamsam families, Tongpoon had to obtain a bank loan. As Chamnongsri (1998:227) stated, “Borrowing money became a normal
thing for Tongpoon during that time”. The sole ownership and management of the business rested with Tongpoon. Later, when the business went well, she repaid the loan.

After obtaining the loan, the Bulphol Company invested in the import-export trade and the pawnshop business. The company went well until 1954, when the government passed new banking regulations which improved the security of local banks, and by changing regulations on pawnshops with a view to diminishing their importance as deposit takers. Banks gave loans to agricultural producers at a lower interest rates. This, coupled with the growing reputation of the banks and the improved branch access, encouraged thousands of people to go to banks rather than to pawnshops. In turn, it led to a loss of income for Tongpoon’s pawnshop business, causing the Bulphol Company to close this section of the business (Poonphol Group, 1992:14). (Later, in 1962, Tongpoon revived the business and established a separate company of its own - this time, called The Poonphol Warehouse Company Limited, which operated mainly as a bonded warehouse to store the goods imported in by customers who had borrowed from the Poonphol Group. This will be discussed in the next section.)

Tongpoon was quick to respond to these changing circumstance. When one business was not successful, she shifted to another business right away, in consultation with her relatives about the business market and investments at the time. Thus, from the pawnshop business, Tongpoon went into the rice mill and jute trade businesses (Poonphol Group, 1992:14). She set up rice mills on her lands at Samutprakan Province, using the Wanglee and Lamsam networks in the rice industry as an advantage. In addition, she started a jute processing plant by renting an area formerly called the Phra Khlang Khang Division at Soi Wat Phraya Krait in Bangkok. This jute business played a major part in the Bulphol business expansion after 1957. As will be discussed in the following section, jute was then a new agricultural product and was credited with yielding large profits in the international market during that time.

By the late 1950s, Tongpoon had proven that she was able to be successful in business. The Bulphol Company ranked among the leading companies engaging in the import-export trade (Wanglee family, 1972:7). The rice mills and jute trade businesses also proved to be profitable.
According to Chamnongsri, Tongpoon was good in business, a *phuying keng* (a smart woman) (Chamnongsri, 1998:225). Because of her abilities, she was invited to serve on the managing board of the Phra Nakhon Thonburi Insurance Company in 1950 - a Wanglee joint investment business since 1944 - and in the Bangkok Commercial Bank in 1951 respectively (Wanglee family, 1972:7-8). They invited her not only because of her position as the Managing President of the Bulphol Company, but also because she represented her husband, who had been respected as a leading figure of the Chinese business and the Chinese community in Thailand.

By 1957, The Bulphol Company was involved in the import-export trade of agricultural products, the rice mill and the jute trade. This was a period of establishment, consolidation and determining the business direction for the future Poonphol business empire. In addition, Tongpoon had continued to invest in land as security for her children, a tradition inherited from her husband, Tan Siew Men (Poonphol Group, 1992:24). These lands later became useful for the expansion of the Bulphol business.

*Business Management*

I believe that the management of the Bulphol Company from its revival in 1945 established its matriarchal nature. Tongpoon was in charge of the overall management of the business. The decision-maker was Tongpoon, aided by her daughter, Praphai Bisanbutra, and her adopted son, Tiep Sriwarakiet (Poonphol Group, 1992:14), the son of her earlier trusted *longju* (Pimpraphai, 2003a).

Tongpoon looked after the import-export trade, the ordering of goods and was the business manager for the whole company. Praphai was her right hand, looking after the banking and finance sections of the business. According to the Chinese tradition, the eldest daughter had the duty of helping her mother, especially with the family accounts within the household.

With no one to help Tongpoon with the business revival since all her children were sent to study abroad, Tongpoon called Praphai, whom she had sent to study in Hong Kong for a short period of time, back to assist her by being her secretary and looking after the business as well as
the household finance (Chamnongsri, 1998:226). Although Praphai later married Tanit
Bisanbutra from another rice-trading family, she continued to serve her own natural family.
Pimpraphai (2002a) mentioned how lucky her mother was to be still regarded as one of the
Bulphol business members and a fourth generation Wanglee member, because according to the
Chinese tradition once the daughter has married out, she is considered an outsider to the family.

Apart from Praphai, there was also Tiep, Tongpoon’s left hand. Tiep worked as the
business administrator. Tongpoon trusted Tiep because he was the son of the Wanglee longjiu
who used to assist her with the business during her husband’s time. Tongpoon adopted Tiep and
funded his education (Chamnongsri, 1998:228). Tongpoon was clever, for Tiep had learnt the
business management techniques from his father to assist her. Tiep became a major part in
Tongpoon’s business during this time, since he helped her while her children, especially the sons,
were still studying abroad (Pimpraphai, 2003a). In the initial years of the company, he was
responsible for collecting money and interest in the pawn-shop, looking after the shipping of
goods to and from the warehouse as well as managing the company workers. Later, when these
two businesses had closed down and Tongpoon shifted to running the rice mills and starting the
jute factory, Tiep helped Tongpoon manage the rice mills and jute factory, especially travelling to
the other provinces to buy raw materials (Poonphol Group, 1992:14; Chamnongsri, 1998:228).

However, it should be mentioned that to some extent, Tongpoon ran the business empire
as a woman in a particular way. In terms of business management, Pimpraphai (2003c) said that
her grandmother was known to be very careful cr la-iat with her business management. She
looked into small details, which is often the character of a woman, viewed as gentle but thorough.
However, she also possessed the strong feminine side of being tough and knowing what people
were up to, or ru than khon. From her family relatives’ advice and from her own experience, she
was clever and did not allow others to easily deceive or take advantage of her. This characteristic
persisted throughout the course of her management period.

Business Networks

In addition to Tongpoon’s management abilities with the aid of her daughter and adopted
son, it was undeniable that Tongpoon and her Bulphol Company were successful because of two
external factors, namely the favourable economic environment after World War II, as discussed
earlier, and the family and state networks which worked in her interest. It was the union of these factors which assisted in the rise, expansion, and consolidation of the Bulphol Company.

Tongpoon had family networks from both the Wanglee and the Lamsam families. They not only assisted her with business dealings and advice, but also introduced her to other businessmen and state officials as well (Chamnongsri, 2003; Pimpraphai, 2002a). Tongpoon thus operated in a shared family network.

The Wanglee brothers like Tan Siew Ting, Chalit and Kitti were the main assistants in Tongpoon’s business dealings, especially in terms of foreign trade. Tongpoon, though little educated, was keen to learn. She took extra English lessons in order to be able to communicate in simple conversations with foreigners whom she came into contact with as a result of the import-export business. Nonetheless, study was slow and time-consuming (Thanawat, 2002a; Pimpraphai, 2002a). Praphai had been sent to study in Hong Kong. Though Hong Kong was still a British colony, Praphai was sent there to learn Chinese, with few English lessons available. Therefore, Tongpoon and Praphai’s understanding and communication skills with foreigners were still limited. Tongpoon needed the help of her in-law relatives to help with communication, as evident in Illustration no. 5 (at the end of this chapter) of Tongpoon welcoming Westerners with her husband’s brothers in 1947, namely Tan Siew Ting, Chalit and Kitti Wanglee (Chamnongsri, 1998:226), who were better educated. Kitti was the first Thai member of a branch of the Wanglee family to be given the opportunity to be Western-educated (Chamnongsri, 1998:214).

During that time, Westerners were somewhat surprised to be confronted by a Thai businesswoman. Here, we can recall Anthony Reid’s findings (1992: 482) on the history of Southeast Asian women in foreign trade in general, dating back to colonial times.

Foreign traders were surprised to find themselves doing business with women, not only in the market-place but also in large-scale transactions. Women frequently travelled on trading ships, to the surprise of Europeans, Chinese and Indians alike.
Somehow, Westerners did not seem to trust women in business, mainly because the tradition of dealing with men was still the dominant rule. Thus, with men accompanying Tongpoon, her credit was higher than just she herself running “a one-lady show”.

In addition, Tongpoon also established connections with Chinese business families. Here, the Lamsam family came to Tongpoon’s assistance. Chote Lamsam, her eldest brother, introduced her to Chinese and Sino-Thai business acquaintances as well as other new contacts he had made during this time (Chamnongsri, 2003). As for the Wanglee, they could only provide Tongpoon with limited contacts among the business people they knew since the Wanglee business under Tan Siew Ting’s management pursued a conservative, rather than expansionist path like the Lamsam business.

To carry out any particular kind of trade involved linkages with the state as a means of security for the business, especially during the economic nationalist policies of the second Phibun regime. This was when Chulin, Tongpoon’s second eldest brother, benefited her. Chulin was said to have established close networks with the state. Chulin had worked to build good relations with the new government and the People’s Party since 1938 (Valaya, 1997: 48). He cooperated with the government in promoting a large number of the state-sponsored companies, such as the Thai Niyom Phanit Company Ltd., the National & City Bank of Thailand, Bank of Asia, Bank of Ayudhya, Safety Insurance Company Limited, and Thai Niyom Insurance Company Limited, where he was their managing or executive director. As well as with Phibun and Pridi, the main power-holders of the government at the moment, Chulin also made connections with other influential government officials. For instance, within the Thai Niyom Phanit Company Ltd., he had close ties with the board members, mainly those bureaucratic capitalists involved in state-sponsored companies, namely, Charun Rattanakun (Luang Seriroengrit, Minister of Economic Affairs and Minister of Communication from March 1942-August 1944), Leng Srisomwong, Wilat Osathanon (Assistant Minister of Commerce), and Chawengsak-songkhram (Minister from December 1938-March 1942, Minister of Interior from August 1941), Chun Pintanon – all of whom were leading members of the People’s Party as well (Suehiro, 1996:130-132). According to the cremation book of Chulin Lamsam (1966), he became a board member of eleven companies and was chairman of the Bangkok Chamber of Commerce (later called the Thai
Chamber of Commerce) in 1946, 1948-49, and 1952, and its vice-chairman in 1950, 1954, and 1958. Thus, Chulin had the most contacts, whether at the state level or the business level.

Thus, Tongpoon was able to exploit Chul'in's state networks. Chulin introduced her to several of these state officials. As a result, she was able to obtain some political patronage for her business, both in terms of the business security against the state's economic nationalism policy during the Phibun regime as well as in the reduction in trade tariffs, especially import duties which alone formed thirty percent of all government revenue during this time, according to Pimpraphai (2002a). With limited capital during this revival period, it would be beneficial if she was given some discounts in the actual tariffs incurred.

**From Bulphol Company to Poonphol Group, 1957-1971**

Between the return of her son Suwit in 1957 and her death in 1971, Tongpoon developed and diversified the Bulphol business she revived in 1945. During this second phase, the business structure continued to be matriarchal in character.

Nineteen fifty-seven marks the turning point for the Bulphol Company, with business diversification and expansion from this time onwards. Two major factors accounted for this change. First, there was return of Suwit, Tongpoon's eldest son, from abroad to help her manage and expand the business. 38 Suwit's arrival in the Bulphol Company was later followed by the return of his other siblings. Second, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat's appointment as Prime Minister and the beginning of his industrialization program increased trading momentum in the Thai economy.

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38 Suwit, who later became the fourth generation Wanglee family leader, came back from the United States around 1957 after finishing his studies in banking and finance from the University of Pennsylvania. His main job was to work at the Wanglee Chan Bank. Lacking experience, he was initially appointed as Assistant Managing Director of the bank, while Tan Siew Ting, his uncle, maintained the leadership position as President of the Wanglee Group until his death in 1982. It was during this time under his uncle's management that Suwit had free time to come and assist his mother with the Bulphol business. Within the Bulphol Company, Suwit served as the Managing Director while his mother was President of the Company. For further details, see Chammongsri (1998), *Dutnawa klang mahasamut Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration*, revised edition, p. 220, 241-242.
In 1957, the siezing of power by Sarit led to industrialization of the country, with a realignment of state and capital under American patronage. The strategic demands of the United States, the politico-economic ambitions of the Thai military leaders, and the aspirations of Sino-Thai business leaders fell into line. During this period, there were demands for export, increased foreign investment and foreign aid, infrastructure building, a call for import-substitution and back-extended trade, and low tariffs on trading goods (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:129). All these factors served as important business incentives for Tongpoon and the general business community in Thailand.

From the early 1950s Korean War boom onwards, the world entered two decades in which economic activity increased and world trade grew. Driven by rapid growth in the economies of the United States and Europe, world demand for primary produce expanded through the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. At the same time, freed from colonial constraints and led by the United States, capital became more internationally mobile. Increasing world trade, increasing foreign capital inflows, and the expanding, geopolitical ambitions of the United States had a dramatic effect on the Thai economy (Suehiro, 1996:182).

Under Sarit, the new regime no longer wanted to repress the growth of business as the former governments had done, with its economic nationalism policy. Instead, it wanted to publicly encourage it, and profit from it. Thus, with encouragement in the form of foreign aid from the United States, the Sarit regime built better infrastructure, promoted investment, provided infant industry protection and cheap labour, a growing home market, and an easy balance of payments position. The government also erected a structure of tariff protection which encouraged manufacture of consumer goods to substitute imports in the domestic market. Under the new policy to promote industry, tariff rates on capital goods were revised downwards in the late 1950s. The result was a tariff structure with high rates on consumer imports and lower rates on capital goods and inputs (Suehiro, 1996:186).
As a result, the Thai urban economy grew rapidly. Commerce expanded, and under the influence of the protective tariff structure, traders began "back-extending"39 into manufacture. Primary exporters back-extended into agri-processing. Consumer goods importers back-extended into assembly. Cloth merchants back-extended into textile manufacture (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:136). Manufacturing GDP grew by 10.9% per annum in the first plan period 1961-1966, 9.2% in the second, and 8.4% in the third (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:140). Across all these industries, most of the entrepreneurs began as traders and importers, and moved into manufacturing in the 1960s as a result of tariff protection and government incentives.

Thus, the reorientation of economic strategy under Sarit paved the way for two decades of rapid expansion in the urban economy. The new entrepreneurs of the 1940s grew quickly into the chao sua of the 1960s and 1970s (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:130). Tongpoon was indeed one of these, able to take advantage of this industrialization and thus diversified her business. In a way, it would be correct to state that it was Sarit and his Western-aligned policies that paved the way for the emergence of Tongpoon’s Poonphol Group.

**Business Structure**

By the late 1950s-early 1960s, Tongpoon was successful in her three business sectors - the import-export trade (mentioned above), the rice mill business, and the jute trade. The Poonphol Company increased its initial legal investment from 100,000 baht to 500,000 baht in 1957 (Poonphol Group, 1992:15).

In terms of the rice mill business, Tongpoon had set up two small rice mills in the Baan Piao District, Samutprakan Province. During this period, Suwit helped his mother manage the rice mills, sell milled rice locally and export white rice to the Middle East. However, in later years, the rice mill business went into decline. The Middle East had shifted to Burma for imports of white rice. With this situation, in 1961, Tongpoon decided to sell off one of the rice mills and transformed the other rice mill at Klong Bang Yang into a vermicelli factory. This was the origin of Sittinan Company and its well-known *Ton Son* vermicelli (Chamnongsri, 1995:149-150; Poonphol Group, 1992:16). (Details of the Sittinan Company business will be discussed later.)

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39 Back-extending means extending the business towards the source of supply.
Apart from the rice industry, Tongpoon was also in the jute trade. Initially, she had bought unprocessed jute from the farmers in the Northeast region of Thailand, called the Isan region, and then hired a jute factory to process it, before exporting it to Europe, Japan and the United States (Poonphol Group, 1992:15). Suwit also helped Tongpoon by travelling to Isan to buy raw jute and bring it back on freight trains (Chammongsri, 1995:149). After doing this for about one year, Tongpoon thought it was more profitable to back-extend the trade, as other businesses had done. The factory where she had once had the raw jute processed was successfully expanded vertically in the jute industry, from buying raw materials, to processing it, to the manufacture of jute products, and then exporting the finished product. Therefore, Tongpoon decided to set up her own jute factory at Soi Wat Phraya Krai, Yannawa suburb. During this time, Sukit, Tongpoon’s second eldest son, who had returned from his studies abroad, 40 replaced Suwit in the jute factory. He helped his mother with the factory management, with another longju, Niwat Wahirapratansakul (Tek), as his assistant, in ordering the raw materials (Poonphol Group, 1992:15). Suwit, on the other hand, relocated to look after marketing affairs and jute export. With a good command of the English language as well as skills obtained from overseas study, Suwit was of great assistance to Tongpoon in jute export. At the very start of the establishment of the jute factory, Tongpoon’s plant was hired to process jute for foreign companies like The P.L. Brothers Company Limited and A.T.E. Mascati Company Limited (Chammongsri, 1995:149-150). Later, with Suwit’s recommendation, Tongpoon started to export to other places as well, in addition to being hired by these foreign companies. She also changed

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40 It should be said that after finishing his studies, Sukit initially worked for the Loxley Company of the Lamsam rather than the Wanglee family like Suwit. Though most people would think that the Lamsam family was the owner of the Loxley Company, in reality, the Wanglee also had shares in it. Working with the Lamsam, Sukit was also said to look after the Wanglee family business interests. In addition, it was also an advantage for Tongpoon later, when she came into joint investments with the Lamsam family, as will be discussed later with regard to the establishment of the Mahintorn Company, for Sukit later looks after the Poonphol interests in the Loxley Company as well. As Thongchai Lamsam, Managing Director of Loxley (Bangkok), who inherited the position after Chatchanee Chatikavanich’s retirement, said about the origin of the company in Dokbia magazine (May 1988 issue), reiterated by Thanawat (2000:55)

In reality, Loxley does not solely belong to the Lamsam family. We have to count the Wanglee and Biettie families as well. Today, the Biettie family holds a very small share. As a result, they did come to manage the company. As for Wanglee, it could be said that we are the same family...

Aside from the joint ventures, the Wanglees and the Lamsams also shared some common ancestors through marriages between the two families. For more details, see Thanawat Sapphaibun (2000), Rua chiwit chao sua luat mangkorntrak Lamsam [The Life Boat of the Chao Sua from the Lamsam Family], Bangkok: Krung Thep Thurakit Publishing Company Ltd.
the company name’s English spelling from Bulphol to Poonphol Company and set up the PPC logo to denote the Poonphol Company Limited, leading to easier international recognition (Poonphol Group, 1992:16).

The jute trade of the Poonphol Company under Tongpoon’s management proved successful. It was one of the first companies in Thailand to be engaged in the jute industry and later became the third largest in the world, following India and East Pakistan. To meet the demands of the international export market, Tongpoon had set up a warehouse and a second jute factory near Rama VI Bridge, Phibunsongkram Road. This was called the Bang Po Factory (Chamnongsri, 1995:148). However, later, the former factory at Soi Wat Phraya Krai caught fire and burnt down. At the same time, due to the increasing popularity of jute in the market for making products such as mats, hats or even rice bags, Tongpoon set up several other factories within the country, including joint ventures between she and local people in order to give them better incomes. Here, it should be mentioned that Tongpoon was always keen to test new lines of business, for apart from jute, Tongpoon also tried to manufacture and trade kapok within the jute factory as well (Chamnongsri, 1998:230-231).

During this time, the jute industry was considered the mainstay of the Poonphol Company. The total turnover of the jute trade increased tremendously, from the original 15,000 baht per annum to ten million baht and above within a year. The Poonphol Company Limited, symbolized under the logo PPC, received quality assurance approval from the Office of the Standard of Goods as well as the international market (Poonphol Group, 1992:16). In addition, with the successful expansion of the jute trade, Suwit became one of the founders of the Thai Jute Association (TJA) in 1960. By 1967, he expanded the Thai jute market world-wide (Chamnongsri, 1998:243-244). He was first the Managing Secretary of the Association from 1961-68, before becoming the Activities Manager from 1968-69, to President of the Association from 1969-1972 (Chamnongsri, 1995:162). During this time, Suwit and his fellow Association members had helped initiate jute standards which were beneficial to the Association and the local jute farmers. In addition, he also negotiated with the London Jute Association (LJA) in improving trading conditions between Thailand and London. Furthermore, Suwit was elected as the representative from the Thai private sector to join the Annual Conference hosted by the
Futures and Options Association (F.O.A.)\textsuperscript{41} in determining the standard price of processed jute in the world market (Chamnongsri, 1995:150-162). Thus, with Tongpoon managing the jute factory and expanding the jute industry, Sukit looking after the supplies of raw materials, and Suwit being in charge of the export market, the Poonphol Company became popular and widely recognized, both nationally and internationally, despite the changes in the price of jute in the world market.

However, problems arise when doing business. The Poonphol Company, which was mainly engaged in the jute industry, faced difficulty as polyester increasingly came to replace the use of jute. Nineteen sixty-four was the turning point in the Poonphol Company business. The planting, processing, manufacture and trading of jute declined sharply. Later, with plastic replacing jute, especially in the making of rice bags, Tongpoon’s jute factories had to close down one by one, until the business was ultimately shut permanently (Chamnongsri, 1998: 231). Tongpoon shifted to the tapioca flour business by the late 1960s (Poonphol Group, 1992:17).

Here, Tongpoon should be given credit for her promptness in trying new lines of business, for the Poonphol Company had originally tried manufacturing tapioca flour in parallel with the jute trade, but the former was not treated as seriously as the latter. It should be mentioned that Tongpoon became interested in the tapioca industry because earlier, there was news of a person who tried exporting tapioca as a kind of animal food and was successful. From then on, Tongpoon started the business and tested the market (Poonphol Group, 1992:17). She converted the Visuttipanit Company to tapioca flour production and trade in 1959, as will be discussed later. At the same time, she also set up a branch within the Poonphol Company to engage in similar business. Later, in order to reduce the shipping cost abroad, Tongpoon had decided to transform the high volume tapioca flour into tablets in order to facilitate shipping and export (Poonphol Group, 1992:17).

\textsuperscript{41} The Futures and Options Association (FOA) is an industry association for firms and institutions carrying on business in futures, options and other derivatives or which use such products in their business. Its principal role is to represent the interests of its members in the public and regulatory domain and deliver a wide range of support services to the membership. The FOA’s membership includes banks and financial institutions, brokers, commodity trade houses, energy market participants, fund managers, exchanges, clearing houses, systems providers, lawyers, accountants and consultants. See “Futures and Options Association” (n.d.), [http://www.foa.co.uk], date accessed: 22 April 2003.
In addition to the above activities, Tongpoon started to diversify into other businesses even when the jute industry was still flourishing. In early 1959, Tongpoon set up the Visuttipanit Company to sell steel and spare parts to manufacturing industries (Chamnongsri, 1995:16). This included equipment used in rice mills and saw mills. However, the business was unprofitable, leading Tongpoon to soon shift to tapioca flour production and trade.

In 1961, Tongpoon also set up the Sittinan Company at one of her former rice mills to manufacture vermicelli. She established the factory to manufacture glass vermicelli, using the green beans she had previously bought from the local market for her import-export trade. The business was successful and later became the “Ton Son” Vermicelli Brand in the Thai local market (Poonphol Group, 1992:16). But as stated before, Tongpoon was always keen to test new products for her business. Coupled with vermicelli production, Tongpoon also used the remaining green beans and turned them into Thai dessert starch, since both vermicelli and dessert starch are made from green beans (Chamnongsri, 1998:229). Thus, Tongpoon was a flexible and resourceful person, able to adapt to circumstance and use materials at hand to turn into useful and saleable products. Today, the Sittinan Company manufactures and distributes vermicelli and modified bean starch (for dessert). It has two factories, one in Samutprakan and another one being set up in Lad Lum Kaeo District, Prathumthani Province. With these increasing business achievements, Tongpoon seized business opportunities further, by increasing the investment funds from the original 500,000 baht in 1957 to 2,000,000 baht in 1961 (Poonphol Group, 1992:16-17). This was typical of Chinese businesses, for it is their style to invest further when new opportunities arise and the business is going well.

In 1962, Tongpoon further expanded the business. She registered two companies – Poonpipat Company Ltd. and Poonphol Warehouse Company. The first business - Poonpipat Company - was responsible for renting out warehouses at Samrong, Rama VI Road and Bangsai and managing the shipping ports at Pu Chao Saming Phrai. In terms of the shipping ports, Tongpoon also built and registered additional private ports to facilitate communication and trade (Chamnongsri, 1995:148; Poonphol Group, 1992:17). The Poonpipat ports were among the earliest private ports in Thailand and are still operative today (Chamnongsri, 1995:148). Poonpipat Company was considered a horizontal expansion of her import-export trade. In
addition, Tongpoon also established a second business during this time - the Poonphol Warehouse Company. Replacing the former unsuccessful pawnshop, this business was mainly established to lend money against the import of goods (Chamnongsri, 1995:148; Poonphol Group, 1992:17) and store the goods in the warehouse. This business could be seen as another horizontal expansion to assist the Poonpipat Company of warehousing and private ports.

Thus, Tongpoon was quick to respond to changes and the demand in the market. When one business was not profitable, she shifted to other businesses and tested the market. In this way, she was flexible and quick to act. If one branch of the business was inefficient, she would immediately replace it with another new business to keep the business running, as evident with shifting from the rice mill business to the manufacture of vermicelli, or the jute trade to the tapioca trade.

In 1964, Tongpoon also set up the Construction and Engineering Service (C.E.S.) Company. As a result of the booming construction industry from Sarit’s industrialization plans and with Sukit’s recommendation, Tongpoon set up this company. However, having too many businesses to handle, Tongpoon arranged for Sukit and Suppachai, her seventh child who graduated with an engineering degree from the United States and who initially worked for the Public Works Department, to help manage the business (Chamnongsri, 1998:233; Poonphol Group, 1992:17). The task of this company was mainly to construct company premises for the expanding Poonphol businesses. Tan Siew Men before his death and later Tongpoon, had bought a lot of land, whether at Rangsit, Thung Mahamek, Trok Chan, Sathorn, Pu Chao Saming Phrai area, or Sukhapiibarn 3. These properties, which had previously been branded as distant, far away sites, had turned out to be productive land for the Poonphol business by this period (Virat, 1986:113; Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1993:26; Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:2).

In 1970, Tongpoon also set up the Pipattanasin Company Limited to develop the remaining sites and turn them into real estate developments. Moreover, in 1971, Tongpoon went further with the business expansion of two additional companies - Suebsiri Company and Poonpattanakan Company - both of whom were also in charge of land development (Poonphol
Group, 1992:20-21). These were vertical expansions of the C.E.S. construction business. They managed the properties and decided how they should be developed.

For instance, within the Suebsiri Company, one of the projects which Tongpoon had seen and managed towards the end of her lifetime was the development of the Rangsit area. She donated a few pieces of her land collection in Prachatipat District, North Rangsit area, as a social contribution in order to build schools, a police station, a hospital, and a disabled people’s home respectively (Poonphol Group, 1992:24). This is the normal practice of wealthy people in Thai society. They would engage in social and charitable activities in order to gain social reputation as well as receive merit, according to the Buddhist teachings. In addition, normally, if they build a school, for instance, the school or a building within the school compound will be named after the donor. In Tongpoon’s case, she had built two schools – the Tanyaburi School (named after the suburb Tanyaburi) and Tongpoon Uthit School. As for the remaining Rangsit area, she had set up the Rangsit Fresh Food Market and put Saisukhon, her youngest daughter, to be in charge of the business (Chamnongsri, 1995:152). In this regard, she was shrewd and business-minded since the people around the area would have to depend on this market. Thus, she had received social reputation, business profit, and Buddhist religious merit all at the same time. However, part of the market was later transformed to another business in the post-Tongpoon period.

By the late 1960s-early 1970s, Tongpoon had managed the expanding businesses and placed all the companies under the Poonphol Group of Companies. Here, the Poonphol companies continued to be a part of the Wanglee Group, although only in name and reputation, and with separate Poonphol Group finance and management - all under Tongpoon. Even though her children returned from their studies abroad and assisted Tongpoon with each of the businesses in the later years, as will be discussed in detail below, she was still working. She was still the head, managing the entire business group, and available for consultation, with Praphai looking after the finances of all the businesses. As Chamnongsri (1998:234) said, despite her poor health due to diabetes, high blood pressure, and intestinal problem during this time, Tongpoon still worked.

Aside from the Poonphol Group, Tongpoon also had shares in other companies as well. Tongpoon went into joint ventures with her paternal Lamsam family as well as the Wanglee in-
law family (aside from being under its umbrella, as will be discussed later), and other related business family relatives.

First, Tongpoon entered into a joint venture with the Lamsam family. As mentioned in the above section, Tongpoon was originally from the Lamsam family. Therefore, joint ventures in the form of a holding company with her own family was not strange. There was the establishment of the Mahintorn Company, a holding company between the Lamsam family (with the Lamsam as the main shareholder of this company) and the Poonphol Group in July 1961. This was a business dealing with the trading of agricultural produce and local products (Supphalak, 1996:132). In addition, there were also other similar joint ventures between the two business families in later years, after Tongpoon's death, as will be mentioned in Chapter 7.

Apart from the Lamsam family, Tongpoon also did business with the Wanglee family. In 1970, the Wanglee Group and the Poonphol Group under the Wanglee became shareholders of the Thai Phanit Insurance Company42, a joint venture between Chinese businessmen and a group of Thai state officials (Phanni 1985:84-86, Supphalak, 1996:82-83). Originally, this was a joint investment insurance business set up in 1940 by Phraya Pipattanakorn (Chim Posayanond) (Linjong Uthaipath, 1994:91), a state official and a relative of the Wanglee family. The Poonphol Group and the Wanglee Group became shareholders during 1970. Initially, they together formed eight percent of the total shares. In 1973, they increased their investment and became then the largest shareholder of the company (Department of Commercial Registration, Ministry of Commerce, 1973). Here, it should be mentioned that the Poonphol Group held more shares than the Wanglee Group, but together, they formed the majority voice. Management of the business then went to Tongpoon and the Poonphol Group. By being involved in the Thai Phanit Insurance Company, Tongpoon had strengthened ties with the state via officials and those Chinese business families like the Kiengsiri family (who was also into the shipping port business

42 It should be mentioned the Thai Phanit Insurance Company had state officials and Chinese businessmen as shareholders. Phanni (1985:84-86) lists the initial shareholders of the business during its establishment in 1940, namely Phraya Pipattanakorn, Luang Seri Roengrit, Phraya Manawarajseri, Luang Chawengsaksongkram, Sa-nguan Boonyarak, Luang Dhonwanipan, Tan Ching Keng, Prasit Taveesin, Lo Tek Chuan Bulasuk, M.R. Boonrap Intratoot, Chaweng Kiengsiri, Meng Tansatja, Sahat Mahakhun, Tan Kiek Boon.
like Tongpoon) and the Mahakhun family\(^4\) (who owned the Union Bank of Bangkok Limited and had important links with the state), as well as family relatives like the Posayanond family and the Bulasuk rice trading family (Phanni 1985:84-86, Supphalak, 1996:82-83) - all of whom were advantageous to her business.

Thus, under Tongpoon, the Poonphol Group was running well, with business expanding both in vertical and horizontal arrangements. Tongpoon had established a strong base for the Poonphol Group. Several sectors were set up to support primary and initial import-export trade - namely, warehousing, shipping ports; the production and export of several products like vermicelli, modified bean starch for dessert, tapioca; real-estate; construction as well as land development. As seen in Table 1, the Group included the Poonphol businesses itself and some joint ventures with other families.

**Table 1: The Poonphol Group under Tongpoon’s Management (1942-1971)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Poonphol Company Limited</td>
<td>Export of tapioca, buying raw materials, consultation and management of the other businesses within the Poonphol Group, investment in other companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Visuttipanit Company Limited</td>
<td>Tapioca flour trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Mahintorn Company Limited (joint venture with Loxley Company Limited of the Lamsam paternal family)</td>
<td>trade of agricultural produce and local products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) The Mahaguna Company had important state linkages since it was one of the largest contractors in Thailand undertaking construction of the railways between Bangkok and Khorat (in the Northeastern region), the Central Postal Office, Don Muang International Airport, and Tobacco Monopoly Factory under the full support of the military governments, and was considered an influential family among the Chinese community since its former leader, Sahat Mahakhun (1895-1961) served as the leader of the Teochiu Association and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Thailand from 1948 to 1961. See Suehiro (1996), *Capital Accumulation in Thailand 1855-1985*, p. 166-168.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Sittinan Company Limited</td>
<td>Manufacture and distribution of vermicelli and modified bean starch (for dessert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Poonpipat Company Limited</td>
<td>Rent out warehouses, real-estate, and investment in other companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Poonphol Warehouse Company Limited</td>
<td>bonded warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>C.E.S. Company Limited</td>
<td>construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Thai Phanit Insurance Company Limited</td>
<td>insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Pipattanasin Company Limited</td>
<td>Land development, rent out/leasing of real estate properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Suebsiri Company Limited</td>
<td>Land development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Poonpattanakan Company Limited</td>
<td>Land development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Poonphol Group, 1992:20-21)

These businesses and joint ventures continued expanding in later years after Tongpoon’s death in 1971, as will be seen in the Chapter 7.

*Business Management*

As stated above, Tongpoon was the main managing director and president of the Poonphol Group. However, she also needed to rely on her sons, as well as the *longju*, to help her manage the expanding businesses (Poonphol Group, 1992; Chamnongsri, 1995).

With the return of her children, Tongpoon had more helpers whom she could trust and thus decided to expand into several new lines of businesses. In a way, Tongpoon was able to exploit the Western knowledge her children had gained from their overseas studies and apply
them to business expansion. It was a kind of investment. Initially, with the return of Suwit and Sukit, they both assisted their mother with the business. The management dealings were divided between them. In a way, they had replaced Tiep, Tongpoon’s adopted son, who later became their assistant and consultant. In 1960, there was a new registration of the managers of the Poonphol Company and Suwit was being listed as among the managers of the business. In 1961, there was another registration of the managers of the company and Sukit’s name was also added to the list of managers (Poonphol Group, 1992: 16-17).

Moreover, Tongpoon had four longju to assist her in the post-1957 period, namely Niwat, who used to assist Sukit in the jute factory, as well as in later periods, Mongkol Ningsanond, Somridth Saitanya and Sampan Saitanya (Poonphol Group, 1992:15). As Pimpraphai (2003a) said, there could be several longju helping in the businesses. In Tongpoon’s case, each longju was responsible for a particular industry, namely one was in charge of the jute-tapioca industry, one in the bonded warehouse business, one in the warehousing and shipping ports business, and one in the vermicelli and bean starch industry. As for the other businesses, it was her children who took the responsibility.

Tongpoon distributed the management positions of the businesses to her children. Initially, they looked after the business for Tongpoon as managers. Everyone must report business progress to her - a practice within Wanglee family since the time of Tan Lip Buay and Tan Siew Men (Chamnongsri, 1998: 234). At this stage, Tongpoon was still the Managing President of the business group. It was only just before she died that she legally distributed the directorship of each business to her children to take full responsibility (Chamnongsri, 1995). With her death in September 1971 (Chamnongsri, 1998:234), the practice of reporting business progress ended. However, all of the companies still fell under the management of the Poonphol Group, for it was designed to be a kongsri business. Details of the Poonphol business allocation of responsibility are as follows.

Praphai Bisanbutra, her eldest daughter, though married out, co-managed the Poonphol Group with her mother towards the end of her mother’s lifetime. She assisted her mother by looking after the overall management as well as continuing her old job of taking care of the
finances of the whole business. She knew her job well since she was Tongpoon’s personal secretary and her “right hand” from the early years of the business, when it was still the Bulphol Company. Praphai was well respected by her brothers and sisters as the eldest in the family. In addition, she brought in her husband and children to help with her mother’s business (Suphalak, 1997:12; Chamnongsri, 1998:226, 242). But following Tongpoon’s era, Praphai was still considered a member of the fourth generation Poonphol rather than an outsider, belonging to her husband’s family, according to the Chinese tradition, as Pimpraphai (2002a) said. Moreover, this advantage was also passed down to Pimpraphai, as will be seen in Chapter 7. Thus, credit should be given to Tongpoon for a new way of thinking, which never occurred in the Wanglee family business history, but arose during Tongpoon’s time and thereafter. After Tongpoon’s death, Praphai continued to look after the finances of the Poonphol Group of Companies.

Suwit Wanglee, the eldest son, was the leader of the main Wanglee family business (Chamnongsri, 1998:237). He was also his mother’s assistant in terms of marketing and foreign export. After his mother’s death, he replaced his mother’s position as managing director of the Poonphol Group of Companies (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:42, Poonphol Group, 1992:22).

Sukit Wanglee, the second eldest son, was responsible for agri-business industries as well as looking into matters of joint ventures of the Poonphol business. He was also given the management of Poonpattanakan Company and the C.E.S. Construction Company (the latter one shared with Supachai Wanglee). He was also on the management board of the Poonphol Group (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:42; Poonphol Group, 1992:22; Pimpraphai, 2003a).

As for the other children, they were assigned management positions in each of the small branch companies. Saisukhon Wanglee, Tongpoon’s youngest daughter, was given the Rangsit Fresh Food Market to manage (Chamnongsri, 1998:233). A few months before Tongpoon’s

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44 Sukit used to help manage the production of the jute factory business until it was closed down. For more details, see Chamnongsri (1998), Dutnawa klang mahasamut [Boats in Mid-Ocean: A Saga of Migration], revised edition, p. 230-23.
death, she was also beginning to manage the Suebsiri Company which had been recently established (Pimpraphai, 2003a). Supachai Wanglee, who received an engineering degree from the United States, helped Sukit managed the C.E.S. Construction Company (Chamnongsri, 1998:233). Suchart Wanglee managed the Poonpipat Company, while Suthep Wanglee managed the Visuttipanit Company (Pimpraphai, 2003a). Surajit Wanglee took over the management of the Poonphol Warehouse Company (Chamnongsri, 1995:148), and Supot Wanglee was given management of the Sittinan Company (Chamnongsri, 1995:150). In addition, Tiep, Tongpoon’s adopted son, was promoted to be one of the members on the management board of the Poonphol Group of Companies, helping Tongpoon manage the whole business. After Tongpoon’s death, he was given shares of the business and continued to serve on the management board of the Poonphol Group (Poonphol Group, 1992: 23, Supphalak, 1996:133-137).

Apart from the above, there were three children who were not involved in the Poonphol businesses for personal reasons, although they did receive shares in the business. Supapan Kam (Supphalak, 1997:22; Chamnongsri, 1998:197, 299) married a Hong Kong businessman and migrated to live with her husband in Hong Kong. Surapong Wanglee graduated from Cambridge University and remained in England, working as the manager of the Overseas Union Bank (OUB) Bank, a Singaporean Bank, in London (Chamnongsri, 1998:197). Sujin Wanglee, being more interested in insurance rather than the Poonphol business, decided to work for the Wanglee Group by serving as the Managing President of the Luang Lee Insurance Company (which later changed its name of Nawakit Insurance Public Company Limited) (Pimpraphai, 2003a).

Business Networks

From 1957 onwards, Tongpoon was less dependent on family networks for her business dealings. Two factors accounted for this declining dependence. First, with the return of her children from abroad, especially Suwit and Sukit, they had replaced the Wanglee in-law members in business dealings, both internationally and locally. Second, once Chote and Chulin from the Lamsam family had introduced Tongpoon to the businessmen and state officials, Tongpoon later made contacts with them directly (Pimpraphai, 2002a).
Nevertheless, this independence of Tongpoon and her Poonphol Group did not imply that Tongpoon no longer had business ties with her family relatives. On the contrary, the networks still existed and were important because they contributed to the stability, prosperity and expansion of the Poonphol Group in the business sector. For one thing, after their return from abroad, Sukit worked for the Wanglee family business and was later the fourth-generation Wanglee leader, after Tan Siew Ting’s death in 1982, while Sujit worked for the Loxley Company of the Lamsam family. Thus, the Poonphol Group could be seen as establishing closer ties with these two business groups, with their members working for both of them. For another thing, in 1970, Tongpoon also came into joint ventures with both the Wanglee and Lamsam families. In one of these joint ventures, the Thai Phanit Insurance Company, she also was able to make further connections with state officials and other business families and relatives.

Moreover, towards the late 1960s- early 1970, that is, the end of her lifetime, Tongpoon had established a social network within the Rangsit area. She had donated the North Rangsit area to charity, by setting up a small town with all the necessary organizations (Poonphol Group, 1992:24). She also established a Fresh Food Market there. Therefore, there was a double advantage incurring from one act. She gained social reputation not only for herself and her family, but also for the fresh food market business which most of the Rangsit area people need to depend on.

As seen in the previous chapter with the Wanglee leaders engaging in social activities and being respected within the community, Tongpoon also did the same thing. The difference is that the Wanglee’s case is mostly confined to the Sino-Thai and Chinese community, whereas Tongpoon’s case applies to Thai society in general. This does not imply that Tongpoon is more Thai than Chinese.
Tongpoon thus represents an instance of a successful Sino-Thai businesswoman. Under her management, the Bulphol Company, which started off as an import business dealing with cosmetics and clothes was revived and expanded into the Poonphol Group, spanning into trade and industrial related businesses consisting of agri-business, bonded warehouse, warehousing and private shipping ports, construction, land development, real-estate, and other related businesses. Here, several factors are worth considering for her rise and success in the business world. These include the sudden death of her husband and her role as family leader, her Chinese upbringing in an entrepreneurial environment within the family, her use of family networks, economic prospects in Thailand after World War II, as well as the courage, ability and determination of Tongpoon to continue to engage in business despite the obstacles faced. In addition, although the Poonphol Group of Companies belonged nominally under the corporate umbrella of the Wanglee Business Empire, it was independent financially and administratively. The Poonphol Group only benefited indirectly from the association with the esteem of the Wanglee name.

It appears that Tongpoon’s case was not unique, but part of a small number of successful businesswomen. There also exist similar cases of successful businesswomen during Tongpoon’s time, as will be discussed in the following chapter. These businesswomen tend to share a similar pattern of success.

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Illustration No. 3 – The Bulphol Company

(Poonphol Group, 1992:4, 14)
Illustration No. 4 – The Poonphol Group and some of its companies

(Poonphol Group, 1992:16, 31)
Illustration No. 5 – Tongpoon Wanglee in Business, 1945-1971

Tongpoon with Western merchants around 1947. Above, aided by Tan Siew Ting, Chalit and Kitti Wanglee for English translations.

Tongpoon and her family around late 1960s-early 1970s.

(Chammongsri, 1998:226, 235)
Chapter 6
Other Female Entrepreneurs: Tongpoon’s Business Counterparts

Introduction

During the time of Tongpoon’s management of the Poonphol Group in the post World War II period, there existed socially accepted gender divisions in business - the so-called “male-related” and the “female-related” industries. Men were usually trained for and were involved in “male-related” industries which comprised heavy industries such as engineering and construction, banks and other financial institutions, transport, communications, ownership of shops and hotels; etc. Women, on the other hand, had limited education and tended to work within the “female-related” industries, which focus primarily on real-estate and marketing as well as the service sectors of garment manufacture, shop management, hotel management; etc. However, overlaps did occur and women could sometimes break into different areas. As such, Tongpoon was an exceptional case, since her Poonphol Group during her initial management phase was primarily concerned with agri-business, warehousing and private shipping ports. These later provided a solid foundation for further business expansion. As such, these businesses did not fit into the female mould.

Apart from Tongpoon who operated outside the accepted female business environment, there also existed other major businesswomen in Tongpoon’s time. Here, I will give examples of two such women - Khunying Suphatra Singholaka and her Chao Phraya Riverboat Express Company and Thanphuying Chanat Piyaoui and her Dusit Thani Hotels & Resorts Company. In this regard, a brief comparison between them and the case of Tongpoon is useful. Although each entered the business world for different reasons, their businesses were established and expanded into business empires around the same time. Hence, what were the factors which led them to success? Was there a shared, similar pattern between them?
Khunying Suphatra Singholaka of the Chao Phraya Riverboat Express Company

Khunying Suphatra Singholaka (1910-1993) was President of the Chao Phraya Riverboat Express Company Limited and President of the Suphatra Company Limited. She inherited this small business from her mother and expanded it into a big industry. This was a family-oriented business. She had various achievements during her life time, both in terms of success in building a ferryboat empire in Bangkok covering a fleet of fifty-two river ferryboats as well as extending the business primarily into the real-estate industry along the Chao Phraya River where the boats operate. In addition, she also owned a school (Suphatra Singholaka Charity Fund, 1994:131).

Suphatra was born in 1910 to an upper-class Thai official family of Indian descent. Her father was Phraya Raj Montri (Sa-nga Singholaka), a Thai-Indian who served as a government official. He placed great importance in seeking honour and reputation for himself and his family (Suphatra Singholaka Charity Fund). On the other hand, her mother, Khunying Bunpan Singholaka, possibly a Thai-Mon, had a small river boat business which she had managed, presumably as an interest. As a child, Suphatra was sent by her father to serve in the royal palace in 1922 from the age of twelve. Later, the abolition of the absolute monarchy and the beginning of the constitutional monarchy in 1932 enabled her to lead her life outside the confines of the palace walls (Suphatra Singholaka Charity Fund, 1994).

Soon after, she inherited a small river boat business of only three boats from her mother. Initially, she had no previous knowledge in the business, except from her mother’s brief teachings. The boat service operated at a loss for more than ten years, until the post-World War II period when conditions became more favourable. In the meantime, Suphatra had to face various problems, such as the Great Depression, an increase in petroleum prices, the big floods in Bangkok during that time, as well as the constant bombings during the war period which led to the resignation of most of her employees. At that time, she wanted to sell off the business to the government but the government refused to buy it because it was unprofitable. However, having

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45 Mon is an ethnic group of people occupying the border area of southern Burma and northern Thailand.

46 Her mother, Khunying Bunpan, probably died in the early 1930s.
linkages with the state, Suphatra was able to have the tax incurred on her business waived. Still, she also had to sell her jewelry and other valuables to keep the business running (Suphatra Singholakka Charity Fund, 1994)

During this time of hardship, Suphatra had to operate at all levels of work - from manager to clerk. Suphatra also had to operate the small boat service herself, although with some aid from her husband during her pregnancy. In the morning, she drove a boat. At night, her husband would do the job. However, Suphatra was the main manager of the business, for later, after giving birth to her second daughter, she divorced her husband for his philandering activities (Suphatra Singholakka Charity Fund, 1994)

Conditions improved in the post-war period, with the defeat of the Japanese and the end of the war. In particular, Sarit's industrialization programs introduced in the late 1950s, bringing about infrastructure restructuring and development within the country as well as foreign investment and capital inflow, promoted the business. There were more people using the boat service. In this regard, she was able to establish state links via her male acquaintances in business circles, in order to secure as well as promote her business (Suphatra Singholakka Charity Fund, 1994). In 1971, Suphatra started the express boat service and also tourist ferryboats (air-conditioned) to the outer provinces. Income and profit expanded from then on.

From a small business with only three to four riverboats operating to and from the Thonburi side and the capital side at Chang Wharf and Prannok Wharf, Suphatra had developed it into a big business with fifty-two modern, well-equipped ferryboats and express boats. She named some of the boats after herself, like Suphatra 1, Suphatra 2, Suphatra 48 - all of which denoted her fighting spirit and courage. Later, she won public recognition, given the title "Woman Fighter of the Chao Phraya River" (Suphatra Singholakka Charity Fund, 1994). In addition, she was also bestowed the title of Khunying, designating her links with the Royalty and the fact that she had made various contributions to society during her lifetime.

In a way, Suphatra and Tongpoon shared a similar formula for business success. Both operated their business in the male business arena, rather than the female one. In addition,
elements existing in both Suphatra and Tongpoon’s cases were the presence of a business role model and influence within the family, the need for courage and determination, the post-World War II industrialization period, as well as networking with the state and business counterparts. First, it should be said that Suphatra had her mother who served as a business role model for her. Although she did not grow up in an entrepreneurial environment like Tongpoon because she was sent in to work at the Palace when she was twelve years old, she could have heard about her mother’s business and seen her mother working. After the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy, her mother trained her in business. To a certain extent, her mother could have served as an inspiration for her. Second, she had the courage and determination to fight. During the initial unfortunate times of business operation, she sold her valuables to keep the business running, although the business was operating at a loss for more than ten years. Her courage was among her factors for business success. “Suphatra chose success through marriage, but is now estranged from her husband and has become one of a powerful matriarchy built by Thai wives accumulating money to protect themselves from their husband’s inevitable and legal polygamous adventures.” (London Times, 1970, cited in Suphatra Singholaka Charity Fund, 1994:131). Here, it should be said that both Tongpoon and Suphatra had the courage to keep the business running and foresee future developments in their business. Tongpoon had courage in changing to another business when the former one was not operating efficiently, while Suphatra’s courage was to stick with the boat business regardless of its unprofitable result. Third, it could be said that part of her business success was due to industrialization in the post-war period. In this regard, she was able to seize a business opportunity. Moreover, networks were necessary for business, and Suphatra was able to establish links, especially with the state in fostering her business, whether in times of hardship during her initial business career or during the favourable business times. In this regard, she had found channels to establish state relations via her business counterparts.

Thanphuying Chanat Piyaoui of The Dusit Thani Hotels & Resorts Company

Another example is Thanphuying Chana: Piyaoui (1924-present), who is considered the leader of the hotel industry in Thailand. She started a hotel business with financial assistance from her paternal family. Later, she borrowed overseas to expand the business, which became
The Dusit Thani Hotels & Resorts, with branches in Thailand and other countries. In addition, she had other related businesses like serviced apartments and shopping malls. She also won social recognition, referred to as chaomae thurakit rongraem. (Godmother of The Hotel Industry), the “Iron Butterfly” (comparable to iron lady), as well as being bestowed with the title of khunying (Tonsakun Sui, 2002:81) and subsequently, thanphuying.

Chanat is a second-generation Sino-Thai born to a Chinese father and a Sino-Thai mother. But unlike Tongpoon, she is of Hainanese, rather than Teochiu, descent. She was the fourth of sixth children. Ever since she was young, she grew up in a trading environment. Her father was a wood broker in Bangkok, while her mother inherited her grandfather’s business as rice-mill owner in Saraburi province in Central Thailand. Thus, Chanat was able to follow their footsteps as a businesswoman. In fact, she often said that her mother served as a role model and inspiration for her (Thanawat, 2001:223).

When she grew up, Chanat wanted to further her undergraduate studies in the United States. This was not typical of women during that time, whether they were of Chinese or Thai in ethnicity. However, given that Chanat’s mother was a businesswoman with modern thinking, she supported Chanat. She wanted Chanat to meet and experience the challenges of the outside world. Thus, she contacted the Hainan Association in the United States via the Bangkok branch to assist Chanat upon her arrival to the United States (Thanawat, 2001:222). Chinese networks were essential since the Chinese, especially each particular descent group, would regard themselves as brothers and sisters of the same origin, and would help each other. Chanat was said to be among the first women in Thailand to further their studies overseas (Thanawat, 2001:222).

However, once in the United States, Chanat was unable to enter her desired University due to an English language proficiency problem. Therefore, she had decided to travel around the country and stayed in good hotels before returning home. During her trip, she was impressed by the grandeur of American hotels and was determined to own a hotel business. In Bangkok at that

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47 The title "Iron Butterfly" was given to her by Fortune magazine.
time, there were no luxury hotels, except for The Oriental Hotel. Chanat viewed the hotel business as a profitable and good career (Thanawat, 2001:222).

Upon her arrival in Thailand, Chanat discussed the idea with her family. She asked for a sum of money from her parents to invest in the business. She leased land for twenty years from her wealthy second sister who had married into a rich business family (Thanawat, 2001:223). She then started the small Princess Hotel. In 1950, at the age of twenty-five, The Princess Hotel, situated on the street leading to The Oriental Hotel at Charoen Krung Road, was finally opened. Initially, it was six storeys high, had sixty rooms and spanned over three shop sites. At the inauguration of the hotel, Chanat had invited Rama IX’s (King Bhumibol Adulyadej - 1946-present) only sister, HRH Princess Kalayaniwattana, to preside at the ceremony (Thanawat, 2001:223), thus strengthening ties with the Royal Family in order to build a good reputation for the hotel. In fact, several Bangkokians I have spoken to suggest that there were rumours at the time that the Princess had become a secret shareholder in the hotel. Most likely, the shares were gifts from the hotel.

In the course of her career, Chanat needed to overcome various obstacles. For example, in first year of the hotel, many internal problems arose since both she and the staff were new in the industry. Therefore, she had to work in all positions and solve all problems. In addition, she faced public criticism from the media. During those days, working in a hotel was considered inappropriate for a phuying dii (or a good woman). Most of them were branded as prostitutes (Thanawat, 2001:223-224). Though she managed the hotel, the public did not regard her as having a good reputation. She had to put up with these criticisms and prove herself against the rumours.

Despite the above problems, Chanat was business-minded. In addition to the hotel business, Chanat tried to seize the advantages of the political and economic events during that time and turned them into opportunities for herself. For instance, coupled with the growth of The Princess Hotel, Chanat went into real-estate (buying and selling land) and was the first to build serviced apartments for foreigners to rent, namely the Chanin Court and Chan House (Thanawat, 2001:225). This was a period of opportunity for her since it was the period of the Vietnam War. There were large numbers of American soldiers based in Thailand seeking comfortable
accommodation. Therefore, she was able to bring a large amount of foreign capital into the country (Thanawat, 2001:225).

However, Chanat’s mainstay was the hotel business but it was never free from problems. The twenty years land lease of The Princess Hotel was about to expire, and she could not renew the lease since her sister wanted the money to build another hotel called the Rama Hotel on Silom Road. As a result, Chanat had to find a place to build her new hotel. This time, she had studied the market and decided to build a bigger hotel, which was to become what is today The Dusit Thani Hotel in Bangkok. She wanted land where her hotel would be a landmark and a symbol of Thailand and that particular piece of land was occupied, belonging to the Royal Property Bureau (Thanawat, 2001:225-227). Thus, she needed to negotiate with the various government offices situated on the site for them to move, bringing up various reasons to support her argument, providing enough monetary compensation for them, as well as finding powerful people to patronize her project. Chanat’s link with the Kirg’s sister during the inauguration of the former Princess Hotel proved beneficial. Chanat was therefore able to exploit patron-client ties with Royalty as well as the state.

Apart from the land used to build the hotel, Chanat needed investment capital. The actual investment was 360 million baht (although the initial registration capital was forty million baht). However, Chanat had only five percent of the capital for investment. Chanat had the idea that she must hold fifty percent of the total shares to have a majority vote and management power. Thus, she needed to obtain loans from three foreign banks, because the local banks were unsure of the future of the business and would not allow her to borrow. Using indirect links she had through the banking acquaintances of both her father and sister, both of whom had business credit in Bangkok, Chanat was able to obtain foreign loans (Thanawat, 2001:227). Thus, Chanat required the use of various networks and much negotiation during that time in order to start The Dusit Thani Hotel.

The hotel started building in 1967 and opened for operation in 1970. It consisted of five hundred rooms, twenty-three storeys high and spanned sixteen rai (2.56 ha). At that time, a hundred rooms were thought to be more than enough. However, Chanat wanted something above average and extravagant. She aimed for the hotel to be the top-ranking, luxury hotel in Bangkok.
(Porawan, 2003). She employed Western as well Japanese engineers and hotel experts to assist in the design of the hotel (Chanat, 2003:82-83).

During this period, there was connection between the operation of the bureaucratic polity and the success of the Dusit Thani Hotel. Chanat had links with Major General M.L. Taweewong Tawalsak, a former military officer who was in charge of the Crown Property Bureau, which is an independent government agency considered as being part of the Royal Palace. Therefore, Chanat had connection with a developing, independent power base in the Thai polity. Major General M.L. Taweewong Tawalsak aided Chanat in matters such as maintaining the lease of site of the hotel, as well as recommended a local bank to become a shareholder in the hotel during the hotel’s financial crisis (Chanat, 2003:87).

In addition, Chanat was clever and responsive to the situation at hand, especially with regard to her debts. She found a way to list the hotel in the Stock Exchange of Thailand. In turn, she advertised the sale of a small number of shares to the public. By the fifth year of the hotel business, Chanat was starting to repay back the loan. This was a clever and quick way of repaying foreign debt (Thanawat, 2001:227), by selling local equity.

In summary, Chanat’s case had parallels with that of Tongpoon. Factors such as being raised in a Chinese entrepreneurial family environment and having a role model within the family, the post-World War II favourable economic conditions promoting business, seizing opportunities and diversifying into other businesses when possible, networking through family relatives, Royalty and state officials, and the determination to do business despite facing difficulties and hardships on the way together formed the business pattern that Tongpoon had shared. Like Tongpoon, Chanat operated in a male business milieu, in this case, the hotel industry. Although hotel management was considered part of the service industry, hotels during that time were mainly small and run by Chinese men, rather than the big, Western-style hotels to cater for tourist, business and family needs. Some hotels of the time were little more than brothels. As such, Western-style hotels were rare. The only well-known Western-style hotel of a high standard was The Oriental Hotel (Thanawat, 2001:223). In addition, hotels were mostly owned and managed by men, although it was not unusual for women to hold secondary
management positions. Chanat made a difference to the hotel industry because she was among the first women to own and manage a hotel during that time.

Apart from the cases of Suphatra and Chanat mentioned above, there also existed other businesswomen who rose to prominence in the post-war period. Many were Sino-Thais and were of Tongpoon’s younger generation.

Conclusion

In sum, business traditions are not necessarily hindrances for women’s success in business. Suphatra and Chanat, along with Tongpoon, tended to operate in the male business environment rather than the typical female environment. Women can challenge men in some business areas.

Furthermore, having Chinese ethnicity alone does not guarantee success in the business world, although it is one of the factors in promoting Tongpoon’s business success. It appears that these businesswomen shared a similar business success pattern which included the presence of a business role model and influence within the family which served as sources of business inspiration for these female entrepreneurs, the need for courage and determination despite facing difficulties and hardships on the way, the post-World War II industrialization period, as well as networking with the state and business counterparts. At the very least, it had an impact on Tongpoon, Suphatra and Chanat’s business management style.
Chapter 7
The Post-Tongpoon Period, 1971-1994

Introduction

Tongpoon’s death in 1971 signified a point of departure in the management of the Poonphol Group. The earlier matriarchal leadership unique to the business reverted to the normal patriarchal leadership practiced within the majority of Chinese and Sino-Thai business families. Suwit, Tongpoon’s eldest son, replaced her and continued to manage as well as to expand the business, taking advantage of the growth of the Thai economy. However, while there was a reversion to a patriarchal leadership succession, there also arose female businesswomen as managers of daughter companies of the Group. This was evident in the roles of Tongpoon’s daughters, Praphai and Saisukhon, as well as her granddaughters, Pimpraphai and Pimphaka. These Poonphol businesswomen successful after Tongpoon, but operated at lower levels than Tongpoon. As such, the management of the Poonphol Group in the post-Tongpoon period could be characterised as patriarchal, but with reduced male dominance.

Succession and Gender

Generally, gender is an important marker for succession within most Chinese and Sino-Thai business families. Priority is given to male heirs, especially the eldest son. But given the social, political and economic changes and developments which may occur, the rule could be slightly altered, with patriarchy being retained. This type of succession is referred to as selective patriarchy, and was practiced in the Wanglee Group. As for the Poonphol Group, the normal rule of patriarchy was applied to the business after Tongpoon’s accidental matriarchy.

In terms of the Wanglee Group, the eldest most able son succeeded. Tan Tsu Huang, the founder of the Wanglee branch in Thailand, was succeeded by his second son Tan Lip Buay because his eldest son, Tan Lip Heung, was an adopted son. Tan Lip Buay was also succeeded
by his second son, Tan Siew Men, since his eldest son, Tan Siew Boong, was incapable of managing the business compared to Tan Siew Men. After Tan Siew Men’s death, his younger brother, Tan Siew Ting, who was then eldest male at that time, succeeded him to await Tan Siew Men’s eldest son, Suwit Wanglee (1928-1994), who was still studying abroad.

In terms of the Poonphol Group, Praphai, the eldest child who could be seen as a possible leader of the Group since she was Tongpoon’s assistant from the early years of the company’s revival, was in fact passed over in favour of Suwit, the second child in line, yet the eldest son. While Tongpoon was in hospital before her death in 1971, Suwit was appointed by her to lead the Poonphol Group. Therefore, Tongpoon herself imposed normal Sino-Thai succession rules within her own company. Suwit was also the expected and rightful heir of the Wanglee Group to succeed his deceased father and his uncle’s temporary leadership position. If Tongpoon was to choose Praphai, Suwit still had the Wanglee Group to manage. However, because gender rules applied, Suwit was chosen to head both Groups.

**Suwit’s era (1971-1994)**

After Tongpoon’s death in 1971, Suwit, Tongpoon’s eldest son, rather than Praphai, the eldest daughter, inherited Tongpoon’s position and continued to lead the Poonphol Group. This business leadership succession followed the Chinese inheritance tradition of favouring the eldest son. At this point, Suwit had two positions. He assumed the leadership of the Poonphol Group. At the same time, he continued to work as managing director of the Wanglee Group, while his uncle, Tan Siew Ting, served as President of the Group (Chamnongsr, 1998:247-248). Later, with Tan Siew Ting’s death in 1982, Suwit was responsible for leading the Wanglee Group as well. Under his leadership, Suwit managed and expanded the businesses in each business group, given the favourable economic conditions of the time, such as the industrialization policy of the Thai state, the mid-1980s economic boom, and the expansion of Bangkok and its economy.
Economic Environment and the Poonphol Group's Expansion

Until the end of the 1960s, the Thai economy was driven by import-substitution and the back-extending processing of agricultural products. The government structured the economy to transfer surplus from the expanding agrarian economy into urban consumption and investment. From the early 1970s to mid-1980s, the growth of the urban economy slowed under the impact of the weakening of agricultural growth, the withdrawal of American patronage, and the inherent limitations of the import-substitution strategy. The transition to export orientation was advocated by technocrats, bankers, potential exporters, and foreign creditors, but blocked by vested interests in both business and the bureaucracy. Only after the recession of 1983-1985 threatened major disorder in both government and commercial finance did the government devalue the baht and promote exports. Over the next two years, the massive devaluation of the baht against the East Asian currencies, and the fall in the price of the major import item of oil, completed a reorientation of the relationship between the Thai economy and the outside world (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:143-151).

Tentatively from the late 1970s, and then more positively from the mid-1980s, the government shifted its economic strategy towards the promotion of exports in terms of both labour and the manufacturing industries (Suehiro, 1996: 281-283). In particular, the normalization of relations with China during the Kukrit Pramoj government in the mid-1970s, coupled with the economic reforms during the 1980s Deng Xiaoping regime, contributed to increasing trade and investment by Sino-Thai businesses in mainland China.

In this regard, normalization of relations with China may have contributed to the Wanglee business in China, given that the Wanglee family originated as rice exporter to China. The Wanglee Group had a long tradition of trade within China. This trading pattern was interrupted by World War II and later by the embargo on trade with China following the Communist Revolution in 1949. The normalization of relations between Thailand and China would allow the Wanglee Group to resume its traditional trade relationships.
Thus, by the end of the 1970s, the Thai manufacturing sector had already surpassed agriculture and Thailand was joining the Asian Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) during the economic boom period (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:143). The Thai capitalists, according to Suehiro (1996: 218-220), could be divided during this period into three major categories, namely the commercial bankers who established their businesses by the early 1950s and developed them into conglomerate giants in the 1970s; industrial groups who developed on the basis of import-substitution industries in full collaboration with foreign capital after 1960s; and the agribusiness group which rapidly expanded by integrating agr: cultural exports with industrial activity. The Poonphol Group belonged to the last category during this period. These local capitalist groups developed their businesses and achieved capital accumulation under the prevailing conditions – especially those imposed by the existing power structure, the industrial promotion policies of the government, and the influx of foreign capital. In addition, these capitalist groups also adapted and improved their system of business in response to changing conditions and environments.

With Tongpoon having laid the necessary business foundation, The Poonphol Group continued to develop under Suwit's management. He expanded the business aggressively, with the economic environment developing at a more advanced stage to engage actively in the global economy. Three main areas of expansion included 1) agri-business and export; 2) real-estate development; 3) investment and securities (Poonphol Group, 1992; Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:2). Together, they formed the heart of the Poonphol business from that time on. The agri-business during Tongpoon's management expanded vertically into the tapioca business and during Suwit's era, it continued to do so, with more exports. As for real-estate development, Tongpoon had invested in this new industry approximately one to two years before her death in the early 1970s. Suwit was then active in expanding this booming industry (Who's Who in Business & Finance, 1995:42). In addition, the investment and securities business started during Suwit's time. Suwit had the idea that having their own financial institution to support the business would make the business stronger, as the Wanglee Group had done earlier. Thus, using the economic conditions favourable for investment described earlier, Suwit set up several additional companies in each sector. These were either investments by the Poonphol Group itself or joint ventures with other businesses, both local and international. I will briefly discuss some of these companies below.
With regard to the agribusiness and export sector, Suwit expanded the industry further. With the rise in export demand for agricultural products, Suwit established the Bua Kao Company in 1972 as an export broker and a facsimile service provider to assist in the export of the Poonphol trading company. In 1976, Pattawee Wattana Company also came into existence to assist in the tapioca trade. (This business later had a sideline as a land development company as well). That same year, there was also the establishment of the Poon Udom Company to trade other agricultural products. In terms of the tapioca processing and manufacturing, Suwit also decided to set up three additional companies to support the rapid expansion of this industry. First was the Poonsin Industrial Company, which was set up in 1976, to manufacture tapioca seeds and threads used for desserts. Second was the Poonmitra Company Limited in 1979, involved in the manufacture of tapioca seeds. Third was the Poonpattana Industrial Company, a firm used to process tapioca (Poonphol Group, 1992:18, 20-21; Supphalak, 1996: 138, 141-143).

Bangkok was expanding at a rapid rate, both in population and in area, during this economic boom period. With the promotion of the manufacturing sector, the population of Bangkok increased at over seven percent a year, from almost five million to nearly nine million in the course of the 1980s (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:162). Population grew as a result of the movement of labour from the agricultural sector in the provinces to the manufacturing sector in the city.

In addition, export growth sparked a secondary boom in real-estate, retailing, consumer goods, and financial services in the home market (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:163). Urban demand increased sharply. Affluent urban consumers spent an increasing proportion of their incomes on manufactures. Thus, Suwit brought the Poonphol Group into a heavy expansion in the growing real-estate industry. This sector of the economy became popular as a result of the urban growth of Bangkok. Given that Tongpoon had left behind large amounts of undeveloped land and had started this infant industry during the early 1970s, Suwit then expanded the industry from the mid-1970s onwards. With a few companies being set up as land development and construction companies in the early 1970s before Tongpoon’s death, Suwit went further to establish businesses dealing with the sale and rental of premises as well as other land development projects. For instance, in 1977, Suwit established the Rangsit Ruam Pattana Company. This company rents out premises and operates a premise cleaning service. In 1982,
Suwit established the Sathorn Thani Company, a real-estate business to rent out premises and manage land development projects of the company (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:39,41; Supphalak, 1996:141,143). This company later became the mainstay of the Poonphol real-estate industry. It had many successful projects, among them were the Sathorn Thani Office and Condominium Projects 1 & 2, which were in charge of building premises for the Wanglee and Poonphol companies, especially the Wanglee Group’s former Nakhon Thon Bank main office building (Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:1-2; Supphalak, 1996:143).

Moreover, there were additional companies set up during the economic boom period. To name a few, in 1987, there was the establishment of the Sathorn Thani Management Service Company (S.T.M.S.), a branch of the Sathorn Thani Company, to manage office buildings and internal repair services within these premises. In 1988, there was the establishment of Executive Management Services Company to rent out offices, recruit labourers within the country, and serve as a ticketing agency as well (Supphalak, 1996:145-146). These companies were predominantly responsible for real-estate sales and rentals as well as land development projects. Pipattanasin Company, established in 1970 during Tongpoon’s time, was a land development and real-estate rental company. Under Suwit’s management, the huge amount of land at Sukhapibarn 3 was transformed into a housing estate in 1993-1994 (Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1993:25-26; Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:1-2). This was indeed one of Pipattanasin Company’s projects.

With increased commercial activities and an open market, the banks also started to re-engineer their structure and systems to cater for both local and international demand. The home-market focus was replaced by global participation (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:140; Suehiro, 1996:245). In this regard, Suwit’s specialization was in the area of banking and finance. In addition to agri-business, Suwit also established a financial base for the Poonphol business. Given the growth of the Thai economy during that time, coupled with the importance of the business group having its own financial institution, Suwit felt that the Poonphol Group should follow the same path as the Wanglee Group. Therefore, in 1972, Suwit established the Poonpipat Investment Company as investment capital fund. In 1979, the name was changed to Poonphol Investment and Securities Company and later became listed in the Thai Stock Exchange in 1981,

For a complete picture, Table 2 below lists the companies owned and established by the Poonphol Group under Suwit's leadership.

Table 2:
Wholly-owned Companies Established by the Poonphol Group under Suwit's Management (1972 onwards)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Poonpipat Investment and Securities Company Limited</td>
<td>investment and securities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Bua Kao Company Limited</td>
<td>export broker, facsimile service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Poonsin Industrial Company</td>
<td>manufacture and trade of tapioca seeds and threads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Pattawee Wattana Company Limited</td>
<td>trade of tapioca products, land development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Poon Udom Company Limited</td>
<td>agri-business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Rangsit Ruam Pattana Company Limited</td>
<td>premise rentals, cleaning service within the premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Somrudee Company Limited</td>
<td>premise rentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Poonmitra Company Limited</td>
<td>manufacture of tapioca seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Poonpattana Industrial Company Limited</td>
<td>tapioca processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Sathorn Thani Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate, premise rentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>S.T.M.S. Company Limited</td>
<td>building management and building repair services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Executive Management Services Company Limited</td>
<td>office rentals, recruiting of labourers, ticketing agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Baan Yen Arkart Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>P.N.C. Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Sathorn Nakhon Tower Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Poonphol Group, 1992:18, 20-21; Supphalak, 1996:318-319)
Joint ventures

Besides the companies established by the Poonphol Group, Suwit also went into joint ventures with several groups - with the Wanglee and the Lamsam family relatives, and with other domestic businesses as well as with foreign business partners. Established big businesses mobilized their resources to take up joint venture opportunities offered by incoming capital. Foreign investors wanted to establish or expand their manufacturing facilities in Thailand, taking advantage of low-cost conditions, especially supplies of cheap labour (Suehiro, 1996:282-284). Foreign investment joint venture companies began during Suwit’s era. Prior to this, joint ventures with foreign partners were in the form of joint cooperation, for instance, with American companies ordering supplies from Thailand, not a joint investment company established in Thailand as during Suwit’s period after 1971. As for the joint venture businesses with the state, there were very few because conditions in the economy had changed. Businesses grew stronger, more independent, and increasingly participated in the global market. State patronage existed, yet declined sharply.

Joint investments, it could be said, come in the form of both joint establishment of new companies and buying already established companies (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:39). In both cases, the Poonphol Group holds partial shares in the company. The business group that holds the majority of the shares in the company will run that particular firm. Mostly, the Poonphol Group only held partial shares since they had enough companies of their own to manage. However, there also exists a company which the Poonphol Group holds the majority shares and therefore manages it.

In terms of joint investments, the Poonphol Group also concentrated on its main areas of specialization – namely the agri-business and real-estate sectors. In addition, given the growing economic boom in favour of industrialization, Suwit joined with other business partners in establishing companies in the areas of the industrial activities and holding companies as well (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:41).

With regard to the agri-business industry, Suwit had joint investments with related families as well as foreign businesses. An example is the Mahintorn Company which is a
Poonphol-Lamsam joint venture established to trade agricultural produce and local products during Tongpoon's era.

Suwit also expanded joint businesses aggressively in the growing land-development/real-estate sector as well. Joint investments were established predominantly with the Wanglee family since the Wanglees also owned land around the same area as the Poonphol Group (Who's Who in Business & Finance, 1995:37-38), as well as with other local and foreign business partners.

Also related to the real estate industry is the construction business. In 1990, Suwit went into joint venture with the Wanglee Group and the Kumagai Gumi Company of Japan to establish the Singkhi Company. Although this is a joint investment business, management of this company lies with the Poonphol Group, since they hold the majority of shares (Poonphol Group, 1992:18).

Apart from joint investments in agri-business and real-estate industries, Suwit also expanded the joint ventures into new lines of popular businesses developing during his time – namely investment/holding companies and industrial-related businesses. As business momentum increased, several corporate groups started real management reform by setting up modern holding companies which were expected to centralize decision-making on the global strategy, mobilize investment funds, and improve personnel management of their associated companies during the 1980s economic boom (Pasuk and Baker, 1995:166-167; Suehiro, 1996:224-225). In terms of investment companies, the Prasertyard Company was established in 1978, a joint venture with the Lamsam Group. This was an investment business with other foreign companies. Furthermore, there was the Prakongsap Company in 1979, a joint venture between the Poonphol Group and the Setthapaibul Company, as well as the establishment of the Poonphol-Wanglee joint investment of P.P.M. Holding Company (Supphalak, 1996:142-143, 146).

With regard to industrial-related businesses, Suwit established the Thai Alifatics Company to manufacture chemicals in 1989. This is a joint venture between the Poonphol Group, the Wanglee Group, and other business groups. Moreover, with the expansion of telecommunication and electronic devices during the boom period, Suwit also went into joint
investment in 1990 with the Lamsam Group in establishing the Ekpawee Company. The company was primarily a Lamsam business set up to engage in selling and distributing electronic devices like computers, telephone, calculators, facsimile; etc (Supphalak, 1996:146).

For a clearer picture, Table 3 shows the main joint ventures of the Poonphol Group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Tamrongyard Company Limited</td>
<td>trade of agricultural products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Thanakorn Vegetable Oil Products Company Limited</td>
<td>manufacture of vegetable oil and seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Thanakorn Trading Company Limited</td>
<td>trade of vegetable oil products, UHT brand milk, flour mixture for frying food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Prasertyard Company Limited</td>
<td>investment with foreign companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Boriboonsin Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate/land-sale broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Prakongsap Company Limited</td>
<td>investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Siam Modified Starch Company Limited</td>
<td>manufacture and export of processed tapioca flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Sap Sathorn Company Limited</td>
<td>premise rentals, investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Ruam Pattana Industrial Company Limited</td>
<td>premise rentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Lake Ratchada Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Thai Alifatics Company Limited</td>
<td>manufacture chemicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>P.P.M. Holding Company Limited</td>
<td>investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Singkhi Company Limited</td>
<td>construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Sathorn Sombat Company Limited</td>
<td>real-estate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
199048 | Tweak Thai Company Limited | office rentals, office service management |
---|---|---|
1990 | Ekpawee Company Limited | sale of electronic devices like computers, telephone, calculators, facsimile; etc. |
1991 | Rangsit Plaza Company Limited | premise rentals, cleaning service within the premises |


In sum, the Poonphol Group’s expansion under Suwit’s management was the result of the exploitation of favourable economic conditions during the economic boom period. For instance, expansion of the real-estate and financial service industries went hand-in-hand with the economic boom. With increasing growth in these two sectors, Suwit positioned the business to meet market demand as well as extending the Poonphol Group into other related areas like construction, and other related businesses; etc. Towards the end of Suwit’s era, the Poonphol Group was not only engaged in many primary businesses, ranging from agri-business (trading of agricultural products and tapioca industry) to food industry, warehouse/shipping ports business, construction, but also extended its participation to the land development/real-estate industry, investment and securities.

At this time, the Poonphol Group directly managed over twenty companies. Table 4 gives a summary of the Poonphol Group’s managed companies.

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Table 4: A Summary of the Main Businesses under the Poonphol Group Management (up until 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Business</th>
<th>Names of Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. agri-business (trading of agricultural products and tapioca industry) | Poonphol Company  
Visuttipanit Company  
Pattawee Wattana Company  
Poonsin Industrial Company  
Poon Udom Company  
Poonmitra Company  
Poonpattana Industrial Company |
| 2. land development/real-estate | Pipattanasin Company  
Suebsiri Company  
Poonpattanakan Company  
Rangsit Ruam Pattana Company  
Somrudee Company  
Sathorn Thani Company  
S.T.M.S. Company  
Executive Management Services Company  
Baan Yen Arkart Company  
P.N.C. Company  
Sathorn Nakhon Tower Company |
| 4. investment and securities | Poonpipat Investment and Securities |
| 5. food industry | Sittinan Company |
| 6. warehouse/shipping ports business | Poonpipat Company  
Poonphol Warehouse Company |
| 7. other businesses | C.E.S. Company  
Bua Kao Company |
| Primary joint venture business managed by the Poonphol Group | Singkhi Company  
(a joint venture with Kumagai Gumi Company of Japan) |


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49 This category refers to the joint venture company where the Poonphol Group holds the majority shares.
Wanglee Group’s expansion

Apart from expanding the Poonphol Group, Suwit also managed and assisted in the Wanglee Group’s expansion. Suwit’s primary accomplishment in the Wanglee Group was bringing the family bank into joint partnership with the American-owned Citibank (formerly called First National City Bank) in 1972. This alliance with an American partner was a natural development, since the United States had played a major role in Thailand’s industrialization in the post-World War II period, especially since Sarit’s pro-United States government from the late 1950s-early 1960s onwards. With joint venture with Citibank, Suwit was able to redevelop the Wanglee Bank (Econ News Group, 1995:140) and transform it into Nakhon Thon Bank, a commercial public bank able to compete with the other modern banks within a short period of time and to exist effectively in the rapidly changing Thai economy. In this regard, the Citibank replaced the old traditional Chinese system of banking with the American system. The American banking system made banking easier and more efficient since the teller could directly pay the client the money in cases of withdrawal, rather than have to go to the indirect process of passing through another staff member for withdrawal of money, which was the Chinese system practiced by most commercial banks in Thailand during that time (Chamnongsri, 1998:245-247).

Later, in 1979, the Thai government via The Bank of Thailand altered the 1962 Commercial Banking Act to prohibit excessive family or individual dominance within a commercial bank, and allow it to truly become a public bank. The main requirement was for each bank to reduce the original ownership to fifty percent and to additionally have a minimum of 250 external shareholders, together forming at least fifty percent of the total shares. Each shareholder must not hold more than five percent of the total amount of shares sold, except in the case where shareholders were government agencies, or similar organisations (Yiphan, 2002:19; Chamnongsri, 1998:247). As a result, while the Wanglee Group held fifty percent of the bank, the Citibank had to sell its shares off, because having only five percent of the total shares was not worth the investment. So Suwit lobbied the Crown Property Bureau\textsuperscript{50} to buy the Citibank shares

\textsuperscript{50} The Crown Property Bureau, formerly called the Privy Purse Bureau, exclusively manages matters concerning the private revenue and expenditures of the king. One of the responsibilities of this organization is direct investment in a variety of businesses such as land, rental houses, rice mills, commercial banks, shipping companies, and railway construction. It can be understood as a kind of proto-investment bank which exclusively served as the core organization to undertake private business on behalf of the king. One may claim that it was a kind of state capital or
to improve the bank’s reputation and appearance in public eye (Charnnongsri, 1998:247). The Privy Purse Bureau as an agency of the Royal Palace then became the main shareholder of the Wanglee bank. Members of the Crown Property Bureau each hold five percent of the total shares, and together, they formed the majority voice. This move by Suwit strengthened the Wanglee ties with the Royal Household.

Moreover, like the Poonphol Group expansion, Suwit also brought the Wanglee Group to invest in other popular businesses (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:42; Supphalak, 1996:142-143,320). In this regard, the Wanglee Group was considered in a better position than the Poonphol Group since it already had the Nakhon Thon Bank as its strong financial foundation to support its main agri-business, re-engineer its insurance company, as well as assist in the Group’s investment in land development and real-estate industries.

Business Management under Suwit’s Leadership

In terms of business management, Suwit headed both the Poonphol and Wanglee Groups. However, given the enormous size of each business empire, it was impossible for Suwit himself to manage all the companies efficiently. Thus, Suwit managed the main businesses in each business group, and appointed his siblings to look after the daily affairs of the other companies according to their duties before he had assumed the leadership position. The difference in management during Suwit’s era from that of his predecessors was that because of the large number of individual companies now involved, Suwit had selected a few brothers who served as the managers in each business sector, looking after the overall performance of the particular industry as well as the individual management of each company within the sector (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:39, 41-42). In turn, these managers served as Suwit’s eyes and ears, bringing principal matters of concern to Suwit’s attention. Needless to say, Suwit was still responsible for the Group’s management, especially in terms of business expansions and joint ventures. This was similar to teamwork, with Suwit as the team captain. As stated in Phuchadkan raiwan [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:2,
...for the growth of the business... Suwit was considered as playing a major role. His siblings all listened and accepted his judgement willingly.

With regard to the Poonphol Group, Suwit had succeeded Tongpoon and became the Group’s leader. He continued to look after the export trade of the Poonphol Company. However, he had brought in his sister, Praphai, who was familiar with the company from the time she was Tongpoon’s secretary, to assist with the overall management of the Poonphol Company (Pimpraphai, 2002a). At the same time, Suwit also focused on three recently established lines of business - namely, investment and securities, real-estate/land development, and Poonphol business investments (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:42).

In terms of the management within each daughter company, Suwit had his siblings, usually in the positions to which they were appointed by Tongpoon, to manage them. It should be said that all of Suwit’s brothers and sisters were on the management board. This included Tiep, Tongpoon’s adopted son, as well. In fact, Tiep continued to work for the Poonphol Group as an advisor and was given a small amount of shares in several of the Poonphol businesses (Supphalak, 1996:133-135, 137, 141, Poonphol Group, 1992:23; Pimpraphai: 2003a).

Women took significant roles in the management of the Poonphol Group during Suwit’s era. Suwit’s sisters assisted with the management of some Poonphol companies. As mentioned earlier, Praphai, Suwit’s elder sister, assisted him with the management of the Poonphol Company, in addition to her regular duty of looking after the finances of the Poonphol Group. Praphai was influential as the eldest sister of the family. It could be seen that Praphai held the second most important role, after Suwit’s leadership, in looking after the finance of each and every company within the Poonphol Group, which was indeed a sensitive area. Matters on expenditure and company income had to go through her. Thus, she was like Suwit’s right hand, for she could comment on the finances of each company’s management and work for the Poonphol Group’s best interests. In addition, Saisukhon, Suwit’s younger sister, also continued to manage the Rangsit Fresh Food Market and the Suebsiri land development company assigned to her by Tongpoon (Supphalak, 1996:136-137; Pimpraphai, 2003a). Like her brothers, Saisukhon was educated overseas and given the management of a company. In this case, women were still considered as belonging to the Wanglee family and the Poonphol business. They were
not discriminated against because of their gender, as practiced in the earlier Chinese tradition of female inferiority.

As for other business areas, Suwit had his three younger brothers, Sukit, Sujin and Supot, as business sector managers (Who's Who in Business and Finance, 1995:42; Phuchadkan rai wan [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:2). Sukit, the second oldest brother in line, was responsible for industrial-related business and trade. Sukit replaced Suwit in the tapioca export industry, while Suwit limited his job mainly to trading within the Poonphol Company. As for Sujin, aside from working for the Wanglee Group’s Nawakit Insurance Company, he also began to play an active role in the real-estate industry by assisting Suwit. One of the popular projects he was engaged in was the Future Park Rangsit shopping mall complex, a joint investment with Robinson Department Store Chain and the Univest Group. Here, Sujin transformed the former Rangsit Fresh Food Market land into part of the shopping mall complex in late 1990s (Chamnongsri, 1998:233), almost 20 years after his mother’s death. Finally, there was Supot, who managed the tapioca food industry. He had formerly managed the Sittinan Company and was also responsible for other companies in this industry.

Later, with the Poonphol Group’s expansion into the new real-estate industry, Suwit had to find additional company managers. He recruited his nephews and nieces, who were effectively considered to be fifth generation Wanglee members, although not in the direct descent of the male line. For instance, Danai-thanit, Prapahai’s eldest son, was given the management of the Rangsit Ruam Pattana Company (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:52-53). There was also Pimpraphai, the eldest daughter of Praphai, who was in charge several companies. Having many companies at hand during that time, she was a capable female manager (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1995:44, 49-52). There was also Pimphaka, Sukit’s daughter, who manages the Pipattansin Company, and subsequently, assisted her uncle Sujin with the Future Park Rangsit Shopping Mall Complex Project (Who’s Who in Business & Finance, 1994:54). Under Suwit’s leadership, Danai-thanit, and especially, Pimpraphai and Pimphaka were given opportunities in the Poonphol business.

Whether this change from the normal Chinese patriarchal business management to a patriarchy with reduced male dominance under Suwit’s leadership was a result of Tongpoon’s
management example and her legacy or because of the influences of the local environment and overseas education of her children should be an issue worth considering. Influences of the post-World War II period were definitely important. Tongpoon was a pioneer of female business leadership in the Wanglee family. She had revived the business in the post-World War II period, a time when people's attitudes towards women and society were changing due to foreign influences (for example, US films portraying images contrary to the traditional male and female relations practiced in Thailand at that time); the independence of previously colonised, neighbouring countries around Thailand; economic reforms which required the mobilization and exploitation of both male and female labour; etc. In such instance, Tongpoon was fortunate to be in the situation and exploit these Western influences, in addition to using her Sino-Thai background, since Sino-Thai family norms and hierarchies gradually modified the Chinese tradition of female inferiority. Despite this, one thing to be sure of is that the Poonphol Group under Suwit's leadership reverted to patriarchal management, yet a patriarchy with reduced male dominance.

As for the Wanglee Group, a similar management structure also applied under Suwit's leadership. Suwit assumed the leadership position of the group after 1982. However, given that the core business of the Wanglee Group was the Nakhon Thon Bank and due to the limited expansion of the Group during Tan Siew Ting's conservative management style, coordination of the business was not as complex as that of the Poonphol Group. Besides, Suwit employed his male cousins and nephews to assist in the business management, which was the normal business practice in most Chinese/Sino-Thai businesses as well as others. There were no female managers employed, unlike the management in the Poonphol Group.

On 19 August 1994, on his way to the conference of the Thai Chamber of Commerce in another province, Suwit died in a plane crash (Chamnongsri, 1998:253). However, the patriarchal leadership of both the Wanglee and the Poonphol Groups continued with his successor.
Sukit’s era (1994-present)

After Suwit’s death in 1994, Sukit, Tongpoon’s second eldest son and the most senior male family member in line, assumed the leadership positions in both business groups \( Phuchadkan rai wan \) [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:2). This was definitely in accordance with the Chinese tradition of inheritance. Suwit had no male heirs, only an adopted daughter who was still very young at that time (Chamnongsri, 1996:248; Phanni Bualek: 2003).

In terms of the Poonphol Group, Sukit assumed the leadership position and continued to manage his own areas of industrial-related businesses and trade. Suwit’s functions were then distributed among his siblings. The Poonphol Company was managed by Sukit, with the continued assistance from Praphai. The real-estate/land development sector was in the hands of Sujin, Suwit’s assistant in the area. As for the Poonpipat Investment and Securities Company, Sujin also replaced Suwit, since he had a background in finance \( Phuchadkan rai wan \) [The Manager, daily issue], 1994:2). This company later collapsed following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. As for his female siblings and nieces, their management positions during Suwit’s management continued under Sukit’s leadership.

In terms of the Wanglee Group, Sukit was responsible for making important decisions, though the actual management of the bank, which was considered the Group’s core business, rested with Worawee, Suwit’s deputy. This was because Sukit lacked the financial background to manage the bank. Worawee was assisted by Thamnu and both had worked in the bank during Suwit’s time (Econ News Group, 1993:294-297). Later, in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the bank was taken over by the London-based Standard Chartered Bank and renamed Standard Chartered Nakhon Thon Bank. \(^{51}\) This terminated the Wanglee family’s role in the bank’s management. From then on, the export of agricultural products remained the mainstay of the Wanglee Group. It also continued to be active in insurance, agri-business, construction, real-estate and land development.

\(^{51}\) The Wanglee family sold most of its shares in the bank to the Standard Chartered Bank, leaving only a very small portion of the shares with them. This was to save the bank from bankruptcy and eventual collapse due to the floating of the Thai baht currency during the Asian Financial Crisis. As a result, the management of the bank lies with the
Conclusion

The management of the Poonphol Group changed after Tongpoon’s death. Tongpoon’s matriarchal leadership practice was removed. In place was management by Suwit and subsequently, Sukit. However, there arose female businesswomen as managers of daughter companies of the Group. Praphai, Tongpoon’s eldest daughter, co-managed the Poonphol Company with Suwit, in addition to undertaking the financial management of the Poonphol Group. Saisukhon, the youngest daughter, was responsible for the Suebsiri Company of land development. Nieces like Pimpraphai and Pimphaka also became managers of the real-estate companies. This could be viewed as a patriarchy, but with reduced male dominance.

Although after Tongpoon’s death, the Poonphol Group had patriarchal leadership exemplified by the ascendance of Suwit and Sukit, the business certainly continued the female management tradition, though in more junior positions compared to Tongpoon. Eight out of Tongpoon’s nine sons, and two out of three daughters, worked for the family business. Thus, proportionally as many women received management positions as men, though the proportion of males is slightly higher, since Tongpoon had more sons than daughters.

Nonetheless, under the leaderships of Suwit and Sukit, though women’s presence and voice were being established in the once patriarchal business world, the relative importance of the jobs in the Poonphol Group still favoured male rather than female management. For instance, though Praphai was given the management of the Poonphol Company to co-manage with Suwit, and later Sukit, the important decision-maker and the leader of the agri-business sector still lay with the men. Even though the daughter Saisukhon was given responsibility to manage the Suebsiri land development company, the son Sujin was given the power to oversee this real-estate and land development sector. Gender determines position, and in the post-Tongpoon period, women arose to management positions, yet at the same time, they only became secondary

Standard Chartered Bank. For more details, see Yiphan (2002), Chao Sua Yesterday: sokkanattakam khong nai thin thai [Tycoons Yesterday: A Tragedy of (Sino-) Thai Capitalist], p. 107-110.
managers, subject to male leadership and supervision. Future developments will demonstrate more clearly the tendencies towards female empowerment in the Poonphol Group.
Illustration No. 6 – The Poonphol Leaders in the Post - Tongpoon Period

Second Generation Poonphol Leader
Suwit Wanglee (1971-1994)

Third Generation Poonphol Leader
Sukit Wanglee (1994-present)

(Poonphol Group, 1992:22)
Illustration No. 7 – Secondary Managers of the Poonphol Group companies in the Post- Tongpoon Period

Praphai Bisanbutra

Saisukhon Wanglee

Supachai Wanglee
Surajit Wanglee

Supot Wanglee

Tiep Sriwarakiet

(Poonphol Group, 1992:22-23)
Tongpoon Wanglee’s management of the Poonphol Group (1942-1971) is considered an example of an accidental matriarchy in that she succeeded to the business in unforeseen circumstances and, as a matriarch, managed the business group successfully. After her death, the traditional succession arrangements again came into force. Her case challenged the gender hierarchies within the normal Sino-Thai family’s patriarchal way of doing business. Initially, Tongpoon and her husband started the Bulphol Company as an interest, coordinating it part-time, with most of the managing assistance and consultation coming from the Wanglee family longju. Later, after her husband’s death, Tongpoon had to change her role to become a full-time businesswoman in order to support her family of twelve children. She revived, managed, and expanded the business herself, although receiving some assistance from her relatives in the Wanglee and Lamsam families. Considering her achievements, several factors could account for her business success. Nonetheless, being a female business leader was not easy at that time, because she operated outside the perceived expectations of the conservative Sino-Thai business community. How did Tongpoon overcome this difficulty?

Some major reasons could be put forward for Tongpoon’s business success. First, the death of her husband was primarily responsible for turning Tongpoon into a full-time businesswoman. She needed money to support her children and provide security for them. The Wanglee family is a kongsi business which could not possibly cater for the needs of each and every family member. She thus had the motivation to succeed.

Second, Tongpoon came from a well-to-do family background. Her family financial position, especially from her husband, allowed her to start the business. In Tongpoon’s time, which was during the immediate post-World War II period and later, the Thai economy was not as mature as it is now. The economy was in its recovery. The national business economy was in the hands of a small group of wealthy and influential people. Women’s engagement in large business only occurred at the upper-class level.
Third, Tongpoon’s Chinese ethnicity partly contributed to her business management skills and ultimate success. Since she was young, she grew up in a Chinese family trading environment. She helped her mother look after the family finances and overheard conversations about business dealings and tactics.

Once she had managed the business after her husband’s death, she used the Wanglee reputation to develop and expand her business. Though management was controlled by the Poonphol Group rather than the main Wanglee Group, the former owed a lot of its reputation and respect to being a “Wanglee” property. Tongpoon had operated her business under the Wanglee shadow and reputation. First, her entrepreneurial success could be attributed to the fact that the business people dealing with her still looked to her as Tan Siew Men’s wife (Wanglee family, 1972). Second, at times, she would use the Wanglee family networks in her business management. Formally, the Poonphol Group belongs to the Wanglee Empire. Thus, it seems inevitable that through the intermediary of the Wanglee family, Tongpoon’s business networks and contacts broadened. Tongpoon used and mediated this relationship to her advantage when possible.

In this regard, family networks (both from the Wanglee and Lamsam) were employed to assist with her business dealings and to broaden her contacts with other local and international business counterparts as well as with the state officials. Family networks are essential for business and are typical of most Chinese businesses. As Phanni (2002:68) said, you need networks to do business successfully. In addition, operating in a family-oriented business, Tongpoon was able to employ most of her children to assist her with internal business management, as explained earlier with the distribution of the business branches among her children. She thus had the means for success.

Fourth, the economic environment within the country was also an essential factor for the welfare of the business. Tongpoon was lucky to do business at the right time. She had revived the business during the post-World War II period, a time when European businesses and colonial powers declined, leaving a trading vacuum for the Chinese to fill. As well, alliances between businessmen and Thai state officials and the 1950s Asia-wide economic boom brought about by the Korean war provided opportunities for enterprising business leaders. From 1957 onwards,
Tongpoon was able to expand her business with the rise to power of Sarit and the emphasis on industrialization of the country, with a realignment of state and capital under American influence. The strategic demands of the United States government for a pro-American presence in Southeast Asia as a counter to communist China, the politico-economic ambitions of the Thai military leaders, and the aspirations of the Sino-Thai business leaders fell into line. During this period, there were demands for export, increased foreign investment and foreign aid, infrastructure building, a call for import-substitution and back-extended trade and low tariffs on trading goods. All these factors served as important business incentives for Tongpoon. She had the opportunity for success in business.

Lastly, in doing any kind of business, the ability, courage and determination of the owner are also necessary criteria for success. Tongpoon was quick in resolving business challenges. For instance, when one business was not profitable, she shifted to the other businesses and tested the market to keep the whole company running, as evident with the shifting from the rice mill business to the manufacture of vermicelli, or the jute trade to tapioca trade. She was clever in diversifying the business and learning from business counterparts around her in order to adapt to the situation at hand (as seen from her interest in the tapioca industry after hearing the news of a person who tried exporting tapioca as a kind of animal food and was successful). Although she had assistance from her children, the longju, family relatives, together with business and state networks along the way, Tongpoon was said to be the primary manager and decision-maker of the entire business group. In addition, she also had female business role models, namely her grandmother and her aunt, whom she had looked up to for motivation. She had the ideal that she could also manage her business as successfully as theirs (Pimpraphai, 2002a). She therefore had the personal attributes necessary for success.

In addition, to some extent Tongpoon ran the business empire as a woman in a particular way. In terms of business management, Pimpraphai (2003c) said that her grandmother, Tongpoon, was known to be very careful or la-iat with her business management. She looked into small details, which is often the character of a woman, viewed as gentle but thorough. However, she also possessed the strong feminine side of being tough and knowing what people were up to, or ru than khon. From her family relatives’ advice and from her own experience, she was clever and did not allow others to easily deceive or take advantage of her.
With all these factors, Tongpoon started with the small Bulphol Company of import-export trade of consumer products in 1942 and had ended up with the big, expanding Poonphol Group, consisting of several companies specializing in the import-export trade of agricultural products, the manufacturing of tapioca flour, modified bean starch (starch for dessert) and roll vermicelli, the pawn business, warehousing and private shipping ports, construction industry, real-estate, land development, and the fresh food market.

However, throughout the course of her business career, there also existed differences between matriarchal and patriarchal management. First of all, women possessed unequal educational backgrounds, which in turn led to the difference in the types of business they managed. Women, especially before World War II, often were less well-educated than the men. A woman like Tongpoon was handicapped in both education and technological skills. Coming from a Chinese family background, her parents, especially her father, had the idea that a woman’s place belonged in the household. It was not necessary for a girl to possess a high-level of education, for when she grew up, she would marry out to another family. What she needed was the skills required for maintaining the household. On the other hand, men received a higher education. Many were sent to study abroad, previously to China to learn the Chinese language and skills necessary for trade. Then, through the course of time, many upper-class Thai as well as Sino-Thai families later sent their sons to the West to acquire English language proficiency. And particularly, the Sino-Thai business families sent their sons to study the technological skills needed to develop their businesses. As a result, men were mostly into finance, manpower and technical industries, whereas women often received lesser roles, for example, in the service and real-estate industries (Pimpraphai, 2003c).

The above case was true of Tongpoon. She started the business initially as a company to import cosmetics and clothes, which could be seen as a female occupation. After her husband’s death, she continued with the import-export trade, later expanding the business into the rice-trade, pawn-shop business, warehouse, and began the jute trade, but all these with the assistance of Tiep, her adopted son, who helped her by looking after the workers and buying raw materials. Later, when Suwit and her other sons returning from their overseas studies, Tongpoon had more manpower to expand the business even further into the manufacture and intensive export of jute, tapioca, construction, and other related heavy industries. It would be impossible for Tongpoon to
manage the heavy industry and its expansion all by herself. What would have happened if she had two instead of twelve children? Would the business have expanded as it is now? Would she have adopted promising if poor youngsters to be part of the family in the Chinese tradition, or would she have broken out of the Chinese pattern and used professional managers from outside the family in the various elements of the business?

Second, living in a patriarchal society, female entrepreneurs needed to exploit the patriarchal networks available to them in order to run the business successfully. Often, female entrepreneurs, especially those upper-class ones, obtained business opportunities through men – whether from their father, husband or in partnership with their siblings. Business networks, especially with family relatives, are deemed necessary for them to develop and expand their business and establish their own networks. In particular, almost any business that has to deal with the bureaucracy still needs male executives to undertake the hidden and ritualised corruption of the bureaucracy. But that does not prevent a good female entrepreneur from having male staff to carry out this role (Baker, 2003).

This being said, Tongpoon successfully exploited the male networks available to her. She employed the longju and later, her sons, to assist in looking after the workers and managing business contacts, both locally and internationally. In addition, she also benefited from the networks of both the Wanglee and the Lamsam families, and the employment of assistance by relatives from both families. Particularly in relations with the state, Tongpoon had relied on her brother, Chulin, who had close ties with the state in the post-World War II period. This dependence on the male network is an indication of the strength of the Chinese family management strategy.

In this regard, female entrepreneurs tend to share a similar path to success. Factors such as being raised in an entrepreneurial family environment and having a role model within the family, the post-World War II favourable economic conditions promoting business, seizing opportunities and diversifying into other businesses when possible, networking through family relatives, state officials, and the determination to do business despite facing difficulties and hardships on the way together formed the pattern that Tongpoon and her female business
counterparts like Khunying Suphatra Singholaka of the Chao Phraya Riverboat Express Company and Thanphuying Chanat Piyaou of The Dusit Thani Hotels & Resorts Company shared.

In addition, the question may be asked whether Tongpoon and her Poonphol Group were a continuity or discontinuity with the Wanglee traditions. It seems she maintained the Wanglee practice of internal family business management and lateral integration of the business elements. She carried on the legacy of her great-grandfather, Hook, in the way in which she scattered the business among her children. Aihwa Ong (1993:755) argues that the Chinese diaspora has been similarly shaped by a kind of “family” biopolitics, which she defines as “a set of rational practices that regulate healthy, productive bodies, and their deployment in flexible capitalist activities”. Chinese culture values cooperation among relatives. Thus, it is not a surprise the Wanglee helped the Poonphol Group by supplying them with networks, and the Poonphol Group became part of the Wanglee business. Both parties benefited.

However, female leadership like that of Tongpoon did not intend to challenge or replace the male leadership position. The structures and mechanisms of Sino-Thai society did not allow women this chance. “Newly acquired mobility increased a woman’s capacity to circumvent family discipline, establish her own nuclear family, and avoid being so closely monitored by her in-laws. However, this did not mean that these women challenged the patrilineal and patriarchal family structure” (Bao, 2003:127). Tongpoon’s Poonphol Group is still subject to the Wanglee Empire. Though management and finance are separated, Tongpoon still needed to depend on the Wanglee reputation. Though the founder and manager of the business was Tongpoon, business dealings outside the Poonphol Group still relied on the ability of men, who were more readily accepted and able to move about more freely. More importantly, men are more acceptable and welcome in the public sphere than businesswomen, who often stay within the company and look after the internal business affairs like internal management and financial statements (Pimpraphai, 2002a).

Tongpoon’s case thus reflects an unusual historical instance of a Sino-Thai woman’s leadership and advancement in business. Aside from being situated at the right place at the right
time, several other factors such as her class background; her Chinese family background; the economic prospects in Thailand after World War II; as well as Tongpoon’s personality, namely the courage, ability and determination to continue to engage in business despite the obstacles faced; could all be accountable for the entrepreneurial success of Tongpoon and the Poonphol Group. After Tongpoon’s death, though leadership of the business reverted to a male succession typical of the Wanglee, Sino-Thai and other business families in general, there also exist female managers of small branches of the business as well, as in the case of Tongpoon’s daughters, Praphai and Saisukhon, as well as granddaughters, Pimpraphai and Pimphaka. As such, the management of the Poonphol Group in the post-Tongpoon period could be seen as patriarchal, but with reduced male dominance.

More recently, women are becoming more valued in business due to changes in the structure of Thai society. Today, there are few objective impediments for female entrepreneurs. In fact, they are just as educated, just as smart, just as good as negotiating as men; etc. Because there is not much difference between male and female business management, the barriers to their business leadership aspirations are mainly subjective or social; that is, either the lingering family preference for patriarchy, or the very male-oriented, social culture which is still important in certain sectors of business. (So, it is not really gender that hinders a woman’s career, but the package that comes with being a woman!) Tongpoon represents an instance of “an accidental matriarch” within the then traditionally male-dominated Sino-Thai business community.

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APPENDIX
Appendix No. 1 – The First Five Generations of the Wanglee Family

Tang Huang Yong (Xuanyi/Hook)

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Tan Tsu Huang

+ Lao Sok Chia  -------- Tan Lip Hueng + Khoswi

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+ Tae Chuk Seng

+ Lip Boong Eng

+ Nu Posayanond  -------- Tan Lip Buay + Heng Siew Ngi

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+ Cham

-------- Sa-nguan

-------- Chalit

-------- Kitti

-------- Tongyu + Ung Yak Long Lamsam

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-------- Chote

-------- Chuang

-------- Chulin

-------- Tongpoon

-------- Lek

-------- Kasem

-------- Pitsri

-------- Pook + Lo Tek Chuan Bulasuk

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-------- Bumpen

-------- Teng

-------- Song

-------- Tan Lip Tong + Si Ngang Chue

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-------- Tan Siew Iem

-------- Siem Hieng

(continue next page)
Tan Lip Buay’s children (Tan Siew Men’s siblings)

Tan Siew Boong + Khow Khuang Hua -------- Tan Sia Yieng
          + Eng Su Ngek --------------- Tan Tien Seu
                                           --------------- Tan Tien Siew
          + Ieng Si ------------------- Tan Tien Hai
                                           --------------- Tan Ouang Heng
          + Chiu Siew Kieng ----------- Tan Ouang He
          + Li Cho Chu --------------- Tan Ouang Jiang

Tan Siew Men + Heu Koong Heng -------------------------- Tan Ei Yieng + Koo Leng
          + **Tongpoon Lamsam** ------------------ Praphai + Tanit Bisanbutra
                                           |----- Pimpraphai
                                           |----- Danai-thanit
                                           |----- Pitipong
                                           |----- Tamrongrat
                                           
                                           |----- Suwit + Thawara Kanokkun
                                           |----- Saijai
                                           
                                           |----- Supapan + Kam Kong Yan
                                           |----- Alan (Chi Yim)
                                           |----- Anita
                                           |----- Mandy
                                           |----- Annie (Mimi)
                                           |----- Eddie (Chi-Wing)
                                           
                                           |----- Sukit + Supee Sapyen
                                           |----- Phet
                                           |----- Pimphaka
                                           
                                           |----- Surapong + Nongnut Wanglee
                                           
                                           |----- Saisukhon
                                           
                                           |----- Supachai + Arunee Srisamphan
                                           |----- Apichart
                                           |----- Anuchit
                                           |----- Issara

(continue next page)
Suchart + Lawan Setthapakdi
    - Chutima
    - Chotirot
    - Chutitorn

Suthep + Unaporn Rattanaprakan
    - Anak
    - Anich

Sujin + Anuree Chintakanon
    + Ruchiraporn Lamsam
    - Saran Kiratibutra (son from Ruchiraporn’s former marriage)

Surajit + Saichit Bulasuk
    - Chittinan
    - Natchai

Supot + Puangthip na Pomphet
    - Kem
    - Ket

Tan Siew Ting + Ng Sok Eng
    - Tim + Kesorn Lamsam
    - Tan E Ki + H.B. Lo
    - Tan Ei Oong + Frank Cheng
    - Tan E Hieng + Vernon Croucher
    - Lalana + Yod Youngpichit
    - Tan Li Tsu
    - Tan E Lak + Michael Law

    + Songsri Bulasuk
        - Nongluck + Kosum Kasemsan
        - Worawee + Anchanin Ingdhatanuwat
        - Nongnut + Surapon Wanglee
        - Oranut + Pramook Chantavimol
        - Wuttichai + Porntip O-chareon
        - Sabaithip + Komsan Navikabhol

Tan Siew Or + Ung Yu Tek
    - Tan Ouang Ngor
    - Tan Ouang Teng
    - Tan Tien Hu

(continue next page)
Tan Siew Kia + Hieng Mieng Chang ------------ Tan Tien Hok
-------------Tan Tien Ip
------------- Tan Tien Ia
------------- Tan Tien Kue
------------- Tan Ti Jiang
------------- Tan Ti Yong
------------- Tan Ti Hieng

Sa-nguan + Chulin Lamsam ----------------------- Piroj
------------- Potipong
------------- Chamnongsri
------------- Taweenut

Chalit + Payom ------------------------------- Chaweewan
------------- Thamnu
------------- Thammanoon

Kitti + Vilai Bulasuk -------------------------- Kandapa
------------- Phakaphan
------------- Chalan
------------- Kalaya

+ = married to
---- = the children
bold = our main object of study

Appendix No. 1A – The Lamsam Family: Tongpoon’s Siblings and Their Families

Chote + Nom Ungpakorn ----------------------------- Bancha
----------------------------------------------- Chujit
----------------------------------------------- Chatchanee
----------------------------------------------- Chanathip
----------------------------------------------- Banyong
----------------------------------------------- Banchop
----------------------------------------------- Yupin
----------------------------------------------- Yutti

Chuang + Phra Nitikornprasom (Sa-nguan Chaisanien) ------------------------------- Nguankai
----------------------------------------------- Chatchawan
----------------------------------------------- Sa-ngamawan
----------------------------------------------- Orawan
----------------------------------------------- Nida
----------------------------------------------- Sanchai

Chulin + Sa-nguan Wanglee ------------------------------- (from Appendix No. 1)
+ Phanni Suwannasuk ------------------------------- Thongchai
+ Adisai Tansakul ------------------------------- Poomchai

Tongpoon + Tan Siew Men Wanglee -- ------------------------------- (from Appendix No. 1)

Lek

Kasem + Wanee na Pomphet ------------------------------- Vachareewan
----------------------------------------------- Sumanthana
----------------------------------------------- Ruchiraporn
----------------------------------------------- Samornmitra
----------------------------------------------- Suchitpan
----------------------------------------------- Supanya

Pitsri +Surapan Bisanbutra ------------------------------- Dechpol
----------------------------------------------- Patipat
----------------------------------------------- Puchpong
----------------------------------------------- Ruchaporn

+ = married to
---- = the children
bold = our main object of study

NB. There exists several cases where the male family members had more than one wife and children born from these wives. However, in this thesis, only the names of those relevant to the study have been mentioned.

(Chamnongsri, 1998:297-303)
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