

[class mate at school or university, or] to find someone who knows him and introduce you. . . . In my case I was introduced to BOI people by a member of a consulting company. . . . We visited BOI almost every day to follow up the case and try to establish a personal connection. . . . One surprising thing was that our [German] President used to learn Thai from a BOI staff member in Frankfurt and this relationship was always referred to . . ."

When dealing with BOI, she took care to avoid offering a straight bribe or any favour "against the law. It would be considered as corruption." But her company's relations with the Customs Department were assigned to a shipping company whose staff were known to bribe customs officers.

This case demonstrates how complex and multi-layered patronage-building can become. None of the alternatives considered or implemented for building the desired relationships was created "cold." Each was designed to exploit some previous social connection, bridging different contexts: school and university friends, friends of friends, a connection made by a consultant, a connection made by the Company President, a long-term arrangement between the shipping agency and the Customs Department. And when she dealt with this BOI officer this Thai manager took along her assistant:

"so, if I leave the company, [the assistant] is still the link with him. [And if the assistant leaves too] she takes these experiences and personal relationships to her new job."

Thus the manager does her client assistant a favor which will be reciprocated with loyal service, even if they should be working for different companies.

In this case, the patronage relationship could be transferred so long as the BOI officer (patron) is properly introduced to the assistant (new client) while the manager (old client) was still in office. But in other contexts such a transfer may not be possible.

9.6 Guanxi

Informal GUANXI relationships constitute a major social dynamic in the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Singapore, and in Chinese societies elsewhere.⁶ The theoretical question that arises is how far guanxi is a Chinese variety of patronage (patronage with a Chinese name), and how far it should be regarded as a distinct phenomenon. The practicing international manager has to make up his/her own mind, perhaps deciding on the all-embracing interpretation in some situations, and discriminating in others.

Guanxi has been defined as:

. . . the set of personal connections which an individual can draw upon to secure resources or advantages when doing business or in the course of social life. (Davies, 1995)

This definition is broad, and in practice the term is used with many different meanings. At one extreme it may indicate no more than that the individuals concerned are favorably inclined to each other, and that a basis exists for a relationship. At the other