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Chinese Cinema in Bangkok from 1950s to 1970s: Industry, Market and Network[1]

Kornphanat Tungkeunkunt*

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Abstract

This article provides a historical analysis of the Chinese cinema business in Bangkok during the 1950s-1970s. By examining the dynamics of the industry, market, and network, it offers a comprehensive picture of Thai film history that includes the role of foreign production studios. In particular, it focuses on the heyday of Chinese films in Bangkok during this time period, highlighting the crucial factors that contributed to their success.

The article reveals that most Chinese films in Bangkok were imported from Hong Kong, with some relying on co-productions with local Thai studios to gain greater access to the local cinema market. One noteworthy example is the Shaw Brothers studio, which managed to secure distribution networks and a loyal Thai audience. To conclude, it states the importance of industry, market, and network dynamics in shaping the success of Chinese cinema in Bangkok during the 1950s-the 1970s, and highlights the ways in which foreign production studios have contributed to the broader history of Thai film during this time period.

Keywords: Chinese cinema; Hong Kong cinema; Teochew-dialect cinema; Shaw Brothers; Thai film history; distribution network

Introduction

In 1937, Yang Wenying, a primary school principal from Shantou (in the Guangdong Province of China) published in Shanghai a small book entitled *Xianluo Zaji* (Notes on Siam)[2] after his return

from a short trip to Thailand. During his visit, he observed that cinema, along with Teochew opera, was one of the most important and popular forms of entertainment within the Chinese community of Bangkok. Yang noticed that in the early 1930s there were more than ten cinema theatres in Bangkok, some of which showed only Western films and others only Chinese ones. Yang (1937) concluded that "this was evidence that the cinema industry was well developed in Southeast Asia, even more so than in China" (p. 86). During the mid-20th century, cinema remained a popular form of entertainment in Bangkok, while Teochew opera gradually declined in popularity. In the late 1960s, it was estimated that over two thirds of the population in Bangkok attended motion picture shows at least once a week. Therefore, it can be said that cinema was a staple of everyday life in the city, including for the Chinese community—Thailand's largest minority (Blanchard, 1958).

As Yang remarked, Thailand's cinema industry was dominated by foreign productions, especially Western and Chinese ones, while Thai films accounted for only a small percentage (U.S. Information Service, 1963). Anulom Chanrungmaneekul (2018) notes that low growth and the inability to compete with Hollywood films in terms of audience success were persistent problems throughout the 120 years of existence of the Thai film industry. Ingawanij (2018) argues that Thai cinema's history was not only about Thai film production, but also about the cinematic practice in the country. Instead, it is important to consider how cinematic encounter and experience shape the narrative of Thai cinema's history. This means looking beyond the content of domestically produced films and instead exploring the broader context in which they were created, distributed, and consumed. According to Ingawanij, constructing a narrative that is central to the cinematic encounter and experience involves examining the ways in which films were made, marketed, and exhibited, as well as how audiences engaged with them. In this light, Chinese cinema industry played an important role in the history of Thai film. And yet, the topic of Chinese cinema in Thailand has been rarely explored, despite the growing academic interest in transnational Chinese cinema, especially in Southeast Asia (see Chung, 2007; Yung, 2008; Taylor, 2011; Zhang, 2021).

The present article situates Chinese cinema within the context of Thailand, centring on Bangkok during the 1950s–- the 1970s. It examines Chinese cinema business from a historical perspective, attempting to draw a broader picture of Thai film history that includes non-Thai spoken films and foreign production studios. The article is divided into three sections: the first provides an overview of the Chinese film industry in Thailand after 1949 to contextualize the considerable influx of Hong Kong productions; the second addresses the development of Chinese cinema for the Thai market, with a focus on Hong Kong's collaborations with local Thai studios; finally, the last section presents the case study of the Shaw Brothers studio and analyses how it achieved commercial success in Thailand by securing distribution networks.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the industry and cinema culture have undergone significant changes since the late 20th century, with the decline of both the Shaw Brothers and the cinema industry. This article is confined to the period of mid-20th century when the drastic changes have yet to begin.

The Chinese Film Industry in Thailand after 1949

Films from Mainland China

The establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 was a turning point in the relations between Thailand and China—or, as the Thai government of that time preferred to refer to as, communist China or Red China. Thailand sided with the US and, as a result, distanced itself from the PRC. This isolation was based on political and diplomatic factors rather than cultural aspects. At least until 1958, Thailand's cinema industry still welcomed a significant number of Chinese films from the PRC. Such films, popular among Chinese audiences in Thailand, came from well-known production studios in the PRC, such as *Changchun* and *Kunlun* (Li, 1965).[3] In other words, most Chinese films from the PRC, after being examined by the Thai Police department, were allowed to be screened in Thailand.

However, some Chinese films from the PRC were banned from Thai cinema theatres because of censorship. Some were not granted approval from the very beginning, while a few others were withdrawn from screening because of controversy after their release. As of September 1957, it was estimated that fifteen Chinese films from the PRC were approved, four were banned and three were still pending approval (NA MI, [1]mor.tor.3.1.4.24/4).

With the intensification of anti-communist feelings in the Thai government, Chinese films from the PRC began to be examined more seriously. A telegraph from 1957 from the Thai ambassador to Washington DC reported that the US government expressed concern about recent events in Thailand, such as a cultural group's visit to China (Ibid.), the emergence of anti-US sentiments, as well as the fact that communist propaganda films were too easily available to the public. The Republic of China (ROC) ambassador to Thailand also argued that the surge of Chinese communist films in Bangkok and of leftist propaganda in Thailand were part of a communist scheme to vie for support from the local Chinese community. The ambassador enclosed a list of thirty-one Chinese communist films shown in Bangkok since August 1957 (Ibid.). These films included Changchun studio's *Slapping of the Princess, Liu Chiao-erh*; *Changcheng's The Exhilarant Songs and Dances, The Miraculous Brush*; and Kunkun's *The Roaming Adventure of Sanmao*.[4]

In October 1958, the Thai government announced a ban on the import to Thailand of all films and publications originating from communist China (NA MI, [1]mor.tor.3.1.4.24/6). It is unclear why this official ban began only in 1958 and not earlier, in 1949. One possible explanation is that in 1958 Thailand was being ruled by the military and that, under increasing pressure to seek international support, it intensified its anti-communist policies to show that it would lean to the side of the U.S. Nevertheless, this decision provided a great opportunity for more Hong Kong-produced Chinese films to be imported into the Thai market, especially in Bangkok.

The Growth of Hong Kong Cinema

Teo (2009) notes that the development of cinema in Hong Kong cannot be dissociated from the one in mainland China, especially after the Chinese civil war of 1946–49 boosted the migration of Chinese filmmakers from Shanghai to Hong Kong. Moreover, the size and location of Hong Kong had a deep impact on its film industry from the very beginning (Chi, 2012): Hong Kong is so small in both geographic and demographic terms that its films were exclusively export-oriented to overseas markets, especially Chinese-speaking communities. As a British colony situated on the southeast coast of China, it was a gateway of Asia's international trade. The maturity of its cinematic production and circulation attracted the investment of Chinese filmmakers, including the production of films in dialect targeted at specific speech groups.

The emergence of the Hong Kong film industry in Bangkok is important with respect to the advent of Teochew-dialect cinema (*Chaoyu Pian*) during the 1950s. As nationals from Teochew-speaking areas of southern China were the predominant ethnic Chinese group in Bangkok (Skinner, 1957), one may assume that the Teochew dialect was, to some extent, the lingua franca of the Chinese community in the city. To meet the high demand for Teochew-dialect cinema, the Chinese in Bangkok would invest in Teochew-dialect filmmaking in Hong Kong, where the film industry was already thriving and mature. In 1955, a group of Teochew businessmen established Tuojiang Film Company to produce Teochew-dialect films (*Hong Kong Filmography Vol.4*, 2003; Ng, 2013). The production being unexpensive and highly profitable, it was suitable for studios and distributors that had limited capital. This encouraged Chinese businessmen from Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand to import Teochew-dialect films from Hong Kong and sell them on the Southeast Asian market (*Sin Sian Yit Pao*, 1959, December 6).

What was perhaps paradoxical about Teochew-dialect cinema production in Hong Kong was that it did not circulate in Hong Kong, where Teochew was not a lingua franca, but was targeted at Teochew-speaking Chinese communities overseas. It was ironically regarded as "Hong Kong cinema that had never been screened in Hong Kong," and was available only in Southeast Asia, mainly in Thailand and Singapore (*Hong Kong Filmography Vol.4*, 2003). Instances of Teochew-dialect cinema[5] include *The Story of Wang Jinlong* (19 September 1955), starring Xia Fan, a famous actress of Teochew cinema; *The Return of Shi Pinggui Part I* (4 January 1957); *The Return of Shi Pinggui Part II* (14 March 1957); *The Tragic Story of Zhao Niang* (17 May 1957); and *He Wenxiu Meets His Wife in the Nunnery* (3 August 1959), also starring Xia Fan. These films were reportedly very popular among Chinese audiences in Thailand, where Xia Fan toured and gave singing performances to promote the films in which she starred.

Despite its success in the previous decade, in the 1960s Teochew-dialect cinema began to decline. With the rapid change and expansion of modern cinema, its low-budget productions seemed rough and unsophisticated (Wittayakon Publishing House, 1966). Thus, the popularity of Teochew-

dialect cinema' gradually declined with the rise of modern Chinese productions by the major film studios of Hong Kong, which will be discussed in the next section.

Opening Access to the Market: Collaboration with Local Studios

The reasons why the Hong Kong film industry had such a wide access to the international market lie in a combination of political and business factors. According to Teo (2009), Shanghai filmmakers who migrated to Hong Kong were aligned according to the same the left-right divide that prevailed on the mainland. While left-wing studios began to make films along their ideological lines, they were outshined by the sudden rise of right-wing studios aligned with anti-communist ideology, and became less prominent during the second half of the 1950s (Teo, 2009). In the same period, right-wing studios such as Shaw Brothers and Motion Picture and General Investment (MP&GI)[6] became a dominant force of the Hong Kong and Southeast-Asian film industry. This transformation reflected the fact that the Hong Kong film industry was moving in the direction of a more conventional, refined, and glamorous production that would not risk political censorship in the new markets (Teo, 2009).

Academics have long paid attention to Shaw Brothers, one of Hong Kong's most representative studios (Fu, 2008). Chung (2007) demonstrates that Shaw Brothers films were tailored to the political censorship policies of different markets, producing for instance "milder" versions to pass the strict censorship of Southeast Asia. Davis (2011), on the other hand, argues that existing historical accounts tend to overstate the studio's diasporic qualities, especially compared to other firms. Nevertheless, Zhang (2021) notes that anti-communist alignment is the reason for the right-wing affinity between Hong Kong and Bangkok: in Thailand, the development of the Shaw Brothers' business and film production was not dissociated from the political line, which complied with the Thai government's anti-communist policy (Rong, 2009).[7] In an effort to enter and entertain the Thai market, Hong Kong studios began a process of adaptation and collaboration with Bangkok's elite, leading to a variety of co-productions during the 1950s and 1970s.

Hong Kong-Thai Co-Production

Hong Kong's co-productions with Bangkok go back as far as the 1930s. As early as December 1933, the Cantonese film *Love Redeemed* was claimed to have been produced by the United Film Production Company of Bangkok, although it is uncertain whether the film was a Hong Kong-Thailand co-production or a Hong Kong-China co-production shot in Thailand (Kar & Bren, 2004). In the 1960s–70s, the practice of co-operation and collaboration between Hong Kong and Thai studios became more common. When Taiwan announced new currency controls in 1955, it drastically limited the funding of Hong Kong films. As a result of this currency reform, Hong Kong's Mandarin cinema went into crisis, independent production shrank, and filmmakers despaired. The

only resource was to open up to co-productions in the Philippines, Korea, and Thailand—a favoured destination for film industry professionals seeking work outside Hong Kong. In addition to the large and promising market of its Chinese community, Thailand could boast a bustling film industry and its government was eager to assist foreign filmmakers in nurturing local film production. This cooperation was particularly evident in the co-productions between the Thai company Aswin Pictures and the Hong Kong production studios.

Aswin Pictures was established by His Royal Highness Prince Bhanubandhu Yugala, a prominent producer and director and a half-cousin of His Majesty King Bhumibol of Thailand. It was not unusual for a member of the royal elite to become involved with Thai filmmaking. As early as in the 19th century, the advent of cinema in Thailand was initiated by a small number of commercially-oriented playhouses established by Thai elites. Members of the royal elite, therefore, have historically played a significant role in the creation of the local film industry and, at various points, were actively involved in the running of the cinema business (Barmé, 2002).

In December 1961, Aswin Pictures of Thailand co-produced with China United Film Company of Hong Kong the Thai-language film *The Boat House* (*Ruen Phae* in Thai), directed by H.R.H Prince Bhanubandhu (*Hong Kong Filmography Vol.5*, 2005). The story of *The Boat House* is dramatic, universal, and apolitical: three best friends, Chen (So Asanachinda), Kaew (Chaiya Suriyan), and Rin (Chin Feng) fall in love with the same girl, Phen (Maria Chang or Ye Kwong). They live together in a boat house rented from Phen's father. As the three friends grow up and find their way in life, Chen graduates with honours and becomes a police officer, while Rin becomes a singer and Kaew a boxer. Phen's father intends for Phen to marry Chen, but she is in love with Kaew and, on a stormy night, she gives herself to him. Unfortunately, the twists and turns of life force Phen to marry another wealthy man. The best friends meet again when Chen, a newly appointed police officer, is ordered to arrest Kaew, whose fellow bandit has killed their best friend Rin.

The movie was released to great critical success in the local newspapers. Film reviews praising *The Boat House* were also published in *Sin Sian Yit Pao* (1962, January 19), a popular Chinese paper in Bangkok. At the fifth Golden Doll awards[8] of Thailand, in 1962, *The Boat House* won five awards, including best picture, best actor, and best supporting actor. *The Boat House* became a landmark of Thai cinema and was remade several times both as a movie and as a TV series. Furthermore, the eponymous theme song, sung by the character Rin became a classic in the interpretation of legendary Thai artist Charin Nanthanakorn.

The success of *The Boat House* boosted Aswin Pictures's confidence in cooperating with Hong Kong production studios. A few years later, in 1964, Aswin Pictures co-produced a new film with Shaw Brothers, titled *The Crocodile River* in the Chinese version and *Champoon* in Thai. The two versions of the film were different in terms of both narratives and casting. In the Thai version *Champoon*, the lead character was played by Thai actor Maen Thiraphon, while the lead actress

was Shaw star Julie Shih Yen. In the Chinese version, all of the characters were played by Shaw stars such as Paul Chang Chong, Liu Liang-hua, and Li Ting. The cast was chosen by H.R.H Prince Bhanubandhu, who directed the Thai version, and Lo Wei from Shaw Brothers studio, who directed the Chinese version respectively (*Sin Sian Yit Pao*, 1963, October 19).

The story of *Champoon* was adapted from the short novel by Thep Mahapaoraya, a prominent modern Thai writer. The tragic story begins when Champoon, a girl from a Chinese family in southern Thailand, falls in love with Amnoey, a Thai man from Bangkok. Champoon's father dislikes Amnoey because he is Thai. Although Champoon insists that she has never been intimate with Amnoey, her father does not believe her and ties her up with an iron chain on the second floor of their house. Worse, her stepmother takes away her clothes and leaves her naked, so that she cannot run away. Champoon finally manages to escape and run to Amnoey. However, when she arrives to his house, she sees him making love to a Filipino girl. Heartbroken, Champoon turns away from Amnoey and eventually ends her life, walking into the river to be swallowed by crocodiles.

Hong Kong film magnate Run Run Shaw, head of Shaw Brothers, flew to Bangkok for the gala premiere of the Thai version at the Chalermket Theatre in Bangkok on 18 August 1964. Their Majesties King Bhumipol and Queen Sirikit attended the performance, a joint production of Shaw studio's and Thailand's Aswin Pictures, starring Julie Shih Yen (*Southern Screen* 78, 1964). *Southern Screen*, a movie magazine published by Shaw Brothers to promote the company's projects, reported that Shaw star Julie Shih Yen was thrilled that the Thai king and queen had come to watch the production and had congratulated her on her performance (*Southern Screen* 80, 1964).

Run Run Shaw was invited for an audience His Majesty the King Bhumipol the next day and had a cordial talk about the cinema industry. His Majesty greatly enjoyed *The Crocodile River* and expressed hope that co-operation between the Hong Kong and Thai movie industries would be strengthened (*Southern Screen* 78, 1964). The audience with the king was made possible by H.R.H Prince Bhanubandhu, whom the king respected and who was in good terms with Run Run Shaw and Shaw Brothers distributors in Bangkok (Rong, 2009).

Featuring Stars

The collaboration between Thailand and Hong Kong has led to many other co-productions since the mid-1950s. Several Thai stars featured in Hong Kong films to attract local Thai audiences. For instance, Mit Chaibancha and Petchara Chaowarat, the golden couple of the Thai film history, starred in the Thai version of the martial arts film, *Flyer and Magic Sword* (1971), and played with Chinese leading actress Fan Lin in the Chinese version. Thai actress Phanawa Chanachit, or Wang Ping,[9] also known as "the pearl of Asia", was frequently cast in Hong Kong films such as *Duel of Fists* (*Quan ji*, 1971), where she appeared alongside Shaw star David Chiang. Concurrently, Thai filmmakers sought to internationalise their films by including foreign movie stars into Thai films:

Hong Kong stars began touring Thailand for live appearances and filming, such as Ku Mi in 'Iron Fist' (*Mat lek* in Thai) and Yu Chien in *The Treasure of the River Kwai* (*Sombat maenam kwae* in Thai) (Liu, 2004). Some Thai film critics noted that Hong Kong actresses were good in action films and to some extent willing to feature in sensuous settings (Liu, 2004). Hence Hong Kong female stars featuring in Thai films were popular with Thai audiences.

Securing Distribution Networks

The rise of Chinese cinema from Hong Kong in the Thai audience market peaked with the Shaw Brothers studio, whose business success was largely due to its excellent networks in terms of both distribution and promotion. While visiting the Shaw Brothers studio in Hong Kong in 1976, the influential Thai literary and cultural figure Rong Wongsawan (2009) interviewed Run Run Shaw about his business model. Rong noted that the studio's prominence in the Hong Kong entertainment industry was the fact that 141 cinema theatres were contracted to play only Shaw-distributed films, while other studios would have only around one hundred contracted cinemas (Ibid.). Securing the cinema theatre market through distribution and promotion networks was also crucial to the dominant status of Shaw Brothers in the Thai market.

Contract System and Distribution Networks in the Movie Market

As an important film market in Southeast Asia during the 1950s-the 1970s, Bangkok attracted film distributors from all over the world (including America, India, China, and Japan) who wished to expand their distribution networks and cinema lines in Bangkok, where each cinema theatre independently screened its own genre. Moreover, the Yaowarat area, known as the hub of the Chinese community in Thailand, had many standalone cinema theatres. In the late 1950s, *Sriyaowarat* was the main venue for Teochew-dialect cinema in Bangkok, while *Chalermburi* and *Chalermlakhon* mainly showed Mandarin films and was doing so even in the earlier 1950s, when Western films seemed to dominate the Thai market. Texas was the cinema for Indian films, and *Capital* (or Tokyo) for Japanese ones. Nevertheless, Western films remained the most popular, with good records of box office success, and were shown in many cinemas in the area nearby Yaowarat such as *King*, *Sinfa*, *Chalermkhet*, and *Grand* (Shanren, 1965).

However, the situation of film distribution in Bangkok began to change in the 1960s, when a new system was implemented. When a film distributor signed up with a production studio and a cinema, the film would be released in first-run cinemas, second-run cinemas, and then third-run cinemas respectively (Sin Sian Yit Pao, 1961, January 22). The implementation of this new distribution system led to intense competition among cinema lines to secure filming rights (*Sin Sian Yit Pao*, 1969, July 24).

The new distribution system also enabled the rise of Chinese cinema when *Juntun* pictures signed up with Shaw Brothers in 1964 to develop the Chinese cinema market in Thailand. Shaw Brothers was then entering a new era of colour films and aspired to access the global market to counter rapidly increasing production costs (Song, 1969).

At first it was very risky for Juntun Pictures to distribute Hong Kong-produced films because Western films were dominating the market in Thailand and colour film made Shaw's productions quite costly. However, the venture was also a rewarding one, in that the import of Shaw's films helped Juntun Pictures establish and expand its cinema lines. In the late 1960s, Juntun Pictures' distribution system included a cinema line consisting of *New Odeon* (a major cinema), *Thiankuothian, Krungkasem, Broadway, Chalermrat, Jinghua*, and *Sinfa*, which made Juntun Pictures the largest distributor of Hong Kong's Mandarin cinema in Thailand. The second distributor was Yaowarat Pictures, whose cinema line included *Sriyaowarat and Sriratchawong*, which mainly distributed Cathay's productions. The third distributor was Siam Rama Pictures: first it cooperated with Juntun Pictures to show Shaw's films, then it shifted to Yaowarat Pictures to show Cathay's films, and finally operated independently. Yaowarat Pictures put an advertisement in magazines Hong Kong to call for cooperation with Chinese production and distribution (Qingyu, 1969). When Chinese cinema was hugely popular in Thailand, *Capital,* a studio that showed Japanese films and Queen Indian films, also expanded its distribution to Chinese films.

Among these cinema theatres, *New Odeon* was the domain of the Shaw Brothers in Bangkok and the sole agent of *Southern Screen*, a monthly English-Chinese magazine published by the Shaw Brothers from 1957 to the mid-1980s to share upcoming films, movie star profiles, gossip, and news originating from the Shaw Brothers studio with fans around the world. From volume 153 (November 1970) to volume 192 (February 1974), *Southern Screen* was also published in Thai— a calculated move to expand its market in Bangkok to a non-Chinese audience. This strategic attempt to achieve what Yung (2008) calls "thinking and going global, acting and selling local" enabled Shaw films to stand out in the local market.

In financial terms, Shaw's Mandarin films were consistently successful. For example, *Madam White Snake* grossed a record 800,000 baht within just a couple of months (Shanren, 1965); *The Love Eternal*, also known as *Liang-Zhu*, made more than 700,000 baht; *General Hua Mulan* made 1,000,000 baht; and *The Shepherd Girl* more than 1,200,000 baht . Shaw's martial arts films soon achieved unprecedented box office success, with films such as *One Armed Swordsman*, *The Golden Swallow, Killer Darts, Dragon Inn*, and *The Golden Sword* (Qingyu, 1969). By the late 1970s, the genre had not lost its popularity in Bangkok, and a number of Shaw's martial arts films earned millions upon their release: these include *The Brave Archer*, exceeding 3 million baht; *Clans of Intrigue; Killer Clans; Executioners from Shaolin; The Jade Tiger*; and *The New Shaolin Boxers*, each of them grossing 2 million baht (Lin, 1978). Even in the post-Shaw Brothers era, Bruce Lee's

films continued to have a significant impact on the cinema industry across Southeast Asia including Bangkok (Teo, 2009).

However, the rise of Chinese cinema, along with Hollywood films, is said to have contributed to the downfall of the Thai film industry. According to Aunalom Chanrungmaneekul (2018), as Chinese films became increasingly popular in Thailand from the mid 1960s, some cinema theatres in Bangkok chose to screen Chinese films instead of Thai ones. Even in the countryside, distribution agents of Chinese films opted for cinema theatres, in addition to outdoor movie, weakening the visibility of Thai films (Ibid.). If this could be explained as the result of a demand-supply imbalance in the Thai audience market, it also emphasized the important role of the distribution networks that had long dominated cinema theatres. Indeed, distribution networks and cinema theatres play a crucial role in choosing the films we see in cinemas today.

Conclusion

This article has provided a historical analysis of the Chinese cinema business in Bangkok during the 1950s-the 1970s through an examination of the industry, market, and network dynamics. In terms of industry, it has been demonstrated that Hong Kong production studios were the primary source of Chinese films imported into Thailand during this period, with the Shaw Brothers studio emerging as a dominant force in the industry. In terms of market, co-productions with local Thai studios were also an important strategy for reaching local audiences. Also, in terms of network, the Shaw Brothers' ability to sign up with a large number of cinema theatres for exclusive distribution of their productions helped to solidify their position in the market. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the complex interplay between industry, market, and network dynamics in shaping the heyday of Chinese films in Bangkok from 1950s to 1970s. While this analysis is limited to the period between the 1950s and1970s, it provides a valuable foundation for future research into the evolving dynamics of the Chinese cinema business in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

* Kornphanat Tungkeunkunt is Assistant Professor in History, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University. Email: kornphanat@gmail.com.

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Notes

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2 Thailand was known as Siam until June 23, 1939, when it was officially named as Thailand. It was called Siam again from 1945 until 11 May 1949 and has been renamed Thailand until the present.

3 In 1947, A Spring River Flows East, a film from the Shanghai's Kunlun Studio, stormed the box office in Bangkok.

4 Unless otherwise stated, the article maintains all names and their spellings used in original documents. Chinese and Thai names transliterated by the author are italicised.

5 The names are translated to English by the author.

6 MP&GI (Motion Picture and General Investment), Shaw Brother's primary competitor, was reconstructed and re-named "Cathay" (Guotai) in 1965 after the death of its founder— Loke Wan-tho —in a plane crash in 1964.

7 Rong Wongsawanveteran, a veteran Thai journalist, used to work on advertising the Chinese films for the New Odeon, a principal distributor of Shaw's productions.

8 The Golden Doll Award was also known as Phra Suratsawadi, one of the most prestigious awards in Thai film circles.

9 Phanawa was from a Chinese family in Bangkok and was able to communicate in Chinese, thus making a career in Hong Kong's film industry possible.