

The Changing World of the Executive in the Thai Management Environment

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1. Introduction

Thailand is in the course of changing from an agricultural to a newly industrialized country. This implies a change in Thai society, that is from the style of an agriculturally-based to that of a new industrially-based society. What it is felt should be considered here is this concept of change since, on looking at the social structure, it is this change in the style of working life, traditional agricultural to industrial, or technologically-based agricultural, that is seen to be significant.

Before discussing the changing world of the executive in Thailand, we should first consider Thai social structure. In recent times, several social scientists, both Thai and foreign, have used the phrase "a loosely-structured social system" to describe Thai society - in comparison with that of Japan, which is regarded as a "tightly-structured" social system (Embree, 1950: 181-193). When looking at the present-day social system, we find that Thailand continues to maintain its loosely-structured style quite well. Current changes in Thai society are in working life; the patterns of relationships between individual and individual, individual and group, and group and group, appear much the same as before.

The problems facing the executive in Thailand can be seen in the light of the need to adjust to this changing pattern of working life, while continuing to accept Thailand's traditionally loosely-structured social system. The more globalization has come to influence Thai culture, the more has the pattern of Thai life tended to change from its own traditional style towards adopting and adapting this more "globalized" pattern. This of course directly affects the style of working life.

In the past, Thai families have been of the extended, rather than the nuclear, type. But by now, in urban areas, the average number of family members has been reduced to five. A Thai of working age will often leave the rural parental home to rent his or her

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room or house in an urban or industrial location. The pattern of eating has changed from that of preparing and cooking one's own food to that of buying ready-prepared meals at the minimart or supermarket. Some of the new nuclear households in large cities such as Bangkok do not even have their own kitchens. The husband will take his breakfast and lunch at the office canteen, and his dinner at the foodshop en route for home - while his wife does much the same.

It has been widely said that to develop society is to develop people and to develop people is to develop their minds. "People" here we may think of as family members - where the family is the smallest unit within the societal system. If this unit, the family, changes the change will certainly affect other subsystems in the overall system - including the world of the executive, the management organization. Many academics have criticised the "loosely-structured" system of Thai society - and, the more globalization has evolved, the more apt this criticism has seemed to be.

If we hope to develop our society to be successfully geared into the business environment, we must give some attention to the overall social structure. Without careful thought we may only gain one benefit to lose another - while we succeed in business we will be losing valuable traditions that have been preserved to us from our ancestors. We may for instance recall that in the past we had far fewer of the many environmental problems we face at present. Many recent conferences and seminars have discussed the environment, especially around the theme of "environment vs. development." The question is: how can we maintain a good environment while developing our society? It will be a poor policy to achieve economic prosperity while failing to preserve the environment. This is one lesson from the past that we should learn so that we may not have to repeat it again.

To return to the business executive in Thailand: nowadays, as compared with the past, the Thai executive must be a more and more active person - because business information and communications technology is moving fast. A business person who does not adapt to this new information technology will be left behind. At the same time executives are faced with the need to learn new ideas in management from abroad - while yet not losing their own individuality. We can learn lessons, for instance, from Japan, and adopt and adapt Western technology, while still preserving and maintaining our own qualities of mind and spirit, our own intellectual traditions. To accept every influence, while retaining nothing we can regard as our own, is to become an intellectual colony. What pride could we then take in ourselves?

2. Thai Social Structure as Influencing the Executive in Thailand

Many academics, both Thai and foreign - historians, economists, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists - have studied Thai society and have adopted various models to analyse this society: economic, limited evolutionary, historically oriented, structural and personality psychological models among them. Among these, the structural model will be chosen for discussion, resorting to others only as necessary.

John F. Embree was an American anthropologist who came to Thailand after experience in Japan and Vietnam. He concluded that Thai society, which he characterized as a "loosely structured social system," differed, in incorporating many distinct modes of behaviour, from those of Japan and Vietnam, which he regards as "closely structured." Embree's work, which appeared as "Thailand: A Loosely Structured Social System," in *American Anthropologist* (1950) was later widely criticised among sociologists and anthropologists, especially by Hans-Dieter Evers (1969) in "Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand in Comparative Perspective."

Embree, in describing Thai society as "loosely structured" intended to point out that it is a society that accepts the right of individual members to make decisions - that there is not only one decision possible. Otherwise put, Thai society is a culture in which considerable variation in individual behaviour is sanctioned. On the contrary, Japanese society, as a "closely structured social system," expects the behaviour of members to adhere to strict social regulations, from which it is difficult for an individual to deviate. Roles, status and rules of behaviour among individuals towards one another have been clearly prescribed and all are expected to abide by them.

Embree sees this loosely structured character to society as closely related to "individualism." He writes that the first cultural trait that visitors are likely to observe is that Thais lack continuity and discipline and do not like to work in a team. If, as compared with the Japanese, they lack discipline, as compared with Americans Thais do not respect the principles of management, and do not show the awareness of time of an industrial society.

Nonetheless, Embree concluded that both loosely structured and closely structured societies have values which are able to maintain the system. Thai society can adjust itself to outside circumstances more effectively than can the Japanese and Vietnamese. Embree further explained that a loosely structured society like that of Thailand is not a weakly integrated society, but rather a society that has flexibility.

In relation to the Thai social structure, we may now consider features and characteristics of the executive's behaviour towards other members of an organization. By "features" we will mean manifest aspects of behaviour, those expressed overtly towards the person contacted; by "characteristics" we will mean attitudes that, though present, the individual does not wish to express openly. In this sense, the office girl's smile directed at a customer is a "feature" - the intent to give efficient service, if present, is a "characteristic."

Significant features of Thai - as opposed to American and Japanese - economic behaviour, which can be related to the historic domination of Theravada Buddhist and Brahmanistic culture, can be set out as follows:

1. Independence and freedom. Thais do not wish to be under the control of others - in fact they dislike any kind of strict control. They resent domination and interference by others, whether in the details of their work or their personal lives. This love of independence can make Thais neglectful of their duties. The individual tends to regard himself as of first importance - which can result in difficulties for coordination and work within a group.

2. Individualism. This is a value derived from the influence of Theravada Buddhism, which emphasizes the individual's responsibility for his or her own karma: one must rely on oneself - not on others. In the Buddhist view all are equal. In Thai families, parents are not particularly strict with children - from the beginning there should be the minimal interference with the individual. A Thai proverb says "Their house is theirs - this house is ours." That's their business - it's nothing to do with us! In relationships with other people, the principle is "krengchai," which can be said to mean: you can't make someone do what they don't want to do, and you shouldn't try.

3. Satisfaction with whatever is one's own. Thais do not try to be like others. They believe that success depends on one's karma. It is equally possible to all to be happy, even if one is poor. One can be satisfied with whatever one has. Indeed it is better to be so than to be too ambitious - ambition can lead to striving and suffering. Moreover, one has to humiliate oneself in order to ask others for help. This would not accord with the Thai character. The Thai view that one can be satisfied with what one has is an optimistic one.

4. The search for happiness in the present life. Thais see the world as beautiful and look for happiness in this life - in contrast to a Western view which often sees life as a conflict between basic needs (the "id") and morality and responsibility (the "superego"). Thais do not feel such misgivings over allowing themselves to seek happiness - it is

human nature to do so. It is a view that makes for mental health - Thais are not too serious and tend to live a relaxed life. However, this may seem to cause problems for a government that wants people to maintain discipline and self-control, and to be economical in order to save capital for national development.

5. Respect for the powerful. Thais tend to be deferential and respectful towards those with much authority. In personal relationships there are rituals which reflect the greater or lesser difference in status between individuals. Certain pronouns, rather than personal names, are used when addressing older or more authoritative persons, and it is important for the individual of lesser status to know the rules. In Thai society, it is usual for a person of higher status to be addressed as "father", "mother", "uncle", or "aunt". Especially in rural society the older person is referred to by the younger as "phi" (elder brother or sister), "aa" or "naa" (younger uncle or aunt), "lung" or "pa" (elder uncle or aunt), "pho" or "mae" (father or mother), "taa" or "yay" (maternal grandparent), "puu" or "yaa" (paternal grandparent) - the term reflecting the relationship of seniority, rather than of blood as in a Western society.

6. A fondness for showing off. This reflects a certain pride and self confidence. Thais do not allow others to look down upon them. The individual is a human being, equal to others - their rights are his rights. This feeling is expressed in a tendency to show off and remind others of one's importance. Thais like uniforms, official rank, authority and praise, will present themselves as educated persons, take care to dress smartly and delight in such status symbols as expensive cars.

7. Politeness, helpfulness, broad-mindedness and sympathy. Thais would prefer to be friendly with everyone. The real sincerity with which strangers are welcomed is well known. Sincerity and mutual help are valued, rather than taking advantage of others - rather compassion for the disadvantaged. Anger is short - prolonged feuds are unusual.

Some technocratic commentators have characterized the Thais as having "independence and freedom," and their society as having "hierarchical structure" in which one respects one's elders and accepts their authority. Thais are said to be self-assertive, not concerned with or relying on social institutions (Wongsrirat, 1985: 307334). Another writer states of Thai cultural values, that Thai society lauds prosperity, power, seniority, sportsmanship, generosity, broadmindedness, gratitude, academic achievement and deference (Kruekaew, 1975: 69-79).

Thai cultural values have in fact been said (Smakkam, 1988: 32-59; Opler, 1946: 199-206) to exemplify three dominant themes: (1) personalism, (2) love of fun, and (3) accumulation of merit.

As far as management is concerned, it can be expected that national culture will inform

the way in which individuals or groups of executives will work. The manager will bring to his or her work unconscious assumptions and theories about employee behaviour that have been culturally conditioned. Beck (1990) suggests that, in order to cope with the increasingly complex, fast moving and internationalized business of today, it is necessary for managers to become consciously aware and critical of these subconscious assumptions and models, which otherwise can lead to errors of judgement. Beck proposes a simple exercise that helps to bring these assumptions to light. Sutton (1962: 28) characterized the influence of culture on Thai administrative behaviour as reflecting Buddhist ethics and a monarchical ideology. Government officials work sluggishly and yield to higher authority. The relationship between superordinates and subordinates is a vertical, top-down one. Officials may seem to have no initiative or creative ability. The system seems self-perpetuating, change goes slowly or only on the initiative of a superior (Sutton, 1962: 30).

This kind of view of the negative effect of culture on Thai management behaviour is widely accepted by those Western academics who have made comparative administrative studies, such as Fred Riggs (1964), Joseph Sutton (1962), James Mosel (1957) and William Siffin (1957).

4. The Influence and Role of Thai Cultural Patterns among Executives in Thailand

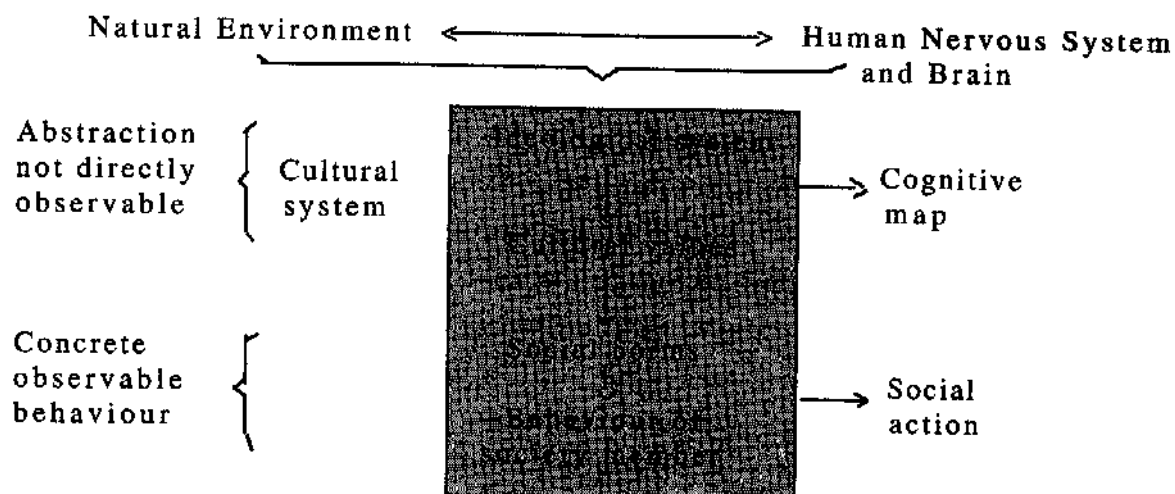
When considering the influence of cultural patterns rooted in Thai society on the management style of executives in Thailand, we may cite two characteristics of behaviour of individuals in relation to one another: (1) the influence of culture on decision-making in management and (2) the influence of culture on the Thai management system.

(1) The Influence of Culture on Decision-making Behaviour in Management

In analysing the influence of culture on behaviour, and taking the individual as the starting point for analysis, we will first observe that each society will have a system of thought or ideology, a philosophy and world view, and a process of communication or transfer of thought or knowledge. These cannot be observed directly. They seem to be an abstraction from the brain processes of each individual. They are acquired by learning, especially socialization or enculturation. Learning as such creates a conceptual framework, a world view and ideology for the members of that society. These form a pattern of life for people within a particular culture. Sociologists and anthropologists have viewed

this philosophy or ideology as a “cognitive map.” All human cognition results from the various stages in the individual’s learning and experience. The relationships between ideology, cultural values, social norms and behaviour of members of a society can be set out in a chart as follows (Smakkam, 1988: 35-38).

Chart 1: Influence of Culture on Individual Behaviour



The above chart can be related to the individual human being in society. Each will receive, by enculturation or socialization, cultural influences which formalize as ideology, cultural values and norms. These are not observed directly, but affect the behaviour of each member of the society in ways which can be seen. Behaviour is learnt which will be at the foundation of managerial decision-making within the Thai, or other, organization.

Decision-making is a major duty of the executive or superordinate at every level. Its study is concerned both with behaviour and technique and is hence broadly-based, comprising many levels: individual, group, organization and society. “Corporate” or “administrative” decision-making takes place at the levels of policy-making, management and individual decision (Changrien, 1977: 98-100). Simon made a logical analysis of administrative decision-making behaviour in his book “Administrative Behaviour” in 1950. He regarded human action and work as arising from decision-making. What action to take is selected from existing alternatives - usually the individual will select the best and most rational course of action. Later, in 1957, Simon modified his concept

of decision-making behaviour. The individual is now presented with facts and values. There is a limit to how far facts can be searched, and the alternatives are limitless. The human decision is the decision that gives satisfaction - the "rational" decision of Simon's earlier book is impossible!

In reality, there is no perfect, rational, human decision-making behaviour. Therefore, in reaching a decision, apart from the economic aspect which relies on evaluable facts and data, the major factor influencing the quantity and quality of data is culture. Every member of an organization, at every level, is unknowingly the recipient of outside influences which become criteria for decision-making within the organization. His life is still mainly outside the organization, and these influences are cultural - their influence on his decisions will be large. If the framework of organizational rules and discipline comes into conflict with culture, it is the rules and discipline which the decision-maker will try to bend as far as possible - the organizational criteria will no longer coincide with actual practice.

Hodgetts and Luthans (1990), defining culture as "acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to direct social behaviour," suggest the following principal dimensions along which national cultures vary: (a) The way people perceive themselves and their condition; (b) the country's approach to managing its economy; (c) the relative stress on individualism as against collective behaviour; (d) the degree of acceptance of unequal distribution of power as against equality; and (e) the ability to accept ambiguity and uncertainty. These factors will influence a manager's ability to motivate personnel and leadership style. The authors point out that human resource managers will need to be aware of these differences if they are to be effective in an international era.

If we look at Thai society we will find how cultural influences limit and influence management decisions. We see an executive preference for avoiding uncertainty. Executives dare not do what has never been done before. In handing down a decision they feel "krenghchai" - they fear for the decision's impact on others' interests as well as their own. They must not cause a superior to lose face - one of the most culturally-conditioned elements in Thai executive decision-making. The pattern of decisions strongly depends on the values and personal opinions of the decision-makers.

The influence of culture may bias decisions within the bureaucratic system even more than in the private sector. Thus:

(1) Government officials normally distort facts and information - especially where this puts themselves in a more positive light - before proceeding to their superiors.

(2) Officials commonly discriminate between policies where their own interests are involved.

(3) Officials must follow decisions whether or not they agree.

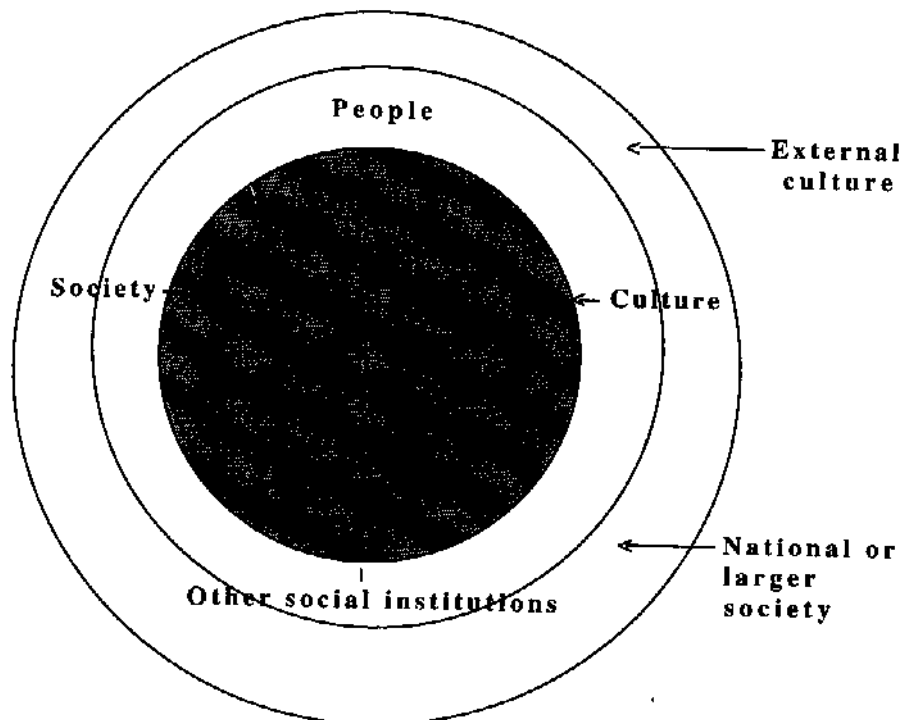
(4) Officials will play their roles increasingly as they are given responsibility, while avoiding duties whose performance is not consistent with their own purposes.

In conclusion, decisions and behaviour of individuals will be subject to cultural influences involving ideas of seniority, sympathies, preference, "krengchai," interests and values. These influences may cause decisions to fall short of management objectives, and will effect other behaviour within the Thai management system.

(2) The Influence of Culture on the Thai Management System

Organization and management can be regarded as a subsystem of society as a whole, an institution that has the duty of supplying products and services to members of

Chart 2: The Influence of Culture on Organization and Management



Notes: In reality, the three circles will completely overlap and mix - there is an indivisible relationship.

Source: Choop Karnchanapakorn. 1972. In Amara Racksasat and Khatiya Karnasut, *Theory and Concept in National Development*. (Bangkok: NIDA, 1972).

the society and the population as a whole. In administrative mechanism, and in other important ways, organization and management arise from the cooperation of a group of individuals. The member of an organization is a member of the society, having values that are bound to be influenced by the culture, customs and values of that society. These values will tend to influence behaviour and decision-making so as not to conflict with patterns of performance accepted as good by the majority of society members. This will be so both inside and outside the organization within which the individual works. The cultural values of the society within which the individual has been socialized will always effect management. The following chart summarizes what has been discussed above.

Cultural influences on Thai organization and management can be analysed as having the following aspects: (1) on individual behaviour within the organization, (2) on interpersonal behaviour towards other individuals within the organization, (3) on principles of Thai management, and (4) on the management structure.

(1) Cultural Influence on Individual Behaviour within the Organization.

This can be further considered under the following subdivisions:

(1.1) Behaviour as to the relationship between superordinate and subordinates

Of Thai society in general it may be stated that stratification still exists. This may be a consequence of the historic governmental system. For a long time Thailand was governed under the absolute authority held in the hands of the king. In the Sukhothai period, the role of the king was that of father to his people - the people were, in a sense, his children. Such a system may be aptly termed "paternalistic"- the government is that of one big family! Later, in the Ayutthaya and Ratanakosin periods, the relationship of king and people changed from one of paternalism to one of lord and commoners, of master over servants. The king was deified. Like a god he held in his hands the life of every one of his subjects. In the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), Thailand first came into serious contact with Western foreign countries. As a result of the transfer of Western cultural ideas into Thailand, the popular view of the king as a divine being was weakened, one factor that eventually led to the change of regime in 1932. From then on the role of the king as a god with absolute authority over life was lost. Nonetheless, the king has remained very close to his subjects, and still retains his ritual, social, governmental, as well as bureaucratic, administrative roles (Changrien, 1971: 11-13). Moreover, the power of the old system of social status can still be felt, for instance, in the system of regulations governing land tenure; and especially in the classification of government officials, with their titles of

Khun, Phra, Phraya, Chaophraya, Senabodi, Akkramahasenabodi, and so on. This system of social values promotes the man whose title is high on the scale.

At the present time, we still know a government official's title and rank when we see his uniform. Apart from which, many important aspects of the family, economic status and education are still dominated by the old system.

On the administrative side, the idea of the government as master is still reflected in the behaviour of Thai civil officials. Though Thailand's political system has formally changed from one of absolute monarchy to that of democracy, most government officials still like to assume the role of rulers over the people. In consequence, the capability and efficiency of the organization depend much on who leads the organization. Organizational norms likewise depend on the role-playing and behaviour of the leader. If the leader prefers to apply modern or Western concepts of management, the authorities under him will follow suit - if he prefers to maintain the old magisterial system, they will still follow. Thus the example of the leader, rather than the quality of team work, determines the effectiveness of the organization.

(1.2) Behaviour as to the relationship between individuals in the organization

When we consider relationships between individuals, we look at the organization as a collection of individuals, as a society within which cultural influence creates manifold types of relationship. Individuals who come to live within the organization bring with them the values in which their social culture trained and educated them. This will influence the behaviour of the organization as a whole (as we can see from Chart 1). Culturally-related social values remind the individual that in order to survive, to live at ease, one must consider the feelings of others, especially those with whom relationships are close, one's colleagues, superordinates and subordinates. Thus, most Thais have heard the saying that, among government officials "If you want to get ahead quick, you've got to be pulled by your boss and shoved by your workers" - as well as, we add, your colleagues. It could be said that Thai organizational behaviour is more concerned with promoting good relationships among every person in the organization than with getting any work done! The man who only works, and forgets about human relationships, however efficient he is, will find success hard to come by. These relationships stem from cultural values that abhor conflict within the group, that respect individuals, or simply love fun - that create many kinds of informal group relationships distinct from the formal groups within the organization. The situation is illustrated in Chart 3.

This kind of charismatic informal organization may arise from many causes: an individual's engaging personality, unusual ability or knowledge, or specialization in any field. Such an individual is accepted and respected by subordinates and colleagues, gains many followers, and may have closer relationships with influential persons than does his immediate superior. He is not necessarily an official of high rank - one of lesser rank may have this power.

(2) Cultural Influence on Interpersonal Behaviour within the Organization

We consider now cultural influence on behaviour among individuals within the organization towards others outside the organization. We must make clear that the influence of many aspects of social culture will greatly affect what can be regarded as an interaction between the organization and society. The characteristics of cultural influence on this kind of behaviour can be considered under several headings:

(2.1) Traditional Thai society is agricultural and in such a society there are not clear-cut regulations governing behaviour. Persons maintain close relationships. They assist one another for personal reasons rather than on principle. Someone who needs help will ask it from one whom they have helped previously. Their attitude towards someone they support will pay no regard to regulations or law. We can say that individuals do not make a distinction between work and personal affairs.

(2.2) On the contrary, behaviour towards persons with whom one is not familiar or closely related will not manifest "krengchai." It will be strictly according to regulations, and will be that of the master rather than the giver of services. People also fear the authority of government officials, a throwback to the former habit of respect for the powerful which comes from the political culture of the Ayutthaya period.

(2.3) A further relational custom is the exchange of gifts between government officials and other persons, which is a cause of corruption. It is a Thai social value to respect the rich; and hence money plays an important role in the everyday behaviour patterns of Thai people. An individual wants to be rich, feeling that to become rich will lead to acceptance by the public and respect from others, including government officials. Some Thai technocrats have maintained that "money can buy even loyalty and love - money is the god of life" (Kruekaew, 1975: 30). Thus money and associated social values have an important influence in determining the behaviour of persons in an organization.

(3) Cultural Influence on the Principles of Thai Management

Thai society before the administrative reforms in the reign of King Rama V was

characterized by the principle of "Sakdina," which allotted to "phrai" (commoners) two status groups. "Phrailuang" were commoners answerable to a master, with whom the relationship was that between a patron and a client. This creates a relationship of personalism, with a vertical linkage, which gives importance to the individual. In this kind of situation, patron and client will be satisfied so long as the interests of both are mutually satisfied. There is an uncertainty about the relationship. The "phrai" will attend to his master's interests in order to gain the master's approval and support, while at the same time he will seek other, informal patronage in case his formal patron should withdraw his support or lose his own status.

Cultural structure influences management, that is, it influences behaviour at work. Vichitvadakarn (1982: 336) concluded that the governmental system is divisible into two structures: (1) Social Structure, which clings to merit as a norm, and (2) Cultural Structure, whose values can be seen to have not yet changed very much, whereas the social structure has been changed by the introduction of new concepts for application, and the purposive use of the merit system. Here, the philosophy of the merit system may not fit well with the cultural structure. For example, the main problems of the governmental system are those of patronage, favoritism, individualism and corruption. The impact of cultural influence on principles of management can be seen especially in relation to cultural values associated with personal obligation. The patronage system appearing in management will have an impact on other areas of performance.

(4) Cultural Influence on Thai Management Structure

The cultural characteristics of Thai society are such as individualism, or collectivism without any common interest or formal regulation. Integration among people is that of a family membership. This can be seen even in national political society, where the members are as if cousins. The national administration is like a big family. It has no formal regulation or formal authority, in which considerations for award of honours, respect, placement and decision-making follow the lines of favouritism and nepotism. The management system relies only on the group structure. Thai administration, as in the past, has the characteristics of a master/servant and bureaucratic system.

Though, at present, the administration is systematically expanding, its formal integration remains that of related individuals; while the traditional cultural and political structures persist and inform the administrative structure. The latter is a mixture of old and new. Varying personal influence, closeness, and capabilities interfere with the patterns of performance and decision-making.

5. The Changing World of the Executive in Thailand

Today the world is becoming "globalized." Every country on the planet's surface is having to adjust to this strong trend towards globalization. And this includes Thai executives. They are encountering the problems of adopting and adapting changing ways of behaviour to their organization.

There are four areas in which executives in Thailand are now facing these changing patterns.

(1) The changing pattern of the management information system

In the past, Thai executives did not pay much attention to information in relation to their decision-making. This was a consequence of the fact that they did not have to fight any strong competition. In the public sector, Thai government executives did not think it necessary for them to make decisions on the basis of up-to-date information. When a decision affecting management performance was made, information was used that was near to hand, whatever could be got from nearby persons.

Nowadays, Thai executives must adjust a great deal if they are to know how to apply information in order to make appropriate decisions. Moreover, to use information means to invest. So far few Thai executives invest in information. Most still prefer to use secondary data and information within their organization. Only a few business organizations collect primary facts and information for their decision making. However, the influence of globalization is now causing Thai executives to invest in their own primary information sources and to give more importance to the information management system. The more the world becomes globalized, the more the business organization's decision-making needs up-to-date, accurate and sufficient information. Otherwise, new competitors, far stronger than any in the past, will take over their stake in the business arena.

(2) The changing pattern of resource management

In the past, Thai executives did not pay much attention to resource management. Resources were abundant in an agricultural country with much low-cost human labour. However, in Thailand now, wages and salaries for labour are rising higher and higher. During the last few decades, Thai workers have gone abroad to search for jobs in the United States, Japan and the Middle East; while now, in consequence of the growing cost of the Thai workforce, there is an influx of workers from the neighbouring countries of Cambodia,

Myanma, Laos and China.

Thai executives now have to learn how to minimize cost. In the past, many business organizations, holding monopolies in markets most of which were far from conditions of perfect competition, could set prices for their products independently. But nowadays Thailand's markets are all much nearer perfect competition, and it can no longer be an executive's policy just to step up the price of his product. Rather they must decrease prices if they are to compete with other organizations.

(3) The changing pattern of process management

In the past, Thai executives did not face any problems of work procedure or stages in work performance. Organizational structure at that time seemed simple. Now, the situation has changed. Globalization demands that Thai business organizations become more sophisticated. An executive today can no longer rely on common sense alone. Rather, in the environment of a modern organization, Thai executives must accommodate a growing management knowledge base. At present, they must participate at least once a quarter in some seminar or training course. Consultant companies whose business is running these seminars and training courses are growing fast. Thai executives are present with increasing frequency.

Training to upgrade performance has in fact been regarded as the single most important issue for labour in Thailand (Hall, 1996: 335-336). Rapidly growing companies are facing a shortage of qualified personnel. Skilled persons are often able to hold several jobs simultaneously. The growing demand for training is being met by new university courses and degrees, trade organizations and by companies themselves through internal programmes that may include overseas experiences for employees.

Nonetheless, Thai executives are still facing problems over improvement of the work process. As far as this field is concerned, they have had little previous experience. In the elementary business organizations of the past, the work style was guided by common sense rather than theories or management models. Now the executive must learn about reengineering, ISO-9000, TQM and many other matters concerned with work process improvement.

(4) The changing pattern of performance evaluation

In the past, Thai executives had little experience of appraisal or evaluation by management. In small organizations, executives familiar with past work performance did not concern themselves much with performance evaluation.

Now, in some Thai business organizations, supervisors will appraise the work performance of their subordinates. But the future of employees comes to depend on the supervisor, rather than efficiency or quality of work. In comparison, a Japanese business organization, Toshiba, has a more systematic style of work evaluation. This uses three dimensions: (1) Self-evaluation by the employee, (2) Evaluation by the employee's colleagues, (3) Evaluation by the employee's supervisor.

Otherwise, work performance evaluation by business organizations in Thailand is still not very common. Some have conducted no evaluation over a long period, for reasons both of limitations of budget and lack of interest. However, executives must now start to give greater attention to work performance evaluation, if they are not to be overridden by competitors.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The more the world becomes globalized, the more so do Thai executives have to adapt themselves to changing global trends. If they turn their backs to this fact, they will never survive in the business arena, even in the public sector. The impact of globalization is not only on transport, communications and the mass media, but on way of life and professional career. To survive in this age, executives in any business organization must try to forecast trends in, not only the near, but even the remote future. For what they must have, the word we may use is VISION. They must have a vision of at least immediate and intermediate social trends which they can apply to their management.

For Thai executives, this means that they must pay more attention to the changing patterns of their social and cultural structure, as well as of the management system - the changing patterns of information retrieval and use, of application and cost of resources and of the management process, and of the style and use of performance evaluation. Otherwise they must apply themselves continuously to self-improvement, for instance through seminars and training courses, in order to be up-to-date in management knowledge. At the present time, to merely walk on is to follow others. If one wishes to lead, one must run, always and never stopping.

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