

From Saigon to HK and Rice to Corduroys: the Wong family of Wong Cheong Fung, King's Dyeing, Corona Textile, and Perfecta

By York Lo



Wong Min-ching (third from left) with his sons and grandchildren in the mid-1960s. (Courtesy of John Huynh)

Earlier in the group, we have covered several Chiuchow merchants from Vietnam operating in HK such as the Hui family of Lune Hing Cheong and Singapore Fodder and the Chan family of Pak Wo Cheong and Secure Industries. The Wong family covered in this article is another example whose Wong Cheong Fung was one of the leading rice importers in HK and the family also founded King's Dyeing & Weaving which was one of the largest dyeing and weaving mills in Hong Kong and Corona Textile, which was one of the first producers of corduroys in HK in partnership with leading Japanese firms. Third generation member also built Perfecta Dyeing, Printing & Weaving Works into one of the world's largest.

Wong Cheong Fung Weaving Factory (黃祥豐織造廠) and Wong Cheong Fung Company (黃祥豐行)

A native of Chaoyang (潮陽), family patriarch Wong Min-ching (黃綿禎) was a Chinese doctor/herbalist who went to Saigon in Annam (old name of Vietnam) in the late 19th century and started his first business venture – the Wong Cheong Fung Weaving Factory in Cholon in the 1920s when he was in his 50s. The factory was one of the first Chinese-owned textile factories in Vietnam and by the 1960s was one of the leading textile factories in the country alongside Vinatexco (越南紡織, founded by Duy-Nhat Truong 張維岳, former father in law of Li of HK Sanatorium and chairman of Hotel Arc En Ciel 天虹大酒店 in Saigon), Vimytex (越美紡織, founded by Vietnamese Chinese and American interests in 1959) and

Vinatefinco (越南印染廠 founded by Long-Tham Ly 李良臣). (華僑經濟年鑑, 1964) In the process, Wong became one of the richest men in Vietnam and he and his family befriended many key political figures in South Vietnam including President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Outside of business, Wong Min-ching was a generous philanthropist who served as chairman of the Chiuchow Six Counties Hospital (六邑醫院, founded in 1892 and now known as An Binh Hospital 安平醫院), one of six Chinese hospitals in Saigon, in 1945 and served on the board of the Chiang Kai Shek Hospital (中正醫院) in Saigon which was chaired by Dr. Wong Chek-wing (王爵榮, 1919-1985). A devout Buddhist, he co-founded Bright Moon Charitable Society (明月善社), a Chiuchow Buddhist organization in Saigon with eleven others including the industrialist (楊業城) in the late 1940s and contributed to the building of the Wong Tai Sin Temple in Hong Kong.

After the War, the Wong family established the trading firm of Wong Cheong Fung Co (黃祥豐行) in Hong Kong to import rice from Annam. The firm operated out of 39 Des Voeux Road West in the 1940s to the early 1960s and was one of the leading rice importers in HK. (香港工商手冊, 1946; CGCC Membership Directory, 1965) Later, the firm operated out of Wong House (永基大廈) at 26-30 Des Voeux Road West which was built in 1963. (Hong Kong \$ Directory, 1974)



The four Wong brothers (left to right): Che-ting, Che-keung, Yip-shou, Tin-chun (Courtesy of John Huynh)

Wong Min-ching died in 1973 in HK in his 90s and he was survived by his four sons (by the order of birth): Wong Yip-shou (黃業受, aka Huynh Tho), Wong Che-keung (黃志強), Wong Che-ting (黃志庭) and Wong Tin-chun (黃天俊), all of whom helped established the various family businesses in Vietnam and Hong Kong and travelled back and forth frequently between the two countries. Of the four brothers, Wong Che-keung maintained the highest profile in HK as he was extremely active in community affairs in

the 1960s, having served as chairman of HK & Kowloon Chiuchow Public Association (潮州公會) and Chiu Yang Residents' Association of HK (潮陽同鄉會) and director of the Western District Kaifong Welfare Association (西區街坊福利會) and Chiuchow Chamber of Commerce (潮州商會會董).

In August 1960, Wong Che-keung returned to HK on an Air France flight from Phnom Penh after spending time in Vietnam with his businesses and was welcomed at Kai Tak Airport by fellow Chiuchow weaving mill owners Lau Mon-ling and Lau Him-chai (see article on Chip Tak) and other Chiuchow tycoons such as Tse Sek-fui (see article on HK Old Mary) and Y.S. Chow of Chow Deuk Sang Jewelry (WKYP, 1960-8-29)



Left: Wong Che-keung receiving a flag from Miss China Kiang Luo-shun (江樂舜) in 1962 at the Chiu Chow Public Association (WKYP, 1962-10-19); Right: Wong Che-keung (second from left) with Chung Chuen-yan of Annam Pak Kwei oil and Andrew Lam of Lam Yuen Fong Watch (second from right)



Wong Che-keung (second from right) delivering a speech at the Chinese New Year banquet for Chiu Chow Public Association in 1964 (WKYP, 1964-2-17)

In 1964, Wong Che-keung's eldest daughter Wong Yin-hing (黃燕卿), a graduate of Syracuse University in New York married Hui Chung-huen (許仲萱), the eldest son of Hui Kwok-pui, a leading Chinese businessman in Okinawa and graduate of Lingnan University. The reception at the HK Hilton was attended by over 1000 guests including Sir T.N. Chau, Secretary of Chinese Affairs J.C. McDouall and many Chiuchow tycoons covered earlier such as George Sim, Chan Dai-bun, Richard C.K. Chan, Chan Shun, Choi Cheung-kok and others such as Wong Kwai, Wong Toke-sau and even the police sergeant Lui Lok. (WKYP, 1964-2-3)

King's Dyeing & Weaving Factory (乾豐染織廠)




In the early 1960s, Wong Cheong Fung partnered up with the Japanese trading giant Mitsui Bussan and Dai Nippon Spinning (merged in 1969 with Nippon Rayon into Unitika) to form Corona Textiles in HK with HK\$2 million in capital to manufacture corduroys. The group built a 4-story factory at 73-75 Hung To Road in Kwun Tong on a 15,000 sq ft site which opened in September 1961. The factory was managed by Wong Che-keung and his younger brother Wong Tin-chun who were chairman and factory manager respectively but the board of three was dominated by Ichiro Fujita from Mitsui and Jotaro Watanabe from Dainippon as Wong Cheong Fung only owned 30% of the venture while its Japanese partners held the remaining 70% (50% by Dai Nippon and 20% by Mitsui). Dai Nippon supplied the 300-400 looms while Mitsui handled sales outside of HK. The opening ceremony was followed by a reception at the

Ambassador Hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui which was attended by many guests including Sir T.N. Chau and Kenneth Fung and the Japanese consulate general and many from the Chiuchow business community and textile and weaving industries. (TKP, 1961-4-1) In the early 1960s, Corona was producing 350,000 yards of corduroy annually. (Oriental Economist, 1963)

華僑日報, 1961-09-22

冠冠紡織有限公司

，生先東島西理經總行洋井三承昨廠啟
 經總，生先平吉原長寧蓋廠織紡本日大
 腦首業各蒙，綵剪合聯生先次孝津島理
 產生港本為廠啟。謝致此謹，導指臨蒞
 科理管，化代現備設，家一第之絨蕊燈
 師技流一請聘日由，化械機產生，化學
 ！察垂請敬，界世過品出，產生督監



驗 志 黃：長寧董
 郎一田藤：寧 董
 郎太錠邊渡

號五十七至三十七道圖鴻塘官龍九：址廠

Ad for the opening of Corona Textiles in 1961 (WKYP, 1961-9-22)

Corona Textile was dissolved in 1978 and was succeeded by Corona Corduroy Factory which was incorporated in 1975. Corona sold its site in Kwun Tong to Kian Dai Wools controlled by the Lu family of SEA Holdings and moved into the King's Dyeing & Weaving Building in the late 1970s and a related firm - King's Corona Trading & Garments Ltd (乾豐寶冠製衣貿易) was incorporated in 1976. Corona Corduroy was dissolved in 1991 while King's Corona was dissolved in 1992. The original site of Corona Textile at 73-75 Hung To Road was re-developed into the 12-story Kian Dai Industrial Building in 1980 and then later sold to Pamflet which re-developed it into KOHO and sold to the New World Group in 2014 for HK\$1.6 billion.

Winland Investment (永達利企業)



永達利企業上市 認股超出二十倍

九證陳普芬主席主持抽籤

永達利企業有限公司，每股以面值一元在九龍證券交易所上市，並由九證陳普芬主席主持抽籤。

永達利企業有限公司，每股以面值一元在九龍證券交易所上市，並由九證陳普芬主席主持抽籤。公司包銷，該公司擁有已建成之工廠大廈兩座，兩座，租金收入穩定，目前計劃擴建原有廠地，將來發展未可限量，此外尚投資於其他工業，獲利頗厚，息率高達七厘，而市價溢利率僅為十一厘四倍人其價位實為偏低，故認股投資者看好，申請認股者甚為踴躍，超出達二十倍以上，故須以抽籤方式決定分配。昨日被行抽籤儀式，由該公司董事長黃志強，九龍證券交易所主任陳普芬主持，並由廖興銀行經理魏存威及新開記名見證，即席由廖興銀行經理黃志強抽出中籤者，儀式簡單隆重而公允，該公司股票將於一月二十九日在九龍會正式掛牌。(上圖為陳普芬主席抽籤時情形)

**荃灣垃圾站
月底全開放**
(港訊)荃灣區內之垃圾站將於本月三十日起一週開放三天，

Winland directors with Kowloon Exchange chairman Peter Chan Po-fun picking in 1973 (WKYP, 1973-1-25)

To capitalize on the stock market boom in the early 1970s, the Wong family injected the Kwai Chung building into King's Land Investment (慶年豐企業, originally incorporated in 1965 before renaming in 1972) which was renamed Winland Investment in January 1973 and went public on the Kowloon Stock Exchange on the same month through issuance of 9 million shares at \$1 apiece underwritten by the Liu Chong Hing Bank and Oriental Finance.

In December 1975, Huynh Tho died at the age of 77 at the HK Sanatorium and was survived by 5 sons and 7 daughters. (WKYP, 1975-12-16)

In 1982, King's Dyeing, which was 17% controlled by Winland, applied to build a new factory at the Tai Po Industrial Estate that year. At the time, 60% of Winland's revenues came from rental income. (KSEN, 1982-7-31) In 1983, Chow Sau-ting (周修彤), the managing director of Regal Star Garments (麗星製衣廠, incorporated in 1975, dissolved in 1996) joined the board of Winland.

Perfecta Dyeing Printing & Weaving Works (振裕染印織造廠)

As King's and Corona exited the fabric and corduroy business in the 1980s, Perfecta Dyeing Printing & Weaving under the management of another family member Wong Yuk-tung (黃旭桐) emerged as one of the four largest dyeing mills in HK. The eldest son of Huynh Tho, Yuk-tung founded Perfecta in 1971 and according to his younger brother John, he was extremely hardworking, often working 7 days a week.

In 1980, Yuk-tung expanded into garment and incorporated Morella Enterprises which was renamed Via Hongkong Ready-to-Wear Co (昌泰製衣廠) in 1987 and Cheong Tai International Holdings in 1998. Cheong Tai owned Cheong On Garment in Guangzhou and Cheong Wah Garment in Tanzhou.

In 1988, Perfecta established a joint venture with the Guangzhou Textile Bureau in Guangzhou. By 1991, Perfecta had between 500-999 employees and operated out of the Edward Wong Industrial Centre in Kowloon (Directory of HK Industries, 1991)

Supported by his son Thierry Wong Kou-kian (黃炯堅), Wong Yuk-tung went big into China in the 1990s. In 1992, he through Silver Yield Industries (銀潤實業, incorporated in 1988) established Panyu Tanzhou Perfecta Spinning Weaving & Dyeing Co (番禺潭洲振裕紡織染印) in Panyu and over the next five years invested over US\$13.8 million into the venture. Over the next decade, the firm became a vertically integrated textile conglomerate in Panyu with annual export sales of \$600-700 million to the US and Europe and over 5 million square feet of factory space with over 3500 workers. By 2001, Perfecta was one of the top 500 exporters and top 50 dyeing and weaving companies in China.

In 2004, Perfecta together with fellow HK weavers Datsun Weaving Factory (捷成布廠) and Fung Fat Knitting Manufactory (逢發織造) sponsored Cotton USA's "East Meets West" collection designed by students of Edinburgh College of Arts and made by the three firms which were displayed in London, Paris (Texworld's Cotton USA booth) and Hong Kong (fashion show at Cotton USA's Cotton Day promotion). Wong Yuk-tung also acquired 115 cemetery sites at Da Peng Bay (see article on Chow Yau) as investments via Bright Success Management prior to 2007.

Today, the Wong family's entrepreneurial tradition is continued by Yuk-tung's younger brother John Huynh who also founded his own enterprise, Born and raised in Saigon until the age of 11, John graduated from the University of Toronto and started his career selling fabrics but later moved into premiums and other lifestyle products such as bags and shoes. After Vietnam re-opened, he went back for business and also sourced products from Cambodia and Myanmar.