

The Chinese Community in Bangkok : Continuity and Changes

อินเินนาการแต่สถาบันไทยศึกษา จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
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The Institute of Thai Studies
Academic Affairs

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Since ancient time, the significant role ~~the~~ Chinese community has played in Thai society has been most evident in many aspects ; Rattanakosin era in particular has witnessed the Chinese influence in their economic activities. The Chinese community have increased in number and have lived various walks of life; commerce and business, labour force and government. Most of them have assimilated well into Thai society through marriage and cultural exchange. The economic influence they have wielded soon paved their way to leading social and political roles. The Chinese community grew at a very fast pace matching the business growth of Bangkok of which the Chinese people themselves have been the major thrust. Therefore, history evolution and changes in their life merits an indepth research to brighten the vista and understanding on the multifarious roles they play in the Thai society of today.

For this reason, the Institute of Thai Studies has been provided with generous support from the Ford Foundation to conduct research on project on "Chinese Community in Bangkok : Continuity and Changes" from October 1982. Now that the research on historical part has been finally concluded, the Institute of Thai Studies; Academic Affairs Chulalongkorn University and the research team wish to express their sincere and warmest thanks and appreciation to Dr. Tom Kessinger and the Ford Foundation for their invaluable contribution in this very important academic task.

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The Chinese Community in Bangkok

The Chinese represent the largest of the various minority groups found in Thailand.¹ Moreover, among the Southeast Asian countries with Overseas Chinese populations, Thailand has the largest, approximately 3 million.² In Thailand the largest proportion of the Chinese immigrated to Bangkok, beginning with the Early Bangkok (Ratanakosin) Period. Furthermore, these Chinese immigrants represent one of the ethnic groups that contributed to the westernization of Thailand, which clearly began with the signing of the Bowring Treaty with England in 1855, and have greatly contributed to the growth of Bangkok as an economic center, especially in terms of trade, and its rapid development up to the present.

Reasons for Chinese Immigration to Thailand

Great numbers of Chinese emigrants left China during the late 1700s and the early 1800s (i.e. the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1851)

¹ Khacatphai Burutphat, Chon Klum Noi Nai Thai Kap Khwarm Man Khong Khornng Chart (Krungthep: Caroenrat Karnphim, 2526), p. 3.

² Tuan Liseng, "Chaw Cin Tae Chiw Thi Opphayop Ma Yang Thai Nai Raya Raek", translated by Wiphada Cancarusin, corrected by Witit Wanthabun; in Khon Chin 200 Pi Phai Tai Phra Borom Phothi Sompharn, Sen Thang Setthakit Chabao Phset, Nov. 2526, p. 27.

* For examples : the Suppression of the Chin-Ch'uan Revolts(1773-1776); the Subjugation of the Kansu Muslims(1784); the Taiwan Expedition(1787); the Nepalese war(1792); White Lotus Revolt(1796-1804) T'un-li Chiao Rebels(1813); Opium War(1839) Taiping Rebellion(1850-1865); Nien Rebellion(1853); Muslim Rebellion(1856) and Arrow War (1857)... The list of the chronological historical events is Assistant Professor Binada Youngdiaroon's kind contribution.

for both political and economic reasons. Politically, during this period there was much in-fighting among the Chinese to seize power, especially in the southern provinces, resulting in a state of turmoil. The defeated had to seek refuge outside of China by the thousands, as did those members of the populace who wanted to flee from the political turmoil.³ Moreover, this political situation so adversely affected the economy that the people were unable to devote their full efforts to making a living. Faced also with bandits and natural disasters, throughout the land they suffered from famine and starvation.

The aforementioned political and economic situations in China were important factors that pressured many Chinese to emigrate in order to find a new place to make a living. Some of these Chinese immigrated to Thailand because it was a "land of plenty" that offered many opportunities to seek out a livelihood. The Chinese represented a source of first-rate labor; they were hard-working, industrious, persevering and gave their best efforts for the wages that they received.⁴

Subsequently, a "need" for the Chinese labor force in Thailand was created, beginning with the reign of Rama II, when the policy of conscripting commoners as corvée labor for various public works projects

³Ch'en Su-ching, China and Southeastern Asia (Chungking and New York: China Institute of Pacific Relations, 1945), p. 6; quoted in William G. Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 21; also see Louis Mitchison, The Overseas Chinese (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1961), p. 16.

⁴Mullica Ruangrapce, The Role of the Chinese in Thai Economy, Society and Art from Rama I to Rama IV (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2518), p. 68.

was changed to one of hiring Chinese laborers to, for example, dig canals. The reasons being that the Thai force was conscripted and inexperienced and they lacked motivation because they received no benefits from their work.

In addition, the Chinese who possessed specialized knowledge and experience in trade and shipping were in demand since Thailand was in the process of rebuilding her economy during the Early Bangkok development period. They were needed to assist in the affairs of the Krom Phra Khlang, especially in regards to foreign trade, having clearly demonstrated to the Thais their capabilities in this area beginning with the Ayudhaya Period and continuing to the Dhonburi Period. Furthermore, the fact that the Chinese who entered Thailand were exempted from the social classification system meant that they were not conscripted for corvee labor like Thais but were free to choose their means of livelihood, whether it be merchandising or hiring out as laborers. Consequently, during the Early Bangkok Period Chinese immigrants poured into Thailand in great numbers, causing no ill-feeling on the part of the Thai population or rulers, indicating that the existing policy supported these mass immigrations.⁵

Later, after Thailand had made treaties with various foreign nations, beginning with the Bowring Treaty with England in 1855, the Thai economy was making a definite expansion into export trade. More and more foreign traders were coming to Thailand and the problem arose as to who was to be middleman between the producers and buyers, most of whom were Westerners. For the most part Thais themselves were not skilled or experienced in trade and most chose to farm. Those with

⁵ Pensri Duke and Piyanart Bunnag, S.391 Prawatsart Thai 1 (Krungthep: Sannak Thim Aksorncharoonthat, 2521), pp. 133-136, 160-163.

these Chinese who were looking for a safe and calm refuge. Besides, the policy of the Thai rulers had not been prejudiced or obstructive towards foreigners since the days of Ayudhaya.⁸ The Chinese especially had become an important economic force for Thailand and had always been a part of Thai society, quite well accustomed to Thai ways and people. Therefore, the later Chinese immigrants were able to adjust to Thai society just as the first ones had done. Another factor was that most of these Chinese were young, able-bodied men with no families or with their families remaining in China, so they usually took Thai wives, settled down and eventually became a part of Thai society.⁹

In summary, political and economic conditions in China were important factors forcing large numbers of Chinese to leave China from the late 18th century to the 19th century. Beginning in the Early Bangkok Period at various times significant numbers of these Chinese immigrated to and settled down in Thailand. Motivating these immigrations were the favorable conditions in the country that provided ways to make a living, the economic policy of the Thai rulers, safety from political troubles, as well as a society that allowed smooth adjustment and assimilation. Most of these Chinese settled in Bangkok,

⁸ For more details see Sonchai Anumarnratchanon, Karn Thut Khong Thai Samai Krung Sri Ayudhaya. (Phranakhorn: Rongphim Thai Kasem, 2493), 164 pages.

⁹ Thirawet Pramuanrathakarn and Piyarat Bunnag, Course S. 1210 Prawai Sangkhom Lae' Wathanatham Thai (Krungthep: Thai Watana Phanit, 2527). p. 86.

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⁴Mullica Ruangrapce, The Role of the Chinese in Thai Economy, Society and Art from Rama I to Rama IV (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2518), p. 68.

some education sought positions in government service and the upward social mobility that this would bring. Thus, the opportunity arose for the Chinese to fill this role of middleman, buying goods from the Thais and selling them to the Westerners, on the one hand, and importing foreign goods for sale to the Thais, on the **one** hand.⁶

As a result, during the reign of King Rama IV, there was another great inpouring of Chinese immigrants after the signing of the Bowring Treaty and this continued into the King Rama V reign. During this period travel from China to Thailand became much easier and some of the Chinese already settled in Thailand acted as middlemen to bring more Chinese laborers into Thailand even though the latter might have no finances. In 1882 the British Bangkok Passenger Steamer Company began providing direct transportation between Swatow and Bangkok once a week, making travel even more convenient since it was no longer necessary to go via Singapore. An average of 10,000 Chinese per year arrived in Bangkok during this period.⁷

In addition to the stimulus of Thailand's changing economic conditions, there were social and political reasons for the large numbers of Chinese political and economic refugees entering Thailand. At that time Thailand's state of affairs was relatively normal, more so than some of its neighbors. Even though there were some external and internal political problems, the rulers were able to solve them and return to a state of normalcy within a short period of time. Such an atmosphere induced foreigners to come to Thailand, in particular

⁶James C. Ingram, Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1970

(California: Stanford University Press, 1971) p. 37.

⁷William G. Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand, p. 43-44.

which, being the capital city, was the country's economic center and offered more opportunities for them to provide for themselves. The Chinese population of Bangkok gradually multiplied, leading to the establishment and expansion of Chinese communities.

Establishment and Growth of Chinese communities in Bangkok

Most of the Bangkok Chinese came from southern China and consisting of 5 groups: Cantonese from central Canton Province, Hokkien from southern Fukien, Tae Chiu from northeastern Canton Province, Hakka from northern Canton Province, and Hainanese from the northeastern part of the island of Hainan.¹⁰

The first Chinese community in Bangkok was located in the vicinity of Tha Tien and the Royal Palace. These Chinese were Tae Chiu who had arrived in large numbers during the Dhonburi Period and were allowed by King Taksin to settle and carry on trade in this area, which is on the left bank of the Chao Phraya River and was opposite the King's palace.¹¹ Later, in the Early Bangkok Period when King Rama I moved the capital to the left bank of the river, he had this community moved to an area to the southwest and outside the city wall.¹² It later came to be called "Sampheng". The masses of Chinese who arrived in Bangkok during King Rama II's and Rama III's reigns largely joined the Sampheng community.

¹⁰ William G. Skinner, Leadership and Power in the Chinese community of Thailand (New York: Cornell University Press, 1958) p. 4.

¹¹ William G. Skinner, *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹² Cawphraya Thipakornwong, Phra Ratchaphongsawadarn Krung Ratanakosin, Rama I's Reign.

As a result, Sampheng experienced rapid growth not only because it was a residential area but also because it became a major market area, the first Chinese one in the Early Bangkok Period. The Chinese preferred trade as a means of livelihood and were adept at it, doing it wherever they lived. The Chinese in Sampheng were the first to convert their homes into shophouses selling a variety of goods.

Subsequently, during the reigns of King Rama IV and Rama V (1855-1910), i.e. in the period following the signing of the Bowring Treaty with England, another large Chinese immigration took place, causing the expansion of the Chinese community into areas outside Sampheng, namely¹³

1. The area from south of the city wall to the south bank of the mouth of Phadung Krung Kasem Canal.

This area was actually the original Sampheng community which spread out as a result of King Rama IV's decision to dig Phadung Krung Kasem Canal, expanding the city's perimeter to the east. This area, previously outside the city wall, became a part of the city proper.¹⁴

¹³ Sawitree Dabhasuta, *The Relations between Thai, Chinese and Western Communities in Bangkok 1855-1910*, (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2527), pp. 38-42.

¹⁴ Piyanart Dumag, *Duangporn Nophakun and Suwalhaun Thardarniti, Canals in Bangkok: History Changes and Their Impact (1782 A.D.-1982 A.D.)*, (Bangkok: Research Division, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok's 200th Anniversary Celebration, 2525), p.40.

This expanded Chinese community comprised an area stretching from the southern city wall to the south bank of the mouth of Phadung Krung Kasem Canal, in the environs of Wat Karlawā, parallel to the Chao Phraya River and New Road, approximately 1½ miles in length.¹⁵

Three parallel roads cut through this area extending away from the river, namely, Sampheng Road, Yawaraj Road and New Road, respectively. Various alleys and lanes interconnected these three roads.¹⁶ Both sides of the roads were filled with shophouses, some concrete and some wooden, some of the latter still having nipa thatch roofing.¹⁷

This Chinese community was administratively divided into tambons (communes), with a Chinese Kamnan (chief) in charge of each tambon. These were Trok Ban Phraya Isaranuphap, Saphan Han-Sampheng, San Caw Kaw, Kongsī Long, Wat Samphanthawongsaram, Trok Taw Sampheng, Trok Phraya Krai, Tekmikoei (next to Wat Cakrawatrachawart), Saphan Yai Cai Thueng, Rong Kathakaw, San Caw Mae Thap Thim, Trok Acorn, Talat Noi, Trok Wat Yuan, Talat Noi-Trok Ban Kaeng Buan, and Choeng Saphan Talat Noi. Sampheng Market was the most important in the area; here people

¹⁵Samuel J. Smith, "Bangkok, Siam, as it is," Siam Repository 1 (1896): p. 107.

¹⁶Based on map of Bangkok, Phra Mahanakhorn Sayam RS.121, Printing Office, Map Department, Bangkok.

¹⁷S. Phlai Noi, Bangkok (Krungthep: 2520); p.74.

could find all types of goods, from the small-pots and pans-to the large and high priced-boat engines.¹⁸ In fact, Sampheng acquired the designation "Talat Yai" (The Big Market) as opposed to "Talat Noi" (The Small Market) or "Talat Kia", which was the second oldest and largest in the area.¹⁹

Thus it can be seen that during the reigns of King Rama IV and Rama V Sampheng spread out over a broad area, giving rise to numerous other Chinese communities.

2. Raft House Communities on the Chao Phraya River

Raft houses were strung out along both the Bangkok and Dhonburi sides of the Chao Phraya River for a distance of about 4-5 miles. Each contained about 30-40 square feet of floor space and consisted of 2 one-story units with walls made of wattle and roofs of nipa thatch. The majority of the raft house owners were chinese traders.²⁰ However, in the latter part of King Rama V's reign, when several new roads were built in Bangkok and buildings constructed along both sides of the roads, the Chinese raft house communities took up residence in these buildings,²¹

¹⁸ Arnold Wright, "Bangkok", Twentieth Century Impressions of Siam (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908), p. 244.

¹⁹ S. Phlai Noi, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

²⁰ D. B. Bradley, Bangkok Calendar (Bangkok: American Missionary Association, 1871), pp. 111-112. and Sir John Bowring, The Kingdom and People of Siam V. I. (London: John W. Parker, 1857) p. 85.

²¹ Kong Horeolmai Mong Chart (K.H.C.) (National Archives), Ekasarn Watchakarn Thi 5, Y, Th. 9/41, "Prakart Rang Cat Thi Sang Thanon Tam-son San Phanthom", "Prakart Hai Khayai Thanon Damrung Mueang."

and subsequently few Chinese could be found living in raft houses along the river.²²

3. Talat Phlu Area

This community was located in Dhonburi on the Bangkok Yai, or Bang Luang Canal. The Chinese here were engaged in trade and betel leaf (phlu in Thai) cultivation.²³ The merchants included those with permanent gold shops and boat peddlers who mainly sold food.²⁴ The number of Chinese engaged in betel leaf cultivation was quite large and it may be that this area represented the only area in Bangkok where a large group of Chinese were engaged in an agriculture occupation.²⁵

4. Dhonburi Bank of the Chao Phraya River

This Chinese community located in Dhonburi was situated across the river from the Sampheng Chinese community on the Bangkok side of the river at the point where Ratchawong Road runs up to the river bank. This location was called "Huai Cun Long" in Chinese, meaning "steamship landing", since it had been a landing where steamships docked to unload goods.²⁶ Besides being a transfer point for goods, this area

²² Arnold Wright, op.cit., p. 241.

²³ K. H. C., R. 5, N. 33/18, "Phuak Cin Ang Yi Wiwart Kan Nai Thong Thi Bang Yi Reua".

²⁴ For details see Karncanarkphan, "Dek Khlong Bang Luang", Vol. 16 (Krungthep: Rueangsin, 2520), pp. 143-163.

²⁵ Sawitree Dabbhasuta, op.cit., pp. 41-42.

²⁶ Sathian Koset, "Phuen Khwam Lang", Vol. 1 (Phra Nakhon: Suek Sit Sayam, 2513), p. 75.

was a production center with, in particular, rice mills and lime mills. Rice mills were to be found along the river's edge down to the lower section of the Bukkhalo area and the mouth of Dawkhanong Canal. These enterprises had branches, offices, or retail shops in the Sampheng area across the river.²⁷ The Chinese living in this area were well-to-do, as could be judged from the expansive Chinese architectural style of their houses. They consisted of a large central structure with two-story buildings on either side and fronted by a spacious tiled courtyard. There was a large main gate and two small side gates that served as entrances.²⁸

In addition, Chinese were to be found scattered about elsewhere but not in community-size groups like the four above. For example, the market area within the south city wall along Bamrung Mueang Road, along Fueang Nakhorn Road, and along Bangkok Road in the Westerners' market area. In short, wherever there were marketing activities Chinese shops and residences could usually be found there.²⁹ With the exception of the raft house communities, the other large Chinese communities expanded continuously until World War II. As time passed the raft house communities became smaller, beginning in the later part of King Rama V's reign, as more and more of these Chinese established residences and businesses along the newly built roads in the city. For example, Samson Road and other roads in Dusit District³⁰;

²⁷S. Siwarak, Bukkhon Ruam Samai Nai Thatsana Khong S.

Siwarak (Krungthep, Mun Nithi Komol Khim Thong, 2523), pp. 168, 179.

²⁸Sathian Koset, op.cit., p. 76.

²⁹Sawitree Dabbhasuta, op.cit., p. 42.

³⁰K.H.C., R. 5, Y. Th. 9/16 Hornq Krom Phra Khlang Kharnq Thi 4, Kumphaphan R.S. 114 and K.H.C., R.5,Y.th. 8. 3/6 "Krom Phra Som Krarp Bangkok Thun Ratchakarn Thi 5."

the area between Bangrak and Suriwong Road; Sip Song Hang Road; Si Phraya Road; Decho Road³¹; and Silom Road. At first, however, buildings located near the river were in great demand and therefore expensive because most trade still depended on river transportation.³² Also, later on some Chinese came to occupy buildings on temple grounds, e.g. Wat Cakrawat Rachawart, Wat Rartburana, and Wat Yarn Nawa.³³

In brief, when roads were built and buildings constructed along them, the Chinese would either purchase or sub-lease the buildings and set up trade in them, leading to the establishment of more and more Chinese communities.

Social Status

In their former homeland most of the Chinese who came to Bangkok were of more or less the same status, i.e. poor and uneducated. Therefore, there were very few prosperous or well-educated among them.³⁴ Being poor, they came seeking a place to make a living and become wealthy. They came with just their shirts on their backs (the Thai expression being literally, "with a mat and a pillow") but with the

³¹ K.H.C., R.5, Y.th. 9/46, 7 Thanwarkhom, R.S. 118, "Phra Rat-cha Krasae Rap Sang Khorng Ratchakarn Thi 5."

³² Ibid.

³³ Outit Jucngnipowsakul, *The Economy of the Wat in Bangkok 1782-1910*, (M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2526), 234-239.

³⁴ Kenneth Perry Landon, *The Chinese in Thailand* (New York: Russell E Russell, 1973), p. 203.

Sua, and had opportunities to raise their social rank through the royal service system since most of them received titles of nobility, ranging from Phraya to Khun,³⁸ with a sakdina rank of 400 and above.³⁹ The Chinese with titles of nobility, most of whom were under the jurisdiction of the Krom Tha Sai, were responsible for trade dealings between Thailand and countries to the east of the Gulf of Thailand, such as China, Japan, and Vietnam, and were responsible for supervising the Chinese population of Thailand. In addition, not a small number of them were semi-official tax collectors.

Nevertheless, no Chinese was delegated sole and absolute responsibility for supervising the Chinese communities of Bangkok due to the fact that among the five sub-groups (Cantonese, Tae Ciw, etc.) no one overall leader could be selected because of the competition for power among the sub-groups.⁴⁰ Some notable high-level Chinese figures in Bangkok during the reign of King Rama V were Ce Sua Yom, or Luang

³⁸For details see K.H.C. (Compiler), "Karn Taeng Tang Khun Nang Thai Nai Samai Ratchakarn Thi 5 (Krungthep: K.H.C., Krom Silapakorn, 2521).

³⁹Somdet Phra Caw Boromawongthoe Krom Phraya Damrong Rartchanupharph Lae' Phraya Rartchasena, "Thesaphibarn" (Phra Nakhorn: Rongphim Rung Ruang Tham, 2498), pp. 51-52.

⁴⁰Williana G. Skinner, Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Thailand, p. 8.

Sathorn Rartchayuk (who supervised the digging of Sathorn Canal and the construction of Sathorn Road), Ce Sua Fak, or Phraya Choduek Rartchasetthi (Fak Chotiksawat), Ce Sua Khian, or Phraya Choduek Rartchasetthi (Thian Chotiksathian), Luang Thichaiwari (Nu), Ce Sua Yim, Arkorn Ki, Ce Sua Niam, etc.⁴¹

Middle Level Chinese

This group included general middle-level merchants with not-so-large businesses, skilled workers clerks and trainees in Chinese and Westerners' shops, and employees of the semi-official tax collectors. They had fewer finances than the upper level group but they had sufficient skills to make a living. Given improved skills and more income, they had the opportunity to become small business owners.

Lower Level Chinese

At this level were found the unskilled laborers such as hawkers, rickshaw and cart pullers, rice mill, saw mill and dry dock workers, Chinese opera actors and actresses, etc. These people did not actually wish to remain in Thailand permanently but sought only to save up some money for a period of time.⁴²

These three social levels of Chinese made up the communities described above which were located in various areas of Bangkok and Dhonburi. They were exempted from the Thai social classification system and were not conscripted for corvée labor but they were required to pay a head tax. Those who had paid this tax were required to wear a

⁴¹D.B. Bradley, Bangkok Calendar (Bangkok: American Missionary Association, 1870), p. 64.

⁴²William G. Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand, p. 135.

pi around their wrists, i.e. a piece of "wax" (Khrang) stamped with an official seal, simply to signify this.⁴³

Residences and Way of Life

The residences of the Chinese in Bangkok during the reigns of King Rama IV and V can be divided into 2 categories: those of the upper level Chinese and those of the middle and lower level Chinese.

The residences of the upper level Chinese reflected the efforts to retain elements of Chinese architecture. Most of the construction materials were imported from China. A typical residence consisted of three buildings: a large central one, which usually ran parallel to the river or a road lying to the front, and two long parallel ones on either side of the central one running perpendicular to the river or road. All three might have either one or two stories. They surrounded a spacious open courtyard with walkways paved with large ceramic tiles or granite flagstones transported from China as ballast for merchant ships. The courtyard opened onto the river or the road to the front, where an arched gate was situated. It was covered with a roof running parallel to the central building; a name plate was hung over the entrance.⁴⁴ Near the end of King Rama V's reign some Western architectural features were introduced, e.g. carved balustrade posts and curved

⁴³ Sonsak Shusawat, Pookee: The Poll Tax Collection from the Chinese during Bangkok Period. (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2524), p. 46.

⁴⁴ Phutsadi Thippathat and Marnop Phongsathat, Ban Nai Krungthep (Bangkok: Research Division, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok's 200th Anniversary Celebration, 2525), p. 96.

transoms, but the overall architectural pattern remained Chinese.⁴⁵

Several upper level-Chinese residences are still in good condition even to this day: in Bangkok, those of Luang Upakarnkosakorn in Trok Yachun, Saphan Han, near Wat Borphitphimuk; Luang Nawakenikorn, Trok Phraya Krai Songwart Road; Sowhengthai at Talat Noi; in Dhonburi, those of Wang-li, in the vicinity of Huai Cun Long, and Poki, in the vicinity of Tha Din Daeng on the bank of the Chao Phraya River diagonally across from Songwart and Tha Ratchawong, etc.

The residences of the middle and lower level Chinese were concrete or wooden row houses. The former were usually one story, had thick walls and Chinese type roofs. Examples of these kind of buildings can still be found in Trok Yachun, Saphan Han and in Sampheng.⁴⁶ There seemed to be no definite patterns for the arrangement of these buildings; such was determined mainly by the roads running through a given area and the nature of the site itself.⁴⁷ In addition, unskilled laborers might live together in employer-provided housing at the rice mill, factory or shop, for example.

Wherever the Chinese resided, they still held to their long-practiced traditions and customs, especially respect for what was sacred to them.⁴⁸ Thus, Chinese temples (san caw and wat) were community

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 163-165.

⁴⁶ Sawitree Dabbhasuta, op.cit., p. 92.

⁴⁷ Phutsadi Thipphathat and Marnop Phongsathat, op.cit., p. 96.

⁴⁸ For details on Chinese religious concepts see sathiankoset Lae¹ Narkhaprathip, Latthi Khorng Phuean (Phra Nakhorn: Phrae Pitthaya Lae¹ Odeon Store, 2500), pp. 481-776.

centers for the Chinese in Bangkok, e.g. San Caw Mae Thap Thim, San Caw Ton Sai, San Caw Siaw Sue Kong, San Caw Pun Taw Kong, all in Samphong and its environs⁴⁹; Wat Leng Noei Yi, or Wat Mangkorn Kamalarwart, on Caroenkrung Road; Wat Yong Hok Yi, or Wat Bamphen Cinpharot, in Yawarart district; etc.

Furthermore, from the early days up until the reign of King Rama V the Chinese usually dressed in the Chinese style, wore their hair in queues, and at home followed Chinese ways. For instance, wise sayings and auspicious blessings written in Chinese were hung over doors and on walls. The language of the home was one's own particular Chinese dialect; Thai was spoken to officials and other thais but the Chinese could not write Thai.⁵⁰

Some Chinese attempted to pass on Chinese traditions and customs to their children by means of a Chinese-type education. Some sent their children to study in China; others engaged Chinese teachers to give lessons in their home or sent their children to be educated by temple keepers. Texts consisted mostly of old religious texts, literary works and Chinese history books.⁵¹ As time passed more and more

⁴⁹ Kiat Ciwakun, et al., Markets in Bangkok: Expansion and Development (Bangkok: Research Division, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok's 200th Anniversary Celebration 2525), and Phutsadi Thipphathat and Marnop Phongsathat, op.cit., p. 11.

⁵⁰ Sir John Bowring, The Kingdom and People of Siam, Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 86.

⁵¹ Phichai Ratanaphon, "Wiwatnarkarn Karn Khuap Khum Rongrian Cin" (M.A. Thesis, Department of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration, 2512), pp. 33-34.

Chinese were gradually assimilated into Thai society so that the number of Chinese who genuinely followed the ways of their ancestors gradually decreased.⁵²

For relaxation, most of the Chinese favored gambling and betting at gambling houses, lottery houses, Chinese opera houses and opium dens. This was a practice brought from China and the above establishments were to be found especially in Bangkok.⁵³ Thai officials were unable to completely prohibit or suppress such gambling establishments as is witnessed in the following announcement of 1888:

"... po thua, a Chinese game of chance, is considered evil, tempting Siamese citizens to be gamblers and be wasteful. It should be suppressed to the greatest extent possible and eventually stopped altogether. Be that as it may, putting it to an absolute end immediately would cause lot of trouble and difficulties since the Chinese, who have come to live in Siam under the grace of His Majesty and have shown good behavior, play it all the time."⁵⁴

To summarize, the Chinese came to Thailand to find work and many decided to become permanent residents. Somdet Krom Phraya Damrong Ratchanuphar divided the Chinese who came to Thailand into 2 groups: those

⁵² "Khon Cin Nai Thatsana Khong...Kuekrit," Senthang Setthakit Chabap Phiset: Khon Cin 200 Pi Phai Tai Phra Borom Phothi Sompharn (Krungthep: Sirichai Karnphim, 2526), p. 32 and Phra Caw Worawongthoe Phra Ong Caw Culacakraphong, Caw Chiwit (Phra Nakhorn: Khlang Withaya, 2507), p. 286.

⁵³ Sawitree Dalbhasuta, op.cit., p. 95.

⁵⁴ R. T. Th. Sathian Lailak. et al. (compilers), "Prakart Hor Ratsadakornphiphat," Prachum Kotmai Praceu Sok Lem 11 (Phra Nakhorn: Rongphim Daily Mail, 2478, p. 127.

who came and went, came and went, not staying permanently, he called "new Chinese"; those who came and settled down to stay he called "old Chinese".⁵⁵ Of whichever group, when they came to Thailand, they brought with them their Chinese ways, as reflected in the residences they built and the other facets of their lives mentioned above. Even so, the Chinese and the Thai experienced harmonious relations, mixing so well it was hard to tell them apart.

Occupations and Economic Roles

The Chinese who came to Bangkok during the Early Bangkok Period were first located in Sampheng. Their economic pursuits can be classed into 4 main categories:

1 Agricultural

Many kinds of vegetables were grown in the Sampheng area:

Chinese lettuce, white lettuce, green lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower and Chinese convolvulus. Seeds were purchased through Chinese traders who sailed merchant ships between Thailand and China. As the Chinese population grew the vegetable farms expanded to outside the Sampheng area where land for cultivation was rented from wealthy landowners.

Besides vegetable farming, betel nut and betel vine leaves were cultivated, both in Bangkok and Dhonburi. One area of Bangkok is still called Suan Phlu (phlu = betel vine leaf). The leaves grown by the Chinese were crisp and quite symmetrical in shape; so popular were they, in fact, that special betel vine leaf markets were established, as evidenced by another still existing place name, Talat Phlu, in Dhonburi.

⁵⁵ Sondet Phra Caw Boromwongthet Krom Phraya Damrong Ratchanupharb, Phra Ratchaphongsawadarn Krung Ratanakosin Ratchakarn Thi 5.

2. Merchandising

Besides farming, the Chinese had other skills which they put to use in making a living. For example, making Chinese sweets and cakes which Thais came to know, such as Khanom pia', khanom ko, taw huai, taw thueng, chaw kuai, pa thong ko, etc. Those who had no such cooking skills would handle selling and delivery. Craftsmen who could make and repair stoves known as taw ang low would peddle them from house to house and do repair work also. Others raised and butchered pigs and sold the pork from house to house.

The Chinese who had sufficient capital would set themselves up as middlemen, buying from producers, who were mainly Chinese also, and selling the goods in residential areas. For this boats were also used; they could get to any and every place along the river and canals where people lived. They numbered in the hundreds and plied their wares up and down the river and along the various canals. Their wares included foodstuffs and all kinds of necessary articles.

Prior to the signing of the Bowring Treaty floating markets were important merchandising centers for merchants, mostly Chinese, and merchantwomen, mostly Thai. Agricultural products, other foodstuffs, cloth and clothing, and samphaw boat parts were available.⁵⁶ Lining both banks of the Chao Phraya River for a distance of about 4-5 miles were to be found one-story raft houses, all of similar size, approximately 30-40 square feet, and consisting of 2 units with wattle walls and nipa thatched roofs. The majority of these raft houses were occupied

⁵⁶ Sunthorn Phu, Vannakam Mirat (Phra Nakhorn: Krom Silapakorn, 2505), pp. 28-32.

Other Chinese found work as crewmen on the samphaw and sampan boats carrying trade goods to and from Thailand and other countries, China in particular. Later, when trade with the West increased Chinese laborers found jobs as dockworkers, loading and unloading ships docked along the river.

4. Overseas-Trade, Shipping, Shipbuilding, and Tax Collection

Chinese who were knowledgeable of and skilled in overseas trade had served the King in the Krom Phrakhlang Siakha and the Krom Tha continuously since Ayudhaya times, as is witnessed by the Chinese-held noble title of Phraya Choduekarartsetthi, who was the chief of the Krom Tha Sai, for example. Among the great number of Chinese who entered Thailand during the Early Bangkok Period, especially in the reigns of King Rama II and Rama III, those who were skilled in overseas trade and shipping assisted the state in these matters. Some served simply as steersmen, harbor pilots, ship captains and even ship crewmen.⁶¹ Having had provided useful service to the state, some of these individuals were conferred titles of nobility according to long-standing royal tradition in return for their meritorious service. For instance, Luang Phokharartchesetthi, Khun Phakdi Arkorm, etc.⁶²

In addition, some Chinese were skilled in shipbuilding-constructing bulwarks and caulking, for example-and played a role in Thai

⁶¹ Sir John Bowring, The Kingdom and People of Siam (Kuala Lumpur, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1969), Vol. II, p. 418.

⁶² H. Samut Wachirayarn, Cotmal Wet Ratchakarn Thi 3, C.S. 1206 (2387), No. 49.

service to the state as tax collectors by many Chinese thus gave rise to Chinese families with lines of nobility. For instance, the Sac Lim family, two brothers of which were tax collectors, became the Krairoek family in the Early Bangkok Period. Others that trace their descent to tax collectors include the Chotikasathian, Chotikaphukana⁶⁵, Huntrakom, and Phisarnbut families.

It can therefore be seen how changes in the Thai economy during the Early Bangkok Period, especially the promotion of samphaw (junk) trade and the implementation of the caw phasi nai arkorn system, provided opportunities for the Chinese to better their economic position. of course the state had already given support to their immigrating to Thailand to find work and settle down. At this stage they were given duties and responsibilities for service to the state in overseas shipping and trade and as semi-official tax collectors. This clearly put them in contact with and gave them interests in common with government masters and nobles, which resulted in upward social mobility for the Chinese in service to the state as well as increased wealth. Therefore it can be said that the Chinese played a significant role in controlling the Thai economy while most Thai state leaders were intent mainly on working for the state and raising their social status within the state service system, as they had traditionally done.⁶⁶ As for the general

⁶⁵ S. Suknontharphirom, "Botbart Khon Cin Tor Phawa Setthakit Thai Nai Samai Krung Eatanakosin," Ehon Cin 200 Pi Phai Tai Phra Borom Photi Sompharn (Krungthep: Sirichai Karnphim, 2526), p. 86.

⁶⁶ Piyant Bunag, "An Analysis of Social Mobility in Thai Society during the Early Eatanakosin Period", Research Report Series No. 8. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1985), pp. 103-308.

kaw yort and the lak kak.⁶⁸ These ang yi secret societies sometimes had violent and fatal encounters causing disturbance of the peace.⁶⁹

The Post-Bowring Treaty Period

The Bowring Treaty of 1855 with England was the first of several similar treaties made with other countries. They gave rise to the production of goods for export, in particular rice, which provided a great deal of revenue for Thailand. The Thai economic system acquired the new features of producing goods for sale and a monetary system.⁷⁰ Following the signing of these trade agreements with various countries, merchant ships from industrialized capitalist countries in the West began arriving in Thailand in order to set up mercantile businesses and factories such as banks, rice mills, etc., firstly in Bangkok. At that time Thai leaders were in the process of changing the face of the city to make it more like that of Western civilized nations. Particular changes that were economically significant for the expansion of trade were the digging and improvement of canals⁷¹, the building

⁶⁸S. Sukhontharphirom, op.cit., p. 87.

⁶⁹For details see Suparat Lertphanichkul, Triad Societies in Thailand 1824-1910, M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2524).

⁷⁰Chatthip Nartsupha and Sathee Prasartset, "Rabop Setthakit Thai, 1851-1920, Wiwatanarkarn Thun Niyom Thai" (Bangkok: Academic Affairs Section, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University and Economics Study Group, Faculty of Economics, Thammasart University, 2523), p. 2.

⁷¹For details see Piyarat Bunnag, Duangporn Nophakhun and Suwathana Thardarniti, Op.cit., Chapters 2-3.

<u>Race</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Tae Chiu Chinese	78,091	8,207	86,298
Hokkien Chinese	19,823	2,367	22,190
Cantonese Chinese	25,978	4,151	30,129
Hainanese Chinese	12,165	903	13,068
Hakka Chinese	9,411	1,409	10,820
Other Chinese	15,337	9,624	18,961

Source: K.H.C., R.6, N.27/8, Rueang Yort Samanokhura (22 March-20 May, 2458)

With the mass immigration of the Chinese to Bangkok and the above mentioned conditions, the Chinese were bound to become engaged in a wide range of economic activities, which can be grouped into the following 3 categories:

1. Unskilled labor
2. Merchandising and trade
3. Compradores

1. Unskilled labor

This group of Chinese worked for foreign traders as stevedores, loading and unloading goods, as load bearers for the companies owned by Western traders, and at various steam and wind-powered rice mills. Later on, this group developed into the so-called "small capitalists" of Thai society.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ S. Sukhontharpirom, op.cit., p. 88.

They were located both within and outside the city wall and were run by Chinese.⁷⁷ They got rich fast.

The benefits of banks were recognized immediately. Not only were returns high but they facilitated trading and merchandising. When bank came to Thailand the Chinese responded without hesitation, especially those familiar with phoi kuan, the business of sending money from the Chinese in Thailand to their relatives in China. Most Chinese bankers were traders who had already realized profits. Between 1907 and 1933 there were 9 important Chinese banks, e.g. Iawyongheng Bank Ltd., Wanglican Bank Ltd., Sunli Bank, etc.⁷⁸

Various kinds of factories and mills were set up in the Bangkok area: ice plants, flavored syrup plants, weaving mills, ship yards, steam-powered saw mills, rice mills, ironworks, workshops with such specialists as goldsmiths, silversmiths, builders and carpenters, printing shops, electricity generating plants, match factories, cigarette factories, soap factories, tanneries, dye works, and saw mills. In particular, the number of rice mills expanded very swiftly in the rice-growing areas along the northern and eastern railway lines.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ratanawadee Ratanakomol, "Development and Roles of Commercial Banks in Thailand (1888-1945)" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2523), p. 55.

⁷⁹ James G. Ingram, Economic Changes in Thailand 1850-1970 (California: Stanford University Press, 1971), p. 170.

Over a period of time, the small-scale Chinese merchants who served as compradores distributing Western goods developed close relations with and won the trust of the Western traders. Eventually these small investors accumulated enough capital to become big businessmen themselves.

In summary, trade in Bangkok small scale and large-scale--was in the hands of the Chinese to the extent that it can be said they controlled the Thai economy. This powerful economic role came about not only because of favorable a Thai social structure and the favorable state of affairs in Thailand but also because of some special characteristics of the Chinese people themselves, namely,⁸²

1. Qualifications and skills in trading;
2. Education
3. Mutual assistance

1. Qualifications and skills in trading

A majority of the Chinese had an interest in trading and were industrious, persevering, patient and thrifty - all of which were very basic and important traits. Along with their skills in trading, these traits enabled the Chinese to raise their status very swiftly. One analysis has examined Chinese trading expertise in terms of 2 types of strategies: objective and subjective.⁸³

⁸² Poonket Chandhakanond, The History and the Expansion of Chinese trade in Bangkok Metropolis 1855-1932, (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2527, p. 60.

⁸³ Suphat Manangkhen, "Kolayut Karnkha Khorn Khon Cin," Khon Cin 200 Pi Phai Tai . . . , pp. 94-98 (for source see footnote 65).

would try to get to know and get close to these persons of power and influence, presenting them with gifts on various occasions. This strategy contributed significantly to the merchants' becoming wealthy and prosperous.

B. subjective strategies refers to strategies related to personnel and activities within the business establishment, consisting of 4 components:

a. treating employees as family members :- When the Chinese came to Thailand, at first they were dependent on their employers. Later on when they themselves built up business concerns with several employees they would usually provide them with housing on the premises of the establishment and also food, this practice being called kongai in Chinese. For example, within the compound of the old offices of the Wangli company in Dhonburi row houses were built for employees to live in. Besides receiving their salaries they were also given rice for their families. Providing workers with housing and food helped to create family-type relationships - with the employer as the family head-causing the workers to feel as if they were relatives. Thus, the Chinese employer-head of family visualized running his business as the way to provide for both his employees' families and his own.

b. preparing and training children for work :- Training children for work took two forms. In the case of a small business usually the father would first have his children work at other business establishments in order to gain knowledge and experience, after which they would return for further training in running the father's business as preparation for taking over the responsibility later on. In the case of a medium-size, prospering concern the father who was

The foregoing strategies used in carrying out their business and their traits of modesty and thrift enabled the Chinese to gradually build up their savings and investments from small ones to larger and larger ones.

2. Education

The arrival of more and more Western traders in Thailand following the signing of treaties with various Western nations lent a much more important role to the English language in trade contacts and negotiations. The Chinese realized its importance in facilitating both internal and external trading business and also its advantages for someone entering the new well-paying occupations such as compradores and clerks in Western firms. Experience from these new positions could be put to use later on in their own trading ventures.

Realizing the importance of English, the Chinese furthermore sought to provide an education for their children. Primary education could be obtained at missionary-operated schools such as Assumption, which offered a general curriculum with emphasis on foreign languages. Many assumption graduates were able to raise their social status and became leaders in government service and the business field.⁸⁴ Take for example Koson Hoontrakun, the son of Untui and Khaim, born at Talat Noi, Samphanthawong District, Bangkok, who finished the 8th grade at Assumption. After graduation he took over his father's business

⁸⁴Marnee Osatharom, Education in Thai Society 1868-1932, (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2524), p.27.

In brief, a Western education background, especially the acquisition of English, along with training in the family business and experience gained from working for Western firms either as a clerk or as a compradore, gave Chinese merchants a distinct advantage in setting up their own businesses and enabled them to meet with success.

3. Mutual assistance

When the early Chinese immigrants in Thailand had become financially secure and independent, they would often send word to their relatives and friends in China to persuade them to come to Thailand and make a new start. When these latter immigrants arrived they would receive aid and assistance from the early immigrants. They would all live together in groups and establish close ties.

The assistance received and the close ties that developed among the Chinese immigrants enabled later immigrants to set up businesses of their own very quickly. Take the case of Khuibun Sae Worng who was persuaded by Lim to come to Thailand. Lim found a job for Khuibun as a rice mill worker at Hua Lamphong. Afterwards, Khuibun was able to start his own business and became a well-to-do merchant.⁸⁶ Or take the case of Piraya Phison Sombat Boribun (Yim Tansakunsalayabut). When he had established a firm economic position in Thailand, he was able to persuade a relative, Theng Sae Law, a fellow Hokkien Chinese from Cianjiew to come to Thailand. Theng came, when he was only 15, and worked as a helper in Piraya Phison's business, and before long was able to set up his own business and serve as a semi-official tax

⁸⁶ Nai Khuibun Sae Worng, Amosorn Nai Ngarn Charpanakitsop Na'

War Somanat Wiharn, 20 August 2483.

printing shops, rice mills, pawn shops, rice marketing, shipping, bidding for the semi-official tax collector positions, and monopolizing the collection of opium and various kinds of gambling taxes.

At the same time others worked as coolies building railways, digging canals, as laborers at rice and saw mills. Still others were craftsmen and so on. In brief, the Chinese were equipped and willing to tackle any profitable job with patience and diligence, taking the hard with the easy, and were not easily discouraged by obstacles. Eventually, they secured their position in control of the Thai economy.

Besides the economic role of the Chinese they made social contributions by aiding the state through the provision of funds for the digging of canals and the construction of roads and bridges. Caw Sua Yin, or Phraya Phisomsombat, had Phasi Caroen Canal dug; Arkorn Yang had Techawanit Road built; Arkorn Teng, or Luang Udornpharmit, had Kim Seng Li Bridge built; etc.

However, the presence of the Chinese in Thailand did lead to some significant political problems, which began with the establishment of the ang yi secret societies. Conflicts of interest had developed among the Chinese themselves and posed a threat to civil peace, to the point that during the reign of King Rama V a patrol division was set up to watch over the Chinese and prevent them from committing acts of violence. The patrol division would send both covert and overt observers to watch over gatherings of Chinese, sometimes actually sitting in on their meetings.⁸⁹ In addition, Chinese newspapers from Swatow and

⁸⁹ K.H.C., R.6, N. 20/5, "Rai Ngarn Krarp Rian Senarlordi Kra-suang Naklorh Barn Gark Krom Korn, Trawon Phanack Gin, 10 June R.S.

In 1916 he sent emissaries to set up branches of the Tung Meng Hui Society in Thailand.⁹³ For instance, 1914 saw the founding of the Chinese Club of Bangkok, a business association of the Hakka Chinese in Bangkok, which served as a cover for underground operations. Later on revolutionary cells were set up within private business organizations at 2-3 locations in the provinces; a book and newspaper club was set up in southern Thailand. Thus the framework for Chinese nationalist societies in the provinces took shape.⁹⁴ In addition, in 1909 the first Chinese school had been established in Bangkok to serve as a means of instilling a sense of nationalism among the Chinese youth born in Thailand.

One Chinese leader in Thailand who played an important role in providing support for Dr. Sun-yat Sen's revolution was Hsiao Fo Cheng, or Hsiao Hut Seng Srilunruang. Not only did he lend financial support to Dr. Sun-yat Sen but he also published a Thai and a Chinese newspaper in Thailand for the purpose of disseminating the revolutionary ideas issuing from China. The Chinese version of this newspaper was called Hua Siam Sin Po (Hwa-hsin-jih-pao) and usually featured military and

⁹³Tung Meng Hui was a revolutionary society that opposed the rule of the Manchu Dynasty. Its members cooperated with several other groups, including that of Dr. Sun-yat Sen, in establishing the Kuomintang Party. (from Kanpirom Suwannaonda, *ibid.*, p. 82)

⁹⁴William Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History (New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 158.

This series of events all gave rise to a greater sense of consciousness to the motherland among the Chinese in Thailand. They developed an awareness of the greatness of China and pride in their Chinese nationality, especially the young, who had very strong nationalistic feelings and wanted to see China become greater and greater. The Chinese who wore their hair in queues cut them off; Kek Meng (Kuomintang) flags were displayed in Chinese houses, as were pictures of Dr. Sun-yat Sen, indicating faith in the revolutionary ideals taking hold in China. This period saw the clustering of Chinese into communities rather than being dispersed among Thais as previously and the Chinese kept apart from the Thais, particularly in urban areas, thus creating further discord.⁹⁷

One occasion when the Chinese actually created civil unrest was when, in June 1910, they staged a massive strike in Bangkok. This took place only 5 months before the ascension of Phrabart Somdet Phra Mongkut Klaw Caw Yu Hua (Rama VI) to the throne. The purpose of the strike was to protest the rise in the head tax, or phuk pi tax, from 1.50 baht per year to 6 baht.⁹⁸ The striking Chinese caused disorder for three days (1-3 June), the unrest finally being quelled by military force.

In the same year, at the start of King Rama VI's reign, rumors began to spread that sons of the Chinese were to be conscripted into military service, causing large numbers of young Chinese men to flee to China. Another rumor had it that at 5 years of age Chinese children

⁹⁷Yupharet Millikaen, op.cit., p. 111.

⁹⁸Phuangroi Klorn-Ueang, op.cit., p. 332.

Klaw Caw Yu Hua placed great importance on his policy of dealing with the Chinese problem in Thailand.¹⁰¹

In addition, during this period the Chinese in Bangkok also staged protests against American and Japanese goods. Such acts on the part of the Chinese caused many problems for Thailand. Be that as it may, throughout the period from 1855 to 1932 Thai state officials continually sought some means of compromise in dealing with problems caused by Chinese because they did not want any problem to grow and get out of control, thereby posing a threat to national stability and security.¹⁰² Furthermore, in almost every reign Thai state officials held to a policy of natural assimilation of the Chinese into Thai society through the marriage of Chinese men to Thai women.¹⁰³ Thus, later generations of Chinese

¹⁰¹Yupaporn Churchinda, "Sua Pa: Structure of Organization and Political Role" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 1985), p. 41. For more details see pp. 141-146.

¹⁰²See Ponket Phandhakanard, op.cit., pp. 90-98.

¹⁰³There were times when an anti-Chinese immigration policy was put into effect, namely, after World War I, a short period after World War II, and during the Prime Ministership of Field Marshall Por Phibulsongkram. See Thawi Thirawongseri, Satharnapharp Tharn Kotmai Khorng Chaw Cin Nai Prathet Thai (Krungthep: Pho Sam Ton Karnphim, 2517), pp. 19-77.

ability to adapt to the changing conditions of the Thai economy, and also the Thai policy to bring about Western-type improvements to the country. Since the majority of these improvements were concentrated on developing the capital city, Bangkok, trade and business expanded, leading in turn to widespread growth of Chinese communities in the newly developed areas.

In particular, new roads were built: in Rama IV's reign, Caroenkrung, Lamrung Mueang, Fueang Nakhorn, Trong; in Rama V's reign, 110 new streets and roads were built, particularly in the southern section of the city, from Phadung Krung Kasem Canal to the Bangrak area, the area within the city wall, and in Sampheng. Later, in the reigns of Rama VI and VII and up to 1932, most of the new streets were built in already established business areas in order to facilitate business and trade transactions. The building of streets during this latter period was an effort to interconnect the existing transportation routes, especially the roads and the Chao Phraya River.

With the new streets and roads came new buildings, row shops and markets in response to the establishing of permanent places of business by the Chinese who had saved up enough to rent row shops where they could sell their merchandise and services. One of the most wealthy row shop and market owners was Phra Khlang Kharn Thi, during the reign of Rama V.¹⁰⁵

The growth of business took place along both sides of the new roads that passed through community areas, causing environmental

¹⁰⁵ Sayomporn Tongsari, The Impact of the Building of Roads...

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for both political and economic reasons. Politically, during this period there was much in-fighting among the Chinese to seize power, especially in the southern provinces, resulting in a state of turmoil. The defeated had to seek refuge outside of China by the thousands, as did those members of the populace who wanted to flee from the political turmoil.³ Moreover, this political situation so adversely affected the economy that the people were unable to devote their full efforts to making a living. Faced also with bandits and natural disasters, throughout the land they suffered from famine and starvation.

The aforementioned political and economic situations in China were important factors that pressured many Chinese to emigrate in order to find a new place to make a living. Some of these Chinese immigrated to Thailand because it was a "land of plenty" that offered many opportunities to seek out a livelihood. The Chinese represented a source of first-rate labor; they were hard-working, industrious, persevering and gave their best efforts for the wages that they received.⁴

Subsequently, a "need" for the Chinese labor force in Thailand was created, beginning with the reign of Rama II, when the policy of conscripting commoners as corvee labor for various public works projects

³Ch'en Su-ching, China and Southeastern Asia (Chungking and New York: China Institute of Pacific Relations, 1945), p. 6; quoted in William G. Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 21; also see Louis Mitchison, The Overseas Chinese (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1961), p. 16.

⁴Mullica Ruangrapce, The Role of the Chinese in Thai Economy, Society and Art from Rama I to Rama IV (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, 2518), p. 68.

