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Hong Kong's place in South East Asia

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Hong Kong's Place in South East Asia

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SUMMARY - HONG KONG'S PLACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Is Hong Kong just another Chinese city? This is the line used to justify the inclusion of Hong Kong as part of the Chinese state. But a close look at the lived history of Hong Kong – particularly its first century as an Asian port city – suggests Hong Kong's non-nation-state identity has been vital to its existence. This identity, which is now denied, was central to its earlier successes and to its distinct personality.

Through archival research and oral history interviews, this thesis investigates the peoples who have come from Southeast and South Asia, and around the world, to make Hong Kong. This work traces, for example, the importance of the Parsi community to the founding and growth of Hong Kong. It reveals the intricacy of intimacies when various kinds of sex-working women not only from China but from wider Asia enter liaisons and produce offspring with men from not just China but the wider world. The arrival and outsized influence of Jews from Baghdad, Venice and beyond, and of Armenians and many others who have sojourned through India, alongside men and women from pre-existing Southeast Asian trading communities, all combined to make Hong Kong not Chinese, but Eurasian. These people brought their own family ties and diasporic networks, which then intersected with those of others, making new networks. It was this mixing that made Hong Kong.

This thesis offers a different perspective on Hong Kong's history to those offered to date. As elaborated in the Introduction, China specialists rarely consider the diversity of Hong Kong, while the post-1949 Chinese Communist Party state's claims of a 'century of humiliation' and that Hong Kong 'has always been a Chinese city' woefully ignore Hong Kong's lived realities. Imperial historians find Hong Kong falls outside most categories of analysis; it was never a typical British colony, if such a thing exists. An Area Studies approach is also hit and miss as Hong Kong sits neither wholly in Chinese Area Studies nor Southeast Asian Area Studies. As a first step in getting to grips with the problem, I offer a new, broader definition of the term 'Eurasian' to include people from across geographical Eurasia, thus Armenians, Parsis, Jews and others, alongside the mixed race 'first indigenes' of Hong Kong.

In Chapter Two I examine the pre-1841 trading worlds of South and Southeast Asia and beyond, tracing the routes of peoples and trading practices that led to Britain's

arrival in Hong Kong. In Chapter Three, that British arrival (in 1841) is more closely considered. The imposition of alien rule by conquest is not denied, but the many unintended consequences of the British presence offer a more nuanced description of who settled in Hong Kong and why. Chapter Four is largely based on the privately-held research papers and notes made from now destroyed records from Hong Kong's (and Canton's) Parsi community. These show the crucial role of Parsis in Hong Kong's formation, thanks to their long history of diasporic trade.

Chapter Five examines the role of women, often involuntary, in birthing children of mixed heritage who went on to become leaders of Hong Kong business and society. Despite colonial traditions and taboos, I suggest that it is these 'in-between' people who rapidly become central to the functioning of Hong Kong. Chapter Six continues to follow these people of diverse origins as they mix and combine with others, creating new networks. Chapter Seven examines how these varied combinations of Hong Kong people reacted to the shock and stresses of Japanese invasion and occupation in World War Two and the eventual British return.

Chapter Eight looks at how the many Hong Kong people who fought and died for their home adjusted to the arrival of millions of people from mainland China, amid new prosperities and dreams of democracy. Chapter Nine concludes that the visions of multiple generations of Hong Kongers of their own futures remain unheard as ruling powers fail to acknowledge Hong Kong's character as neither solely Chinese, nor British, but Eurasian. None of the pre-existing frames through which Hong Kong has been regarded and defined do full justice to its Eurasian character. This matters when considering the sharp difficulties experienced by Hong Kong and its people, as the Chinese state tries to make the place its own.

DE PLAATS VAN HONGKONG IN ZUIDOOST-AZIË

Is Hongkong een gewone Chinese stad? Dat wordt vaak gezegd om te rechtvaardigen dat Hongkong nu deel uitmaakt van de Volksrepubliek China. De geschiedenis van hoe de mensen van Hong Kong leefden – vooral tijdens de eerste eeuw van Hong Kong als Aziatische havenstad – leert ons echter dat het 'niet-natiestaat-karakter' van de stad, dat nu verloren is, essentieel was voor Hongkongs bestaan, zijn vroegere successen en onderscheidende identiteit.

Op basis van archiefonderzoek en Oral History interviews beschrijft dit proefschrift de verschillende groepen mensen uit Zuidoost-Azië, Zuid-Azië en de rest van de wereld die Hongkong hebben opgebouwd. Zo wordt bijvoorbeeld ingegaan op de belangrijke rol van de Parsi gemeenschap bij de stichting en groei van Hongkong. Er wordt gewezen op de complexe intieme relaties die ontstaan wanneer een verscheidenheid aan vrouwelijke sekswerkers uit China, maar ook uit de rest van Azië, zorgt voor nageslacht met mannen die niet alleen uit China, maar uit de hele wereld komen. De komst en zeer grote invloed van Joden uit Bagdad, Venetië en daarbuiten, Armeniërs, vele anderen die via India reisden, en mannen en vrouwen uit reeds bestaande Zuid-Aziatische handelsgemeenschappen, maakte Hongkong tot een Euraziatische in plaats van een Chinese stad. Deze mensen kwamen met hun eigen familiebanden en diasporagemeenschappen, die vervolgens verweven raakten met die van anderen, waardoor nieuwe netwerken ontstonden. Uit deze mix ontstond Hongkong.

Dit proefschrift werpt een nieuw licht op de geschiedenis van Hongkong. Zoals beschreven in de Inleiding, staan China-kenners zelden stil bij de diversiteit van Hongkong. Daarbij vormen de uitspraken van de door de Chinese Communistische Partij in 1949 uitgeroepen Volksrepubliek China, die het heeft over een 'eeuw van vernedering' en stelt dat Hongkong 'altijd een Chinese stad is geweest', een jammerlijke ontkenning van de alledaagse werkelijkheid in Hongkong. In de geschiedschrijving over het Britse imperium valt Hongkong buiten de gebaande categorieën; het is nooit een typische Britse kolonie geweest, als zoiets al bestaat. Een Regio Studies benadering is ook niet geschikt, omdat Hongkong niet volledig onder China Studies valt, en ook niet volledig onder Zuidoost-Azië Regio Studies. Om dit probleem aan te pakken introduceer ik eerst een nieuwe, bredere definitie van de term Euraziër. Daaronder vallen mensen uit geheel geografisch Eurazië, dus Armeniërs, Parsis, Joden en anderen, naast de 'eerste oorspronkelijke bewoners' van Hongkong, die van gemengde etnische afkomst waren.

Hoofdstuk 2 gaat over de handelswereld van Zuid- en Zuidoost-Azië en daarbuiten in de periode voor 1841. Daarbij wordt gekeken naar de routes die mensen aflegden en handelspraktijken die hebben geleid tot de komst van de Britten in Hongkong. In Hoofdstuk 3 wordt dieper ingegaan op de komst van de Britten (in 1841). Er wordt

niet ontkend dat een vreemde mogendheid door verovering een heerschappij oplegde, maar de vele onbedoelde gevolgen van de Britse aanwezigheid bieden een genuanceerdere beschrijving van wie zich in Hongkong vestigde en waarom.

Hoofdstuk 4 is grotendeels gebaseerd op de onderzoeksverslagen in particulier bezit die hun origine hebben in de nu vernietigde archieven van de Hongkongse (en Cantoneze) Parsi gemeenschap. Hieruit blijkt de cruciale rol van de Parsis bij de ontwikkeling van Hongkong, vooral vanwege de lange geschiedenis van handel in hun diasporagemeenschap.

Hoofdstuk 5 gaat over de rol die vrouwen, vaak onvrijwillig, hebben gespeeld bij het baren van kinderen van gemengde etnische afkomst. Deze kinderen werden⁹ later vooraanstaande leiders in de handel en samenleving van Hongkong. Ondanks koloniale tradities en taboes stel ik dat deze ‘in-between’ mensen al snel de spil worden in het functioneren van Hongkong. Hoofdstuk 6 beschrijft hoe deze mensen van verschillende komaf zich vermengen en combinaties vormen met anderen, waardoor nieuwe netwerken ontstaan. In Hoofdstuk 7 komt aan de orde hoe deze uiteenlopende combinaties van Hongkongers reageerden op de schok en spanningen van de Japanse invasie en bezetting in de Tweede Wereldoorlog en op de uiteindelijke terugkeer van de Britten.

Hoofdstuk 8 gaat in op de wijze waarop de vele Hongkongers die vochten en stierven voor hun thuisstad zich hebben aangepast aan de komst van miljoenen mensen van het vasteland van China, te midden van nieuwe welvaart en dromen van democratie.

In Hoofdstuk 9 wordt geconcludeerd dat er geen aandacht is voor de wijze waarop meerdere generaties Hongkongers hun eigen toekomst zien, omdat de machthebbers weigeren te erkennen dat Hongkong niet uitsluitend Chinees of Brits is, maar Euraziatisch. Geen van de al bestaande kaders om Hongkong te analyseren en definiëren doen volledig recht aan zijn Euraziatisch karakter. Dit is van belang in het licht van de ernstige moeilijkheden waarmee Hongkong en zijn inwoners worden geconfronteerd terwijl de Chinese staat deze plek probeert toe te eigenen.

Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been written without the help of many people. In the Netherlands I am particularly grateful for the intellectual stimulus and support of Henk Schulte Nordholt, who I first approached thanks to the vital encouragement of Chiara Formichi. Professor Schulte Nordholt quickly clarified my challenge when he suggested that Hong Kong could be seen as part of Southeast Asia. I was already engaged in research on the people I have come to see as Hong Kong's founding families, which was proving his point as so many key people were not 'Chinese' or 'British' but from the wider Eurasian continent, filtered through South and Southeast Asia. Here in Leiden I would also like to thank Pui Chi Lai, another scholar on Hong Kong, and also Limin Teh. Heather Sutherland generously offered new ways of looking at and trying to define what I call these in-between people. At the same time, my readings of luminaries such as John Darwin and Timothy Harper seemed to justify my stress on the interstices within colonies and regardless of empires. Frank Dikotter made it all sound so simple when he told me, 'Just dig into the archives and let them guide you in telling the story.'

In Hong Kong, the historian Christopher Munn generously read first drafts and improved matters immensely. In several cases, insights into some of Hong Kong's founding families have been possible only thanks to descendants of those families themselves. First in line stands Dr. Ron Zimmern, who, ever since he started discovering his own family history, has wanted to know more. Jimmy Master kindly shared his uncle Jamshed Pavri's painstaking research, a unique, underused insight into the Parsi community of Hong Kong and Canton. Generous, too, was Dawn Leonard, a great friend from our early newspaper days, who I only later realized was part of the Samuel Macumber Churn-Fenton-Kotewall matrix. She helped me reach other family members, including ninety-year-old uncle Charlie, as well as Pat Botelho, and the Fenton ladies, Patsy and her daughter Kim Fenton Lamsam. Similarly open has been Andrew Tse, a descendant of Sir Robert Ho Tung's brother Sir Ho Kam Tong. His brother Michael was good enough to take me through the Eurasian cemetery. The historian Brian Edgar's explorations of his own family's past through his impressively researched blog led me into many interesting byways.

Anthony Correa, proud descendant of Portuguese, Eurasian, and many other bloods, has connected me to Portuguese elders and historians: Anthony's uncle Bosco Correa, Henry 'Quito' d'Assumpção, Michael Noronha, and Alberto Guterres. Anthony introduced me to his mother, Vivienne Correa (née Baker), to the Shroff (Neville and Burji) family of Hong Kong and the d'Almada Remedios family and their excellent Macanese Friday night dinners. I'm grateful to descendants of E. R. Belilios, including Tim Judah, Anthony Choy, and Simon Choa-Johnston; to Sir Michael Kadoorie and his Hong Kong Heritage Project; and to George Cautherley, with his ever-expanding family tree. John Asome, Jill Fell, Brian Rothwell, Audrey Thomas, Veronoica Needa and Sean Olson have all done original research on their families and shared it. Barbara Merchant's fascinating research on her Eurasian pasts in Shanghai has helped too.

One of my biggest debts is to scholars no longer with us, which, for Hong Kong, means Rev. Carl T. Smith. As Christopher Munn wrote of Smith's seminal work, *Chinese Christians, Elites, Middlemen and the Church in Hong Kong*: 'Every so often a work of history appears that radically changes our understanding of people, place and period... This book asks questions about Hong Kong that have never been asked before.' Carl Smith's methodology, informed by a background in genealogy as well as divinity studies, set new standards of research and found new sources. By training his magnifying glass on land registry documents, wills, letters, missionary archives, Chinese-language archives, and simply the birth, death, and marriage notices in the newspapers, Carl opened up a new world for the rest of us to dive into. I only wish he could have still been around to share all this with.

My thanks also to the archivists: Helen Swinnerton at HSBC Archives, Amelia Allsop at the Hong Kong Heritage Project, Garfield Lam of the HKU Archives, Bernard Hui of the Public Records Office in Hong Kong, Judy Green and Howard Elias of the Hong Kong Jewish Historical Society, Iris Chan and colleagues at HKU Library's Special Collections, and John Wells and colleagues at the Cambridge University Library. Other helpful archives include SOAS special collections, the London Metropolitan Archive, the National Archives (UK), the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, Leiden's Asia Library, and the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Above all, my thanks to Kees Metselaar.

Propositions / Stellingen

- 1.** Official Chinese historiography of Hong Kong focuses on a 'century of humiliation' and asserts Hong Kong is 'just another Chinese city', ignoring Hong Kong's diverse past and populations.
- 2.** British assertions of administrative prowess are overblown and popular historiographies asserting a 'tale of two cities' seeing only British and Chinese communities, which coexisted but did not mix, are inaccurate.
- 3.** A detailed prosopographical approach, combining genealogical work with wider analysis of networks and trading diasporas, gives new insight into the Eurasian backgrounds of the founding families and peoples of Hong Kong.
- 4.** Understanding the wider Asian and Eurasian character of Hong Kong is vital to explain Hong Kong's current dissonance in which the ethno-authoritarianism of China confronts Hong Kong as Asian Port City.

Six Stellingen on related topics

- 5.** The Area Studies approach fails any student of Hong Kong as neither the 'China' category, nor the 'South East Asia' category offers a proper home to Hong Kong which straddles both Areas.
- 6.** Assertions about the racism and oppression seen in empire elsewhere (the British in Africa or Dutch in the East Indies), do not fit easily with Hong Kong where virtually everyone freely chose to move to this British colony.
- 7.** Although a great deal of in-person research was required in Hong Kong, completion of the thesis here in the Netherlands was important to avoid the inevitable self-censorship accompanying any academic (and other) project now occurring in Hong Kong.
- 8.** Journalistic techniques — such as the long-term development of confidential sources, in-depth interviewing, and deep pools of curiosity — are an under-estimated resource for academic enquiry.
- 9.** Another under-estimated resource are my personal archives of private family's papers, photographs, audio recordings and informal contacts maintained over many years.
- 10.** Happy though I am to wade through countless academic tomes, as a journalist and published author my challenge here was learning how to write in an academic way, to really show I'm serious!

Curriculum Vitae

Vaudine England was born in New Zealand in 1959 to parents whose work took her through four primary schools (in New Zealand and Australia) and three high schools (in Australia, Singapore and England). Her first degree, in Politics and Philosophy was earned at the University of Western Australia in 1980, after which she began working as a journalist in Hong Kong, the Philippines and Indonesia. She first worked for daily newspapers, then for the regional *Asia Magazine* and, from Jakarta, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. On moving to England to join the BBC World Service, Vaudine completed a Masters in Area Studies (Southeast Asia) at the School of Oriental and African Studies by night class. Her particular interest was economic history (thanks to Professor Ian Brown, now retired). She then returned to South East Asia, living in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Thailand and working across the region in print, on radio and television. Her first book, *The Quest of Noel Croucher, Hong Kong's Quiet Philanthropist*, was published by the University of Hong Kong Press in 1998. She was drawn back into journalism by the fall of Indonesia's President Suharto, and later returned to the BBC in Hong Kong and Thailand. In 2011 she left daily news to concentrate on historical research and writing, focused on the families and institutions of Hong Kong. A series of books emerged, on the histories of the Hongkong Land conglomerate, The Hong Kong Club, the Arnholds private trading group and its founding family the Greens, and the Sindhi dynasty who took the name Harilela. Out of this work and a growing circle of contacts in Hong Kong's older communities came the idea to explore Hong Kong's Eurasians and other diverse peoples. Meanwhile, Vaudine's move from Hong Kong to the Netherlands enabled the idea for this PhD to come to fruition.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This enquiry into the social architecture of Hong Kong identifies some of its leading architects, and concludes that many peoples, beyond simply 'British' and 'Chinese', were engaged in the creation of Hong Kong. Who are the vital, but oft-ignored, people who helped to shape Hong Kong's first 'long' century (1841-1945)? This thesis aims to throw light on who these other people are, where they came from, what they did and what networks they formed in Hong Kong, within their communities and with others.

These questions matter, firstly, in order to re-set the historical record with new information. They also matter now as Hong Kong struggles through identity and political crises since London handed sovereignty back to Beijing in 1997. Chinese histories define the colonial era as a 'century of humiliation' in which Hong Kong was never a colony, but 'just another Chinese city'; British versions of history are also limited. James Hayes portrays Hong Kong as a tale of two cities: 'Two very different races and cultures have somehow contrived a mutually acceptable co-existence over one hundred and thirty-one years of dramatic change in China and in the outside world; mainly, it seems, by leading largely separate lives... The desire to live a separate life was a characteristic of both communities and fortunately for Hong Kong each possessed the capacity as well as inclination for it.'¹ I hope to deconstruct such claims, to go beyond 'two races' and to prove that Hong Kong was much more than 'two cities', thereby helping to illuminate continuing schisms between Hong Kong and China.

This thesis does not debate theoretical constructs such as colonialism, post-colonialism, identity-, elite-, or state-formation. My focus is on the people on the ground, on the actual lives being lived, in order to discover an interlocking network of familial, business and government figures. As a result of this focus on the multi-faceted background and interactions of Hong Kong's early communities, their greater significance is revealed, suggesting that more than just British colony or Chinese city, Hong Kong was a Eurasian Port City.

¹ Topley, *Interaction of Traditions and Life in the Towns*, p1, p5, pp6-7.

This granular level of enquiry matters, say historians Tim Harper, Christopher Bayly and John Darwin. Work on the daily lives and identities of all peoples in any colony is a crucial ingredient in attempts to better understand the nuance of empire. John Darwin notes that 'Imperialism and empire are abstractions. To study them only through the correspondence of officials or the declamations of critics is to grasp little of their historical reality... we need to know more about the local "agents of empire", the physical embodiment of the imperial project...' ² Thus: 'empire is still widely imagined as the intrusion of a more or less homogenous group of (European) settlers, businessmen or officials into zones inhabited by stable indigenous societies enjoying varying degrees of political and cultural unity. The more we learn about pre-colonial and colonial societies, the more unsatisfactory this conventional picture appears...' ³

Harper finds in Singapore, as in other cities of the time, that 'outward-looking trading communities had built up maritime connections and wealth on a scale to be seen in few other cities of the age. The fortunes of its Chinese, Arab, Armenian, Jewish, and other minorities paralleled, and in many cases eclipsed that of the Europeans, who themselves were a heterogeneous community... the imperial globalization of the later nineteenth century encouraged an ecumenical and internationalist outlook...' ⁴ What survived the first World War were the networks founded on earlier systems of kinship, consumption, religion, and trades. Malleable ethnicities, the mixing of people and their movements form Harper's *Invisible Empires* throughout the great port cities of colonial Asia. Here, instead of a diasporic perspective of dispersal, longing and suffering, a new focus on mobility allows identity to become more fluid, hybrid, and fragmented. ⁵

To this end, Harper advocates fresh biographical work on key figures to show complex and contradictory layers of belonging. Illuminating polyglot migrant communities, interactions and daily lives would, he notes, counteract their near-

² Darwin, John. 'Afterword', p250.

³ Darwin, John. 'Afterword', p251.

⁴ Harper T.N. 'Singapore 1915', p1794.

⁵ Adam McKeown, 'Conceptualizing', p307, wants to 'center mobility and dispersion as a basis from which to begin analysis, rather than as streams of people merely feeding into or flowing along the margins of national and civilisational histories... a diasporic perspective would complement and expand upon nation-based perspectives by drawing attention to global connections, networks, activities, and consciousnesses that bridge these more localized anchors of reference.'

invisibility in the archive. A closer look at how diasporic networks mediated between transnational, colonial and local political identities would help show the constraints and opportunities of now. Christopher Bayly has also shown that not only ideas, but peoples, jump across oceans and borders, requiring the history of connections to be both lateral and vertical.⁶

Work on inter-Asian intimacies and the wide range of affective relationships to be found within colonies also has relevance here. Laura Stoler concluded after studying Michel Foucault that the many worlds of sex and sexuality were clearly a domain of control; Batavia already had a prison for married and unmarried European women in 1642, she noted, in a discussion of the now well-known subject of the use by colonial powers of ideas of racial and female purity to bolster ideas of empire. 'These concerns over racial and cultural hybridity fuelled the administrative and practical fears of a heterogeneous European community that its boundaries needed policing in ever more intimate ways,' wrote Stoler.⁷ She rightly noted how attitudes shifted over time: 'Thus, concubinage was still seen to uphold a European middle-class standard in the 1880s but seen to undermine it two decades later.'⁸ Jean Gelman Taylor has looked closely at the changes in Indonesia's colonial culture from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries through the shifting ambiguities of racial and gender distinctions.⁹ Ann McClintock, Catherine Hall and Philippa Levine have each made pivotal contributions to the field, bringing to the fore issues of gender, sexuality, racism and power. As Tony Ballantyne has noted, the emphasis in earlier colonial historiography on narratives of achieving nationhood or on merely the power of the metropole long ignored the much richer fields of cross-cultural engagement, the bundled relationships, the networks, mobility and all the exchange going on. In his deconstruction of notions of Aryanism he discovers empire to be not a spoked wheel with the metropole as hub, but a web of personal ties, circulations of ideas, intermingling of peoples, reinforcing Bayly's point about lateral connections.¹⁰

⁶ Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, pp4-5.

⁷ Stoler, *Race & the Education of Desire*, p46.

⁸ Stoler, *Race & the Education of Desire*, p113.

⁹ Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia, Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia*.

¹⁰ See, amongst other works in the Bibliography, Tony Ballantyne's *Orientalism and Race*; Antoinette Burton's *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*; Ann McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*; Philippa Levine's *Gender and Empire*; Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose's *At Home with Empire*.

But in my notes made back when I first read such sources (in 2014-15), I continually scribbled: What about Hong Kong? What were the laws on race in Hong Kong, how did they evolve? Was interracial sex or marriage banned? How was European status defined? How were mixed-race offspring defined, what rights did they have? Again and again, even new research on colonial lives seemed to ignore Hong Kong. One clue to this gap might be found in Stoler's inability to accept the evidence provided in an interview with a former Indonesian housekeeper to a Dutch colonial family who longs for a return to that colonialism as she missed the work and her place in the household. Stoler treats as a revelation the fact that colonial lives must have been more subtle and complex than 'we' thought of those 'with whom we do not sympathize, politically or otherwise.'¹¹

How much more problematic would she and many other theorists find the reality of Hong Kong, a place to which millions of people moved in order to willingly place themselves under British colonial rule! Every specialist likes to see their own subject as *sui generis*; in Hong Kong, however, it is hard to deny the challenge it poses to traditional ideas of post-colonialism as its post-British life is not 'liberation' or independence but a new colonialism under the Chinese Communist Party.

Another reason, perhaps, for the paucity of work on Hong Kong's colonial existence in general, and on the rich world of the multiple lateral lives being lived, is that Hong Kong does not fit into preconceived academic categories. It falls beyond the boundaries of Area Studies as it fails to settle wholly in the 'Area' either of 'China' or of 'Southeast Asia'. As will be seen, if Hong Kong is viewed only through the prism of Chinese Studies, much of its locally-generated nuance is lost. In recent years, this erasure has become more deliberate as the Beijing government tries to tie Hong Kong into its own ethno-nationalist sphere. Traditional definitions of Southeast Asia also neglect Hong Kong as the area encompassed usually stops at north Vietnam and fails to reach further north to Hong Kong. As island, peninsula and mainland, Hong Kong also falls outside the long-running discussion within the field about differences between archipelagic or mainland Southeast Asia. Hong Kong is both China and Southeast Asia, and both mainland and archipelago.

¹¹ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain – Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, p238.

Work which has focused in intimate detail on just who did what has been more useful, such as that of Chie Ikeya in her close-up examination of women as the intermediaries between the local and the global during Burma's (Myanmar's) time under British colonial rule. She rightly puts Burmese women and men at the heart of moves towards education, new media, multiple expressions of modernity, and an active engagement with the foreign. She agrees with Barbara Andaya's identification of the hegemony of the national epic in which a few heroic men achieved independence for a colony as a key cause of the historiography going off track. Instead, Ikeya finds in colonial Burma, 'a society shaped by its openness to and participation in a culture and a world above and beyond the local or the national'.¹²

This 'world above and beyond' is what I have found in Hong Kong too. Here was interaction, collaboration and literal cross-fertilisation between not only 'Chinese' and 'Europeans', but a variety of people and networks from far and wide. Once in Hong Kong, these peoples went forth and multiplied, in business and pleasure, in their own communities and with others. These new webs of engagement created a (widely defined) Eurasian community, more than a mere meeting of East and West.

The message demands its own methods

My effort here is concentrated on tracing some of Hong Kong's earliest families, their origins, their networks and their progressions, often but not always into the early twentieth-century elite in Hong Kong. I rely on self-identifications by those people as 'Portuguese', 'Parsi', 'Armenian', 'Jew', and others, all prevalent at the time. As for the term 'Eurasian', I offer a new, much broader definition than commonly used in Hong Kong in order to demonstrate how important were individuals and networks from across the wider Eurasian continent (thus incorporating Armenia, Iran, India and parts of South East Asia) to the making of Hong Kong.

This work requires a specific set of tools (or methods) which I describe below and which rely, to some extent, on my early journalistic training. Starting with a curiosity about particular families and personalities, I have tracked down descendants through my extensive network of contacts gleaned from decades as a journalist and

¹² Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma*. Also, Andaya, Barbara. *The Flaming Womb - Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia*.

author in Hong Kong and South East Asia. This forms part of a research methodology -- here identified as prosopography -- to examine what became a series of interlocking networks in Hong Kong.¹³ Prosopography is the practice of identifying and describing people and the groups or networks they form within a particular historical context. It requires looking at their origins and genealogies, their interactions and various iterations. The Oxford-based expert on prosopography, Katharine Keats-Rohan, cites Lawrence Stone's definition of it as 'the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives', and Paul Magdalino's definition of it as 'a means of profiling any group of recorded persons linked by any common factor'.

My methods include extensive archival research and oral history work. A first key tool has been the interviewing of various community members and family descendants, often repeatedly, via personal meetings, email and extended correspondence over several years. I have interviewed as many of these descendants of the families under study as time, family sensitivities and geography have allowed. The apparent emphasis here on families which are either middle class or have eventually become wealthy members of the elite is because these are the people who are becoming open to discussing their pasts. Several approaches to members of families which were not so obviously successful were rebuffed. This has the disadvantage of skewing results to suggest that all mixed-origin people were successful, which is clearly not the case. Instead, the hope must be that as more elite families become open to their own histories -- and specifically to banishing the taboo against admitting that one's great grandmother was probably a sex-worker -- other families will more readily follow.

The interviews often took many hours over weeks and months, based on relationships of trust I have built up over years. Only then, have individuals become comfortable with sharing details of often contested pasts and complex intimacies. Often lunch with one family member would lead to conversation with another; contacts also jumped over apparent boundaries of distinct communities, such as when a 'Portuguese' would introduce me to his Parsi friends, or an apparently 'British' source insist on my meeting his Chinese forebears. Such conversations, and

¹³ K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography Approaches and Applications*. See also, Lawrence Stone's 'Prosopography' in *Daedalus* (1971) and Magdalino in Cameron's *Fifty Years of Prosopography*.

continued personal contact, offer new insight into diverse groups and families; they have also given me access to privately held records, and the gifting of unpublished research material. I have personally visited the cemeteries (in Hong Kong, Britain, Romania and beyond) and family homes of those people under discussion. Private family records, previously unpublished, have been shared with me, including a 510-page compilation of data on the Parsi community of Hong Kong and South China.

Such conversations also carry hazards, familiar to me from my decades in journalism: people's memories are faulty, and interviewees massage or improve on the facts of their stories, sometimes unconsciously but also deliberately. Versions of personal history remain disputed between siblings, within families, and across communities. In some cases, one family member has granted permission to cite family records, only to be contradicted by other relatives. In this and all cases, I have checked and double-checked with all interested persons (not just the writer of a family record but often with the people about whom he or she has written) to secure permission for any quoted material. Where permission has not been possible, or has been retracted, I have deleted that material. I promise confidentiality to everyone I interview and pledge that any citation of their words will be checked with them to confirm my right to use it. Most of these interactions were recorded digitally; both the sound files and my transcriptions are maintained on private computer backups.

Primary source material lies in rare oral histories of multi-generational families, and in the collections in community centres (such as Hong Kong's Jewish History Centre, and the Zoroastrian Trustees of Hong Kong). I have worked in the Archives of the University of Hong Kong Special Collections, the Hong Kong Public Records Office, the HSBC Archives, the Hong Kong Heritage Project (the Kadoorie family archive), the Jardine Matheson Archive held at Cambridge University, the (British) National Archives and a range of private collections footnoted throughout. Family collections I have been given access to include photo albums, diaries, unpublished papers and detailed genealogies. A key archival source has been the Carl T. Smith Collection, with which I have been engaged through various projects since 1979. This comprises detailed notes on almost all individuals of early Hong Kong, traced through Land Registry records, church records and newspapers. This prosopographical and empirical focus is what takes me beyond theories and categories into real lives.

A constant task has been the checking of what I am told against what has been recorded, and vice versa. Different versions of family histories have been checked as far as the records allow; in some cases no definitive facts have survived and in others, new facts have emerged. Despite the challenges integral to the collection of family records, this has remained an important part of this thesis, not least because the written records remain scarce. Sometimes the persistence of conflicting records about the same person or situation is revealing, in itself, of the complex factors at work in both the living, and the describing, of truly Eurasian lives. Hopefully, further research will enable any necessary corrections and illumination of memories.

Defining scope and language

Here, 'Hong Kong' (Heung Kong, or Fragrant Harbour, perhaps named after the incense traded there) does stretch back into Chinese history, but coalesces when the outside world arrived, circa 1841. The Hong Kong people discussed here, similarly, include some Chinese but largely comprise the many non-Chinese peoples who went into the making of Hong Kong. I am not for a moment denying the centrality of Chinese peoples (in all their diversity) as the majority of people in Hong Kong before, during and after Hong Kong's British period. The importance of Chinese state actors, and even more of the many millions of Chinese workers, traders and families is indisputable. So too is the primary importance of the Chinese workers who literally built Hong Kong – its port, roads, buildings and more, and as 'coolies' loading and unloading ships, investing in produce and marketing it worldwide. I am here deliberately concentrating on the communities less covered. Many of these, too, arrived with little, worked hard and got ahead – it is these peoples and processes I aim to untangle here.

A key concept is that of the Eurasian person(s), personality, community. Narrow definitions in common usage describe the offspring of (typically) a Western man and a Chinese (or Asian) woman. My definition is far broader than this, encompassing not merely mixed-race union, but the range of peoples from across the Eurasian continent, from the Caucasus and the Black Sea, through Middle and Near East into South and Southeast Asia and so into new combinations with Chinese and others. This geography of Eurasia includes those who reached Hong Kong from Yerevan or Julfa, Calcutta and Canton– the Armenians and Baghdadi Jews, Parsis and Indians,

Malays, 'Manilamen' and others – as well as those products of relationships between different 'Asian' men and women, many different 'Chinese' and 'Westerners' and more. These people formed the functioning core of early Hong Kong.

Such people are boundary-crossers, taboo-breakers, middlemen, translators, multi-cultural operators and bricoleurs, people who improvise (from the French verb *bricoler*, to tinker). The term applies to the use of found objects in art or architecture to anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's creation of mythical thought which he sees as originating in a 'heterogenous repertoire'; one must make from this, and make do.¹⁴ Where engineers move from goals to means, bricoleurs re-use available materials to solve new problems, trying, testing, playing around. In cultural studies it can refer to the acquisition of objects, even identities, across social divisions. Artist John Akomfrah described his aesthetic for a new work for the 2024 Venice Biennale, *Nine Cantos*, as bricolage: 'Bits and pieces of my heritage and identity make up a, not seamless, whole, yet I make sense of myself' in order to 'find a way of banishing difference, by getting fragments to agree to a momentary union. When that happens, it's beautiful.'¹⁵ So too with Hong Kong's lateral thinkers. When Muslim neighbour interacts with Jewish trader in a Chinese warehouse, via an Armenian or a Parsi, diverse pools of knowledge and multiple identities create ever-more syncretic iterations; they are all bricoleurs.

In Hong Kong, in contrast to more ordered, racially-defined Singapore and the Straits Settlements, there was more room for migrants to make their own way. The colony's first administrators were startled by just how many people were turning up from different places; it had not been part of the plan which was initially for a floating opium warehouse and little more. As will be seen, the first British, Parsi, Portuguese and other settlers on Hong Kong island focused simply on continuing the trade they knew from Canton. Importing this or that ethnic group for particular tasks, or anything like adding glory to the 'Raj', was not on the agenda. This left a lot of room in which people could go their own way and create their own connections and communities. Thus, the British let the Armenian Paul Chater reclaim the harbour because his plan worked; he chaired the elite Hong Kong Club because he

¹⁴ This is a brutal summary of his *Le Pensée sauvage*, Paris, 1962, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago, 1966.

¹⁵ John Akomfrah spoke to Maya Jaggi in 'John Akomfrah on exploring colonialism, migration and globalism through "bricolage"'. *Financial Times*, 9 November 2023.

made it more aspirational; then he fashioned a university out of Parsi, Chinese and Southeast Asian friendships. After all, the British were bricoleurs too: they were easily racist when it suited them, but innovation and improvisation, so long as it did not conflict with imperial interest, were allowed to shine.

By applying prosopography, by which I mean tracking the people involved, and discovering precisely who moved to, and thus formed, Hong Kong, this port city's role as stimulus to 'brilliant bricoleurs' emerges.¹⁶

One caveat must be added: this story cannot be told in numbers. The numerical majority of Hong Kong people has always been Chinese but my focus is specifically on the Other. We can trace individuals and families of diverse origins and ways of life but only through the tools of family and oral history, and by looking through the gaps in the records. Those records, such as the Censuses produced in Hong Kong from the 1850s onwards, only delineated undefined groups, such as 'Europeans', or the 'Indians' in the armed forces. Parsis and Armenians were not counted and nor were the many stateless people or those of diverse Jewish roots. (Only during World War Two, in the details of those resident in the Rosary Hill refuge run by the International Committee of the Red Cross, was an attempt at finer distinctions made, in forms outlining 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' – see Chapter 7, pp208ff.) The number sometimes given by the Hong Kong government for a similarly undefined category of 'Eurasians' was always very small as few people, even well into the twentieth century, voluntarily identified themselves as such. These are indeed in-between people often categorised as on the margins who, in the course of helping Hong Kong into existence over almost two centuries, gradually become central to it.

Hong Kong in Chinese historiography

This is not the story conventionally told of Hong Kong's emergence. Amid China's nationalist myth-making it is easy to forget that 100 years ago it was deep in a vicious, long-running civil war.¹⁷ Its capital city was contested and central state control extended barely south of the Yangtze, certainly not to Xinjiang, Taiwan,

¹⁶ I am indebted to Professor Henk Schulte Nordholt for this imagery.

¹⁷ States in Asia only recently became finite entities with clear lines drawn between them, with national myths to match. See Winichakul, Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*.

Hong Kong or any Nine-Dash Line.¹⁸ Such elasticity makes finding Hong Kong on old Chinese maps problematic – it just isn't there. One of many barely known islands strung off the coast, Hong Kong was unknown and unremarked.¹⁹ Wade concludes that incorporation of areas south of the Yangtze into the Chinese state only accelerated in the eighth and ninth centuries CE. C.P. Fitzgerald agrees.²⁰ Roderich Ptak has traced the routes used between China and Southeast Asia in the fourteenth century. Nowhere does Hong Kong appear.²¹ The discovery of Southern Song-era pottery during the construction of a new rail link in Kowloon²², and more recently the remains of a similarly dated water reservoir system, offer clues to prior settlement on the mainland (not the island) of Hong Kong. Accounts following the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997 claim that Tuen Mun and other now major areas of Hong Kong were part of a thriving Chinese trading hub one thousand years ago.²³

A more measured description can be found in the annotated Chronicle of Peace County, where Peter Ng suggests the Chinese government's opinion of Hong Kong at the time of its cession to Hong Kong (1841-2) was probably little different to that of Britain, namely disdain: 'But to the Chinese Emperor in far off Beijing Hong Kong was an insignificant rock in an undesirable sea off the coast of a minor county on the fringes of his empire... indeed in the 1822 edition of the Guangdong provincial gazetteer the map of the county of Xin'an in which Hong Kong lay did not show the island at all.'²⁴ The first edition of this Gazetteer dates to 1688; the 1819 gazetteer of Xin'an County is the only comprehensive work on the area before the coming of the British.²⁵ But Ng concludes the maps were not useful — 'the island of Hong Kong

¹⁸ Geoff Wade notes a 5th-century BC map which gives no southern border; by 200 BC, a southern border roughly matched China's borders as asserted today. In the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD) the border reached Hue and north Myanmar. Wade in Evans, Hutton, & Kuah, p35.

¹⁹ 'The degree to which Chinese political control was exercised over the areas depicted on these maps as being "within" China remains contentious.' Wade in Evans, p35.

²⁰ Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, pxix.

²¹ Ptak, Roderich. 'From Quanzhou to the Sulu Zone', and, 'The Ryukyu Network'.

²² *South China Morning Post*, 6 July 2014.

²³ K.C. Chan, *South China Morning Post*, 1 January 2000, p1: 'Like Hong Kong today, the region in 1000 had recently been re-integrated into China', and was 'a key salt production and pearl harvesting centre, as well as a major custom duty-collection post for international trade'; an elaborate tomb of a Han official 'bears witness to the existence of a sizeable imperial administration in Hong Kong some two millenia ago'.

²⁴ Ng, Peter, *New Peace Country*, p1.

²⁵ Krone, 'A Notice of the San On District'; Sung Hok-p'ang, 'Legends and Stories'; Balfour, 'Hong Kong before the British'; Baker, 'The Five Great Clans'; Hayes, 'The Pattern of Life', and 'The San On Map of Mgr Volontieri'; Ronald Ng, 'The San On map of Mgr Volonter'.

did not appear as such on them... the island merited no special mention... The very way in which the administrative subdivisions of the county were arranged indicated how insignificant this part of its territory was felt to be.²⁶ Ng opines: 'Without the British intervention, 'the Hong Kong region would doubtless have remained in obscurity'.²⁷

So much for Chinese imperial ideas of Hong Kong at its birth in 1841 as a Port City. But though absent, was it somehow 'always Chinese'?

The official Chinese line is that Hong Kong was never a British colony, merely occupied territory, which 'was built and made prosperous on the blood, sweat and corpses of Chinese coolies'.²⁸ Textbooks now state: 'Even [though] Britain occupied Hong Kong... the Chinese Government did not recognise such unequal treaties and insisted [on] her sovereignty over Hong Kong. Therefore, Hong Kong did not satisfy the condition of "a country losing sovereignty" and was not a colony.'²⁹ China's representative to the United Nations, Huang Hua, said this in 1972, but was largely ignored – except in Beijing. Chinese scholars discount Hong Kong's multi-ethnic cosmopolitanism; it is thanks to modern China's management that Hong Kong has been able to thrive, not its rich history in Asia and its diverse peoples and ideas.

States Liu Shuyong: 'Hong Kong has been part of Chinese territory since ancient times. Before the British occupation, Hong Kong had achieved considerable development in agriculture, fisheries, the salt industry, transportation, cultural undertakings and education. It was by no means a desolate and barren land at that time.'³⁰ Change has come in the past 150 years, 'particularly since China's execution of the policy of reform and opening-up', in contrast to early British rule (1840-60) when they simply made it into 'the biggest depot for opium smuggling in East Asia', and 'employed bandits to abduct labourers...'

²⁶ Ng, Peter, *New Peace Country*, p1.

²⁷ The 'New Territories' leased by Britain in 1898 was the least settled 'three-fifths of Xin'an', with a population of about 100,000. 'Local government, in fact, was very much left in the hands of the people themselves...hence receives little mention in the gazetteer.' Ng, *New Peace Country*, p66.

²⁸ For this and other examples of the Marxist post-1949 Beijing School, see work from the Academy of Social Science in Beijing, especially Ding You. This is preoccupied with the opium wars, and the firm view that Hong Kong from its earliest times has been sacred Chinese territory.

²⁹ Cited by *Financial Times*, 15 June 2022.

³⁰ Liu Shuyong, 'Hong Kong', p583. He deliberately elides mainland and island of Hong Kong.

His claim of earlier 'cultural undertakings and education' is evidence-free, while the proven record of colonial educational and other projects is ignored. He also cannot deny that, 'On the eve of liberation of China's mainland, there had emerged a considerable exodus of capital, equipment, technicians and managerial personnel from China's inland provinces to Hong Kong...'³¹

Above all: 'The Chinese government has helped maintain Hong Kong's political stability and provided it with powerful economic support in a spirit of giving due consideration to history and maintaining the status quo. Hong Kong has thus benefited from long-standing preferential treatment.'³²

Similarly 'patriotic' historiography is under way in the huge new 'Chronicles of Hong Kong' project, a HK\$780 million, eight-year project launched on 28 December 2020. It aims to tell stories of Hong Kong as part of China from ancient times to 2017 over 66 volumes, to reconnect people with their Chinese roots. Organizers, led by Hong Kong's first post-handover appointed Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, insist the project is not politically driven. Instead it is something the community has longed for over many years, said (the half-Thai) Executive Councillor Bernard Chan.³³

Hong Kong in British historiography

With its pre-colonial existence in doubt, credit for founding Hong Kong, if such it is, surely goes to aggressive opium trading conglomerates chafing at the rules of the Canton trade, such as Jardine Matheson & Co., bolstered by the new British ideology of 'Free Trade', and British arms superiority in the first Opium or Anglo-Chinese War (1839-1942). Beyond that, debate persists over what the British contribution really was. Did London sit down and plan it all? Did men from the City of London go out to make it a petri dish for Gentlemanly Capitalism? Or was there a more nuanced reality in which developments took place quite differently on the ground?

³¹ Liu Shuyong, 'Hong Kong', pp587-8.

³² Liu Shuyong, 'Hong Kong', p591. He notes the talent, hard work of ethnic Chinese but not others.

³³ See an online lecture given to the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 14 May 2021 by Professor Lee Chak Fan, Chief Convenor of the Editorial Committee, Hong Kong Chronicles.

Theorists such as J.A. Hobson in the 1890s-1900s, argued that imperial expansion was necessary for lack of investment opportunities at home. V.I. Lenin agreed, that 'monopoly capitalist' firms had to go abroad, helped by state powers who then competed with each other and so went to war. Mercantilism, the idea that wealth and trade were finite entities which had to be held from rivals, with force if need be, was one motivation. 'Free Trade' was another, enabling industrialists to help break the British East India Company (EIC) monopoly on trade with China (by 1833). P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins wrote several highly influential and controversial articles in the *Economic History Review* in the 1980s.³⁴ They saw the British empire as rooted in the City of London, home to merchant banking, investment, insurance, mercantile marine and communications services. They tied imperial expansion to processes at work within Britain, the metropole, as new men emerging from the industrial revolution aimed to get rich and so acquire the status of 'gentlemen'. Certainly, newly elite networks of capitalists emerged. Certainly, too, the empire expanded in Southeast Asia when its bureaucrats developed close links with British commercial enterprises, as in Malaya, Borneo, Burma and Siam. But breaking the EIC monopoly and other changes on the ground were fuelled more by Asia-based 'country traders' than by the City of London. It was clear that the metropole mattered, but only as part of a far larger whole.

Anthony Webster finds³⁵ the idea of Informal Empire invented by Gallagher and Robinson in the 1950s more helpful: 'The British market therefore became important for the prosperity and survival of local ruling elites in many developing states. In this way [way?] many less developed countries outside the formal British empire became economically dependent upon Britain.'³⁶ Formal though the appurtenances of power were in the status of the British Governor, his councils and ceremonies, Hong Kong manifested aspects of informal empire. Although the British market mattered and services emanating from the City of London were central to major firms in Hong Kong, here was no huge native population to suppress and only one city to build.

³⁴ 'The political economy of British overseas expansion' (1980), 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British overseas expansion', Parts One and Two (1986, 1987). Leading critics were D.K. Fieldhouse (1994), Geoffrey Ingham (1995). See also Anthony Webster (1998, 2006).

³⁵ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p6.

³⁶ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p7.

As will be seen, there was also a certain disinterestedness in London's attitude to Hong Kong, a lack of commitment in Britain's imperial project to a full-bodied inclusion of Hong Kong. London was initially dismayed to find it had got Hong Kong instead of more settled and thriving ports further up the Chinese coast. London was also determined the Hong Kong would pay its own way, and frequently railed against the costs of the ever-growing community which seemed to be growing regardless upon what London had thought was a barren island.

In contrast to other British colonies in the region such as Singapore, Hong Kong seen from London was on the periphery of empire. Interventions in Hong Kong were less formal (than, for example, the import of Chettiars to Malaya). The perpetuation of British power can better be found, says Webster, in delicate collaborations between British interests and local elites, again prioritising lateral, local ties over periphery-metropole rules.³⁷ More significant too were pre-existing networks and patterns of trade in Southeast Asia that connected Hong Kong into the regional pattern, as will be seen in this thesis: 'These networks displayed various characteristics, such as the prevalence of trade in Asian products like opium; the enduring importance of trade links within the Asian world, notably between Southeast Asia, India and China; and the prominence of Asian mercantile organisations such as those of the Chinese.'³⁸

Just how different Hong Kong's genesis was to that of other British colonies can be seen where early notions of 'empty lands' justified colonial incursions into territories ranging from Australia to Africa. The most famous claim to Hong Kong being empty land came from the British foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, who in 1841 disparaged this 'barren island with hardly a house upon it'. But this political claim aimed to quash the pretensions of those who he felt had exceeded his authority. Paradoxically, his claim of barrenness was intended to delay, even cancel, colonization, not its opposite. In the event, as so often, pronouncements from London had little to do with what took off in Hong Kong. Britain did not even build it before all manner of people came.

³⁷ Webster *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p8. He cites Ian Brown of SOAS, Anthony Reid's *Ages of Commerce*, new work on the Nanyang Chinese, Trocki's work on opium and Ray's 'Asian Capital' and more.

³⁸ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p21. The assumption that when the EIC lost its monopolies, that Britain would lose these older commercial networks was thus also entirely wrong.

Hong Kong in Asian and Hong Kong historiography

Proving Hong Kong was at least as much part of Southeast Asia as it ever was of China is easy with early Chinese definitions of anything south of the Yangtze River as 'Southern'. Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen find a 'Greater Southeast Asia' in place by 221 BCE, with the Yangtze River as the dividing line with China.³⁹ The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia agrees.⁴⁰ Sun Laichen, in a *longue durée* over two millennia, offers an 'Upper Southeast Asia' which includes today's Hong Kong; China's control 'was nominal, superficial, indirect and cursory.'⁴¹ But finding a place for Hong Kong within the usual boundaries of Southeast Asia is difficult. Hong Kong simply falls between the two stools – of Chinese Studies to its north, and Southeast Asian studies to its south.

An area studies approach helps insofar as it offers a view of connections beyond Hong Kong, but is not a strong enough historiographical vessel in which to examine all of Hong Kong's aspects. This is partly because Southeast Asian studies has its own problems. Scholars have long debated whether, as political scientist Donald Emerson says, Southeast Asia is just the space between China and India, or a cohesive region which, as Webster argues, 'enjoyed a distinct cultural and geographical identity long before the period of European incursion'.⁴² Ambiguous borders and scholarly insecurity, notes Heather Sutherland, have led the search for a legitimising lineage by equating Southeast Asian seas with the Mediterranean.⁴³ Reid, Lombard and others stress diversity, networks, openness, tolerance, and syncretism as (positive) shared characteristics of the region.⁴⁴

Hong Kong historiography adds a lot of the so-far missing human depth, but precisely for its focus on the local, it misses a wider appreciation of the global

³⁹ Sun Laichen in Wade & Sun, *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, pp44-45.

⁴⁰ Tarling, *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol 1, p56n1. See also, pp107ff.

⁴¹ Sun Laichen in Wade & Sun, *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, pp46-47.

⁴² Webster, Anthony, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p2. See also Donald Emerson, Norman Owen.

⁴³ See Sutherland, 'Southeast Asian History and the Mediterranean Analogy'; here, R. Bin Wong finds a 'Chinese Mediterranean', p14, and backs Takeshi Hamashita's depiction of three zones. Van Leur denied this, in *Indonesian trade and society*, p147. See also, Ptak (2001): 3-4.

⁴⁴ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, and *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, etc. Henley and Schulte Nordholt offer 'environmental change as an underlying pacemaker of economic and political cycles', *Environment, Trade and Society*, p11. See also, Kratoska, Raben and Schulte Nordholt. eds. *Locating Southeast Asia*.

character of Hong Kong, offering only a limited perspective on the port city.⁴⁵ Christopher Munn describes the 'Colonial School' of history where Whites led and Chinese were a homogenous mass with criminal tendencies. Tales start in the glory-days of Canton, romping through the opium wars into the founding of Hong Kong (be it accidental, mistaken, fortuitous or all three). Works in this category clearly have their conceptual limitations but several key works remain must-reads, and influential.⁴⁶ The 'Marxist, post-1949 Beijing School' narrative of colonial exploitation and oppression places the Chinese as victims of grotesque European plots. Munn notes similarities with the Colonial School in a reliance on officials and statistics, and in taking the opium wars as starting point. The acts and feelings of Hong Kong inhabitants barely rate a mention in either metropole.

'The Hong Kong School', by contrast, focuses on complex social and political dynamics, asking new questions about race, class, gender and identity. It works from the realities of Hong Kong - its peoples, where they come from, what they do, where they are going - offering many surprises. Henry Lethbridge in the 1970s was the first to look at class and race; he considered Eurasians a much-neglected component of Hong Kong; he also tackled Poor Whites or Beachcombers, ignored by official colonial histories for lowering imperial prestige, and the evolution of the Po Leung Kuk and Tung Wah groups and District Watch Committees.⁴⁷ He offers no systematic study of his 'Eurasians' however. W.K. Chan's *The Making of Hong Kong Society* showed that class divisions within the Chinese community as well as the British were more significant than racial division, as Chinese and European merchant elites combined against labourers.⁴⁸

Discovering the human fabric of Hong Kong has been made possible partly thanks to the obsessive curiosity of genealogist and theologian-turned-historian, Revd Carl T. Smith. He spent decades scouring every available record from old newspapers to Land Registry documents to compile his famous Index Cards detailing, individual by individual, the rich and interesting lives lived beyond the small circle of the tight

⁴⁵ Munn, *Anglo-China*, pp 1-18.

⁴⁶ For example: E.J. Eitel's *Europe in China*, J.W. Norton-Kyshe's 1898 two-volume *The History of the Laws and Courts of Hong Kong*, Guy Sayer, G.B. Endacott, Frank Welsh and Michael Sheridan.

⁴⁷ Lethbridge, *Stability and Change*, Ch. VII "Caste, Class and Race in Hong Kong before the Japanese Occupation", Ch. VIII "Condition of the European Working Class in 19th Century Hong Kong".

⁴⁸ Chan, W.K. *The Making of Hong Kong Society*.

colonial elite. He showed how Hong Kong was made in what colonialists saw as the borderlands, those rough districts on the 'edge' of town, the unknown worlds of the Parsi opium warehouse or Chinese temples, the Portuguese printing works or the sailors' mosque, the obscure sanctuaries of Christian mission-work or the good-time bars along the western end of the city's main artery (Queen's Road).⁴⁹

Elizabeth Sinn picked up Smith's baton and ran with it through studies of Chinese community organization.⁵⁰ Sinn notes, 'Like other frontier towns, where the social structure was still fluid, the young colony allowed marginal people with energy and daring — those adept at seizing opportunities as well as creating them — to get ahead.' She adds: 'Though never a level playing field, Hong Kong as British colony provided enough flexibility and openness for people of different backgrounds to exert their entrepreneurial vitality...'⁵¹ Munn's *Anglo-China* details how both Chinese 'criminality' and British 'justice' have been woefully misunderstood, and how complex it was to merge Chinese and British ways of running societies. John Carroll's *Edge of Empires* outlines the creation of a late nineteenth century 'Chinese' elite (in fact, largely Eurasian), noting 'Colonies were not just about exploitation; they were also about how people learned to work within the cracks.'⁵²

While early narratives sometimes spoke of Hong Kong surviving despite its 'precarious balance' between China and Britain, Ming Chan focuses on Chinese merchants who 'survived and thrived not despite but because of Hong Kong's "precarious balance": its strategic position at the geographical, political, and cultural borders of the British and Chinese empires.'⁵³ Bernard Luk shows how the goal of educational curricula in colonial Hong Kong was to create 'a bilingual, bicultural elite to function as middlemen between British traders in Hong Kong and merchants and mandarins of China'.⁵⁴ Tsai Jungfang, Michael Ng and others have pointed out how politically aware so many Hong Kongers were, from the early nineteenth

⁴⁹ Smith, Carl T. 'The Chinese Settlement of Hong Kong', *Chung Chi*, p 27. Also, Smith, *Chinese Christians, Elites, Middlemen*; Smith, *A Sense of History*; and, *English-Educated Chinese Elites in Nineteenth-Century Hong Kong* in Topley, *Interaction of Traditions and Life in the Towns*, pp65-96.

⁵⁰ Sinn, *Between East and West*, 1990; Sinn, Wong and Chan *Rethinking Hong Kong*, 2009; *Power and Charity*, 1989; *Pacific Crossing*, 2013; *Multicultural Encounters in Hong Kong*, 2017.

⁵¹ Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, p30, and p41.

⁵² Carroll, John, *Edge of Empire*, p10.

⁵³ Ming K Chan, *Precarious Balance*, p59.

⁵⁴ Luk, Bernard, *Chinese Culture in the Hong Kong Curriculum*, 654, 658-660. Candy Chan finds Hong Kong's Foreign Communities; Chu offers a ruthlessly unequal entrepôt, in *Building Colonial Hong Kong*.

century. Tsai shows labour unrest, splits within the Chinese between conservative and pro-western elite, and the influence in Hong Kong of Chinese political movements; he proves the Chinese are not apathetic and that colonial times offered partnership and collaboration as well as conflict and social crisis.⁵⁵

Tsai also insists on Hong Kong's roots being found in Southeast Asia: 'The growth of Hong Kong after 1842 into an entrepot owed a great deal to the interregional and international trades already developed in the region centuries before the Opium War. In fact, British Hong Kong inherited these trades, which had long been carried on, with Canton and Whampoa as a transshipment port for commodities from various parts of China, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Western world. The historic Nanyang trade figured prominently in the region, with the Teochiu (Chao-chou), Hoklo (Fulao, Hokkien, Amoy) and Cantonese merchants taking active parts in it. The Nanyang trade loomed large in the background of the flourishing Teochiu and Hoklo business circles in colonial Hong Kong... In short, underlying Hong Kong's development as an entrepot was a long history of overseas trade with Canton as a transshipment port.' He adds: 'The prosperity of Hong Kong was linked to the Chinese communities overseas, which retained close ties with their homeland... The Chinese communities abroad clung to the Chinese way of life, and Hong Kong became the centre of an international trade catering to their needs.'⁵⁶

Law Wing Sang denies a narrative of success based on a neutral non-interventionist colonial administration, as it ignores the politics. He applauds Ngo Tak-wing who shows Hong Kong people were not apathetic, rule was less laissez-faire than assumed, conflict was ever-present. In his construction of Collaborative Colonialism he finds 'convenient but often-neglected access to understanding the irregularly shaped cultural landscapes of Hong Kong.'⁵⁷ He agrees Hong Kong is a product of pre-colonial trading patterns, particularly Southeast Asia's coastal cities, and sees a chauvinist victimhood among nationalist Chinese historiographers who deny British colonialism paved the way for Hong Kong, where 'A new settlement of overseas Chinese had been created, which in many respects had more in common with any

⁵⁵ Tsai Jung-Fang, *Hong Kong in Chinese History*; Ng and Wong, *Civil Unrest and Governance*; Ngo Tak-wing, *History, State and Society under colonial rule*; Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power*.

⁵⁶ Tsai Jung-Fang, *Hong Kong in Chinese History*, p17 and p26.

⁵⁷ Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, p5. Also: Ngo Tak-wing, *History, State and society*.

Chinese community in Southeast Asia than with imperial China itself.⁵⁸ He adds Hong Kong's elites have always sought approval from elsewhere, open to collusion with whoever was in power.

Hong Kong historiography adds vital depth and breadth to any study of the place. But again it is limited – confined to looking either at local people without their global networks, or to the territory's place in the world without any focus on its people. This thesis aims to pull these elements together by showing how a close-up analysis of Hong Kong's peoples, communities and networks – the prosopography – gives us new insight into Hong Kong's larger role, not just locally, or regionally, but globally.

Hong Kong stands in a global chain of Port Cities

New imperial histories offer new structural perspectives and allow subaltern voices to be heard, providing a larger framework. But these are still restricted by their scope in which empire is defined as the main frame.⁵⁹ Only by taking a deeper look at the world pre-dating Hong Kong and the connections created through global networks of trade and migration, is Hong Kong's place in the world finally enabled to emerge. Global historians offer a wider view across Asia encompassing the entire Eurasian continent, helping to show how even such a late developer as Hong Kong can trace its roots back to Venice and Baghdad, through Sokotra and Calicut, and on through Surat to Singapore.⁶⁰ Their work enables local history to be seen in a global context, and allows Hong Kong to join a long-standing network of Port Cities.

Firstly, Janet Abu-Lughod⁶¹ disputes Wallerstein's claim of a growing integration of regions and societies around 1450, by showing so much was happening before the

⁵⁸ Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, p28. Closer examination of miscegenation offers new postcolonial historiography; 'manifold interrelationships' between colonial and nationalist projects, p209, help show 'the multifarious colonial makings of the Hong Kong Chinese'. p210.

⁵⁹ Howe, Stephen, *The New Imperial Histories Reader*.

⁶⁰ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*; Bentley, *Old World Encounters*; Hopkins, *Globalization in World History*; Wesseling, *Imperialism and Colonialism*; Wesseling, *A Cape of Asia*; Wesseling, *Expansion and Reaction*; Osterhammel, *Transformation of the World*; Osterhammel, *Colonialism*; Goody, *The Eurasian Miracle*; Lombard and Aubin *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea*; Tagliacozzo and Chang, *Chinese Circulations*, pxii. Baghdiantz et al, *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks*.

⁶¹ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*.

West arrived, at least back to the 1200s.⁶² Then Bayly's outline of early modern globalization highlights the period just before the birth of Hong Kong as one of global imperialism, increasing hybridities and inter-racial sex. 'Large Eurasian, Afro-Asia, and later, Euro-Australasian communities developed across the world... Neither race nor nationality, as understood at the end of the nineteenth century, was yet a dominant concept.'⁶³ He adds: 'Chinese merchants in port cities adapted these Eurasian and Islamic categories to their own concepts of refinement and barbarity... Caste as a global measure of embodied status... operated at a deeper level than nationality, which remained a flexible and rather indistinct category at this point.'⁶⁴

Work by Hopkins et al shows the cosmopolitanism of earlier eras of archaic and proto-globalisation. Even though mixing was later corralled by national interest, 'continuities were striking everywhere because the European empires were built on the archaic foundations and proto-globalizing tendencies of the societies they subordinated... the structure and evolution of colonialism itself were heavily influenced by the resilience and continuing dynamism of indigenous institutions.'⁶⁵

Hong Kong stands out as having, in 1841, very little 'society' for new imperialists to exploit or manipulate. This is why its emergence was so reliant on older patterns of cosmopolitan diasporas, integral to world trade across Eurasia for centuries. The British were one globalizing force to birth Hong Kong, but two non-European globalisms, Islam and Diaspora, played key roles too. 'The continuing vitality of the borderless world of diasporas was thus of key importance in maintaining the global economic system that is usually seen as being the product of the West.'⁶⁶ Bayly outlines key aspects of archaic globalizations that prefigured the evolution of the modern world (and so the birth of Hong Kong), noting the centrality of merchant diasporas and how a maritime bazaar economy, and the land caravan trade, underpinned capitalist expansion in the colonial period. Important traders were Armenians from Persia through the Ottoman world to Burma and beyond. Bayly

⁶² Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System* University of California Press, 1974. Abu-Lughod, 'Discontinuities and Persistence: One World System or a Succession of Systems', in Frank and Gills, *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand*, pp278-91, p283. See James Chin Kong *Merchants and Other Sojourners*. Frank's *ReOrient* claims 15th century Southeast Asia 'was one of the world's richest and commercially important regions', pp92-3.

⁶³ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, p46.

⁶⁴ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, p47.

⁶⁵ Hopkins, *Globalization in World History*, p8.

⁶⁶ Hopkins, *Globalization in World History*, p40.

says such agents of globalisation have long been treated as mere sideshows to the primary narrative of European expansion when they should instead be seen as integral to it all, part of a functionally coherent pattern of commerce and culture.⁶⁷ Wesseling showed that not only must imperial centres accept pre-colonial reality, but so must those colonized admit their own histories.⁶⁸ Henley and Schulte Nordholt note how a historiographic big picture can encompass rich fields of diasporic, migration studies, and cosmopolitanism, and that the longer view helps to 'overcome the compartmentalization imposed by conventional historical periodization.'⁶⁹ At last, a perspective emerges in which Hong Kong might belong. Global history with a dose of *longue durée* shows East, Southeast and South Asia as deeply connected, interlocking zones of peoples, activities and polities.⁷⁰

Rajat Kanta Ray details the evolution of this bazaar, that expanding sphere between European corporations and subsistence or peddling trades.⁷¹ Ancient systems met, confronted, meshed and merged with western imperialisms. Thus, the 'five great colonial port cities of nineteenth-century Asia – Shanghai, Hongkong, Singapore, Calcutta and Bombay – became the focal points of Asian trade and finance. The concentration owed as much to the expanding participation of the Jewish, Indian and Chinese merchant communities as to the influx of Western capital.'⁷² Specifically, port cities are where the bricolage – the mixing and migration - happens. The chain of global port cities is the pathway on which Hong Kong's diverse peoples – its bricoleurs and Eurasians – travel. Port cities are the milestones marking their journey across the world, and port city networks are the highways on which they travel. This takes us far beyond the frames of British or Chinese historiographies, or the constraints of Area Studies or local Hong Kong historiography. Hong Kong's Eurasians are Port City People.

⁶⁷ Bayly, in Hopkins, *Globalization in World History*, p64.

⁶⁸ See Wesseling, *A Cape of Asia and, Imperialism and Colonialism*.

⁶⁹ Henley and Schulte Nordholt. *Environment, Trade and Society in Southeast Asia*, p2. See also: Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*; Cohen, *Global Diasporas*; Cheah, Robbins, eds. *Cosmopolitics, Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*; McDonogh, and Wong, *Global Hong Kong*; Meter, *Hong Kong as a Global Metropolis*; Hamilton, *Cosmopolitan Capitalists, Hong Kong and the Chinese Diaspora*.

⁷⁰ See Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*; Conrad, *What is Global History*; Bellich et al, *The Prospect of Global History*.

⁷¹ Rajat Kanta Ray, 'Asian Capital', p455.

⁷² Rajat Kanta Ray, 'Asian Capital', p482. Hein says 'Port-related flows of goods, people and ideas cross institutional boundaries and create complex, fuzzy territories', in *The Port Cityscape*.

As Bayly's bazaar evolves into Asia's chain of port cities, Hong Kong's history makes more sense. Where once coastal towns fed inland agricultural produce to a maritime trading world, port cities featured a dominant power seeking monopolies over the trade in key commodities. British port cities, by contrast, eulogised a notion of Free Trade in which the more (trades and traders) was considered the merrier (or most lucrative). Su Lin Lewis describes port cities as 'nodes of commerce, communication, and power'; she finds 'the emergence of a nascent and cosmopolitan civil society in Asia in its multi-ethnic port-cities.'⁷³ Here the local and the global came slap bang up against each other, changing each other in the process. Colonial-era port cities 'were fraught with racial hierarchies and economic inequality, yet they were also incubators of modern sensibilities open to new ideas of political and social change, from democratic government to women's rights.'⁷⁴ She adds that port cities further east 'have been just as diverse, though the extent to which their inhabitants interacted and emulated each other is still up for debate.'⁷⁵ By the 1920s, port cities were 'dynamic environments in which Asians could re-imagine the world ... hotbeds for religious reformers, aspiring political leaders, new literati, and a rising middle class'.⁷⁶ But post-colonial states in Asia built on nationalist narratives, often obscuring the lateral links between trading and labouring classes beyond borders.

Harper aims to 'decentre our understanding of these larger processes' to tell 'of lives that were lived at the interstices of empires, and of struggles that did not see the nation-state as its sole end or as the natural ordering of a future world.' He cites Mas Marco Kartodikromo calling this 'the human nation of the world' and finds 'a time and a place between - or, perhaps more accurately, besides - empire and nation.'⁷⁷

Port cities also pre-date these definitions. Rhoads Murphey explains: 'Port functions, more than anything else, make a city cosmopolitan, a word which does not necessarily mean "sophisticated" but rather hybrid. A port city is open to the world, or at least to a varied section of it. In it races, cultures, and ideas as well as goods from a variety of places jostle, mix, and enrich each other and the life of the city'.⁷⁸

⁷³ Lewis, Su Lin, *Cities in Motion*, p2.

⁷⁴ Lewis, Su Lin, *Cities in Motion*, p2.

⁷⁵ Lewis, Su Lin, *Cities in Motion*, p8

⁷⁶ Lewis, Su Lin, *Cities in Motion*, p1.

⁷⁷ Harper, Tim. *Underground Asia*, pp xxvii-xxviii.

⁷⁸ Murphey, in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, p225.

The chief mark of success for a port city was its ability to attract trade and traders. It might or might not be a Treaty Port – a legally defined entity, akin to the earlier Capitulations of Ottoman times, offering extra-territoriality. The trade might be coastal, riverine, or international, ‘Yet all of them also exhibit a highly varied mix of peoples and cultures, reflecting their widespread connections...as cosmopolitan centres of ferment, social mobility, innovation, and stimulus, open doors on the world and major crossroads of its traffic in ideas and people as well as in goods.’⁷⁹ It was the people that made a port city.⁸⁰

Su Lin Lewis, Tim Harper, Sebouh Aslanian, Mark Ravinder Frost, and Sunil Amrith provide a framework in which Hong Kong can be at home.⁸¹ In particular, Harper has shown how insular Southeast Asia had always been global, constituting an axis between East Asia and India and the Middle East. Always porous, the region benefitted in many ways from colonial injections of vigour and modernity, leading to a revitalisation of old patterns, which, at least for the nineteenth century, maintained ethnicity as a malleable concept and migration as a core activity. By seeing how people actually lived, using biographies of key figures and an understanding of diasporic identities, one can, he argues, show how hugely complex layers of activity and belonging emerged around the great port cities of colonial Asia which remained largely ungoverned by the Europeans who thought they were in power.

Physical links strengthened the human networks too. Steamships sailed between Manila and Hong Kong, flights to London from Hong Kong flew via Penang, Masonic lodges overlapped from Hong Kong to Johor. South Asians came to Hong Kong because they knew Western rigging; Overseas Chinese returned to Hong Kong as the nearest safe place to China.⁸² Leonard Blussé argues in this context that compared to earlier port towns such as Canton, Batavia and Nagasaki, Singapore and Hong Kong marked a firm break with the past, being based not on monopolistic control of one or two commodities, but on the British concept of free trade.

⁷⁹ Murphey, in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, p236, and ff.

⁸⁰ Broeze, *Gateways of Asia*, p17. Sutherland refers to Berry, *Cities as Systems*. Paul Cohen argues littoral cities - Canton, HK, Shanghai, Ningpo, Foochow and Tientsin - had distinct cultures.

⁸¹ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*; Lewis, ‘Rotary International’s “acid test”’; Harper *Underground Asia*; Harper and Amrith, *Sites of Asian Interaction*; Frost, *Singapore, A Biography*.

⁸² Blussé, *Visible Cities*.

Port City Prosopography

By tracing the families, key personalities, their networks and fluid social zones, Hong Kong emerges as an Asian port city made by wider Eurasia at least as much as by China. In this thesis I discover the in-between people, who I also call Eurasian, who are essential to understanding the nature of Hong Kong.⁸³ Detailed empirical work is needed through a close reading of people and families as, so often, the records lead us astray. For example, Paul van Dyke notes that defining trade according to ships' flags has 'skewed our understanding of what was actually happening' as many financiers of voyages were based in India or Southeast Asia. 'Customs officials in China — as well as historians in the present day — have logically assigned the trade of those ships to the flags they displayed. This has kept the real owners in the shadows'. Even though a ship's captain might be European, the power sat elsewhere. Here again, the tools of prosopography can help by focusing on just who owned the ships, where they came from and where they went. By concentrating on these people, it is hoped to bring them from the margins of history to the centre where they more rightly belong.

Helen Sutherland explains these translator/interpreters were the 'Gatekeepers, capable of shaping both perceptions and policy. Their ability to bridge cultural divides was crucial, but consequently their identities could appear ambiguous and their loyalties uncertain...'⁸⁴ She adds: 'Such mediating roles demanded special skills, sensitivities, and connections, which were mainly to be found in the creole and mestizo communities that developed in the wake of European settlement.'⁸⁵ More specialized were banians of Calcutta, dubashes of Madras, or the comprador of the China Coast. Perhaps most under-rated of all were the women who often formed the first connections with new traders, in Hong Kong as across Southeast Asia.

Many of Sutherland's points about Makassar apply to Hong Kong. She notes how State Archives may be seductively coherent but ignore day-to-day routines, politics, and the internal life of Asian communities - dividing people by race, religion,

⁸³ Van Dyke & Schopp, *The Private Side of the Canton Trade*, p3, also see p5.

⁸⁴ Sutherland, 'Treacherous Translators and Improvident Paupers', p319.

⁸⁵ Sutherland, 'Treacherous Translators and Improvident Paupers', p324.

occupation and contracts when all such borders are permeable, ambiguous, flexible. Her tolken, as with Hong Kong's Eurasian core, were numerically small but central to urban life and the port city's functioning. Her tolken, as did Hong Kong's Eurasians, maintained their own networks of informants, clients, diplomatic relations and political intelligence. She finds, as do I, the symbiosis between these 'translators' and the powers that be. She also finds, as do I, that several families monopolized the tolken positions for generations, 'all part of an inter-connected complex of clans'.⁸⁶ And she notes how, as time went by, the space for negotiation, the lifeblood of such in-between communities, shrank.

Tracing the emergence of Hong Kong requires a close look at many of these in-between people.⁸⁷ Examining the daily life of diverse peoples will take us beyond the binary of 'Chinese city' or 'British colony'. In Hong Kong, newly inter-connecting people generated a fresh dynamic, a non-state entity with roots far across the Eurasian continent. Discovering how Hong Kong became an Asian port city gives Hong Kong the more-Asian identity that is its due. It also illuminates how and why Hong Kong was different to mainland China.

There is no one word for the essential people in trading settlements who are more than middlemen and women, more than translators or traders, more than mistresses or clerks. They might be each of these things when acting for the outside power, but also run their own businesses, their own property empires, nurture their own dynasties, forge their own networks. They are often more influential over a longer period of time than any passing British or Chinese administrator. They cross boundaries – of race, faith, class and gender. They cross borders in the simple physical sense - they are all, British and most Chinese included - migrants. They also break taboos - when a Parsi marries a Chinese, or a Briton speaks Hindustani and Portuguese, or a Muslim's three wives are each of a different faith and ethnicity, or an Englishwoman brings up her husband's half-Chinese children with care.

⁸⁶ Sutherland, 'Treacherous Translators and Improvident Paupers', p339. See Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*; Kling & Peason *The Age of Partnership*; Bonacich, 'A Theory of Middleman Minorities'. Blalock's Middleman Minorities encompassed Chinese in Southeast Asia, Jews in Europe, Indians in East Africa, Armenians, Parsis. See Cheeseright, 'Mixed Blood: Discovering Eurasians'; Yap, 'Sex and Stereotypes'. Scammell, 'The Pillars of Empire: Indigenous Assistance'; Neild-Basu, 'The Dubashes of Madras'; Bosma & Raben, *Being 'Dutch' in the Indies*; Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*; Butcher & Dick, *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming*; Ross & Telkamp, *Colonial Cities*.

⁸⁷ Emma Teng's *Eurasian* offers only one Hong Kong example, the well-known Ho Tung family.

One learns who matters by what they do. Hong Kong's Eurasians found the gaps between empires and made them their own, becoming indispensable to any empire's functioning. By reading within a Global History frame — providing a wide angle lens to make comparisons, find similarities and note differences across times and spaces — this becomes clear. It also helps to understand the variety of peoples who have made Hong Kong home, by considering Hong Kong not merely a lonely Chinese land stolen by Scottish drug-traders, but a way-station on the routes of globalization over centuries. Any binary *Tale of Two Cities* forgets that many of these people were sleeping together most nights. It forgets the many other peoples who slept there too. It forgets Hong Kong's offer of new life to bricoleurs. They were not sent by the central imperial power to this 'outpost'; they were not already in Hong Kong when the European empires arrived. They moved.

The first generations of today's Hong Kongers' knew the way to Hong Kong, as Chapter 2 shows, from earlier trade links of which their forebears had been a part.

Chapter 3 meets the people arriving, trading and building lives under British rule.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Parsis - one of many groups with Asian roots who played a central role in Hong Kong.

Chapter 5 looks at the often-trafficked women who birthed Eurasian families and traces how they bore the seeds of a new elite.

Chapter 6 brings this web into the twentieth century when mixed-race families faced challenges of identity as the boundaries around them changed.

Chapter 7 shows how these networks adapted and survived World War Two.

Chapter 8 surveys recent changes as Hong Kong's history of absence continues: neither Britain nor China included Hong Kong people in talks over their fate.

Chapter 9 concludes this thesis with a summary of how Hong Kong only makes sense if seen as port city, and more so as a Eurasian port city.

Chapter 2 Asia's Global Trade and Port Cities

Trading of one kind or another had been going on south and west of Hong Kong for centuries and this trade was global long before the latecomers, Westerners, arrived. Even then, after European traders appeared in Asia increasingly from the sixteenth century, and the British in full force from the late eighteenth century, Hong Kong was an afterthought on the map of Asian exchange. We look here at how that happened, in order to understand where Hong Kong's peoples came from. This chapter argues that Hong Kong's emergence was only possible thanks to particular pre-existing figurations, namely, patterns of commodity exchange practised by long-standing and far-flung networks of peoples from across Eurasia. An imperial power did not suddenly appear, run up a flag and start a city. On the contrary, the port city of Hong Kong grew out of, and was foreshadowed by, scores of earlier port cities across the world, where a wide range of peoples, of different faiths and living practises, came together and exchanged goods, ideas and even genes. This chain of trade and human connection was never seamless or safe, nor was it a uniform process with fixed rules. But the logic of trade required networks of inter-connected people (often families, dynasties and faith-tied groups) to pursue it.

Political structures prevalent at the time – a weak China, a powerful imperial thrust from Europe, a diverse spray of countries and cultures to south and west – all enabled the founding of Hong Kong. But while Empire may have been the rallying call of the opium traders, that loosely-run structure could only function on the back of Asian trading diasporas with all their knowledge, experience, alliances and linked port-cities. It suited the power-holders to welcome migrant communities, to give them space and freedom to run their cross-border lives. Without them, trade would not take place. A mutual balance was required of information and support, between rulers and trading networks. After all, those networks both predated and outlasted changing ruling patterns.

Trade and its Peoples

Back in the ninth century, a thriving exchange was underway between Canton and civilisations as far away as western India and Persia. Long before the more northern

Chinese joined in, Persian, Sanskrit and other influences had been spreading through India into commercially linked centres in South and Southeast Asia.⁸⁸ Hinduism and Buddhism co-existed and with spiritual figures on the move came traders and the exchange of material goods across the Indian and Malay seas. A revolution in the production of wet rice and the spread of prosperity along developing trade arteries challenge the Chinese perception of the world, with itself as the centre. From the tropics came the pattern of strategic river ports in which outlets for rich commodity production upriver became centres for sending out that produce to markets to the north and west. These ports were often highly cosmopolitan, welcoming Chinese, Indian, Arab and Malay traders, and Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim teachers.⁸⁹

By the 800s, Arabs had routes across the Arabian Sea to Indian ports such as Quilon or Calicut, through the straits between India and Ceylon to Aceh, the northern tip of Sumatra. This was already an established route before the Chinese of the Song thought about joining in. Once Canton was added as a destination, and if the pirates of Malacca and around Singapore could be managed, the route was extended northwards. Ships either sailed up the coast of Champa, the Gulf of Tonkin and Hainan to China. Or they took the more dangerous but bountiful route along the north coasts of Borneo, the western Philippines to southern Taiwan and Fujian. Once the Spaniard conquest of southern America had spurred the extraction of silver which then reached Spanish Philippines, the route would take in Manila too, a vital link in the chain from the 1570s.

A great deal of specialized production was going on, of metal tools, ceramics, textiles and Indian cotton. China's Southern Song era (1127-1280), placed unprecedented attention on maritime routes to the South, and finally Chinese shipping could be seen joining the trading networks of the region (just as its overland routes through Central Asia were falling apart, accelerated by the fall of Baghdad in 1258). Chinese actively spread themselves southward: 'for the first time in Chinese history the revenues from trade and customs exceeded the land revenue. Much of this contact was with the southern borderlands, and the island countries beyond them...'⁹⁰ This

⁸⁸ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p34. Note Sheldon Pollock's term, the Sanskrit Cosmopolis, for a wide spread of Indian culture across southern Asia from around the fourth to fourteenth centuries.

⁸⁹ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p45.

⁹⁰ Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, p15.

contact made Chinese influential in the Srivijaya kingdom (Sumatra and Malaya), altering control of sea routes between India and China, and where merchants came from all over and met each other: Arabs, Chinese, Indians, Malays, Bugis and more.

Now Southeast Asia entered its 'Age of Commerce' lasting from the 1400s well into the 1600s. Go-to places were Pegu in Burma (Myanmar), Ayuthaya in Siam (Thailand), Phnom Penh on the southeast Asian mainland, Palembang in Sumatra, Malacca (Melaka) on the Malay Peninsula, Banten in West Java, plus Brunei, Cebu, Manila, Ternate and Banda. A 'highly organised system of entrepot trade'⁹¹ involved successful diaspora capitalists such as the Chettiars of south India and the Gujarati sharafs of the north. Chinese traders were integral once Quanzhou (Chinchew) and Guangzhou (Canton) joined this cosmopolitan world during the Southern Song era. Muslim Arabs were in Canton from the mid-800s; after all, the Indian Ocean trade was essentially an Islamic network 'increasingly intersecting with the other networks based in the ports of China'.⁹² As usual, Arabs married locally and spread the word. Islam was the natural faith of commerce as it offered a portable trading vocabulary and legal framework. The Muslim 'treasure ship' Admiral Zheng He left behind significant groups of Chinese Muslims in the various ports he visited. Yet the powers in the region at the time were Siam, Champa and Java.⁹³

European powers

The Chinese state was far less important in regional trade than were its peoples. Acknowledgement of Chinese suzerainty occurred to varying degrees in Malaya, Burma, Sukothai, Khmer, Champa, Annam, and Java. From 1350 on, however, successive Chinese revolts meant 'control over south China was lost', presumably including the area now known as Hong Kong; and, 'As on previous occasions the decline of Chinese power meant that the kingdoms of the south were left to their own quarrels without any fear of Chinese intervention'.⁹⁴ Trade and the nodes it nurtured, carried on regardless. Now Malukan spices were reaching Venice through Cairo (by 1490s) and by 1498, Vasco da Gama had found a new route to Calicut from

⁹¹ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p63.

⁹² Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p69.

⁹³ Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, wonders if the Ming Expeditions, 1405-1433, lacking conquest and official trade were about power or curiosity, pp87-89, 92-100.

⁹⁴ Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, p85.

Lisbon, so that Lisbon began replacing Venice. When Portugal took Malacca in 1511, the displaced Muslim community there carried on in Sumatran and other ports. Spain took Cebu in 1565 and Manila in 1570 - so that ships from Mexico brought not only silver but also chili, papaya, maize and tobacco to Asia. The Dutch then barged in and were trading 22 ships through Southeast Asia by 1598, taking Ambon in 1606, Jakarta in 1619, Banda in 1621, and Formosa (Taiwan) in 1624-62 and 1664-68.

The Chinese were only just entering this rich new world of southern trade pioneered by other civilisations. Hong Kong was nowhere on this map in the pre-modern era. Up until about 1400 all Southeast Asian trade goods were foraged from the wilds — elephant tusks, rhino horns, aromatic woods, incense, cloves, nutmeg, gums, resins, Birds' nests, bird of paradise and much more. But now, China needed silver from Manila (and Japan), Europe needed Southeast Asian spices and Chinese silk and ceramics, and everyone needed India's cotton. A shift to commercial agriculture produced spectacular growth in pepper and sugar cultivation in 'the lands below the winds' (under the sway of monsoons). Tin mining took off too. Huge temporary populations of traders between monsoons were turning up from everywhere, spurring the growth of cosmopolitan trading hubs across the region. 'Most Southeast Asian maritime cities, and all of those which served the long-term trade with India and China, had hectic periods when merchants from both China and India were in port, which reminded Europeans of the trade fairs of their continent.'⁹⁵

It was China's decline and growing distaste for maritime trade that let it slip out of government hands into those of private merchants. Ming emperors 'did not have contact with men from the real [further] south... These northern men of slight education had no personal knowledge of the south, the sea, or indeed of any region of China other than their native place and the palace at Peking.'⁹⁶ Their focus was always the pressing dangers looming from the north. Chinese maritime power was a Sung phenomenon, which faded out thereafter. Once all trade, for example with Japan, was ruled illegal, it was taken over by 'smugglers' and 'pirates'.

This abdication by the Chinese state was taking place just as more aggressive figures were making inroads from the West, leading to the granting of the monopoly on

⁹⁵ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p80.

⁹⁶ Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, pp106-7.

foreign trade to Canton and the rise of Western dominance there. As Fitzgerald notes, the thought was not to oppose trade but to control it 'at a point far removed from the northern provinces, and at the same time nearest to the countries from which the foreigners came. By making Canton the sole port, there was no reason for foreign shipping to move further up the coast, and contacts with potential dissidents could be minimised.' Thus, 'The abdication of all sea power by both Japan, following the seclusion policy adopted by the Tokugawa Shoguns, and then by China under the Manchu dynasty was the origin of the Western ascendancy in the Far East.'⁹⁷

From 1750 to 1850, when the idea of a settlement on Hong Kong island arose, trading patterns across Southeast Asia were diverging. Anthony Reid posits a decline in Southeast Asia after the sixteenth century and asks if this divergence between East and West was due to European monopoly-based colonialism, to culture, or the fall in silver production. Victor Lieberman says that the entire Eurasian continent, East and West, suffered similar crises (with important distinctions to be made between mainland and archipelagic Southeast Asia). Kenneth Pomeranz shifts the moment of divergence to 1750-1850, blaming it on Asia's exhaustion of land and energy while Europe had coal and forests available in the New World. Reid sees this as an impressive argument but one which discounts the importance of China's silver import strategies, and says the crisis affected Southeast Asia more than elsewhere because of the region's high exposure to the expanding global trade cycle. As the West's ships took control, many Southeast Asian cosmopolises were lost; European militarisation and monopolies ensued.

What historians agree on is that there were significant climate changes, patterns of disease, military innovations and shifts in global commercial cycles, as well as new intellectual trends which would change the shape of the playing board. 'By the eighteenth century the items of greatest interest to world trade were no longer Southeast Asian, but had shifted to the cotton cloth of India, the tobacco and sugar of the New World, and the silks, porcelains, and tea of China.'⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, p112, p113.

⁹⁸ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, pp147-148. See also, Lieberman, Victor. *Strange Parallels*, and, Mainland Mirrors. Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence*.

Movements of People

Already by the fifteenth century, Chinese traders had been moving southwards in greater numbers. This movement both pre-dated, and strengthened, British, Dutch and other Europeans empire in Asia. Once new Qing/Manchu rulers reversed Ming rules against travelling abroad, its traders were now seen as useful to have around.

As Wang Gungwu has outlined, two Chinese communities abroad at the time that Ming China had closed its maritime gates, were stuck abroad: one on the northeast coast of Java, described as Muslim, and the other of Guangdong and Fujian descendants of Chinese sojourners who had traded regularly at Palembang. There were probably more, in Champa, Siam, Malay, Sulu, and Borneo. 'Thus, before the arrival of the Europeans, a chain of small port communities of Chinese traders was servicing a thriving trade that many people in eastern and Southeast Asia were actively seeking to expand,' says Wang, citing Ming Veritable Records.⁹⁹ 'The Hokkiens ... were the majority of the overseas traders between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. They were also the most successful. They emerged as a coherent trading force on the China coast earlier than the Portuguese did on the European coast.'¹⁰⁰ When the Ming had tried to shut them down in 1368 they carried on regardless, survived on their own outside the law. Skilled ship-builders, wealthy clansmen and literati relatives, home and village networks — all survived, providing a wealth of long-time knowledge and experience of Southeast Asia.

Kwee Hui Kian explains how successive waves of Chinese throughout 1400-1850 populated the region. They gradually inserted themselves into regional trade and local markets; they even started producing key commodities such as sugar, gambir, pepper, rice and tin. Clan origins gave them networks abroad; meanwhile whoever was in charge (originally indigenous power-holders and later colonial) allowed, even encouraged, them to occupy strategic commercial positions. Kwee notes that it was not some innate "Chinese-ness" that made these communities succeed. Rather, 'what gave them [the Chinese] decisive advantage over other groups of Asian and European commercial agents were the specific characteristics in the development of the Southeast Asian economy during the early modern period. This momentum was

⁹⁹ Wang Gungwu, *Merchants without Empires* Ch. 13, in Tracy, *Rise of Merchant Empires*, p408.

¹⁰⁰ Wang in Tracy, *Rise of Merchant Empires*, p419.

then carried over into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they were serving as trade intermediaries especially for the European merchant houses'.¹⁰¹

It was a happy confluence of time and place. Chinese settled down and opened shops from the early 1400s in entrepôts or port towns in north Java, Palembang and Siam. A century later, Chinese shipping to Southeast Asia had increased massively and was now reaching Malacca, Patani, Brunei and Banten. Chinese also operated within enclave European ports once they appeared and were soon the dominant local intermediaries in Manila and Batavia.¹⁰² By the eighteenth century, Chinese junks were visiting port towns in Cochin China, the Mekong delta, Siam, Indochina, Songkhla, Cebu, Sulu, Trengganu, Pahang, Johor, Riau, Siak, Aceh, Brunei, Banjarmasin and Makassar. Kwee says they were just as dominant in inter-insular trade through Southeast Asian seas, as well as upstream into rural hinterlands. They traded all the usual forest and marine products and grew rice too. They also gained political influence, as port masters, revenue farmers and even foreign ministers.¹⁰³

In considering why Chinese were so good at all this, Kwee notes their adaptability, peddling skill, advanced credit systems, and petty currency trade. Above all, however, what made them pre-eminent was European reliance on them (seen, for example, in the rule by the Dutch trading company, *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC). China's growing demands on the region and increased European demand for Southeast Asian products, intensified the need for trade intermediaries. Unlike local groups, the Chinese could stand apart from local conflicts and competition. Far better to use outsider-Asians – and the Chinese soon outpriced and outpaced others such as groups from the Middle East or South Asia.

¹⁰¹ Kwee, in Henley and Schulte Nordholt. *Environment, Trade and Society*, p150.

¹⁰² There were about 30,000 Chinese in Manila in the 1600s and about 3,000 in Batavia in 1627. 'These two port towns also witnessed a novel development in the history of Chinese migration: While they had previously visited Southeast Asia primarily for commercial reasons, Chinese migrants began arriving at these European settlements not only as traders but also as craftsmen, market gardeners and sugar producers.' Kwee in Henley and Schulte Nordholt. *Environment, Trade and Society*, p151.

¹⁰³ In the 1600s, Chinese leased rights to birds' nest collection and cotton textiles from Javanese rulers, thus gaining a monopoly over these commodities; by the third quarter of the eighteenth century, Chinese traders were also dominating trade in Java tobacco, timber, palm sugar, salt. 'In fact they had effectively penetrated the hinterland economy of Java'. Kwee in Henley and Schulte Nordholt. *Environment, Trade and Society*, p155.

At the same time, China's need for regional products was rising – products such as pepper, or exotics such as tortoise shells, resins, sandalwood, rice, timber, sea cucumber. Getting these goods for the Chinese market meant competing with Europeans and working around restrictions, with no imperial support from the Chinese motherland. This was private enterprise and required engaging with the local authorities and making one's own deals, creating monopolies via money not military force. These Chinese could then do the relay shipping, taking tin or pepper from one port to the next within the region, and they could solve production squeezes by importing Chinese labour into Southeast Asia to grow the rice, the pepper and the cash crops, and to do the mining. The concomitant commercialization of Southeast Asian production thus left key products and trades in Chinese hands.

This was a clear example of how the combination of, on the one hand, European empire and, on the other hand, Asian communities of varied insider / outsider status, formed new networks of trade and power. As will be seen, Hong Kong would offer new variations on this theme.

Chinese and British interests

This new dynamism of Chinese trading communities coincided with, on the other side of the world, Britain's. The British had finally won their Napoleonic wars, and had already gained rich Asian experience through their brief tutelages of Manila (1762-64), Malacca and Padang (1765), Maluku (1796 and 1810) and Java (1811-16). The new British presence gave Asian rulers a chance to throw off Dutch or Spanish yokes. A profound distinction that the British brought to the playing board was what they called 'Free Trade'. The Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish had each tried to gain sole control of a key commodity and enforce a monopoly which produced violent punishments of transgressors. The British ideology of 'free trade' required not monopoly but preferential access through special relationships and being faster on their feet. Penang and Singapore became powerful magnets for producers to exchange anything from rice, sugar, tin, coffee and pepper, for manufactured items, Indian cottons, firearms and opium. Anthony Reid reports that this new ideology seemed to work: Singapore's trade with independent entities such as Siam, Vietnam, Aceh, and Bali at least doubled, if not tripled, between 1825 and 1845.

With the British came a new focus on the trade in firearms and opium which the newly establishing states of mainland Southeast Asia and Qing China found deeply tempting. Free trade ports such as Singapore, and soon Hong Kong, earned revenue not by taxing trade, but by taxing opium. The Opium Farm - the farming of revenue by contracted agents — took on a new form as the Chinese allies of the British and the Dutch across Southeast Asia brought in their people to labour, to consume opium, to gamble, and to pay tax on it all. 'The battles for control of new frontiers of mining and plantations in the [Malay] Peninsula and Borneo were often about which Chinese tax-farmer would act on behalf of which ruler'.¹⁰⁴ Opium farmers were given legitimacy through native titles and Dutch or British colonial councils. China's tribute system through which Southeast Asian kingdoms paid court to the Chinese empire had lost all economic meaning by the start of the 1800s. Instead, the specific task of revenue farming quickly became the prerogative of Chinese throughout the region, providing ready access to huge profits, as well as a closeness to the governing power on whose behalf the revenue was being farmed. The farm was invariably allocated (or auctioned) to an influential Chinese so that the British could out-source all that tiresome and expensive business of debt collection and drug distribution. Siam, Johor, Singapore and, later, Hong Kong could not have survived without their opium farms.

The arrival of Europeans in Asia's midst did not by itself change or cause everything.¹⁰⁵ By the eighteenth century, no matter how hard the Europeans tried, the British and the Dutch could still not find a way to compete effectively with the Gujaratis on trade through the Red Sea. They could only make inroads in commodities which the Gujaratis found uninteresting, such as spices and coffee. What mattered was cotton cloth and the Gujaratis controlled that.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, although competition was fierce there was always collaboration too. Europeans had the guns and well-armed shipping; Indian merchants also hired European captains and sailors, sharing knowledge and co-financing trips. Asian merchants moved eastwards from Bengal in the late seventeenth century, trading with Arakan, Pegu,

¹⁰⁴ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p203.

¹⁰⁵ See Kling and Pearson, *The Age of Partnership*. In the 16th century, the Portuguese modified existing patterns in the Asian spice trade but did not replace them. The Portuguese taxed most of Gujarat's external trade (in northwest India) but they cooperated with wealthy Gujaratis too.

¹⁰⁶ For Gujarati merchants in the Red Sea Trade, see Das Gupta in Kling and Pearson, pp123-158.

Siam, Manila and Sumatra, shipping was also run by Armenian merchants, many based in Hugli and Balasore port (part of what we now call Calcutta/Kolkata).

Within Southeast Asia, as important as the Chinese traders were Bugis from South Sulawesi, commanding a long-established trading network through Riau. When the British appeared, they bought opium off the Bugis and sold it on to the Chinese in the South China seas at a profit; at the same time the Bugis bought tin and pepper produced from Johor, Palembang, Bangka and Riau and sold it on at a profit to the British, Portuguese and Chinese. They sold textiles from Bengal and Surat to Westerners and also to the indigenous traders who were bringing in the tin and pepper. Chinese junks bringing China goods, as well as Siamese, Cambodian, Malay and Acehnese boats, came for tin, pepper and opium.

Meanwhile, English interest was only growing and the search for a settlement was underway from the 1770s. In 1772, Edward Mockton had tried for a defensive alliance with the Bugis with permission for a military post at Riau, an exercise of dubious value given the Dutch had expelled the Buginese from Riau by 1784 and Buginese appeals to the British against the Dutch went unheeded. Raffles lost four children and sent his wife insane by thinking that Bengkulu, on the south coast of Sumatra, would be the future way-station of world trade. His second guess turned out better, in Singapore, taken officially in 1819.

As for the Chinese, 'it might be said that increasing numbers of south coast Chinese now understood that it was too difficult to realize maritime China on Chinese soil itself and began to bring their own private versions of maritime China with them overseas,' noted Wang Gungwu.¹⁰⁷ For these Chinese who had, between the 800s until 1368, eagerly gone abroad to join the Asian trade before Ming era restrictions quashed them, the arrival of the Europeans in the region was a good thing. Now the Chinese who had stayed out of China all those years were important again, needed by the Europeans as local allies across the region. And these overseas Chinese had learned the business. They were now more confident, experienced and knowledgeable of foreigners' ways and laws. 'Before the opening of the Treaty Ports after 1842, when the Westerners could have direct access to China, the half century

¹⁰⁷ Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, pp10-11.

or so may be described as the golden age of what might be called “sojourner networking” [when the overseas Chinese] gained an autonomous place’.¹⁰⁸

Back in Canton, it had been a terminus of the Asian trade since at least the 900s; this was not a town suddenly thrust into the modern era by the British guns firing off the ‘Opium War’ of 1839-42. As Paul van Dyke has convincingly shown, Canton’s life blood was not merely the thirteen foreign factories, not at all. Scores of junks headed out from Canton every season, funded both by foreigners and Chinese, going to Batavia, Cochin China, Siam, Cambodia, Passiak, Caucong, Cancou, Palembang and Manila.¹⁰⁹ These were Chinese-managed junks which were competing with Macao (i.e. Portuguese) ships and European ships, actively engaging in the Asia trade. The English trade through Canton was the only one which came near this primarily regional Canton trade.¹¹⁰ The junks had lower storage capacity continuing the tradition of separated water-tight compartments, and so were 35 per cent less efficient than English company ships. However, they employed a lot of people, about 175 crewmen each, and so were massively important to the Canton economy. Somehow despite their higher costs they charged lower rates, competing actively with the foreign traders. Macao too was trading actively, running sandalwood out of Timor and ships as far afield as the Malabar coast. It received little support from Lisbon (suffering under the effects of the monstrous 1755 earthquake) and had to be sure of avoiding any upsets with the bosses of Canton, thus avoiding the provision of too much competition to Canton’s vital regional trade.

The century just before Hong Kong’s birth saw major commercial expansion in the region. Li Tana noted this upsurge in Southeast Asian regional trade directly before the birth of Hong Kong.¹¹¹ Chinese in Bangkok were travelling all over the region, collecting local, British, and Indian products for local as well as Chinese markets. By 1828, up to 70 per cent of the coins in circulation in Guangdong were cast in Vietnam. By the 1830s, Singapore Chinese played a growing role in the Saigon trade, drawn by the gains possible in speculation in rice. These traders took British cotton manufactures, especially grey shirting, to barter it at a loss for rice which was then sold on several times before delivery, at Batavia. ‘It was not by accident that the rice

¹⁰⁸ Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, pp12-13.

¹⁰⁹ Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, p152. See also, Dyke, *The Canton Trade*.

¹¹⁰ Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, p156.

¹¹¹ Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, pp261-270.

trade was handled only by the most prominent merchants in all the port cities — Singapore, Saigon, Bangkok, and later Hong Kong. Due to the requirements of large capital outlay and storage facilities, as well as the risks involved in shipping, the rice trade could only be controlled and speculated in by these most powerful Chinese.¹¹²

The founding of Singapore sealed an informal compact between Chinese and British. 'Together they found that they could carry on as stewards of international commerce in the Malay world without the Malays or Bugis who had once dominated that trade.'¹¹³ That symbiosis included Penang funnelling products extracted from Siam, Sumatra and northern Malaya into Singapore and so to China. Chinese traders made this happen. Chinese planters grew the pepper (in Brunei, Cambodia, Chantaburi,) and the gambir in Riau and Johor and the sugar in Siam and Vietnam. Chinese miners extracted the tin from Phuket and Kelantan, Bangka and Borneo. By the end of the eighteenth century, a whole new economic map had been drawn across Southeast Asia. The Chinese junk trade underwent its greatest expansion and settlements in Southeast Asia only grew. This growth was inextricably intertwined with the growth of British settlement at Singapore and up the Malay peninsula. This would 'set the stage for British capital to take control of both the financing of the production and, the purchasing of the products'.¹¹⁴ None of this could happen without the active collaboration of overseas Chinese and other trading networks.

Bird saliva and other glues

Michael Walter Charney has argued convincingly that people often study either the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia or they study the Indians / Armenians / Persians / Europeans of the Western Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.¹¹⁵ But to understand the emergence of Hong Kong, we need to do both. One way to trace this is through the things being traded.

Charney's example of birds' nests illuminates one of many so-called 'country trades' that would later shape the emergence of Hong Kong. He describes a triangular

¹¹² Li Tana in Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, p267. She names some of these Chinese.

¹¹³ Lieberman, 'Mainland-Archipelagic Parallels and Contrasts', in Reid, *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies*, p44.

¹¹⁴ Trocki, 'Chinese Pioneering in Eighteenth Century Southeast Asia' in Reid, *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies*, p98.

¹¹⁵ Charney in Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, pp 245-259.

network trading in bird products, especially nests but also eggs, feathers and skins, which were produced and exported from British Burma, through Penang to southern China. This trade increased dramatically in the early nineteenth century, partly because British expansion into the Straits Settlements in the 1790s and coastal annexation of coastal Burma 1826 and Lower Burma 1852 meant that 'commercial intelligence-gathering rapidly increased'.¹¹⁶ More significantly, a growing Chinese domestic demand pushed nest-harvesters further afield to work harder. For example, the Governor of Cochin China (south Vietnam) sent an embassy to Burma in 1820-21 to get permission to buy esculent birds' nests on the Tennasserim coast to sell in China; the officials went up the Straits of Malacca via Singapore, Malacca and Penang.¹¹⁷ When the British occupied Tenasserim in 1824 as part of the First Anglo-Burmese War 1824-26, their plan was to develop local commerce with Chinese merchants especially from the Straits and Penang. There was even a farm or contracted monopoly for birds' nests, bid for in five-year periods.¹¹⁸ By the early 1840s, Chinese junk fleets were going further northwest beyond Tavoy and Mergui to the Ramree Islands, in central Arakan, for birds' nests and fish. There was also tin from Mergui and Penang, shipped on to China, India, and London. Chinese demand pre-dated the British presence, but the British presence expanded the trade and hinted at a British and Chinese needs for new trading places (such as the future Hong Kong) through which to trade.¹¹⁹

Roderich Ptak also focuses on the items traded to gain insight into the networks formed. Fujian and Guangdong were the most important producers of tea - especially a zone south of the Pearl River known as the 'thirty-three settlements'. Tea was also brought from inland to Guangzhou and at first was shipped up to Amoy in

¹¹⁶ Charney in Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, p247.

¹¹⁷ Charney in Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in Transition*, p248.

¹¹⁸ The highly profitable Tavoy Farm was run by a Chinese. The Mergui Farm went to the Armenian Sarkies, later famed for their hotels including the Raffles (Singapore), the Strand (Rangoon) and the Eastern & Oriental (Penang).

¹¹⁹ Reyes, Raquel, 'Glimpsing Southeast Asian Naturalia in Global Trade, c. 300 BCE-1600 CE', Ch. 7 in Henley and Schulte Nordholt, *Environment, Trade and Society*, pp96-119. Reyes takes the trade in luxury goods back to the 3rd century, when southern China imported aromatic clove from the Moluccas. By the 13th century, trade between China and the Malay Peninsula focused on jungle products — beeswax, lakawood, gharuwood, ebony, camphor, ivory, rhino horn, in exchange for pongee parasols, silk thread, rice, salt sugar, porcelain, earthenware bowls. Archaeologists see a Southeast Asian interest in foreign goods back to the 4th century. A key source for Sung traders was the *Chu-fan-chi*, or *Record of Foreign Countries* written by Chao Ju Kua, published as a handbook in 1226. This described people and cultures along the sea routes of Asia, coastal Africa, Mediterranean, and a methodical account of principal items of maritime trade, p117.

Fujian for export from there. By the end of the seventeenth century, British traders were shipping tea from Amoy and the Zhejiang coast. 'From 1699, the British ships would appear in Guangzhou to load tea too. By 1704, Britain was importing about 20,000 pounds sterling worth of tea from China; this would expand five-fold. While Guangzhou turned into the most important port in tea trade with the British and EIC, the British shipments from Amoy had ceased completely by 1715.'¹²⁰ Of course the Dutch, Portuguese and French were engaged too, but growing purchases of tea by the British (and their packing it in boxes to hold the flavour on the long journey to Europe) cut into Dutch dominance. In 1721 and 1722 the British sent three times as much tea to Europe as did the Dutch VOC, until Amsterdam decided to ship direct from Guangzhou too. Amsterdam sent two ships at once, one loaded with silver and the other with commodities; the European products would be sold in Batavia in exchange for products that China needed, and then those products would be used in Guangzhou to buy Chinese goods. It worked for a while.

More importantly, argues Ptak, it showed a better way to pay China for tea: to give it products it wanted. This was a next step in the pathway towards the founding of Hong Kong. Crucially, these were not European products but Southeast Asian products desired by the Chinese. Thus European ships had to engage in Southeast Asian trade to collect the Asian products to take to China. It is vital to note here that this trade in Asian products - from birds' nests to tea, from ivory to sea slugs - long predates the trade in opium which would later dominate the China trade.

'The new trend was the British *country trade*, in other words, the trade carried out by private British traders who did not work for EIC and were noticed in Guangzhou after 1730 due to their strong competition. Both regular EIC ships and those of British *country traders* sailed frequently within Southeast Asia searching for commodities which would enable them to buy tea in China as VOC used to do.'¹²¹ It was the marauding Dutch and English who saw (more than the Portuguese did) that the key to avoiding dependence on Spanish silver was to engage in this intra-Asian Country Trade'.¹²² Profits from the country trade eventually replaced home-base subsidies to pay for war fleets and fortresses.

¹²⁰ Ptak, 'The Chinese, the Portuguese and the Dutch in the Tea Trade', p6.

¹²¹ Ptak, 'The Chinese, the Portuguese and the Dutch in the Tea Trade', p15.

¹²² Tracy, *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, p8. See also, Chaudhuri *Trade and Civilisation*.

Once again, this trade, albeit enabled and expanded by the workings of European empires, was not possible without local alliances, knowledge and skills. Nor was it possible without the active engagement of trading diasporas – not merely the Chinese but the Asian and Eurasian trading networks of old.

Asian trades, Asian traders

Asian traders did not wither away once the Europeans joined in. Arasaratnam shows Coromandel traders sold cloth into Thailand and drove Europeans out of that market. Europeans did best when they had a naval force at their disposal, although they did not master every sea, and force was sometimes counter-productive. Notes Pearson, 'More broadly speaking, the fact that Europeans prospered at least as much through association with Asians as through competition against them has led some scholars to characterise the period from 1500 to about 1750 as "an age of partnership".'¹²³ Amid all this movement of goods, people also moved.¹²⁴ This world came about because different groups of individuals and communities knew how to make it work. Gujarati Muslims inherited some of the capital accumulation methods of the Hindu sharafs, as part of a ready exchange not just of goods but of ideas. While the Chinese system of weights entered the Southeast Asian lexicon, so did Indian and Arab terms needed for effective commerce enter Malay.¹²⁵

Already in the 1600s, foreign merchants 'were constantly being incorporated into local society through the medium of marriage and adoption of local language and dress norms'.¹²⁶ It was a hybrid world, and the word 'foreign' did not mean 'westerner' but included even those Southeast Asians operating just outside their own home area. From this time until the 1840s, shipping that had previously been in Arab and Asian hands was now in Chinese. Placing the traders at the centre of this matrix shows the great extent to which Europeans in general, and the late-arriving British in particular, had to build on what was already there.

¹²³ See Pearson and King, *The Age of Partnership*.

¹²⁴ Cushman and Wang, *The Changing Identities of Chinese in Southeast Asia*.

¹²⁵ Controversy surrounds the discovery that Islam might first have reached Java from Sunni Muslims in China's Quanzhou trading in South Eastern oceans. Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p102.

¹²⁶ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p92.

As John Wills found, 'Historians have understood for many years that the Europeans first established themselves as non-privileged participants in the multi-ethnic life of the Southeast Asian ports and even when they came to wield ultimate power made use of indigenous structures and practices to control Asian traders and settlers.'¹²⁷ He says it makes no sense to think in terms of European intrusion followed by Asian response – it was interaction that mattered. 'From the beginning, Indians did not just tolerate the Europeans; they employed them, rewarded them with revenue rights, and sought their protection in trade, in the process teaching them how to exploit the immense talents of the Indian peoples for production, commerce, and welfare.'¹²⁸

As a result of this active interaction, a wide range of trade links and societies evolved which connected Southeast Asia with southern China and the Indian subcontinent.¹²⁹ This in turn forged a new hybridity in Asian places, seen in the determination of western colonialists to marry their local partners, not simply cohabit. Women had long been the intermediaries between native and outside traders and this was not only to do with sex. Many Southeast Asian women were the acknowledged lead trader in a family, responsible for the marketing, and management of money. Sex was important though and the concept of temporary marriage meant that women conducted a kind of serial monogamy, marrying a trader for the duration of that man's residence in port, parting amicably when that time was up and when he had paid or given whatever had been promised. This system enabled women to move on without shame. 'Hybridity was therefore the norm for these cities, up to the point when communication with the homeland became so well established that its prejudices were imported.'¹³⁰

Freelance prostitution is not mentioned by travellers. Instead, there was 'temporary marriage'. As described by a Dutch captain in Patani, foreigners were free to choose from women who presented themselves... 'provided they agree what he shall pay for certain months. Once they agree about the money (which does not amount to

¹²⁷ Wills, 'Maritime Asia', p99.

¹²⁸ Wills, 'Maritime Asia', p86.

¹²⁹ For routes between Chinese and Southeast Asian ports in 14th-17th centuries, see Mills, 'Arab and Chinese Navigators' and 'Chinese Navigators in Insulinde'. Ptak looked at routes thru Sulu and Moluccas in 'The Northern Trade Route to the Spice Islands'. More recently, Tagliacozzo's edited *Asia Inside Out* volumes tell more, particularly *Changing times* and *Connected Places*.

¹³⁰ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p126.

much for so great a convenience), she comes to his house and serves him by day as his maidservant and by night as his wedded wife. He is then not able to consort with other women or he will be in grave trouble with his wife, while she is similarly wholly forbidden to converse with other men, but the marriage lasts as long as he keeps his residence there, in good peace and unity. When he wants to depart... she may look for another man as she wishes, in all propriety, without scandal.'¹³¹ Reid adds: 'Because Southeast Asian women played a dominant part in retailing, such contract wives were doubly valued by traders to help them sell their goods.'¹³²

Reid sees Southeast Asian women as 'pioneers of cultural interaction', a role usually ignored by historians or by the nationalists or imperialists of their own countries. Since at least the seventeenth century, it was the women who learned the necessary languages, and women who would advise foreign trading partners and act for them in their absence. They were of vital importance as negotiators also 'presumably because women were accustomed to bargaining and compromising by their commercial roles, where aristocratic men were constrained by fear of compromising status'.¹³³ A long run of impressive women in trade and diplomacy peopled the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries until European Christian hegemony, with its related obsessions with monogamy and racial prejudice, took hold. Barbara Watson Andaya accepts these generalized truths, while requiring more nuance and exceptions. It remains problematic that arguments about Southeast Asian women having more agency are based, perforce, on scarce evidence.¹³⁴

In the tropics, cultural hybridities appeared in language as Portuguese acquired Creole variants, Malay tangled with Arabic, Hokkien with Dutch. Clothing was multi-coloured and textured, with cloth from around the world combined in fabulous ways. Performance styles in theatre and music combined vastly contrasting traditions. The first westerners to make their homes in these Asian cities survived and made fortunes if they found local allies, male or female, and if they adapted their behaviour to local conditions. They brought new discoveries and demands from Europe and they were open to new products and ways of life in the East.

¹³¹ J. van Neck 'Journal' in Foreest, *De Vierde Schipvaart*, p225.

¹³² Anthony Reid, 'The Organisation of Production in the Pre-colonial City', Ch. 2, in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, p64.

¹³³ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p127.

¹³⁴ Andaya, Barbara Watson. *The Flaming Womb*, and 'Studying women and gender'. See also, Taylor, 'Finding Women in Southeast Asian History', in Owen, *Routledge Handbook*.

‘There was more contact and knowledge than in earlier periods, more mutual respect and curiosity than in later ones,’ concluded Reid.¹³⁵

Amid the variations of mixing between men and women, was the growth in new mixtures of men in general — including trading networks from across the Eurasian continent, from the Armenians to the Jews, from the Parsis to the Malays. Gujarat Muslims sold cotton to Red Sea port of Mocha, paid for with silver from Egyptian coffee traders (thus via Venice); the coffee was re-exported to Europe. ‘Armenian merchants, who had developed close ties with the English through the trades in English broadcloth and Persian silk, used their own ships to send the brightly coloured cloths of the Coromandel Coast from the English outpost at Madras to the Philippines, again in return for Mexican silver..¹³⁶

Armenians had been trading since the ninth century with Russia and Bulgar. During the Middle Ages they were middlemen between Italy and Mongolia. By the sixteenth century they were concentrated at Julfa, along the axis of the Araks River, thus Russia, Turkey, Iran. They also sustained communities in Amsterdam, Venice, Livorno, Ukraine, Crimea, Moldavia, and Persia. Akbar the Great was even encouraging Armenian traders to settle in India. Early 1600s, Shah of Persia deported inhabitants of villages along the Araks, during his campaign of 1603-04 against the Turks. If not deported, then epidemics or sold as slaves. Many settled against their will south of Caspian Sea. Only the nobility, and only to a limited extent, were respected by the Shah and were allowed to settle near Isfahan, thus founding a suburb of New Julfa.¹³⁷

Trade was now encouraged again by the Shah; he wanted to enrich Persia through the silk trade, sending silk to Europe in return, he hoped, for science and technology. With New Julfa as a main base, Armenian trading networks spread to Basra and Baghdad, as gates to Ottoman Empire; to Hormuz and Bandar Abbas at entry to Persian Gulf; to Agra (where an Armenian church has stood since 1567), and on to Delhi and Lafore, Diu, Cambay and Bombay; to Malabar and the Coromandel coasts, especially Madras in the 1500s-1700s; on to Bengal, Saidabad, Chinsura, Hugli and

¹³⁵ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p141.

¹³⁶ Tracy, *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, p1.

¹³⁷ See Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*.

Calcutta (where an Armenian tomb dates from 1630); to Burma - Pegu, Ava, Syriam, Rangoon - trading with Madras and Calcutta and also in service locally as highly influential counsellors, interpreters and tax collectors; to Siam, and the Malayan coast, settled by Armenians during the 1500s; to Batavia, since 1636; to Manila from the 1600s, selling cloth from Madras, for gold and silver (and benefitting from the embargo against Protestants and Muslims by obtaining navigation rights from Spain); and so to Canton, where they appeared in 1720, in tea.¹³⁸

'In general, Armenian merchants in Asia practiced all forms of commerce (caravans, peddling, large-scale retailing, large-scale trading)... They used the same commercial techniques as the Europeans. And when they felt it necessary, they did not hesitate to embark on a coordinated political and commercial strategy directed by the leading citizens of New Julfa. They prospected new markets and new trade circuits. They took advantage of competition or rivalry that arose between their European partners... One of the reasons for the success of the Armenians was the atmosphere that prevailed at the heart of this merchant community: a great sense of solidarity based on kinship ties or marriage and one contractual relations, especially relations of trust, which did not exclude recourse in case of disputes to an informal system of arbitration and, more rarely, to systems of local justice.'¹³⁹ Armenians had good knowledge of the land, itineraries, sources of goods, conditions of sale, continuous exchange of information, adaptability to shifts or crises in trade, absence of proselytism, and experience. They were proficient in accounting too. Along with stubbornness and courage, scholars have remarked on their solidarity with each other. They spent a lot on charity and piety, building churches and printing presses. Although geographically extended they were socially integrated.

The Hanseatic League, a northern European trade network, also linked a Jewish Diaspora. Iberian Jews were central to world trade, one of few activities available to them. Ashkenazi Jews of northern Europe and Sephardi Jews of Iberia were both persecuted, with converted Jews called Marranos in Spain, and New Christians in Portugal. From 1500 on, even these Jews had to flee Spain (they had to emigrate or burn, literally); Portugal took them in at first, but from 1536 a much worse

¹³⁸ Translated from Michel Aghassian and Keram Kevonian, 'Le commerce armenian dans l'océan Indien ans XVII et XVIII siecles', in Tracy, *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, pp270-273.

¹³⁹ Tracy, *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, Ch. 8 Frédéric Mauro, pp266 ff., p273.

Inquisition took root there. And when Philip II of Spain became King of Portugal in 1580, the New Christians fled to overseas territories too, settling into their own areas ('nations') within big trading cities, such as Antwerp, and Livorno. There they could parlay their special knowledge of bills of exchange and double-entry book-keeping.

Other merchant communities present before the Europeans, across most of the maritime space from Africa to Japan was Muslim-dominated trade. This included Ismaili groups such as the Bohra (who would also appear, much later, after the founding of Hong Kong). The Bohra (which in Gujarati simply means trader or merchant) came originally from Arabia, via Yemen, to Bombay before travelling further eastwards; many were Hindus who had converted to Islam and all were firmly against trading in opium or alcohol. Sikhs and Hindus who settled far from their Indian homes often prayed at the same temple. The Sindhi diaspora, one of many out of India, found a place in ports from Aden to Malacca and beyond. In various parts of the British empire, leading roles in finance would be delegated to the Indian Chettiar community.

A less known yet central role was taken by the Parsis, followers of the Zoroastrian faith who fled Persia for Surat in northwestern India before settling around what became Bombay – long before European traders landed there. They were among the first Indians to take an interest in the China trade and were indispensable to the growing wealth of the east Asian trading world. They owned the ships and provided the interface for foreign traders, for example between the Portuguese (and later the British) who arrived on India's north-western shore and wanted access to the produce of inland markets. They controlled that access to products (such as spice and opium), they moved the goods on their own ships, and crucially, they developed financial systems to extend credit to other traders, making themselves central to extensive trading networks.

Asian Port Cities

Hybrids need a home. Most of this trading, and the confrontation of different peoples and ideas, was happening in developing port cities. An over-arching power structure had come first from local and ancient houses or clans; then European military force brought the umbrella of empire. Neither form of power could function

without traders from all of Asia's worlds. Power needed people, and a port city was a mutable, useful site of interaction and exchange – of goods, and of peoples. That interchange relied on pre-existing networks, and forged new ones too.

The nuts-and-bolts daily business of an international port made a port city home to hybrid people: at least part of a port city had to be, by definition, open to the world. It needed to welcome different races, faiths, cultures, and ideas as well as goods from elsewhere. The chief mark of success was a city's ability to attract trade and traders. All port cities also offered a highly varied mix of peoples and cultures, notes Murphey, producing 'cosmopolitan centres of ferment, social mobility, innovation, and stimulus, open doors on the world and major crossroads of its traffic in ideas and people as well as in goods..¹⁴⁰ On offer through this intense mixing of peoples and products in an often confined space was upward mobility. 'Many, probably most, of the Asians who rose to wealth and prominence in the rapidly growing port cities were not only *arrivistes* but parvenus, people whose origins were humble or obscure but who made their way rapidly upward in the dynamic and fluid situation of the port cities where change was concentrated, progressively displacing formerly or traditionally dominant groups, first in these cities and increasingly in each country.'¹⁴¹ Some port cities might be royal enclaves with a port in their shadow.¹⁴² Many developed cultures quite different to that of their hinterland and/or retained traditional values and institutions.¹⁴³

A port city might be large or small, with or without a river-mouth, home to a handful of ethnic groups or more. Most important was its openness – to peoples, ideas, goods, languages, and multiple faiths. This was rarely found in capital cities of nation states (which anyway were rare state forms); a certain latitude was required. The best port cities ran themselves and displayed a distinctly non-state nature.

A port city was not necessarily a Treaty Port. The latter was a specific legal construct, akin to the 'Capitulations' governing Levantine ports through the Ottoman empire and beyond, in which foreign traders were granted the right to separate legal

¹⁴⁰ Murphey, in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, p236.

¹⁴¹ Murphey, in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, p237.

¹⁴² Wolters, *History, Culture & Region*, p 42.

¹⁴³ Tsai Jung-fang, *Hong Kong in Chinese History*, p9. He sees this in Hong Kong temples, lion dances, paper money-burning, triads etc, p10.

systems and rules of residence. Port cities might include areas delineated as 'Concessions' within which such rules might apply. Leonard Blussé argues that after early port towns such as Canton, Batavia and Nagasaki came a new type of place, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, based not on monopolistic control of one or two commodities, but on the British concept of free trade.¹⁴⁴ Port cities had a tendency, too, to become something other than first envisaged.

The British liked their port cities. When in 1786, Captain Light founded Penang, it was intended as a naval base to protect the route to China but became a trading entrepot for the Malayan peninsula. The British presence in Singapore for 50 years from 1819 led the British to extend their remit northwards in the name of stability. By 1895, the four sultanates of Perak, Negri Sembilan, Selangor and Pahang were combined into a Federation, and in 1909 the Thai King was induced to cede sovereignty over his four southern provinces to Britain, thus placing the entire Malay peninsula under British rule. In 1841 'Rajah' Brook had given such valuable service to the Sultan of Sarawak that he became his heir.

In Burma, British imperialist expansion via India was akin to European expansion in Java during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The French meanwhile were expanding to take over Annam (in 1859), Saigon (1862), Cambodia (1864) and Laos (1890). Notably, the bulwark of Chinese imperial power remained silent — the Manchu might take a lofty tone but all this European expansion occurred on their watch, sometimes into areas previously claimed by the Ming.¹⁴⁵ Thus, British traders began toying with port city prospects on the China coast.

Hong Kong on the Map

By looking at the contextual and historical dynamics that facilitated the growth of Hong Kong, we have found Hong Kong's roots as an Asian port city in the trading world of all Eurasia. In 1841, Hong Kong joined the strong pre-existing chain linking ancient trading routes and changing commodities into a rich web of exchange. Southeast Asia was the central meeting point, through which traders from far and

¹⁴⁴ Blussé, *Visible Cities*.

¹⁴⁵ Takeshi Hamashita follows trade routes from Quanzhou/Fuzhou between Ryukyu, Taiwan and Sulu, and the western route from Guangzhou to 'find various hinterland relations with Hong Kong as the centre'. See Curley and Hong, *China and Southeast Asia*, pp28-9, p35.

wide had to travel and stay. Craig Lockard sees Southeast Asia and Southern China as 'part of the same canvas of interaction... a fluid multi-ethnic and dynamic transnational economic zone and flexible political boundaries.'¹⁴⁶ Sunil Amrith found centuries of participation, be it voluntary or not, in 'a sophisticated world of commerce across the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.'¹⁴⁷

We have seen that Hong Kong joined this world of global connectivity through the peoples of the wider Eurasian continent. Parsi networks brought Ruttonjee, Kotewall, Shroff and Master. The Armenian diaspora offered Paul Catchick Chater. From elsewhere in India came Mody, the Venetian Jew Belilios, and the Baghdadi clans of Sassoon and Kadoorie. From Malacca came descendants of the Kapitan Cina, namely Chui Leep Chee, whose offspring would intermarry with Hong Kong Eurasians of the Ho, Lo, and Ho Tung clans. From Macao and beyond came Portuguese. So too came Malays and Manilamen, Lascars and their recruiters, such as the ghaut serang, Sheikh Moosdeen, who would build Hong Kong's first mosque. These names spawned clans fundamental to the shaping of Hong Kong.

These networks did not disappear in the age of European conquest – more often they strengthened. The British Empire gave just enough structure, law and order to facilitate trade, leaving space for individuals and initiative. This loose imperium, overlaying long-standing networks of peoples and trade, was symbiosis: the British needed Asian networks in order to function, and these networks of diverse Asians and Eurasians needed that casual overlordship in order to thrive. Fixed nation-state boundaries and ethnic divisions were less relevant than the cross-boundary networks of trading diasporas and the multi-layered, multi-ethnic intimate connections between women and men (within and beyond Asia). By bringing Hong Kong into being, the British were able to capitalise on these pre-existing networks of trades and traders.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Lockard, *The Sea Common to All*, p221.

¹⁴⁷ Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora*, p20. 'Until 1820, the majority...were captives or slaves', p21.

¹⁴⁸ Tsai Jung-fang notes: 'The growth of Hong Kong after 1842 into an entrepot owed a great deal to the interregional and international trades already developed in the region centuries before the Opium War... underlying Hong Kong's development as an entrepot was a long history of overseas trade...', *Hong Kong in Chinese History*, p17.

Chapter 3 British Possession

British traders in East Asia, backed by London's military and political force, spent little thought on their necessary colleagues among age-old Eurasian trading diasporas. More central in British minds were the increasing frustrations they were experiencing in their trade with China. This was an era when the British felt they might rule the world, as they knew it. Taking Hong Kong and other ports up the coast would be a quick way to ease trade and increase profits. So, why not! This attitude revealed unchallenged assumptions about British supremacy, a perceived right to trade what and where they wished, and a belief in China's weakness. China's failure to offer full rights and freedoms to its own would lead some entrepreneurial Chinese to back the foreigners. China's centralising impulses also blinded it to the trading dynamism beyond its borders. This only strengthened the British belief in their ideology, Free Trade, a cause they thought worth killing for.

In this chapter I will trace the British approach to the settling of Hong Kong, in order to understand where Hong Kong sat on Britain's imperial map. Hong Kong was not the perfect result of all the warfare and negotiations for either London or Peking. It was the available answer at the time and would, due to circumstances often beyond metropole control, take on a life of its own. How did the British enable this process? Some answers will be found in a certain British casualness; what really mattered in their imperial mind was the Raj. That medium-distance umbrella of protection, made real in Hong Kong with Indian troops, kept the Chinese government at bay while migrants populated the port and built vital networks. Meanwhile Peking (then, as now) assumed it would influence and control whatever it liked in what it continued to see as its own zone, regardless of legal or other British imperial devices.

Chinese trade before Hong Kong

Just before the birth of Hong Kong as a port city in 1841, the key site of interaction between China and the rest of Asia was Canton, one of the world's most important trading posts since it was declared the only legal Chinese port for Western trade in 1757. By the end of that century, Canton was the second-largest city in China (after Peking) with a population of about 750,000 and experience in international trade going back more than a millennium.

This pre-Hong Kong foreign traders' port is often described as a site of conflict between Westerners and an intractable East, where the squabbles surrounding the trading presence were but a precursor to war. Julia Lovell paints a picture of near total incomprehension between northern Chinese bureaucrats and the often foreign traders of the south. Commissioner Lin Zexu thought: 'On the outside [Europeans] seem intractable, but inside they are cowardly.. Their legs and feet, moreover, are closely bound by their tight trousers, which makes bending and stretching inconvenient. When they reach shore, they are thus powerless, and their strength can be easily controlled.'¹⁴⁹ He also thought foreigners were addicted to rhubarb (they seemed to eat a lot of it) and stole children because Europe was under populated. Lin could have checked all this with the Cantonese who knew foreigners much better but, indicative of schisms within China, bureaucrats from the north did not trust southerners for advice.

The British were little better, imagining 'China' as a vast unity of thought and deed. But, says Lovell, China was 'a cross-bred state, held together by coercive cosmopolitanism'.¹⁵⁰ Its core territory for centuries was north of the Yangtze river, but conquest had greatly expanded the state to south and west; trade with the outside world was sometimes allowed and sometimes not, confined to tiny, controlled hubs of multi-culturalism. Within the frontier city of Canton, encounters across cultures could be nuanced, with interactions based on mutual respect, says John Carroll:

'Canton connected a wide range of Britons, both Company men and private traders, with those from home and from other parts of the British Empire, especially India but also nearby Singapore, Penang, and Malacca, and even distant Australia, all recent additions to the empire.'¹⁵¹

The Canton System involved a committee of 13 Cantonese merchants, the Co-hong, responsible for overseeing the foreign traders who, during the trading season (roughly May to November), had to live in the *hong* (trading firms)

¹⁴⁹ Lovell, *The Opium War*, p75.

¹⁵⁰ Lovell, *The Opium War*, p91.

¹⁵¹ Carroll, *Canton Days*, p5, p6.

offices/warehouses (known as factories) 200 metres outside Canton proper. The foreigners were under close supervision, barred from hiring their own servants or messengers, or keeping any wives or family with them. They traded tea, silk, ceramics, herbs, opium, cotton, indigo, ebony, ivory, sandalwood and seal pelts. Britain's East India Company held a monopoly on trade until 1834 which presumed to ban other British traders, but not other foreigners - so Americans, Danes, Dutch, Swedish worked there too.

British traders outside the East India Company increasingly defied the monopoly and soon traded under licence through Canton. Known as the country traders, these men were allotted space on Company ships. Key among them are names that have become household familiars in Hong Kong today. The biggest was William Jardine, (1784-1843), the Scots surgeon who turned to trade in 1817 and by 1824 had taken control of the ailing Charles Magniac & Company. Another Scotsman turned up in Canton in 1820, 24-year old James Matheson; he formed Matheson & Company and in 1827 founded the China Coast's first major English-language newspaper, the *Canton Register*, a fervent advocate of free trade. Matheson and Jardine founded Jardine, Matheson and Company in 1832, known to this day as Jardine's. This firm's central role in what would become the colonisation of Hong Kong cannot be underestimated. William Jardine was a powerful personality (known in Canton as Iron-head); Cantonese vernacular for a canny trader was to be 'Scots'. He was pivotal in finding a way to stir the British government to back his ambition for freer (or more open to foreigners) trade. Of older roots was the rival British firm, Dent and Co., founded by William Dent. By the 1820s, this dynamic firm was run by his three sons, John, Lancelot and Wilkinson. Other pioneers included the American firm Russell and Co., founded by Samuel Russell of Boston in 1919, and Augustine Heard Co.

Integral to the trading community of Canton, and founding members of early Hong Kong, were Indian, Parsi and Armenian family firms. There were 145 foreign traders resident in Canton in 1831: 66 English, 52 Parsis, 15 Americans, three Dutch, three Swedish, one French, one Swiss and four Spanish.¹⁵² Some of these had already used the deep, protected harbour of Hong Kong when laying up sensitive cargoes out of

¹⁵² Best on the Canton period is Garrett, *Heaven is High, the Emperor is Far Away*; Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*; Dyke, *The Canton Trade*; and, Hunter, *The Fan Kwae at Canton*.

officials' or pirates' sight. Such firms, almost all of them trading mainly in opium, formed the first circle of connection to underpin the birth of Hong Kong.

Most histories of Hong Kong, be they from a British frame of reference or Chinese, tell of how enterprising or evil opium-traders were oppressed and /or rightly controlled by Chinese rules. The drug was either desired commodity or tool of enslavement, and the foreign traders' insistence on their right to penetrate Chinese markets either laudable or offensively wrong. These traders then persuaded Britain to go to war to assert their perceived right to 'free trade' in and with China, whether China wanted it or not. The result was China's defeat in the first Opium War (1839-1842) resulting in the Treaty of Nanking which opened five Treaty Ports up the coast of China — Amoy (now Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo and Shanghai — and ceded the island of Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity.¹⁵³

An insular possession

Beyond the general outline, however, nuance matters when asking how it was that British ideas of their imperial selves produced a kind of rule over Hong Kong that nurtured a thriving metropolis. The basic idea, here seen in word and deed, was that when British traders wanted something, they should have it: stake that claim, raise the flag and let enterprise flourish.

British traders based in Canton were sick and tired of the pressures and restrictions involved selling opium into China through Canton. They had willing Chinese buyers in the local merchant community but had to resort to ever more complex manoeuvres to smuggle the drug in. There was no doubt in the traders' minds that they at least needed warehouses somewhere nearby. The British foreign secretary Lord Palmerston, however, had a lot more on his plate (alongside marrying his mistress, Emily Lamb, in 1839). His focus was on the aftermath of the 1830 Belgian revolution, pacification of the (Portuguese) Peninsula, keeping Russia out of the Bosphorus and the Ottomans safe from the Egyptians.

¹⁵³ A second Anglo-Chinese war (1856-60) saw French fighting alongside British; the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin legalised opium, opened ten more treaty ports in China and freed Western traders and missionaries to travel in China, confirmed (after the sacking of Peking's Summer Palace) in the 1860 Convention of Peking. Hong Kong was also extended onto the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860.

The impetus behind Hong Kong came from the traders, not government. The president of the Select Committee of the East India Company (Elphinstone) said in 1815 that there should be 'a convenient station on the eastern coast of China'. Sir George Staunton, famous translator and EIC servant, said in 1833 that a last resort could be to establish trade in some 'insular position'. Sir JB Urmston (who had been head of the British factory Canton 1819-20) backed the idea of an 'insular position' but suggested it should be Chusan. A letter to a Canton newspaper signed by 'a British merchant' in 1833 preferred a treaty port with a British embassy (not a full colony). In 1830, James Matheson produced a pamphlet, *The Present Condition and Prospects of British Trade with China*, advocating preparedness for war, but not war; by 1836, he wanted a firm policy supported by a strong fleet. Also in 1836, another trader, Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, was more belligerent in his own pamphlet; he suggested floating warehouses but was firmly against taking a colony. An anonymous missionary pamphlet was against all such talk.¹⁵⁴

The apparent 'necessity' of a place protected for British trade 'became painfully evident'. In 1834 Lord Napier had mooted the taking of Hong Kong 'which is admirably adapted for every purpose', whether as treaty port or colony was unclear. In 1836 Sir George Robinson repeated the plea for 'the occupation of one of the islands in this neighbourhood, so singularly adapted by nature in every respect for commercial purpose.'¹⁵⁵

The Jardine's-backed paper, *Canton Register*, took a typically confident stand on 25 April 1836:

'If the lion's paw is to be put down on any part of the south side of China, let it be Hongkong; let the lion declare it to be under his guarantee a free port, and in ten years it will be the most considerable mart east of the Cape. The Portuguese made a mistake: they adopted shallow water and exclusive rules. Hongkong, deep water, and a free port for ever!'

¹⁵⁴ Eitel, *Europe in China*, pp53 ff.

¹⁵⁵ Warren-Smith, *European Settlements*, p178.

Peking paid little attention it seems. As Lovell notes, China had far larger internal problems than a bunch of restive foreigners down south. In the late 1700s, half a dozen major revolts showed how badly the empire was malfunctioning. By the 1830s, internal despair required the identification of an outside scapegoat and so the spotlight fell on the opium trade and its foreign traders. A legalization lobby had, by 1836, almost won, but then the Spring Purification Circle of puritan idealists stepped in. This resulted in the appointment of Commissioner Lin Zexu to Canton on 10 March 1839. Bargaining and bluffs on both sides culminated in Lin putting 500 men to work for 23 days in June 1839 to destroy 1.15m kilograms of foreign opium. The first shots in the first 'Opium War' were fired on 4 September 1839, with British ships at the gates of Canton by July 1840.

Lovell reminds us that the British empire was neither on a civilizing mission, nor expanded in a 'fit of absence of mind', nor, as Marx and Lenin said, in a well-plotted land- and resources-grab driven by industrial expansion and greed. Instead, says Lovell, beyond the theories lies 'the inevitably extemporized nature of the empire: British policy abroad was usually designed under exceptional pressure, in alien environments, by operatives without local linguistic competence and isolated (in the pre-telegraphic age) for months at a time from counsel back home.'¹⁵⁶

The effective expulsion of the British from Macao in August 1839 after the opium-burning trauma saw the first British 'occupation' of Hong Kong, albeit on ships in the harbour. The search for food for this seaborne community led to the little-known battle of Kowloon Bay (4 September 1839) with Captain Charles Elliot in the cutter *Louise*, accompanied by a small armed vessel, the *Pearl*, and one other light ship, lined up against three large men-of-war junks. Six hours of negotiation allowed his men to land to buy food but as they were taking it away, when some mandarin runners appeared to prevent them, Elliot opened fire. The entire occupation of the harbour lasted only until 3 November when the British returned en masse to Macao. By 1840, Hong Kong was the headquarters of British forces in the area.

A first attempt to end the much larger military engagements comprising the Opium War was the Treaty of Chuenpi which on 20 January 1841 ceded Hong Kong island

¹⁵⁶ Lovell, *The Opium War*, p61.

and the harbour to Britain forever. A near-contemporary recorder of events, Eitel insists that the offer of Hong Kong (instead of Quanzhou or Chusan) came from the Chinese.¹⁵⁷ It seemed to be the answer, offering security and a natural deep-water anchorage. A line of warehouses along the shore would enable the foreign traders to do business as they wished, free of all those Canton restrictions. Profits would only increase. Tellingly, in a sidelight on how important the Jardine's men were to this process, chronicler Maurice Collis noted that 'Matheson, who was generally inclined in his letters to call Elliot too mild and hesitating, had no criticisms on this occasion...'¹⁵⁸

The Chinese negotiator Kishen also thought all had been arranged satisfactorily. He had saved Chusan from foreign predators and thus Peking from threat, tossing the foreigners that insignificant thing called Hong Kong. But the glow of glory faded fast. Both Peking and London were greatly displeased. Kishen was dragged off in chains for giving away even a forgotten, un-used island, and Elliot received a blistering letter from Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston, dated 21 April 1841:

'You have disobeyed and neglected your Instructions; you have deliberately abstained from employing the Force placed at your disposal; and you have without sufficient necessity accepted the Terms which fall far short of those you were instructed to obtain. You were instructed to demand full compensation for the opium which you took upon you two Years ago to deliver up. To ask Parliament to pay the money was out of the question. You have accepted a sum much smaller than the amount due to the opium holders. You were told to demand payment of the expenses of the expedition, and payment of Hong debts. You do not appear to have done one or the other. You were told to retain Chusan (Ting-hai) until the whole of the pecuniary Compensation should be paid, but you have agreed to evacuate the island immediately.

'You have obtained the cession of Hong-kong, a barren Island with hardly a House upon it. Now it seems obvious that Hong-kong will not be a Mart of Trade, any more than Macao is so. However, it is possible I may be mistaken in this matter. But you still will have failed in obtaining that which was a Capital point in our view: an

¹⁵⁷ Eitel, *Europe in China*, pp121-22.

¹⁵⁸ Collis, *Foreign Mud*, pp293-294.

additional opening for our Trade to the Northward. You will no doubt, by the time you have read thus far, have anticipated that I could not conclude this letter without saying that under these circumstances it is impossible that you should continue to hold your appointment in China.'

Young Queen Victoria had already written (on 10 April) to her uncle King of the Belgians: 'The Chinese business vexes us very much, and Palmerston is deeply mortified by it. ALL we wanted might have been got, if it had not been for the unaccountably strange conduct of Charles Elliot.. who completely disobeyed his instructions and TRIED to get the LOWEST terms he could..' The British cabinet repudiated the deal; Sir Henry Pottinger replaced Elliot and kept fighting for a year until China capitulated with the Treaty of Nanking in August 1842.

Bricolage in action

It's true there was very little to build on, thanks to a near-total absence of any Chinese administration or society. 'Hong Kong was one of many "barren rocks" on the edge of San On (later called Po On) District, one of the least important in the Kwang Chau Prefecture... The limited exercise of government authority and its geographical location made it a base for pirates... Since it was easy to slip away by boat if government officials came to check on inhabitants, the islands on the edge of San On District were popular haunts for outlaws and the criminal element.'¹⁵⁹

The place was not, however, entirely void of human settlement. Hong Kong Island was home to 'several villages of some size, as well as hamlets, and a few larger coastal villages which served as market towns for the villages and as home ports for a permanent boat population and visiting craft.'¹⁶⁰ Larger villages included Wong Nei Chong and Little Hong Kong; others were Tai Tam, Tin Wan, Wan Chai, So Kon Po, Shek O and Pokfulam. Actual villages-cum-towns were Chek Chu (Stanley), Shaukeiwan and Shek Pai Wan (Aberdeen). An observant Lt Thomas Bernard Collinson of the Royal Engineers noted 10 villages besides the town of Chek Chu and at least 400 acres of well cultivated ground; admittedly some villages comprised

¹⁵⁹ Smith, *Chinese Christians, Elites, Middlemen*, p107.

¹⁶⁰ Hayes, 'Hong Kong Before 1841,' p106.

just seven or eight houses. The hub of Aberdeen had shops for hats, mats, sails, ropes, baskets, rice, fruit, vegetables, tobacco and more.

Amid great natural beauty, people spoke Cantonese in the bigger settlements and Hakka in the smaller ones. Most residents were farmers and fisherman, with clans dividing up the hillsides for grass-cutting, a key fuel for cooking. The botanist Robert Fortune found the locals to be 'harmless and civil'. A military surgeon Keith Stewart McKenzie said they were 'industrious and obliging... very peaceably disposed'.¹⁶¹

Not everyone lived on land. The Tanka people were born, lived, wedded and died on larger fishing craft often anchored at Cheung Chau and Tai O. They were not allowed to live on shore, did not attend the village schools and were excluded from the official examinations and hardly ever intermarried with the landmen. 'Generally, they lived a life apart, under separate official regulation, and were despised and often oppressed by the land population as the popular and long received legend has it.'¹⁶² The existence of temples (two at Stanley, two at Aberdeen and one at Tin Hau) suggest other forms of pre-1841 life. Parts of them have been dated to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries.

And yet, it was indeed mostly barren. Very little, if any, attention is paid by the *Chronicle of Peace County* to the Island of Hong Kong, an otherwise exhaustive and semi-official record of Chinese life. Even there, the most ambitious reports aiming to claim a prior civilization, or at least settlement, can only offer, at most, about 4,000 farmers and fishermen at Stanley and Aberdeen.¹⁶³ The officer in charge of Census and Registration, Samuel Fearon, in his report of 24 June 1845, recorded that before cession of Hong Kong, its population was about 4,000, including about 1,500 growing rice, and 2,000 fisherfolk, and a remainder who 'gained a subsistence by furnishing supplies to the fishing vessels resorting to the harbours'. There was abundant, excellent granite which 'occasionally brought a few hundred quarrymen to the island, but its general unproductiveness and barren aspect offered but few attractions to the inhabitants of the neighbouring mainland.' Fearon noted that 'The

¹⁶¹ Hayes, 'Hong Kong Before 1841,' pp114-5.

¹⁶² Hayes, 'Hong Kong Before 1841,' p126.

¹⁶³ The most contemporaneous Chinese source on Hong Kong at its birth is Ng, *New Peace County*.

arrival of the British fleet in the harbour speedily attracted a considerable boat population, and the profits accruing from the supply of provisions and necessities at once raised many from poverty and infamy to considerable wealth. The shelter and protection afforded by the presence of the fleet soon made our shores the resort of outlaws, opium smugglers and indeed of all persons, who having rendered themselves obnoxious to the Chinese laws, has the means of escaping hither.”¹⁶⁴

Missionaries were disappointed in the slim pickings available in the possible number of convertible souls. But Jardine and Matheson had personally circumnavigated the island, seen that the harbour was good, and decided to settle the northern shore. They envisaged a floating opium warehouse away from over-zealous Chinese commissioners. A mere handful of observers wondered if it might become a real town. The whole venture was highly speculative. With neither the British nor the Chinese states enthused by the prospects, Hong Kong would have to be as self-made as many of its traders’ personal fortunes — with the added benefit of armed protection provided by British troops. Surviving records suggest there had been very little thought about what sort of settlement might emerge. All that mattered was a place to store ‘the drug’. In the treaty, nothing was written down about opium. Even though British officials claimed they intended to stop the trade, Matheson was unmoved. “I believe it is like the Chinese edicts, meaning nothing, and only intended for the Saints in England. [Governor] Sir Henry [Pottinger] never means to act upon it, and no doubt privately considers it a good joke. At any rate, he allows the drug to be landed and stored at Hongkong.”¹⁶⁵

Hong Kong was declared a Free Port on 7 June 1841, and the first Land Sale was held on 14 June. By year’s end, it boasted about 15,000 residents. A Royal Charter was promulgated on 5 April 1843, yet not until 23 June 1843 did a ratified Treaty of Nanking settle its status. More than a year earlier, meanwhile, British military forces raised the British flag (at the top of what is still called Possession Street) on 26 January 1841.

In a fascinating questioning of the later glory-filled British memories of this and other ceremonial occasions, it seems that this first flag was raised by one Mohammed

¹⁶⁴ Smith, ‘The Chinese Settlement of British Hong Kong’, pp26-32.

¹⁶⁵ Matheson letter 21/4/1843, quoted in Collis, *Foreign Mud*, p302.

Arab. When he died in 1878, the *China Mail* (of 28 March 1878) repeated his claim to have been the person who actually raised the flag: 'The man, known by the name of Mohammed Arab, died here yesterday. We understand that his residence in the Colony dates with the cession of the Island to Her Majesty, and it was he who planted the British standard on the Island, being with the Expeditionary Force. He was a very charitably disposed person, and always stretched a helping hand to the needy and poor irrespective of nationality. He was well-known to many in the foreign community, and held in no little estimation for his uprightness and charities. His funeral, which took place yesterday, was largely attended by persons of various nationalities.' The claim is unproveable as records of the two possible regiments he might have belonged to are insufficient, namely the Bengal Volunteers or the Madras 37th Native Infantry. The other candidate for flag-raising honour is the British midshipman (later Admiral Sir William) Dowell, who would have been just 15 and could have been a midshipman at the time, at the start of a brilliant naval and colonial career.

Two layers of meaning are hidden here. One is that by the 1870s Hong Kong had become such a successful part of empire that raising its flag was deemed an honour worth claiming. Secondly, 'If it had been Mohammed Arab, it would have been a foretaste of the multiracial legacies that colonialism would leave to the island...' ¹⁶⁶

London's initial disinterest can be seen in its treatment of the man who made it happen, Captain Charles Elliot. He remained unrewarded and unremarked throughout British Hong Kong's existence. ¹⁶⁷ Instead, it was people on the ground who took the first steps to mark out land lots, build offices and homes, and create a viable society. Some chroniclers, such as Dafydd M.E. Evans have described this period as a chapter of accidents. ¹⁶⁸ While London was busy telling its appointed Governors (Pottinger, and his deputy Johnston) not to allow civilian settlement to progress at Hong Kong, they each found themselves organizing land sales later in

¹⁶⁶ Lowe, 'Hoisting the Flag Revisited', p14.

¹⁶⁷ This neglect applied to later governance too. Efforts to coordinate policy with Southeast Asia excluded Hong Kong – except under Governor Sir Cecil Clementi, 1925-30, who was convinced better coordination of policies and contact would bring great benefits to regional governance. Papers of Sir Cecil Clementi (1875-1947). Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, Boxes 1-54.

¹⁶⁸ Topley, *Interaction of Traditions and Life*, chapter by Dafydd M.E. Evans, pp11-41.

1841 as people were taking up lots regardless. By the time the treaty ratifying Hong Kong's existence was done, the island's population had quadrupled.

This relative emptiness of Hong Kong gave the arrival of pre-existing networks of traders and others, from Southeast and South Asia as well as Canton, even greater significance. Without these arrivals, Hong Kong would not have happened. British official ambivalence further enabled Hong Kong to go its own way, offering opportunities to all manner of Others, while Britain's imperial gaze seemed focused more on India.

Random outpost or coherent community?

Hong Kong had not been intended as a settlement colony, merely an imperial outpost for trade and economic exchange with China. It was not an appendage of the British economy, nor of Victorian society; it was a place which went its own way with its treasured (and more than century-long notion) of what a 1970s financial secretary, John Cowperthwaite, called 'positive non-interventionism'. Steve Tsang notes that 'Since it was an imperial outpost rather than a settlement colony, Hong Kong developed a "colonial society" that reflected this reality. This was not the result of a deliberate policy but a product of the time and the prejudice that prevailed while British imperialism asserted itself on the basis of superior organisation, logistics and military might.'¹⁶⁹ This colonial establishment, 'the produce of self-confidence and racial arrogance that came with the power of empire', largely left the Chinese alone.¹⁷⁰ However, Christopher Munn disputes this in his deeply researched *Anglo-China*, detailing multiple layers of British-Chinese encounters, particularly through crime and punishment, to counter the more benign notion of laissez-faire rule. Munn noted: 'Most Europeans went to Hong Kong to accumulate enough money to establish themselves in a real settlement colony (such as New Zealand or California) or retire back to England.'¹⁷¹

Meanwhile, the British in Hong Kong developed an idea of a 'community' which, Munn noted, 'almost never included the Chinese. Nor did it extend to the large

¹⁶⁹ Tsang, *A Modern History*, p62.

¹⁷⁰ Tsang, *A Modern History*, p62.

¹⁷¹ Munn, *Anglo-China*, pp57-58.

working-class European population that made up the garrison... Colonists did their best to recreate a form of bourgeois English life in their bungalows, gardens, clubs and churches. Plentiful servants, picnics, hunting trips, amateur theatre, evening entertainments, news, books and fashion from home, and the importation of large amounts of wine, beer and ice helped them to achieve this. But the luxury and comforts with which the colonists surrounded themselves could not disguise the fact that life in this most remote of British colonies was difficult, unpleasant and precarious.¹⁷² This 'community' was also 'as hierarchical as that in any English town'. Munn describes how at the top, the wealthy merchants led by Jardine Matheson, and Dent, only intervened in colonial politics when their interests were threatened, perhaps by proxy through the Jardine-sponsored newspaper, the *Hongkong Register*. The Governor and his senior officials theoretically held political precedence. But they could not compete with the merchants socially or politically. Smaller merchants, lawyers, physicians, journalists, clergymen and clerks formed a middle bourgeoisie, tightly linked through work, family and church ties and Freemasonry. Then came: 'The petty bourgeoisie of European shopkeepers, publicans, overseers and police inspectors occupied the lower regions, struggling, in many cases, to remain within "the community" and ever keen to differentiate themselves from the Chinese shopkeepers, publicans, overseers and functionaries, who were among their neighbours, colleagues and competitors. Minute social distinctions, gossip, scandal and ostracism served important regulatory functions, isolating and trapping Europeans within their own universe, and demarcating them clearly from other communities...' ¹⁷³

Recounting the huge influx of Chinese and others who literally followed the British flag to Hong Kong, contemporary visitors were impressed by the building of houses, markets and public roads — particularly the Queen's Road along the waterfront. All this activity seemed to prove the 'necessity of such an emporium as Hong Kong...' ¹⁷⁴ Benjamin Lincoln Ball paid a visit in 1848 and 'noticed fine large buildings on both sides, all of European construction - the finest English barracks, hospital, etc...' He also rather liked the Chinese quarter:

¹⁷² Munn, *Anglo-China*, pp58-59.

¹⁷³ Munn, *Anglo-China*, p58.

¹⁷⁴ Hall, *Narrative of the voyages and services of the 'Nemesis'*, pp84-85.

'Here are a number of small sailor taverns, every evening lively with the fiddle, drum, tambourine and dancing. Looking in at the door of the front room, if the screen is removed, can be discovered a party of sailors, of all nations - black and white - with a sprinkling of English and Ceylon soldiers from the garrison, enjoying themselves after their own fashion. Early in the evening they are in a state of high glee; later, their spirits begin to flag and they have to replenish them from a well-stored bar at the back part of the room; still later, some of them become so *low-spirited* that the interposition of their comrades is needed to induce them away, and occasionally the police have to render their assistance. In the long line of square windows, without glass, over the Chinese shops, sit a certain class of Chinese women, ogling and looking out on the passers-by.'

Ball then recorded the apparent seats of power – the business district featuring 'blocks of houses occupied mostly by English and foreigners, auctioneers, apothecaries, the club-house of the merchants, &c., and back short streets of Chinese mechanics. On the left are Messrs. Rawle, Drinker & Co., Messrs. Dent & Co., and others, the Bank, and some retail stores.' Not far away stood the military compounds with barracks for (often Asian) soldiers enlisted in the British imperial cause, next to officers' residences, a hospital and shipyard and above all, Jardine's.

Ball reckoned the population of about 20,000 (circa 1855) included only a small number of Europeans: 'Almost every nation is represented here, though there are only a few of each. I can enumerate with the English, American and Chinese, the Spanish, French, Portuguese, Persians, Bengalese, Javanese, and Manilla Indians, the German, Italian, Russian, Danish, Swiss, Dutch, Belgian, Pole, and the Arab, Turk, Armenian, Tartar, Siamese, African, and South American.'¹⁷⁵

Indeed, alongside the Canton crowd, those pre-existing and enthusiastic networks across the seas and shores of South and Southeast Asia had already taken note and, quite simply, moved in. Treaty or no treaty, traders had been arriving in Hong Kong since early 1841. They came from Canton and Macao; they came also from the Malay archipelago, the Dutch Indies and what became the Philippines; they came from India, the Middle East, the Levant, Armenia and from a wider Eurasia.

¹⁷⁵ Ball, *Rambles in East Asia*, pp90-91.

These many peoples built a new base which rapidly acquired a life of its own, regardless of what officialdom in either London or Peking thought about it. The Anglo-Chinese wars had tipped a weak and divided Chinese state into a pre-existing map of regional trade. Chinese people had, of course, long been active both from Chinese shores and through long residence further south in Asian port cities. Now, even before the legalities of Hong Kong were concluded, the city was emerging, thanks to direct extensions of those Asian networks. The Chinese state did, and still does, hate this 'humiliation', as they call it. Many Chinese people nonetheless saw and grabbed the manifold opportunities the appearance of this new Asia-trade based port city offered.

Tough love

Perhaps because the British who were not traders lacked a convincing network to call their own, they had doubts. They questioned Hong Kong's viability, and frankly wondered if it was worth the bother. Samples of essays written by students of the (mission-based) Morrison Education Society in 1943 encapsulate the ambivalence.

'The island was covered with mat houses when the English first came... Now there are thousands of inhabitants English, Chinese, Hindoos and others. The greater part of the Hindoos are soldiers... There are a great number of police men in the town English and Chinese. The Chinese ones are very cruel, they go out seeking after money in a wrongful way all the day. The sailors on shore are also very bad, they are always drunken, and some of them strike the Chinese and trouble them. Hongkong is now becoming more flourishing and famous and a great point of union to the Chinese and English...'

'Before the treaty was signed, the Chinese were afraid to go to Hongkong... but now they can go without telling a lie... The laws of the island are very free, and it may be a good example to the Chinese government... The greater part of the Chinese on this island, are opium eaters, proud and insolent. But the governor, and officers, that trade with the Chinese are with kindness and gentlemanly...'

‘About three years ago there was not one Chinese governor, who dared to hold a banquet with the English, as they were afraid of them. But now this year in the month of May there were two imperial commissioners came to this island and visited the British governor and took dinner with him..’¹⁷⁶

Clearly the British record of engagement was mixed. Her Majesty’s Deputy Superintendent of Trade, A.H Johnston, had decided in 1843 that Hong Kong was ‘precipitous and uninviting’.¹⁷⁷ The government Treasurer Montgomery Martin was even less inspired, and in an 1844 report wrote ‘the island will never be healthy’. Scathingly, he wrote: ‘A sort of hallucination seems to have seized those who built houses here; they thought that Hong Kong would rapidly out-rival Singapore, and become the Tyre or Carthage of the eastern hemisphere. Three years’ residence... have materially sobered their views.’ He also deplored the moral depravity of it all. The colony was but a magnet for vice:

‘There is, in fact a continual shifting of a Bedouin sort of population, whose migratory, predatory, gambling and dissolute habits, utterly unfit them for continuous industry, and render them not only useless but highly injurious subjects in the attempt to form a new colony. There are no other inhabitants. A few lascars seek employment in ships. The European inhabitants, independent of those in the employ of Government, consist of members of about 12 mercantile houses and their clerks...’ Little did Martin realise that it was precisely these ‘Bedouins’ who would make Hong Kong a viable city.

As for the heavy mid-year rains, these give the hills ‘a greenish hue, like a decayed Stilton cheese... the granite is rotten and passing, like dead animal and vegetable substances, into a putrescent state...’ The fetid odours, deadly poisons and noxious steam ‘produces a depressing effect on mind and body which undermines and destroys the strongest constitutions.’ This was not a version of events calculated to inspire British devotion to its Hong Kong possession. It was certainly not the triumphalist vision of British empire-building offered by conventional nineteenth-century visions of empire as a cleansing, progressive force.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ *The Chinese Repository*, Volume XXI, Jan-Dec 1843, pp362 ff.

¹⁷⁷ Johnston, Note on the Island of Hong-Kong.

¹⁷⁸ See Dilke, *Greater Britain and Problems of Greater Britain*; Seeley, *The expansion of England*; Froude, J.A. *Oceana*; Carlyle, ‘Occasional discourse’; Mill, John Stuart. ‘The Negro question’; Lord

Most damning of all, from Montgomery Martin, came the claim that apart from random shipping here and there: 'There does not appear the slightest probability that, under any circumstances, Hong Kong will ever become a place of trade.'

Far better to focus on tea from China's northern ports; besides, northern Chinese were just so much more civilized. After a lengthy comparison with Raffles' Singapore, he concluded 'that the geographical, territorial, and commercial advantages which have contributed to the prosperity of Singapore, are totally and entirely wanting and can never be created at Hong Kong.' Martin's report found little favour with Hong Kong's governor of the time, J.F. Davis, who wrote of moves to improve the health of troops through better housing and said, in fact, land revenues were far exceeding Martin's estimates and progress was afoot in all directions. Above all, 'the finest harbour in the world (as many naval officers pronounce it), and a free port, must render it in time a great entrepot.'¹⁷⁹

London remained unconvinced. *The Times* of London, 6 April 1846, concluded 'Hongkong has quite lost caste as a place for mercantile operations' while the *Economist* of 8 August 1846 announced: 'Hongkong is nothing now but a depot for a few opium smugglers, soldiers, officers and men-of-war's men.'

Acting Sheriff and Assistant Magistrate W.H. Mitchell warned it was foolish to claim Hong Kong as a new Carthage when the opening of other treaty ports meant they too could trade directly with China.¹⁸⁰ Instead, 'The passage boats ply unceasingly, carrying to and fro the shopkeeper, the artizen, the coolie, and the adventurer, together with those endless small wares which a Chinese population requires... This is by far the most productive branch of our local traffic, because it passes through so many hands from the highest to the lowest. The Merchant or the Agent sells two three or four chests [of opium] to the broker - the broker lets these out one by one to the retailer and refiner, who boils it down, and sells the Coolie a penny-worth of

Milner. *The Nation and the Empire*. For discussion, see Nicolls, *The Lost Prime Minister*; Wormell, *Sir John Seeley*; Burroughs, 'J.R. Seeley'; Tigner, 'Lord Cromer'; Chamberlain, 'Lord Cromer's'.

¹⁷⁹ Lord Stanley in London on 17 December 1844 asked Davis to detail his objections to Martin's report. Gov Davis writes back on 25 April 1845, received by Lord Stanley 2 August 1845.

¹⁸⁰ Mitchell, CO129/34 pp310-364, December 1850, p327a.

prepared opium to smoke, or a pounds worth to remit home by the passage boat to leave in the evening...'¹⁸¹

He was prescient on the significance for Hong Kong of the American gold rush: 'Looking forward to some fifteen or twenty years hence, I think Hongkong will be the chief Port of supply for a considerable Chinese population about to spring up on the Western shores of the Pacific - a steady and considerable emigration from Chinese... has already set in..'¹⁸²

Two decades later, there was more British unhappiness and doubt despite a multitude of changes - the accumulation of land on Kowloon across the harbour from the Island of Hong Kong, and the end of a second Opium War, to name but two. 'The profits of the China trade, formerly enjoyed by a few, were now divided among the many. The days of the merchant princes were now a dream of the past. Fortunes were still made but it took some decades or years to make them.'¹⁸³ The 1851 International Exhibition in London simply had no stall for Hong Kong. The only item from China at the show was 'a tiny pagoda, a jade cup and two silver race cups exhibited by Mr W Walkinshaw, and a North-China walking stick added by Mr FS Carpenter of St John's Wood'.¹⁸⁴ As the mercantile public criticised the labours of the missionaries, the latter saw Hongkong as 'a stumbling block to the progress of Christianity and civilization in China'.¹⁸⁵

Asians, Eurasians and Chinese shared few of the doubts expressed by British officialdom. They simply piled in.

New arrivals were fleeing China's chaos. The messianic revolution attempted by Hong Xiuquan, a hakka who decided he was the brother of Jesus Christ, ravaged

¹⁸¹ Mitchell, CO129/34 pp310-364, December 1850, p329a-330a.

¹⁸² Mitchell, CO129/34 pp310-364, December 1850, p343-344. Indeed, nearly 20,000 healthy Chinese had already been shipped from China to Western shores within 10 months! This sparked a new fear in Mitchell's mind: 'That these young and lusty fellows must intermingle with the dark beauties of the Country, Creole, Mulatto and Mestiza is plain enough; and equally plain that the cross will be more of a Chinaman than an American, and with instinctive Asiatic tastes and prejudices — Looking forward then beyond our own time, I think Hongkong will become the chief seat of the trade for the supply of that new population, and that on the whole its prospects arising from the West are not discouraging...' pp344.

¹⁸³ Eitel, *Europe in China*, p276.

¹⁸⁴ Eitel, *Europe in China*, p277.

¹⁸⁵ Eitel, *Europe in China*, p281.

China, leaving about 20 million people dead and the triumphant Qing empire greatly weakened. This Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) was, says J.D. Legge, a key moment: 'It has always seemed to me that this was the turning point... As Canton was threatened, the families of means hastened to leave it, and many of them flocked to this Colony. Houses were in demand; rents rose; the streets that had been comparatively deserted assumed a crowded appearance; new commercial Chinese firms were founded; the native trade received an impetus...' ¹⁸⁶ They brought their own clan networks which would become trading associations and charitable groups by the 1860s and 1870s. The second 'Opium' or 'Arrow' War was just as vital as finally the headquarters of the China trade was no longer in Canton but in Hong Kong. ¹⁸⁷

By 1866, trade was dipping again, thanks partly to obstruction of the junk trade by the Canton authorities but also to the collapse of the Overend & Gurney discount house in London. Traders in both London and Hong Kong wondered if there would ever be calm, secure days of profit ahead. But then the Suez canal opened in 1869, and a telegraph line opened to Europe in 1871. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became a high time for global trade, travel and exchange.

As a result, the British idea of themselves in Hong Kong turned full circle within a generation. Ignoring the foundational role of the opium trade, and ignoring too the centrality of the Asian networks which made this and other trades happen, Hong Kong became a 'British' success in time for the late-nineteenth century era of imperial pride.

In just one year, 1878, successive British travellers were effusive about the place. Isabella Bird recorded that Hong Kong was 'moored to England by the electric cable, and replete with all the magnificent enterprises and luxuries of English civilisation.. It is hardly too much to say that it is the naval and commercial terminus of the Suez Canal.' ¹⁸⁸ Constance Cumming was seduced by the sheer beauty of Hong Kong but also by the enterprise and hard work that had hewn a city out of granite slopes. So

¹⁸⁶ Legge, Lecture given in City Hall, p184.

¹⁸⁷ Prior to this, 'Most foreign ships trading with China called at Hong Kong or Macao to discharge their illicit cargo and then went straight to Shanghai, Tientsin and Ningpo to pursue their proper trade. Chinese goods were shipped directly from Shanghai and Canton, by-passing Hong Kong on the return journey...' Chiu, *The Port of Hong Kong*, pp27-28.

¹⁸⁸ Bird, *The Golden Chersonese*, pp38-39.

too was John Thomson.¹⁸⁹ Sir David Wedderburn enjoyed a comfortable stay at Government House, found the public gardens to be beautifully laid-out and said Hong Kong reminded him of several great trading cities, specially Gibraltar and Genoa: 'Everything is in good repair, the houses are lofty with massive foundations, the streets most of which are very steep are paved with granite.. altogether the solidity and cleanliness combined are very striking when contrasted with the oriental cities in general...' He attended a function at the Cathedral, ascended the Peak by sedan chair and went to the races at Happy Valley where he seemed more impressed by the cosmopolitan populace than by the horseflesh. He noted, however, that security demanded that Chinese could not go out at night without a pass and a lantern and, 'only two Chinamen's names are to be found on the entire jury list in the Colony where nineteen twentieths of the population are Chinese...'¹⁹⁰

The subtext to the more positive mood was, thanks to brilliant British management, and the (always somewhat patronising) discovery that 'the Chinese' were such hard workers, Hong Kong was a winner. The traders knew this all along. J.J. Keswick was sure, when he was *taipan* (as top magnates were called locally) of Jardine's, that the Company and Hong Kong had a bright future together. On 14 January 1890, (a mere fortnight after the birth of his daughter at East Point), he told the Royal Colonial Institute: 'Being a free port and affording every convenience for quick despatch, [Hong Kong] has become the great centre for shipping, the terminus of many mail lines, and the junction from which new departures are taken... For foreign trade it has become the port of Canton, and for the great and growing coast and native trade with North and South, and with Tonquin, Saigon, Siam, and the Straits Settlements and India, it is the emporium.'

Just into the twentieth century, the mood remained benign. In 1908, A. Gorton Angier, Editor of the *London and China Telegraph & London and China Express*, praised Hong Kong's progress since it was castigated as a barren rock. 'The development is marvellous, and it will certainly continue despite an occasional check. A few landmarks remain, and go on from strength to strength, but the general face of things has been greatly transformed. It is withal a handsome place. The banks, the new blocks of offices on the reclaimed Praya ground, the new Law Courts and Post

¹⁸⁹ Thomson, *The Chinese*.

¹⁹⁰ Sir David Wedderburn's *Travel Journals through south and east Asia*.

Office and the dwelling houses may with justice be described as palatial.¹⁹¹ He admired the proliferation of new industries - breweries, flour mill, iron mine, cigarette factory, sugar refineries, cement and rope manufactories, small steamer boat-building, kerosene oil godowns, Shell and Royal Dutch facilities, the docks, hydraulic power, electric power and much more. But he forgot to note few had been started by London men.

‘The two great factors of Hong Kong’s success remain as they always have been. They are the flag that betokens the sovereignty, and the freedom of commerce it implies, plus its geographical position at the door of a great continent where a vast trade may be done, and grow vaster with its gradual opening. The possession of Hong Kong is a great privilege, but it is likewise a great responsibility...’¹⁹²

By the time of World War One, Hong Kong — which had enthusiastically celebrated Queen Victoria’s Jubilees and then mourned her death — was now imperially important: ‘That Hongkong is handsomely doing its duty in connection with the Great War is strikingly shown by the fact that the Government of the colony offered to the nation a sum of \$5,000,000 (about £925,000) towards the prosecution of hostilities, and this generous contribution was gratefully accepted by His Majesty’s Government. It was to be paid partly from current revenue and partly from the proceeds of a loan of \$3,000,000 (£550,000) [funded by local merchants] raised in the colony. Other large sums have also been contributed by the people of Hongkong to aid in various ways in the great conflict. At the time of writing a Bill is before the Hongkong Legislature for compulsory military service.’¹⁹³

A British Masterplan?

Back in 1868, amid popular lamentation that Hong Kong’s high times were already over, the *China Mail* (of 11 January 1868) had claimed: ‘the olden days of rapid fortunes being made are well-nigh past’. But in the 1880s, the Hon. George Nathaniel Curzon wrote after a visit to Hong Kong that while ‘it is evident that business competition is much keener now than it ever was before. Large fortunes are made

¹⁹¹ Angier, *The Far East Revisited*, p112.

¹⁹² Angier, *The Far East Revisited*, p 124.

¹⁹³ Feldwick, *Present Day Impressions*, p515. Much fuss was made of royal visits, e.g. Prince Albert Victor and Prince George, in 1881, Hacker, *The Hong Kong Visitors Book*, p116.

with difficulty; the merchant princes and magnificent hongts of an earlier day have disappeared...’, nonetheless, great wealth persisted. It was to be found in the hands of ‘Messrs Jardine, Matheson and Co. [who] remain almost alone among the great houses whose establishments almost a generation ago were the talk of the East...The traveller finds the British merchants banded together in a powerful confederacy...’¹⁹⁴

Curzon appears to be describing a version of what became known as Gentlemanly Capitalism.¹⁹⁵ Certainly, when London bankers, insurers, or shippers appeared in Hong Kong, they quickly took on the manners, dress and sense of superiority of ‘gentleman’ even if their father had been a coal-miner. They quickly joined The Hong Kong Club to assert their elite status and kept whatever connections they had with other (different-hued or lower class) communities quiet.¹⁹⁶

Certainly without the finance and services of the City of London, much could not have happened overseas: when the discounting house, Overend & Gurney collapsed in London in 1867, several of Hong Kong’s then leading companies disintegrated overnight. Certainly those *taipans* also liked to think they had influence ‘back home’. But it was temporal, patchy and inconsistent. When William Jardine retired from the China Coast to London in 1841, he became a member of parliament but died without heirs just two years later. Subsequent leadership was found via his nephews, the Keswick branch of the family. When Jardine’s men returned or retired to England or Scotland, they could be assured of a welcome in the City, but not necessarily in the halls of political power. Even today, Jardine’s top managers have despaired when the government of the day refuses to listen to their hard-won insights on dealing with the Chinese.

Perhaps more importantly, whatever was decided at desks in London took months before reaching Hong Kong, at least until the telegraph was invented. Just as with the attitude of southern Chinese to northern Chinese imperial control, so too for many British in Hong Kong: the mountains were indeed high and the (British) emperor was also very far away. It was another way of saying that the so-called

¹⁹⁴ Curzon, *Problems of the Far East*, pp423 and 178.

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter One.

¹⁹⁶ See England, Vaudine. *Kindred Spirits*.

periphery sustained itself with its own internal competitions and collaborations. In Hong Kong, neither London nor Peking held as much sway as they imagined.

People on the Periphery

This chapter has found London's ambivalence about, and often disinterest in, the building of a lasting settlement in Hong Kong. This attitude highlights the extent to which, under the lofty imperial umbrella, Hong Kong's roots lay more in the Asian trades and trading networks to its south than in the metropole. Whatever London, or Peking, called it, this was an Asian port city in progress. Nominal power lay in London, but Hong Kong was a periphery far away. Agency lay with the people on the ground, not on the other side of the world or far north in Peking. Webster's commentary on the significance of pre-existing networks and patterns of trade in Southeast Asia opens the way to connect Hong Kong into the regional pattern.

'These networks displayed various characteristics, such as the prevalence of trade in Asian products like opium; the enduring importance of trade links within the Asian world, notably between Southeast Asia, India and China; and the prominence of Asian mercantile organisations such as those of the Chinese. These longstanding Asian niches of commerce remained the mainstay of the British imperial economy in south east Asia well into the second half of the nineteenth century.'¹⁹⁷ As he points out, industrial exports played a secondary role and the idea that older commercial networks in the region depended on the East India Co's monopoly on trade between Britain and the East is quite wrong, as was the assumption that when East India Co went down so too would these older commercial networks. Specifically: 'The contention here is that these Asian markets and networks remained central to the British imperial economy in the region well into the second half of the century.'¹⁹⁸ These Asian networks would always be more important than London alone.

Any reading of other British imperial experiences only serves to show how separate was the Hong Kong example. Part of that is simple geography, social and physical — here was no huge native population to suppress and only one city to build. But there was perhaps always a lack of commitment on Britain's part in Hong Kong to what

¹⁹⁷ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p21.

¹⁹⁸ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p21.

might be called the imperial project elsewhere.¹⁹⁹ London was always aware of Peking, and what was happening in China, and appeared to trim its sails accordingly. It had set out to have a port and warehousing station for the China trade and perhaps never wanted much else.

The British striding back and forth between club, counting house and cathedral believed themselves to be in charge of a system which aligned everyone around them on a scale of acceptability and usefulness. Women, of no importance, and Chinese were generally on the lower end of the scale. Next came other labouring classes - the Malay or Filipino seamen and builders, and their 'Lascar' brothers, meaning Indian and often Muslim seafarers. Parsi traders were a class apart. Other mostly white people, of European or preferably American stock, or from other British settler colonies such as New Zealand and Australia, might be good enough to gain entry to the Club, but would never crack the true inner circles. Of course there were exceptions to each group and, often, categories of class and wealth over-rode those of skin-colour. Yet all this was just one world among many engaged in the building of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was born thanks to its allegedly peripheral people. These included the Portuguese and mixed networks of non-British empires in Asia, as well as Muslims and Hindus of India and Southeast Asia, traders of Armenian and Jewish origin from the Middle East and further away on the Eurasian continent – and the Parsis.

¹⁹⁹ See Darwin, *The Empire Project*, and, *Unfinished Empire*.

Chapter 4 The Parsi Network of the Nineteenth Century

Closely connected to the British trading world — and often fundamental to it — was the densely woven world of the Parsis. This chapter aims to draw a picture of the Parsi world as it moved from Canton to Hong Kong. This is necessary because this group with its Asian roots and re-generating network played a central role in the development of Hong Kong.²⁰⁰ Recognition of their importance comes from the fact that in conventional and/or contemporary British accounts, whereas members of any other minority were called simply 'Malay', 'Indian', 'Chinese' and similar, the individual Parsi was invariably referred to as a 'Parsi gentleman'. In British eyes at least, it seemed the Parsi was a cut above other 'Others'.²⁰¹

Yet the history of the Parsis of Hong Kong has barely been written. The Parsis of Hong Kong (unlike those forming the India-based community) cultivate a discreet, almost invisible presence. Efforts to document their past have been stymied by an unwillingness among the Trustees of the community to invest the time and money necessary. Occasional articles offer only broad outlines. Thanks to one dedicated man, however, this thesis can draw on a unique resource: the papers compiled by the late Jamshed K. Pavri, and shared here by his nephew, Jimmy Master. For Pavri, his work was a celebration of Parsi brilliance in all fields – finance, morality, faith and continuity. Despite this hagiographical approach however, his scrupulous detail of individuals and their connections provides the prosopography needed to gain insight into Parsi networks.

Bombay-born Pavri (1917-1989) moved to Hong Kong aged 17, and to Vancouver, Canada, with his wife Roda Framroze in 1958. A dedicated Parsi from a leading Parsi family, he was ideally placed to chronicle his community. Alongside an active community life, he spent many months over several years making extensive notes in English from the documents left in the Parsi Temple and Offices in Hong Kong, many in Gujarati.²⁰² These include the *Parsi Prakash* magazine from Bombay, along

²⁰⁰ The Far East opened 'as much by contact with India as with European merchants...' Hyde, *Far Eastern Trade*, p2. See also, Allen & Donnithorne. *Western Enterprise*.

²⁰¹ Jamshed K. Pavri recorded a story about the Indian shoes known as Jodas; British law in India required native shoes to be left at door but an exception was made for Parsis. See The Pavri Papers, unpublished, pp189-190.

²⁰² It should be noted that spellings of names shift even within The Pavri Papers.

with records of the Hong Kong Anjuman (Community), which include its past lives in Canton and Macao.²⁰³ In addition, Mr Pavri consulted hard-to-find books, particularly that by Ratanjee Faramji Vatcha, *Mumbai no Bahar*, published in June 1874 by Bombay's Union Press.²⁰⁴ He also actively corresponded with descendants of the great dynasties he discusses, with which his own family is inter-related. These close, collegial contacts garnered much new information. His goal was to encompass the entire history of the Parsis in the East.

The huge significance of his work lies not only in what he collected but in the fact that when the Hong Kong Anjuman demolished its old temple and built a high-rise in Happy Valley, the bulk of the records he had been working on disappeared. Only Mr Pavri's work, here called The Pavri Papers, offers a digest of the earlier, now lost, records. Pavri's nephew, Jimmy Master, has given written permission for use of these records, and laments the failure of his community to take better care of its history: 'Please do use the material from my Uncle's papers, I am sure he would be delighted that it is widely read and used. The notes were compiled during his many visits to Hong Kong in the late 1970s and early 1980s when he visited Hong Kong *en route* to Mumbai, and trawled through the extensive material that was in the old Zoroastrian Club building, and with the re-development of the old property in 1989, I don't think any of the source material exists any more. Much of the material was handwritten in Gujarati, a language which most Parsees can speak, but cannot read...' ²⁰⁵

Pavri was convinced that his Parsi forebears and fellows were special. He ascribes to them a higher moral standing, greater facility in building business empires, and a communal connection and faith not found in another communities. He does not see

²⁰³ Book One of the Hong Kong Anjuman records covers 1845-1849 and 1856-1868 (1850-1855 is missing), including original documents and trust deeds from 1874 printed in 1879 and 1892. Book Two comprises originals for 1869-1898 and copies for 1886-1983. Book Three covers 1884-1898 in photocopies; Book Four is 1899-1906 in photocopies; Book Five is 1907-1913 in originals plus 1909-13 in copies; Book Six covers 1925-1930 in originals and 1916, 1918 and 1925-30 in photocopies. Pavri also consulted an original Printed Trust Deed dated 30 July 1874, printed in 1920, and several books of bound financial statements for 1886-93, pages 1-17 of 1894, 1894-98, 1909-13 (photocopies) and for 1916, 1918, and 1925-30.

²⁰⁴ Vatcha had been part of the Canton community of Parsis and with them was held under house arrest in May 1839, was a signatory to the 13 December 1842 Petition to Sir Henry Pottinger, and a significant donor to the founding of the Canton Anjuman (in 1845). He had been in China since 1836 and retired to Bombay in 1870, where he died on 22 Aug 1893, aged 78.

²⁰⁵ Email correspondence, 2 May 2023.

the need to explain his partiality, but his detailing of family after family offers answers to the riddle of Parsi predominance, showing the Parsi route to success was based on:

1. the forging of an inter-related web of family ties through constructed marital, business alliances and succession between Parsis. Traditionally, a child is only a Parsi if both parents are Parsi; inter-marriage also consolidated family capital.
2. the Parsis enjoyed a starters' advantage, being in the Asian trades before many of their Western collaborators and competitors.
3. they proved adept industrialists - providing the raw materials, then adding value to them, then shipping them on ships they owned, and always, funding their own and others' trade.
4. Above all, they enjoyed genuinely close business and personal ties to the then-dominant power, the British.

Thus, being Parsi directly offered membership of a tightly-woven but cosmopolitan network – it was a ready-made ticket to ride.

How Parsis sweetened Bombay – and seeded their success

Histories of the Parsis pre-dating Jamshed Pavri's important work do not offer the same detail as Pavri's extensive family trees, company lists and commentary. But they do confirm an outline of an early start in international trade. In Tang dynasty times (618-907), in the Chinese dynastic capital of Chang-an/Xian there were Buddhist and Taoist temples and nunneries, one Nestorian church, one Manichean temple — plus four Zoroastrian temples.²⁰⁶ These were for descendants of Parsis who went to China after the Arab invasion of Persia and fall of the Sassanian empire. More Parsis, however, went to India, and Pavri found no link between those in Tang China and those in India. The latter survived and grew, perhaps due to a more tolerant local society, some of them making their way to a very different China almost a millennium later. The story goes that when Parsis first fled Persia to India the local king had told them he had no room for them. In riposte, a Zoroastrian

²⁰⁶ The Pavri Papers cite Edward Schafer's *Ancient China* Time Life Books N.Y., p107; and Dun Li's *The Ageless Chinese* Charles Schreiber's Sons, N.Y. 1971, p173.

priest asked for a full cup of milk, took a teaspoon of sugar and gently stirred it into the milk without spilling a drop. He then told the king: 'If you take us into your kingdom, we will be like the sugar in the milk: we will blend in with you but we will also make your kingdom sweeter'. And so they stayed.²⁰⁷

Christine Dobbin states it was not only a flight from Muslim persecution in Iran c785 which founded India's Parsi community. Forebears of India's Parsi community had long been trading with India, 'Zoroastrian and Christian Persians in the centuries preceding Islam having dominated commerce in the Western Indian Ocean ... Thus the Parsis should not be seen as a refugee community settling down in India as agriculturalists and weavers, woken to commercial life by the European East India Companies, but rather as having much earlier developed a new trading diaspora between the Arab-dominated Middle East and Hindu India. Trade was their pursuit from the time of their arrival.'²⁰⁸

Surat in north-western India was the major trading metropolis of the Mughal Empire and in the seventeenth century was home port to the largest merchant fleet of the Indian Ocean. Its mercantile communities traded with the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and places beyond. What it lacked in a natural harbour it made up for through its deep connections inland with, for example, Agra, Benares and Lahore. From the end of the thirteenth century onwards, Arab and Persian traders lost ground to Gujarati shippers throughout the Indian Ocean. Jews, Jains, Parsis and Hindus were important traders before the Portuguese 'age of discovery' changed the ground rules with armed ships.²⁰⁹ The Portuguese and British built factories in what would become Bombay next to pre-existing merchant houses (Indian, Baghdadi Jewish or others). A marriage treaty between Britain and Portugal in 1661 included the Bombay islands as part of the dowry, hence transferring their ownership from Lisbon to London.

²⁰⁷ Neale, Michael. 'In Praise of Parsis', p263.

²⁰⁸ Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, pp78-79. Her references include Wink, A. *Al-Hind. The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol 1: *Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, 7th-11th Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 1991, p105. Also, Wink, A. "The Jewish Diaspora in India: Eighth to Thirteenth Centuries" *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 24, no 4 (1987): 350-1.

²⁰⁹ Curtin, *Cross-cultural trade*, pp137, 145. Also: Ross and Telkamp, *Colonial Cities*, Ch. 13, Dick Kooiman: 'Bombay: From Fishing Village to Colonial Port City (1662-1947)'.

The East India Company moved in, but what it needed was traders, bankers and artisans. The Company invited all comers, 'offering all religions and communities freedom of worship and management of their own caste affairs.'²¹⁰ Amid the Hindu Banians (adept in banking and money-lending) and, Bhattias (running merchant fleets between Africa and East Asia), and the Muslim Memons, Bohras and Khojas, came the Parsis, moving south from Surat. How did the Parsis outstrip the rest?

Some Parsi chroniclers have simply admired the wealth of the Parsi community yet it was not only Parsis who grew rich through trade. They have highlighted the values of honesty, philanthropy and all-round goodness promoted by their shared Zoroastrian faith. Yet Parsis are not the only people to have a faith encouraging good behaviour. Perhaps it was the quiet confidence of many Parsis in the cohesiveness of their own faith and culture? Or was their success just down to often being first?

Certainly they took risks and tried new things, some of which failed – just as other traders did. They were sometimes smart and sometimes lucky – just as other traders were. But Pavri not only ascribes special skills to explain Parsi success; he also skates over any possible frictions within the community.²¹¹ Alongside their appetite for risk, and knowledge of both English and Chinese languages, he claims for his brethren an 'astounding and business acumen of a far superior calibre'.²¹² Pavri also cites the 'Oriental Memoirs' of James Forbes, who visited India in 1776 and said Parsis were 'active and industrious, they applied themselves to domestic and foreign commerce, and many of the principal merchants and owners of ships at Bombay and Surat [are] Parsees: others learned the mechanic arts, and engaged in the varied manufactures of the loom, the best carpenters and ship-wrights in India'.²¹³

Dobbin stresses more practical aspects, noting Parsi inroads into industrialisation, not least because steam offered new ways to compete in shipping and cotton mills.

²¹⁰ Ross and Telkamp, *Colonial Cities*, p212.

²¹¹ Connections other than trade also lubricated Parsi networks. Pestonjee Ruttonjee Colah wrote against the opium trade (despite his father having done extensive business in it) and was part of a group that took over the 'Rasht Goftan', the Gujarati fortnightly newspaper started in Bombay by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1851; Cursetjee Nusserwanji Camajee, Cursetjee Rustomjee Camajee, Dosabhai Framjee Camajee, Sorabjee Shapurjee Bengalee and Pestonjee Ruttonjee Colah became joint proprietors, running it for ten years at a loss. Pestonjee Colah left for London in 1859 with Dadbhoy Nowrojee and Jamshejee Pallonjee Kapadia, along with students Khurshedjee Camaji, Hormusji Dorabji Camaji and Framjee Rustomjee. He died in Manchester in 1891 aged 62.

²¹² The Pavri Papers, p18.

²¹³ 'Oriental Memoirs' of James Forbes, Vol 1, p79. In The Pavri Papers, pp18-19.

Their entrepreneurial foresight extended to an embrace of the joint stock principle which enabled investors to contribute varying amounts. 'The starting capital of these early industrial ventures was raised exclusively by the families and relatives of the founders, but ultimately numerous Parsis outside the great families proved willing to buy shares in Parsi firms.'²¹⁴ Parsis built Bombay's first cotton mill in 1856; by 1895 they controlled 20 of city's 70 mills. The Parsi Tata clan's steel factories provided railway lines for the British in Mesopotamia in World War One and for colonial east Africa; now they own Jaguar, Land Rover, Tata Steel at IJmuiden in the Netherlands, Air India, Tetley tea and more.

However, Dobbin also finds a moral or at least communal element: 'To be part of these communities of trust, the merchant was required to play an active and steady part in the temple as well as the bazaar. Reverence for religious values was required.'²¹⁵ Whether such values are peculiar to Zoroastrianism seems debateable.²¹⁶ But industrialisation, and the raising of funds within their own community help explain how Parsis of generally quite humble backgrounds were able, within one or two generations to achieve wealth. The cohesiveness of their community enabled a mutually reinforcing circulation of money, goods and familial ties.

Conflicts arose, of course, but each Parsi community in each different place (Bombay, Canton, Hong Kong, Singapore etc) ran, and runs, its own affairs through a body of Trustees; there is no over-arching clerical nor civil authority that can claim governance over the entire community. At stake are matters not only of theology (usually agreed upon by seven hereditary priests), but, as the community became wealthy, vast funds, trusts, endowments, charitable bodies and properties. The Bombay Panchayet, tending to the largest community of Parsis, has long had the largest land bank to manage and was initially regarded as supreme by early traders abroad. But Bombay's remit applies only to Bombay. It has often involved the courts, which concluded that the French wife of R.D. Tata could not be accepted as a Parsi convert; a current case is whether a Parsi woman can be deprived of Parsi rights

²¹⁴ Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, p88.

²¹⁵ Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, p96. She cites Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*: 'Moral peril and economic unreliability were seen to be closely connected,' p385; pp 31, 371, 373.

²¹⁶ See also: Palsetia, 'Mad Dogs and Parsis.'

since she married a Hindu.²¹⁷ Overseas communities are often more liberal; except for India, Pakistan and (recently) Hong Kong, which each have full-time paid priests, religious leadership is voluntary. A marriage or conversion in one place might not be acknowledged in a more orthodox place. Trustees manage community property and decide who may or may not enjoy the benefits of the property.

The basic question is who can be considered a Parsi. Does conversion to Zoroastrianism give full right to the funds, properties, fire temples and Towers of Silence burial rites? What happens when Parsis marry out, and do the children of a couple in which only one part is Parsi qualify as Parsi? It is a struggle over money, land and maintaining the 'purity' of the tribe. Each community is tending towards the more liberal side, but each moves at its own speed.

Trustees cannot and do not get involved in family or other issues unless specifically asked to do so. In small communities, leadership has always rested on a handful of families who have managed their own affairs as they wish. This made for a tightly-woven elite in the early days of the Canton trade and among the first settlers of Hong Kong where members, bound closely together, retained the flexibility to express their faith and sense of belonging according to their time and place.

Pavri's records suggest the primary cause of Parsi success was the depth and breadth of the Parsi network. Profit-making was a family affair and that family was large, international, and trustworthy. Dobbin and others have also shown the importance of financing and industrialisation practices alongside the human ties of trust and family fealty. In this era of British imperial expansion, however, one more factor was vital: Parsi alliances with the British, both personal and professional.

²¹⁷ I am indebted to Jimmy Master for references and context on this subject. See: https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1697846/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk_=cb165f2b9f662405c51918aad3c503c17d938a55-1597817360-0-AOO1MXcWLKWpUXpqbunCqzucaKGjhDnyzGqksmOi-q0FB1BpQa03YrfSIJ-LlnlYwAXuPRafpM_VbaSzur0UDEPIN-Xslzjl7nsoP1-8-M-1ztqXRfpDvf2fMNdtqwcofuJaQicxvkrZIR3QNviqL8vUFBd9YgRG-A_uy19sEMzmgoGiVw_IVvndXBXINMNzwJrZ7rWHVLIvWl4ZHXvI2F7z82TPAeQvpqpaUkC6WefYiaggv7ZHxk5aNYIaH6YuYBJkEdkxw-IbKOl0UeY2bqoolgv-sDP0u6u8BrI6M_xcCZKwCDJg4Rioiipf9LbZZ_4MWvdc5xVXdwWnRoM2ALp9v5h-IPc8L1iN-7HAPhui Also: https://media.law.wisc.edu/m/2ywnk/sharafis_judging_conversion_to_zoroastrianism.pdf Also: <https://www.scobserver.in/cases/goolrokh-gupta-burjor-pardiwala-parsi-excommunication-background/>

Parsi - British ties

Gaining experience and capital from trading first with the Portuguese and then with the British, Parsi clans began building and owning ships, and warehouses. Soon they were trading on their own account from Bombay to Canton, Singapore and Shanghai. A steady stream of young men travelled between India, through Southeast Asia to China and back. They were learning the trade from their forebears, ready to pass it on to the next generation, unafraid of far-flung travel and ready to work anywhere. Amalendu Guha traces Parsi success to migrant mobility, 'their religious work ethic, their special minority position, their lack of caste prejudices, their production-oriented peasant-artisan background'.²¹⁸ Certainly, Parsis punched above their weight. In 1826, Parsis owned nearly half of Bombay's property but numbered just 10,738 of its 200,000 people.

However, notes Guha, a key to their success in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was 'above all, their acceptability to British patrons as stable collaborators'.²¹⁹ This was not an uneven relationship of powerful Westerner and 'native' middleman. On the contrary, the Parsis were respected by the British because they were not subservient. Guha notes: 'unlike their counterparts in China of the same period, the Indian comprador of the coastal ports was not merely a collaborator; he was also a competitor of the foreign merchant. Both collaboration and conflict were reflected in his vacillating political stand and economic position.'²²⁰

The Parsi's progress from Bombay to Canton and Hong Kong can be seen in a business calendar of 1794, listing the leading Parsi families: Hirjee Jivanjee Readymoney, Sorabjee Muncherjee Readymoney, Nusserwanjee Maneckjee Wadia, Pestonjee Bomanjee Wadia, Faramjee Nanabhai Daver, and Dabida Nusserwanjee Dadyseth. Before the end of the eighteenth century, such families had become major ship-owners: in 1794, nine prominent Parsis owned 21 ships, six of which were engaged in the China trade.²²¹ Armed, of solid teak and heavily staffed, these were smaller than East Indiamen. Tellingly, notes Pavri, Parsis were not exclusive in their

²¹⁸ Tripathi, *Business Communities*. Ch. 8: 'More About the Parsi Sheths: their Roots, Entrepreneurship, and Comprador Role 1650-1918', by Prof. Amalendu Guha, pp109-150. p112.

²¹⁹ Guha in Tripathi, *Business Communities*, p112

²²⁰ Guha in Tripathi, *Business Communities*, p119.

²²¹ The Pavri Papers, pp137-8.

business: 'On Parsi ships, usually the Captain and officers were British. The crew also known as Lascar (from the Persian word Lashkar, meaning army), were native Indians from Gujarat and Chinese.'²²² Ownership, thus power, was Parsi, while management via the officer class was British.

Parsi bonds with the British were often close and personal. By the time the Parsis had reached Canton, they were seen as easier to socialize with than other religious groups. Sharing a drink or two at Bombay's Byculla Club — one of the models used by the founders of The Hong Kong Club in 1846 — was not encouraged but neither was it banned.²²³ The fact that, unlike Muslims, they could drink alcohol has been cited as something which made them appear more user-friendly to the free-drinking British. Parsis also sometimes allied themselves to the British imperial cause.²²⁴ Dobbin confirms: 'A symbiotic relationship grew up between the Parsis and the British which had no comparison in any relationship which existed with the Hindu or Muslim commercial communities.'²²⁵

This connection long predated the birth of Hong Kong but would be foundational to it. Together, these men of London and Bombay saw the potential of Hong Kong's deep water harbour and together they staked the claims that encouraged others to follow.²²⁶ The Pavri Papers offer a multitude of familial combines which over several

²²² The Pavri Papers, p12.

²²³ The Byculla Club's history dedicated several pages to the prominence and dignity of Bombay's Parsi community. Sheppard, *The Byculla Club*, pp11, 14-15, 144-145.

²²⁴ The Pavri Papers, p32. Parsis had moved south to Madras in the 1780s, often on EIC contracts. By 1796, these included Eduljee Rudibaina, Mobed Rustamdaroo, Mobed Jamshedjee, Ramjee Adarbadna, Sohrabjee Meherwanjee Mehta, Bhikhajee Butoo, and Jamaspjee. Meanwhile, Manajee Kukajee took the name Talati, already in Zanzibar, Natal, Durban, China, Cambodia.

²²⁵ Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, p82. And, 'Pamela Nightingale's study of the period shows mutual lending between the Company's servants and the Parsis.' p82. To get faster news of Calcutta opium auctions to Bombay Rustomjee & Pestonjee Muncherjee Co 'made arrangements with Messrs McIntyre & Co of Calcutta to send "express" messengers on foot so that they were getting there four days ahead..' The Pavri Papers, p245.

²²⁶ Neale concludes 'the British formed a symbiotic relationship with Parsi merchants, financiers and middlemen, radiating from Bombay. Parsis effectively became a pillar of Britain's imperial establishment.' Neale, 'In Praise of Parsis', p256. That bond with the British took on many forms. Parsis were friends and mentors to Nehru and Gandhi — being both pro-British and active in the movement for self-rule. Ms Bhikhaiji Cama (1861-1936) was a friend of Lenin and unfurled the tricolour Indian national flag in Stuttgart in 1907. Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) was the first Asian Member of Parliament in London, co-founder of the Indian National Congress, a priest, mathematician and cotton trader, who argued for home rule in both Ireland and India. Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree was Tory MP for Bethnal Green in 1895; Shapurji Saklatvala was MP for Battersea in 1922. In 2006, Lord Karan Bilimoria of Chelsea, maker of Cobra beer, became the first Parsi member of the House of Lords. Other famed Parsis include the conductor Zubin Mehta and leader of Queen rock band, Freddie Mercury (née Farrokh Bulsara).

decades secured a powerful place in the China trade and so, eventually, in the founding of Hong Kong. As private traders, and among the earliest to engage in China, they were free of EIC rules yet close enough to exploit them. As close allies to the British, in relationships of mutual respect, their choice about when to ease out of Canton was pivotal to the future of Hong Kong.

Mr Readymoney goes to China

According to Jamshed Pavri²²⁷, the first Parsi trader in the China seas was Hirji Jivanji Readymoney in 1756, with two ships, the *Hornby* and the *Royal Charlotte*. H.J. Readymoney was the second of three sons of Jivanji Kukaji Sui (Darji), the Parsi who, apart from Rustom Maneck, had enjoyed the most dealings with the East India Company in the 1700s. Jivanji extended significant finance to the EIC whenever it needed it; 'They always did business buying merchandise paying cash and thus began to be known as Readymoney.'²²⁸ (His other names also indicate the occupation of his ancestors: Sui means needle and Darji means tailor.)²²⁹

Hirji was 43 when he first went to Ningpo in China (further north than Canton), and took the younger, 28-year old Rustamji Dadabhai Nadirshah with him. (Founder of the Nadirshah family clan, Rustamji died in Bombay in 1793, aged 65.) He took a cargo of raw cotton and opium, bringing back supplies of tea, silk and earthenware and was said to have made a two hundred percent profit. He made more trips, via Calcutta to China until the 1780s. Crucially, in Bombay (and probably due to his father's connections), Hirji forged a close trading friendship with John Forbes, formerly of the EIC before founding his eponymous trading firm.

Hirji had no son, so made sure to marry off his daughters to men all in China trade. Daughter Soonaji married Nussewanji Rustomji Banaji, partner in the famous Parsi

²²⁷ The Pavri Papers, pp235-7.

²²⁸ The Pavri Papers, p89.

²²⁹ Shroff as a family name derives from the function of taking payment for services, a word still in use today; Screwalla was for men responsible for the Screw which helped pack cotton; the Allbless family formerly known as Karani got their new moniker due to patriarch Eduljee Maneckjee's job as cook for Sir Charles Forbes, where he was so diligent for nine years that he became a favourite of Sir/Lady Forbes. 'He was in the habit of saying "All Bless" most of the time and hence it stuck as his name and eventually [he] began to be known as Eduljee Allbless.' The Pavri Papers, p164. When Charles Forbes returned to England in 1811, Eduljee started working for his partner, Mr Tasker, and became his broker; this developed into retail trading on his own account, and so his family's move into the China trade.

China trading co Banaji Limji & Co; Soonaji was not only religious and charitable but a very clever woman, which probably helped. (She died on 14 May 1847, aged 84.) Second daughter Jivnai married Naoroji Rustomji Nadirshah, son of the Nadirshah who had accompanied her father on their first trip to China. Third daughter Bhikhaiji married Cursetji Ardeshir Dadiseth (Dadyseth), another family with a powerful and wealthy future ahead in China. Meanwhile, Hirji's younger brother, Muncherji Jivanji Readymoney, went to China once and became a 'known big merchant, vessel owner and land owner, well respected person in Bombay...' before his death in 1786, aged 75.²³⁰ Muncherji's eldest son Sorabji Muncherji Readymoney conducted his China business through (an apparently Muslim) agent, Nakhoda Mia Mohammedali bin Mohammed Husain Roge. Sorabji owned two ships, 'Shah Monocher' and 'Shah Kaikhosrow' and was renowned for feeding 2,000 refugees of the Gujarat famine of 1790 for ten months; like his father he had the honourable position of Akabar in the Parsi religious community, the Parsi Punchayet. He died in Bombay in 1805 aged 50.

Muncherji's second son, Dhunjibhai Muncherji Readymoney, went to China and stayed a few months but on his return to Bombay, died at sea in 1779 aged 28. Another brother, Kaikhosrow Sorabji Readymoney, followed the family business in China but was more interested in life as a literary intellectual in Bombay; he sent his cousin Tehmuljee Rustomjee Readymoney to China in 1824, who would also become agent to Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy alongside running his own business. Another son of Muncherji, Tehmuljee Jivanji Readymoney, also engaged in the family business but led a quiet life until his death in Bombay in 1805, aged 87.

When the patriarch, Hirji Jivanji Readymoney, died, his fortune went first to his wife Cooverbai, 'an intelligent and worthy lady of her days'.²³¹ She proceeded to arrange the child marriage of their first daughter Soonaji's son (Jehangir Nusserwanji Rustomji Banaji) to third daughter Bhikaiji's daughter (Meherbai Ardeshir Dadyseth) - both grandchildren were so young that they sat on lap of Cooverai for the marriage. The point of this arrangement was that Nusserwanji Rustomji Banaji became the Readymoney's adopted son; indeed he received not only the family fortune but the family name. (When Sir Cowasji Jehangir Kt CIE, died in Bombay in

²³⁰ The Pavri Papers, p94.

²³¹ The Pavri Papers, p97.

1878 without an heir, his brother Hirji's eldest grandson Jehangir Jivanji Readymoney took on the knighthood.)

Among other early starters in the China trade was Edulji Bomanji Edulkaka who made a first trip in 1775 and spent nearly 30 years in China. In 1768, Kaikhosroo & Fardoonjee, sons of Dhunjishah Manjishah of Surat, sailed for China with merchandise on their own ship but drowned in a typhoon; the date of their deaths is unknown. In 1774, Muncherjee and Eduljee Camajee went to China; they were sons of Camajee Cooverjee who had gone to Bombay from Surat in 1735 with Lowjee Nusserwanjee Wadia, and died 9 March 1773. Pavri's records show that on 6 March 1790, Eduljee Bomanjee (Edulkaka), Muncherjee Dorabjee Colah, Busserwanji Bhikhajee China and Muncherjee Nowrowji who were in China as agents of Bombay merchants, petitioned John Harrison of the EIC regarding a Chinese merchant who had absconded with their cotton. Eduljee Bomanjee (Edulkaka) and Hormusjee Dorabjee Lashkar were still China agents of Bombay merchants in 1803. The next year, in 1804, they were joined by Dadabhai Nusserwanji.

Other early Parsi traders with China included Hormusji R Chinai (a first trip in 1793), Hormusji S Dolakhau (in 1775), D.M. Readymoney (a first trip in 1779), H.E. Cama (first trip in 1786), and Merwanji M Tabak (in 1790, before joining Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy on a 1799 visit). By 1807, Parsi vessel owners included Hormusjee Dorabjee Lashkari (*Minerva* and *Shah Behram*), Sorabjee Cawasjee Patel (*Albian*), Dhunjibhai Sorabjee Readymoney (*Alexander*), Framjee Cowasjee Banajee and others (*Sulemani*), and Ardeshir Dadibhai Dadyseth (*William*).

When Dadabhai Nusserwanji Modi died in Bombay in 1810, aged 50, he left a business partner, Eduljee Behramjee Modi; they had been trading in China since April 1790. Burjorjee Rustomjee Chinai died in 1816; he had been the main agent of Ardeshir Dadibhai Dadyseth in the China trade. The Parsi said to have visited China most often was Jamshed J. Porter who died in 1837 having made 42 visits. Many more examples exist to show how Parsis were early entrants to the China trade based in Canton and how this enterprising approach enabled them to achieve dominance in trade, ship-owning and finance.²³² Another interlocking kin and

²³² The Pavri Papers, pp89-91, sourced to Parsi Prakash, Vol. 1.

business network was that led by Framjee Ruttonjee Moos, who went to China in 1809. In partnership with Jayachand Laichand and Muncherji Fardoonji Vajifdar he opened the Muncherji Fardoonjee Company for business at China, Calcutta and Madras. Framjee made just two trips to China, but he had six brothers, and the sons of two of those brothers would find a future in China: Hormusji's son Merwanji, and Nusserwanji's son Shapurji. Merwanji went to China with uncle Framjee in 1823 and did not return to Bombay until 1840, (where he died aged 65, in 1863).

In 1814, Jehangirjee Cursetjee Tarachand with Seth Tarachand Motichand left Bombay for Canton, and later became known as Jehangirjee Tarachand. Significantly, Seth was the first Hindu to go to China to trade; he stayed eight years, leaving Jehangirjee to carry on the business from 1822. Jehangirjee later became agent to Sir Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy, Motichand Amichand and Huthesing Kesarsingh, alongside his own business. In 1826, Burjorjee Framjee Kohidavas first went to China with his maternal uncle Bomanjee Maneckjee Bhandara. By 1830, he seemed to be trading on his own but from 1840 he was in partnership with Dadabhai and Muncherjee Hormusjee Cawasjee and Nusserwanji Bomanjee Modi in the name of Dadabhai Muncherjee Cama & Co in India, and Dadabhai Nusserwanjee Modi at Canton. But China was not enough for every Parsi. In 1828, Sorabjee Cawasjee Kharas started in China, but went from there to Aden in 1840 where he conducted his business, returning to Bombay in time to die there in 1875.

The Readymoneys shows how inter-marriage, business alliances, and an early Parsi start in China made the difference.

Wadia rules the waves – and the trust bank

Another key founding family of Parsi networks from Surat to China was the Wadia. A look at this lineage shows how multi-generational power accrued through trade, in this case through the ownership and building of ships. It also shows the central importance of trust, not only within the Parsi community but beyond it. A closer look, enabled by Pavri, shows the centrality, too, of the Parsi practices of inter-marriage, generational business succession, and close ties to the British.

Lowji Wadia was the leading Parsi shipbuilder; he established the Bombay Dockyard in 1736; he and his descendants stayed in charge there till 1884. His grandson, Pestonjee Bomanjee Wadia, was the most successful of all Wadia, the leading figure among Bombay's Parsis before Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy came along. His agent in China was Cursetjee Faramjee Wadia, who spent more of his life in China than in India, and was the first to be buried in the Parsi cemetery in Macao in March 1829 (aged 48). Pestonjee was also a prominent cotton trader with his own cotton bailing press or 'Screw' (hence origin of the Screwalla Parsi family name), one of the biggest landowners and shipowners of Bombay, and stood as an equal to the [British] Governor of Bombay.²³³ His brother, Hormusjee Bomanjee Wadia, was house broker for Forbes & Co, and dealing mainly with China.

Indicative of the workings of the Parsi community of trust, Hormusjee Bomanjee Wadia had the responsibility (in the absence of banks) to keep the records of the monies of the community, and to act as custodian of same. 'When disputes arose between partners... senior partner handed over the Parsi Punchayet funds to Hormusji Bomanji Wadia, for safe keeping, which he continued until 1823.'²³⁴ When Hormusjee himself once found he was in financial difficulties, he quickly transferred the community funds into a selection of names – himself, plus Nowrojee Jamshetjee Wadia, Framjee Cawasjee Banajee and Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy – and had it all deposited at interest with Remington Crawford Co.

When Hormusjee Bomanjee Wadia died in 1842, aged 74, Forbes & Co rushed supplies of solid silver and coins to his office to restore confidence, showing the strength of the bond between them.²³⁵ Hormusjee's youngest son, Ardaseer Hormusjee Wadia, meanwhile, had a close relationship with Dent & Co, one of the founding firms of the Canton trade (and subsequently Hong Kong). Thanks to that relationship, B & A Hormusjee Co became the Bombay agents for the leading British

²³³ The Pavri Papers, pp145-8.

²³⁴ The Pavri Papers, p152.

²³⁵ The Pavri Papers, p155. Hormusjee's sons and Forbes & Co built the 'Hormusjee Bomanjee', caught in a typhoon, 24 July 1836; 14 Parsis were among all those on board drowned, including Sorabjee Nusserwanjee Nadirshah, Rustomjee Hirjeebhoy Tabak, Shapurjee Bomanjee Guzder, Eduljee Dorabjee Mehta. The ship 'functioned as a floating warehouse for half a million sterling in bullion and the opium consignments from India because it was safer in Hong Kong to store opium and treasure abroad.' Keswick, *Thistle and the Jade*, 1982, p196.

financial institution, the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank. Again, Pavri's granular detail highlights Parsi cohesion, and the central importance of ties with the British.²³⁶

One other Wadia line of note was through Nusserwanji Maneckji Wadia, who secured the agency from the French government to handle their ships and cargoes through Pondicherry. His sons continued the French business while becoming brokers for various British firms. His brother-in-law Muncherjee Jamshedjee Wadia helped found the Canton Chamber of Commerce in 1834.²³⁷ Nusserwanji Wadia had been in partnership with Cursetji Ardeshir Dadyseth; the Dadyseth name can be traced back to Homji Behramji, said to have come to Bombay in 1760. One of his grandsons, Dadibhai Nusserwanji, was a wealthy merchant, cotton trader and shipowner in the London-China trade, who used six agents, some of whom we've already met: Edulji Bomanji Edulkaka who first went to China in 1775 and had houses in Penang and Macao; Rustomji Dadabhai Nadirshah, the young pioneer who went with Hirji Readymoney on the first Parsi trip to China (and whose second son Nowroji had married Readymoney's second daughter Jivnai); Dadibhai Nusserwanji's own eldest son Hormusji; Jamshedji Nanabhai Guzder, who would make seven trips to China; Dosabhai Maneckji Parekh who made 11 China trips before retiring in 1818; and, Faramji Cawasji Banaji – another illustrious name.

Dadibhai Nusserwanji's son, Ardeshir was the first to use the Dadyseth name. Aged 43 when his father died he made a large inherited company even larger, buying more ships, building more houses in Bombay and consecrating more temples. When he died in 1810, his two sons Cursetji and Jehangirji carried on the business for 19 years; Cursetji's sons took on the trade and agencies continued with a variety of British firms; his third son, Homji, married Chandanbai, the daughter of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy. Almost a century later, one Nusserwanji Jamshedji Dadyseth (Dadi) would be 'son-in-law of Sir Hormusji Nowroji Modi of Hong Kong'.²³⁸

Already, simply by looking at Readymoney, Wadia, Dadyseth, Banajee, Cursetjee, Framjee and others, the hitherto-undercovered centrality of the Parsi presence in the early Bombay-Canton trade is clear.

²³⁶ The Pavri Papers, pp162-3.

²³⁷ The Pavri Papers, p141.

²³⁸ The Pavri Papers, p108.

Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Jardine's, and Parsi advancement

The most famous tie-up, stemming from a shared shipping disaster in 1809 but coming to fruition in the 1830s in Canton, was that between Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and William Jardine. As so often, the attention by British chroniclers has gone to the British trader, Jardine, often forgetting the pivotal role of the Parsi Jamsetjee.

Hinnells says: 'It has been estimated that in the 1830s, Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sons were the largest constituent of Jardine Matheson. In the 1830s Jardine's were annually transacting more than £1m worth of business, with Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sons remitting to London about £150,000 per year through Jardine in China.'²³⁹ Jardine Matheson Archives confirm the closeness of the relationship, which reads as a partnership of equals. Jeejeebhoy was not easily intimidated and would freely reject any produce not up to scratch. He personally took the initiative to put their jointly-owned clippers up for sale when they couldn't compete with newly introduced steamers.²⁴⁰ As Hinnells noted: 'Contrary to the popular image of Parsis being cringing and supine in their attitudes to the British, many of the letters complain in strong terms that Jardine Matheson were not obtaining the highest prices they could for opium by trading in different places rather than just in local markets.'²⁴¹ Jamsetjee wanted the best price, wherever it could be got, be that locally in Canton or further afield.

Not only was Jamsetjee pivotal to the entry and survival of Jardine in the China trade – he was pivotal to the development of the Parsi trading diaspora. This is because of that key layer of networking within the Parsi community, beyond marriage and faith, namely the continual placement of sons, brothers and nephews into jobs in the trading firms of one's own or related Parsi family's firms. Just as many young Baghdadi Jews would get their start in Bombay or Hong Kong by working for the expansive Sassoon conglomerate (as would the Kadoories, for example), so would Parsi families, launch their sons into trade via a clerkship in the capacious embrace of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy & Co. Some such clerks, such as

²³⁹ Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, p161. Jardine saw Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sons as the best-managed business east of the Cape.

²⁴⁰ JMA:Reel 58, p105, letter dated 15 Jan 1853, see also Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*.

²⁴¹ Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp 161-2. Footnote 38, p162, gives JMA references for same.

Meherwanjee Meneckjee Tabak who first went to China in 1790 and later traded for himself as well as being an agent for then-Sir Jamsetjee, were related to the Jamsetjee family line, but that was not necessary. Any bright Parsi male could apply or, more likely, be put forward by a father or uncle for the best apprenticeship available in international trade.

Among the countless young Parsi men who worked in the Jamsetjee company offices were the related names of Patel, Parekh, Patuck and more. This line begins with Dorabji Nanabhoy, one of the first Parsis to leave Surat for Bombay and then to pioneer in the China trade. In an oft-repeated pattern, he traded his way up, changing his name along the way and founding what Pavri calls the 'illustrious' Patel family of Canton, Macao and Hong Kong.²⁴² The Patel name would soon connect with Parekh, chosen by one branch of the Wadia; successive generations all worked for the Jamsetjee firm, as did Framjee Pestonjee Patuck. Back in Bombay in 1837, he helped form the Cursetjee Cawasjee Co with Cursetjee Cawasjee Banajee and Muncherjee Framjee Camajee thus forming a next layer of prominent kin-connected trading ties. Meanwhile, Dinshawjee Sorabjee Patuck who died in Bombay in 1842, aged 35, had also, with his father, Sorabjee Pestonjee Patuck, been English writer (clerk) in the Jamsetjee firm. After all, Jamsetjee was Dinshawjee's mother Ratanbai's uncle.

Jamsetjee was the youngest son of a poor father, Jeejeebhoy Chanjee Ratanjee Vatcha, born on 16 July 1783 in Bombay and married when still young to his cousin, Avabai. He first worked for his father-in-law, Faramjee Nusserwanji Batiwala, in the empty bottle business. His first visit to China, in 1799, was made with a cousin but by 1802, he was on his own. An 1805 trip was life-changing, according to his own account, published in the *Bombay Courier* on 9 April 1806. The ship he was on was

²⁴² From 1790, Dorabji had been conducting business in the name of Dorabjee Rustomjee Patel Co, with China, Calcutta, Pegu, Rangoon and ports along the way. He first went to China 1793. His brother Cawasjee Rustomjee Patel was also the Boat Contractor of the EIC. Cawasjee died in 1799 and so Dorabjee took over his brother's business; he also owned two ships, *Purshotam*, and *Shah Jehangir*. A next Dorabjee Sorabjee Patel, who died in Macao in 1841, aged 23, had gone to China with his cousin Hirjeebhai Rustomjee Patel, second son of Rustamjee Cawasjee Patell. Rustamjee first went to China in 1834, aged 25, and ended out running a vast business between Macao, Canton, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Penang, Calcutta and England, owning up to eight vessels at various times. He stayed in China for 14 years, then moved from Macao to England in 1853, until his death there in 1877 aged 68. (His son, Sorabji, would stay in China and Hong Kong, 1854-64, during which time he also joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Regiment in 1861.)

captured by the French and taken off to Madagascar. Jamsetjee's account curiously omits the key fact that he endured this diversion in the company of young William Jardine. The Pavri papers fill the gap. The ship, the *Brunswick*, now crewed by the French, reached the Cape of Good Hope on 16 September 1805. That night, a massive storm smashed the ship's anchors; the *Brunswick* promptly ran aground. Jamsetjee, Jardine and others had to be offloaded with all goods and find another ship to get them home. Haggling was intense and provisions low until they reached Calcutta on 5 December 1805. Legend has it that the shared disaster made Jardine and Jamsetjee close friends and colleagues thereafter.

After Jamsetjee's fifth trip to China in 1807, he stayed in Bombay, managing an empire spread from Siam to Sumatra, Madras and Calcutta, and Singapore. Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy & Co, was not an entirely Parsi enterprise -- partners were the Hindu Motichand Amichand, and the Muslim Nakhoda Mia Muhamed Ali-Rajeh. 'With appropriate calculation, astuteness and untiring zeal, the business prospered successively and in a short period, Jamsetjee ended up amassing amazing wealth,' says Pavri.²⁴³ He bought at least nine ships and traded in partnership with Remington Crawford & Co of Bombay, and with Jardine Matheson & Co in China, mainly sending raw cotton and opium to China, and bringing bullion back.

Jamsetjee took his sons Khurshedjee, Rustomjee and Sorabjee into the business. A penchant for pomp and splendour emerged, seen in the lavish weddings of the sons, attended by the highest members of British and local government and business in Bombay. In the tradition of all wealthy Parsis, temples were consecrated in Jamsetjee's name and donations made to feed the poor, build wells, schools and hospitals. When Motichand Amichand died in 1836, Jamsetjee set up a trust in Motichand's memory to look after poor Hindus in Surat and Cambay. Jamsetjee was knighted in 1842 (an event marked by a large group of Hindus and Parsis setting up a fund to translate works from European and Asiatic ancient and modern languages into Gujarati, to be made free for all) and made a baronet in 1857.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ The Pavri Papers, p197.

²⁴⁴ This did not come cheaply. Said *Bombay Government Gazette*, 2 Sept 1857: 'This title, which Sir Jamsetjee will enjoy during his lifetime and his male successors for ever, and in order to hold the same with honour and dignity, Sir Jamsetjee gave in trust to the government, a sum of Rs 25 lacs and his palatial Mazagon Castle.'

‘But how can one person, however industrious, astute and even fortunate ... amass such abundant wealth?’ asks Pavri. The answer was China and opium.²⁴⁵

Jamsetjee was no subservient, cringing subordinate to the British. On the contrary, he chose to offer advice to the British government. He wrote to the Governor of Hong Kong, Henry Pottinger, in 1842 warning him against ‘pressing too severely upon the Chinese, who in common with all other nations are entitled to have their prejudices respected and their self-love not too rudely disturbed.’²⁴⁶ He disapproved of the small compensation offered for the surrender of opium stocks in Canton, telling H.N. Lindsay in London: ‘You can have no idea of the ruin and misery which this China War had brought to many families here and abroad.’²⁴⁷ Already by 1851, Jamsetjee was disappointed in the China trade, telling his then partner at Jardine’s, Donald Matheson: ‘Our Trade with China which, even when you were in Hongkong was beginning to be on a reduced scale is now even more limited, and where there are so many competitors in the field it is hardly worthwhile pursuing it. In fact, times are very much changed here ever since you left and many new Houses have sprung up in China.’²⁴⁸

When Jamsetjee died on 14 April 1859, ‘more or less, Bombay came to a standstill ... Since the arrival of the Zoroastrians from Ancient Persia, no Zoroastrian had risen so high in esteem.’²⁴⁹ His sons carried on the business under their own names, with second son, Rustomjee, proving most adept, not least in the lucrative cotton trade during the American Civil War. The southern states had been the dominant source of cotton for mills in Britain and India but these states were blockaded during the war, opening the trade to other players, such as the Parsis. The Lancashire Mills stopped buying from southern states to support Lincoln and bought it from India instead. ‘Several Parsi and Hindu houses were engaged in speculation on a scale and in money which today also astounds us.’ Many firms fell in the subsequent crash.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ The Pavri Papers, p217.

²⁴⁶ Thampi, ‘Parsis in the China Trade,’ Note 15: Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Papers, Vol. 1/11/1842-23/12/1842 pp155-158, letter, 18 March 1842.

²⁴⁷ Thampi, ‘Parsis in the China Trade,’ Note 16, no date given.

²⁴⁸ Thampi, ‘Parsis in the China Trade,’ Note 19: Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Papers, Vol 2/1/1851-29/12/1851, pp42-43.

²⁴⁹ The Pavri Papers, p227.

²⁵⁰ Pavri lists the 24 Companies with substantial debts: Behramji Hormusji Cama, Rs3 crores; Pestonji Cursetji Shroff, Rs1 crore 30 lacs; Cursetji Fardoonji Parekh, Rs3 crores 50 lacs; Ardeshir Cursetji Dadiseth; Shapurji Dhunjibhai Batiwala (son-in-law of Sir Jjeejeebhoy); Jeejeebhoy Dhunjibhai Batiwala (ditto); Sorabji Pestonji, and Nowroji Nanabhai (close relative to Taramji

Pavri thinks Rustomjee continued the connection with Jardine too - at least until he used his standing in the Bombay legislature to outlaw the sale of opium in 1866.

The name of Jamsetjee recurs constantly in any Parsi chronicle, not least due to the immense pride in his achievement of Baronet status in Britain. Even the histories of Jardine's done by their own family members pay due deference to the vital role played by Jamsetjee in easing Jardine's entrance into the China trade – without which one could argue there might be no Hong Kong.²⁵¹

Parsi Centrality in Canton

Core to the Parsi business in Canton (as to that of most other foreign traders there) was opium. But specific to the Parsi trade was their ability to bring in the Malwa opium from western India; they had the contacts back in India with those growing the opium, they had the financing to support growers in India, as well as to back speculative investments in the China trade; they were trusted to transmit the profits of private British traders out of China (giving the British political cover when needed); they owned the ships to carry traders and the drug; and, they now had a foothold in Canton to oversee its sale. Between 1800 and 1822 the bulk of opium brought to China was Patna (dominated by Armenians in Calcutta) but from 1822-1839 the balance was reversed in favour of Malwa, further helping to entrench Parsi dominance.

From the arrival of Mr Readymoney in 1756, the Parsis lived and worked together in Canton — and with others. They stayed in the Chow-Chow factory, so named because it was inhabited by a diverse group of people - including Parsis, Muslims and other Indians. This was one of the so-called Thirteen Factories, meaning combined warehouse/office/residence buildings lined up in a row along a tiny

Cawasji Banaji); Dosabhai Meherwanji Wadi Co; Meherwanji Nusserwanji Bhowanagree; Dhunjibhai Faramji Patel; Nowroji Ardeshir Daver; Faramji Ardeshir Daver; Dadabhai Behramji Banaji; Limji Maneckji and Maneckji Banaji; Ardeshir Cursetji Fardoonji; Ratanji Jamshehdji Parekh; Sorabji Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy; Maneckji Shapurji Kaka and Muncherji Hirji; Behramji Nanabhai Banaji; Bomanji Faramji Cama; Rustamji Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy; Karsandas Madhavdas; Kanda Narandas; and Premchand Roychand. Plus another 11 Parsis, four English, 33 Hindu, two Muslim and one Jew debtors — a total of 51 individuals and firms with total debts of more than 7 crores on top of the Rs18 crores and 91 lacs listed above, The Pavri Papers, pp352-3; after settlement, total loss circa Rs 20 crores. But some Parsi firms eschewed speculation and did fine.

²⁵¹ Keswick, *The Thistle and the Jade*, 1982, pp17-18.

stretch of the Canton waterfront. Here stood the 'English factory', the 'Dutch factory' and all the rest, including the Chow-Chow or Parsi factory. All foreign traders at Canton had to spend six months for the annual, Chinese official-prescribed, off-season in nearby Macao; so too with the Parsis, who were first recorded in Macao in 1825.²⁵² (After the Canton Factories burned down in 1856, the trading community moved to Shamian/Shameen island on the Pearl River, edging Canton's trading district; here too, Parsis were early land-owners.)

Jardine, Matheson & Co built the first, fast opium clipper (*Red Rover*), but Parsis built the second when 'the stalwart Parsi princely merchant Rustomjee Cawasjee Banajee of Calcutta' built *Shilft* in 1832. Pavri claims this sailed from Calcutta to Macao in 16 days, 17 hours, making it the fastest ship of the time on the China run. The third opium clipper was the *Cowasjee Family*, also built by Rustomjee Cawasjee Banajee and his sons. Their descendants too would be leading merchants of Hong Kong.

The Parsi habit was (until twentieth century Hong Kong) to transmit wealth back 'home' to Bombay and to retire to Bombay in time to enjoy it and bequeath it to Parsi (and other) charities in Bombay. Many, many pages of The Pavri Papers are dedicated to the habit of philanthropy, first to their own community, but also to hospitals, schools, libraries and other institutions intended to serve the population of Bombay and beyond. In Canton or other China trading stations, Parsis chipped in together to support their own needs – for a meeting ground, a burial place and for any of their number finding themselves in trouble.

Pavri does not recount any cases of one Parsi leaving another in the lurch, although bankruptcies and personal disasters are told from time to time. Instead, writes Pavri: 'Those were the days when at least in the Parsi community there was no malice or competition with others. On the contrary, if someone came into difficult times, others would rush to help and either solve or lessen the troubles. There were others who would encourage young intelligent persons to go into business and assist them. Business was so prosperous that there was enough for everyone.'²⁵³

²⁵² Smith, in 'Parsee Merchants in the Pearl River Delta', details Parsi residents of Macao, and describes the house and goods of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee in Macao as his finances collapsed. Three Parsis were among successful bidders for land at Shameen in 1861; in Macao by contrast, the 1863 directory offers only one Parsi, Framjee Bomanjee; by 1872 this had grown to five.

²⁵³ The Pavri Papers, p183.

Similarly mystical, perhaps, was Osmond Tiffany, writing in 1849: 'The Parsees are the most remarkable of any of the races in Canton.. They give feasts and drink wine, and cheer vociferously, and are a jolly set. Their dress is peculiar, in summer a white robe fitting closely to the back and arms, with wide pantaloons of the same, or of red or blue. In the cold season they have dark colored coats cut in the same fashion, and edged with red cord. Their hair is shaved in part, leaving it growing at the temples, and all wear the most enormous moustaches, which may often be seen as one walks behind them.. many of them speak English well, and all are very courteous in their manners.'²⁵⁴

Behind the exotic looks, meanwhile, Parsis were deploying a range of techniques designed to propel their trading success. Family ties and personal perseverance underpinned Parsi financial success, from Bombay to China and ultimately to Hong Kong. That nexus of names – Readymoney, Banaji (Banajee), Dadyseth, Cowasji (Cowasjee) – would form a core within the earliest Hong Kong elite.

Madhavi Thampi notes, 'In contrast to the Bengali traders from Calcutta known as the banians...the Parsis were distinguished by their willingness to travel personally to China. They were even prepared to spend years far from their homes setting up and working in their family establishments.'²⁵⁵ In 1809, when only one private English trader was resident in Canton, there were several Parsis. By 1831, alongside 32 English traders were 41 Parsis; in 1835, with 35 English were 52 Parsis. 'Generally speaking, they were known as aggressive traders who collaborated with the British, especially the private traders, when it suited their interests, but were also ready to differentiate their position from that of the British when they felt their interests demanded it.'²⁵⁶

They also, crucially, were ever ready with their money. They had the capital and the family-backed confidence to lend their money liberally. They were soon the vital cash connection between Canton and Bombay. Most Chinese merchants soon found themselves indebted to the Parsis; most British would find they could not trade

²⁵⁴ Osmond Tiffany, Jr. *The Canton Chinese, or the American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire*. Boston: James Munroe and Co, 1849, in Garrett, *Heaven is High, the Emperor is Far Away*, p84n10, pp 244-6.

²⁵⁵ Thampi, 'Parsis in the China Trade,' p19.

²⁵⁶ Thampi, 'Parsis in the China Trade,' p20.

without them. Caroline Dobbin asserts that the westerners' China trade would simply not have been possible without the Parsis:

'These private traders now had a key role in Britain's important China trade, for they transferred the funds realised by this trade in sales at Canton to the East India Company's treasury there in return for bills of exchange on London or the Indian government revenue. Without this the China trade could not have been financed, and it was on this basis that the Bombay agency houses built their prosperity...Parsis, then, were the key mediating community, between the British and the products of India they desired to export. All the [several dozen] prominent Parsi families had extensive interests in China and acquired enormous wealth.'²⁵⁷

Parsis were at the centre of all major events in Canton. Signatories to a Petition to London to end the EIC monopoly on trade with China, dated 24 December 1830, included seven Parsis but, says Pavri, the biggest Parsi names were not listed, perhaps to hedge their relationships with the EIC (whose last monopoly, on the China tea trade, was not abolished officially until 1833). Also in 1830, when three members of the Select Committee of the EIC in Canton were leaving Canton for Bombay, their farewell address was also signed by five Parsis: Framjee Pestonjee Patuck, Nanabhai Framjee Cawasjee Banajee, Burjorjee Maneckjee Chinai, Jehangirjee Cursetjee Tarachand, and Meherwanjee Hormusji Moos.

Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee of Calcutta played a key role in the early China trade offering, for example, to look after the sick Lord Napier in 1834. Napier was there in an attempt to broker easier trade relations with the Chinese but talks were not going well and Napier had become seriously ill. Banajee's offer helped negotiators to reach the compromise to allow Napier to leave Canton for Macao, where he died on 11 October 1834.²⁵⁸ The petition led by Dadabhoy Rustomjee which implored Lord Napier not to make trouble with Governor-General Lu Kun as it risked a stoppage of trade, earned the Parsis 'nothing but censure and scorn from the *Canton Register* [newspaper] and others, accusing them of going above their station and presuming to speak for all British traders.' The Parsis rejected the sneer of being 'a tribe of men', insisting they spoke only in hope of achieving the resumption of their own trade.

²⁵⁷ Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, pp84-85.

²⁵⁸ Carroll, *Canton Days*, pp169-170.

Says Pavri: 'The Parsis formed a formidable group of traders in Canton. Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee headed the group of 24 Parsi merchants. The Banajees were the biggest merchants and equalled Dent & Company and Jardine Matheson. They had a total of 20 ships engaged in their China trade.'²⁵⁹ Pavri also lists the 47 Parsis who were part of an elaborate farewell to William Jardine in 1839. This largest, most lavish dinner in the history of China's foreign community,²⁶⁰ took place in the British consular hall, formerly the EIC's grand hall, under Jardine's initials spelled out in lanterns. The toasts began, first to Queen Victoria, then the US President, then to Jardine himself. Speeches included one by Parsi merchant Dinear Dorabjee. Jardine made a point of toasting his Parsi partners, saying, according to the *Canton Register*: 'under the turban were to be found some of the most enterprising, skilful, and successful merchants of the East'. He lauded their business acumen, their charity, their philanthropy. Says Pavri: 'Jardine was always friendly with the Parsis for it was Framjee Cawasjee Banajee who got him started and later Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy helped him to become stronger.'²⁶¹

Throughout the build-up to the first Anglo-Chinese or Opium War (in 1839), Parsis were present. Parsi names were on the Memorial sent to British foreign secretary Lord Palmerston on 24 May 1839. This listed Chinese acts of aggression, stoppage of

²⁵⁹ The Pavri Papers, pp39-40. The 24 Parsi names he listed are: Dadabhai and Maneckjee Rustomjee Banajee, Nanabhai Framjee Cawasjee Banajee of Nanabhai & Pestonjee Cawasji Banajee, Muncherjee Jamshedjee Wadia and his son Nusserwanjee of Muncherjee Jamshedjee & Sons, Bapujee Vicajee Meherjee, Framjee Muncherjee Colah of Framjee Muncherjee Colah & Sons, Dorabjee Hormusjee Laskari of Hormusjee Doradjee Laskari & Sons, Bomanjee Maneckjee Bhandara of Permananda Maneckjee, Burjorjee Fardoonjee Parekh of Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy Co, Dhunjibhai Mucnherji Petigara, Cawasjee Shapoorjee Langrana (brother of Muncherji Cawasji Shapurji Langrana (Mansukh - poet and writer), Jamshedjee Burjorjee Chinai, Bomanjee Jamshedjee Mulla, Framjee Jamshedjee Screwalla, Eduljee Fradoonjee Khambatta, Rustomjee Burjorjee Modi, Dosabhai Fardoonjee, Nusserwanjee Jamshedjee, Jamshedjee Nusserwanjee [sic], Hormusjee Behramjee Handa, Sorabjee Nusserwanjee, Dosabhai Rustomjee Seth, and Dimanjee Dorabjee Bengalee. The eight Parsis who joined 16 British merchants to form a first trading council were Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee, Burjorjee Fardoonjee Parekh, Framjee Muncherjee Colah, Nanabhai Framjee Cawasjee, Muncherjee Jamshedjee Wadia, Dorabjee Hormusjee Laskari, Bapoojee Vicajee, and Bomanjee Maneckjee Bhandara. Pavri says the most important Parsis in the opium trade were Framjee Muncherjee Colah and Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee.

²⁶⁰ Carroll, *Canton Days*, pp131 ff.

²⁶¹ The Pavri Papers, p43. He describes the Chamber of Commerce meeting in Canton on 24 November 1836, which included two Parsis, Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee and Framjee Pestonjee Patuck. By 21 March 1838, Banajee was joined by Hirjeebhai Rustomjee Patel and Dinshaw Fardoonjee Panday. This Council meeting sought a way to avoid confiscation of opium stocks, in vain. On 25 March 1839, a Petition to Commissioner Lin, again to try to avert confiscation, included the names of 22 Parsis, including Banajee, Chinai, Bhandara, Patel, Panday, Screwalla, Dolakhan, Handa, Irani, Tabak, Mulla-Ferozna, Sethna, Hosangjee, Ranjee, Mehta. p50.

trade, detention, confinement, forced bonds and related hardships. Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee alone had to hand over 1,000 chests of opium when the Chinese Commissioner Lin Zexu confiscated foreign stocks of opium and had it burned on 3 June 1839. Of 16 foreigners singled out by the Chinese after house arrest as the main offenders at the time, prohibited from leaving Canton, were four Parsis: Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee, Bomanjee Maneckjee Bhandara, Hirjeebhai Rustomjee Patel and Framjee Jamshedjee Screwalla.

Camajee clan's clues to how kin works

The Camajee family, extending from Surat to China, Southeast Asia and into Hong Kong, offers just one example of how Parsi kin networks worked, illustrating to what extent the Parsi network was foundational to Hong Kong. The Camajee clan shows the size of Parsi networks, the experience of both ups and downs in trade, yet the perseverance in trade and thus the expansion of those networks.

The family line started with Cooverjee Bhimjee, aged 20, leaving Surat for Bombay in 1735, in the company of the original scion of the Wadia family, Lowjee Wadia. Cooverjee had two sons, Camajee and Kohanjee; then Camajee had two sons, Eduljee and Muncherjee.

One of Eduljee's sons, Hormusjee Eduljee Camajee, went to China with the Eduljee Bomanjee Edulkaka who had first reached China in 1775; he learned Cantonese, was agent to Hormusjee Bomanjee Wadia, and took his cousin Faramjee Muncherjee Camji to China. A mysterious allegation against him by a Chinese merchant involved him in costly litigation; 'In the process of defending his honour and name, he lost most of his wealth and became almost broke.'²⁶² But in 1818, Faramjee Cawasjee Banajee took pity and made him his China agent; he soon secured other agencies from Bombay and Chinese merchants and retired to Bombay in 1823 with a respectable fortune. Says Pavri: 'After his retirement, even the Bombay government asked for his services in dealing with the Bombay Chinese community ... as a Chinese language translator whenever some disputes arose between the local Chinese and the government...'²⁶³

²⁶² The Pavri Papers, p187.

²⁶³ The Pavri Papers, p187.

Hormusjee Eduljee Camajee's second of four sons, Dadabhoy Hormusjee Camajee, went to China in 1825. By 1833, third son Muncherjee joined him, and so was established Dadabhoy Muncherjee Camajee & Co, China. On 26 October 1840, this took in two more partners: Nusserwanjee Bomanjee Mody and Burjorjee Faramjee Kohidaroo, thus the new company name in Bombay became Dadabhoy Nusserwanjee Modi & Co; by 1845, this was also the Burjorjee Faramjee Co in Calcutta. Third son Muncherjee had travelled to London in 1854 to establish Cama & Co; by 1861 he had started and become first president of the London Anjuman, but Cama & Co was closed by 1863 and he returned to Bombay the next year. With no heirs of his own he adopted the son of his older brother Nusserwanji. Meanwhile, youngest son, Behramjee Hormusjee Camajee, had opened a company in Singapore. 'During the American Civil War he made substantial profits and amassed a big fortune.'²⁶⁴ The brothers also started the Cama Insurance Company in 1852. 'The Cama family members amassed substantial wealth in their business with China and made good use of the money in charitable worthy causes,' concluded Pavri; indeed they do well in early Hong Kong too.²⁶⁵

Stepping back to Cooverjee's other grandson, Muncherjee, there lies a larger and more venerable lineage in the China trade. Muncherjee's first son, Faramjee, had already gone to China with his cousin Hormusjee Eduljee Camajee before 1800 and was doing a large business with China in agate stone, good quality English earthenware and opium. Second and third sons, Hosmusjee and Nusserwanji, worked in Bombay in the offices of Burjorjee Nanabhai Daver and Nusserwanji Petit respectively. They then joined their older brother's China business, thus forming Faramjee & Nusserwanji Muncherjee Cama Co, later changed to Nusserwanji & Faramjee Cama Company. But Faramjee died in 1823 aged 43, and Hormusjee died in 1828 aged 44, leaving Nusserwanji solely responsible for all his brothers' offspring, akin to a small village.

In time-honoured fashion, Nusserwanji Muncherjee Camajee brought his oldest brother's oldest son, Muncherjee Faramjee Cama, into the business and so, from 24 October 1832, it was the Muncherjee Camajee Co. On going into partnership with

²⁶⁴ The Pavri Papers, p192.

²⁶⁵ The Pavri Papers, p193.

Cursetjee Cawasjee Banajee (in 1838) it became Cursetjee Cawasjee Co., where Muncherjee Faramjee Cama became a partner, owner of five ships, House Broker for Graham & Co., and a large land-owner in Bombay. He also became known as 'Bhatia' for his simplicity and frugality in life. He had two sons, Meherwanjee and Hormusjee, who continued the business until 1871, and three brothers – Pestonjee Faramjee Cama, Bomanjee Faramjee Cama and Dosabhoy Faramjee Cama. Pestonjee with his brother Bomanjee had established Pestonjee & Bomanjee Faramjee Camajee & Co, in Bombay in 1842. Then with younger brother Dosabhoy, they established Dosabhoy Framjee Cama & Co. in Calcutta; Pestonjee Faramjee Cama & Co. in Canton and Shanghai; and, Hormusjee Jamasedjee Nadirshah & Co. in another Chinese treaty port, Amoy. These brothers did well. 'Business was successful and generated wealth and prosperity in the big Cama family.'²⁶⁶ Alongside Bomanjee, Dosabhoy Faramjee Camajee opened P & DF Cama & Co and in 1862 travelled from London to New York on the then biggest liner, the 'Great Eastern', and travelled round America, the first Cama to do so. Indeed, Dosabhoy had a sense of adventure, managing to be in Afghanistan during the attack on the British residency in Kabul of September 1879; he lived to be 69, dying in Bombay in 1892.

Having made sure the family line of his oldest brother, Faramjee, was secure, uncle Nusserwanjee Muncherjee Camajee also looked to his own four sons, all of whom carried on the family business. The two oldest sons, Dadabhoy and Dhunjibhoy, were in Canton when the Canton Anjuman was established on 19 September 1845.²⁶⁷ Third son Khurshedjee started his own business in 1843 based in Bombay (Khurshedjee Nusserwanjee & Co), Calcutta (P & C.N. Cama & Co.), and China (Dorabjee Nusserwanjee & Co). The latter was largely run by younger brother Dorabjee, in China for most of his life from the age of 14, particularly in Shanghai, where he died in 1882, aged 62. Meanwhile Kurshedjee owned two ships, 'Mermaid' and 'Ardaseer', and became a partner in Cama & Co in England in 1855. He established several joint stock companies: Bombay Merchants' Insurance Co., Paper

²⁶⁶ The Pavri Papers, p175. Bomanjee Camajee also had four sons: Faramjee, Pochajee, Hormusjee, Nusserwanji, Bomanjee Camajee.

²⁶⁷ The Pavri Papers, pp170-171. Pavri describes the Camajees as reformist Parsis, as 'even before this, the Cama family members amongst themselves made a declaration in writing on November 14, 1844, that expensive and superstitious ways of the Parsis like and especially at the time of funerals, uthamna and ceremonies of the dead where friends and relatives come daily for 10 to 30 days, called "Pathernas", collection of monies for charitable purpose in the name of the deceased, the Cama family members would do no such thing.'

Manufacturing Co., Native Insurance Co., Mercantile Steam Navigation Co., Royal Spinning & Weaving Mills, Vikas Patent Ship, Victoria Patent Bricks Co. and more. Of Khurshedjee's seven sons, one became a London barrister.

Meanwhile, Nusserwanji's other brother who had died young, Hormusjee Muncherjee, also had four sons. The oldest of these, Pestonjee Hormusjee Camajee took his first trip to China in 1845, returning to Bombay in 1852. 'Prior to going to China he, with his cousin Cursetjee Nusserwanjee Camajee and some other China Parsi merchants, started the Parsee Insurance Society on September 28, 1844, with 102 shares of Rs 1,500 each.'²⁶⁸ Despite news reports that this venture failed, Pavri claims, either through loyal hagiography or because his sources in Parsi records were better, that 'By 1871, the Camajees had made so much money that they voluntarily closed their business.' Back in Bombay, Pestonjee had set up a range of charitable trusts and displayed a more than usual fervour for British royalty; he secured the Duke of Connaught in 1883 to lay a foundation stone for a women's hospital he had founded in his own name. By 1887 Pestonjee Hormusjee Cama had been made a CIE (Companion of the Indian Empire).²⁶⁹

Pestonjee's closest brother, Dosabhoy, although often eclipsed by his star-powered sibling, was active in the China trade and in Canton had been trustee of Anjuman funds. Next brother, Rustamjee Hormusjee Camajee had first been to China in 1833 but preferred Bombay where he started Dinshaw Rustomjee & Co., importing English merchandise, but dying young, aged 27, in 1839. Fourth brother, Ruttonjee Hormusjee Camajee, joined the family firm of Hormusjee Muncherjee Camajee & Co. in Canton and also started his own firm, Ruttonjee Hormusjee Camajee & Co. Highly educated with excellent English he was instrumental in founding the Canton Anjuman (donating funds and being a Trustee), before he too died aged 27, in 1851.

Khurshedjee Rustomjee Cama, meanwhile, was the son of Rustamjee Hormusjee Camajee. Because his father had died when he was just seven years old, Parsi kinship patterns kicked in to support him. His mother arranged with his uncle Dosabhoy to marry off young Kurshedjee to Dosabhoy's daughter when he was just

²⁶⁸ The Pavri Papers, p178.

²⁶⁹ The Pavri Papers, p179-180.

eight years old. He was then educated and sent to Calcutta to learn the business and from there, in 1850, to China where he was made partner in the family business. Back in Bombay, however, he chose to become a scholar of languages and teacher of Zoroastrianism. After his death in 1909, the K.R. Cama Oriental Institution was founded to hold his library and be open to all.

Thus did the Camajee clan cover all the bases of Parsi worthiness. They constructed multi-generational lineages to conserve and expand wealth-generating networks, they traded through success and loss, and contributed to the betterment of their community through philanthropy and even intellectual endeavour.

First Parsis of Canton to Hong Kong

Before the war which handed Hong Kong to the British, 15 ships (out of a 27-strong war fleet) were chartered from Dadabhai Rustomjee Banajee's father, Rustomjee Cawasjee Banajee of Calcutta; another in the fleet was owned by Framjee Cawasjee Banajee. When Britain finally embarked on war with China in 1839, the British Commander's lead ship, HMS Wellesley (and HMS Melville) had been built at Wadia's Bombay Dockyard. Crowning Parsi involvement is the fact that the Treaty of Nanking was signed on board the Parsi-built HMS Cornwallis, on 29 August 1842. Along with opening five Treaty Ports on the China Coast, this ceded Hong Kong Island in perpetuity, making Hong Kong a British Crown Colony.

Among the Parsis who stood alongside the leading British traders when the British flag was raised at Possession Point on 26 January 1841 was Faramji Meherwanji Talati. His family firm was the second to start trading in Hong Kong,²⁷⁰ although the family heritage lay in tax collection: Talati means revenue collector and the original patriarch, Kukaji Aspuji Talati, had three sons, the eldest of whom, Manaji Kukaji Talati, was given the 'Talati-ship', or revenue farm over 18 villages of Navsari and Pachora, Surat. Pavri's notes²⁷¹ reveal his frustration at being unable to pin down the exact family tree to arrive at this first Talati to reach China, in 1827.

²⁷⁰ The Pavri papers, pp270-272.

²⁷¹ The Pavri papers include a letter from Pavri to Pesi and Minnie Sorabji Talati, pp279-281, resident at La Clara Mansion in Hong Kong, dated 2 July 1989; no answer to the letter could be found. He asks for details of Pesi's father in Shanghai mentions other Talati names in Hong Kong: Dadabhai Dinshawji Talati, to HK in 1890s or so, rtnd Bombay 1 April 1899, rtnd HK until 1904; Hormushah Dadabhai Talati (perhaps son of above), his name also in HK Anjuman book of

Faramjee Meherwanji Talati founded F.M. Talati & Co. in Canton, whose major business was opium and which moved to Hong Kong in 1842. His son, P.F. Talati, took over the business in his own name (Pestonjee Framji Talati), trading not just opium but also precious stones, jewels, oils and more, before dying in Hong Kong in 1919, aged 58. Meanwhile, a Meherwanjee Pallanjee Talati, born in Bombay in 1872, left his work as a solicitor there to reach Hong Kong in the late 1800s, whereupon a company emerged as M.P Talati & Co.²⁷² The name lives on in Hong Kong.

These networks of connections among Parsis, and between Parsis and other leading merchants — often deep and personal — transformed the first settlement of Hong Kong in 1841 from a purely ‘white’, Western or British exercise into something quite different. This stepping on to the Hong Kong foreshore was a more broadly Asian and Eurasian extension of pre-existing ties into a new base off the edge of China. Those pre-existing trading routes, with their roots in the South and Southeast Asian waters which these traders had sailed together for so long, were Asian routes. For these to grow (and along the way settle Hong Kong), they needed their Asian traders. Foremost amongst these traders stood the Parsis.

This can be seen at the first auction of land along Hong Kong’s foreshore. Held on 14 June 1841, it was far ahead of any legal right to the land (enshrined by a Treaty which was not signed until August 1842). Officials (including Portuguese clerks from Macao who would themselves become leading lights of Hong Kong society)

1903 and 1904; Nowroji Edulji Talati, name appears in HK in 1872; K.H.N. Talati, name appears 1898-9 as having offices in HK, Shanghai and Japan, with a partner called Rustamji Aspandiarji Sethna in Japan, doing pearl business and visiting Paris regularly for this; Jamshedji M. Talati, in Peking, who had hotels in Peking and Tientsin, and had written to the Shanghai Anjuman requesting a Navjote ceremony (by Mobed Saheb) for daughter — ‘Your father Sorabji was the Chairman of the meeting of 20-4-1932 where Jamshedji M. Talati’s letter was discussed and it was agreed to send the Mobed Saheb to Peking’... The Pavri Papers, p280. Pavri continues, to list Ratanji Sorabji Talati in HK 1886, left 1888; Nusserwanji Talati, relative of Jamshedji M. Talati, wife was Navajbai, probably also in Peking, who might have more daughters including Freny; Bapsy Sorab Talati had a Navjote performed for her — ‘This Bapsy is your sister I hope’, p280. He adds: ‘Your father was appointed Trustee of the Shanghai Anjuman on March 18, 1925... If you know the name of your grandfather and if that would be Pestonji Meherwanji Talati, we will have a complete genealogy. In 1934, there was only one Talati family in Shanghai, your own.’ p281. Pavri asks when Pesi’s father went to Shanghai, when he went to HK etc. ‘I had a booklet prepared at the time of your wedding...now in the Manchester University Library.’

²⁷² Meherwanjee P Talati married Cooverbai (daughter of Burjorjee and Modi of Surat), herself a graduate; he became president of the Hong Kong Anjuman. They had a son, Burjor, sales representative for the leading Hong Kong firm Taikoo Sugar Co., who died young; Cooverbai published a book on Zoroastrian religion in 1954.

hastily drew up a series of 'Marine' and 'Inland' Lots, the best ones being those facing the all-important sea. The buyers needed the money and ambition to take a chance on the legalities in order to claim a vital part of that sea shore.

Aside from the British were four Parsi buyers of land: Heejebhoy Rustomjee, Dadabhoy Rustomjee, Framjee Jamsetjee and Pestonjee Cowasjee.²⁷³

Heejebhoy Rustomjee appeared first in Canton as resident there in 1825; he stayed in Canton, Hong Kong and Macao until 1857. Being close to William Jardine, he bought Marine Lot 10 at this first land sale in 1841 and by 1843 had transferred it to Jardine Matheson & Co; he also bought Marine Lot 11 and 24, the latter being taken over by military for storage of ordinance. He was keen to fund a first seamen's hospital in Hong Kong but struck financing difficulties, whereupon Jardine's funded it instead. Pavri explains that only ten days before the auction, the cousin he had brought with him to China in 1839 (Dorabjee Sorabjee Patel) had died in Macao aged 22. 'Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee's contribution appears to have gone flat as Heerjeebhoy came into financial difficulties... Jardine Matheson and other merchants provided money and the hospital was established in 1844.'²⁷⁴

Dadabhoy Rustomjee (Dhunjibhoy Ruttonjee Bisney) bought Marine Lots 5 and 20 with the latter later taken by the government for part of the naval dockyard. He built himself a house on Lot 5, then changed his mind about living in it, preferring to stay based in Macao. This was the house offered as lodging for Chinese Commissioner Keying on his visit to Hong Kong in November 1845, hence its new name, 'Keying House', until it became the British Hotel, later to be sold to Dent's. Dadabhoy Rustomjee can be traced back to seventeenth-century Bhivandi near Surat, from where Banajee Limjee came to Bombay in 1690 as an employee for the EIC. In early 1700, he started Banajee Limjee Co, with sons Behramjee, Maneckjee, and Limjee. With offices in Calcutta and elsewhere, he owned ships and did philanthropy in the generous Parsi way. Behramjee had five sons: Nanabhai, Rustomjee, Dadabhai, Muncherjee, Cawasjee. Son Nanabhai started his family name of Daver and all went

²⁷³ The full list of buyers: Dhunjibhoy Ruttonjee Bisney, Dent & Co, Dirom & Co, Ferguson, Leighton & Co, James Fletcher & Co, Fox, Rawson & Co, Framjee Jamsetjee, W & F Gemmell & Co, Gribble, Hughes & Co, R Gully, Charles Hart, Holliday & Co, Hooker & Lane, Jamieson & How, Jardine Matheson & Co, Captain Larkins, Lindsay & Co, MacVicar & Co, Captain Morgan, Pestonjee Cowasjee, P.F. Robertson, Heejebhoy Rustomjee, Turner & Co, Robert Webster.

²⁷⁴ The Pavri Papers, p252.

well in the family business until a dispute in 1790. According to Pavri's notes, Nanabhai Daver and Faramjee Cawasjee Banajee also 'had very extensive business with China'.²⁷⁵

The Banajee family business with China started with Faramjee Cawasjee Banajee, maternal nephew of Dadibhai Nusserwanjee Dadyseth who had extensive China business since 1775; young Faramjee went as agent for his uncle to China in 1796 and 1798, then started his own business as a supplier of stores to EIC ships, buying his first ship in 1805. Faramjee prospered, and bought more ships: 'In 1820, Faramjee Cawasjee Banajee sent William Jardine to sell his Malwa opium.'²⁷⁶ Jardine had already shared his *Brunswick* adventure with Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, and now here was another fruitful Parsi partnership — all long before Jardine and Donald Matheson formed their own partnership as Jardine Matheson & Co in 1828. Pavri says Faramjee's partnership with William Jardine didn't last long as Faramjee 'desired to terminate this pernicious commodity and never again touched opium during his lifetime.'²⁷⁷

Faramjee's sons also entered the China trade: 'The Banajees were highly respected and well known China merchants.'²⁷⁸ Faramjee also had six brothers, of which the fourth, Limjee, was son-in-law to the famed Ardeshir Dadibhai Dadyseth. Fifth brother, Cursetji Cawasjee Banajee, started modestly, supplying British ships but 'With honesty and hard work, he slowly collected a small fortune'.²⁷⁹ Being son-in-law to Cursetjee Ardeshir Dadyseth, and broker to British companies, 'made him sufficiently rich to embark upon still further lucrative China trade.'²⁸⁰

The result was the Cursetjee Cawasjee Company - in partnership with two other China traders, Faramjee Pestonjee Patuck and Muncherjee Faramjee Cawasjee – the latter who we have met already through the Camajee family line. The partnership lasted three years before dissolving amicably as Cursetji Cawasjee's sons were now ready to join instead, thus, from 1842, existed Cursetjee Cawasjee Sons & Co.

²⁷⁵ The Pavri Papers, p110.

²⁷⁶ The Pavri Papers, p111.

²⁷⁷ The Pavri Papers, p 112.

²⁷⁸ The Pavri Papers, pp118-9.

²⁷⁹ The Pavri Papers, p114.

²⁸⁰ The Pavri Papers, p114.

Faramjee's sixth brother, Rustomjee, along with his siblings, 'brought the greatness and glory of the Banajee name to its highest peak'.²⁸¹ He 'conducted his business on a scale which far exceeded that of any other trader of his times'.²⁸² When his older brother Framjee turned his back on opium, Rustomjee took it up and brought his sons into it, Dadabhai and Manekjee. 'Dadabhai was destined to play a leading part in China and could perhaps have become the pioneer settler there had the business not suffered unexpected huge losses and was liquidated'.²⁸³ Rustomjee meanwhile broke with tradition by bringing his wife from Bombay to Calcutta, and his daughter, Mithibai, who married Meherwanjee Jehangirjee Banajee, the grandson of Framjee Cawasjee Banajee. A brother of his wife opened an office in Singapore; back in Calcutta, Rustomjee held a 500-guest ball to open his lavish mansion there in 1837; he owned 27 ships, more than the 20 ships of the EIC, and was the driving force behind the Kidderpore Docks of Calcutta. Only when his older brother Cursetjee died bankrupt in 1847 was Rustomjee's business broken. The China company fell too, carrying huge losses. But his son, Dadabhoy Rustomjee Banajee had been one of the first buyers in Hong Kong's first land auction.

The next Parsi purchaser of land in the 1841 auction was **Framjee Jamsetjee**, who has the honour of being the first settled Parsi resident in Hong Kong — 'but he appears to have been a reluctant resident, as he repeatedly advertised his property for rent or sale until the day of his departure from Hong Kong'.²⁸⁴ Framjee was an independent trader, not connected to any firm or partnership. He lived in Canton 1834-39, and in Hong Kong's first land auction bought Marine Lot 36, where he built a small house and sea wall. By 1844, the thrill had gone, and it was advertised for sale as 'that pleasant and healthy residence known as Framjee's bungalow surrounded by well stocked garden and commanding a fine view of the bay with a large sea frontage'.²⁸⁵ Framjee had an office in European-dominated Queen's Road Central as well as in the thriving local business zone of Peel Street. A decade later, in the *Friend of China* of 22 October 1854, a 'Final Notice' appeared: 'Mr Framjee Jamsetjee, the oldest inhabitant of Hong Kong, being tired of the colony and obliged to leave at last, requests all accounts to be sent for liquidation.'

²⁸¹ The Pavri Papers, p115.

²⁸² The Pavri Papers, p122.

²⁸³ The Pavri Papers, p123.

²⁸⁴ Smith, 'The Establishment of the Parsee Community in Hong Kong,' in *A Sense of History*, p395.

²⁸⁵ Advertisement in *Friend of China*, 6 Sept 1846.

Framjee Jamsetjee also took the name Buxey, as his forebears, the brothers Jamshedji Nusserwanji and Sorabji Nusserwanji had been in the service of a Buxey in Surat and thus took on the name.²⁸⁶ Framjee's father, Jamshedji, was a supplier of household effects to Bombay Governor Sir John Malcolm, who in return gifted lands near Crawford Market in Bombay. Faramji (Jamshedji) Nusserwanji Buxey, this early land-buyer of Hong Kong, had first been a teacher in Bombay, then in a solicitor's firm servicing the EIC; he first went to China in 1829 working for Dadabhoy & Maneckjee Rustamjee Banajee & Co where he later became a partner; he too is on the founder's list for the Canton Anjuman. After the Banajee firm closed down (in 1848), Framjee later joined Ruttanjee Hormusjee Camajee & Co, becoming a partner there on 6 July 1861. This firm also closed, in 1864. As the *Daily Press* reported on 11 January 1864: 'Parsee merchant, Jehangir Framjee Buxey, to leave on 15th instant, very old firm Messrs R.H. Camajee & Co has been dissolved, he is to retire, he filled place of Parsee Punchayat in HK'.

But Framjee was not finished with Hong Kong yet. Although he retired to Bombay in 1864, he was back in Hong Kong for the Anjuman meeting of 1870. Indeed, a 27 January 1868 announcement suggested he had arrived only four years after he had left Hong Kong 'for good': 'Mr Jehangirji Faramji Buxey authorised to sign for Eduljee Framjee Sons & Co'. However, he fell sick in May 1873, and died in Bombay the next year. Says Pavri: 'All members and descendants of Jehangirji Faramji Buxey married into wealthy and illustrious famous [sic], Sir Hormusji Nowroji Mody of Hong Kong was also his relative.'²⁸⁷

The fourth purchaser of land in the 1841 auction was **Pestonjee Cowasjee** who bought Marine Lot 7, but soon decided to sell it; the government took it back sometime before 1844, after which the Dent's trading firm bought it and built a large structure intended as an exchange, but slow business again saw it resumed by the government for use as a supreme court. Pestonjee Cowasjee also bought Marine Lot 66, but died soon afterwards, on 18 August 1842, aged 62. The latter lot reverted through his will to Jehangir Framjee Buxey who immediately vested the lot with

²⁸⁶ The Pavri Papers, pp287-291. 'Bisney had some non-Parsi blood. But then, it becomes a very long story to explain' p422. Letter from Pavri, 22 July 1988.

²⁸⁷ The Pavri Papers, p291.

Cowasjee Pallanjee, head of Cawasjee Pallanjee & Co - one of the biggest Parsi firms on the China coast. 'There was no legal status of Hong Kong but Cawasjee Pallanjee & Co was the first to commence their office in Hong Kong from Canton. The second one was Faramjee Merwanjee Talasi to see the flag hoisted but moved to Hongkong in 1842, the third one was Rustamjee Dhurjeeshaw of P.P. Cama & Company and the fourth was Albert Sassoon, son of David Sassoon who continued his business from his opium clipper in the harbour and came ashore and established his office six months later.'²⁸⁸

Cawasjee Pallanjee & Co, officially the first Parsi firm to start trading in Hong Kong, lasted more than one hundred years. The Pavri Papers take us back to 1820 when Cawasjee Darasha Sethna had four sons who all moved from Surat to Bombay: Pallanjee, Bomanjee, Pestonjee, and Faramjee. Pestonjee was apparently 'the intelligent one', who travelled to China from 1820 (and died in Macao in 1842, aged 52). Pestonjee brought in two brothers (Pallanjee and Faramjee) and four nephews (Cawasjee Pallanjee, Khurshedjee Bamanjee, Cooverjee Bomanjee and Cawasjee Faramjee) to form Cawasjee Pallanjee & Co in China and Cursetjee Bomanjee & Co in Bombay (both in 1829). When his father Cawasjee died in 1842, Pestonjee took over, trading mainly in opium, spices, silk, and later yarn. He was 'a talented businessman and the firm reached new heights of prosperity under his leadership ... The firm became so successful that a popular saying arose: "Whatever Cawasjee says, Hong Kong does."'²⁸⁹

After Pestonjee died, the business was carried on in the family. Nephew Cawasjee Pallanjee was one of first trustees of the Canton Anjuman. His first marriage connected the Cawasjee family to their Sethna cousins; a daughter from that union married Shapoorjee Bomanjee Mistry, who was also a partner in Cawasjee Pallanjee & Co. Cawasjee Pallanjee's second marriage to Bachoobai Dinshawji Parbhoo (Warden) produced five sons: Eduljee, Ardeshir, Petanji, Dinshawji and Bomanjee; and four daughters: Navajbai, Shirenbai, Armai and Dhanbai. Another Pestonjee nephew, Khurshedji Bomanji Sethna was in China from 1833 where he welcomed all cousins, sons and relatives; he 'loved them all and the Sethna family never had any

²⁸⁸ The Pavri Papers, p251. Sassoon was not Parsi, but scion of the Baghdadi Jewish dynasty.

²⁸⁹ Guo Deyan, 'The Study of Parsee Merchants', p58.

shortage of manpower, mutual trust, love and respect for all'.²⁹⁰ Another Pestonjee nephew, Cooverjee Bomanji Sethna, a tutor to Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy 2nd Baronet, became the first Parsi to go to Shanghai, opening a branch there in 1849.

At home in Hong Kong

In trying to pin down why Parsis have been so important to the making of early Hong Kong, some attempt has been made to find the sources of their special strength. Even though he himself did not deconstruct the success stories, the records Pavri saved go a long way to explaining this. He shows the almost unequalled longevity of the Parsis in trade, and specifically in trade on the China Coast. They were trading east of India before the British arrived in northwest India and found them such helpful allies. They were in China ahead of virtually any other foreign traders. As Pavri shows through his extensive genealogies, many of the first individuals to meet each other in the Canton trade and move together to Hong Kong had already known each other back in Bombay. Whereas British and others might trade through family companies, those families were not genetically tied into scores of inter-related families all linked by faith and ethnicity into an active, multi-national network as Parsis were.

The Zoroastrian Charity Fund was founded in Canton and Macao before Hong Kong was born. In Canton in 1823, those who gathered to lead the community had been Hormusjee Bomanjee Wadia, Framjee Cawasjee Banajee, Nowrojee Jamshedjee Wadia, and Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy. The first meetings of Hong Kong's Parsi Anjuman (community centre and temple) were held at the offices of Dadabhai and Maneckjee Rustamjee Banajee in 1845. This Anjuman was intended to provide spiritual, social and practical succour purely for the community in Hong Kong. A primary challenge for Parsis abroad was also to bury the dead, in contrast to Bombay Parsis who could follow traditional practise in leaving the dead out on sacred towers. Four years earlier, the Canton community had sent representatives south to Singapore too.²⁹¹ But Hong Kong's Anjuman would soon take on a larger importance.

²⁹⁰ The Pavri Papers, p258.

²⁹¹ The Pavri Papers, pp487-8. See p489 for a list of Singapore Parsi donors, 1853.

On 27 September 1857 in Hong Kong, a meeting of the Anjuman was held thanks to Rustamji Dhunjeeshah Captain, at the offices of Rustomjee Ruttonjee Company, chaired by Jehajirjee Framjee Buxey. This meeting discussed how Canton was becoming too unstable. Indeed, within a year the second Anglo-Chinese war would break out; Adarjee Shapoorjee reported that the endangered Parsis of Canton needed a roof over their heads in Hong Kong. By 11 February 1861, they had bought a house at 49 Elgin Street, just up the hill from Hong Kong's waterfront. The process was another example of how the Parsis stuck together, looked after their own, and hedged their bets between Canton, Macao and Hong Kong – before consolidating in Hong Kong.²⁹²

Land for their own cemetery in Hong Kong was granted in 1852, and a first burial took place there in August 1858; by 1872, 143 internments had taken place. In 1859, when Parsis were excluded from an offer of season tickets to the Dramatic Corps' shows in Hong Kong, it caused such an uproar that the Corps had to apologise and immediately remedy the failure; the debacle contributed to the Corps' eventual merger with the Amateur Dramatic Corps.²⁹³

And so the pattern repeated — sons and well-married daughters, nieces and nephews, kept trading between both west and east coasts of India with Canton, Singapore, Shanghai and above all, Hong Kong, in a multi-generational series of connections which continually strengthened Parsi networks, and long-standing relationships with others in the China trade. Most Parsis of nineteenth century Hong Kong were men; their wives were either back in Bombay or lived in seclusion. The reality of frequent marriage between cousins occasioned comment (for example, in the *Daily Press* of 7 February 1865), claiming this caused moral problems and should be avoided by bringing in wives from Bombay. But a couple of leading Parsis –

²⁹² The 1923 committee comprised Jehangirjee Hormusjee Ruttonjee, Rustomjee Ardeshir Dastur, Rustomjee Eduljee Desai and Muncherjee Nanaghhai Mehta. Rented sites at Duddell Street and Leighton Hill Road followed; an attempt to buy premises in 1929 fell through. Meanwhile Mohamed Nimazee, a personal friend of Richard Lee Hysan, chief executor of the Lee Hysan Estate Ltd, reported the Lee's purchase of Jardine Matheson Hill which they were levelling. Rustamji Ardeshir Dastur asked Lee Hysan Estates and was granted a special price for 3,000 square feet on a 999-year lease. Architects Leigh & Orange were hired and a foundation stone laid at 101 Leighton Road on 24 October 1930. Fund-raising continued from Hong Kong to Canton, Shanghai, Kobe, Bombay and Calcutta; the official opening ceremony was on 19 July 1931. Today's temple and Anjuman remain on the same site, but now in a high-rise office block.

²⁹³ See Jarrett, *Old Hong Kong* / by Colonial.

Kotewall and Ruttonjee – took a different approach, choosing to marry Chinese women and building dynasties with them.

The Ruttonjees, by marrying locally in Hong Kong, forged a clan which would play a leading role in trade, industry, philanthropy, health and support for (British) Hong Kong during World War Two. So would the Kotewall who first worked in Hong Kong for Tata, married locally and produced Sir Robert Kotewall, Hong Kong's first Eurasian member of the Legislative and Executive Councils in the 1930s, and a contested figure in the process of the War and Japanese occupation. Lesser known heroes include the (unrelated) Kotwal brothers, and one Mr Jokhi who escaped death at Japanese hands and gave away a fortune in response. Conflicts and competition became unavoidable in subsequent generations of Parsi families even as a paucity of family memoirs and other sources provide little evidence of earlier rivalries within the Parsi community.

Parsi influence in Hong Kong has long outstripped their numbers. Street names give a hint: Kotewall Road, Bisney Road, Mody Road and more. The first stock exchange, cricket club, Jockey Club, Ruttonjee Hospital and more banks have Parsi roots. Star Ferry grew out of the love that Dorabji Neoroji had for horticulture. He lived in Hong Kong for more than 50 years and owned large warehouses on the Island, a bakery and the King Edward Hotel. He built an extensive garden in Kowloon which he visited with his own small boat. Soon, he was lending it to friends who also had gardens in Kowloon and the ferry was born. The service ran commercially from 1880, growing to four boats a decade later, making 147 crossings a day. The founders of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (today's HSBC) in 1865 included two Parsis: Ardasheer Hormusjee (Wadia) and Dadabhoy Rustomjee (Banajee). One of the bank's three trustees was KH Dadabhoy Rustomjee.²⁹⁴

As this chapter has shown, by the late nineteenth century, the Parsis were well-entrenched in Hong Kong. They had strong kinship networks, based on flourishing webs of inter-related family ties. They enjoyed a starters' advantage, which had given them a head start over other trading groups who arrived in Hong Kong without the shared Canton experience and knowledge of the China trade. The Parsis

²⁹⁴ See King, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation* Volume 1, p54, pp88, 90. 135. pp166-9, p52. See also White, *Turbans & Traders*, pp189-192.

made sure to cover all aspects of trade, from innovations to industrialisation, from finance to shipping, and more. Being Parsi meant being part of a closely-knit but cosmopolitan, well-travelled and, by now, highly experienced trading network.

Above all, close ties with the British, and the Parsi ability to fraternise easily with everyone but particularly with this dominant imperial power of the time, explains the persistent success and importance of the Parsis.

As will now be seen, their particular network then became part of the wider mixing of diasporas that forged the young Hong Kong.

Chapter 5 Empire as Eurasian Habitat

*'It was in a Hongkong school that the following conversation took place. Is your father Eurasian? No, Sir. Is he a Parsee? No. A Jew? No. Then what is he? A broker, sir.'*²⁹⁵

This chapter looks closely at such women and men of indeterminate origins and flexible functions to show how they shaped the formation of Hong Kong as not just an Asian but a Eurasian port city. Here we will consider the role of women in forging new connections across ethnicities, and the way in which certain men played an outsize role in shaping young Hong Kong's early communities. We do this in agreement with John Darwin, for whom the kinds of people considered here were the true agents of empire, 'the physical embodiment of the imperial project...'²⁹⁶ So incomprehensible to the British were these mixings of peoples across race, gender and class that they named the areas where such clans and business formed not suburbs or districts but 'bazaars'. The word seems to conjure a chaotic world of oriental mystery, yet it's where Hong Kong's first indigenes were found. The Parsi nexus with British and other traders put Hong Kong on the map but many more diverse networks would be needed to make it work. We dive here into the bazaar to see how this new community emerged.

The first men bringing their women with them from Canton or finding new ones on arrival were progenitors of a far-ranging community of 'in-between' people. They themselves already lived between worlds – their 'home' to the west which they might not see for years, if ever, and their daily life as inside-outsiders on the China coast. In business, they daily crossed borders of clan, caste, creed and converse. Some more aspirational merchants might have shored up their defences against insecurity by claiming a 'Britishness' or class standing reliant on exclusion of the 'non-British' Other. Most, in their more intimate liaisons, produced Hong Kong's first locally-born port city people. Their roots stretched across the entire Eurasian continent, so that 'Eurasian' does not just mean the products of a Chinese woman's contact with a Western ('white') man, but of all manner of multi-cultural mixing.

These people were Eurasian by nature, and Empire was their habitat.

²⁹⁵ *Hongkong Telegraph*, 3 March 1894, cited in Bard, *Voices from the Past*, p128.

²⁹⁶ Darwin, in Bickers & Henriot, *New Frontiers*, p250.

In tracing this mixed community's evolution, we must first contradict J.S. Furnivall, the influential historian of Southeast Asia, oft-quoted for saying that different peoples meet 'only' in the marketplace.²⁹⁷ Dare we ask for more of any time or place than such a pluralism? How can his description be a limitation on a place such as Hong Kong, which must have been the nearest thing existing to marketplace incarnate? The mixing that made Hong Kong went on in bed, at home, and in families over generations.

Opium

Hong Kong was initially an opium warehouse. 'By the late 1840s, it was estimated, three-quarters of the entire Indian opium crop passed through Hong Kong... Indeed, the opium trade and Hong Kong are so obviously intertwined that it is hardly possible to consider the early history of the colony without some reference to the drug: the colony was founded because of opium; it survived its difficult years because of opium; its principal merchants grew rich on opium; and its government subsisted on the high land rent and other revenue made possible by the opium trade.'²⁹⁸ Without opium, Hong Kong would have been bankrupt and probably abandoned in its first decade. Local consumption was the norm, as was its export to Chinese abroad, driven by that other key export – of labour out of China, through Hong Kong, to the New World. Opium and the control of labour were long intertwined.²⁹⁹ The sub-contracting of the sovereign right of tax collection by the state to private interests, or revenue farming, once common in Europe, spread across Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hong Kong, too, farmed out the taxation of its opium. In Southeast Asia, the British had found ready-made Chinese elites to handle the vast sums and act virtually as a local police force, but in Hong Kong, a comparable collaborating class took a while to form.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ 'In Burma as in Java, probably the first thing that strikes the visitor is the medley of peoples—Europeans, Chinese, Indian, and Native. It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market place, in buying and selling. There is a plural society: with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere, there is a division along racial lines.' Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, pp304–305.

²⁹⁸ Munn, in Brook and Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes*, p107.

²⁹⁹ See Carl Trocki, Ch.3 in Brook & Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes*.

³⁰⁰ Butcher and Dick, *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming*, p6.

The government's only other source of income was land rent which had to be low enough to keep merchants interested. The bulk of indirect taxation, therefore, fell on the poorer Chinese majority through tax collection monopolies on salt-weighing, stone-quarrying, building and operating markets, running slaughterhouses, managing public privies, collecting night-soil, even on maintaining rural rope-walks. In Hong Kong's first four decades, such tax farms formed about a quarter of government revenue. Also, the farms 'encouraged and empowered local elites over whom the government believed it could exercise some degree of control.'³⁰¹ Those elites could then become rich and influential.

The first holders of the opium farm, George Duddell and Alexander Matheson, lasted only three months in 1845 before sustained attack by Chinese interests made it untenable. The farm went to Lo Aqiu, one of the government's leading collaborators who had made himself useful during the Opium War and in the early settling of Hong Kong. A change of rules occurred in 1858 bringing in a new holder, a protege of the bishop, Chan Tai-Kwong, thus a respectable, anglicized front man for the Wo Hang company which was heavily invested in the 'coolie trade', or export of labour. Another struggle ensued; he was replaced by a competitor, the Yan Wo, which held it for some years. For the next three decades, the tax farm was shuffled around among a clutch of Chinese firms, most of them connected to either the Yan Wo or Wo Hang firms.

Here lay a key early layer of communal organization – the Nam Pak Hong, or literally, the South North Trading Association. Economic migrants to Hong Kong formed this grouping in 1868; originally intended to cover the trade in products from north and south of the Yangtze River in China it soon came to mean the trade in products from South Asia—opium— and Southeast Asia—rice, and forest and marine products such as birds' nests, sea moss and herbal products—to China. In addition, 'Gold mountain' firms serviced the 1850s gold rushes in California, Australia and New Zealand, trading the people, opium, and even the bones of the dead for burial back in China.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Munn, in Brook & Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes*, p112.

³⁰² The London Missionary Society had its own view of all this: 'The Chinese here, having left their native villages to engage in trade or obtain employment under a foreign government, are as a rule a more adventurous and independent class than those who stay at home. They are likely to

Just up the hill from Bonham Strand where these migrant Chinese trading firms were based, their principals founded the Tung Wah Hospital Group (in 1872), which became the central focus of Hong Kong Chinese philanthropy, medical care, and community organization. Under its auspices, the District Watch Committees took shape, another venue for migrant Chinese to care for their property at the same time as show leadership qualities that would endear them to the British government.³⁰³ Just as the Tung Wah Hospital Group was so much more than a hospital, the District Watch took on jobs far beyond its initial remit, becoming census takers, helping to trace runaway girls, acting as detectives for welfare societies, arbitrating civil cases and family disputes, controlling queues at water shortage times, and still catching thieves and loiterers.

Back in the marketplace, competitors for the opium farm continually made new combinations to apparently under-bid each other, resulting in ever lower revenues for the government. After one of many 'reforms', the farm was won by a Singaporean Hokkien Chinese based in Saigon who had stakes in opium farms in Singapore, Saigon and Annam. This increased annual opium revenues by 55 per cent. As usual the new farm soon faced the age-old problems of smuggling and evasion, and the manoeuvring continued. Only when amendments to the Chefoo Convention standardized the taxes on opium charged by the Chinese government, did Hong Kong, the main artery for smuggling opium into China, draw up legislation in 1887. This banned opium imports of less than a chest, except under licence, and required strict reporting on the movements of opium in and out of the colony.³⁰⁴ By 1910, the opium farm contributed 17 percent of the government's annual revenue. The government took it over in 1914 as part of an anti-opium

lose some of that tenacious bigotry which is so hostile to the search for truth and to become a little more liberal-minded through their intercourse with foreigners. This gain is, I fear, more than counter-balanced by the sad example which a great number of nominal Christians from England and elsewhere set before their eyes. To this must be added the unwise action of our government. The three great vices of conduct of the Chinese—opium smoking, fornication, and gambling—are all carried out under the license and regulation of [British] government...'

London Missionary Society, South China Reports, Box 1, Hongkong 6 February 1868, p5. School of Oriental and African Studies Special Collections; CWM South China Reports Boxes 1–8.

³⁰³ As a sign of its role as a breeding ground for the Chinese elite, its membership by 1941 would include the five Chinese members of the Legislative and Executive councils—Sir Shouson Chow, Sir Robert Kotewall, Lo Man-kam, Dr. Li Shu-fan, and William Ngartsee Thomas Tam—three of whom were in fact Eurasian.

³⁰⁴ Munn, in Brook & Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes*, p120.

campaign, but revenues only grew, prompting worries about how the government would cope if it stopped; it carried on until 1941. (Early patterns in the export of Chinese labour through Hong Kong were also revitalized by the British in World War One when it sent Chinese ‘coolies’ for portage work on the Western Front to free up troops for fighting.) By the end of the nineteenth century, management of the opium syndicate would move into Eurasian hands. But where did these Eurasians come from?

As we saw in Chapter Two, Southeast Asian women in some port cities were able to parlay their local skills in the marketplace into relationships with foreign traders.³⁰⁵ These women were crucial intermediaries and some were able to increase their own wealth or power as a result.³⁰⁶ Traders who came from Southeast Asia to Hong Kong might have expected this pattern to continue. But by the mid-nineteenth century, puritanical Victorian mores were rendering the technicolour hybridity of the tropics inapplicable to Hong Kong. Instead of celebrating its rich, multi-hued communities, Hong Kong’s hybridity was forced into the shadows, down dark streets, behind shaded screens. More importantly, the results of that hybridity, the mixed-race offspring forming Hong Kong’s first local-born global community, were treated as dirt by both British and Chinese who saw themselves as ‘pure’. Their emergence as influential players in Hong Kong may be surprising. But viewed in the wider lens of regional and global trade, the central role of mixed-race people seems inevitable.

In Batavia, ‘a group of well-married Eurasian women became central in controlling the fortunes of Batavia’.³⁰⁷ But that was earlier, in the tropics. Hong Kong’s innovators and intermediaries would not be so favoured. By tracing their emergence, through the trades in opium, labour, and in women, Eurasians can be found attending mixed-race, multilingual schools, working through local and foreign leadership bodies, and so forging new networks through inter-marriage and

³⁰⁵ Temporary Marriage worked ‘provided they agree what he shall pay for certain months. Once they agree about the money (which does not amount to much for so great a convenience), she comes to his house and serves him by day as his maidservant and by night as his wedded wife. He is then not able to consort with other women or he will be in grave trouble with his wife, while she is similarly wholly forbidden to converse with other men, but the marriage lasts as long as he keeps his residence there, in good peace and unity. When he wants to depart... she may look for another man as she wishes, in all propriety, without scandal.’ J. van Neck ‘Journal’, in Foreest & de Booy *De Vierde Schipvaart*, vol 1, p225. From Reid in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, p64.

³⁰⁶ See Taylor, ‘Finding Women in Southeast Asian History’. Also Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, and ‘Studying women and gender in Southeast Asia’.

³⁰⁷ Rei, *Critical Crossroads*, p129.

business ties. Dissecting this multiplying pattern, or institutionalisation, of the Eurasian-making process, shows the full significance of Hong Kong's Eurasian core.

Trading Women

In a literal interpretation of Furnivall, men did meet women in a market. The women, whether they liked it or not, were the objects for sale:

'HONEY At Mrs Randall's—a small quantity of good Honey in small jars, also Gin, Brandy, Sherry, Port, Champagne, Claret, Bottled Beer, Porter etc etc. Lyndhurst Terrace, Victoria, 12th June 1851.' 'Honey' was sex. One of the colony's earliest visitors, Benjamin Ball, enjoyed Hong Kong's passing throng: 'the English, American and Chinese, the Spanish, French, Portuguese, Persians, Bengalese, Javanese, and Manilla Indians, the German, Italian, Russian, Danish, Swiss, Dutch, Belgian, Pole, and the Arab, Turk, Armenian, Tartar, Siamese, African, and South American'. He liked the 'small sailor taverns, every evening lively with the fiddle, drum, tambourine and dancing... In the long line of square windows, without glass, over the Chinese shops, sit a certain class of Chinese women, ogling and looking out on the passers-by.'³⁰⁸ Some Chinese-only brothels catered for Chinese, others solely for Westerners;³⁰⁹ there were also exclusively Japanese brothels.³¹⁰ The highest-class brothels catering to Westerners served military and ship's officers. At the bottom rung were those bars and brothels serving itinerant sailors and labourers.³¹¹

Segregation occurred partly because the 1857 Contagious Diseases Ordinance applied only to brothels serving Westerners as the British administration cared only for the health of its own. The far larger Chinese world of prostitution was obscure and impossible to police anyway, not least because Chinese community leaders were active participants. The Ordinance was intrusive and brutally enforced but advocates argued this helped ameliorate the aspects of slavery inherent in the

³⁰⁸ Ball, *Rambles in East Asia*, pp90–91.

³⁰⁹ Cheng Po Hung, *Early Prostitution*, pp65–66.

³¹⁰ Sinn, 'Opportunity Knocking: Female Brothel Keepers in Hong Kong,' in Pearson and Ko, *A Sense of Place*, p267. See also, Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong*, especially Ch. 13.

³¹¹ By 1847, Queen's Road taverns included George Mills's Neptune Tavern where two entrances, offered more flexibility. George McQuin advertised his Beehive Tavern: 'Within this hive, we're all alive, and pleasant is our honey; If you are dry, step in and try, we sell/s for ready money.'

trade.³¹² Debt bondage, for example, a kind of slavery which forced women to work to pay off a debt, usually in brothels, was illegal in British law. But all imperial contagious disease legislation made women solely liable for surveillance and detention, not men.³¹³ European and American women only came under the contagious disease ordinances 20 years after the local women.³¹⁴ Yet segregation was never complete; a neighbourhood described as ‘marginal cosmopolitan’ by Philip Howell was home to ‘a mixed and polyglot group composed of middle-class or wealthy Chinese, Chinese prostitutes serving non-Chinese, European prostitutes, Indian, Parsee and Muslim merchants and shopkeepers, a few scattered Portuguese and Macanese, and protected women... The mixed nature of this district alerts us to the fact that racial segregation was more of an ideal than an achievable reality in Hong Kong.’³¹⁵

Traditionally, poor Chinese girls were sold as domestic workers called *mui tsai*, or little sister.³¹⁶ Daughters were a liability unless they could be sold into domestic service, brothels, or marriage. But one route existed for Chinese women to discover more rights under British imperialism than they ever had under Chinese. This was as brothel-keeper. This was one of the few trades where women could conduct business, make a profit, and accumulate property—something women were unable to do in China.³¹⁷ Brothel keepers, though admittedly by exploiting other women, learned how to raise capital, manage personnel and customer relations, meet market demand, keep and monitor accounts, determine credit ratings, deal with the colonial administration, and more. It was a highly profitable business, but not without its horror stories. In 1846, a brothel keeper threw out an ill prostitute onto a waste pile

³¹² See Levine, *Prostitution, Race & Politics*, p40.

³¹³ CO129/50, pp73–92, 1855. See also CO129/50, pp219–29; CO129/50, pp340–51; CO129/50, pp366–67; CO129/55, pp230–69. Legislators, all men, felt ‘repugnance’ having to legitimize something ‘intrinsically immoral,’ yet came to see the trade was unstoppable and needed rules. CO129/55, pp230–69; CO129/62, pp468–517; CO129/65, pp98–100; CO129/67, pp586–88.

³¹⁴ Levine, *Prostitution, Race & Politics*, p243. Infected women were detained in the Lock Hospital. Dr. Philip Ayres told a government enquiry in 1877, ‘The Chinese treat syphilis as an ordinary sore which heals up...’ Dr. Lum Chau Fan, senior doctor of the Tung Wah Hospital, said, ‘A quack doctor would use mercury, but a proper doctor would not employ it. The use of mercury makes the disease settle down in one part or other of the body, then it breaks out again and is very difficult to cure.’ Women often self-medicated with alum water and other remedies. Government, *Report to Enquire into the Working of the Contagious Diseases Ordinance*, pp14–16.

³¹⁵ Howell, ‘Race, Space and the Regulation of Prostitution,’ in Carroll and Mark, *Critical Readings*, p53. A report before the 1867 law noted some Chinese men used European brothels, and at busy times, European brothels took in Chinese women to meet demand. See CO129/124, pp95, 115; Parliamentary Papers 1871 (C108) *XIX Report from the Royal Commission*, pp226–7.

³¹⁶ Sinn, ‘Women at Work’, p94.

³¹⁷ Sinn, ‘Women at Work’, pp87–88.

where she subsequently died, yet when the case was taken to court the jury failed to classify this as murder.³¹⁸ Although she had become diseased as a result of her work, the coroner led the jury to rule that the death was an act of God, implying that turfing out sick women with the rubbish was far from unusual.

Under Tung Wah auspices, the Po Leung Kuk was founded in 1878, to stop the kidnapping of women and young girls. Then Chief Justice John Smale suddenly discovered in 1879 that all those women working in the sex industry or as child domestic workers were in fact slaves. It had taken more than 30 years for the British government to choose to notice the abuses built into a society reliant on the selling of children to ameliorate extreme poverty, and the many variants of the sale of women.³¹⁹ He insisted that under British law, no one person can acquire any right over another person,³²⁰ and likened the underbelly of Hong Kong life to that of the Confederate States of America under slavery. But the government hid behind 'Chinese tradition'; its China expert, German missionary Ernst Eitel, explained that Chinese 'slavery' was morally impossible to condemn and a necessary support to Chinese patriarchy.

This was an unbridgeable chasm over notions of individual rights. Chinese patriarchy as an organizing principle meant that individual rights and ideas of personal liberty as understood in the West were completely alien. In Chinese society, anything from betrothal or marriage to concubinage, adoption, or servitude also involved the exchange of money. The right of a patriarch to sell his children was unquestioned, and selling children (for adoption) was totally normal and done without fuss.³²¹ Not until 1923 was free will made the genuine reason to regulate prostitution. Not until 1970 was concubinage made illegal. But already back in 1921, a British government commission reported to the Colonial Office: 'The [Po Leung Kuk] home is largely used as a recruiting ground for cheap supplementary wives by

³¹⁸ Norton-Kyshe, *The History of the Law and Courts*, vol. 1, pp101–102.

³¹⁹ Report by Chief Justice Sir John Smale (20 October 1879, CO129/194) on trafficking, child slavery, and Eurasian street urchins. Study by Ernst Eitel (November 1879) blames Eurasian 'degeneracy' on low-class European men and 'disrespectable' Chinese women. On women's refuges, see Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong*, p169, and Ch. 15, for the French convent's Home of the Holy Childhood (L'Asile de la Sainte Enfance), Berlin Foundling Home, Hildesheim Home for the Blind, Victoria Home and Orphanage and the Eyre Refuge (forerunner of YWCA).

³²⁰ This was clear in 1867 when Tang San-ki fought in court to stay in Hong Kong rather than be returned to her 'owner' in Canton; she won. Berney, 'Writing Women's Histories,' pp211–24.

³²¹ Sinn, 'Chinese Patriarchy and the Protection of Women' in 'Jaschok and 'Miers, p142.

members of the Committee... The Committee have luncheon parties there on Sundays, and the marriageable girls attend on them.'³²²

Protection, of a kind

Far better was to be a 'protected woman.' The elite foreigner had few dealings with brothels. 'Protection' was a discreet alternative, sometimes even evolving into genuinely caring relationships. Being a protected woman meant more than merely being 'kept'; the term implied a formal status. The system was both normal and expected. William Caine, the colony's first chief magistrate and later colonial secretary, had a daughter, Elizabeth, by his Chinese protected woman sometime in 1843.³²³ Protected women existed in a class separate to women in brothels. When the intellectual Wang Tao visited in the early 1860s, he found 'As many of them are kept by Europeans, they have become quite wealthy and own houses of their own.'³²⁴ Some claimed to be 'protected' as cover for active prostitution with several clients; degrees of 'protection' varied greatly.

Some protected women managed to acquire substantial estates. These were the lucky ones.³²⁵ While still in a position of dependency, it was freer than being trapped in a brothel or abusive Chinese family. The protected woman was only accountable to one man—who was often absent. She could sponsor loan associations, take a financial interest in brothels, or train children who had been bought or adopted for concubinage. Once they were wealthy, these women often bought property together. At least two such sisterhood houses were formed, on Peel and Graham streets.³²⁶ The first documented evidence of a land grant by a foreigner to a protected woman was in July 1845, when a merchant, F.J. Porter, conveyed a lot in Queen's Road West to 'Akew' for the nominal sum of five dollars. She sold it the next year for seven hundred dollars. The social historian Carl T. Smith's study of land records revealed

³²² April 1921, p5, CO129/472, p360.

³²³ His wife, Mary Ann, either tried and failed to live with this or just left anyway in 1845. Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong*, pp68–69.

³²⁴ Wang Tao, 'My Sojourn in Hong Kong, Jottings of Carefree Travel,' trans. Yang Qinghua, in *Renditions*, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1988; cited in Cheng, *Early Prostitution*, p 19.

³²⁵ Carl T. Smith points out, 'Such women were the fortunate ones who had generous protectors who ensured their financial security and who used their business acumen to add to their initial seed money,' in 'Abandoned into Prosperity' in Siu, *Merchants' Daughters*, p136.

³²⁶ 'Excluded from expatriate society, they formed their own network on the basis of their peculiar position.' Smith 'Abandoned into Prosperity' in Siu, *Merchants' Daughters*, p141.

that between 1843 and 1852 there were 18 women landowners designated as 'females,' four 'spinsters,' and one 'boat woman.' The records for 1856–62 gave no detail of gender or place of origin; after 1863, the word female was not used, but single woman, spinster, and unmarried woman did appear. Thus, from 1863 to 1884, a total of 205 single women were listed as landowners, many of them probably protected women. This amounted to less than three percent of the transacting population at the time, but it showed a route ahead for Chinese women who would not have had that opportunity in China. It was precisely thanks to intercultural mixing that these women could rise above the limits of their own society.³²⁷

Having a mistress was normal for foreign men in Hong Kong and there is no evidence that it affected their careers. Peter Vine, partner in the Hong Kong law firm Deacon's, found that in the 1850s alongside 50 expatriate wives, the majority of 400 expatriate men 'developed liaisons with Chinese or Portuguese ladies, but they were expected to behave discreetly, and not to embarrass the expatriate wives and their children by openly flouting these relationships.'³²⁸ Osmund Cleverly, a merchant shipping captain, had two children baptized in 1845 with no mother's name. Next month he married a British woman, clearly running two families.³²⁹ The auctioneer George Duddell had an illegitimate son baptized at St. John's Cathedral in early 1850, George Minza; no mother is named. Samuel Clifton, a police inspector, had legitimate and illegitimate children.

In his 1845 will, William Stewart, a partner in Jardine Matheson and Co., bequeathed to 'Alloy... a Chinese female' money for the purchase of a house in a location of her choice and monthly payments. Wrote Stewart: 'My executors will invest the sum as to yield a pension for her future support, she having no one but me to look for the means of diverting starvation in her old age.' He also gave a portrait of Alloy to his colleague Andrew Jardine. Stewart had been in China since 1835; in these early years, such public acknowledgment—revealing one's Chinese lover through a

³²⁷ 'In the inter-cultural setting of the China coast cities, the protected woman, under certain circumstances, could create her own place. If she had been locked into the traditional patriarchal domination of females in the Chinese family she would have been denied this road to independence.' Smith in Jaschok and Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy*, p229.

³²⁸ Peter Vine, 'A Study in Loyalty—William Thomas Bridges.' Unpublished, p12. Vine was a war crimes prosecutor in Hong Kong in 1946 before joining Deacon's.

³²⁹ St. John's Baptism 1838–1887 Register, Public Records Office, Hong Kong, with permission. Also Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong*, pp69–70.

portrait gifted to a colleague—would raise few eyebrows.³³⁰ At a different point on the class scale was John Stewart who in 1849 was an officer on a schooner off Amoy (Xiamen) on China's southeast coast. By 1860 he was running a boardinghouse at 43 Hillier Street. Registered with the London Missionary Society Chinese Congregation, he had a daughter baptized, and promised to marry her Chinese mother, in 1883. He was respectable enough to make it onto the colony's Jury List, a sure mark of recognition, and he was a business partner to flag-raiser Mohammed Arab.³³¹ His will also demonstrated his deep ties in the local community: Abdool Razak Madar was his executor, his estate went to 'Ng Shee', and his burial was at St. John's Cathedral under the appellation 'John Stewart of Lascar Row.'³³²

Non-European men also had protected women. A deed of settlement drawn up by the merchant Mahammed Ebrahim Hajee Asgar before leaving Hong Kong in 1883 provided for Hung Assoo and their five children. Asgar appointed another merchant to be trustee for Hung Assoo and to be responsible for overseeing the management of Inland Lot 125 on her behalf, as compensation for eleven years of cohabitation.³³³ Legal records only tell us about those with something at stake—in a will, or a property transaction marked down in the Land Registry. Church and cemetery records provide more examples.³³⁴ The merchant Phineas Ryrie had a long-standing relationship with a Chinese woman; he left money to their daughters, Maggie and Eva. David Sliman, with Jardine's for many years, had a girl, Lam Yu-shi. David Culloch, from an old Scottish family, worked for Turner and Co. for more than 25 years; he left the income from a property to Young A-chun for the rest of her life.

Ng Akew

Among all these women's stories, that of Ng Akew stands out: brilliant survivor, entrepreneur, and archetypal 'salt water' girl. Her story has been rediscovered

³³⁰ 'It is doubtful if even a decade later a partner of Jardine's would have displayed a portrait of his Chinese woman in his home.' Smith in Jaschok and Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy*, p222. See PRO HKRS Will File 79, 1847, 4/14.

³³¹ Carl T. Smith Collection, Card 61-780—Memorial 5941, 13 April 1874, Inland Lot 584 Section B, in consideration of \$4,200, Mahomed [sic] Arab and John Stewart, traders to Francis Francis of Oriental Hotel, hotel keeper. Registered 14 April 1874. Memorial 6370, 28 September 1875, Inland Lot 231A, 248, 248A in consideration \$2,200, equity redemption John Stewart, boardinghouse keeper, to Lumbah boardinghouse keeper. Registered 29 September 1875.

³³² Carl T. Smith Collection, Card 61-779, Probate File No. 1066 of 1877 (4/346).

³³³ Smith sources this to Hong Kong Land Records, Memorial 12699, 4 October 1883.

³³⁴ See Lim, *Forgotten Souls*.

thanks to Carl T. Smith,³³⁵ and to reports of the Cumsingmoon Affair in the *Friend of China*.³³⁶ Ng Akew's protector was James Bridges Endicott, captain of the ship *Ruparell*. Its function was to receive stores of opium arriving from India and beyond, preparatory to the sale (and smuggling) of the drug into China. Endicott was from a prominent family traceable back through six generations to the longest-serving governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Endecott (sic), and thus a founding family of New England. Later the founder of Thomas Hunt and Co., he resided mainly in Macao. When he died in Hong Kong, *The China Mail* of 7 November 1870, described him as 'one of the few remaining pioneers of civilization in our Colony ... He was very generally respected, and his sound and shrewd counsels will be missed by many who have profited largely by them.' The numerous attendance at his funeral 'indicated the respect in which the deceased gentleman was generally held.' All this, despite his well-known relations with Ng Akew.

Ng Akew was 'a shrewd intelligent woman, without any of those feelings of degradation which Europeans attach to females in her condition.'³³⁷ She took up trading opium in a small way, buying eight chests full of the drug that Endicott, as captain of a receiving ship, had legitimately recovered from a shipwreck – but these were seized by pirates. Akew's paid the pirates two visits, got her ships back, plus six other heavily armed junks laden with other goods. Unfortunately, this attracted the attention of a British captain, and of an American schooner, which aimed to seize the goods, assuming them to be the product of smuggling. But neither the British authorities, who protected the opium trade in Hong Kong, nor the Americans, officially committed to suppressing it, could act against Ng Akew. If the Americans had seized the goods, it would be an admission that the produce derived from an opium deal leading back to a respectable American, Endicott. So they handed the case over to the British, who then had to drop it, as it was outside their jurisdiction. Thus, Ng Akew scored a significant profit by parlaying her unique position between Chinese and foreign powers, both in bed and in business.

³³⁵ Carl T. Smith, 'Ng Akew, One of Hong Kong's "Protected" Women,' pp13–17 and 27; see p13.

³³⁶ See the *Friend of China* newspaper from 13 October 1849. The editor, typically given the hypocrisy of the times, felt obliged to apologize for even covering the subject: 'Irregularities have grown out of the demoralized condition of the foreign residents in China, partly from the branches of their traffic [opium], partly from the long term during which society was nearly without the influence of educated and refined European families. The last few years have seen wonderful changes in the social conditions of the foreign residents, and we now speak more of what was than what is; but...its shameless immoralities are too open and too observable.'

³³⁷ *Friend of China*, 13 October 1849.

When Endicott felt the need to marry a Miss Ann Russell in Macao on 19 October 1852, he executed a deed of trust the day before that conferred on Ng Akew, 'spinster, a Chinese female, residing in Macao, and mother and guardian of Achow, a Chinese infant of ten years or thereabouts,' two well-placed pieces of land in Hong Kong. The trustees were merchants who also had Chinese women: Douglas Lapraik and William Scott. Endicott then took two of the sons and one of the daughters he'd had with Ng Akew with him back to America, leaving Akew with one of each. She moved officially to Hong Kong and allied herself to Fung Aching, a local businessman. Together they bought more land in 1855–56. When he left Hong Kong in 1856, Fung left at least three more properties to Akew.

Most of Akew's business dealings outside her property portfolio were loan schemes with women like her. In 1868, she was principal of ten 'single women' who bought a site on Graham Street between Hollywood and Staunton streets, in today's Soho, a central zone both then and now for multiracial business, residence, and pleasure-seeking. But after a decade, Akew had finally overextended herself. A suit was brought against her to recover a debt, which prompted a rash of ten further cases brought by widows and single women to recover funds from schemes she had promoted. Akew petitioned for bankruptcy. Her residence was held in trust and thus not at risk. The auction of personal effects, however, offers insights into her lifestyle. Her decor of choice included custom-made Blackwood marble-top furniture, bookcases, and one iron safe.³³⁸ Now stout and aged 58, Akew had enough to live comfortably for years. The arrival of the global trading world on her doorstep had brought opportunity.³³⁹ An added quirk to the story comes James Endicott's wife, Sarah Anne, who, according to Endicott's will, had given 'unceasing care and devotion' to all of his children, including 'those who stand in relationship of step-children as of her own, she having made no distinction in the treatment of them.'³⁴⁰

This was not the society seen in colonial or communist histories, or in any Tale of Two Cities. Diverse liaisons and a determined underclass provide Hong Kong's first

³³⁸ *Hongkong Daily Press*, 29 March 1878.

³³⁹ She was 'a formidable opponent and a person to be reckoned with. She played her double role to the hilt. She was a woman of intelligence and independence, trading on her own, making her own decisions, and achieving results in a man's world.' Smith in Siu, *Merchants' Daughters*, p138.

³⁴⁰ Hong Kong PRO Probate File, No. 104 of 1870 (4/227). Thanks to Carl Smith.

Eurasians. Descendants of these first Eurasians have downplayed or denied their roots, for fear of admitting one's great-grandmother was a prostitute. Yet many of these women, who birthed multicultural Hong Kong, manipulated a system that could hardly have been more brutally stacked against them. 'From the Chinese point of view, women, whether they were wives, concubines, daughters or mui tsai, were always someone's property, never free agents, and therefore were never entitled to move about 'voluntarily.'"³⁴¹ In a world where every female had a price, the trick was to make sure that price was a high one. Some of these women did just that.

Indispensable Ambiguity

A more archetypal agent of empire than Daniel Richard Francis Caldwell would be hard to find.

Thanks to the unpublished diary of John Evelyn Fortunatus Wright,³⁴² we learn that Caldwell, his good friend and godfather to one of his sons, was 'slim but well built with peculiar largish blue eyes which the natives cannot at all understand.' Wright says, 'He is a most amusing, good-tempered person, sings a good song, tells capital yarns maintaining at the same time a most unassuming, gentlemanly bearing. His common name among the Celestials is 'Jam Quie' which literally means, 'Conjuring Devil.'" Caldwell could also enliven a dinner party with 'some very clever juggling.' Wright and Caldwell had been confirmed together in 1851 by the Anglican Bishop George Smith at St. John's Cathedral; here Caldwell admitted to a wild misspent youth in Singapore until he was thrown out by his family in 1834, fled to China, smuggled opium, womanized, got ill, returned to Singapore, and joined the British Expeditionary Force to return to China, ending up in Hong Kong.

He found a government that barely understood its environment, and faced continuing conflict with China and high rates of crime and piracy on the seas in and around Hong Kong. Gunboat diplomacy had broken down China's barriers against foreign trade but had not allowed much time for anyone in London to think about how to rule a place where most people spoke Chinese and other unknown tongues.

³⁴¹ Elizabeth Sinn, in Jaschok and Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy*, p146.

³⁴² Unpublished original manuscript, at PRO, Hong Kong, 13 May 1850; cited in Lim, *Forgotten Souls*, p120.

Caldwell quickly became necessary. He was English, but not an insider, having been born in 1816 on St. Helena. Rather than Eton and Oxbridge, Caldwell grew up in Penang and Singapore. Crucially he could communicate in several dialects of Chinese, Malay, Hindustani, and Portuguese. He had sailed in the same fleet with Major Caine (a future colonial secretary); settling in Hong Kong in 1842, he became interpreter in the Magistrate's and Supreme Courts.

He died on 2 October 1875. His lavish gravestone still stands in the Hong Kong Cemetery. So does that of his wife, Mary Ayow (or Ayou) Chan. Caldwell was one of the few early white men to go so far as to marry his Chinese love—first according to Chinese rites, and seven years later, in St. John's Cathedral in 1851, to the open approval of the bishop and his wife. This is the first recorded marriage between an Englishman and a Chinese. He had all their numerous children baptized in the cathedral and well-educated, launching what is probably Hong Kong's first legitimate Eurasian clan.³⁴³ Mary Ayow Chan's origins are obscure, but she became an enthusiastic Christian convert, active in charity and benefactor of the Chinese congregation of the London Missionary Society. For several years, her household included a private chaplain from Foshan, China.

Caldwell's career was tumultuous—he was investigated for variants of corruption twice, sacked once, and eviscerated by a segment of the press. For the conservative critics, he was himself a 'half-breed,' corrupt by nature, further tarnished by spending too much time with the Chinese, and anyway, his wife was a harlot. To those more sympathetic to this charismatic, clever man, the accusations against him were fuelled by racism and the petty jealousies of a fractious colonial administration struggling under an ineffective governor (John Bowring) in a time of general unease. Even his critics weren't sure how to judge this man who thwarted clichés and lived off nuance. G. B. Endacott claimed Caldwell was 'never quite trusted' and as 'a man of mixed blood and married to a Chinese, he possibly was not completely accepted socially... there was always something slightly shady about him... scandal and intrigue seemed to shadow him.' Yet he was extraordinarily versatile, hired by both government and Chinese as mediator, intelligence gatherer, trusted fixer.

³⁴³ Marriage and Baptism Registers, St. John's Cathedral, PRO, Hong Kong, with permission. More on Caldwell, see Munn, *Anglo-China* and Munn in Bickers and Henriot, *New Frontiers*. Also Holdsworth and Munn, *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*; Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong*.

One moment Caldwell was excoriated for his reliance upon his friend and informer Too Apo, who was soon convicted as an extortionist. Fulsome testimonials followed from the Royal Navy, which he guided on numerous expeditions against pirates, where he 'enabled the Commanders of Her Majesty's Ships to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, a question of great difficulty without such assistance . . .'³⁴⁴ Dogged by low pay and debt, he quit government in 1855 and went into business with 'pirate' Ma-chow Wong. But the government couldn't function without him and lured him back a year later, now as registrar general and protector of Chinese inhabitants and, in 1857, licenser of brothels. Only Caldwell could keep the Chinese quiet.³⁴⁵ It was Caldwell, too, who solved the puzzle of how Chinese in court would swear to tell the whole truth when the Bible was irrelevant to them; he suggested replacing the judicial oath with a (non-Christian) Declaration of Truth; this became law in 1856.

In 1858, Attorney General Thomas Anstey launched a vicious attack against Caldwell; two government inquiries followed, revealing just about every insecurity about race, gender, and empire then felt in Hong Kong. It must have been galling indeed for men who outranked Caldwell to have no riposte available when he noted that, unlike him, they couldn't tell one 'Chinaman' from the next. This closeness to the Chinese community was what made Caldwell dubious in conservative circles, even when his loyalty to his Chinese godfather was admired in others.³⁴⁶ He was not a good look back in the imperial capital. *The Times* thundered that Hong Kong was 'always connected with some fatal pestilence, some doubtful war, or some discreditable internal squabble... There is a fault also in the position of Mr Caldwell who is allied by marriage to the Chinese population and who, therefore, never can disabuse the Chinese of the notion that he is as one of them, and can be acted upon as they are acted upon.'³⁴⁷

Yet when deprived of a government career by the judgment against him in the second enquiry, Caldwell became even more indispensable, as a private detective, arbitrating disputes and leading a semiofficial secret police. By 1868 he'd been hired

³⁴⁴ CO129/62, pp576–80, 28 March 1857.

³⁴⁵ CO129/59, pp218–20.

³⁴⁶ Munn in Bickers and Henriot, *New Frontiers*, p20.

³⁴⁷ *The Times*, 15 March 1859, pp583–84.

by the Chinese holders of the monopoly in legalized gambling. Soon the business world and government were again saying that without him they could do nothing, at least with the locals, who so vastly outnumbered the colonial elite. When Albert Smith, a performer of London, visited in 1858, he had ‘one of the most agreeable evenings with [Caldwell’s] family, that I had spent at Hong Kong. Mrs Caldwell is Chinese, and the little children speak in the language. At ten I went out with him, armed, for a prowl about the low quarters, and saw a wonderful deal.’³⁴⁸ Some might argue that Caldwell’s active freemasonry explains how he survived it all; however, there were Freemasons on both sides of the battle over Caldwell’s career. The new attorney general, Julian Pauncefote, said: ‘Some think that [Caldwell] is an ill-used, but respectable man, while others do not share this opinion, but so long as he comes and says “I can get the murderers” we can give no other answer than “we are glad if you can”.’ If everyone, including government servants, was ‘out to feather his nest, to make a killing as speedily as possible so as to escape back to England, or rather to Scotland, before typhoid fever, malaria or cholera took him to an early grave,’³⁴⁹ perhaps Caldwell’s crime was that he was not plotting escape. Like generations of Eurasians to come, he was committed to making his life in Hong Kong. His son, Daniel Edward, became the first bilingual, Hong Kong-born, and –trained lawyer, and a founding partner of Wilkinson and Grist (a still-independent law firm in Hong Kong), though he blotted his record by fleeing the colony in debt. A brother, Henry Charles, was the third partner of Deacon’s admitted to the Hong Kong Bar, forming a partnership with the fourth, W.H. Brereton. The signatures of Caldwell and Brereton are found throughout the documents underpinning the China-Asia trade.³⁵⁰

The lives of figures such as Ng Akew and Daniel Caldwell show bricolage at work, in the improvisation of advantage and (often upward) mobility out of obscure or oppressive origins. By playing the colonial system they managed not only to survive but thrive, founding sisterhoods (in Ng’s case) and Eurasian dynasties (in Caldwell’s) that would prove foundational in Hong Kong’s first century.

³⁴⁸ Smith, *To China and Back*, p63.

³⁴⁹ Lethbridge, Introduction in Smith, *To China and Back*, pp.xii ff.

³⁵⁰ Stuart Heaver, ‘Flagrant Harbour: The Sordid Affair That Cemented Hong Kong’s Reputation for Vice and Corruption,’ *South China Morning Post*, 22 February 2014.

Intermarriage and Agents of Empire

The British overlords had seen Hong Kong as just a warehouse station, with opium hulks able to provision from the harbor. But within a first decade so many people were arriving that roads had to be built, a prison provided, and a rudimentary justice system devised. Robbery, often with violence, was commonplace. Yet still Hong Kong was safer for many than China, and people were on the move. The government's Census of 1853 shows that, leaving aside the British garrison, Hong Kong's total of 39,017 people comprised 37,536 Chinese (living on shore and in boats), of whom slightly more than 6,000 were female; 194 'temporary residents' (mainly sailors); 352 Indians, Malays, and Manila Men (Filipinos) with just 38 of these being women; 459 Portuguese (of both Macao and Goa), 137 of them women; and 476 Europeans and Americans, 86 of them women. Less than two decades later, the population had trebled. The 1871 Census showed a 'European' population of 2,736 people, 684 of them women. Other categories included one described as 'Goa, Manila, Indian and others of mixed blood,' numbering 1,388; 'Chinese in the employ of Europeans' (7,617), Chinese living in the city of Victoria (72,984), in villages (10,507), and on boats (23,709). A summary table listed 'Whites,' 'Chinese,' and 'Coloureds' to reach a total of 84,147 men and 33,619 women, thus 117,766 people.

Amid this medley, many more mixed marriages would follow, although we will never know the full amount.³⁵¹ Patchy records exclude what historian Guo Deyan described, but failed to explain, as a significant amount of mixing between Parsis and Chinese. He says this mixing took place not only in trade and intellectual exchange, but in love.³⁵² Guo adds that it took time for the Chinese to accept Parsis, but then inter-marriage seemed natural: 'In China as elsewhere, intermarriage between people of different nationalities is an age-old practice; there is nothing surprising in this fact itself, But in the early twentieth century, and even earlier, marriages between Chinese and Parsees were not marriages of convenience; they served no political purpose. They were the results of a process of the two communities getting to know and appreciate each other over a long period of

³⁵¹ A registrar was not appointed until 1852; church records were more reliable—if people married in church. See CO129/39, pp177–79, 18 March 1852; CO129/42, pp274–79, 3 June 1853; CO129/64, pp430–33; CO129/37, pp92–102.

³⁵² Guo Deyan, 'The Study of Parsee Merchants,' p59. See also Thampi, *Indians in China*, p77.

time...'³⁵³ Such links made it into fiction when Eileen Chang refers in *Zhang Kan* (published in 1976), to the marriage between a Chinese woman, Mi Ni and a Parsi man named Banaji, in early twentieth century Hong Kong. The wealthy Banaji spoke fluent Chinese and inspired Chang's 1944 serialised novel, *Lianhuantao*.

Robert Thom, scholar and gentleman, was made the British consul in Ningpo, China, when he already had a Chinese wife—not mistress or passing fling, but wife. In all the effusive eulogies on his untimely death in 1847, not one mention was made of his private life; all focused on what an excellent chap he had been. When Thom went out of his way to protect his wife's brother from a mob, this was seen as an instance of loyal duty despite the trouble he then faced with 'native,' that is Chinese, not British, authorities.³⁵⁴ The *Chinese Repository* could only praise him as one 'who zealously promoted every honest effort to extend our intercourse with this peculiar people.'³⁵⁵ Thom had contributed to the drafting of the Treaty of Nanking; he defied death when carrying a truce flag during the first Opium War at Amoy in 1840; his zeal and exertion during military engagements at Chusan, Canton, and Changhai were also praised. Fluent in Chinese, he produced texts teaching not just language but also 'How to meet and greet and eat'; 'Mr Thom made himself at home with the Chinese, caring little where or with whom he might chance to be. Whether with the high official or with the lowest coolies, he always had something to say, saw something to admire, and found something to learn.'³⁵⁶ Marriage across races was clearly not an insuperable problem.

Many such marriages took place among the middle and lower classes, such as that of the German auctioneer Christian Friedrich Rapp, who married Mei Ho and appointed her guardian over his six children in his will. Alfred Parker, chief engineer of a steamship ferry called Tai On, married a matron at the Hong Kong Hotel. Edward Lewis provided for his widow, Ah Ching Lewis, and daughter, Yan Noi; he hailed from Kingston, Jamaica, in 1865, and worked in the Public Works Department (PWD) for thirty-six years. John Maxwell, a Scots ex-policeman from the Royal Naval Yard, also joined the PWD; he had his first child baptized at the London Missionary Society Chapel, where they persuaded him to marry his lover, Wong Ah

³⁵³ Guo Deyan, 'The Study of Parsee Merchants,' p60.

³⁵⁴ William Tarrant, *Hongkong*, p139.

³⁵⁵ *Chinese Repository* Vol. XVI, 1847, p237.

³⁵⁶ *Chinese Repository* Vol. XVI, January to December 1847, p242.

Hing. Thomas R. McBean, usher and interpreter in Hindustani and Bengali at the Supreme Court for twenty-five years, married Francesca Brigitta Cruz, but left her and their seven children entirely unprovided for on his death. William Godwin of Middlesex married the Chinese widow of Christian Jensen; he worked at the Land We Live In tavern. John Humby married Ms. Wong and had two daughters; after a policeman's career he bought the British (later, Empire) Tavern in 1872.

Christian Fredrick Petersen, who established the German Tavern, married a Chinese; their children were baptized in the Chinese To Tsai Church. His brother Peter Petersen also had a Chinese wife, Lum Asing. Born about 1852 in Macao, she had been a student of the noble Miss Harriet Boxer, joining Petersen aged just 17. He worked at the Land We Live In, then the City of Hamburg, and the Royal Oak. On his death in 1876, \$500 went to his mother back in Sweden, but the rest to Lum Sing. Now calling herself Mrs. Jane Frances Petersen, she kept the business running, even marrying a wastrel, J.J. McBreen, as the Licensing Board preferred men's names. She left him for Singapore and opened a boardinghouse, giving birth there to McBreen's child. Back in Hong Kong, now separated, the Anglican missionary Reverend J. B. Ost acted as trustee for her and her children. Moving back and forth between Singapore and Hong Kong, she had minor brushes with the law but at least she had money. The will that her first husband, Petersen, made in her favor had been executed by his good friend, another tavern keeper with a Chinese wife, John Olson. By 1867 he was running the National Tavern and the Oriental Restaurant, also the Star Hotel and later the Stag Hotel. The Jury List of 1888 listed him running a Temperance Hall. He died in 1918, and 'Ellen Olson' died on 20 October 1915, aged sixty-one. This was his wife, Ching Ah Fung. However, John's offspring included Hannah Mabel, daughter of one Yau Kum. This was his first woman, before he and Ching Ah Fung had four children over 34 years. Yau Kum's fate remains unknown.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ John Olson's will left his estate 'in trust for all my children by the said Ching Ah Fung whether born before or after wedlock both classes being hereafter included in the terms child and children.' Hannah was somehow left out, as from a different mother. Tensions later split the family: 'It wasn't only to do with the fact that Old John didn't include my grandmother [Hannah] in his will, written when she was only 10. Both our families managed to hush up their Chinese inheritance but in Hong Kong, the Olsons were much happier in their Eurasian skin than the Warrens,' noted a present-day descendant and researcher, Jill Fell. Correspondence with the author, May 2019. See also Sean Olson, 'Hong Kong Legacy: A Swedish Connection'. Also his monograph, 'Hong Kong Legacy,' and correspondence, early 2019.

But it was not only barmen and women who got together. Young (Winchester-educated) Shearman Godfrey Bird, fourth of 15 children of a rural vicar, with senior military men, architects, and civil servants for relatives, went to China as an army officer in 1857 to fight the second ‘Opium,’ or ‘Arrow,’ War³⁵⁸. Luckily, he wrote—of mosquitoes, prickly heat, military actions and treaty ports. He was learning Chinese at the same time as helping to burn down Chinese villages; he took up photography, bird hunting, and sailing, and then he met 18-year-old Amy Chun. No marriage certificate was ever found but they claimed marriage on 1 June 1859. Amy was baptized as an Anglican in 1863, after two of her children had already been baptized. By contrast, the head of the Imperial Maritime Customs, Robert Hart, left behind a Chinese partner and several children when, soon-to-be-ennobled, he went on leave to find a ‘proper’ wife. Shearman Bird made no effort to hide his Amy—they went out together in public, and, rather than shame causing his career to founder, Shearman resigned from the military to pursue a more lucrative civilian life. Amy was no ‘flower boat girl;’ her father was a builder or contractor and may have been wealthy. Like Caldwell, Shearman Bird was moving closer to the local community; soon he was a Hong Kong government surveyor. Life for the young couple in Canton and Hong Kong was not easy, but included dinners, picnics, and teas, usually with members of the Protestant missionary world; there was also the friendship between the Birds and the wealthy Hong Kong broker Granville Sharp and his wife, Matilda. Shearman’s brother Sotheby helped found the leading architects’ firm of the China coast, Palmer and Turner. Shearman died soon after he and Amy arrived in Canada in 1869, leaving Amy alone to rear eight children, all of whom became integrated into Canadian or British society.

Calcutta to Hong Kong

Each of these mixed families formed part of the fabric of Hong Kong—a city built not just by a handful of white men and Chinese coolies, living in different worlds. Rather, the energy that Hong Kong brought to world trade came from those who stepped over the limits of their colonial, class, or racial fencing to help build a new world. One man illustrates all the contradictions of this mixing in mid-century Hong Kong. His roots go back to the glittering port city of Venice although he arrived in

³⁵⁸ Naomi Ridout gave a talk about this in Hong Kong in August 2014, and wrote, ‘He has Given up an Immense amount for this Wife,’ April 2019.

Hong Kong from Calcutta and went on to huge financial success and philanthropies notably in girls' education. He sat at the peak of respectability as board member at the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (1868–88) and on the Legislative Council. Yet he ran a known double life with two families, one Jewish and one Chinese, the latter rising to prominence. His name was Belilios.³⁵⁹

From Venice, his father had managed close ties to Baghdadi traders in Syria, trading between Europe, the Middle East, and India. His mother, Salha Lanyardo, was from a prominent Aleppo family. Once in Calcutta they quickly became wealthy there, too. Based around Howrah, west of Calcutta, they owned half the district where rail was inaugurated in 1854 carrying jute, cotton, and wood—and opium. Young Belilios (born in 1837) married Semah Ezra from a top Baghdadi family in Calcutta (related to the Sassoons) in 1854, and joined his father's firm as a clerk. He arrived in Hong Kong in 1862 on his own; his first godowns (or warehouses) were on Lyndhurst Terrace, that marginal zone 'populated by a mixed and polyglot group composed of middle-class or wealthy Chinese, Chinese prostitutes serving non-Chinese, European prostitutes, Indian, Parsee and Muslim merchants and shopkeepers, a few scattered Portuguese and Macanese and protected women.'³⁶⁰ Belilios was of a world in which Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew as well as English had long facilitated global trade. Key to his success were his multiple, fluid identities. The British saw Belilios as Indian or Portuguese Jewish, whereas, he said, 'the native Chinese make no difference between a Jew and a Christian. Both are foreigners in their eyes, but, if anything, they are better affected towards the Jew, whom they regard as an Asiatic like themselves.'

He found his Chinese lover (known only as Ms. Li) sometime between 1869 and 1872. It's unclear when his Jewish wife appeared in Hong Kong from Calcutta but it's thought to be around this same time. With his wife, Belilios had a stillborn son in 1871. In 1872, he built the impressive mansion, Kingsclere, on Kennedy Road (after a first Kingsclere at 13 Caine Road). His summer residence, the Eyrie, where he kept a

³⁵⁹ This portrait of Belilios relies on materials generously shared by the Judaica Library at the Jewish Historical Society, Hong Kong; and published works of Plüss, Weiss, Rosenthal et al. Thanks are due to Judy Green, Amber Gould, Howard Elias, Anthony Choy, Tim Judah, Simon Choa-Johnstone, Andrew Tse, and Dawn Leonard.

³⁶⁰ Smith, in Jaschok and Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy*, pp226–27.

pet camel³⁶¹ and other animals, was next door to the governor's on the Peak. In 1880, with his wife, Semah, he had a son, Raphael Emmanuel. In 1882, he was appointed to the Legislative Council and made a justice of the peace. His mistress bore his first daughter in 1885, named Marie Felice 'Paw Paw' Lee Wai Yin, on 3 March. Two more daughters followed, 'Yee-paw' Mabel and 'Saam Yee-paw.' It's clear the exotic behavior of Belilios was no bar to worldly success. He rented three of the 62 telephone lines available in 1889, sat on the highest councils in the colony, gave large behests to charity, and expressed an obsessive admiration for the British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli (Earl of Beaconsfield). 'Every Friday I commission my butler to distribute fowls and bread among the necessitous families...'³⁶²

The Government Central School for Girls (founded in 1890), got new premises in 1893 thanks to Belilios; this gave a middle-class English education to daughters of Chinese, European, and Indian residents; by 1898 the renamed Belilios School for Girls had 539 pupils, of whom about 233 were British. This (and the Diocesan Girls' School) gave Eurasian girls alternatives to merely drifting into concubinage.³⁶³ Belilios also endowed scholarships, a reform school for boys, several hospitals, medals for bravery, and more. The Belilios Medical Scholarships were for boys 'who are Chinese on the mother's side,' a clear opening to children of mixed race. Just as his father had donated land for a synagogue in Calcutta, so did Belilios in Hong Kong but the Sassoons went to court in 1897–98 claiming Belilios was reneging. The judge ruled for Belilios but behind this ran a deeper schism. The Sassoons were Baghdadi Jews, tracing a lineage back to Iberian Sephardic roots; Belilios was Sephardic but open to Ashkenazi too, the latter hailing from eastern Europe, poorer migrants fleeing the pogroms of the Pale of Settlement. Behind the schism was thus a hint of class warfare.³⁶⁴ Although Sephardim had first arrived as humble seamen, the growth of the community was fuelled by Sassoon wealth and patronage. Caroline Plüss believes this produced a Sephardic relationship with poor Jews 'characterised

³⁶¹ *The Hongkong Telegraph*, 24 July 1897: 'We are informed that the animal belonging to the Hon E.R. Belilios strayed away from his stable at the Peak yesterday afternoon. A long search during the afternoon proved fruitless but this morning, the poor animal was found dead about 100 feet below Mountain Lodge, having apparently jumped or fallen from the wall there.'

³⁶² Plüss, 'Assimilation vs. Idiosyncrasy', pp57–58.

³⁶³ Letter No. 41 from Eitel to Colonial Secretary, 5 July 1889, in CO19/342, pp80ff.

³⁶⁴ The colony's first synagogue was one of Arthur David Sassoon's houses on Seymour Terrace; his brother Solomon David Sassoon gave a house on Shelley Street; in 1882 Sir Jacob Sassoon bought the defunct Cosmopolitan Club. *China Mail*, December 1897, covered the synagogue court case, as did the *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 December 1897, p3, and *China Mail*, 3 December 1897, p3.

by distance, disapproval, embarrassment and the refusal to integrate mendicant co-religionists.³⁶⁵ In contrast, cosmopolitan Belilios was unfazed.³⁶⁶ Though Jewish, his idea of himself did not rest on that identity alone. He was in frequent business dealings with leading in-between men of all origins and had no qualms putting Jardine's men in their place.³⁶⁷

Double life notwithstanding, by 1893, Belilios earned his Companion of St. Michael and St. George honor from the British queen. In 1900, Belilios left both his wife, Semah, and his Eurasian family in Hong Kong, and 'retired' to England with his son Raphael Emmanuel. He secured a coat of arms for his family in 1901. He died on 11 November 1905, at Green Park House, 134 Piccadilly, aged 67. An obituary in *The Times* described Belilios as merchant, legislator, and landed proprietor, one 'largely interested in many public companies,' with a special interest in education. His marriage to Semah is recorded but no mention is made of his parallel Chinese lover and family.³⁶⁸ The whitewashing of Belilios's double life was just as normal as the existence of the second family in the first place. This simply wrote out of history up to half of what was, in fact, going on.

Building networks through kinship and institutions

Deeper than business ties were the family webs created by cross-faith and cross-racial congress. Inter-marriage would tie the Belilios name to those of Lam, Tyson, Heard, Lobo, Overbeck, Kotewall, Ho Tung, and Botelho—a roll call of Hong Kong's pre-war elite and the nexus of old money. Just this one strand of multicultural relationships linked the worlds of overseas Chinese from Malacca in Malaya via Jew from Venice and Calcutta, to German, Spanish, British, Portuguese, Dutch, American, and Parsi worlds. This is due to four sisters—Lam Fong-kew, Lam Kew-fong, Lam A-shui, and Lam Tsai-tai—born to Ms Lam and a Mr Bartou who might have been Spanish consul in Macao and Manila in the 1840s and '50s. From the Lam

³⁶⁵ Plüss, 'Assimilation vs. Idiosyncrasy', p53.

³⁶⁶ When the Sassoons settled on the (current) synagogue site, Belilios refused to lend his name to a tablet enshrining gratitude to the Sassoons and the naming of the Ohel Leah Synagogue after the Sassoon matriarch; he resigned as a trustee. *China Mail*, 6 December 1897, p3.

³⁶⁷ See Jardine Matheson Archive, MF 8940: Hong Kong, 13 August 1867. Also, C14/10, 1866; C36/21 Canton Ins. Letter Book, February 1875–March 1876.

³⁶⁸ Instead, note was made of his admiration for Lord Beaconsfield, and his sending of large wreaths to Disraeli's statue in Parliament Square, as well as primroses and violets to his grave. *The Times* 13 November 1905, p7, 20 April 1921.

sisters' liaisons came the men and women who would form the basis of an influential Eurasian network in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.³⁶⁹

The first sisters, twins Lam Fong-kew and Lam Kew-fong, were 'protected women' of George Tyson and John Farley Heard.³⁷⁰ George Tyson arrived in Canton from Boston as a clerk with the American trading firm Russell and Co. in 1854.³⁷¹ Albert Farley Heard, in China 1854-73, married Mary Livingston. Land records show his mediation of brother John's liaison with Fong-kew's sister, Lam Kew-fong, gifting her valuable sites in Hong Kong and Macao. She subsequently expanded her property empire, building herself a new house and leasing sites to other protected women. Fourth sister, Lam Tsat-tai, was 'protected' by Gustav Overbeck, partner in Dent and Co. and later by an American, Edward Constant Ray. Overbeck married an American in 1870 but a year earlier conveyed two lots to Lam Tsat-tai 'to provide for her and her children'. She, too, developed an extensive property portfolio. Third Lam sister's daughter, Chan Quay Neo, married Choa Leep-chee (Lap-chee). His Fukien family had settled in Malacca and boasted an ancestor who had been Kapitan Cina, leader of the Chinese community under Dutch colonial rule. His uncle, Choa Chee-bee, was comprador at Tai Koo Sugar in Hong Kong, where Leep-chee joined him in 1874, rising to great riches. His progeny blossomed too. His son Choa Po Sien married Belilios's daughter Marie Felice; their daughter, Margaret, would marry the future Sir Rogerio Hyndman Lobo, (the Lobo Amendment of 1984 required any deal signed by China and Britain over Hong Kong's future to be debated by the Hong Kong Legislature). Meanwhile, their son George married Maisie Kotewall, one of the nine children of Sir Robert Hormus Kotewall and Edith Lowcock. So far, the mix engendered from the four Spanish-Chinese Lam sisters had encompassed American, European, Chinese, Malay-Chinese, Venetian Jewish, and Portuguese roots. Sir Robert was eldest son of the Parsi trader Hormusjee Kotwaj and his Chinese wife, Cheung A-cheung. Meanwhile, Choa Leep-chee had another wife, and with her another half-dozen children, one of whom was Trixie, born in 1909, who married a Portuguese called Arnaldo Botelho.

³⁶⁹ All this is thanks to Smith, 'Abandoned into Prosperity' in Siu, *Merchants' Daughters*, p134.

³⁷⁰ Research by Thomas Larkin in the Augustine Heard Archives suggests the 'Protector' was in fact Albert's older brother John, with Albert completing the paperwork on which these records were based, after John's departure from Hong Kong. See Larkin, Thomas M. *The China Firm, American Elites and the Making of British Colonial Society*. Columbia University Press, 2023.

³⁷¹ Jardine Matheson Archive, Microfilmed Letters Files, B7/2, B17/15, and B11.

Eurasian networks developed through these complex family ties. They also grew out of colonial-era institutions: Hong Kong's multi-racial schools, advisory committees and philanthropic work, and business ties (often relating to opium). Trixie Choa, for example, made friends with other Eurasian family networks, such as the Churn and Leonard families, through her attendance at Diocesan Girls' School, which alongside the Diocesan Boys' School has long been an incubator of a mixed local elite.³⁷²

After the death of George Tyson in 1881, his land in Hong Kong went to a clerk in the magistracy, called Chan Kai-ming, George's half-Chinese son with Lam Fong-kew. Young Chan was placed in the Diocesan Home in 1870 and won scholarships at Central School, before becoming secretary of the all-important Opium Farm. He would become one of Hong Kong's leading men, following the traditional trajectory of success in the non-British world.³⁷³ This trajectory began at Central School³⁷⁴ and grew through participation in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, chairmanship of the Tung Wah Hospital Group, board member of the Bank of East Asia, donor to the University of Hong Kong and other educational causes, and an acting member of the Legislative Council.³⁷⁵ This would become the standard pattern for young Eurasian boys, Hong Kong's new elite.

Girls, such as Mary Louise Emily Angell, who would call herself Maria Louisa Emily Angele after her education with the Canossian Sisters, was set on a path of upward mobility not by a determined single Chinese mother but by a beneficent foreign

³⁷² Trixie's daughter Pat Botelho says some Choa cousins looked down on the Portuguese line, despite the Choas also being products of a Lam sister. At the same time, 'My mother never wanted us to be in touch with the Singapore and Malacca family,' says Pat Botelho. Interview with author, 21 January 2019. But Portuguese neutrality proved useful during World War Two as it allowed the family to stay at their mansion largely unscathed, and Choa cousins soon arrived to share sanctuary. Meanwhile, George Choa CBE became a renowned ear, nose, and throat surgeon, council chairman of St. John's Ambulance and innovator of treatments for deafness. He was among an early batch of 'Members of the Local Community' invited to join The Hong Kong Club in 1970, a place he saw as convenient for lunch. 'I'm half Chinese but identify as Chinese. I don't say I'm Eurasian unless some stupid Chinese is saying I'm not Chinese; then I say I'm mixed blood.' Interview with George Choa, 24 June 2013.

³⁷³ *Hongkong Telegraph*, 5 October 1909. The winning opium syndicate for three years was led by Ho Shai Kit, included Ho Kom Tong, Ng Li Hing, Leung Yan Po, Lau Chu Pak, and Mr. Chan Kai-ming, known for his 'intimate knowledge of the opium trade in Hong Kong.' Other leading men included Sin Tak-fun. Born in 1856, he was another Central School graduate, government clerk, interpreter at Stephens and Holmes legal firm then the solicitors Ewens and Harston.

³⁷⁴ Gwyneth Stokes: 'In 1893 separate classes were established in the Upper School only, for non-Chinese boys... The basis of selection for entry to these classes was dress; all boys not in Chinese dress were non-Chinese... it was a 'simple' way and avoided problems that might otherwise have arisen in the case of the numerous Eurasian students.' *Queen's College 1862–1962*, p61.

³⁷⁵ Holdsworth and Munn, *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, p71.

father. Born in 1880, she received a letter from Victor Hobart Deacon, Hong Kong's leading solicitor, when coming of age in 1902. In this, he explained: 'soon after my arrival in this Colony in the year 1880, I made the acquaintance of one with whom ever afterwards till his departure from Hong Kong I was on terms of intimate friendship. I allude to the late Charles David Bottomley, your father, and one of my greatest friends. He was a Merchant in the firm of Messrs Douglas Lapraik and Co...' ³⁷⁶ Suddenly this 'orphan' was a woman of substance. Her father had left a trust, the proceeds of which were 'for her sole and separate use and benefit and free from the control, debts or engagements of any husband of hers.' Deacon's firm had collected the rents from her properties until, in 1894, plague caused the government to condemn most of the congested Taipingshan area, pulling down her flats among others, to tackle the infection. He itemized what the government had paid and how he had almost doubled this fund on her behalf. Showing her education with the nuns had achieved some practical benefit, Maria Louisa asked first that all the shares be put in her name, then agreed to invest further in property. She might have guessed the identity of his mistress and thus possibly her own mother too. Bottomley had arranged that if his daughter died before coming of age, the trust and income should all go to 'Kan Shun Tsoi of Victoria aforesaid Single Woman...'

Maria Louisa's future was secured not just by money but education. Her Canossian Convent was on land gifted by Leonardo d'Almada, the first Portuguese to arrive from Macao in 1841. Schools were a key route for many in-between people to get ahead, often thanks to their uneducated mothers: 'In fact these women understand the value of education and prize it far more than respectable Chinese women do.'³⁷⁷

Local schools for fishermen's children were augmented by missionaries such as Robert Morrison, who brought his more Western-style Anglo-Chinese College from Malacca to Hong Kong. St. Andrew's School offered secular, multiracial schooling for girls as well as boys since 1855. Financed from public subscriptions led by Andrew Shortrede, editor of *The China Mail*, this taught Portuguese, Chinese, Parsi, and other children. No failure of mixed-culture education caused the demise of St. Andrew's, but rather its success. The far larger Central School was founded in 1862 to be multicultural. (It became Victoria College in 1889, and Queen's College from

³⁷⁶ Deacons Archive, Hong Kong University Library Special Collections.

³⁷⁷ Minute by Eitel, 1 November 1879, *Hongkong Government Gazette* 26, 4 February 1880, p177ff.

1894 to this day). Half the day went on Chinese language drills and the traditional Confucian curriculum; the other half went on Western subjects and English language. The goal was to create people to develop Hong Kong and, perhaps, China; a Westernized local elite. Most students were Chinese or Eurasian, yet there were enough variations to require classes to be taught in Urdu and Portuguese as well as English, Latin, and Chinese. (Meanwhile, the Church of England's Anglo-Chinese School of 1848 reemerged as St. Paul's in 1851. St. Joseph's College was born in 1876, out of a Roman Catholic school first opened in 1860.)

But what about girls? Governor Bowring lamented that 'a large proportion of children of native mothers by foreigners of all classes is beginning to ripen into a dangerous element out of the dunghill of neglect . . .' Would they be doomed to a life in the sex trade as their mothers had been? Fuelled not by feminism but moral fervour, Harriet Baxter set up an independent Chinese girls' boarding school, a school for European orphans and children of mixed race, and a boys' day school in the early 1860s. Separately, the Diocesan Native Female Training School (DNFTS) from 1863, in contrast to Baxter's schools for the poor, was intended for middle-class Chinese 'small-footed' girls (meaning their feet were bound). This taught Chinese and English, needlework, geography, and Bible history, plus 'moral habits.' Girls' education was based on traditional roles but revolutionary in the opportunities it offered: in 1864, superintendent Mary Winefred Eaton was stoned by a Chinese mob who saw her teaching of English as akin to the degradation of Chinese girls.³⁷⁸

The problem, again, was the hypocrisy surrounding sex and its price. A first DNFTS graduate was Lydia Leung, who married a church assistant and spread the word in Foochow. But she was an exception. Families more typically retrieved their now-English-speaking daughters from school to sell them for a higher price as a result; most became mistresses kept by Europeans. This quickly led to a wholesale shutting down of girls' education for a generation, justified on so-called moral grounds by men of the church and of business, including those whose sex lives had brought the girls into being.³⁷⁹ The apparent 'failure' of this early effort at educating girls ignores the reality that being the mistress of a rich white man may have been preferable.

³⁷⁸ They 'apparently associated her with the teaching of English to girls and thereby with their degradation.' Sweeting, *Education in Hong*, p152.

³⁷⁹ See Chiu, 'A Position of Usefulness'.

Buyers of women were left unchastised; instead, girls were punished through the withholding of education. Young Chinese, Eurasian, and other boys were allowed to garner the benefits of a Westernized education; girls were not. The DNFTS became the Diocesan Home and Orphanage, mainly for European and Eurasian children, including boys, in 1869. By 1878 it had become the Diocesan Boys' School, the next most important institution after the Central School for the creation of Hong Kong's non-British elite.

The Ho Tung dynasty

Arnold Wright claimed in 1908 that 'no man amongst the Chinese has borne his part in local, commercial, and social life with more conspicuous ability, or with greater credit to himself and his nationality than Mr Ho Tung.'³⁸⁰ This is the standard tone of reporting on Ho Tung—lavish admiration, crediting him with incredible ability, 'Chinese nationality' and moral uprightness. Certainly, he was exceedingly rich. His story highlights the route to success for Eurasians, their capture of colonial levers of wealth and influence, and the various elements brought into play: a determined 'protected woman' mother, education at Central School, experience as Comprador to a Western trading firm, membership of the right advisory committees in both Chinese and Western society, and a deliberate creation of a family name, collective family identity, controlled marriages for the sake of money and power, and patriarchal grip.

Ho Tung's mother, known only by the surname Sze, was the protected woman of a Dutch Jewish businessman, Mozes Hartog Bosman, known in Hong Kong as Charles Henry Maurice Bosman.³⁸¹ Sze had a daughter, Ho Pak Ngai, before she met Bosman, who would marry Choy Sing Nam, a Jardine's comprador. Sze had four sons with Bosman—Ho Tung, Ho Fook, Kai Mun, and Kai Gai (Walter)—interspersed with another son, Ho Kom Tong, who cannot have been conceived with Bosman, who was away at the time. Two daughters were probably both post-Bosman. Bosman had arrived in 1859 and traded in quicksilver (the liquid form of mercury), chartering ships, and exchanging currencies. Three years later he formed

³⁸⁰ Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth Century Impressions*, p176.

³⁸¹ Andrew Tse has traced Bosman back through five generations to Germany, with a Jacob Levy Bosman moving to the Netherlands in the eighteenth century.

Bosman and Co. with Cornelis Koopmanschap and Henry Edwards, who had been supplying the Californian gold fields with labour. Notes historian Elizabeth Sinn, 'Like other frontier towns, where the social structure was still fluid, the young colony allowed marginal people with energy and daring—those adept at seizing opportunities as well as creating them—to get ahead... It was just waiting for the big break.'³⁸² That break was gold, news of which reached Hong Kong in 1849, spurring a huge voluntary migration through Hong Kong across the Pacific to California. With it went supplies of Chinese food, opium and women in one direction, and wealth, offspring and the bones of the dead the other. By 1861, Koopmanschap's company with Bosman was chartering half the ships plying the Pacific. By 1869, the two men had fallen out; Bosman was declared bankrupt and left for England.³⁸³ Thus did Robert Ho Tung become fatherless.

Ho Tung's life followed an identical path to that of his fellow Central School graduates, compradors, and Chinese committee members. But he surpassed them all. Ho Tung was the oldest son; perhaps he took the desertion of Bosman hardest. Or perhaps he felt in tune with this anonymous letter, signed 'Eurasian,' to the editor of the *Hongkong Telegraph*: 'Our lot is anything but a happy one...deserted in nine cases out of ten by heartless fathers...thrown at an early age on the slender resources of our fine mothers...it were better we had ne'er been.'³⁸⁴ Ho Tung was determined to ensure he would never be so vulnerable again. Family legend has it that in 20 years as comprador with Jardine's, he accumulated HK\$2 million on the side, a huge amount in the year 1900. Throughout, he insisted on identifying as Chinese. Despite half-European roots and blue eyes, he wore Chinese clothes, followed Chinese habits of family piety and claimed China as 'the land of my fathers'.

His older sister's husband at Jardine's, probably helped, as did his first marriage, to Margaret Mak, daughter of Jardine's partner Hector Coll Maclean and his Chinese love. Making sure he was known for integrity and hard work, he then used his chronic digestive complaint as reason to hand the compradorship to (half) brother Ho Kom Tong, to manage a vast and international investment portfolio. Of course he chaired the Tung Wah Hospital Group, owned fine residences, became a director of

³⁸² Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, pp30 and 41.

³⁸³ Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, pp114–17 and 354n84.

³⁸⁴ Letter to the *Hongkong Telegraph*, 24 September 1895.

a score of companies and travelled extensively in Europe and the United States. He was a personal friend to governors, sat on committees, and donated funds to anything from the Diamond Jubilee or South African War funds to the Kwangsi Famine. His wealth, coupled with his seemingly deliberate creation of a dynasty, marks him out from his contemporaries.³⁸⁵ As his daughter Jean Gittins would record, 'Father chose to be Chinese as he thought the Chinese would not disown him openly.'³⁸⁶ He took a Chinese surname, Ho, and persuaded his brothers to follow suit. He made sure brothers and half-brothers had jobs, running shipping, sugar trading, and banking businesses; his brothers Ho Fook and Ho Kom Tong would succeed Ho Tung as Jardine's comprador and set up their own private businesses with his support. When his wife, Margaret Mak, could not conceive, she adopted Ho Fook's son Ho Shai Wing, then arranged Ho Tung's second marriage to her cousin Clara, who gave him ten children.

A series of strategic unions then tied Ho Tung into the leading Eurasian clans. Ho Kom Tong's son and daughter married daughter and son of Choa Leep-chee. Another daughter, Elizabeth, married Tse Ka Po, scion of a Macao comprador's family; son Andrew married a granddaughter of Ho Fook. Two sons of Ho Fook married two daughters of leading solicitor Sin Tak-fun. Ho Tung's sister Ho Sui Ting married Wong Kam Fook, comprador to the Hongkong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co. Intermarriages with the family of comprador Lo Cheung-shui then shaped a next generation of wealth: Ho Tung's daughter, Victoria, married Lo's son Man Kam, or MK; another daughter, Grace, married MK's younger brother Lo Man Ho; a sister of MK married Ho Fook's son Ho Leung.

So began what Geert Mak found in the multiple generations of wealth and power of the Jan Six family of Amsterdam: the oligarchization of power. In a family's search for certainties, family is put before everything else; 'the family fortune and the family collection had to be carried through time as intact as possible, for the sake of future generations and out of respect for previous generations.'³⁸⁷ Almost all these marriages were arranged and tied the Ho Tung family into a multiplicity of other Eurasian family lines, including Rothwell, Fuhrmann, Kew, Bush, Zimmern,

³⁸⁵ See Zheng and Wong, 'The Mystery of Capital'.

³⁸⁶ Gittins, *Eastern Windows—Western Skies*, p11.

³⁸⁷ Mak, *The Many Lives of Jan Six*, p348.

Kotewall, Hung, Gittins, Hall, Churn, Anderson, Overbeck, Baker, Fenton, Broadbridge, Ahlmann, Wong, Lowcock, Shea, Laing, Frith, and of course Tyson, Choa, and Belilios.³⁸⁸ Unsurprisingly, this ever-expanding web of family ties resulted in shared market intelligence and wealth generation—some of it overt through the passing on of comprador and other positions in the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, Jardine's, E. D. Sassoon and Co., and other banks—some of it less overt but just as important, as in the family-backed establishment of the Tai Yau Bank.

Despite his constant profession of 'Chineseness,' Ho Tung carried a British passport and nationality and took a British knighthood. At the same time, he completely rejected his youngest brother who did just what Ho Tung did—denied half his heritage—but chose the other half, taking a Western name, Walter Bosman, and identifying as English. When Ho Tung's son Eddie secretly married an Irish Catholic maid from their house in Belgravia, Mordia O'Shea, Ho Tung rejected both Mordia and, for many years, Eddie. Though the filial son of a prostitute (he left money for her indigent relatives, and paid obeisance to her grave), Ho Tung found it impossible for his son to marry a maid. It was a racial rejection as well as class, as much 'better' wives for Eddie were all Eurasian or Chinese. Ho Tung's failed to ever achieve a government position,³⁸⁹ but spent a lot of time, energy, and money in the 1920s on his quixotic idea to bring all of China's warlords together for a 'roundtable discussion,' as if that was going to bring unity to China.³⁹⁰ Ho Tung and his brothers were more successful in celebrating the 1887 and 1897 jubilees of Queen Victoria. He was also to have his cake and eat it when he became the only exception to the 1902 law that aimed to bar non-Britons from living on the Peak.³⁹¹ Men such as Ho Tung

³⁸⁸ Ho Kom Tong's son Ho Shai Kit married Winnie Choa, daughter of Choa Leep-chee; Ho Kom Tong's daughter, Elsie, married Choa Po Yiew, son of Choa Leep-chee. M.K.'s aunt Lo Shui Choi (aka Lucy Rothwell) married Ho Tung's brother Ho Fook. M.K.'s sister Edna married Ho Fook's son Ho Leung. Sin Tak-fan's son married the daughter of Chan Kai Ming; daughter Flora married Ho Fook's son Ho Shai Kwong.

³⁸⁹ JMA J1/8/4, from David Landale of Jardine's Hong Kong to Henry Keswick, London, 18 December 1914: 'Ho Tung is very pushing just now and has ambitions in several directions such as the Legislative Council but so far his efforts in that direction have not been responded to by the Government.' J1/8/5, 4 June 1915: 'You will have heard that His Majesty has conferred the honour of Knighthood upon Mr Ho Tung who now designates himself Sir Robert Ho Tung. This honour I understand has increased his desire to be invited to a seat on the Boards of as many local companies as possible . . .'

³⁹⁰ His former Central School mate Ng Choy (Wu Tingfang), now in Peking, told Ho Tung to leave Chinese politics alone and enjoy his wealth while he could.

³⁹¹ Racism was sometimes dressed up as a moral stricture against Chinese habits of multiple wives and families, but there was also fear of property price escalation, which would force Europeans back down the hill. Chinese members of the legislature were recorded as seeing 'the

wanted it all—the approval and influence in the British world, but also a world in which they could truly be on top. So they created a parallel world. When failing to gain entry to British sanctums, they made their own. Ho Tung was a founding member of the Chinese Club in 1899. Members would include compradors, lawyers, and the newly professional classes of Chinese and Eurasian worlds.³⁹² A Chinese Recreation Club was established in 1912 mimicking the strict entrance requirements and dress codes of its exclusively European forebear.

Ho Tung's honors, from both the British and the Chinese came as a result not of his 'nationality' but of his great wealth. Perhaps race was irrelevant and the trick was to be Eurasian but claim to be something else. After all, Eurasians could employ the best of all worlds to their own advantage.³⁹³ When the Republican Revolution in China in 1911 overthrew the Qing, men such as Ho Tung appeared more ambivalent, or more subtle, at negotiating their multiple identities. Ho Tung was no revolutionary but was proud to invite Sun Yat-sen, to lunch. Ho Tung's son Edward was the University of Hong Kong student union leader who hosted Dr. Sun's famous 1926 speech in which he traced the roots of his revolutionary ideals to his education in Hong Kong. Another son, Ho Sai Lai (Robert), became a prominent general in the nationalist Kuomintang, later fleeing to Taiwan, which he represented as a diplomat abroad. At home, still the Confucian-style patriarch, Ho Tung failed to understand the threat of Chinese communism, losing all his China wealth in 1949.

Ho Tung contemporaries included Ho Kai who, when studying law in London, married an Englishwoman, Alice Walkden who, with his sister, he immortalized in the Alice Ho Mui Ling Nethersole Hospital. Knighted, a Freemason, and 'Chinese at heart,' Ho Kai promoted Western medicine and education among the Chinese and

justice and reasonableness of the proposed legislation.' CO129/447. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce protested but was ignored.

³⁹² The *Hongkong Weekly Press*, 25 February 1899, for the founding committee: Chau A Fook, Chan Kai-ming, Chan Wieson, Chow Kam-wing, Fung Wa chun, Ho Fook, Ho Tung, Li Hong-mi, Li Pak, Lo Tat, Kuk King-fo, Mok Man-cheng, Mg Kwai-shang, Tse Tsan-tai, and Wong Hoi-pang.

³⁹³ They could also get quite tangled in conflicting loyalties. During the Coolie Strike, provoked by a tightening of Lodging House regulations in 1895, Ho Tung convened meetings of compradors in his office at Jardine's; both Chinese and European merchants were losing money, so in that instance their interests were in concert. It was similar to the Anti-American Boycott of 1905–1906, when Hong Kong's Chinese ignored pressure from Chinese communities elsewhere to join the boycott; economic considerations were more powerful than any call on a presumed Chinese nationalism. It was different with the Anti-Japanese Boycott and riot of 1908 when all Chinese joined in even at financial cost to themselves..

secretly supported the revolution in China.³⁹⁴ His multiple identities made him beneficiary and backer of colonialism at the same time as he expressed a Chinese political identity. Attempts to describe him as either British imperialist or Chinese revolutionary have foundered, as the roles overlapped: it was his Western exposure that fuelled his desire for change in China.³⁹⁵ Tellingly, Ho Kai led a petition in March 1891 of ‘an important and influential section of the Chinese Community’ in need of an English-language school for the children of the upper-class Chinese. They didn’t like Queen’s College (Central School) because of ‘the indiscriminate and intimate mingling of children from families of the most various social and moral standing.’³⁹⁶ This was Chinese elitism in action against Hong Kong’s cosmopolitan core. Ho Tung offered money for a school open to all but—in what would become King George V School in Kowloon Tong—initially got the opposite. Just like Ho Kai’s Chinese friends, the British also wanted a school free of all that indiscriminate intermingling³⁹⁷ and pressed Ho Tung to let his money be used for that. It took two generations for KGV to become the school of choice for the English-speaking mixed races of Hong Kong.

British headmaster of Queen’s College, G. H. Bateson-Wright, suggested the problem was that the ‘Chinese, taking them all round, are more apt and willing pupils than European boys.’ For him, the problem was trying to educate ‘a large, mixed, cosmopolitan community, the bulk of which belongs to the most conservative of nations on the face of the earth,’ by which he meant the British and the Chinese.³⁹⁸

A genuinely cosmopolitan education came only through Jewish generosity: the Ellis Kadoorie Chinese School Society. This ran multiracial schools for Indian, Eurasian,

³⁹⁴ Ng Lun, *Interactions of East and West*, p136.

³⁹⁵ Law, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, pp79 and 82. Paul Cohen, ‘The New Coastal Reformers,’ pp255–64. See also Tsai, ‘The Predicament of the Comprador Ideologists,’ pp191–225, ‘Syncretism in the Reformist Thought of Ho Kai and Hu Liyuan,’ pp19–33, and *Hong Kong in Chinese History*, pp138ff, 153ff, 160. Tsai found that competition between Ho Amei and Ho Kai for the seat on the legislature to be vacated by Ng Choy was partly played out through attempts to prove a greater ‘Chineseness,’ a contest that Ho Kai won.

³⁹⁶ They got St. Stephen’s College in 1902. Carroll, *Edge of Empires*, pp86–87, 197–204, 215–21, 341ff. Law, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, pp50ff. Chiu, ‘The Making of Accomplished Women,’ pp71–72.

³⁹⁷ ‘European children in this Colony have been ruined irretrievably by intercourse with and contamination from the mixed races with whom they have had to associate in the elementary schools,’ opined *The China Mail*, 30 January 1901.

³⁹⁸ Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth Century Impressions*, ‘Education’ By G. H. Bateson Wright, DD (Oxon), pp121–28.

and Chinese students. The language of instruction was English, with Hindi, Urdu, and Cantonese offered as second languages; admission was free. The schools were 'historically reserved for non-Chinese speaking locals' and were taken over by the government just before World War One.³⁹⁹ St. Joseph's College still educates a mixed-race elite of boys. Bateson-Wright vigorously praised the 'generous unpaid zeal of the Christian Brothers, who, in a truly catholic spirit, admit Jews, Turks, Heretics, and Infidels to the benefit of their high-class education.'⁴⁰⁰

Thus, we have seen how, by the late nineteenth century, determined women, occasionally benign men, and colonial-era schools and committees, created a Eurasian Hong Kong. Looking closely at individuals and their relations from the bazaar up into middle and upper classes, we have seen Hong Kong's first Eurasians emerge as educated professionals. They could be not just bilingual but genuinely bicultural. They did not all need to be intellectuals but were alert to new ideas, technologies, journalisms, and diplomacies. Through name- and dynasty-creation, some became rich, and embedded in British Hong Kong's power structures. From being merely in-between they were now on their way to becoming central.

³⁹⁹ Weiss, 'South Asian Muslims', p437. See White, *Turbans and Traders*, pp212–16.

⁴⁰⁰ Bateson-Wright in Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth Century Impressions*, p123.

Chapter 6 Forging Networks (1900-1940)

Having met women and men who were fundamental to the making of Hong Kong as a Eurasian Port City, here we will meet some of their key successors. We do this partly because this next generation of Eurasians held large sway and made vital contributions to the building of Hong Kong in the early twentieth century. It is also important to meet these people, however, because of the networks they formed. Precisely as successors, these new people and clans were a development on past iterations, particularly in the networks they created, thereby raising questions about the evolving character of Hong Kong. Men such as Caldwell were outliers. Now men such as Chater, Kadoorie, Li, Mody, Macumber Churn, Anderson and Kotewall were building new groups of friends, colleagues and collaborators. Through these new networks we find new foci of belonging. Some of these networks were formed on the basis of business collaboration, others on faith or ethnicity, yet others crossed all such borders. This chapter asks, therefore, to what extent Hong Kong society was communal (locked into separate communities)? Or was it indeed cosmopolitan?

The term Eurasian here continues to encompass the broad range of peoples from geographic Eurasia, as well as the more narrowly defined products of mixed liaisons. Both usages apply here. By following these individuals—both those of mixed race and those with roots in Eurasia—and tracking what they did, we will see how Hong Kong's many different people were gaining in confidence, regardless of ethnic background. This consolidation of Hong Kong's port-city peoples took place against a backdrop of rising nationalism, sharper definitions of identity, and cross-border conflict in which the harshest boundaries were drawn on the basis of class, not race. Yet Hong Kong was in fine fettle. Celebrations of the royal jubilees ('golden' in 1887 and 'diamond' in 1897) had established the colony as a shining light of the empire in the East. That confidence produced, by the early twentieth century, new land, electricity, telephone, mining and property companies, mostly facilitated and funded by Hong Kong's Eurasians. The odd whiff of revolution in China was largely ignored—after all, there was always some sort of chaos going on over there. Few had any inkling that a couple of world wars and Communist revolution would follow; it was startling enough to some that opium divans were to be closed by 1910.

It was also still a magnet to new arrivals. A quarter of a million people in Hong Kong in 1895 grew to around 450,000 by 1911, despite bubonic plague in the 1890s. And, 'as the Chinese population doubled, the non-Chinese trebled.'⁴⁰¹ The Census showed that the 1911 population (excluding the British military presence) comprised 5,185 Europeans and Americans, 2,558 Portuguese, 3,482 'Indians and others', 55,157 Chinese on boats, and the rest Chinese on land. Who among this medley would thrive amid the gathering clouds of racism, nationalism, revolution and war?

Chater, the Armenian

Back in 1864, a teenager arrived in Hong Kong to stay with his sister and work as a bank clerk. Yet this man would become the central figure in a dominant network, formed from his friends - his Parsi business colleagues, dynamic Chinese investors, a bevy of Portuguese friends, a handful of Scotsmen, and a foundational core of Baghdadi Jews. These were all people of Eurasia who shared multiple identities and ambition. Together, they made Hong Kong ready for a new century.

Paul Catchick Chater, later Sir Paul, arrived in Hong Kong just two years after Belilios, also off a ship from Calcutta. Born in 1846, orphaned aged seven, and one of thirteen children, he was sent in 1855 to La Martiniere School for Boys, where he became prefect and captain of the cricket team. His graduation to enter the India Survey Department meant he had a neat legible hand, a thorough knowledge of arithmetic, square and cubic roots, geometrical progression, fractions, and logarithmic calculations, algebra, trigonometry, and a knowledge of plan drawing; he also had 'a healthy and vigorous constitution, and good eye-sight for observing.'⁴⁰² Those skills, especially the plan drawing, would be seminal to his success. So, too, were his roots in Indian Armenian aristocracy. The East India Company's interlocutor, eminent Armenian merchant Khojah Phanoos Kalandar, was great-grandfather of Begoom, who married Agah Catchick Ariel; their granddaughter was Paul Chater's mother. The family, known for its liberal, cosmopolitan spirit, had spread from Julfa to India and beyond.⁴⁰³ Chater would later donate to the Armenian Relief Fund of London and (in 1899) sponsor six young

⁴⁰¹ Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, p154.

⁴⁰² These requirements appear in the 1855 Manual of Surveying for Revenue in Bengal and the North-Western Provinces.

⁴⁰³ *Calcutta Gazette*, 29 July 1790, a eulogy on the death of Agar Catchick Arrakiel.

Armenians to travel to and settle in Hong Kong. He was not a waif of few prospects - he had the strength of lineage. 'He often put his money into enterprises that seemed risky, but his supreme confidence was usually vindicated in their success.'⁴⁰⁴

Being Armenian meant being tied into regional ribbons of trade through Penang and Singapore where Chater would develop business and property interests. A Catchick founded the *Straits Times* newspaper, and Armenian A.L. Agabeg was publishing the *Daily Press* in Hong Kong in 1860. Chater sailed to Hong Kong on an Apcar ship;⁴⁰⁵ Arratoon Apcar (born at Julfa in 1779) had founded Apcar and Co. in 1819; the family intermarried with other Armenians such as Seth and Sarkies (behind the Raffles, Strand, and Eastern and Oriental hotels). By the mid-1840s the Arratoon Apcar was plying the Calcutta-to-China circuit, carrying people, wedding cakes and tombstones for the Armenian community. On arrival in Hong Kong, Chater stayed with his eldest sister, Anna who had married a Jordan. Her son, Dr Gregory Jordan had studied medicine in Edinburgh. Chater would go into business with his brother Paul; the brokers shared digs also with colonial surgeon Dr. Philip Ayres and Port Health Officer Adams—then Gregory moved in. All were keen Freemasons. Chater and Paul Jordan were stewards of the Jockey Club. Chater, Ayres and Adams were justices of the peace; Gregory Jordan would succeed Ayres as port health officer.⁴⁰⁶

Chater made friends easily. Austin Coates says, 'With his high broad forehead and wide-spaced, friendly eyes, he radiated kindness. Everything he did in his long life was for the public benefit as well as his own ... Chater never did anything drastic. He simply contrived to make things happen.'⁴⁰⁷ Rare criticism arose of the 'gambling mania' he spurred on the stock exchange.⁴⁰⁸ Chater's networks were first Armenian but quickly encompassed Indian, Parsi, Chinese, and Jewish, and eventually the heart of British power in Jardine's, the Hong Kong Club, and Government House. Like his Bengali forebears, he was an enthusiast for royalty and for British rule.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁴ Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong*, p96. Chater, 64, married Swedish Maria Christine Pearson, 31.

⁴⁰⁵ See Wright, *Respected Citizens* p94. Also, Clarence-Smith, in Baghdiantz, Harlaftis, and Minoglou, *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks*.

⁴⁰⁶ Mattock, *Hong Kong Practice*, pp3-4.

⁴⁰⁷ Coates, *China Races*, p133.

⁴⁰⁸ *The China Mail*, 14 January 1893; *Hongkong Government Gazette* 1893, pp479-80.

⁴⁰⁹ Chater chaired Queen Victoria Jubilee committees (1887 and 1897), knighted in 1902, and honored by France after his investment in coal mines in French Tonkin.

Chater soon met his lifelong business partner and trusted friend, the Parsi Hormusjee Nowrojee Mody. This was probably when they were clerks at the Bank of Hindustan, China and Japan.⁴¹⁰ Both men would be knighted; both had forebears who had been trading for generations, in Mody's case with the Portuguese before the British arrived.⁴¹¹ Born in Bombay on 12 October 1838, Mody had a printing press and newspaper, 'Pruthvi Prakash'. He arrived in Hong Kong thanks to the leading Parsi, Jehangirji Faramji Buxey. When Buxey thought of retiring after the closure of R.H. Camajee & Co, he wrote to his wife Mithibai in Bombay suggesting one of his three sons could be sent to take charge; none were keen. So Mithibai offered Hormusji, her sister's son, who very willingly said yes. Mody's friendship with Chater would change Hong Kong. Together they built Hong Kong and Kowloon land and docks, institutions and community organizations. (They would also invest in mining in Tonkin Indo-China and be honoured by the French Government.) Chater set up his Mr. Paul racing stable in 1872 when Mody set up his Mr. Buxey stable; Chater later became chairman of the Jockey Club. Just as Chater had his vast Marble House, Mody had Buxey Lodge. Alongside the bling was the philanthropy⁴¹² to the Ladies Benevolent Society, the Seaman's Institute,⁴¹³ and the marble fountain at the Parsi Cemetery, amongst much more.

Within three years, Chater became a broker, thanks to a next circle of connection, with the Baghdadi Jews, the Sassoons. Seth, the Armenian historian, believes Chater had their backing to be independent: 'One day he plucked up the courage to ask the head of Sassoons whether they would help him if he started as an Exchange broker. The reply being in the affirmative, Chater tendered his resignation... With the help

⁴¹⁰ See Chater, *Sir Catchick Paul Chater: A Brief Personal Biography*. That Mody also worked at this bank is uncertain, however; the *Chronicle and Directories* between 1861 and 1865 are unavailable. Arnold Wright said Mody arrived c. 1861 'to enter the service of a firm of Hindoo bankers and opium merchants.' Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth Century Impressions*, p128.

⁴¹¹ The Pavri Papers offer a genealogy back to a seventeenth-century ancestor, Lavji Dhunji, a ship chandler in Surat, whose descendants were cloth merchants and founders of cloth weaving and dyeing works. pp291-296ff.

⁴¹² In 1907, Mody hosted the Bombay wedding of daughter Shirin to Nusserwanji Jamshedji Dadyseth. Here was the Parsi elite, the Jijibhoys, Readymoneys, Wadias, Behramjee Jejeebhoy, Petits, Camas, Banajis, Dadyseths, with several Indian Princes. The bride's sari was studded with small pearls, with diamonds on her shoes. Mody gave her diamond and emerald jewellery once owned by Marie Antoinette. When his effects were auctioned after his death, a 39-page booklet included 1,000-piece sets of silver, Waterford crystal, Wedgwood crockery, Silver Cups won by his horse stable. Deacons Archive 18/905, Inventory, 'Buxey Lodge.'

⁴¹³ This was because Mody believed 'to our Merchant seamen this Colony owes so much of its prosperity, its commerce, its very existence.' The Pavri Papers, p309.

of the Sassoons, he started auspiciously, and cleared \$600 in the first month as a broker. Thenceforth Fortune smiled on him...'⁴¹⁴

The Li family, meanwhile, came from closer by, having sided with the British in Kwangtung (Guangdong) Province during the second Anglo-Chinese, or Arrow, War of 1856–60 after arriving in Hong Kong in 1854. The Li family's firm, Wo Hang, established in 1857 by the former artist Li Leong, was a typical Gold Mountain firm, meaning its focus was not on the traditional trade in marine and forest products between South and Southeast Asia with China, but on servicing—with labour, opium, and money transfers—areas opening up through the discovery of gold.⁴¹⁵ The family won the opium monopoly in 1862–63 and 1873–79 in Hong Kong, and so got a lock on the market for high-quality prepared opium in North America and Australia; they also traded extensively in rice. In between, on Li Leong's death in 1864, his cousin Li Sing took charge. He pioneered the first Chinese-owned insurance companies and in 1882 set up the Wa Hop Telegraph Company to lay a cable from Canton to Hong Kong. Li Sing was Hong Kong's twelfth-largest taxpayer in the 1870s and a leading man of the colony.⁴¹⁶ His youngest son, Li Po Chun, founded a primary school in his father's name and greatly expanded the family real estate business.⁴¹⁷

Chater had already done business with the On Tai Insurance Company, set up by Li Sing and Poon Pong. These men had all known one another other since the 1860s. A triangular pattern emerged—where the Armenian Chater, the Parsi Mody, and the Chinese Li Sing would change the shape of Hong Kong. Out of this nexus came the development of the stock exchange, the Jockey Club, the central business district, the docks of Kowloon, mining in the New Territories, the University of Hong Kong, and

⁴¹⁴ Seth, *Armenians in India*, p553.

⁴¹⁵ Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, pp33, 110–19.

⁴¹⁶ He would later finance a housing scheme on land once held by the Tang clan; Li Sing's front man in the Tang land projects was Ho Amei. Neither the Chinese nor the British governments backed the Tang. But there were still some ancestral claims, mortgaged by one young Tang clan member to Li Sing and his family.

⁴¹⁷ In 1865, Li Sing had invested in the jungles of Borneo. Two Americans in Hong Kong, Joseph Torrey (editor of the *Hongkong Times* and *The China Mail*) and Thomas Harris, had bought two concessions in Brunei and secured Li Sing's firm, Wo Hang, as partner in the American Trading Company of Borneo. This shipped in labourers, placing Torrey in charge as 'Supreme Ruler,' and tried to develop the land. The settlement slowly starved. New backers included Baron von Overbeck, the Austrian consul general in Hong Kong, but the Brunei adventure never worked. See Tregonning, *Under Chartered Company Rule*, pp7–10.

most leading companies: the Hongkong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., the Hongkong Land and Investment and Agency Co., the Dairy Farm Co., Hongkong Electric, Hongkong Telephone, and many more. Only in the 1880s did the Scots of Jardine Matheson and Co. wake up to their importance, when Chater forged a next vital relationship with John Bell-Irving, the oft-overlooked taipan of Jardine's. He and Bell-Irving were both unofficial members of the Legislative and Executive councils. Bell-Irving was succeeded by his cousin J.J. Keswick in late 1889, so much of the credit for developments on the waterfront went to Keswick when in fact they had grown out of the far deeper tie between Chater and Bell-Irving. It was said: 'Where Chater goes today, Jardine's goes tomorrow.'⁴¹⁸

Where Chater went, he also brought his networks with him – bringing together Armenians, Parsis, Jews, Chinese Scots and many more. Such networks reveal a large and cosmopolitan vision.

Hong Kong People Building Hong Kong

From the first land sales of 1841, marine lots—those fronting the harbor—were most in demand. Traders on the foreshore could have the latest news and commodities off ships in the harbor, brought by small boats to their door; they usually built their own jetty from their office into the sea, and hoped for the best when typhoons thundered in. A first reclamation in 1851 created Bonham Strand, headquarters of the Nam Pak Hong. Next efforts by Governor John Bowring met entrenched resistance among merchants. Chater began experimenting in land creation in the 1870s by extending his lots in western Hong Kong. This area, Kennedy Town, was developed largely by Chater, Li Sing, and Meyer Sassoon.

Now Chater's early training in surveying techniques would prove useful. He hired a sampan by night, to let down a plumb line to measure the depth of the harbor. He was collecting data, privately. This was the genesis of the Praya Reclamation

⁴¹⁸ Waters, 'British Hongs,' p225. Jardine Matheson Archive material shows Jardine's seeking Chater's business in 1880, writing that they had heard of two lots coming up for sale that might suit Chater, so what would he like to offer—JMA, C14/13: 1880. Ties deepened through intensive collaborations over the years but the comment from Jardine's head office at 3 Lombard Street London was measured: 'for many years he has been a good friend to the Firm and he will be much missed in Hongkong'—JMA J1/2/20, 3 June 1926. The firm then engaged in making sure a statue of Chater was built, see J1/2/21 and J1/2/22.

Scheme, which Chater finalized by 1887. He was the pivotal figure—with his surveying skills, investor's courage, knowledge of how to persuade the government to support the plan (from his membership of the government's top advisory councils, and visits to London), and his design of a finance scheme to keep the merchants (of which he was one) on side. Chater's innovation was to give the rights to reclaimed land to the nearest marine lot holder. Successive meetings with lot holders were chaired and charmed by Chater; Bell-Irving or Li Sing would then propose motions with the other seconding it, thereby securing approval from all. Through his freemasonry network, he got the Duke of Connaught to lay the foundation stone in 1890. Then Chater and Bell-Irving founded the Hongkong Land Co. to develop the newly emerging central sites. Chater had a lock on most of them because the Sassoons had passed them on when leaving the colony in 1902.⁴¹⁹ Chater moved the prestigious Hong Kong Club, which he now chaired, to the new square, on which he arranged to place statues of royalty.

While the vision was Chater's, the building of Hong Kong's new central business district could not have succeeded with the support of his friends. Li Sing and his brothers and sons had stakes in almost a dozen key marine lots, just next to those owned by the Sassoons. All were good friends in business, now joined through Chater to Jardine's Bell-Irving. These sites became—by 1905—the heart of central Hong Kong. Chater and his friends created most of the land from the tram line to the shore, where some of the most expensive real estate in the world is now found.

Chater then secured control of Kowloon's waterfront. In 1860, Britain had acquired the tip of the peninsula across the harbor up to Boundary Street, ceded in perpetuity. Kowloon was rugged, with small hills, rice fields, and sandy beaches. The population was 5,105 persons, in perhaps ten mostly Hakka villages. By 1871 there were 81 stone quarries in Kowloon; the Taiping Rebellion then spurred entire families, now Cantonese (Punti) to move in.⁴²⁰ No colonial administrators or magistrates were based there in the nineteenth century; police appeared only in

⁴¹⁹ It's not clear why the family quit Hong Kong around 1902. Several of David Sassoon's sons of Bombay were moving to England and joining the British aristocracy through friendships with royalty, lavish hospitality, support of horse-racing and politics. Lack of support for Sassoon's widow, running the business in Bombay, might explain the departure. One wing of the eastern enterprise had already moved to Shanghai—that of E.D. Sassoon with his trading company and later bank, which would fall to Sir Victor Sassoon, and then to war and communism.

⁴²⁰ Hayes, 'Old British Kowloon.'

emergencies. Ownership of vital Kowloon marine lots was initially split among Sassoon, Mody, and Chater, but by 1887 were assigned by Chater to Hongkong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., his first venture with Jardine's. Reclamation works expanded as more land was needed for the Kowloon Canton Railway, to open in 1910. Chater was a first buyer of land in Kowloon, and gave land and money to build St. Andrew's Church. (He had already, in 1899, secured the Hong Kong Island site for his famed Marble Hall.)⁴²¹ Mody, too, 'had special faith in the development of Kowloon at a time when it was almost an empty area, and invested heavily in real estate there,'⁴²² seen in the name, Mody Road.

A University is born

Mody's greatest gift was his funding of the University of Hong Kong. Since the 1880s, Hong Kong had become home not only to traders of all kinds, but also to what might be called intellectuals. Men such as Patrick Manson and James Cantlie were socially engaged professional men. Dr. Philip Ayres, friend of Chater, was exceptional for his regular visits to the plague warrens of Taipingshan. With Dr. Gregory Jordan and Ho Kai, the Hong Kong College of Medicine was founded in 1887. New life was coming to drama, choral, literary, sketching, and debating societies, including the Odd Volumes Society, formed in 1893 to develop 'a community of men striving for the truth.' The idea of a university took off in 1908, with the arrival of Frederick Lugard as Governor. He had a brutalist reputation from his Nigeria days to live down, and an erudite wife, Flora Shaw.

The list of early donors to the university is a map of the burgeoning elite. Here are the Chinese of the Nam Pak Hong, active in the Tung Wah Hospital and the Po Leung Kuk charities, such as Lau Chu-pak and Ng Li Hing, Sin Tak Fan, Chan Kai Ming, and Tso Seen-wan; they not only gave money but time to attend HKU Council meetings and fund scholarships. The Anatomical Laboratory was backed entirely by Chinese guilds, trading in opium, gold leaf, salt fish, pigs, hemp, cattle, rice, and pawn-brokering.

⁴²¹ Marble Hall is described in purple prose in the *Hongkong Telegraph*, 22 December 1904; See also, Chater, *Marble Hall Hong Kong—A Pictorial Review*.

⁴²² Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong*, p87.

Alongside the wealthy Chinese and Eurasians stood Southeast Asians: Tseng Shek Chau of Saigon, Eu Tong Sen of the Straits Settlements, and Loke Yew and Cheung Pat Sze of Penang. Another major chunk of money came from the viceroy of Canton. The only British trading family to make significant pledges was John Swire and Co. The university's historian, Peter Cunich, believes that British merchant opposition to the project stemmed mainly from the (indeed justified) fear of creating a class of educated, brighter, and cheaper Chinese who would supplant many Europeans at work.⁴²³ Eventually, donations came from the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and Jardine's, but the next-biggest corporate donors were the (Jewish) Sassoons and (the Armenian and Parsi) Chater and Mody Co. Passage of the University Bill through the Legislative Council was held up with its provision for 'one Parsee and one Mahommedan representative' on the court. Opposition to the wording was a sign of how an active community was far ahead of its blinkered bureaucrats. 'Representatives of Asiatic races other than Chinese' wouldn't work either, as that could exclude Jews. At last, the governor was able to nominate 'two additional members' without mentioning race or religion. Chater was honorary treasurer, and Robert Ho Tung was fretting as usual about whether his name would be prominent enough. (Mody died on 16 June 1911, before the university opened on 11 March 1912; his funeral was attended by the governor and stock exchange and government offices were closed.)

Thereupon the university began to build a small, tightly knit campus life; all students lived on campus unless exempted for religious observances such as Ramadan. The student body included Portuguese names as well as Parsi, Muslim, and Eurasian. The largest group of non-Hong Kong students came from Malaya, but then as now, openness on race far pre-dated equality of gender: no women were admitted for the first decade. The first women students, in 1921, were Rachel Irving, daughter of the director of education, and Irene Ho Tung, daughter of the biggest Eurasian donor. The university struggled constantly with finances but was saved by Sir Robert Ho Tung and a stunning interest-free loan worth \$500,000 from Penang's tin magnate, Loke Yew.⁴²⁴ Chinese donors were especially keen on an arts faculty,

⁴²³ Swire's engagement could be traced to its Quaker roots, but also to its desperate need for a better image after a Swire's employee allegedly kicked to death an elderly Chinese passenger on one of their coastal ferries. Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong*, pp119–20.

⁴²⁴ Donors included H.M.H. Nemazee, a dealer in Persian opium. Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong*, p226, p 497n100. The Hongkong and Shanghai Bank in Shanghai advised 'Great Caution' but noted he was 'sole proprietor of M. Nemazee of Princes Bldg

pressing to go beyond medicine and engineering into ethics, law and philosophy.⁴²⁵ Fung Ping-fan said his father, Fung Ping Shan, a key donor, saw the university as a 'lighthouse of the Far East' and 'the centre of learning in South China.'⁴²⁶ Graduates became part of a bilingual, bicultural elite from China to Southeast Asia.

Above all stood Chater—British and Indian and Armenian, yet still sometimes sniffed at by people who didn't know better, such as callow young Charles Hardinge Drage, aide-de-camp to Governor Sir Reginald Stubbs (and future spy). His diary entry for 1 December 1923 'with a busy day ahead of me. With H.E. to lunch with Sir Paul Chater, a coloured magnate and the multi-millionaire of Hong Kong...'⁴²⁷ Yet Chater was 'British,' said member of Parliament T.P. O'Connor: 'Sir Paul Chater is perhaps the least known and at the same time one of the most powerful and, what is more important, one of the most beneficent figures in the Empire ... He is at the head of everything there; no enterprise gets on without asking his assistance... He is the father of everything in Hong Kong, by long residence and service. He is the oldest British settler...'⁴²⁸

Whatever identity he chose or was given, it was Chater who brought Hong Kong into modern times. Governor Sir Cecil Clementi spoke emotionally on 27 May 1926, the day after Chater's death: 'When, as a young cadet, I first landed in Hong Kong, I stepped ashore upon ground which under a most successful scheme, devised by Sir Paul, had been newly reclaimed from the sea ... [his] sage advice ... wonderful foresight ... breadth of vision ... remarkable financial skill ... unbounded enthusiasm ... above all he has bequeathed to Hong Kong development schemes of great magnitude ... which have changed the face of the land, which have vastly increased the prosperity of the colony, and which will inure to the comfort and contentment of present and future generations of its inhabitants.'

Hongkong, who is favourably reported on by our office there. He is possessed of large means and is considered good for his engagements.' HSBC Archives (London), Bankers Opinions, HQ SHG II 688. Jardine Archives saw him as a respectable tea trader with an avaricious market in Persia. JMA: J1/12/4, 26 April 1934.

⁴²⁵ See HKU Archives, Minutes HKU Council, 1911–1941, 17th meeting, 6 September 1912; 23rd meeting, 30 May 1913; 25th meeting, 15 January 1914.

⁴²⁶ Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong*, p317.

⁴²⁷ Drage, Commander C.H. *The 1914–1933 Diaries* (mss), in Wise, *Travellers' Tales*, p194.

⁴²⁸ Seth, *Armenians in India*, cites *The Sunday Times*, September [no date] 1924, pp553–54.

Another example of the cosmopolitan impulse at work can be found in the hostel opened to give single 'white' European women visiting the colony somewhere respectable to stay. The Helena May Institute for Women and Children was born thanks to deep Jewish (Kadoorie), Chinese (Lau Chu-pak) and Eurasian pockets. The Eurasian was Ho Kom Tong, who shared a mother with Sir Robert Ho Tung and had a Chinese father but was buried in the Eurasian cemetery. Ho Kam-tong had at least 12 concubines and more mistresses; his wife, Edith Sze Lin-Yut, was also Eurasian, daughter of a Jardine's tea merchant in Shanghai and a part-Chinese, part-Parsi mother. One of Ho Kom Tong's favourite things was to sponsor—and then take leading roles in—Chinese theatre performances. He also converted a sugar blockade-busting run to Cebu into a charitable enterprise when, having sold the sugar at huge profit to troops busy fending off the Boxer Rebellion, he carried more than three thousand refugees out of Beijing.⁴²⁹

Ellis Kadoorie was the youngest of three brothers to arrive in Hong Kong in the 1880s, offspring of the philanthropist patriarch Silas Kadoorie of Baghdad with his Sassoon-related wife, Reemah Yacoob Elaazar Yacob. His eldest brother, Moshi, was followed by Eleazar Silas or Elly Kadoorie, who had joined E.D. Sassoon and Co. in Bombay and moved with his job to Hong Kong.⁴³⁰ Elly became best known, with sons Lawrence and Horace, for philanthropic capitalism. Elly got ahead by getting sacked when working for E.D. Sassoon and Co. (he had broken open the stores of disinfectant to combat plague). Moshi gave him \$500 and the result was the soon-dominant Benjamin, Kelly and Potts brokerage. Elly Kelly took a stake in the Hongkong Hotel—founded by Chater, Ho Tung, and the Parsi Dadabhoy Rustanjee. When China Light and Power Co., founded in 1901, needed more funding, it came from Ho Tung and the Kadoories. From this came generations of wealth production; when its first Peninsula Hotel opened in 1928 in Kowloon it was seen as too far away across the harbor, until Sir Robert and Lady Margaret Ho Tung celebrated their golden wedding anniversary there in 1931, making it achingly cool.

Elly Kadoorie moved to Shanghai in 1911, encouraged by the Hongkong Bank to help save a rash of flailing rubber companies. A neighbour said Elly was a humble man. 'He would just come out and just put his hand on our head and talk to us

⁴²⁹ Tse, *Ho Kom-Tong*, pp173–74.

⁴³⁰ Elly and Ellis used Kelly as a surname for some years before reverting to Kadoorie.

quietly and gently, and he never pushed himself to the forefront, he was always taking a back-seat, and people would come and kiss his hand, but that was a mark of respect . . .'⁴³¹ The Jardine archive gives another impression with its anti-Semitic tone, resentful of Kadoorie success and dreading the arrival of a Kadoorie on any of their company boards for the investigative determination that will follow.⁴³² Meanwhile, in 1897, Elly married Laura Mocatta, an adventurous traveller, painter, and diarist from a prestigious family of Portugal that had fled the Inquisition to Amsterdam in the late fifteenth century and become bullion dealers for the Bank of England in the seventeenth century. Their first son, Lawrence, was born in 1899; Victor, born in 1900, died in infancy; Horace was born in 1902. The Kadoories took on the Sassoons' mantle as leaders of the Jewish community, for alongside the cosmopolitan was also always the communal; in 1905, they endowed the adjacent Jewish Club and in 1909, its expansion. The traveller Israel Cohen, visiting in 1925, thought it 'the finest Jewish institute of the kind I have ever seen.'⁴³³ Kadoorie money has backed the Synagogue ever since, in a strong pledge of communal support.

The Kadoories, however, saw their world as far larger than that of the synagogue alone. After their mother, Laura, died when their home in Shanghai burned down in 1919, Lawrence and Horace went through formative years in London—where their home was host to King Faisal I of Arabia and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia—before returning to the open-minded city of Shanghai. That world demanded education, health, and other help which the Kadoories gave irrespective of religion and, surprisingly, gender. Kadoorie charities are still legendary, from The Helena May in Hong Kong, to schools for girls in Baghdad or Indian boys in Hong Kong, to agricultural training for Ghurka soldiers to pig-rearing research and the grant of farms to Chinese refugees reaching Hong Kong. 'We Kadoories know everything about pigs but the taste,' said Lawrence.⁴³⁴ They backed the Hebrew University in Jerusalem but also non-Jewish schools and hospitals in Iraq, Iran, Syria, France,

⁴³¹ Manook Nissim, interviewed by Amelia Allsop for the Hong Kong Heritage Project, 16 April 2010, in San Francisco.

⁴³² JMA J1/2/31, 27 April 1933; J1/3/5, 7 November 1935; J1/3/5, 28 and 14 November 1935, Letter No. 1753; J1/24/54, 31 October 1935, Letter No. 1521; 22 November 1935, Letter No. 1529: 'The Kadoories will not be 'handled,' and they are as relentless as they are patient. They try persuasion first, tortuousness second, and if necessary weight of shares third. They so often suggest steps which appear foolhardy, and are foolhardy, and yet they retain their wealth and add to it. But then they prefer gold to goodness, desire to duty, and perhaps falsehood to fact. Yours very truly, W.J. Keswick.' Also: J4/2/2, 4 and 23 February, 30 March, and 6 April 1937.

⁴³³ Cohen, *Journal of a Jewish Traveller*, pp116–17.

⁴³⁴ In Debra Weinter, 'Rothschild of the East,' *Hadassah*, March 1983, pp36, 54–55.

Turkey, India, Britain, and China; they also endowed a synagogue in Portugal. In 1901, Ellis founded the Ellis Kadoorie Chinese Schools Society with his good friend Lau Chu Pak, to build schools in Shanghai, Canton, and Hong Kong.⁴³⁵ Lawrence became the colony's first baron. His brother Horace led the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association as it helped villagers get their produce to markets and underpinned agricultural innovation.⁴³⁶ The Kadoories shared the vision of many in-between people—that Hong Kong was home. Speaking in 1986, Lord Lawrence told me: 'Hong Kong is far less class- or race-dominated than it used to be... The Chinese have got to know those families which have been here a long time. And I think there is a feeling of 'better the one you know than the one you don't.' Perhaps we're more trusted... In the old days for the Europeans, class was just a matter of how far up the Peak you lived. But that attitude has almost disappeared.'⁴³⁷ In 1997, his son Michael said: 'We will not run off in different directions. We are Hong Kong people.'⁴³⁸

So too were Hong Kong's biggest landowners and ratepayers – all now Chinese, Eurasian, Jewish, Armenian, and Parsi. Some had fled China a generation earlier for Australia or beyond, and chose to return not to China but to Hong Kong. Eighteen-year-old Gock Lock, for example, left Guangdong for the Australian goldfields but instead found compatriots working the nursery gardens from which he saved enough to branch out on his own, even going to Fiji to buy bananas. In 1897 he opened his own store and called it Wing On (or 'Perpetual Peace'). Gock Lock was the tough entrepreneur, his brother Gock Chin the calm administrator; both converted to Christianity.⁴³⁹ They opened their still prominent Wing On Department Store in Hong Kong in 1907. Their fellow fruit-and-vegetable merchant Ma Ying-piu had helped the young brothers in the Fiji banana

⁴³⁵ See *Hongkong Telegraph*, 4 March 1913, for a report on when the governor opened a school extension in a stunning Chinese yamen-style building.

⁴³⁶ Denis Bray, a young district officer in Tai Po, lacked the budget for the cement needed to link a vast spread of villages, then met Horace Kadoorie, who gave all the cement at once. Holdsworth, *Foreign Devils*, pp46–47.

⁴³⁷ England, 'Hong Kong Taipans—Lord Kadoorie.'

⁴³⁸ *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 27–28 June 1997, p1. During the 2019 political crisis, Sir Michael noted that over 140 years, Hong Kong 'gave us the opportunity to prosper... [and] instilled the Lion Rock Spirit in me and my children—that energy, ambition, drive and creativity has powered our prosperity and helped us to face many challenges. My faith in our home is undiminished. Now is a time for everybody to unite and be unswerving in our commitment not just to Hong Kong's special place, but to a peaceful solution to our current crisis for this generation, the next, and beyond.' *South China Morning Post*, full-page advertisement, 28 August 2019.

⁴³⁹ Wing On official 100th anniversary celebration materials, 2007, in newspaper advertisements and the Wing On anniversary book, *A Modest Beginning*.

breakthrough. Ma's founding in Hong Kong of the Sincere Department Store in 1900 had inspired the Kwoks to follow suit. Ma, too, was Christian, and his innovations included the hiring of women shop assistants, and the novelty of fixed prices and receipts. His wife, Fok Hing-tong, daughter of the vicar of St. Stephen's Anglican Church, co-founded the Young Women's Christian Association in Hong Kong in 1918. Alongside birthing thirteen children she backed the Anti-Mui Tsai Movement, a statement for both feminism and worker's rights.⁴⁴⁰ Members of this crowd, just as Belilios, Chater, Mody, Kadoorie, and Ruttonjee before them, were now stayers. Hong Kong was their home.

So too were all variations of poorer Westerners, Russian Jews, Sindhiworkies, Sikhs, Muslims and Portuguese. Marjorie Matheson's stockbroker father went bust, so she became a housekeeper at the Repulse Bay Hotel, poor but respectable. Rosie Weill arrived from Harbin, with her family's Sennet Frères jewelry business; daughter Sophie wed the failed tap dancer-turned-impresario Harry Odell, born in Cairo in 1896 as Abadovsky, whose Empire Theatre revolutionized the entertainment scene. Aaron and Amelia Landau, new from Constantinople in 1916, set up Landau's and Jimmy's Kitchen restaurants. DGS teacher Irma Last, came from Czernowitz, a place variously found in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia.⁴⁴¹ George Smirnoff of Vladivostok became an architect and renowned watercolorist.⁴⁴² George and Fanny Green arrived from Romania in 1904 and ran The Criterion pub; their dynasty owns Arnholds trading company and lives in lavish surrounds on the Peak.⁴⁴³ Many more, of course managed merely to survive until the next rupture. Being white and poor was 'letting the side down' and injurious to notions of British prestige.⁴⁴⁴

Sikhs were imported by the British as watchmen (preferred for ammunition duty as they did not smoke) back in the 1860s. Through their long trading history linking Greek, Persian, Arab, and Sindhi mariners, Sikhs brought another global dimension to Hong Kong; their diaspora reaches from Malaya, Fiji, New Zealand and Australia to Canada. Hindus and Sikhs abroad often shared places of worship. Muslim

⁴⁴⁰ Fourth son Ma Man-fai became a rights advocate and pioneer in the democracy movement.

⁴⁴¹ Thanks to Howard Elias, Hong Kong Jewish Historical Society, 15 October 2018.

⁴⁴² Stuart Heaver, 'How the White Russian Refugee Crisis Unfolded in China a Century Ago, and the Lucky Ones Who Made It...', *South China Morning Post*, 7 May 2017.

⁴⁴³ England, *Arnholds*, and *Empire's Children*.

⁴⁴⁴ Ganachari, 'White Man's Embarrassment.'

Punjabis also came, many living around the Shelley Street Mosque first built by Shaikh Moosdeen in the mid-1800s. Muslims intermingled with Chinese families through their wives. The families of Moosdeen, Arab, Rumjahn, Curreem, and Sadick all intermarried with Chinese.⁴⁴⁵ Chinese Muslims came too, fleeing repression in the Panthay Rebellion (1856–73), a separatist movement of Hui Muslims in Yunnan. As so often, Hong Kong was haven. Here too was the technicolour world of the Sindhis, offshoot of a worldwide network of ‘Sindhiworkies,’ typically trading in lavish fabrics, lacquer work, embroidery, and brass items. As with the Sikhs and Punjabis, Sindhiworkies were forced abroad due to the British annexation of Sind in 1843. A first destination was Egypt, but thanks to the new Suez and Panama canals and steam shipping, the demand for ‘curios’ and oriental textiles only grew through that high noon of imperialism.⁴⁴⁶ Sindhis spread far from home into Africa and East Asia, stopping along the way at Colombo, Calcutta, Singapore, Penang—and Hong Kong. The pioneers included Pohoomull, Chellaram, Chotirmall, and Wassiamall Assomull, descendants of whom remain in Hong Kong today.

Another of Hong Kong’s communities had meanwhile been making Kowloon their own—the Portuguese, a good example of both cosmopolitan sensibility and a coexisting communalism.⁴⁴⁷ Of Yaumatei’s 12 farm lots, mostly on the seafront, five went to ‘foreigners’ – Marcos do Rozario and Delfino Noronha, R. A. do Rozario, Fredric Sander, Henry Charles Caldwell, and J.M. d’Almada e Castro. Portuguese also took hold of the Garden Lots available.⁴⁴⁸ They were joined in Kowloon by the

⁴⁴⁵ In 1934, well-known tennis player H.D. Rumjahn married Mary Leung of Canton; by the 1950s a Rumjahn married Mary Teresa Xavier at St. Margaret’s Church. From early lives in trade or government jobs, some such as Ahmet Ramjahn became ‘broker’ and ‘Gentleman,’ their lives recorded in the newspapers and remarked upon with respect. He was survived by five sons, renowned sports and business figures. When Ebrahim Sadick married Miss Firdos Effiandie Rumjahn, the bridesmaids were Norah and Eillen Leonard (from a prominent Eurasian family), the page was Master Sydney Chow, and the flower girl was Thelma Gonzales, covering the Chinese and Portuguese communities, too. Rumjahns became champions in tennis, football, and lawn bowls; they worked for Deacon’s, ran the Jockey Club sweep, bought chunks of land in Kennedy Town in the early 1910s, and established industries (such as the Hong Kong Macao Mosaic Tile Factory of Usuf Rumjahn, who died in 1947).

⁴⁴⁶ Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p120.

⁴⁴⁷ ‘Everyday pleasures took place in a satisfying and simple middle-class milieu. Club life with cards and mahjong, family gatherings ... jaunts to Macao, weekly outings to the beaches in summer, food and gossip, movies and sports. These were an integral part of the Filho Macao life.’ Silva, *Todo o Nosso Passado*, p31.

⁴⁴⁸ Garden Lot holders included Daniel Caldwell, Joao L. Britto, V.I. Remedios, V.S.T. Engholm (female), J.D. Humphreys, C.F.A. Sangster, A.G. Morris, N.B. Dennys, H.J. Holmes, J.M.A. da Silva, A.F. Alves, C.F. Degenauer, Dorabjee Nowrojee, Andrew Miller, W.H. Brereton, George

Kadoories, who knew J.P. Braga who had joined the China Light & Power board the same year Elly Kadoorie had (and was related by marriage to Noronha). They built what became the Kadoorie Hill district.⁴⁴⁹ The naming of Braga Circuit attests to his influence.⁴⁵⁰ Braga had been editor of the *Hongkong Telegraph* from 1902 until 1911 and later became the first Portuguese member of the Legislative Council. Braga helped Sir Robert Ho Tung to set up a New Territories Agricultural Association. Portuguese were also first settlers in another garden suburb, Kowloon Tong,⁴⁵¹ and in the district built by Francisco Soares, a future consul to the Portuguese. Gardening and horticultural shows brought diverse peoples together across the harbour (including Chater and Mody). Parsi hotelier Dorabjee Nowrojee's glorious garden also spawned the Star Ferry when he lent his private boat to family and friends to visit; demand grew so that it became commercial in 1880; four boats in 1890 averaged 147 crossings a day. J. J. dos Remedios and Mathias Soares were avid gardeners. Meanwhile, Noronha and Rozario's garden, 'Delmar', drew in friends Soares and Charles Ford, superintendent of the Botanical and Forestry Department, to found Hong Kong's Horticultural Society.⁴⁵²

Differing places on a spectrum from communal to cosmopolitan can also be seen in clubs, some with enforced boundaries, others with fewer than thought. Contrary to public assumptions, The Hong Kong Club had Jewish members from the 1880s.⁴⁵³ Cross-cultural play was established at the racecourse, on cricket grounds or football

McBain, J.B. Coughtrie, T.D.C. and J. Parker, M. d'Azevedo, E.R. Holmes, M.J.D. Stephens, Mohamed Fakeera, E.G. Humphreys, F.X. da Chagas, J.A. dos Remedios, J.W. Torrey, F.V. Ribeiro, A.R. Madar, H.L. Noronha, Frederick Rapp, B.A. Erane, James Craig, F. d'A. Gomes, H. L. Dennys, I.P. Madar, James Henry Cox. Jarrett, *Old Hong Kong / by Colonial*, p605.

⁴⁴⁹ Jardine's managers disliked the enterprise: 'This Company gives me a pain. Their method is to acquire cheap land...sell the balance in small lots at very high rates...pose as public benefactors. Ho Tung, you know Braga is his running dog, is I think mixed up in it.' JMA, J1/24/48, 2 June 1932, from Paterson to Beith, p3.

⁴⁵⁰ With Lo Man Kam (son-in-law of Sir Robert Ho Tung), Braga urged in vain an end to government censorship in 1936. His son José Maria 'Jack' Braga was a prolific writer on the Portuguese, his papers now held at the Australian National University. See Holdsworth and Munn, *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, pp45–46.

⁴⁵¹ Originated by Constantinople-born insurance man, Montague Ede. St. Joseph's School opened nearby in 1924 drawing in more Portuguese; St. Teresa's Church followed. Hayes, Smith, Werle, et al., 'Programme Notes,' pp221ff.

⁴⁵² Braga, *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*, pp226–28.

⁴⁵³ D.E. Sassoon joined in 1886, M.S. Sassoon in 1894, S.A. Levy in 1894, A.J. Raymond in 1898, D.M. Nissim in 1899, C.S. Gubbay in 1905, E.S. Kadoorie in 1905, Dr. R.A. Belilios in 1907, H.H. Solomon in 1910, and A.S. Gubbay in 1911. Resident members on 1 February 1924, included: A.H. Compton, 1915; E.M. Raymond, 1921; J.S. Gubbay, 1922. The 1911 Membership included the Armenian Dr. G.P. Jordan, 1886; Dr. P.J. Kelly, 1910; and the Parsi, Sir H.N. Mody, Kt, 1910. See also England, *Kindred Spirits*.

pitches. Cricket, rifle shooting, football, golf, lawn bowls, alley bowls, racquets, hockey, lawn tennis—all were on offer. The Parsi community initiated their own Parsee Cricket Club in 1897 before Mody opened the Kowloon Cricket Club in January 1908. By the 1930s, KCC membership was almost entirely Eurasian.⁴⁵⁴ The Kowloon India Tennis Club, formed in 1907, was also used by the Indian Muslim Society (established in 1924). Eurasians went to the Diocesan schools (DBS and DGS) or St. Paul's, and played at the KCC; those identifying as Portuguese would attend Maryknoll and La Salle colleges, play at Club de Recreio, and worship at St. Teresa, St. Joseph, and Rosary churches. 'Chinese' Eurasians had Ho Tung's Chinese Club.

City Hall had initially allowed only limited access to non-elite and non-white groups, but this didn't last. Men joined the Hongkong Volunteer Regiment in 1862 (and its revived version from 1878). Masters of the mercantile marine had the Phoenix Club, born in 1907 out of the Hong Kong Bowling Club, founded in 1898. Club Germania was founded in 1859, The Nippon Club in 1903.

Interestingly, the goal of the international YMCA was to attain a 'higher standard of morality... amongst the Europeans and thus remove one of the great hindrances to the progress of Christianity among the Chinese.'⁴⁵⁵ As McPherson saw it, 'Our membership is largely made up of what might be termed the middle classes. We have to a large extent left out the soldiers and sailors, while bank clerks, assistants in the large shipping firms and government officials, who think themselves the highest grade of society, have left us out... which we cannot afford to let go without the greatest effort.'⁴⁵⁶ The Victoria Recreation Club saw itself as cosmopolitan, meaning, it seems, that membership was open, mixed, and cheerfully unpretentious. It did not mean inclusion of Chinese members unless they carried foreign passports, until rules changed in 1964. Its roots lay in the Regatta Club of Canton (birthed back in 1832); a look at its 1892 membership lists shows that out of 403 members, there were at least 46 Portuguese, 23 Jews, four Parsis, two Armenians, and a dozen Indians. Many

⁴⁵⁴ The 1935–36 cricket team included George Souza, Tinker Lee, Francis Zimmermann, Bill Hong Sling, Ozorio, Hung, Gosano, and Fincher. By 1941: Anderson, Lay, Mackay, Lee, Lloyd, Broadbridge, Fincher, Zimmermann. Ezra Abraham was club president from 1945 to 1954. A tennis star was Enid Lo (later Mrs. E. Litton, mother of Henry). In 1932 the Hong Kong vs. Shanghai tennis team included M.W. and M.K. Lo. See Hall, *150 Years of Cricket*.

⁴⁵⁵ McPherson, 'J. L. McPherson,' p41.

⁴⁵⁶ Annual Report of the Foreign Secretary, 1909–10 (New York: Foreign Dept. International Committee of YMCAs). Cited in McPherson, 'J. L. McPherson,' n22.

more will have been of mixed origins.⁴⁵⁷ Club Lusitano has been serving the Portuguese community since 1866, later joined by Club de Recreio and the VRC.⁴⁵⁸

Yet clubs divided as much as they brought together; many of mixed race have stories of exclusion based on notions of race or class.⁴⁵⁹

Borders, grey zones, prejudice and passports

Therein lay the hitch, as a specifically nationalist republican revolution convulsed China in 1911. Although Sun Yat-sen would later praise his education under British rule, his uprising was for the Chinese. It was not a time for people who were half or three-quarters Chinese, or who felt a different Chineseness, informed by time abroad or in bed with the Other. Frank Dikotter found 'the biological category of 'race' and the administrative category of 'population' were heralded by modernizing elites as objects worthy of systematic investigation.' A slogan arose: 'To strengthen the country, one first has to strengthen the race; to strengthen the race, one first has to improve sex education.'⁴⁶⁰ Assertions of Chinese racial pride made it more difficult to be different. One reformer, Tang Caichang, thought amalgamation of races was best, using the intelligence and strength of mixed-race people in Hong Kong to prove his point. But more commonly, Hong Kongers were looked down on by China's new nationalists precisely for their hybridity, with women's loss of chastity related directly to Hong Kong being colonized.⁴⁶¹

World War One introduced new notions of the nation state and less porous borders as old umbrella-type empires collapsed, and colonial governments faced off nationalist revolutionaries. Early twentieth century China anti-Manchu sentiment merged with Social Darwinism to spur scholars such as Wang Jingwei to believe a state comprising one single race was far superior to one comprising a mixture of

⁴⁵⁷ Names ranged from Botelho and Belilios to Castro, Chater, Gubbay, Joseph, Kew, Levy, Lopez, Madar, Manuk, Nowrojee, Remedios, Sassoon, Sherazee, Stopani, and Wodehouse. Jardine Matheson Archives, JMA-HK and CLUBS JM L6/7.

⁴⁵⁸ See *Club Lusitano, 150 Years of History, 1866–2016*.

⁴⁵⁹ Dawn Leonard recalls: 'I know for a fact that my aunt Mabel, who was married to a Belgian banker, Uncle Pierre, was definitely refused entry to a club because she was Eurasian, and she was flatly denied the option to adopt a child when they couldn't have their own, on the same grounds.' Correspondence with the author.

⁴⁶⁰ Dikotter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity*, pp102, 109.

⁴⁶¹ Lu Dangling, closely linked to the KMT, wrote: 'The most unseemly sight one sees on the street is a Chinese woman walking with a westerner...' In Law, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, pp114–18.

different peoples. From here it was an easy step for China's Nationalists to develop racist ideologies and practices.⁴⁶²

Attorney General Sir Challoner Grenville Alabaster warned of race trauma to come, supposing the lack of laws against miscegenation was because 'until as recently as 1911 the Eurasian problem did not exist...'⁴⁶³ To him, Eurasians were Portuguese, Chinese, or British: 'The grouping would depend on many things, the least of which would be the quantum of blood admixture. A man with such a name as Remedios, Xavier, or Silva, who was a Roman Catholic, educated at St Joseph's College, with relatives in official positions in the neighbouring Portuguese colony of Macao, and who was a member of the Portuguese staff of a British firm, besides being a member of the Club Lusitano, would never be regarded as Chinese, even though he was Oriental in feature and had only a fraction of European blood in his veins. Again, one would have no difficulty in giving a Chinese classification to a half-caste, even though his father were English, who wore Chinese clothes and a queue, who passed under the name of Wong or Chang, who had married according to Chinese custom a 'Kit Fat' (wife) and three concubines, and who after some years' business training in the compradore department of a foreign firm was trading on his own account under a Chinese 'hong' name, besides being a member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. At the same time a Eurasian with an English surname who dressed as a European and lived as such, both in business and in his home life, would not be regarded legally as a Chinese, although his parentage might affect him socially.'⁴⁶⁴

1911 had 'gone far to bridge the pre-existing gap between the Chinese and British Eurasian... [with] the awakening in the pure Chinese of a spirit of nationality which is resulting gradually in forming in their minds the idea that the Eurasian Chinese should no longer be classed as Chinese, or at any rate as the leader of the Chinese community and the exponents to the British of Chinese thought and sentiment.' So 'the race problem has been brought into existence,' requiring legislation in a 'broad and sympathetic spirit.' But, 'it will not be easy—to give an imaginary case—to classify Major Long of Eton, Corpus and the Rifle Brigade, and his father, Mr Leung,

⁴⁶² Dikotter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity* and *The Discourse of Race*. The existence of many non-Chinese in late Qing China was resolved by the Communist Party's idea that assimilating border peoples freed them from class oppression. Wade in Evans, *Where China meets Southeast Asia*, p34.

⁴⁶³ Alabaster, 'Some Observations,' p247.

⁴⁶⁴ Alabaster, 'Some Observations,' pp247–48.

the chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and ex-representative of the Chinese community on the Legislative Council.’⁴⁶⁵

The British of Hong Kong were themselves conflicted, often genuinely loving their local partners (in life or business) one minute, then feeling obliged to disown them the next. Though not expressly forbidden, intermarriage was discouraged; one risked losing free accommodation, contract renewal, and promotion.⁴⁶⁶ Governor May, husband to the Helena who enjoyed Jewish, Eurasian and Chinese funding of her Institute, believed that any Chinese or Eurasian women willing to marry Europeans was bound to be of a low class; she wouldn’t consider it otherwise. There was also the ever-present fear—apparently nonexistent if the spouse was non-Chinese—of influence by the wife’s relatives. Only by the 1930s had some of these strictures begun to be relaxed.⁴⁶⁷ When May tried to ban Ho Tung’s children from attending Peak School, he was firmly quashed.⁴⁶⁸ Yet the Portuguese who kept banks and business running were routinely underpaid. Said a Jardine’s manager: ‘I rather think funeral expenses are a charge on the Firm, Europeans a first class affair, Portuguese second.’ Yet they were respected too: ‘here in Hong Kong [they are] as good as I remember it to be bad at Shanghai... But they all commit matrimony at an early age and they all have enormous families... sickness or any form of bad luck puts them down the drain ... we have to tread delicately.’⁴⁶⁹

At the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, an earlier tolerance, or neglect, gave way to racist exclusion in the inter-war years. Chief manager in the 1930s, Vandaleur Grayburn, insisted that at this ‘British’ bank his staff must marry ‘British’ wives. His name has been enshrined in a halo since his genuinely heroic death from Japanese torture for funneling money to prisoners during World War Two. But his views were startling: *These youngsters... presumably had decent relatives & upbringing, yet one falls for a Russian Jewess of doubtful origin & the other for a half-caste Japanese... These young fools make me quite sick & it disgusts me to think they can so quickly forget their British*

⁴⁶⁵ Alabaster, ‘Some Observations,’ p248.

⁴⁶⁶ The 1909 Crewe Circular, though not law in Hong Kong, said moral objections to concubinage were ‘self-evident.’ No administrator could tolerate such behaviour ‘without lowering himself in the eyes of the natives, and diminishing his authority to an extent which will seriously impair his capacity for useful work.’ Confidential Circular, 11 January 1909, CO854/168.

⁴⁶⁷ CO129/392, no. 31578, 7 October 1912. See O’Sullivan, ‘George Hennessy.’

⁴⁶⁸ CO129/409, no. 983, 8 January 1914. When an extension was sought for the Eurasian cemetery it was granted instantly. CO129/411, no. 27973, 31 July 1914.

⁴⁶⁹ JMA, J1/15/2, 23 January 1936; J1/9/4, 20 August 1936.

*standing & home upbringing... We do not want Russians, dagos & half-castes attached to our staff... I will not tolerate 'mixed' marriages with Russians or half-castes, and I look with disfavour on most marriages with non-British women.*⁴⁷⁰

More significant was the rise of the passport. The importance of this document as a tool of division cannot be underestimated. Through its small pages runs a story of nation state development that directly impinged on this floating world of multinational people coexisting in multicultural port cities. Throughout the twentieth century, Hong Kong's in-between people would feel its lash; as British and Chinese Nationality laws were tightened, identity was no longer a matter of choice of name and dress. It was a state-controlled whip of exclusion.

Sprawling, often cosmopolitan empires - the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, Tsarist—were after 1911 a mass of individual states in the process of becoming. Borders were needed to define themselves, ending a laissez-faire approach to national identity and freedom of movement. France, Britain, Germany, Italy and others passed laws requiring foreigners to carry identification documents. This trend for nationalist self-definition took off such that this 'extraordinary expansion of the capacity of states to control the migration of populations using documentary means... was, in fact, one of the central features of their development as states.'⁴⁷¹ Similarly threatening was the shift in status of 'British Protected Persons'. This had been a loosely defined category of people—such as Baghdadi Jews—including those who might have been of British origin but were not British subjects, in places where Britain exercised extraterritorial or capitulatory rule (such as Turkey and China). It was sometimes a short hop from BPP status to full British nationality—but this could no longer be assumed when the national mood everywhere became more intense.

Class conflict and racial exclusion

Hong Kong's next decade opened with a mechanics' strike, the first in a string of victories for organized labour. The seamen followed in 1922, demanding equal rights to those of non-Chinese seamen. At first ignored, they went on strike with

⁴⁷⁰ HSBC Archives (London), HQ HSBC 0003-0001 and 0002, Grayburn Letters, 20 June 1936, 25 January and 20 November 1937, etc.

⁴⁷¹ Caplan and Torpey, *Documenting Individual Identity*, p270.

devastating effect in a port city. When strikers set off on foot for Canton they were shot at by British police and troops; after 52 days, the government had to cave in, relegalize the union, and agree a substantial pay hike. It was an eerie dress rehearsal for the more far-reaching strike and boycott in 1925. Local demands for pay, improved work conditions, and even democracy, combined with the ambitions of the left wing of the nationalist Kuomintang and of the fledgling Communist Party in Canton, creating a perfect storm for colonial rule. If viewed solely through a lens of anti-colonial struggle, these conflicts were clear harbingers of radical change, presumably with 'Chinese' on one side and 'British/Westerners' on the other. Examined through a lens of prosopography, however, the working classes achieved their peak revolt through the agency of mainland-based nationalists and communists while the Hong Kong class that eventually negotiated to maintain its power was British, Chinese and Eurasian. Class interests trumped those of racial difference.

Trouble began in Shanghai in May 1925 when Sikh police under British command in the International Settlement opened fire and killed at least nine Chinese demonstrators. By June, most of the students at Hong Kong's Queen's College had heeded the call to strike, as had cargo carriers, tram drivers and conductors, seamen, typesetters, and others. Later that month, during a heated public demonstration in Shameen—the foreigners' island off Canton—50 Chinese protesters were killed by the foreign troops based there (as they were in every treaty port around China); anti-British placards appeared in Hong Kong to rise up against the colonialists and their Chinese 'hunting dogs.' On 22 June, Stubbs declared a state of emergency. Soon, Hong Kong was a ghost town. Many thousands of Chinese left for Canton, banks tottered, the economy quickly deteriorated.

On whom could the colonial government rely? It needed its workers, but it needed the support of the local elite more, its rich Chinese and Eurasians, who were often directly anti-worker to maintain their own standing.

One was Shouson Chow, whose family—unusually—went back to the 1600s on the south side of Hong Kong Island. His father was a comprador based in Canton, and young Shouson, after starting at Central School, was selected by the Chinese

government in 1873 as part of a first batch of pupils to study in the USA.⁴⁷² Back in Hong Kong, he co-founded the Bank of East Asia and was director of many leading firms and charities. Chow was a rare combination of Hong Kong roots, Western education, and Chinese conservatism—he also, in a typical elite Hong Kong posture, despised any hint of ‘bolshevism’ such as seamen asking for a living wage, while being a keen philanthropist. At the same time he was a member of the League of Fellowship, which advocated good fellowship within the colony irrespective of race, class, or creed.

The second key man was Robert Kotewall, the son of a Parsi—Rustomjee Hormusjee Kotewall—and his Chinese woman, Cheang A Cheung. The elder Kotewall had been a cotton and yarn dealer for the great Parsi firm Tata and Co.⁴⁷³ He brought up his family on Peel Street, Soho, and when he died in 1895, A Cheung was gifted property in her name and, in time-honored fashion, made sure her children got a good education. Robert Kotewall later admired his father’s willingness to flout convention ‘when in an environment such as ours, British prudery and Parsee bigotry were superimposed on Chinese conservatism.’⁴⁷⁴ In a memoir, Robert described dressing, speaking, and in every way living as Chinese.⁴⁷⁵ A government clerk, he joined the elite by running the Hong Kong Mercantile Company for the well-connected Eurasians Chan Kai-ming (manager of the Opium Farm), Lau Chupak, and Ho Fook.⁴⁷⁶ Kotewall was invited onto the Legislative Council in 1923 to represent ‘the Chinese,’ a role he clearly treasured, despite or perhaps because he was not wholly Chinese himself.

⁴⁷² Educated at Phillips Academy and Columbia University, Chow returned to be Chinese consul in Korea, managing director of the state-initiated China Merchants Steamship Navigation Co. (in 1903) and the Peking-Mukden Railway (in 1907), oft decorated by China’s imperial government.

⁴⁷³ *The Chronicle & Directory*. From 1868 until 1897, the directories record H. R. Cotwal as a clerk at D. C. Tata and Co., but in 1875 the spelling changed to Cotwale, in 1877 to Cotewall, and the company name to Tata and Co. From 1880 to 1896 the listing is consistent as Cotewall, H.R., merchant, Tata & Co., Hollywood Rd.

⁴⁷⁴ Cook, *Robert Kotewall*, pp10–11.

⁴⁷⁵ He never went to Bombay or spoke Parsi-Gujarati. After tuition in Canton, he went to Queen’s College, then DBS. His first wife, childhood sweetheart Grace Hung, died in childbirth. Second wife, Edith, was from the established Eurasian Lowcocks.

⁴⁷⁶ When Chan Kai Ming died in 1919, mourners were led by Sir and Lady Ho Tung, Sir Ellis Kadoorie, Sir Boshan Wei Yuk, the Honourable J.H. Kemp and Hon. Lau Chu Pak, M.K. and M.W. Lo, and Robert Kotewall. Also: Kew, da Silva, Ellis, Razack, Hall, Ismail, Rumjahn, Samuel Macumber Churn, Anderson, Moraes, and more. Wreaths came from the governor, the university, the Bank of East Asia, Dairy Farm, the Kadoories etc.

Both men wholeheartedly backed the British colonial government against the workers – both because they genuinely believed in Hong Kong as *sui generis*, and because of their own interests as beneficiaries of the existing hierarchy. The demands of the striking masses in 1925 sound today as profoundly radical – both to then British colonial rule and today’s Chinese communist rule. The strikers six demands were: freedom of speech, publication, assembly, and organization; universal suffrage for direct election to the legislature; legal equality with Europeans; labour protection laws including an eight-hour workday; rent control and provision of adequate housing; and the right of Chinese to reside anywhere in the colony.⁴⁷⁷ The strike spread through schools, clubs, hospitals and threatened to bring about Hong Kong’s economic collapse.

Yet the local elite never wavered. Historian John Carroll concurs this active collaboration by Chow, Kotewall and other elite figures with the colonial government ‘was to protect their own class interests’ and enabled ‘the leaders of this bourgeoisie to prove themselves to the colonial government as loyal Hong Kong Chinese.’⁴⁷⁸ The new, Chinese-speaking governor, Cecil Clementi, put Chow and Kotewall in charge.⁴⁷⁹ Kotewall’s Bureau of Counter-Propaganda established the Kung Sheung Yat Po newspaper to counter strikers’ news; he advocated the creation of a strike-busting gang of ‘intimidators,’ called the Labour Protection Bureau. Posters warned that Canton’s adoption of outright Russian Bolshevik principles presaged ‘a reign of unspeakable terror...if assistance is not speedily given this poisonous tide of Bolshevism will steadily grow until it engulfs the whole of China beyond the hope of redemption...’⁴⁸⁰ By October 1925 the government could relax but unrest continued for a year.

The government saw the importance of its ‘Loyal Chinese.’ As Governor Stubbs reported: ‘In the first panic, when the Chinese might have been likened to a herd of frightened sheep, they [Chow, Kotewall, et al] immediately came forward and shamed and compelled their fellow countrymen into at least a semblance of courage.

⁴⁷⁷ Neither China’s nationalists (KMT) nor communists (CCP) backed these ideas; Hong Kong had to wait 65 years before even limited voting was allowed.

⁴⁷⁸ Carroll, *Edge of Empires*, p132.

⁴⁷⁹ When Clementi was made governor in 1925, Kotewall was lucky; as First Clerk, Magistracy, in 1913, he presented an illuminated address and led the expressions of admiration to Clementi when he was departing assistant colonial secretary.

⁴⁸⁰ Kotewall’s report, reproduced in CO129/489, p167.

Anonymous letters threatening violence and murder were received by them daily, a reward for their heads was posted in Canton, and still they worked incessantly, gathering at first a few of the more venturesome spirits, who in their turn brought in others, till in a short time the whole Chinese Community had forgotten its fears.⁴⁸¹ Secretary for Chinese Affairs D. W. Tratman stressed 'the wonderful spirit of loyalty and solidarity shewn by the Chinese intelligentsia of the Colony in the face of this great crisis.' Chow became the first Chinese on the Executive Council in 1926.⁴⁸²

Nonetheless, Stubbs fretted about 'excessive' Eurasian influence, saying during the 1922 unrest: 'We can rely on nobody except the half-castes and even they will throw their lot with the Chinese if they think they will be on the winning side.'⁴⁸³ Yet, David Pomfret notes, deep divides between British and Chinese elites 'perpetuated the government's continued reliance in the crises of the 1920s upon elite Eurasians to represent 'responsible' Chinese opinion.'⁴⁸⁴ Kotewall would remain an outlier: in the first films (shot by Ho Kom Tong's son-in-law Tse Kan-po) of 'the leading Chinese', it is striking how different he looked, which probably mattered.⁴⁸⁵ The slipperiness of Eurasian identity made him useful, but vulnerable.

Eurasians step out of the Shadows

Eurasians were, by the 1920s, into their second or third generations. Each family produced at least one difficult character per generation who lost the family fortune, sparked conflicts among multiple mothers or worse. Sometimes struggles were expressed in racial language—one might be derided or praised for being, or looking, more or less 'European' or 'Chinese.' Class divisions arose as progeny of protected women and foreign merchants accrued wealth and power, while legitimate mixed offspring of civil servants rarely scaled such heights. But by decade's end, this group that had once dared not speak its name would publicly, proudly declaring themselves Eurasians. In less than two decades since nationalist revolution next door, they effectively decided to be themselves.

⁴⁸¹ CO129/489, 30 October 1925, p428.

⁴⁸² Chow was replaced in 1936 by Kotewall; both were knighted. In 1928, two new slots went to Chinese physician Tso Seen Wan and Portuguese Jose Pedro Braga.

⁴⁸³ CO129/478, letter by Stubbs, 16 September 1922. CO129/462, 29 July 1920.

⁴⁸⁴ Pomfret, 'Raising Eurasia,' p330.

⁴⁸⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_4fQwlcRBQ, and ff.

Perhaps seeing Kotewall in the top councils of government strengthened Eurasian confidence; more likely it was their own growing wealth and ever-spreading network through colonial Hong Kong that strengthened their hand. A need to define themselves arose when nationalism grew in the neighbourhood, and was made possible due to their own rising confidence. Their children attended the best schools, and often ran them too; their young men entered the top professions often with London training and experience. Each elite family had its roots in a commercial or irregular liaison across ethnic lines, each next generation was educated through colonial-era institutions, each joined the ranks of commerce, law or administration thanks to pre-existing and ever-multiplying networks of kin, class or creed. Each, by the end of Hong Kong's first century, claimed a position of privilege, having secured a hold on the levers of wealth and influence within the colony – the top conglomerates, leading law firms, government advisory bodies and more. Well-established Eurasians also now knew their relationship with all powers (Chinese, British and beyond) was always ambiguous and they should stand on their own two feet. One descendant of this elite, Dawn Leonard, concluded that the slights against them are 'why the Eurasians got together to become such an economic force. To put the two fingers up to both sides—the Chinese and the Brits!'

On 23 December 1929, these interwoven, mutually supporting and competitive clans decided it was time to combine as Eurasians, in order to help other Eurasians. They founded the Welfare League (which exists to this day), thanks to an anonymous donation for the care of destitute Eurasians. The league's committee, then and now, is a roll call of the Eurasian elite, as they see it, covering names from Ho Tung and Kotewall to Churn, Grose, Ho, Hung, Gittins, Litton, and more.⁴⁸⁶ Shying away from a hard and fast definition of 'Eurasian,' the league decided to help in the maintenance and education of permanent residents of the colony, and their families. 'Of course, at that time, aside from the Eurasian Community, few considered

⁴⁸⁶ The four men in receipt of the cheque were S.M. Churn, John Francis Grose, Hung Hing-kam, and Wong Kam-fuk. Attendees at the first meeting, 23 December 1929, were: Lo Cheung-shiu, Hung Tsze-leung, Henry Gittins, Hung Tsze-yee, Ho Leung, S.M. Churn, W.H. Peters, J.L. Litton, J.D. Bush, E.D. Bush, J. Kotewall, A.E. Perry, M.K. Lo, M.W. Lo, Fung Tsok-lam, J. McKenzie, J.F. Grose, Wong Tak-wong, Edward Law, P. Abesser, W.M. Gittins, J.F. Shea, H.K. Hung, Hung Ho-chiu, and C. G. Anderson - aka Charles Graham 'Carl,' the son of Hung Hing Kam who had taken the name Anderson. The first president was Sir Robert Ho Tung, vice president Hon. R.H. Kotewall, honorary treasurer Samuel Churn, honorary secretary Carl Anderson, and committee members Wong Kam-fuk, Henry Gittins, Ho Wing, M.K. Lo, J.F. Grose, and Wong Tak-kwong. This group was in charge until World War Two with Abesser and Law, the latter giving free medical treatment to all league beneficiaries. Kotewall was president 1937–1939, then Churn.

themselves permanent residents of Hong Kong,' noted Eric Peter Ho in his account of the league.⁴⁸⁷ His comment highlights the extent to which Hong Kong's core community was neither entirely Chinese nor British but a mixture of both and more.⁴⁸⁸

Carl Anderson said at that first meeting:

Gentlemen, it has been said of us that we can have no unity...this, though palpably absurd, is a challenge to be faced and an insult to be wiped out. Our detractors little know that if we have not coalesced sooner it is simply because the urge to do so has not been pressing. They do not realise that, after all, there is no gulf between a Chan and a Smith amongst us and that underlying the superficial differences in names and outlook, the spirit of kinships and brotherhood burns brightly. We Eurasians, being born into this world, belong to it. We claim no privileges but we demand our rights for which we must contest to the last ditch. With the blood of old China mixed with that of Europe in us, we show the world that... this fusion, to put it no higher, is not detrimental to good citizenship.

As John Hung said, 'The only pure blood I know is mixed blood—we, the compradors, are the ones who melded Hong Kong together.'⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, these people straddled many worlds in which the sorry misery assumed to be the lot of mixed-race peoples was rarely the whole story.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁷ Ho, *The Welfare League: The Sixty Years 1930–1990*, in Ho, *Tracing My Children's Lineage*.

⁴⁸⁸ Initially the League defined 'Eurasian' as product of a Chinese mother and Occidental father, but helps those of other mixes too. Portuguese were not eligible as they already had welfare organizations. The help was usually for sending children to DBS or DGS. There was debate about whether migration out of Hong Kong should be paid for, as, in one committee member's view, 'Hong Kong after World War II could no longer be regarded as permanent,' but this was shot down with the excuse of a lack of funds. Special funds exist in names of Samuel Macumber Churn and Carl Anderson. That of another past president, Grose, goes to the China Coast Community, a home for (mixed) elderly. A notable president was Dr. Douglas Laing. By 1990 the fund was worth about \$14 million; it has since grown, but can't find causes to spend on.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview, 17 November 2017.

⁴⁹⁰ Lamson 'The Eurasian in Shanghai,' pp642, 647, 648, said they were 'depressed... despised by both the Chinese and the foreigners,' but Barbara Merchant, a Shanghai Eurasian descendant, says: 'They seemed to live a life quite different from the sorry existence described by Lamson—there absolutely was a 'group spirit' around which the Eurasians rallied, which was composed of all Eurasians, whatever their racial/national origins, and the 'lower paid' Westerners. They didn't mix socially with the upper-class Westerners or Chinese, but many did do well, despite their disadvantaged beginnings.' Email correspondence, Barbara Merchant, 2017–2019.

The Eurasian entry into and capture of the colonial establishment had been generations in the making, and should not be surprising given the centrality of in-between people to any port city.

Take the extended Macumber-Churn-Leonard family with its Chinese, Scots, Portuguese, Belgian, and other roots, for example. Descendants of Samuel Churn maintain two gravestones for one great-grandmother as they're not sure which woman is the right one. Is it Ms Cheung or Ms Yip, and where does the name Lily Brown come in? William Macumber was a Scots merchant in Shanghai in the 1880s when he met the mystery woman who would produce Samuel Macumber Churn aka Cheung Kit Tsoi in 1887.⁴⁹¹ Samuel was one of Hong Kong's coming men in the booming interwar decades. As an officer in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps he was sent to Bangkok and Saigon for rice supplies just ahead of World War Two. Caught in Bangkok as war began, he went to work for British military intelligence in Calcutta, becoming a major. He was part of the post-war rebuilding of Hong Kong and a regular donor to veterans' funds, lepers, family planning, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He strongly supported Diocesan Girls' School, where most of his progeny were educated. His investments focused on the growth of Hong Kong: the pilings to support new, taller buildings offered by Vibro Piling Co.; wharf and warehouse ownership for an expanding port (through China Provident and Trust Co. and North Point Wharves); Hongkong Gas Co., and fuelling the Chinese and Southeast Asian diaspora in the Sandakan Light and Power Co. of Borneo. The Union Trading Co. name remains in family hands today.

He married Lena Johnsford (1894–1940), another Eurasian, and had six children: Molly, Eddie, Mabel, Eva, Doris, and Samuel 'Charlie' Churn.⁴⁹² Along the way,

⁴⁹¹ Samuel's mother, Cheung or Yip, was also second wife of Sin Tak Fan in a union that produced no children—Carl T. Smith Collection, Index Card 39-783. His descendant James Lowcock told Anthony Sweeting, 22 October 2007, that 'a particular Scottish merchant loved his 'Chinese wife and family' so much that, when he had to leave Hong Kong due to ill-health, he begged his replacement to look after them. The newly arrived merchant did much more than that; he married the woman and gave his name to her children, thereby establishing a rather complex provenance for this particular Eurasian family.' Sweeting Papers, p102, HKU Archive.

⁴⁹² Eddie's first wife, Doris Frith, had earlier married Oswald Chan of the Tyson-Chan Eurasian clan. Doris had thus been a daughter-in-law of Chan Kai Ming. Eddie divorced Doris to marry a movie star, Dora/Ting Ho. Carl T. Smith, October 2000. Eddie's sister Mabel married a Belgian financier, Raymond Pierre Mardulyn; indicative of his standing, despite or because of his marriage, he was chairman of five companies, director of the Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Co. Ltd. and Peak Tramways Ltd. One of his pallbearers (in 1985) was Michael Kadoorie.

Samuel accumulated Lena House, Pinecrest, and a beach house. Samuel formally dropped his Chinese name in 1913. Charlie, his youngest son, recalled his father claiming to be 70 percent European because his mother, Lily Brown—a surprise name to today's descendants—had mixed blood. 'There's a story that my father went back to America to meet his real father, who told him: "Son, I now have my own family. I will ask 'certain friends in Hong Kong' to give you a helping hand." Was it Macumber? We don't know. They were very secretive in those days about the parentage. I think this happened after I was born but before the war,' said Charlie. His father was 'very tough, autocratic' and 'successful because he was in the right place at the right time, and yes, he knew the right people. Father never said we were Eurasians, we were English-Chinese. He was proud of what he was, never mind Eurasian or not.'⁴⁹³ Perhaps it had become possible to celebrate being Eurasian as long as one had (by now) learned how to behave as British when desired. He was not alone. The first chronicler of this world, Peter Hall, called it the Web when he found myriad connections among a long list of related names.⁴⁹⁴ When he began his research, he faced constant obstruction. One generation on, there is now more ease with the past.⁴⁹⁵

'Growing up was very hard—my Chinese cousins used to call us half-breeds! But we Portuguese couldn't care less,' recalled Pat Botelho, the granddaughter of Choa Lap-chee, whose daughter Trixie had married a Portuguese. Two different forebears had each married a so-called pure Chinese. The products of one union were accepted as Chinese while the others were called half-castes. 'Apparently they didn't look like bastards, but we did. But we had the best of two worlds—we celebrated Christmas, midnight mass, presents, and then when we came out of mass we had a bowl of congee and roast duck waiting for us. At Chinese New Year we were dressed in padded jackets and full-length cheongsam and we got our lai-see [Chinese gift envelope]. Marrying a Portuguese was seen as marrying down but my mum worked it in such a smart way—she was Chinese in many ways. Just as Chinese did every

⁴⁹³ Author's interview with Samuel 'Charlie' Churn, Hong Kong, 3 March 2018.

⁴⁹⁴ Hall, *In the Web*.

⁴⁹⁵ Fourth child, Eva, studied medicine at HKU, became a physiotherapist in London and married Norman Leonard; their bridesmaids were her sister Doris and Miss Cicely Kotewall; ushers were Eva's brother Eddie Churn and H.E. 'Bots' de Barros Botelho. Norman's father, from Liverpool, was in the Hong Kong police in the 1890s and in 1916, left his widow, Caroline, with 12 children to raise; Norman described himself as one quarter Chinese and chose to speak Cantonese with a foreign accent. Eva, Norman, and children (Joy, Dawn, and Keith) moved to England in 1963.

Chinese New Year, she took us first to eldest son of her 'First Mother,' i.e., Dad's first wife. Then to second brother, third brother, etc. She followed the Chinese hierarchy. You know where you stand. But one whole family thinks they're different. They still don't have much to do with the rest of us. But did I care? No! We all bleed the same, and shit too.'⁴⁹⁶

Too close to call?

Many are the family lines which became very close indeed, that of Sir Robert Kotewall, for example, whose three daughters married three sons of Adolf Zimmern. They were repeating a pattern of three generations earlier. In the 1870s, Henry W. Lowcock, British partner in one of Hong Kong's biggest firms, Livingston and Co, was a member of the Legislative Council. He married Annie Loftus Russell but their only child did not survive. But Henry already had two sons - Charles in 1853, and George in 1864 - from a relationship two decades earlier with a woman whose name and ethnicity remains unknown. Charles was father to dynamic Mary Lowcock, wife to a half-Chinese, half-German Jewish man, Adolf Charn Kwong Zimmern. His parents were Adolf Hermann Christian Anton Zimmern and Lai Kim Ip, or Yip.⁴⁹⁷ The elder Adolf Zimmern (1842–1916) had come to Hong Kong in 1868, worked for the trading firm Reiss and Co., was made partner in Shanghai and served on the Shanghai Municipal Council when he was also on the General Committee of the prestigious Hongkong Club alongside the cream of society.⁴⁹⁸ His son, young Adolf, on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 1914, and Mary 'Gum Gai' Zimmern produced Andrew, Ernest, Frederick, Francis, Nora, and Archibald.

With Charles's brother George, and the pattern is similar. He, too, had a Chinese or Eurasian lover (perhaps with Parsi blood); among his offspring was Edith Lowcock, born in 1889. She would marry Robert Kotewall, our man of government knighted in 1938, and they would produce Esther, Phoebe, Doris, Helen, Bobbie, Maisie, Cicely,

⁴⁹⁶ Interview, 21 January 2019.

⁴⁹⁷ The elder Adolf also had three other children. The oldest, Mary, was Protected Woman of Sir Jacob Sassoon in Shanghai, and a brother, Andrew, produced various children including the well-known Rev. George She. The other daughter, Lucy, married Lo Cheung-shiu, thereby tying the Zimmern line to the Ho Tung.

⁴⁹⁸ *The Chronicle & Directory* 1871, p152.

Cyril, and Patsy.⁴⁹⁹ The Zimmerns and Kotewalls who married each other in the twentieth century had no idea their families were tied generations earlier. When Doris Kotewall married Frederick, they were wed by a cousin of the groom, Rev. George She; dignitaries present included top officials from the Chinese and British governments, and members of Hong Kong's leading families. Unsurprisingly, when Dr. Ron Zimmern, direct grandson of Sir Robert Kotewall, checked his DNA he found 29 percent Scottish/Irish/Welsh blood, 21.4 percent Chinese/Vietnamese, 15 percent Ashkenazi Jew, 11 percent South Asian and West Asian, 2.3 percent Middle Eastern, and 11 percent Filipino/Indonesian/Malaysian.⁵⁰⁰

Doris Kotewall's sister Helen married Frederick Zimmern's brother Francis, the leading broker, and produced five daughters. Doris and Helen's sister Cicely married Frederick and Francis's brother Archibald Zimmern and produced Annabel and Hugh. Francis Zimmern would later outline his roots deep in Hong Kong-style aristocracy by listing his Zimmern father and grandfather as leading businessmen, his cousin George the Anglican canon, Frederick the solicitor, Archie the barrister, Queen's Counsel, and first local high court judge. His wife's lineage through Sir Robert Kotewall warranted mention too because he had been on the colonial government's highest decision-making body, the Executive Council. Francis Zimmern recalled stockbroking in the prewar days: 'there were some clients who smoked opium as people smoke cigarettes today, and I often had to arrange only to visit them after they woke up from their opium daze...'⁵⁰¹ Meanwhile, another Kotewall daughter, Phoebe, married Walter Alexander Hung, whose sister was the wife of Sir Robert Ho Tung's son Robert Ho Sai Lai. Kotewall daughter Bobbie never married; her sister Maisie married Dr. George Choa, the son of Choa Po-sien; while the youngest, Patsy, married John Fenton. Their daughter Kim Fenton notes: 'The money came later, from the Zimmern marriages, all the girls. Robert Kotewall had a lot of land in Stanley, so the girls, who were all very smart, sold off bits of land and the girls made millions... only Esther and Patsy married men who already had

⁴⁹⁹ Meanwhile, Edith had a brother, named Henry after his grandfather. He married his sister's niece, daughter of Robert Kotewall's brother Samuel, Mabel Constance. Samuel was the black sheep, leaning on Robert for financial support; he had at least two children; alongside Mabel was Dorothy, who married Luigi Ribeiro. Family legend is that George died when he rode a bicycle down steep Garden Road, straight into the harbor. Carl T. Smith Collection, Index Card 51-878.

⁵⁰⁰ Correspondence with Dr. Ron Zimmern, January 2020.

⁵⁰¹ Hong Kong Stock Market History Project, Interview with Francis R. Zimmern, Former Chairman of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange 1972-77, 14 November 1996.

money.’ It’s believed by some in the family that Sir Robert had other children as his will also specified the ‘Remaining two equal parts for persons whose names I have in a separate letter to my trustees’.⁵⁰² Such convolution was not a problem, believes Kim, because generations of Eurasians were now being ‘brought up loved and educated. We have no problems because we are so full of ourselves, and yes, we have money. There were hang-ups around the 1900s; it’s when they got rich and educated that the hang-ups evaporated.’⁵⁰³

Kim’s father, John Fenton, was son of Solene Hung So Lin—eighth child of Kan Shun Tsoi and Charles David Bottomley, who had paid for his daughter, Maria Louisa Emily Angele, to be schooled by the Canossians. ‘Solene wouldn’t talk about family because her mother had so many men,’ remembered Kim. Kim’s mother, Patsy, has no such self-doubt. ‘I never thought about being different to others at all,’ she says, laughing. ‘I’m a Eurasian, and I have no problem at all, I’m quite happy. Lots of Shanghai Eurasians, they feel, ooh, they must say they are English, or Chinese. But in the case of my family, we didn’t care at all because we were very well treated by everyone. Our family is quite different to other Eurasians—we have a road named after us!’⁵⁰⁴

Another family memoir described the Zimmern and Lowcock families as Eurasians who were ‘more Chinese than Western in their outlook. In fact they usually went by their Chinese names.’⁵⁰⁵ When Cicely Kotewall wed Archie Zimmern she saw his mother, Mary ‘Gum Gai’, as Eurasian ‘but her looks were the very antithesis of her manner. She looked Western, being tall and fair, yet her demeanour was totally Chinese. She barely spoke any English, always wore Chinese clothes, smoked a silver bubble water pipe and loved playing mahjong.’⁵⁰⁶ Patsy had met John Fenton when her older sister Phoebe was marrying Walter Hung. John Fenton’s sister Doris married her aunt’s son Tom Baker, a journalist in Shanghai—Doris’s family were disappointed as they wanted a higher-status match. One of their daughters, Vivienne, married a Portuguese, Frank Correa, so she too was looked down on by some in her family. At the Kadoorie-run China Light and Power, where her husband

⁵⁰² Carl T. Smith Collection, Index Card 50-117.

⁵⁰³ Interview, 21 March 2018.

⁵⁰⁴ Interview, 23 March 2018, at 114 Waterloo Road.

⁵⁰⁵ Cicely Kotewall-Zimmern, ‘Recollections of My Life,’ p62.

⁵⁰⁶ Cicely Kotewall-Zimmern, ‘Recollections of My Life,’ p66.

worked, Vivi remembered three washrooms, one for Europeans, one for Chinese, and one for Local, meaning Portuguese and others.⁵⁰⁷ With such marital ties went not quite empires, but lucrative businesses, and leading positions in society.

Behind the solicitors' firm Lo and Lo lies a long Eurasian trail, which goes back to the nineteenth-century Shanghai merchant Thomas Rothwell who had three children with his Chinese woman; Jardine's helped his failing business by buying his Shanghai land in 1880, employing him, and moving to Hong Kong the children then known by their Chinese names: Lucy aka Lo Shui-choi, and her brothers Lo Cheung Shiu and Cheung-ip.⁵⁰⁸ Lo Cheung-shiu married Lucy Zimmern. His sister married Ho Fook, brother to Robert Ho Tung. Lo Cheung Shiu became assistant comprador to Jardine's in 1894, a job long in the gift of Ho Tung, becoming top comprador in 1918.⁵⁰⁹ One of Lo's sons, Man Kam Lo, was chosen by Sir Robert Ho Tung to marry his eldest daughter, Victoria, and was co-founder with his brother Man Wai of the Lo and Lo legal firm.⁵¹⁰ With his three brothers, M.K. would lead the next generation of professional Eurasians into a postwar era in which many realities would change.⁵¹¹ Where the American Club's country club facilities now stand, at Tai Tam Bay, were once three magnificent villas of Ho Tung's extended family.⁵¹² Just above those three stood the Lo mansion—all with sweeping sea views and grass tennis courts. Old M.W. would greet visitors in shorts and old rattan hat, appearing to be the gardener rather than the host.⁵¹³ Ian McFadzean, the property dealer who found the lease loophole to enable the sale to the American Club, understood the Eurasian

⁵⁰⁷ John and Doris's father, George Lambert Fenton, traded in Macao, where he took Portuguese nationality. Interview, 19 October 2017.

⁵⁰⁸ Thanks to Brian Rothwell, correspondence 2019–2020.

⁵⁰⁹ In a letter on Lo Cheung-shui's death in 1934, Sir Robert Ho Tung wrote that the loss was of 'a dear and trusted colleague who... Lo Cheung Shiu and I shared many happy years together.' The letter went on to applaud how Lo Cheung-shiu had 'brought into the world a circle of extremely capable sons and accomplished daughters.' *Lo Cheung Shiu Esq., J.P.: A Memoir by His Sons*, 1934.

⁵¹⁰ M.K. Lo was educated in England from the age of 12, returning to Hong Kong in 1915 to follow his father, from the boards of Hongkong Land to the Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Co. By 1921 a justice of the peace, he had joined the Sanitary Board, District Watch, and Tung Wah by 1932, the Urban Council in 1935, the Legislative Council, 1935–43; he was knighted in 1948.

⁵¹¹ M.K. Lo stood out in prewar Hong Kong for activism against discriminatory laws and payment practices; he represented seamen's unions in 1922. With Jose Pedro Braga, he set up the League of Fellowship in 1921, against racial discrimination.

⁵¹² Stanley Ho, casino king of Macao, was born in one of these, Stanley Villa, to Ho Kwong, son of Ho Fook and nephew of Robert Ho Tung. 'I believe in talent. I don't believe this pedigree business any more... I was so fed up when I saw how our rich relatives treated us, how much my mother suffered. Sir Robert invented the name of Ho Tung to distinguish his side of the family from the failures. Sometimes it's very embarrassing—big families, you know, normally they are like that.' England, 'Hong Kong Taipans—Stanley Ho.'

⁵¹³ Indeed, exactly this happened when the author walked into his grounds in 1985.

nexus: 'The Los, the Hotungs, and the others, they did not mix with real Chinese and vice versa. And of course the Brits didn't see them as real Chinese. Who did [Jardine's family] the Keswicks rely on, whether in China or Hong Kong? Their compradors. And who were they? Half-European. This half-world was run by Eurasian compradors.'⁵¹⁴ Some Eurasians saw Chinese ways as more distinguished, looking down on Eurasians with English names.⁵¹⁵ Henry Gittins (Hung Tsin), a keen churchgoer who worked at Jardine's, had married the Eurasian Dorothy Ahlmann and had eleven children. But still Sir Robert Ho Tung had trouble giving his approval when his daughter Jean wanted to marry one of Henry Gittins's sons, Billy.

Dancing on the Edge

In the first week of December 1931, those who saw themselves as the great and good gathered at the behest of Sir Robert Ho Tung for his golden wedding anniversary. Of course, everyone knew Sir Robert had two wives and countless other lady friends, but this event was to mark ties to Lady Margaret, his first wife. A booklet reprinted glowing purple prose from the local newspapers, in case anyone might have forgotten how important, visionary, wealthy, romantic, intelligent, and downright heroic Sir Robert had been, so far.⁵¹⁶ Half-Parsi Robert Kotewall said: 'Those who have known Sir Robert, as I have, for the last thirty-five years or so, can tell you that his intellectual powers have not shown the slightest diminution...' He spoke 'in the name of their Chinese friends who can be said to comprise the Chinese community.'

It was as if there were no Eurasians there that night in a hotel built by Baghdadi Jews, served by a Parsi ferry on docks built by an Armenian.

⁵¹⁴ Interview, 15 August 2011. Ian's father was Alec McFadzean, Professor of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong.

⁵¹⁵ Another family linked to Ho Tung is that of Wong Kam Fuk, product of Chinese mother and Scandanavian sea captain. With wife and concubines, Wong had nine children; the oldest, Wong Sik Lam, married Mary Patricia, a daughter of Robert Ho Tung. Wong and Ho Tung links were reinforced over two generations amid tension over which family was more 'Chinese'. One Wong daughter knew renowned Chinese leftists and met Rewi Alley in Macao in 1942. Another was proud to be Eurasian, as were eight out of ten of her DGS classmates; her war was spent with the Soong Sisters and Chiang Kai-Shek. Wong daughter, Jasmine, married Kenneth Chan Tyson, tying Wongs to descendants of Chan Kai Ming, thus back to the Lam sisters. (The Chans changed name back to Tyson in the 1950s, deciding they looked more Western than Chinese by that time.)

⁵¹⁶ JMA L14/9 Wedding Anniversary Booklet—Souvenir of the Golden Wedding of Sir Robert and Lady Ho Tung 1881–1931.

Exactly ten years later, on 2 December 1941, a spectacular diamond wedding celebration for Sir Robert and Lady Ho Tung was held at the Hongkong Hotel—and one week later, Hong Kong would be at war. Dancing on the precipice is fun; not even seeing it was there, is silly. In 1933, when Sir Robert and Lady Margaret travelled through Europe, he was proud to meet President von Hindenburg in Berlin, the man who would appoint Adolf Hitler as chancellor of Germany, and Franz von Papen, Hindenburg's protégé; in Rome he had a private audience with the pope—and on the same day was received by Signor Mussolini.⁵¹⁷

Back in Hong Kong, 600 prominent citizens were taken in hundreds of cars to the distant reaches of Castle Peak in the New Territories. A new brewery was opening its doors, and vats in August 1933 and the general officer commanding, Major General Borrett, usually busy running the military behind British rule over Hong Kong, was there to toast it. The Hong Kong Brewers and Distillers Ltd's directors included Sir Elly Kadoorie, the Hon. Jose Pedro Braga, Ho Kom Tong, Wong Kam Fook, the Armenian theosophist Malcolm Manuk, and J.H. Ruttonjee. Lead investor was Jehangir Hormusjee Ruttonjee, whose father, Hormusjee Ruttonjee, had traded in wines, spirits, and provisions in Hong Kong since 1884.⁵¹⁸ For an enterprise born from Parsi, Jewish, Eurasian, and British financiers, religious services on Sundays were provided by the Irish Jesuit fathers who happened to have a study house nearby. The Ruttonjee name would become known for philanthropy, which, unlike that of many Parsis, was focused not on Bombay or Baghdad, but Hong Kong.⁵¹⁹

But as the beer was brewing, so too was the catastrophic fall of the second-generation Ho Tungs. Two nephews of Sir Robert—Ho Leung and Ho Kwong

⁵¹⁷ *China Review*, London, January–March 1933.

⁵¹⁸ Jehangir Hormusjee Ruttonjee built the distinctive Homi Villa on a promontory nearby to oversee the brewery's construction. See the Industrial History of Hong Kong Group website, post by Hugh Farmer 6 November 2016; and Holdsworth and Munn, *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, pp376–78. Young Jehangir arrived in Hong Kong aged twelve with his mother, Dina, in 1892. After graduating from Queen's College, he joined H. Ruttonjee & Son, taking charge in 1913. He married Banubai Master in India in 1902. A son, Dhun, and two daughters, Tehmi (Vera) and Freni, were born in Hong Kong. Ruttonjee also adopted his two young nephews and niece—Rusy, Beji, and Minnie Shroff—after they lost their father in a typhoon at sea. Freni then married Rusy Shroff and Tehmi married Rustom Desai.

⁵¹⁹ The brewery founder's son, Dhun Ruttonjee, married a Chinese and served on the Urban and Legislative councils. His aunt, Perin, graduated in medicine and married Nariman Shroff. Another Shroff family has taken on the legacy of Ruttonjee charities and chairs the Zoroastrian Charity Fund of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao. The Ruttonjee Hospital (now Tang Shiu Kin Ruttonjee Hospital) began in 1948 as a tuberculosis sanatorium at the former Royal Navy hospital in memory of Jehangir's daughter Tehmina, who had died from TB five years earlier.

(father of the late Stanley Ho)—and Robert’s adopted son Ho Wing had been buying up all the shares they could find in the Jardine’s-managed Yee Wo (Ewo) Spinning Factory in Shanghai. Instead of rising in value, they fell and Ho Leung had already been in debt for years, with Uncle Ho Tung the guarantor. In the same year that another son of Ho Fook, Ho Iu, had tumbled off the cliffs at Tai Tam (perhaps for fear of being outed as homosexual), Ho Leung shot himself dead on the same cliffs. Ho Tung would save his adopted son but not Ho Kwong (hence Ho Kwong’s son Stanley’s lifelong bitterness), while Jardine’s scrambled to retrieve company funds lost down the Ho drain. By June 1934, with M.K. Lo mediating, the Jardine’s boss, W.J. Keswick, wrote to London:

I wish I had Peter Fleming’s powers of describing to you our interviews, how we whispered at each other sitting huddled together on the most uncomfortable Victorian sofa in an immense room hung with extremely bad portraits of halfcaste concubines, how when things became too strained we switched to shares—always oil on the troubled waters of a Ho Tung mind—how we fenced with a profusion of flattery, insincerity and jibes ... and so on. The dramatic effect was magnificent, even the chorus was good—nurses, boys, inquisitive offspring sidling in with blankets, smelling salts, milk and impudence. But underneath it all was that clear cold mind of Shylock immovable. Pathos and playacting are all very well, but what we want is more than a million dollars!⁵²⁰

A month later, and Ho Tung had been pushed to \$600,000, and so a deal was done.⁵²¹

Four years later, Japanese bombs fell on central Shanghai, sending floods of refugees to Hong Kong. The portents were there, if anybody happened to be looking, as Japan’s long-held designs on China were becoming more pressing. Partly, blindness to the precipice was the natural urge to enjoy the wealth while it lasted. Behind it, however, was a feeling in the highest British circles, that Japan’s aggression against China had a silver lining—it would stop China from uniting and becoming a formidable trading and political force. Chief Bank manager Vandaleur Grayburn, in a letter to London agreeing with a colleague’s analysis of the situation, said: ‘While no-one wants to see Japan in complete possession of China it would be infinitely

⁵²⁰ JMA, J1/24/53, 25 October 1934.

⁵²¹ JMA Series E3/10, J1/2/22, J1/2/33, J1/9/1, J1/9/2, J1/24/49, J1/24/51, J1/24/52, J1/24/53, and J7/6. See also, Ho, *Tracing My Children’s Lineage*, Ch. 13.

worse, as Henchman says, if China beat Japan, for life in China for a foreigner would be impossible.⁵²² The director of medical services, Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke, saw this too: Though the sky was full of warnings in that twilit phase, there was a tradition of 'business as usual' while orientals fought each other, and an ambivalence of attitude which allowed some mercantile minds to approve the weakening of Chinese nationalism at the hands of Japan...⁵²³

As war approached, the cosmopolitan dream had not quite died. Even new nationalisms, more passports and rising racism could not kill it. After all, this frontier town was made by migrants. Virtually everyone had roots elsewhere. But the first half of Hong Kong's twentieth century had brought dramatic change to both its elite – now firmly Eurasian of all kinds – and to the growing number of non-elite Hong Kongers. British colonial rule had survived, thanks to its reliance upon its local, conservative elite. This had shown itself to be anti-labour, anti-democratic and anti-feminist for years – and after World War Two would again stymie democratic reforms in order to maintain their own exclusive status. But British rule needed its collaborators, and these Eurasians needed the expansiveness of an often-distant imperium to thrive. Thanks to their evolution through several generations from impoverished single-mother deprivation through education, commerce and law into the highest circles of society, Hong Kong's mixed cosmopolitan core felt they had a Hong Kong to call their own. They would soon lay their lives on the line to defend it.

Communal and Cosmopolitan

In this chapter, we have seen the same names recur across each fresh idea, highlighting how the creation of Hong Kong was due as much to the apparent outsiders as it was to Chinese who arrived across a closer border. Perhaps these newly wealthy men were simply buying a place in society, seeking favor with the colonial power structure? Yet the record of contribution shows that both motives and beneficiaries were diverse.

⁵²² HSBC Archives (London), HQ HSBC 0003-0001 and 0002, Grayburn Private Letters, 13 November 1937.

⁵²³ Selwyn-Clarke, *Footprints*, pp56–57.

Both leading man and 'coloured magnate', Chater stands out in this imperial age where race, as Tim Harper notes, had long been 'insinuated in bureaucratic processes' but was now more policed than ever before, 'and this imposed fresh limits on the ambitions of Eurasians and the emerging Asian middling class. The racialization of state practice gathered pace.'⁵²⁴ This posed challenges to all people of ambiguous or multiple identity but at least in Hong Kong, in contrast to the racially segregated courts of Batavia and Singapore, the legal system was based on Common Law for all. Hong Kong had no separate courts for other races or faiths; it allowed more room for difference. Despite societal taboos against mixing in some circles, there were no legal barriers to do so.

Concepts of cosmopolitanism, too, change over time. The hosting of American General Grant to dinner at Government House in 1879 was taken as a sign of how cosmopolitan Hong Kong was becoming. Next decade, *The China Mail*, when Belilios Scholarships for St. Joseph's College went to two Portuguese—J.P. Braga and L.G. Barretto—explained this was because Belilios had been nurtured in 'that spirit of liberty and fair play which disregarded the distinctions of creed and nationality ...'⁵²⁵ By 1902, the *Hongkong Telegraph* noted the Zoroastrian New Year: 'Hongkong is certainly a very cosmopolitan city, enjoying the benefit of being the home of useful men with different customs and religions ... Each is of service to the other, all exchanging knowledge ... today, the Parsees have their new year's day to keep up, and we hope they will enjoy many returns of it.'⁵²⁶

Historian Philip Mansel showed Levantine port cities were cosmopolitan - in governance, associations, individuals of mixed antecedents, skills, and interests - and communal, in that distinct communities also pursued their own interests.⁵²⁷

So, too, was Hong Kong.

The cemetery at Happy Valley hosted a multitude of faiths; Parsis, Eurasians and Muslims could choose their own cemeteries or this 'colonial' resting place. All races mixed at the most popular recreation, horse-racing. The Freemasons admitted men

⁵²⁴ Harper, 'Singapore 1915', p1794, pp1797-98.

⁵²⁵ *China Mail*, 9 January 1885.

⁵²⁶ *Hongkong Telegraph*, 15 September 1902.

⁵²⁷ Mansel, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe*, pp129-134.

of any hue who pledged faith in one God: beside Chater and Jordan were Polycarpo Andreas da Costa, Chan Tai Kwong, Sir Kai Ho Kai, and Wei Yuk.⁵²⁸

Whereas Robert Ho Tung felt the need to hold massive wedding anniversaries every decade, he was demonstrating his place in the earliest generation of Eurasian, when making such vast statements of status was felt to be necessary. But his time was passing in these between-wars years, and his place was being taken by men who were less insecure about their own identities and more intent on simply building their own lives. By so doing, their focus was on a wider idea of Hong Kong which – with land, university and more, they were bringing into the twentieth century. A close examination of the processes involved in these achievements show that this was both a communal and a cosmopolitan Hong Kong. By following key personalities, the networks they formed and the institutions and associations they built, we have seen the growing confidence of Hong Kong's Eurasian core. This took place, despite, new notions of the nation state, of passports, and the less porous borders as colonial governments faced off nationalist revolutionaries.

⁵²⁸ In 1899, Brother O'Driscoll Gourdin disapproved of this reality: 'Grand Lodge is ... strongly opposed to the admission of Chinese into Freemasonry, and though we have the misfortune to have one or two of such nationality attached to one of our lodges, their number is not likely to increase.' Haffner, *The Craft in the East*, p73. He was soon proved wrong.

Chapter 7 Wars Within and Without (1941-50)

When World War Two hit Hong Kong, its Eurasian core – Ho Tung, Soares, Macumber Churn, Kadoorie, Ruttonjee, Kotewall, Anderson, Ebrahim Abdoolally and others – all adapted to survive, keeping a vision of home intact. Whereas World War One, the 1911 revolution and civil war in China had challenged Hong Kong Eurasians to consolidate their communities and forge new networks, in the 1940s they faced a whole new level of threat. Now, how one's identity was defined, by oneself and by various governments, would become not merely a question of wealth or education but a matter of life and death. Did one want to be British to escape Hong Kong before the war, or Portuguese to get to Macao? Was it safer to be Chinese, even to identify with the new occupying power, Japan? Or was it a cunning plan to be Eurasian? In this defeated British colony, what did being 'British' mean?

This chapter looks at how the Japanese victory over British power and the pressures of Japanese occupation of Hong Kong directly impacted Eurasian families and networks. We will see how structural racism across the British empire made a difference to people's fates, but also who chose to stand up and die for Hong Kong. Some divisions of race and class dissolved when all kinds of Hong Kongers mucked in together to fight and get by. But now those of mixed roots faced Japanese definitions too, which involved trying to encourage Indian and other Asian revolts against British rule; they also forbade allied support for some 'Asians' which they defined as their own and then ignored.

British and allied civilians were interned in the civilian internment camp at Stanley where the risk of death from starvation or lack of care was ever-present. Some Eurasians chose to be British to enter; others such as American writer Emily Hahn (with a lover in British intelligence, Charles Boxer) claimed a Chinese husband in order to stay out of camp. Outside camp, those with more ambiguous identities, or no identity documents at all, faced often more terrifying daily challenges. Ambiguity offered choices and the chance to escape; it also brought new meaning to the word 'collaboration'. Whereas those of mixed origins and identities had got ahead in pre-war times, now it became clear that the line between living through optimizing the best of both worlds or suffering the worst of both worlds, was thin indeed.

Not British enough to leave

Conscription came into force in July 1939 but many had already joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Force, whose companies were proudly named Portuguese, Chinese, and Eurasian. Government architect Leslie Wright, a third-generation Hong Konger, says race was treated differently then. 'Hong Kong was based on racial differences before the war without being racial in the modern sense... The Volunteers were extraordinary, where Number 1 was English, Number 2 was Scottish, No 3 was Eurasian, Nos 5 and 6 I think were Portuguese, and 7 was Chinese. This was not looked upon as racial classification. The Scots were proud of their Scottish company. The Eurasians did the best of all, they fought a terrific battle against the Japanese at Wong Nei Chong Gap. I think they did a great job for the Eurasian community because people realized how well they had fought in the Battle of Hong Kong. This was not being racial. It was just a fact of life.'⁵²⁹ Solomon Bard said the Volunteers 'was one of the few institutions in Hong Kong where the gap between the races did not exist. While in training Chinese and Europeans were as one. Only when the uniforms came off did the barriers return.'⁵³⁰

Indeed, one could put one's life and the safety of one's family at risk the same as the next man. But when Governor Northcote announced (on 28 June 1940) that all British women and children should be evacuated, it was left unclear as to who, precisely, qualified. Among the European community, the frantic packing and planning was shot through with anger that families were being divided, the men left behind; some women went through sudden permutations to become 'indispensable' to the war effort and so to stay. On the other hand, many wives of men fighting for Hong Kong, found themselves excluded. What did 'British' mean?

Did British mean all holders of British passports? If so, then families of many endangered volunteers from the Eurasian and other communities of Hong Kong would qualify. Or did British mean 'white'? Some Eurasians were blocked from boarding the ships. Joyce Anderson, who would marry Robert Symons and become headmistress of the Diocesan Girls' School, was with her sister when told by a

⁵²⁹ Interview, 17 September 2015.

⁵³⁰ Gillingham, *At the Peak*, p174.

registration official that he didn't know what to do 'with the likes of you,'⁵³¹ and the Bliss sisters too were turned back for not being racially 'pure'. Others found, when the ss Empress of Asia sailed on 5 July 1940 from Kowloon to the Philippines, they would be filtered out and sent back – because the 'White Australia' policy banned non-Europeans from immigrating to Australia. No one in the Hong Kong government had thought that through. When pressed in the Legislative Council, it claimed its aim had been to help people with no real domicile in Asia. The result was that the Hong Kong taxpayer paid for a tiny elite to reach safety, leaving 99.9 percent of the population unprotected. Council leaders said the government had, with this measure, lost the respect and confidence of the community, and put a heavy strain on the loyalty of a large part of the population.⁵³² Suddenly being 'British' was racial.

The issue turned on the government term, 'domicile'—the assumption that white/British residents of Hong Kong were only ever temporary, bound by the husband's job, and due to go back 'home' when the job ended. In fact many 'pure' British people did nothing of the sort. They spent their whole lives in Hong Kong, birthed babies there, grew up there, always returned there, even dying there. Hong Kong officials tried to correct London's assumptions on this front, in vain. The *South China Morning Post* was led to conclude (in an editorial, 2 August 1940) that domicile was just another word for racist discrimination. Historian Vivian Kong found that letters to the newspapers reinforced a 'vision in which Britishness transcends the boundary of race,' but official views showed a 'historical reality in which Britishness was reserved to those of "pure European descent" at the time of war.' When the Hong Kong government tried to arrange evacuation for its non-white subjects, racism elsewhere in Empire got in the way: when it asked the governments of Fiji, Ceylon, Burma, and India to receive about 2,393 Portuguese, Chinese, and Eurasian British subjects, only Fiji agreed to take the Chinese.⁵³³ It was the most egregious example yet of the failure of bureaucracy to keep up with Hong Kong's multicultural and multicolored population.

⁵³¹ Symons, *Looking at the Stars*, p23. Also 'Left Behind by Racist Policy,' *Sunday Morning Post*, 9 August 1998.

⁵³² Advocates in the Legislative Council were M.K. Lo and Leo d'Almada e Castro. D'Almada's family was ineligible for evacuation; his brother would lead a company of volunteers in the fighting; sister Gloria (Barretto) sent secret messages under occupation. *South China Morning Post*, 3 July 1940; also 1, 2, and 5 July 1940.

⁵³³ Kong, "Hong Kong Is My Home," p556.

Meanwhile, the Ho Tung diamond wedding party went ahead, as did a 'Tin Hat' ball at the Peninsular Hotel thrown in aid of the allied war effort. Gwen Priestwood remembers the orchestra playing 'The Best Things in Life Are Free' after she had been at the races that afternoon amid 'crowds of Britishers, Americans, and wealthy Chinese, winning and losing bets; the pretty frocks of the women; the gay little groups sipping Gimlets and whiskey-sodas...' She later reflected that a life on the China coast through all manner of perils had made her blasé this time. 'Having lived since 1919 in China, where wars and rumors of war are so prevalent, and also having seen the bombing of the outskirts of the International Settlement in Shanghai in 1932—watching the bombs drop across the road from me, yet still living through them—I had somehow become a little disbelieving... This time—well, would it be any different?'⁵³⁴ Yes, it would.

British enough to die

The doomed defense of Hong Kong began on the same day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, 7 December (8 December in Hong Kong), 1941. Britain had dithered about reinforcing this colony, and its wartime leader, Winston Churchill, made clear he knew it would fall; the hope was a gallant defense to delay further Japanese advance. British, Canadian, and other Allied forces suffered around 2,000 men killed or missing, and perhaps the same number of wounded (the counts vary). The toll for 'Indian Other Ranks' was at least another 1,000 men. For the next three and a half years, almost 11,000 Allied soldiers were held in grisly prisoner of war camps where another almost 300 died; of those who survived, many never fully recovered from the ordeal. In addition, 2,400 British and Allied civilians were detained in Stanley Internment Camp, where hunger and disease ruined lives. Gruesome atrocities were perpetrated by the Japanese before and after the British surrender. 'The sybaritic life of pre-war Hong Kong faded into a dream,' noted the historian Paul Gillingham.⁵³⁵

The willingness of Hong Kong's Eurasians to, literally, die for Hong Kong is seen in the Battle of Wong Nei Chong Gap, that route from one side of the island to the other. By mid-December 1941, Japanese troops held the New Territories and Kowloon so this was 'the valley that the Japanese must surely attack; 'by chance or

⁵³⁴ Priestwood, *Through Japanese Barbed Wire*, pp1, 3–4.

⁵³⁵ Gillingham, *At the Peak*, p177.

good planning' No. 3 Company was 'on the exact path that the Japanese would choose for their move inland.'⁵³⁶ No. 3 (Machine Gun) Company comprised almost entirely Eurasian volunteers, all graduates of the Diocesan Boys' School.⁵³⁷ Evan George Stewart, orphaned son of China missionaries and headmaster of St. Paul's Co-Ed, was the officer in charge. He presided over three platoons (numbered 7, 8, and 9). Commanding 7 Platoon was Captain Leslie Holmes, who, as was his wife, was a crack shot. Commanding 8 Platoon was the first local magistrate of Hong Kong and older brother of the renowned educationalist Joyce Symons, Donald Anderson. But of Stewart's three platoon commanders only Lieutenant Bevan Field, commanding 9 Platoon, survived the war. He worked at Hongkong Land. The men included lawyers, accountants, civil servants, engineers, teachers, salesmen, storekeepers, clerks, brokers, a journalist,⁵³⁸ and several university students. Such men and their families formed the bedrock of prewar Hong Kong society.⁵³⁹

After days-long struggle, 30 men from the company had died, with two more killed later and many of the survivors wounded. Several of those who survived—including Douglas Hung, C.S.M. Quah, and brothers George and Jimmy Kotwall—evaded capture and joined the resistance British Army Aid Group (BAAG); others joined clandestine or commando units such as Force 136 and Mission 204; yet others reached Burma and joined the Chindits, the British-led guerrilla force fighting behind Japanese lines. Major-General C.M. Maltby (General Officer Commanding, Hong Kong), said in Dispatches in 1948: 'I should like to place on record the superb gallantry of No 3 (Eurasian) Company at Wong Nai Chung Gap.' As prisoners, members of No. 3 Company achieved a higher survival rate than others. 'While familiarity with Hong Kong's dubious pre-war sanitation and the accumulated immunity may have helped, no doubt personal motivation was also a factor.'⁵⁴⁰

Within months after Hong Kong fell, the Japanese-controlled Hongkong News reported that Jimmy's Kitchen, the Parisian Grill, and Ruttonjee's brewery were back

⁵³⁶ Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, p122.

⁵³⁷ These included V. H. White, Norman Broadbridge, George Winch, Ernie Zimmern, Harry Gubbay, and George J White.

⁵³⁸ The journalist was John Prettejohn at the *South China Morning Post*.

⁵³⁹ Whole families joined up—all seven Reed brothers, the Matthews, Broadbridges, Youngs, all five Zimmern brothers. Often they worked together or lived nearby to fellow volunteers, although the class spread seen in the location of their homes was vast—from the Peak to dockside housing in Kowloon or small flats in Taipingshan.

⁵⁴⁰ Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, p129.

in operation. But the city had deteriorated, Japanese ships failed to bring supplies, repression was intensifying. By 1944, food shortages were acute, people were starving, the economy had atrophied. A population of 1.5 million before the war was reduced, also by killing, flight and forced evacuation, to around 600,000 by its end.

The Japanese governor Rensuke Isogai was keen to play the racial card, encouraging Asians to rise up against their British colonial masters by backing Japan in a war of the coloured races against the white. But daily life under the Japanese—the rapes and looting, lack of food and work, the infliction of petty humiliations, corruption at every level, the atrocities—soon stripped the Japanese option of any appeal. The sudden British collapse in Hong Kong and across Southeast Asia had grossly damaged British prestige, as had a prewar scandal in Hong Kong when the girlfriend of the officer in charge of air raid precautions made money by supplying substandard concrete,⁵⁴¹ but a local preference for past normality revived. Within a year, the Japanese had shown they could be more racist, bossy, and brutal than anything previously experienced in the colony. Meanwhile, efforts by the Japanese to recruit Eurasians who, they assumed, must have suffered discrimination at the hands of the British, to join an Asian ‘Co-Prosperity Sphere’ met with negligible success. ‘Asians’ were never a homogenous bunch, ripe for the picking, but a hugely diverse jumble of cultures, countries, economies, and peoples. No one power, be it Chinese, Japanese, or Western, could ever get it all under control.

Despite a history of distrust, of being seen as second best, or derided as ‘not British enough,’ it was the crucible of war and occupation in which the character of the true Hong Kongers was displayed. Young women from good Eurasian, Portuguese, British and other homes worked as confidential assistants to military men, as air raid wardens and nurses. Young men lined up to shoot and be shot at; families sought ways to bury wealth or hide their daughters; many fled to Macao; members of the Hong Kong Club patriotically drank as much of the alcohol stocks as possible to stop them falling into Japanese mouths. When later interned in Stanley Camp, these same men ran their company boards on camp stools and empty stomachs, authorizing money for the club housekeeper, and plotting actively for life after the war. Some

⁵⁴¹ Because the girlfriend was called Mimi Lau, the faulty anti-blast concrete blocks became known as ‘Mimi Laus’; her boyfriend committed suicide.

future executives grew up in Stanley Camp, such as Peter Hall; others were born there.⁵⁴²

Outside camp, hospitals flying the Red Cross flag were violated, Chinese stretcher bearers with Red Cross armbands were killed, and scores of nurses were raped. In 1942 alone, said director of medical services Dr Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke, 83,435 burials of Hong Kong residents were recorded, some from fighting or reprisals, but many from starvation. Bank accounts were frozen; people sold anything for food. Bad rice increased in price more than twelvefold before the end. The Japanese rounded people up on boats and towed them out to sea to sink or swim.⁵⁴³ Selwyn-Clarke soon found that Japan was not a signatory to the Geneva Convention. He could run only an Informal Welfare Committee, which, nonetheless, made sure medical supplies reached many in need. Once citizens of Britain and its allies were interned near Stanley Beach on the south side of the island, on 21 January 1942, he organized deliveries of beds, clothes, diapers, infant foods, kitchen utensils, and drugs; he even smuggled in a dentist's chair. He made note of the spontaneous generosity, at great risk to themselves, of Chinese, Indians, Portuguese, and others who were living outside.⁵⁴⁴ Arrested on charges of passing secret messages to British spies in China, he survived. Japan gave Indians and other Asians control over interned Europeans and forced Legislative Council members Sir Shouson Chow and Sir Robert Kotewall to run a Rehabilitation Committee, 'trotting off to Japanese celebrations and making polite, deferential remarks about the virtues of the new regime'.⁵⁴⁵ In March 1942 came the powerless Chinese Representative Council and the Chinese Cooperative Council.

Hong Kong people saving Hong Kong

Simply by continuing to find fuel and food, and ways to survive, the working population achieved a form of wartime resistance. Their numbers were drastically reduced, however, by forced evacuations (often to drown), killings and starvation.

⁵⁴² Such as George Cautherley, who traces family roots back to the trading firm of Augustine Heard & Co, through Bartou and Lobo family lines into the Eurasian clans.

⁵⁴³ Selwyn-Clarke, *Footprints*, pp62, 69.

⁵⁴⁴ Selwyn-Clarke, *Footprints*, pp74–75.

⁵⁴⁵ Lethbridge, 'Caste, Class and Race,' p108.

When Japanese troops had poured over the hills and into Kowloon, a young Lawrence Kadoorie got a handful of transport passes for all senior staff of China Light and Power and commandeered a small bus. Passing La Salle College he rescued 'five somewhat terrified European nurses at their wits end and wondering what to do. I adopted them and put them in my bus...' At the power station, all was under control: explosive charges were in place, it was ready to blow, and key parts already adorned the harbor floor. On his way back to the pier, he met his Portuguese accountant Remedios, who gave him one Mrs. Wookie carrying a baby, saying she was the common-law wife of a British sergeant. Collecting three American sailors, he got everyone Hong Kong-side. He managed to offload the nurses onto a grateful Dr. Selwyn-Clarke, and 'after heated argument' persuaded the American consulate to take the sailors. Then, with Mrs. Wookie and baby, Lawrence went to his home on the Peak, now filled with Canadians. 'Mrs Wookie and her baby, not being considered 'enemy subjects' were found accommodation elsewhere,' recalled Lawrence; her fate would become clear as the war progressed. Lawrence, meanwhile, interned at Stanley, reckoned he became skilled at scrubbing toilets and living rough. It no doubt helped that his family was rich and prominent—after just five months in Stanley they were allowed back to Shanghai.⁵⁴⁶

Barbara Anslow, a young British woman, had signed up for Air Raid Precaution duty and remembers being billeted in Dina House, a building still owned by the Ruttonjees, where she shared rooms with Eurasians and British women. By the end of the war, she felt the change in herself: 'How did the time in camp affect my life? It altered my outlook on racism and religion. Pre-war I had no Chinese, Portuguese or Eurasian friends or acquaintances; our ways didn't cross. In Stanley I had close connections, mainly through R.C. church activities, with all three races and made many friends among them... I like to think camp made me more tolerant.'⁵⁴⁷

The Ruttonjees chose to serve Hong Kong and its peoples, at great personal risk. In 1944 both Jehangir Hormusjee Ruttonjee and son Dhun, accused of engaging in anti-Japanese activities, were thrown into prison, and tortured, only to be freed at war's end. Meanwhile, Mrs Ruttonjee slowly eked out her savings and sold pieces of

⁵⁴⁶ Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, Interview with Oxford Colonial Archives Project, Rhodes House Library, South Parks Road, Oxford, UK.

⁵⁴⁷ BAnslow, *Tin Hats & Rice*, pp27, 31, and 335.

jewelry to stretch the stash of tinned foods and other goods on which she, and many hangers-on, could survive. Lachman Narain's father was a messenger for many Hong Kong Indians as his father's brother owned a store in Macao and could send letters overseas; others in the community were ambulance volunteers or contributed funds and food. A core of British bankers was kept outside camp for some months by the Japanese to keep the banks issuing currency, later recognized as duress notes. One of these was G. A. Leiper: 'My two colleagues and I, and many others, were especially indebted to the late Hon Dhun Jehangir Ruttonjee CBE; his father H.H. Ruttonjee; and to Dr the Hon Sir Sik Nin Chau CBE, who also gave his professional services and supplied medicines free on many occasions. After the war none of these gentlemen would accept any form of repayment for the financial and material help they had given to us.'⁵⁴⁸

A Sindhi businessman, U.S. Chellaram, described the Japanese attitude to Indians as 'honey on the tongue, dagger in the heart.'⁵⁴⁹ He and his family escaped overland by pretending to go on 'holiday' to Vietnam; when they got to Chungking the British authorities refused assistance, so they trudged on to Guilin to get a flight to Calcutta with the help of the U.S. Army. Shapurji Fakirji Jokhi, like Ruttonjee a Parsi, suffered 11 months of torture and solitary confinement for supplying food and medicine to camp internees. 'When a new camp commandant reviewed all death sentences and asked Jokhi if he had indeed supplied such parcels and why, Jokhi said that he would do the same for a Japanese prisoner because his religion required him to feed the sick. 'We are,' he said, 'Asiatic religious people.'" The commandant was moved and commuted the death sentence to imprisonment; three months later Jokhi was freed. He then built housing for more than two thousand people back in Navsari. Fellow Parsis such as Minoo Master, and the Canton residents Behram C. Tavadia and Jal Patel, his brother-in-law, were also tortured, Patel fatally.⁵⁵⁰

Abdoolally Ebrahim & Co, the oldest firm in Hong Kong still operating,⁵⁵¹ was not Parsi but part of the Dawoodi Bohra community, an Ismaili sect that moved first

⁵⁴⁸ Leiper, *A Yen for My Thoughts*, p157.

⁵⁴⁹ Thampi, *Indians in China*, p216.

⁵⁵⁰ Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, p177.

⁵⁵¹ It topped the list of clients in the earliest ledger of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank in 1865 and was, said the bank, 'A respectable firm with whom our dealing [sic] have been very satisfactory and whom we consider would not enter into any engagements they could not see their way to fulfil...HSBC Archives (London), HSBC Bankers Opinions, HQ SHG II 688.

from Yemen to India in 1539. While following Koranic rules against the charging of interest, the tiny but long-lasting Bohra community was and is deeply enmeshed in business. They speak their own language, an Arabized form of Gujarati, and practise their own form of worship,⁵⁵² while remaining members of Hong Kong's Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund. Ebrahim's company dealt in spices, silk, and art, imported cotton goods, and raw cotton from India; it diversified into shipping, real estate, and manufacturing. It ran the very first ferries across the harbor before the Star Ferry was established, small boats still called 'walla-walla,' a name originating in India, as walla means 'person from,' explained Zafir T. Ebrahim, a fifth-generation Hong Konger.⁵⁵³ Many of the Bohra were schooled—alongside Portuguese, Eurasians, and Chinese—at the Catholic St. Joseph's College and the Anglican Diocesan Boys' School. 'For a long, long time we have seen Hong Kong as our only home,' said Norman Hoosenally, a community elder who arrived in 1930. 'We are almost more local than many of the Chinese. It's just that we don't have Chinese faces.' When the fifty-second dai (the intermediary between the Prophet Muhammad and the Bohra people) visited Hong Kong in 1997, a full-page newspaper notice recorded that about a million Bohra lived in India, Pakistan, the Middle East, East Africa, and the West: 'A community eager to explore avenues of trade in the East were encouraged to come to China over 150 years ago by the 47th Dai. They remained and prospered. The 52nd Dai now arrives... His guidance remains: 'Be loyal to your land of abode.'⁵⁵⁴ And so they proved.

Both the Barma and Ebrahim families had friends and relatives interned in Stanley Camp during the war—and in the resistance. When a couple of Hong Kong Bank employees, Luis Souza and Charles Hyde, needed help, it was to Ebrahim's office that they came. The two men had been put up by the Japanese at the 'bankers' hotel,' the Sun Wah, where it was too dangerous to keep their radio. When the bankers asked the Ebrahims to hide it for them, they immediately agreed. They also lent money for food and medicine for camp internees, including one Uncle Saleh, also known as Shanghai Taipan. 'Yes, we kept documents for the bank and a radio,' Ebrahim confirmed. The researcher Brian Edgar adds: 'Hiding the radio meant death if it was discovered, but even making a loan was dangerous—a Turkish restaurant

⁵⁵² Their organizing body is the Hoseinee Society and their place of worship is in rooms above the Wyndham Street Post Office, central Hong Kong.

⁵⁵³ Interview, 15 November 2018. Other leading Bohra families are Barma, Tyeb, and Kayamally.

⁵⁵⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 24 August 1997.

owner and his wife were brutally tortured after incriminating documents were discovered. A quick-thinking Abdoolally employee ate a promissory note from HSBC man Hugo Foy when he realized the Kempetai were entering the premises.⁵⁵⁵

Macao as Casablanca

In Kowloon, acting Portuguese Consul, Francisco Soares, decided it was time for all Hong Kong Portuguese who might have seen themselves as British until now, and indeed had just fought on the British side in the war, to now reclaim their Portuguese identity for sanctuary under neutrality nearby. He allowed his home on Liberty Avenue to become a refuge that doubled as consulate, frantically issuing Portuguese passports. About 85 percent of Hong Kong's Portuguese would flee to Macao. On their way, about 400 crowded into the Soares mansion, where chickens were reared on the roof and many of those staying had their own guns and guarded the whole area at night against looters. Sanitary waste was a problem, but then a beautiful mango tree in the garden that had never blossomed suddenly, thanks to a fresh sewage trench, burst into fruit.⁵⁵⁶ Living nearby were the Gosano and Braga families. One member recorded amazement when they realized how they could escape using Portuguese identity: 'We had become 'Our People' indeed!' Macao, with its sleepy verandas, its hawkers and Catholic fathers, was still, even with its overcrowding and 'off-duty' Japanese, a safer prospect.⁵⁵⁷

Another family to find refuge there was that of Margaret Choa.⁵⁵⁸ She had a privileged upbringing in a mansion in Happy Valley, but that all changed when British troops requisitioned it during the fighting, then the Japanese advanced. Her family threw what they could into large bedsheets and walked to Central. They had no idea where to go but 'there was a wonderful shop owned by Indians which was Kamali [sic: Kayamally?] ... a very old Indian establishment, and they gave us two rooms upstairs of their own building. I think they must have seen us coming up looking for a place and we stayed in those two rooms to start with. But being Eurasians we were not put in camp or given any problems and we were given passes

⁵⁵⁵ Charles was later executed for resistance work.

⁵⁵⁶ Hong Kong Heritage Project, Oral History, Frank Correa, 17 October 2008.

⁵⁵⁷ Hong Kong Heritage Project, the Braga Papers, various.

⁵⁵⁸ Her grandfather, Choa Leep-chee had been the Malacca Chinese who came to Hong Kong to trade in sugar. Margaret would later marry Roger Lobo becoming Lady Lobo; her family tree intertwines with those of Bartou, Belilios, and others.

to leave Hong Kong ... and gradually my family in, in batches went into free China because there you could find jobs with the American army and the British army in consulates and so on...' ⁵⁵⁹ Her future husband Roger's father was Pedro José Lobo, one of two key middlemen who—along with the British consul John Pownall Reeves—kept supplies and support moving for the growing refugee flows into Macao. Pedro Lobo had been born in another Portuguese colony, Timor, but had arrived in Macao young and married into the Hyndman family. Meaning it in the nicest possible way, Pedro became the major 'collaborator' and savior of Macao. With his 'oriental psychology' and the 'skills of a Kissinger,' Lobo made numerous interventions with the Japanese. ⁵⁶⁰ He was head of the powerful Macao Central Bureau of Economic Services, manager of the Macao Water Co., and now led the Companhia Cooperativa de Macao, a joint Macao government–Japanese army private venture. Portuguese surplus, such as tugboats or telephone equipment, was exchanged with the Japanese for food from the mainland. Lobo, father and son, bartered everything they could, from gasoline or church bells to metal frames, wire, nails, and more. At the same time, Lobo senior helped refugees with schooling, and young Roger Lobo worked periodically with British intelligence. ⁵⁶¹

Personal fortunes were made, for example by Stanley Ho: 'I was in charge of a barter system, helping the Macao government to exchange machinery and equipment with the Japanese in exchange for rice, sugar, beans... I was a semi-government official then; I was the middleman,' Ho said. ⁵⁶² Ho got to Macao aged twenty just before the invasion of Hong Kong; by 1944 he had bought a launch, the Coloane, and his future as casino and transport king of Macao was on the way.

In Macao, a revitalized branch of the Portuguese Red Cross was run by another leading Macao merchant, Fernando de Senna Fernandes Rodrigues. Though neutral, Macao's Portuguese leaders knew that if the British were entirely ousted from China, their own time in Macao was likely to be short. So its practice of neutrality was highly ambiguous. The Macao Red Cross of 1943 mainly helped the British Portuguese Eurasians fleeing Hong Kong. Rodrigues made deals for provisions, and

⁵⁵⁹ Hong Kong Heritage Project, Oral History, Lady Margaret Lobo, 25 August 2009.

⁵⁶⁰ Gunn, *Encountering Macau*, p124.

⁵⁶¹ Gunn, *Wartime Macau*, p110. Gunn says Hyndman was a Dutch Portuguese family but Lobo confirms it was Scots.

⁵⁶² Simon Holderton, 'Ho Surveys Empire That Gambling Built,' *Financial Times*, 20-21 May 1995.

had large storage facilities and a wide net of contacts useful not only for foodstuffs but for intelligence, too. Then he was shot dead on a Macao street on 10 July 1945 and this incarnation of the Red Cross lasted only another year.⁵⁶³ Rodrigues's daughter Norma was shot in the back when she attended, aged 12, her father's funeral; she would live in Hong Kong from 1951, in a gracious Kowloon Tong home with many Portuguese neighbours. After marrying d'Almada Remedios she had three children: National Security trial court judge Sue; Leo, a lawyer; and Jose. 'Yes, we all have Chinese blood. My grandfather was pure Portuguese and married a typical Chinese lady.'⁵⁶⁴

Also in Macao was Sir Robert Ho Tung. After that wedding party at the Peninsula Hotel on the eve of war, he had retired 'for a rest,' staying at his lovely Macao mansion with garden and high walls. Perhaps he'd been tipped off it was time to go. While men such as his son-in-law Billy Gittins fought in the Volunteers, was imprisoned, and eventually died in Japan, and Billy's wife, Jean, starved gently in Stanley Camp, Ho Tung was comfortable. His son Eddie had his feet and half a leg shot off as he sought food under fire in Hong Kong. A brother, Ho Wing, was jailed by the Japanese and tortured. Another brother, Ho Kom Tong, at last could run the Jockey Club, keeping the races going through the war. Japanese Colonel Sawa visited Ho Tung in Macao, urging him to join the governance councils being set up in return for help to retrieve confiscated properties. Ho Tung did not succumb to the blandishments but he did visit Hong Kong in March 1942, a trip described by the Japan-run *Hongkong News*, under the headline 'Ho Tung Expresses Earnest Willingness to Cooperate—Anxious to Assist in Bringing a New Era of Prosperity'. He met the press at the Peninsula after a chat with Governor Isogai. 'Accompanied by a lady secretary, Mr Ho appeared in splendid spirits and, fanning himself meanwhile...' said he'd come to see his wife and injured son; the Japanese had been 'most solicitous of his welfare. He could not adequately express his deep gratitude for their kind interest in him.' Wishing to help bring a new era of prosperity to Hong Kong, he welcomed the advice of the Japanese, the press, and all. When pressed, he said he would 'contribute his share towards the establishment' of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in East Asia. 'This concluded the interview but before leaving, Mr Ho

⁵⁶³ See also Lopes, 'Inter-imperial Humanitarianism'.

⁵⁶⁴ Interview, 16 March 2018.

smilingly asked the Press representatives how he looked. When told that he was very healthy for his age, he appeared extremely pleased.’⁵⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Carlo Henrique Basto was arrested at Club Lusitano in 1942 while playing bridge with friends—the Japanese thought his score sheet was coded message-making. He was taken out and killed.

Also executed for espionage were Jimmy and George Kotwall (not related to the Kotewall family of Sir Robert). The Kotwall brothers were neighbours of Saleh Ebrahim, of the Bohra radio-hiding family. With George Samuel Ladd, he joined the resistance network led by the British Army Aid Group or BAAG during 1943 and formed part of ‘K’ Group alongside Jimmy Kotwall. Edgar notes the men were joining at a most dangerous time. ‘Using code, the team sent a wide variety of intelligence to BAAG Field HQ at Waichow, detailing, for example, the movement of ships through Hong Kong harbor, damage caused by American bombing, conditions at Stanley, and the activities of the pro-Japanese Indian Independence League . . .’ They were betrayed and arrested in March 1944, and interrogated for 38 days before being killed. Mr Ladd and Mr Ebrahim received sentences of eight years, while a Chinese associate, Lau King Sing, was sent to prison but died that year.

Boris Pasco had arrived from Russia in 1919 via Vancouver, Montreal, Southampton, and Yokohama. He ran a book shop in central Hong Kong and kept getting sued, or suing others, for copyright infringement or even assault. During the war his shop was used to drop off money for the underground, and provisions for prisoners of war; he, too, was taken by the Kempetai.⁵⁶⁶ In 1948, a plaque was erected at the synagogue for the Jews who died in defense of the colony.⁵⁶⁷

For many young men of the Volunteers who either avoided or escaped internment, joining BAAG was the next obvious step. Eduardo Liberato Gosano, or Eddie, was one example. He was a HKU medicine graduate but, when made surgical officer in the government’s medical department, was paid as a local—meaning no free

⁵⁶⁵ *Hongkong News*, 29 March 1942.

⁵⁶⁶ Howard Elias, Jewish Historical Society, 15 October 2018; *China Mail*, 6 July 1938.

⁵⁶⁷ Carl T. Smith Collection, Index Card 76-1322; *South China Morning Post*, 14 June 1948. Those named are Vivian Benjamin, Leontine Ellis, S. D. Gerzer, Sarah Gubbay, Dr. Rudolf Hoselitz, H. B. Joseph, H. Lipkovsky, A. Samuel, Leo Weill, and Reginald Goldman, from the Hong Kong Volunteers, I. L. Goldenberg of the RNVR, and D. Kossick of the Civil Defence.

housing or long paid leaves—rather than the ‘British’ scale accorded his fellow doctors from abroad. Yet he risked his life for Hong Kong by becoming the famed Agent Phoenix for BAAG. He had been interned but, when released as a ‘third national’ by the Japanese, went to Macao, joined fellow Portuguese doctor Horacio Ozaorio then working at the British consulate, and became a courier for the underground. He also helped rescue of the Hongkong Bank’s records, which had been brought to Macao ahead of the Japanese invasion but now needed to be sent farther away, to Chungking.⁵⁶⁸ Agent Phoenix would also help Leo d’Almada get to London to work with the Hong Kong Planning Committee, plotting the British return to Hong Kong.⁵⁶⁹

Gosano had earlier, with Albert Rodrigues and Solomon Bard, all medical graduates from HKU, worked inside Sham Shui Po POW camp. They had been in the Field Ambulance of the Hong Kong Volunteers—and in the summer of 1940 Bard had just become naturalized as a British subject: ‘Incidentally, the Japanese made no effort to isolate or distinguish Jewish POWs; Nazi propaganda had either not reached Sham Shui Po or was ignored by the Japanese,’ said Bard. Jewish POWs managed to gather for Sabbath services using prayer books sent into camp by the YMCA.⁵⁷⁰ His wife, Sophie, was not interned, being British merely by marriage.

Camp changed lives and fortunes—such as when Bevan Field of the Hongkong Land company met young Bob Baker and recruited him for a postwar career while reconstructing company minutes in camp. Baker’s successor in the job, Peter Hall, was surprised that Bob was a Eurasian too.⁵⁷¹ He was one of the eleven children of John Baker and Gladys Fenton, both Eurasians. Gladys was left bringing up the children when John deserted her, succumbed to opium, and died bankrupt before the war. Another of her sons, Thomas, a journalist, was recruited as press attaché at the British embassy in Shanghai and Chungking. Thomas’s wife, Doris (née Fenton), and her son’s wife joined him by the overland escape route out of Hong Kong and joined a high-flying social crowd during nasty and unsafe times, meeting General

⁵⁶⁸ Gunn, *Wartime Macau*, pp147, 153.

⁵⁶⁹ See Gosano, *Hong Kong Farewell*, for his modest account of his wartime heroism, pp25–29, and his bitterness at second-class citizenship under the British. His wife, Hazel Lang, was a niece of the two Kotwall men executed for their resistance work, p30. Jimmy Kotwall’s widow, Doris, was given neither British passport nor pension, p32.

⁵⁷⁰ Bard, *Light and Shade*, p111.

⁵⁷¹ Interview, 18 August 2011.

and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, and entertaining officers and diplomats.⁵⁷² Fluid relationships, across ideology and borders, are seen in the fact that few overland escapes succeeded without help from the Communist-based East River guerrillas.⁵⁷³

Clifford Matthews, a cricketer refused entrance to the 'British' Cricket Club, fought for Hong Kong and was interned; he was later among those sent to a shipbuilding yard near Hiroshima, but despite backbreaking work, bad food, and disease he survived.⁵⁷⁴ Phylis Nolasco da Silva née Anderson (whose brother Donald had died in combat) took on the highly dangerous task of running BAAG agents, earning a King's Medal for Gallantry. Her sister Joyce taught English to refugee children in Macao. Douglas Hung worked in intelligence and Mary Suffiad in counter-espionage. She and her sister Zaza retired to California, but said Hong Kong would always be home. Sam Gittins and Oswald Cheung were cipher clerks in the British General Liaison Office in China.⁵⁷⁵

Yet another Eurasian who committed wholly to his Hong Kong community was Osler Thomas. His father, George Harold Thomas, also known as Tam Ka-sze, had no idea who his real parents were; George was adopted by a woman, a converted Christian, who sent him to Diocesan Boys' School; George went on to graduate in medicine from HKU.⁵⁷⁶ During the battle of Hong Kong, Dr. George Thomas, now

⁵⁷² Among those who didn't make it was Donald Anderson, another HKU graduate (in arts, 1932), a brilliant lawyer and cricketer, who died in that desperate battle of Wongneichong Gap. Albert Prew was killed in the massacre at Repulse Bay.

⁵⁷³ This, grown out of a Hakka clansmen's group in Hong Kong and Asia, focused on propaganda, indoctrination, relief, and money-raising. Students from Hong Kong's top colleges joined the movement in 1937; the next year a liaison office was opened under the guise of the Yue Hwa tea trading and import-export firm, supported by people such as Dr. Selwyn-Clarke's wife, 'Red' Hilda, and M.K. Lo. Government support was erratic, but these Communist guerrillas provided essential early experience for later intelligence successes—as well as the 'little devils,' child agents, who carried messages and escorted many Hong Kongers to safety. See Chan, *East River Column*. Also Chan, *From Nothing to Nothing*. Also, Fanny W. Y. Fung, 'Unsung Warriors Set Up in Sai Kung: The Hong Kong Guerrilla Fighters Who Battled the Japanese in WW2,' *South China Morning Post*, 15 August 2015.

⁵⁷⁴ Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong*, pp411–12.

⁵⁷⁵ 'Ozzie' Cheung, another DBS and HKU boy, would become acting headmaster at DBS after the war before qualifying as a barrister and joining the Legislative and Executive councils, earning a knighthood in 1987. His war service began with an escape to Macao with his family, and on to the French treaty port of Kwang Chow Wan; he was eventually linked up with W.P. Thomson, a former police superintendent of Hong Kong, now head of the British General Liaison Office, part of British intelligence. Young Ozzie's job was to monitor Japanese activity in South China and coastal waters. He recalled problems with secret ink and radio and being often on the run, taking trains with a bag full of coded messages.

⁵⁷⁶ George Harold Thomas's life was spent in Hong Kong. He married Norah Gourdin, daughter of an American trader who had long lived in Hong Kong and had a Eurasian wife. George and

medical superintendent at Tung Wah Hospital, was able to send an ambulance to rescue his son Osler, who had been part of a group that surrendered to the Japanese only to be lined up for beheading. Young Osler decided to fall into the ditch full of corpses and survived a day and night under the putrefying mess before staggering out and being given new clothes from an old woman in a shack on a nearby hillside. Five weeks later he went back to the ditch and spoke to a gardener who said yes, the water had run red for a few days. Osler managed to retrieve his pips (shoulder decorations to indicate rank), which he had hidden, and, seeing he was a survivor, the gardener handed over the medals of the sergeant major who had been killed there. The bodies were exhumed and reburied in Stanley Military Cemetery.

Osler Thomas joined what became a group escape of HKU students into Free China in August 1942. Journeying by truck, sampan, river junk, and bribery, long days of walking and nights of bedbugs, some completed their studies at various Chinese institutions. Some of the funding for this escape came from the tiger balm entrepreneur Aw Boon Haw. Others, like Osler, reached BAAG headquarters by November, and joined Force 136. He spent all of 1943 infiltrated back into northeastern Hong Kong helping mainly Indian escapees. He heard the Japanese surrender in 1945 on a pedal-powered radio. 'I had been asked by Colonel Ride a few months before if I would like a period of leave and recreation in India, and had declined his offer, thinking the end was near and wanting to be 'in at the kill.' After all, Hong Kong was home,' he recalled.⁵⁷⁷

Living between the faultlines at Rosary Hill

Young Pat Botelho spent her wartime childhood skipping school, and eating broken red rice and yam leaves, which her mother had started growing on the dug-up tennis court. She remembered pushing a trolley to one of the Ho Tung family homes to collect water from its well.⁵⁷⁸ Charlie Churn learned how to fiddle the gas meter to

Norah produced four children, including three more doctors. Osler would marry a Vietnamese-Chinese, Lily Trinh, also brought up in Hong Kong; their children went to DBS and DGS. Daughter Audrey returns to Hong Kong annually to lay a wreath in her father's name at the war remembrance ceremony. Carl T. Smith Collection, Index Card 62-665: *Daily Press*, 3 June 1923; *South China Morning Post*, 25 February 1975. Interview with Audrey Thomas, 13 November 2013.

⁵⁷⁷ Matthews and Cheung, *Dispersal and Renewal*. Also Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong*, pp401–26.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Pat Botelho, 21 January 2019.

make it go backwards, and how to chop trees for fuel.⁵⁷⁹ Both Charlie and Pat remember taking some lessons from Hugh Acome, a teacher at St. Joseph's College. Hugh was the product of a Jamaican-Chinese father and a Liverpool British-Chinese mother. Taken to Hong Kong at a young age, he knew little of Chinese culture and grew up Eurasian. The Acome family huddled at St. Joseph's for safety; home to boys of all faiths and races since its founding, it too was a Portuguese refuge during the war. Hugh's son John recalls growing up alongside Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others. 'Perhaps racially I should have felt more Chinese than anything else, but my grandparents were brought up in particular parts of 'the West' and we had western habits.' They used sit-down toilets, ate Western food with spoons and knives, and sat on comfy sofas rather than hard-backed blackwood Chinese chairs. John concluded: 'Being Eurasian is not just about race or class, it's a state of mind.'⁵⁸⁰ His aunt Agnes Theodora Acome, a nurse working at the French Hospital, was then 'interned' at some place called Rosary Hill, until she appeared one day after the war loaded with fresh fruit. Everyone gorged on it and fell sick, but freedom felt fine.⁵⁸¹

Not until May 1942 could permission be gained to open a Red Cross office to disburse allowances guaranteed by the Allies for people inside and outside camp. It was specifically barred from caring for Filipinos and Indians left in the lurch by the war; these were the 'Asiatics' for whom Japan claimed responsibility (and then largely ignored). It was only allowed to help those American-Chinese who had registered as Americans; this effectively eliminated all American-Chinese, as none of them declared their U.S. nationality to the Japanese for fear of anti-Western repercussions. As for helping Hong Kong's Chinese, this was impossible, as Japan said the Red Cross 'must abstain from giving any assistance... even to those that had British papers, or to Indians ... or to any other Orientals, except to those were Dependents of POWs, or of men killed or missing, or of Stanley Civilian Internees.'⁵⁸² By the end of January 1943, there were officially almost seven thousand Third Nationals in Hong Kong, not including internees or 'Enemy-Nationals.' As for defining who was of which race and which nationality—often not the same thing at all—the definitional complexities multiplied. Third nationals included the local

⁵⁷⁹ Interview, 3 March 2018.

⁵⁸⁰ Acome, 'Growing Up Eurasian,' p8.

⁵⁸¹ Email Correspondence with John Acome, 2017–2019.

⁵⁸² International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Archives, BG 017 07-060, Draft Report, 28 February 1943. BG017 07-068, Letter, 7 May 1943.

wives or common-law partners, even stray loves and mixed offspring of internees. Here, too, were stateless people of perhaps Latvian descent, or Peruvians with Chinese surnames; 'Asiatic Iraqis' whose names such as Hardoon and Gubbay suggest they were Baghdadi Jews; people with Western surnames calling themselves Chinese; plus Portuguese, Irish, Americans, and people of British nationality who were too richly colored to be British enough to be interned at Stanley.⁵⁸³

Their plight was only ameliorated through the initiative of a Swiss businessman named Rudolf Zindel.⁵⁸⁴ He was a trader in Hankow and Shanghai for an export-import business, Arnhold Trading and Co. (the now defunct relative of the still existing Arnhold and Co.), before joining his company's Hong Kong office in 1939. Suddenly given the task of caring for the defeated of Hong Kong, he had no background in relief work and was constantly constrained by the Japanese, allowed only highly controlled, quick appearances in some camps. Money and relief parcels had to sail through hostile waters to be disbursed through the Red Cross delegation in Tokyo; parcels and thousands of messages never made it. Zindel endured surveillance, threats, censorship, and an increasing risk of arrest and torture by the Gendarmerie, as he tried to find ways to navigate this vast minefield in such a way as to gradually improve internees' conditions. He also, at huge personal and financial risk, finally resorted to raising loans locally from three Belgian bankers and a Danish consul with which to buy gold in local (military yen) currency at black market rates, to be paid back in Swiss francs after the war. (One of those Belgian bankers was Pierre Mardulyn, linked to the Macumber Churn Eurasian clan by his marriage to Mabel Churn.) Even more extraordinary: after horrendous pressure for three and a half years, Zindel stayed on and did for 22,000 Japanese internees all those Red Cross services that these same Japanese had made it so hard for him to provide to their opponents.

Zindel's innovation for the many people outside camp was to pool the allowance funds he was disbursing individually into one fund with which he set up the Rosary Hill Home. It was a hostel that all stray dependents and other random people could choose to enter, bringing their own basic needs in clothes and household goods, but

⁵⁸³ For the only full study of the Irish of Hong Kong during the war, see Edgar, 'Steering Neutral?'

⁵⁸⁴ For full story, see England, 'Zindel's Forgotten War—the Story of Rosary Hill.'

leaving any pretension of private life behind. This would be communal living, in an empty college halfway up the Peak (the use of which Zindel negotiated with the Spanish Dominican Fathers for a fee). Deciding who was eligible was not easy. A set of medals, a wedding ring, or parts of a uniform might be genuine, but could have been faked or stolen. Explained Zindel to his colleagues back in Geneva: 'This question of 'adopted children' particularly, is not, of course, an unusual one in Hongkong. Men in the Armed Forces, in time of peace, quite often lived with, or were married according to Chinese Customs, to Chinese girls, have children which perhaps were acknowledged by their fathers, but also left behind when they or their Regiments were transferred. In many cases, the Mothers of such children later on entered an alliance with some other soldier and the children of the previous marriage were taken in, but never really adopted. Their status now, with regard to our scheme of paying allowances, gave much cause for thought...' Common-law wives caused similar dilemmas, with little to prove their claims. Invariably he erred on the side of generosity.⁵⁸⁵

At Rosary Hill, by mid-1943, 1,104 'Dependents' had found shelter. The composition of this community gives an insight into the actual makeup of prewar Hong Kong society. Here were 143 British Legal Wives, 61 Common-Law Wives of British Subjects, 41 Portuguese Legal Wives, 25 Third National Legal Wives, one Common-Law Wife of a Third National, 28 Eurasian Legal Wives, 1 Eurasian Common-Law Wife, and 19 Chinese Legal Wives. There were also 166 Close Relatives of a former supporter now in Camp, four Fiancées (which interestingly added up to five beneficiaries), and 26 Wives of Men serving with British forces and/or the British Merchant Marine abroad.⁵⁸⁶ One of them was the woman collected in Lawrence Kadoorie's mad dash through Kowloon as war began—Mrs. Florence Wookey, 'Eurasian, British by Marriage,' and so given sanctuary.

Eurasian dilemmas

In post-war correspondence, Zindel explained more of what might be termed the Eurasian dilemma, through the case of young Egbert Charles Watson, a nineteen-year-old orphan in desperate circumstances. What should he call himself? To the

⁵⁸⁵ ICRC Archives BG 017 07-060, Draft Report, 28 February 1943.

⁵⁸⁶ ICRC Archives BG017 07-067, Letter from Zindel to Geneva, 30 April 1944.

Japanese, it was better to obscure British nationality and appear Chinese—but in young Egbert's case this almost killed him. His father was Gilbert Charles Watson, a British engineer in the Mercantile Marine who, as far as Egbert could recall, had died in October 1937 on his ship, leaving only a collection of postage stamps. Egbert's mother was Chan A Sin, a Chinese woman; of two brothers, he thought one was killed and the other missing. Once his father's burial expenses were covered, the widowed Ms Chan got help from the harbour master, who got the stamp collection sold in London. She bought two properties with mortgages just before the war but the Japanese demolished one to expand the airport (offering her military yen which she refused to accept). The second was demolished by locals who sold the wood for fuel. Said Egbert: 'The reason why we did not register with and apply for assistance from the local branch of the International Red Cross Association is because my mother had ignorantly registered the whole family as Chinese nationals and given us Chinese names. After a long time, when she came to know about the work of this Association it was too late to do anything because any change of names and nationality would bring about long-term imprisonment and corporal punishment for the whole family. Therefore throughout the war we passed as Chinese nationals.'

That status deprived Egbert and his family of Red Cross assistance, and made them vulnerable to periodic compulsory repatriation orders by the Japanese. One such forced expulsion in July 1945 caught up his brother George, never seen again, and then Egbert and his mother. Robbed thoroughly of even their outer garments by gangs on the junks used to deport them to Chinese territory, Egbert's mother died within three days. Young Egbert, meanwhile, smuggled himself back to Hong Kong on foot.⁵⁸⁷

For some Eurasians, those educated and with more resources at hand, it was precisely their ability to morph identity at will, that enabled them not only to survive, but to do good work. One such was Archibald Zimmern—future son-in-law of Sir Robert Kotewall and prominent barrister. Rosary Hill had a revamped Administrative Council in early 1944, which included Y.C. She, who ran general stores, fuel, rations, medical stores, education, the sewing department, indoor sports,

⁵⁸⁷ ICRC Archives BG017 07-071, Letter from Zindel to Geneva, 2 November 1945.

and entertainments.⁵⁸⁸ He was actually Archie Zimmern, who had been interned in Shan Shui Po POW camp but, on changing to Chinese name and garb, was able to take advantage of a release of Chinese prisoners from camp. There was at least one such release, in September 1942, when about 120 men were freed, in line with Japanese policy that they had no quarrel with Asian people and anyway the Chinese must have been forced to fight for the British. Recalled his fellow internee Solomon Bard, 'As far as I recall, there was no resentment in camp at the release of the Chinese POWs, especially as most of them had families in Hong Kong or Macao. As we learned later, some of the released men managed to escape from Hong Kong and rejoin the Allied forces in China and India...' ⁵⁸⁹ This is just what Archie She would do: when he resigned from Rosary Hill and escaped through southern China to Chungking, he was feted as a leading British citizen with vital information on conditions in Hong Kong. He was both Chinese and British and got the best out of both identities. At the same time, two elderly relatives, Mr. and Mrs. S. Y. M. Zimmern, aged seventy-four and seventy and listed as 'Chinese,' were residents first of the French Hospital Red Cross Section and then briefly of Rosary Hill.⁵⁹⁰

Zindel noted how 'unbalanced' his Rosary Hill community was, hinting at tensions over race, class, age, and gender. Certainly there were a lot of confused social mores due to this mass throwing together of people. Most of the men were under twenty years old and had not previously been required to clean up after themselves. The majority of residents were women, and the Japanese rule that residents must be back in the home by dark caused its own challenges, noted Zindel: 'We have a number of 'Ladies' in our midst, who, whilst they possess the necessary credentials as 'dependents,' find it apparently difficult to withstand the lure of their 'old profession.' Periodical 'roll-calls' have disclosed a number of such 'Absentees,' who

⁵⁸⁸ This Council included Leopold Gaddi in charge of three kitchens, outdoor sports, safety services during air raids, fire prevention, boys' working crews and wood-chopping. Gaddi would become famed for his eponymous fine-dining restaurant at the postwar Peninsula Hotel. Through the Red Cross Gaddi could cable his mother, Constance, back in Switzerland: 'Dearest Mother, We are well, still hoping to be very soon with you all. Trust all well at Home. Working for Red Cross. God's blessings. Love, Leopold and Mildred.' ICRC Archives BG017 07-065, cable 6 March 1944.

⁵⁸⁹ Bard, *Light and Shade*, p118. However, Peter Hall's father told him he had seen only Zimmern men released and assumed it was thanks to Kotewall using alleged contacts with the Japanese to secure their release; family members wonder if money was paid.

⁵⁹⁰ ICRC Archives BG017 07-071; letter from Red Cross Chungking to Geneva recounted Zimmern's inside information, adding: 'Mr Zimmern confirms... that Mr Zindel has gone grey on account of worries particularly in regard to the Refugee Home which he had started and for which he is continuously in want of funds.'

are, however, never at a loss to explain their unauthorized absences by the sudden sickness of an 'Aunt' or a 'Grandmother,' or by an 'unexpected intoxication at a Birthday-Party.' We have now drawn a line under such excuses and future offenders will face the risk of immediate expulsion.' From early 1945, conditions everywhere were worsening dramatically. Food stocks would cover the Home only until about 10 May; available cash was just about exhausted. 'Our ship became less and less seaworthy and actually was in imminent danger of sinking early in April... drastic measures to 'lighten our ship' became unavoidable,' wrote Zindel.⁵⁹¹ Such lightening occurred through the managed departure of 305 dependents, 281 of whom left for Macao in a complex transfer of 1,200 pieces of baggage. By the end of August 1945, there remained at Rosary Hill a total of just 135 persons. Looking back on his Rosary Hill venture, Zindel dared to write that 'thanks to its existence many families have been able to celebrate a Happy Reunion at the termination of the War, instead of standing sorrowful at graves...' ⁵⁹²

Looking on the wider picture, seeing how Eurasians ducked and wove to survive the war, be it in the fighting, in camps, at large in the city or in flight to Macao and China, it can be seen that ambiguous identities held both promise and strife. Hong Kong under Japanese rule was cut to the bone, reduced from thriving port city to the merest shadow of its former self. Rather than striding boldly into new ventures, all Hong Kongers were now, perforce, more private bricoleurs. They had to make secret lives or new names, to find escape or reserves of tenacity. Many of those who waited out the war cherished hopes for the defeat of the Japanese, knowing it relied on help from outside, be it from Britain, America, China or beyond. Some of the bolder characters found the courage to take steps to help bring that outside help closer.

Hong Kong people restoring Hong Kong?

Three men from Macao, dressed as fishermen, smuggled themselves into Hong Kong in August 1945, and over to the Stanley internment camp, to pass on a message. They were Roger Lobo, Dr. Eddie Gosano, and their fellow undercover operative, the comprador Liang Yun-chang. The message they risked death to deliver was a letter patent, a document from the British government to reestablish

⁵⁹¹ ICRC Archives BG017 07-063, Letter from Zindel to Geneva, 25 May 1945.

⁵⁹² ICRC Archives BG017 07-071, Letter from Zindel to Geneva, 7 December 1945.

British authority in Hong Kong. The intent was to instruct the senior British government official in the Stanley camp, Franklin Gimson, to take immediate political control of Hong Kong as soon as the Japanese surrendered. In fact, Gimson had already planned exactly this move from his camp stool and had lined up colleagues to go with him. He even had a flag to hoist. Perhaps more telling is that Eurasian and Portuguese Hong Kongers had made the very same plan. There was no doubt in all these diverse minds that Hong Kong was a place separate to mainland China and should stay so.⁵⁹³ In Macao, the British consul, John Reeves' committee for Hong Kong's rehabilitation, included senior Chinese, Portuguese, Indian, and Eurasian then in Macao. 'We did our best to prepare plans for the renaissance of that Colony.'⁵⁹⁴ They had also formed their own British Eurasian Association.⁵⁹⁵

Given the discrimination and neglect faced by non-white people who identified as British, the commitment to helping a British Hong Kong into a postwar future might be surprising. The point, however, was not being 'British', as this had changed so much through recent travails, but seeing Hong Kong as home, no matter what.

If a plan proposed more than two years earlier by a leader of Hong Kong's Eurasian community, Dr. Douglas Laing, had been acted on, a far richer relationship among all 'British' peoples might have occurred.⁵⁹⁶ In a 23 December 1942 memorandum, Laing described Hong Kong Eurasians as 'natives of the Colony ... many of them are third and fourth generation descendants of the earliest British settlers ... they have always borne a strong loyalty to Britain. This loyalty has always been taken for granted, and proof of it has been given in times of emergency, as in the Great Strike and Boycott of 1925, in the Great War of 1914–18 and in the present war ...' He noted their exclusion from the 1940 evacuation. Yet still they 'all served without stint

⁵⁹³ Gosano got Leo d'Almada to London; he also helped Marcus da Silva, another leading Portuguese lawyer, escape after he had been tortured by the Kempetai in Hong Kong for spying and sending funds into the Stanley camp, although Gosano resented the lack of thanks forthcoming. See Gosano *Hong Kong Farewell*, p29. See also 'The Dark World's Fire: Tom and Lena Edgar in War,' brianedgar.wordpress.com/2012/07/23/marcus-da-silva/.

⁵⁹⁴ Reeves, *The Lone Flag*, pp38–39.

⁵⁹⁵ Carl Anderson, Welfare League co-founder, chaired the association in Macao and on Reeves' departure, recalled his 'strong and all-embracing humanitarianism... He has looked after our spiritual, educational as well as sporting needs. He has shared with us in our little joys and has felt with us in our hardships. He has even shown to us how to or how not to play hockey...' He wished for more such 'men of sympathetic understanding and of sterling character unknown to snobbery.' Reeves, *The Lone Flag*, p148.

⁵⁹⁶ I am indebted to a descendant, Evelyn Fergusson-Laing, for these papers cited.

and gave of their best ... The majority of the young male population was either killed on active service or are interned... Almost every Eurasian family in Hongkong was left in an extremely awkward position. Few had any but the most limited means; many families had lost their all and were entirely penniless...' Many who wanted to flee couldn't afford to. The answer, he pressed, was a mass exit to China or Macao with shelter and work on arrival. Colonel Lesley Ride, the Hong Kong University vice-chancellor who had founded BAAG, gave wholehearted support: 'For many years now I have taught them, worked with them, lived with them and played with them and from that experience alone I would strongly support any move to help them. But the big point about them, I think, is that when the real test of war came they not only served to the best of their ability, but throughout their post-surrender suffering (and as a class I think they have suffered most) they have remained absolutely loyal. There can be no doubt that Hong Kong is for them of all people their home...' The BAAG network could get people out: 'We have the organization and I feel it could legitimately be used for this purpose because a large percentage of the Eurasians are families of those who served with us.'⁵⁹⁷

H. D. Bryan of the British consulate general in Kweilin forwarded Dr. Laing's letter to the British ambassador in China at Chungking on 15 February 1943. He, Bryan, had known Eurasians in Hong Kong and was 'strongly in sympathy with their case...' he wrote. 'They are, like the members of other communities, not without their faults and weaknesses, and there are some black sheep among them, but in general they have been a loyal and hardworking, if comparatively small section of the population, who have in the past not received the consideration they deserved . . .' Laing's letter, wrote Bryan, referred to those who 'have, by reason of blood ties, education and general upbringing, clung to their British connexion [sic], in the face of continual disappointments and rebuffs.' Bryan said the paying of such men of equal education much less 'would appear difficult if not impossible to justify... on broad grounds of equity. The social discrimination against Eurasians which obtained generally in Hongkong, being doubtless characteristic of many other colonies, needs no emphasis.' However, Laing's suggestion of a full-scale evacuation of Eurasians—even if 'necessary or desirable'—would be pointless if there was no work or support for them on arrival. Indeed, it was not to be. A cable on 22 April 1943, to British

⁵⁹⁷ Ride letter, dated 19 February 1943, BAAG Kweilin.

diplomats in Kweilin, Macao, and the Foreign Office in London stated the clear opposition of the government of India and Army Headquarters, India, to proposals for assisted wholesale escapes or walkouts of 'Anglo-Chinese and Eurasians' from Hong Kong. This was 'owing to the danger of enemy agents, transport difficulties and impossibility of absorbing these people in India even if guaranteed from security angle.'

The failure to repay the Eurasian loyalty lasted long after the war. On 28 September 1945, the new British Military Administration promised repatriation or cash benefits to former members of the HK Volunteer Defence Corps. But 'In a gesture of racially tinged ingratitude, the BMA decided that all those Chinese, Portuguese, and Eurasian volunteers who had fought for the British in December 1941 should be deemed to have been demobilized from the date of the British surrender to Japan and, therefore, would not be eligible for any further pay or allowances.'⁵⁹⁸ Persistent discrimination despite their equal suffering, was deadly. Frank Correa recalled that twenty years after the war, his uncle Mem Soares was suffering from kidney failure developed from his time as a prisoner for three years and eight months at the Sham Shui Po prisoner of war camp. He was denied treatment by the British military hospital and could not even access dialysis machines to treat his kidney failure at government hospitals. Frank wrote a letter to the papers to complain, but it was too late and Soares died in Queen Elizabeth Hospital.'⁵⁹⁹

Britain also refused to pay compensation to Eurasian civilians and others for their internment during the war; they were 'not British enough.' Diana Elias, aged eighty-three, finally won her case in Britain when a court agreed the British government was guilty of racial discrimination. Her family of Iraqi Jews had arrived from Bombay, and Diana was born in Hong Kong in 1924; her grandparents, parents, and herself all held British passports. Interned for being British—a process that led to the death of her father from wartime illness and her mother's nervous breakdown—but denied war pensions by the government made her angry. She had joined the Association of British Civilian Internees, Far Eastern Region, when she moved to Britain, filled in her forms, and heard nothing until the details of her forebears'

⁵⁹⁸ Sweeting, ed. Cunich, 'Hong Kong Eurasians,' p98, citing BMA Proclamation No. 14, published 28 December 1945, in Hong Kong (BMA) Gazette 1:1, pp19–20.

⁵⁹⁹ Told to me by Anthony Correa.

births were requested. Six years of legal fight later, Diana got her money, but wondered why it had to be so hard.⁶⁰⁰

Again, why were Hong Kong's Eurasians, of all kinds, so wedded to Hong Kong despite all the downsides? What they envisaged was a place to call home, which until the war had been enabled by British rule over a non-Chinese, non-state formation. It was not British rule, *per se*, that they craved, but a life in an Asian port city which, here and now, happened to involve a British colonial construct. Within that, as a century earlier, governance was present enough to enable a good life but not enough to deny a Eurasian way of life. The precise arrangement of a Hong Kong that was, as it had been before the war, both colony and free city, British and not British, essentially Eurasian throughout, was not fixed in the days after Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945. It would become so, however, at least for a while.

On 30 August, Rear Admiral Sir Cecil Halliday Jepson Harcourt sailed in on HMS *Swiftsure* to run Hong Kong until a civilian administration returned. But what sort of administration would that be? The Committee of the Social Service Centre of the Churches outlined measures for rights, trade unionism, and much greater participation of women in the postwar colonial order. Renaissance men such as Solomon Bard hoped postwar life would be more generous and tolerant. He would help found the Sino-British Club in 1946, and the Sino British Orchestra (the Hongkong Philharmonic Orchestra from 1957). London wanted to restore British prestige and perhaps, too, shore up a community against a reinvigorated mainland China. Gimson wanted to provide a basis for Hong Kong citizenship, and 'thereby the conception of the colony as a distinct entity from China would be created.'⁶⁰¹ But anti-colonialist U.S. President Roosevelt wanted Hong Kong returned to China.

On 1 May 1946, a new civilian administration took charge under Governor Mark Young—now back from his war spent in Japanese internment in Manchuria. He, too, had been thinking about the future. By 26 July 1946, the government had at last repealed the Peak District Reservation Ordinance (of 1904), which had barred Chinese from living on the Peak. Planning units in London had been promising a 'new angle of vision' since mid-1943, with more democratic governance and a

⁶⁰⁰ Adam Luck, 'Subjects of Rough Justice,' *The Standard*, 28 October 2006.

⁶⁰¹ CO537/1650, 1–2, TNA, Gimson to Ruston, 3 March 1946, in Yap, 'A New Angle of Visions'.

speedy localization of jobs. Young's plans were far-reaching, promising universal suffrage and genuine participation in Hong Kong governance by all its peoples. The historian Felicia Yap wonders if the fact that both Gimson and Young had served in Ceylon was significant. There they had overseen a broad local franchise as they built a post-independence elite. These men had ideas of imperial citizenship where people of all races were equal British subjects.⁶⁰² This idea of a colony ruled by popular consent (albeit without full voting or universal suffrage) survived the diminution of immediate threats to Hong Kong's Britishness. When President Roosevelt died, he was replaced by the less anticolonial Harry S. Truman, who accepted British control of Hong Kong. But the consensual ideal did not survive the onset of the early Cold War, when it became apparent that the Chinese Communist Party might win control of a united China, posing an existential threat to all of Westernized East Asia.

But once Governor Grantham took charge in Hong Kong in 1947, Young's plan for a more inclusive future died.

Grantham was ignorant of Hong Kong's resident communities from long before the war, and so was ignorant of that specific Hong Kong identity that had led so many diverse people to build multigenerational homes and families, and even risk their lives for it. Perhaps he listened too much to the newly arrived wealthy Shanghainese who brought money and industry but no Hong Kong history with them; he heard too, those recently restored old families who had no wish to share their privileges. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Grantham simply decided that Hong Kong was a Chinese port and its people would never develop pro-British tendencies. As it would thus never become a self-governing state, in his opinion, he backed the vested antidemocratic interests in his ruling councils, particularly the local Chinese elite. This rich clique, with its family and business ties through every major colonial institution, was unwilling to forgo its own position of unelected privilege. Hong Kong's chance of an independent, self-determining future was lost.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² Yap, 'Eurasians in British Asia During the Second World War.'

⁶⁰³ Grantham, *Via Ports*, p111. 'The Substitution in the Legislative Council of elected for appointed members... which eventually was to lead to internal self-government either within or without the Commonwealth, was the order of the day in British colonial policy. But the problem in Hong Kong is different from that in other colonies, for Hong Kong can never become independent. Either it remains a British colony, or it is re-absorbed into China as a part of the province of Kwangtung'.

New divisions in old communities

Meanwhile, there were scores to settle—the punishment of those who had aided the enemy and the war crimes prosecutions of some of the enemy themselves.

Inevitably, as the archetypal middlemen, some of Hong Kong's Eurasians and Chinese, were caught in this new crossfire. War crimes trials were held in Hong Kong between 28 March 1946, and 20 December 1948. In the view of the legal expert Suzannah Linton, they were a genuine effort to do justice fairly, and, despite failings, were remarkable for the time and place. She thought the treatment of Hong Kong by the Japanese had been genuinely shocking, particularly the forced displacement program that removed a million people from the city, and the famine and starvation that preceded it. She found it disturbing that large-scale sexual violence against civilians was almost invisible in the tribunal reports. There was textbook Japanese military police abuse in the police stations, including what is today called waterboarding alongside burning, beating, and more. Linton also found that most people did not choose to dwell on these recent horrors after the trials.⁶⁰⁴

By contrast, the treatment of what Britain's foreign office records called 'Colonial Renegades and Quislings' was more ambivalent.⁶⁰⁵ Discussions were under way well before the war ended about how to treat various people and deeds, not only in Hong Kong but in India, Burma, and Malaya. Three categories should be prosecuted if possible: those who had prominently engaged in conducting propaganda on behalf of the enemy; those, whether prisoners of war or not, who, during the war, had voluntarily engaged in activities calculated to assist the enemy's operations or to damage the Allied cause; and those who had applied for, and obtained, enemy nationality during the war. Any prosecutions would be conducted speedily. And yet they needed 'to be founded on a tolerant view of their conduct, if by so doing it may be found possible more readily to enlist the loyal support and cooperation of the men of education, ability, initiative and authority upon whom we must necessarily depend, but who, by virtue of their position have in the past been employed by the Japanese.' In other words, some men had blurred lines during the war, but the British would still need them to bolster their rule.

⁶⁰⁴ Linton, Hong Kong's War Crimes Trials. See also John Carney, 'Book Sheds Light on Hong Kong's War Tribunals,' South China Morning Post, 28 April 2013.

⁶⁰⁵ For much of this subject, the source is CO968/120/1-2, TNA.

A secret communication of 4 October 1945, 'Quislings & Collaborators,' reported: 'On return to Hong Kong we were made aware of prima facie evidence that nearly all the leading Chinese in the Colony collaborated in one way or another with the Japanese. The only public figure who appears to have entirely clean hands is Mr T.N. Chau, the senior ranking Chinese member of the Legislative Council, who very early in the occupation slipped away to Macao.' The report went on to note that prosecutions would be difficult, not least because the prewar attorney general, Sir Grenville Alabaster, and other British officials had asked Hong Kong's leading Chinese to cooperate with the Japanese. The report added: 'Present charges of Quisling activities are being widely used to pay off old scores and to satisfy personal enmities contracted pre-1941 among the several contending parties and personalities in Hong Kong.' However, while one could not indict everyone, nor could they be invited out. 'It just does not seem possible to have them shouting 'banzai' in August and singing 'God Save the King' in September.'

Under consideration for trial were men such as Darrell Drake, a teacher in Japan who had married a pro-German Norwegian lady. He was a heavy gambler and drinker and, when he went on leave to Shanghai and then Hong Kong in September 1937, was reported to have business connections with Japanese, and with a known German arms smuggler; he then worked for a Japanese news agency in Hong Kong and during the war worked on the pro-Japan Hongkong News. There was Timothy E. Dunn, a Eurasian British subject, formerly with Thomas Cook Co. in Shanghai, where he had been let go for embezzlement. British intelligence thought he was actually Edward Dunn, a half-British, half-Japanese agent for the Japanese, born in China, 'a well-behaved perfect gentleman.' Joseph Carroll, also Japanese-Eurasian, had collected tungsten and grease for Japan's navy; Joseph Richards trafficked watches, cameras, and radios, and then supplied Japanese officers with wine, brandy, whisky, and gin.⁶⁰⁶ Richards, also Eurasian, stood accused by British intelligence reports of picking out 'undesirable' third nationals for Japanese detention. He was known to have worked for the Japanese for a long time; he had been interned by the British authorities at the outbreak of hostilities but freed by the Japanese. He was reported to have been entrusted with the examination of

⁶⁰⁶ Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, pp122, 299.

documents, alleged to be Macao's British consular archives, discovered on the riverboat Sai On, which had been seized from neutral Portuguese waters by the Japanese in 1943.

Victor Vander Needa, a well-known amateur jockey, was lauded for conspicuous bravery against the Japanese invasion. But his sense of grievance at slights from his British clients and rulers helped rouse him to 'a state of trembling hope and even occasional exaltation by the rediscovery of his Japanese blood,' reports the historian Philip Snow, who adds that Needa became a 'flourishing merchant' employing many to collect iron, bronze, and aluminum for the Imperial Japanese Navy.⁶⁰⁷ At the same time, his brother-in-law Norman Broadbridge was serving in the Volunteers and helped save the life of Bevan Field, a future manager of Hongkong Land. So Needa's wife, Janet, enjoyed reasonable rent for her flower shop (Jeanette's) in Central for decades after the war.⁶⁰⁸

Snow found that 'several hundreds of Eurasians and Portuguese managed to recreate their traditional intermediary role by setting themselves up as 'brokers' to traffic between the conquerors on the one hand and the Hong Kong Chinese population on the other.' He also offered the example of the (Sindhi) Harilela family, which, among other survival tactics, traded rice from the Japanese, to show that 'the brokerage boom enabled some vital goods to flow down to the desperate masses.'⁶⁰⁹

Men such as C. M. Faure, a former Royal Navy commander with a Chinese wife, were also hard to judge. He became head of a Eurasian and Indian propaganda team at the Hongkong News, but in some chroniclers' eyes successfully subverted his role from within.⁶¹⁰ In all, about sixty locals were tried for collaboration and twenty-eight

⁶⁰⁷ Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, pp120–21.

⁶⁰⁸ Veronica Needa is unique in having translated her life story into both thesis and theater. Commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Centre for its FESTIVAL NOW '98: *Invisible Cities*, her solo show *Face*—directed by Tang Shu-wing—was performed in both Cantonese and English and toured Asia and the UK. The play in both language versions was published by the Hong Kong International Association of Theatre Critics in 1999, in its collection *10 Best Plays for 1998*; it was included in Mike Ingham and Xu Xi's *City Stage: Hong Kong Playwriting in English* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005). Later performances included audience interaction through the Playback Theatre (see www.playbackschooluk.org for more information), documented in her MA thesis 'FACE: Renegotiating Identity through Performance' (trueheart.org.uk).

⁶⁰⁹ Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, pp121–22.

⁶¹⁰ Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p221.

found guilty: fifteen Chinese, six Indians, one Japanese with Canadian citizenship, and seven 'Europeans or Eurasians.'⁶¹¹ Concluded the historian Anthony Sweeting: 'On the whole during the Japanese occupation, Eurasians participated in resistance and collaboration. Some Eurasians were, at different times, active in both—for example, as gallant defenders of their homeland, especially prominent in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Force and eventually in the BAAG, and, later, being involved in the black or grey markets. In the main, most Eurasians who did cooperate and even those who collaborated with the Japanese did so for simple, pragmatic reasons—to keep themselves and their families alive.'⁶¹²

Where was Kotewall's community when he needed it?

It was the case of Sir Robert Kotewall that burned hottest, however. The pre-war Attorney General Sir Grenville Alabaster, the secretary for Chinese affairs R.A.C. North, and the defence secretary J.A. Fraser had explicitly asked him and Shouson Chow to cooperate with the Japanese, a request which Kotewall felt unable to refuse despite his misgivings. On 10 January 1942, the Japanese invited Kotewall, Shouson Chow, and others for lunch at the Peninsula Hotel, now their headquarters. Chow and Kotewall thanked the Japanese for not 'harming the people of Hong Kong or destroying the city.' They agreed to cooperate given that the Japanese goal was to 'release the races of East Asia.' Then Kotewall offered a 'Banzai!' and Chow agreed heartily. Kotewall, Chow, and Li Tse-fong all expressed hope for an early end to the war between Japan and China, which Kotewall described as 'more like a family quarrel between two brothers due to a momentary loss of temper.'⁶¹³ The Chinese Representative Council created by the Japanese occupiers included as chairman Kotewall, Lau Tit-sang of the Communications Bank and chairman of the Chinese Bankers' Association, Li Tse-fong of the Bank of East Asia, and Chan Lim-pak, a former comprador to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank. The Chinese Cooperative Council was chaired by Shouson Chow and had twenty-two members including Lo Man-kam.

⁶¹¹ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, pp245–46.

⁶¹² Sweeting, 'Hong Kong Eurasians,' p97.

⁶¹³ Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, pp107–108, 116.

It was well known that Lau Tit-shing and Chan Lim-pak had strong pro-Japanese views; Chan had even been imprisoned by the British during the Japanese invasion on charges of aiding the enemy. Participation on the councils by others, however, was not seen as a great crime at the time. John Carroll believes: 'That there was so little Chinese resentment toward the two Chinese councils during or after the occupation suggests that most Chinese understood that the Chinese and Eurasian leaders had to cooperate.'⁶¹⁴ By 1944, Kotewall and Li Tse-fong had withdrawn from public duties on health grounds; M.K. Lo frequently avoided meetings on claims of ill-health. Shouson Chow, now in his eighties, was excused on the grounds of age. Just about the only tangible achievement of the councils was the setting up of the Chinese Charity Association in September 1942 to donate and distribute relief goods.

After the war, however, it was Kotewall who was singled out for attack. He would end up being asked to resign from public roles while some figures still wanted his head. Lindsay Ride was a particular critic, calling Kotewall the 'Japanese banzai-boy,' feeling that the British government's decision not to prosecute him for treason after the war 'did irreparable harm to British Colonial prestige' in Asia.'⁶¹⁵ A view promoted by the journalist Emily Hahn, who spent twenty months out of internment after the invasion, was that Kotewall was manufactured from 'cheap material' and went on 'fulfilling his destiny as a genuine talking doll, now that the Japanese instead of the British are winding him up.'⁶¹⁶ Yet others who had been on the same councils and signed the same statements were left unscathed. When Kotewall's daughters Bobby and Maisie went to visit friends in the civilian prisoner of war camp they could feel 'that all was not well. That [a university professor] was too nice to us and somehow I just felt a little uncomfortable and the two of us left,' said Maisie. Yet when Maisie went to a tailor after the war, and the tailor realized she was a daughter of Kotewall, he gave a huge discount because he said he and his family had been in Macao during the war and had always waited for speeches by Kotewall in Chinese from Hong Kong. He said the Japanese probably didn't realize the full message, but that he could read between the lines and had gained sustenance from that.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁴ Carroll, John M. *Edge of Empires*, p185.

⁶¹⁵ Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong*, pp428–29.

⁶¹⁶ Hahn, *China to Me*, pp324, 328–29.

⁶¹⁷ Interviews by Christopher Cook in 2003, in Cook, Robert Kotewall, pp119–21.

In Kotewall's own 66-page account of his war, he said that when he was taken by Japanese officers to an office three days after the British surrender, Shouson Chow and young M. K. Lo were there before him and had already proposed Kotewall as their spokesman. Kotewall claimed that he wanted to leave town but had a large family, knew he was being closely watched, and besides, had been advised by government officials to stay. A statement issued on 1 January 1942, written above all the local leaders' names, including those of M. K. Lo and Kotewall, had been checked and approved by the British government. None of these men knew, at that time, that Japan would ignore the Geneva Conventions, and rule as brutally as they did. But how long should it have taken before Kotewall and colleagues realized there was no chance of negotiation, or any coincidence of goals, with this regime? One sympathetic chronicler of Kotewall's war wrote of the naiveté: 'There is a kind of pathos in this part of his narrative as Sir Robert, utterly decent and a believer in British fair play seems to believe that he can negotiate with the head of the Kempetai . . .'⁶¹⁸ Kotewall said he kept arguing for search and arrest warrants in advance and for families to be informed of arrests, and for the sending of food to those arrested—all in vain.⁶¹⁹ Wrote Kotewall: 'I served the Chinese community throughout the Japanese occupation—a period of three years and eight months. It was the hardest and most distressing period of my life. While I was compelled by the Japanese to do things that were positively repugnant to me, and was constantly subject to rebuffs, indignities and secret surveillance, my actions were misunderstood by the British, some of whom I counted as friends.'

A memo from a British official, N. L. Smith, dated 22 March 1945, noted, 'It seems to me that it might be difficult to apply too strictly the European standards in the case of persons of Chinese race who (generally by a geographical accident of birth) are technically British subjects... The smaller fry who let their names appear as Members of the Council (Li Tse Fong and his brother Kwok Chan, Thomas Tam and the rest) seem to me not a great deal worse than the postmen or sanitary employees who carried on the machinery of the government. This opinion is fortified by the inclusion in that list of the name of M. K. Lo who is known, from other sources, to have been quite violently anti-collaboration. The most difficult case will probably be that of Sir Robert Kotewall who has undoubtedly praised by voice and pen the

⁶¹⁸ Interviews by Christopher Cook in 2003, in Cook, Robert Kotewall, p149.

⁶¹⁹ Interviews by Christopher Cook in 2003, in Cook, Robert Kotewall, p152.

Japanese figment of co-prosperity... The evidence may be difficult to collect.’ Another note pointed out there was nothing that could bring Kotewall under the Treachery Act. Any prosecution ‘needs proof of something more serious than propaganda work...’ Mr. Smith in London was pleasantly surprised when he finally saw a transcript of a Kotewall speech, calling it ‘Harmless stuff!’⁶²⁰

David MacDougall, a pre- and postwar government official, now fresh back to Hong Kong from the London Planning Unit, summed it up when he saw that virtually everyone was besmirched by contact with the Japanese, but that Kotewall was both ‘unabashed’ and ‘impenitent.’ More, ‘The Kotewall business is a mess. So far as I can see no one has a scrap of real evidence, and all I have seen so far would not stand up in court for two seconds. This does not stop people pressing for his immediate arrest and trial. (K. was always a man who inspired violent personal dislike.)’ This last sentence is perhaps the most interesting. Why did Kotewall inspire such dislike? Was it his combination of arrogance and naiveté? Was it, too, perhaps an anti-Indian strain of racism?

Any prosecution of Kotewall was firmly quashed once the pre-war secretary for Chinese affairs, R. A. C. North, wrote to Commander Trythall, naval secretary to the commander in chief. He stated, ‘Kotewall showed very marked resource, energy and determination throughout. He was primarily responsible for the measures which frustrated the Japanese plans for a rising in Hong Kong on the day on which they reached Kowloon... he even tried to organise a force of Chinese guerrillas to assist in the defence of the island, and was manifestly disappointed when I opposed the scheme on the ground that the employment by ourselves of francs-tireurs would invite a massacre of civilians by the Japanese.’ North pointed out, ‘Hong Kong was the first British territory to fall into Japanese hands,’ and he had so far believed it was possible that ‘they would follow the usual practice of civilized nations in protecting life and property and in allowing the Civil Government to continue to function to some extent’ that he offered himself to the Japanese as someone who could represent the interests of the Chinese community. When they said no, North offered up Kotewall. Never, said North, had he ever doubted Kotewall’s loyalty to the British Empire. North then outlines three reasons for the particular level of vitriol

⁶²⁰ Hong Kong PRO, HKRS 211, 2–41.

directed personally at Kotewall. 'What follows is highly confidential and I include it reluctantly. It appears necessary however in order to explain the extreme bitterness of the attack on Sir Robert...

(a) The General Strike in Hong Kong in 1925 and the boycott of 1925–27 were part of the nationalist movement in China which led to the elevation of Chiang Kai Shek. On this occasion Kotewall led the local Chinese in the defence of the Colony and his services then were rewarded by the grant of the CMG [a British honor, sometimes preliminary to a knighthood]... Chinese nationalists have never forgiven him for this service to the Empire and would be glad to see him replaced by advisers who might be less shrewd or more amenable.

(b) Personal dislike of Kotewall has for many years been fostered, particularly among European business men, by slanders spread by a Chinese merchant (recently deceased). This campaign was inspired by personal enmity due to a fancied slight, but, equally had its origin in local politics behind the scenes.

(c) There has existed for some time an unfortunate conflict between Sir Robert Kotewall and Mr M.K. Lo. I saw the beginnings of this long before 1941 and am fully aware of the reasons for it. The motives are mixed. I do not believe that Mr Lo would admit even to himself that the vehemence of his criticism has any relation to the removal of an influential rival, or to the diversion of attention from his own yielding to Japanese pressure; but there is such a thing as wishful thinking.

I suggest that when these peculiar reasons for enmity are taken into consideration there is no essential difference between the case of Kotewall and that of the other 'collaborators.'

This defence saved Kotewall from prosecution, but not early retirement. Trythall wrote to Kotewall on 5 October 1945, saying the commander-in-chief 'has, however, formed the opinion that you made an error of judgement in the degree and in the manner in which you interpreted the advice given you by senior British officials to cooperate with the Japanese authorities... [he] considers that you must withdraw from public life.' Kotewall resigned from the Executive Council in May 1946.⁶²¹

⁶²¹ Kotewall died four years later, on 24 May 1949. Li Tse-fong was not reappointed to the Legislative Council. 'Clearly, however, the British felt there was a difference between him and Kotewall,' noted Li family biographer Frank Ching, without explaining the difference. See Ching, *The Li Dynasty* p124.

The British were back in charge, discarding loyal collaborators when they were no longer required. New partners included the Bank of East Asia's Y.K. Kan, knighted for service in both Legislative and Executive councils. He had spent the war playing bridge in the bank's offices with George She, Thomas Tam, and Willy Hung of Deacon's.⁶²² Among the Eurasians, the winner was M.K. Lo who enjoyed a fine career in political and legal circles. His pre-war radicalism, against colonial racism and in favour of a more inclusive Hong Kong, was now more in tune with the changing times. War had shuffled the Eurasian deck and chastened the British, but not much.

Old money meets new

Many individual Eurasians, of all kinds, did not survive the war, many families never recovered. Yet somehow that idea of their Hong Kong was real, and, for a while, it did survive. The nexus between British administration and a more free-wheeling Eurasian style of life survived. Distinctions of identity continued to be employed when it suited those in positions of power and influence even when daily life denied their sting. A greater looseness of definition also emerged – such as when The Hong Kong Club decided, in 1964, to allow 'members of the local community' to join, the first handful of whom were Eurasian. Older families needed to be light on their feet, and most were, but just who Hong Kong belonged to now remained unclear even after the political structure was reestablished because the Chinese Communist win in China in 1949 sent millions of new arrivals to Hong Kong from the late 1940s. These knew little of Hong Kong's first century; they knew only they didn't want communist rule and continued poverty and deprivation. This was not the same pull of the past when diverse peoples sought new opportunities in a nascent Asian port city. Now the arrivals were almost entirely mainland Chinese, fleeing terror. Their presence would change Hong Kong fundamentally.

Port city people could still thrive, for now at least. New people with no past could still make new lives. The Harilela family is a perfect example. It originated in Hyderabad, Sind (then in India but now, Pakistan) and arrived in Hong Kong from Canton in the 1930s. Living in one room the new family – largely uneducated, whose

⁶²² 'Time to Remember,' radio interviews, Y.K. Kan interviewed by Wendy Barnes, Radio Hong Kong, February 1973.

own name was made up and without papers of any kind – was helped by other poor (Indian, Portuguese and Chinese) neighbours to start hawking goods from a suitcase on the footpath outside the British military barracks in Kowloon. Within one generation, second son Hari had led his siblings into billionaire status by transitioning through postwar tailoring (for British and US armies as well as fashion) into property and hotel ownership. Along the way, Hari and his family learned how to gain standing in society – joining Rotary and Freemasons, then local Kaifong community groups, and so into government advisory boards.⁶²³ Hari's son Aron recently addressed the Belt and Road summit hosted by Chinese president Xi Jinping, having previously led Hong Kong's General Chamber of Commerce. Hong Kong was still a place where people with no past could build a future.

These in-between people might be impossible to categorize. Yet one clear thread throughout the myriad different war experiences, choices, and outcomes is that the core of people who saw Hong Kong as home before the war held on to that belief in the decades that followed. That belief was shared by a far wider group than imagined or allowed for by British (and Australian) bureaucracies when they made evacuation plans. It was far wider than imagined by the Japanese, for whom the logic of their Greater East Asia Prosperity Sphere implied that all 'Asians' would fall happily into their embrace. The 'Asians' did not, because that's not how they saw themselves, and because Japanese military governance was repulsive. Gerald Horne's *Race War!*⁶²⁴ claims that European racism and colonialism were deftly exploited by the Japanese to create allies among formerly colonized people of colour, turning white racism on its head. However, his 'race', born in the American black struggle, lacks relevance to the more nuanced relationships existing in Hong Kong.⁶²⁵

Hong Kong's war years showed that ambiguity had advantages in situations where adaptation and negotiation were required. It was of little use in the face of military or other bureaucracies. Definitions of who was 'in' or 'out' carried high stakes. In addition, deciding who was 'British' was not just about passports, or even which side of the war one was fighting, but also how much support – during and after the war – would be on offer from the British government. We have seen that some pre-

⁶²³ See England, Hari Harilela, *Made in Hong Kong*.

⁶²⁴ Horne, *Race War!* A powerful riposte to his assumptions is found in the work of Brian Edgar.

⁶²⁵ Edgar's blog <http://brianedgar.wordpress.com/2013/02/05/gerald-hornes-race-war-1-the-urasians>. Also, Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race*. Also, Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*.

war Eurasian networks were life-savers, such as the Portuguese; others showed their inner weakness, such as when the half-Parsi Sir Robert Kotewall was attacked by fellow Eurasians and side-lined by his British masters. War revealed the cracks that were always present in any community but which come to light under new stresses. Competition for post-war roles shaped some arguments, while great daring and self-belief solved others. New families, such as the Harilelas of Kowloon, would join the post-war boom and rise into high position alongside the older families.

Some Eurasians used the ambiguities of their mixed heritage to navigate war-time dangers with courage and style; others exploited the ambiguities in less edifying ways. We have also seen that, though often ignored, Eurasians would be central to the revival of post-war Hong Kong. British rule would let them down dramatically, but these people still saw their future in a Hong Kong that stood between empires, navigating a post-war Cold War era, jostling with China and wider Asia, and still offering a home. Hong Kong's Eurasian core outlasted the war's upheavals and regrouped both to their own, and to Hong Kong's, advantage.

Chapter 8 Transitions (1950-2024)

In this chapter I will offer a broad-brush outline of the key events and developments that marked the second half of the twentieth century for Hong Kong. I will then consider how these events impacted the Eurasians of Hong Kong. These people were now so deeply embedded in Hong Kong society as to have become almost invisible. The number of Chinese born in Hong Kong (as opposed to the long-standing majority of those living there) also now completely outnumbered the many non-Chinese born in Hong Kong; however, it was the Eurasian families who could boast of multi-generational lives born and bred in this port city. Theirs was the longevity.

Voices both Eurasian and Chinese began expressing new senses of identity in print and film, finding new definitions of Chinese-ness and of being a Hong Konger (a word which entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 2014 and traced an etymology to 1870). Watershed moments would affect that sense of belonging, from the 1960s on. A particular threat to Eurasians would lie in the nationality laws of both Britain and China during and after the 1997 handover of sovereignty from Britain to China.

It will become clear that by the early twenty-first century, Hong Kong had become a different place. No longer the Eurasian port city thronged by foreigners of all kinds building a place with its own personality, Hong Kong is under new management. Now, being foreign is a risk, and ‘foreign collusion’ quite literally a serious crime.

New futures

Hong Kong’s identity as an Asian port city over a long first century (1841-1945) morphed into new forms after World War Two. Its pre-war industrial base expanded with the arrival of Shanghai’s financiers, shippers, textile and other manufacturers. Its life-long function as a refuge for people fleeing China expanded dramatically as millions fled the CCP victory of 1949. Impoverished and struggling, China would be led by Chairman Mao Tse-tung through the devastating and misguided push to industrialize that he named the Great Leap Forward, followed by mass-murdering famine and then the Cultural Revolution—that purging of intellectuals and the middle classes in the name of Communist purity.

In the 1950s, the Cold War came close in the Korean War, ranging the United States and its allies (including Britain) behind South Korea, and China with Russia behind the North. Only a stalemate was reached in 1953 along the 38th parallel (today's border between North and South Korea) after three years of vicious fighting. That war included the imposition of United Nations and United States embargoes on trade with China, suggesting that British Hong Kong would be stymied, barred from trading with its nearest neighbour. But in many ways, thanks to Hong Kong's hybrid nature and the wheeler-dealer instincts of its people, the tensions only raised risks—and profits. Goods crossed borders regardless but, more important, Hong Kong's pre-war home-grown industries now had a chance to shine. They already produced goods ranging from beer to batteries and from toys to jewelry; soon Hong Kong would be producing plastic flowers, luxury watches, and high-end jeans.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong under British rule, backed by a developing projection of American military might, including its missiles, planes, and aircraft carriers, was carving a new future. There were growing pains: the 1952 and 1953 squatter fires that rendered tens of thousands of mostly new arrivals homeless and prompted the acceleration of a public housing scheme; the 1956 riots resulting from the overflow of Nationalist-on-Communist tensions from the mainland; and the 1967 riots sparked by economic inequity. That more than a million mainlanders had fled communism put immense pressure on Hong Kong's social provision.

Amid the frenzy, Hong Kong was changing in more subtle ways. After a first century developing its own Eurasian identity, it was now forced into a newer, wider world. The historian G. B. Endacott noted: 'More important, Hong Kong became virtually autonomous, administratively and financially, in 1958, as was announced by Sir Robert Black, the Governor from 1958 to 1964, in the Legislative Council in March of that year; while Britain still exercises sovereignty, she has in practice restricted herself to control of Hong Kong's external relations.'⁶²⁶

Hong Kong's administration had to find new reserves (of money and will) to house, educate and absorb this massive new population; only by the 1960s would half of Hong Kong's Chinese be actually born in the territory. Hong Kong's role as a trading

⁶²⁶ Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong*, p310.

centre grew and by the 1960s, tourism was taking off too. By the 1970s, Hong Kong's role as a financial centre with all its associated services came to the fore. In the 1980s, talks began over Hong Kong's political future.

Through all this tumult, Hong Kong's Eurasian core faced larger threats than even those posed by World War Two. Following their sacrifice and survival in World War Two, and a post-war rebuilding of wealth, many of the established Eurasian families stayed just that, albeit less reliant on their freshly returned British overloads who, after all, had lost 'face' with their initial defeat by the Japanese. For many confident Eurasians, the role of the British government now was not so much as to confer honours but to secure the wider environment. Backed now by the US which was taking on a role as security-provider across the Pacific, British rule in Hong Kong was a handy guarantor of neutrality. Above all, it provided a bulwark from the little-understood but greatly-feared activities and possible expansion of the Chinese Communist Party. Eurasians could enjoy an evolution in how they were seen, too, from the contempt of the 1850s, the growing reliance upon Eurasian skills and personalities through the later nineteenth century to the wealth and influence of the early twentieth century. Now, Hong Kong's post-war Eurasians could see a post-British imperial context evolving and would begin juggling and calculating as to how best to hold family and funds together.

Moving On

For families such as Kotewall and the wider Parsi community, and for clans such as the Ho Tung and all its related lines of Wong, Ho, Lo, Hui and others, post-war Hong Kong offered the opportunity to further consolidate their wealth. Many leading Eurasians did just this – but at the same time, they had learned a lesson from the war years.⁶²⁷ Now, they knew, they had to diversify. No more would they place all their eggs in the British basket, relying on the perpetuation of colonial rule and earlier capacious definitions of Britishness. These families were alert to decolonizations going on around the world and wondered what this mysterious new China across a closed border would do. They already knew the British way and now set about making sure they had other sources of safety lined up too. They pursued a

⁶²⁷ This section is based on interviews and continued contact with the families in question.

series of new strategies in schooling, investment, property purchase and citizenships in order to cope with a world in which Britain was no longer all-powerful.

From a pre-war habit of sending a couple of sons to Britain for education arose now the fixed routine of sending all one's children not only to Britain but to the United States, Canada, Australia or New Zealand, for schooling, university and often a first job in a professional career. Families might once have revelled in the jumbled junior schooling in Hong Kong amid a range of race and faith-based groups, before sons would move straight into the family business. That was now no longer enough. Now, private schooling in the West for girls and boys started before puberty and was maintained throughout; many scions only came back to a family firm once experience in other companies had been gained. Earlier prejudices in some of these families against marriage to Westerners while abroad were dissolved. When earlier generations (such as in the Lee Hysan family) were threatened with disinheritance if they brought back foreign wives, now such marriages might be favoured if they brought the prospect of new passports.

The Kotewalls who had intermarried with the Zimmerns remained dominant, not in politics, but in the business world after the war. Known as 'the Bank's broker', Francis Zimmern was instrumental in many of the more lucrative arrangements made by the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank (now HSBC); his many daughters became financiers, property investors and socialites and able to enjoy the fruits of his investments (such as The Panorama apartment complex half way up the Peak). At the same time, they married Japanese, British, local and New Zealand spouses, building homes in these places as well as in London, the United States and Europe. Subsequent generations continue to live in Hong Kong but spend less time there. They are friends with families of all origins – Sindhi, Jewish, Chinese, South African and more – whose children attend similar overseas schools and meet on the ski slopes or beaches of the world.

Parsi families in post-war times more readily allowed their offspring to marry non-Parsis, and so schools and homes were found in the home countries of spouses from the Netherlands to California and back. Hong Kong was still home, and charity more likely to be done in Hong Kong instead of Bombay, but the need to weigh options and hedge was ever present.

Some families such as the Kadoories only hunkered down, nestling in ever deeper into Hong Kong-based businesses, and in forging ties with new China. The Kadoories run China's nuclear power plant just across the border at Daya Bay and remain staunchly loyal to whoever is in charge of Hong Kong. Other old clans, including many in the Ho Tung lineage, remain simply that – a vestige of old money, carrying the status acquired by their predecessors in the family line, but not doing much with it. An exception was Stanley Ho, son of one of Ho Tung's disgraced nephews, who took advantage of Macao's wartime opportunities to make a fortune and parlay it into a monopoly over Macao's casinos and transport services between Macao and Hong Kong which would not be broken until the late twentieth century.

Eurasians who had assets at stake differed from other wealthy Hong Kong people primarily in their heightened awareness of vulnerability. They were often the first to diversify their identity documents and places of domicile, in order to make it easier to stay in Hong Kong. It was still home, albeit with life-belts ready if needed. It was as if the Eurasian-ness of many of Hong Kong's older families (not all of whom were rich), was intensifying. More mixing was now more treasured, as it carried clear practical benefits. Being Eurasian implied a clever ability to straddle more dangerous worlds. By the late twentieth century, a Eurasian look was as a desirable fashion.

Such a balance of interests survived until certain key moments of rupture. The first of these was in 1967. Suddenly, members of diverse communities felt the need to rediscover their diasporic pasts and move on, out of the Hong Kong that they had helped build. This seems significant as what happened in 1967 was nothing on the scale of World War Two, from which they returned to Hong Kong. Yet now they left. From May to December 1967, Hong Kong was caught up in dangerous social unrest.⁶²⁸ A mass demonstration and bombing campaign and its repression claimed 51 lives and injured 832. Almost 5,000 people were arrested and almost 2,000 imprisoned before peace was restored by the Hong Kong Chinese police force then still under British management. China's Cultural Revolution had overflowed the border and long lines of Little Red Book-waving cadres marched into the streets of Kowloon, even reaching across the harbour into the streets of Hong Kong's central

⁶²⁸ Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots*. Bickers and Yep *May Days in Hong Kong*.

business district. But while the roots of this unrest lay across the border in China, it found ready embers to enflame in the poverty, over-crowding and lack of workers' rights in rapidly industrialising Hong Kong. Labour disputes broke out led by unions such as the Beijing-linked Hong Kong and Kowloon Federation of Trade Unions, leading to mass marches and fights. Soon loudspeakers from the Bank of China, just across a cricket ground from The Hong Kong Club and next to the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank were blaring out pro-Chinese Communist Party slogans and songs. Among many significant aspects of the unrest, one was that peace was restored by an administration (and a largely Hong Kong Chinese police force) able and ready to fend off mainland pressure.

But that was not enough to reassure many Eurasian families and others about the future viability of a non-communist Hong Kong. The descendants of a Portuguese-Eurasian clan that had issued – through Portuguese consul Soares – passports to help people flee the Japanese occupation to Macao during the war, now upped sticks for Sydney, Australia. Descendants of the Macumber Churn clan stopped hedging their bets and moved completely to England in the late 1960s. Older generation figures such as Charlie Churn stayed in Hong Kong for the rest of their lives, but those with children no longer trusted the Hong Kong they had known and now chose to build new lives abroad. The grandson of Sir Robert Kotewall, that leader of Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s, young Ron Zimmern, was packed off to prep school in England at the age of seven, and never made a home in Hong Kong. Many of those who left in the 1960s now actively connect with fellow Portuguese, Parsis, Indians and Chinese Eurasians in new diasporas in the West. This was not only in Britain either, but in New Zealand, Australia, Europe and North America.

What 1967 spelled to those who had found in Hong Kong an Asian and Eurasian port city to call home was a lesson in temporality. What had made Hong Kong feel safe for them had been British overlordship, freedom of movement, openness to diverse faiths and races and ideas, and the city's ability to connect to a wider world. Not much was yet known about communist China, but generations of Eurasians, defined by their multiple identities, found much to fear in the authoritarianism and anti-capitalism next door. When this city's openness was at risk, these people left.

This would happen again, in the events leading up to 1997, and again after 2019. At each such moment, the overriding fear was of new state control, specifically communist state control. That fear caused many Hong Kongers who could, to flee.

Meanwhile, as China convulsed from the 1950s to the 1980s, the label 'Made in Hong Kong' evolved from a derisory indicator of cheap, low quality into something said boldly by a Chinese migrant to the Netherlands—'I'm made in Hong Kong!' This was, for her, something to be proud of.⁶²⁹ That pride was maintained throughout major transitions, such as in 1979, when the first transfers took place of commercial power from British trading firms Hutchison and Wharf to Hong Kong Chinese tycoons (Li Ka-shing and Y. K. Pao respectively). Key parts in those dramas were played by the old elite of Eurasians (including Zimmern, 'the Bank's broker') even as welcome mats were laid out for international merchant banks to come for the ride.

By 1997, it would be time for Hong Kong to be handed from British sovereignty to Chinese. Any transition of a freewheeling port city, nominally governed by a power located far away on the other side of the world, into an administrative region of a powerful neighbouring state will be difficult. There was no doubt, however, that such a transition would have to take place. China has long claimed 'Hong Kong has always been a Chinese city.' If taken literally, this cannot be true; we have seen how Hong Kong became a city only after the wider world arrived. But China had rejected Hong Kong's founding treaties as 'unequal'. China had a plan⁶³⁰, made absolutely clear by China's first representative at the United Nations, Huang Hua, in 1972:

The questions of Hongkong and Macau belong in the category of questions resulting from the series of unequal treaties left over by history, treaties which the imperialists imposed on China. Hongkong and Macau are part of Chinese territory occupied by the British and Portuguese authorities. The settlement of the questions of Hongkong and Macau is entirely within China's sovereign right and does not at all fall under the ordinary category of 'Colonial Territories.' Consequently, they should not be included in the list of colonial Territories covered by the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

⁶²⁹ See, 'Going Dutch in Chinatown' by Vaudine England, Hongkong Standard, 11 March 2006.

⁶³⁰ Cottrell, *The End of Hong Kong*, p33.

Hong Kong residents all blithely ignored the disappearing act of Hong Kong as a colony in international law, even though it implied that Britain could not grant it independence under the decolonization procedures followed elsewhere. They chose instead to focus on the next deliberately vague bit of the statement: that 'with regard to the questions of Hongkong and Macao, the Chinese Government has consistently held that they should be settled in an appropriate way when conditions are ripe.'

Perhaps port city people need a solid streak of determined optimism or wishful thinking to survive. The result here was a few more decades of growth and enthusiasm in Hong Kong under British administration while China gained more strength on the world stage. Everyone seemed prepared then, through the heady 1970s and into the '80s, to coexist in a liminal gray zone. Sovereignty was something to be tackled some other day, but for now, to paraphrase paramount leader Deng Xiaoping: to get rich was glorious. Many in Hong Kong were happy to salute the British queen at the same time as feeling vaguely patriotic to a Chinese motherland, while those with assets, moved them. The challenge ahead was how to manage that moment 'when the fast-moving urban society now faces the claims of a power whose authority rests on the assumed rights of an ageless, primordial origin?'⁶³¹

Tsai's view is that 'most Hong Kong people resist political control from Beijing, while at the same time they embrace China as the motherland. The causes for their current predicament are deeply rooted in history.'⁶³² Back in 1898 when figures such as Ho Tung, Ho Kai and Ho Amei warmly welcomed the British Admiral Lord Charles Beresford who had arrived on a fact-finding mission, they did so in the belief that the interests of British Hong Kong and China were identical, meaning that collaboration with British Hong Kong was the way to develop China. Ho Tung even collected information to facilitate the British takeover of the New Territories, waiting for the day that China would become as enlightened and prosperous as Hong Kong. Tsai says this is collaborationist patriotism, representing a dual allegiance: 'This situation is subtle and complex.'⁶³³ Everyone was a partner, friend, rival and enemy at same time, says Tsai. Hong Kong's success was China's failure - its inability to provide a secure business environment in the late nineteenth century, its failure to

⁶³¹ Siu, 'Cultural Identity and the Politics of difference,' pp19-43, p31.

⁶³² Tsai, 'History and Identity', pp78-93, p78.

⁶³³ Tsai, 'History and Identity', p85.

control political chaos at home, and failure to give merchants the autonomy and power they had in the West. Collaboration with Britain was preferable, building what Tsai calls a primary allegiance to a Hong Kong community while 'retaining their secondary identity with the Chinese nation.'⁶³⁴

When Governor Murray Macle hose went to Beijing in 1979 to talk with Deng Xiaoping about how to extend land leases beyond their 1997 expiration, Deng said to MacLe hose: 'It has been our consistent view that the People's Republic of China has sovereignty over Hong Kong, while Hong Kong also has its own special position. A negotiated settlement of the Hong Kong question in the future should be based on the premise that the territory is part of China. However, we will treat Hong Kong as a special region. For a considerable length of time, Hong Kong may continue to practise its capitalist system while we practise our socialist system.'⁶³⁵ Deng also said Hong Kong people should 'set their hearts at ease.' Again, the coda was taken as the main message, and on went that gray zone as Hong Kongers rested 'at ease'.

Empires duck and weave

Behind the scenes, however, steps were being taken that would directly affect the people living across boundaries - the Eurasians and others with mixed roots. It is no accident that soon after Macle hose's Beijing visit, the British government chose to confirm in immigration law its exclusion of the majority of Hong Kong's population from full British citizenship. The process had begun, while few noticed, back in 1962 when the Commonwealth Immigrant Act stripped Hong Kong passport holders of their legal right to live in Britain. Hong Kong residents taking British citizenship were now designated as British Dependent Territories Citizens (BDTC), which from 1985 became British Nationals (Overseas), or BNO. Neither status conferred any right of entry to Britain.

The Harilelas, for example, had no passports beyond the British ones they had secured by being in Hong Kong before the war. Their homeland of Hyderabad Sind had been in India when their forebears had left it; now in Pakistan it was an alien world. Only when going through Hong Kong's airport immigration desks one day in

⁶³⁴ Tsai, 'History and Identity', pp91-2.

⁶³⁵ Cottrell, *The End of Hong Kong*, pp54-55.

1962, did Hari Harilela learn that his passport was no longer the full British version guaranteeing him, he had assumed, the right to live in Britain if he wished. The immigration officer advised him to get the new British Dependent Territories Citizen passport, which he assured Harilela was just as good. Only as 1997 approached would Harilela learn that he had only a kind of British nationality which gave no rights of citizenship, specifically no right of abode outside Hong Kong. As a wealthy member of the elite he found ways to solve this, but also lobbied hard with Sindhi friends (notably Lachman Narain) in Hong Kong and London to try to extend passport rights to their less well-off brethren.⁶³⁶

Behind these legal moves was the century-long shift in the nature of the British Empire itself, from global dominance to second-tier status, with a navy that no longer ruled the seas. Back before World War One it was commonplace for anyone born in a territory over which the British flag flew to gain British nationality and citizenship. This right extended at least as far as grandchildren of the British passport holder whether or not the grandparents had themselves been born in Britain or had British forebears. Thus Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai, Sindhis in Hong Kong, Malays or Chinese in Singapore, to name but a few, all believed themselves to be British. Few, if any, had ever been to Britain or had any family there, but the imperial umbrella was understood as a genuine shelter. After World War One, as the sprawling, cosmopolitan empires of Istanbul and Vienna crumbled, it became more important for anyone of 'dubious'—meaning mixed or non-white British-born—origins to make sure they held official passports even as Britain, too, was slowly but steadily pulling up its nation-state drawbridges. Many of Hong Kong's in-between people failed to notice the diminishing value of their passports as British law cleverly separated out citizenship (including the right to live in Britain) from nationality. The latter came only if one could prove one's grandparents, and later only one's parents, were British born. The implicit racism of the shift was clear.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher landed in Hong Kong in 1982, her nose red and streaming from a heavy cold, on her way to meet Deng in Beijing to discuss Hong Kong's future. When she emerged from those talks only to slip and stumble on the steps of the Great Hall of the People, it seemed a portent of the changing of the

⁶³⁶ England, Hari Harilela, pp242-49.

guard over Hong Kong. Many months of tortuous negotiations later, the deal guiding Hong Kong's shift towards Chinese sovereignty was set—and markedly aligned to that plan first outlined by Huang Hua back in 1972. Promised another fifty years after the handover during which nothing would change, Hong Kong was hopeful once more. Many of those who had fled to gain passports elsewhere now returned to Hong Kong, trying to determine their relationship with the 'One country', testing the limits of what might be those 'Two systems'. The next landmark for Hong Kong took place in Beijing: the killing of thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators around Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. Hong Kongers by the million expressed outpourings of empathy and fear for the future. Again, those with no place but Hong Kong to call home intensified their lobbying in London. Britain agreed to issue 50,000 full British passports to residents selected by the Hong Kong government. Work began on a bill of rights. Britain's last governor, Christopher Patten, arrived in July 1992, and by October had promised a broader voter base. China threatened to take Hong Kong sooner if Britain did not behave.

What mattered to Hong Kong people was the chance for one's children to get ahead. If that could be assured under Chinese rule as much as it ever was under British, all was well. But was it? China declared, 'All Hong Kong Chinese compatriots, whether they are holders of the BDTC passport or not, are Chinese nationals.' But what did this mean for Hong Kong citizens who were not 'Hong Kong Chinese.' Some had other passports, but some did not, and the governments' exchanges of memoranda ignored this. Thus, many of Hong Kong's Eurasians, and the 4,500 Indians with BDTC documents, were not covered; they were neither 'Chinese' nor 'compatriots.' Yet still, for several years after the handover, most people were relieved that daily life didn't seem to change much at all. The fruit-seller still tended his stall every day, newspapers were printed, libraries were not culled, money was still made.

Hong Kongers and Eurasians

For so long as Hong Kong was left to itself, shut off from China and often ignored by Britain, it could develop its Eurasian personality. Homegrown cultural capital was gaining traction, with Cantonese music (Canto-pop) and the films of Bruce Lee telling the world this was a stunning, distinct place. Notably, Bruce Lee's lineage

includes a concubine of the Ho Kam Tong clan, so even this icon of apparently Chinese Hong Kong has diverse roots.

Ackbar Abbas, the Hong Kong-born US-based academic and influential author, can trace his roots back to India, Malaysia and China. He calls this Hong Kong a Hyphenation. One of the first Abbas men was called a Serang, a labour supplier, just as Shaik Moosdeen and Mohammed Arab had been. Shaik Abbas (1843–1908) had owned land near the mosque on Shelley Street and worked in government service. His wife, Beebun, was described as the oldest member of Hong Kong's Indian community on her death in 1933; she left more than sixty grandchildren. Abbas men had jobs in solidly middle-class professions, at American Express, Dodwell's, the British Council, on local newspapers, as prison wardens, officers in government, navy, air force, and the Hong Kong Club. Part of the family had intermarried with the Ramjahn and Madar families; one branch was buried in Macao's Muslim cemetery while others moved to Shanghai, Texas, or New York or hailed from Sandakan. One, Abdul Rahim Abbass [sic] was among the founders of the Islamic Union, Hong Kong's organizing body for Muslims. Others married Catholic Portuguese, and into the old Eurasian clans too.

Says Abbas: '[My mother] looked slightly more Indian than I do, I don't look Indian or Malaysian at all. You know, I have this name, and I have this face, and the name don't go together with the face. So I feel like I am a living example of an allegory. And I identify with nowhere. It helps in the sense that you are inside and outside at the same time.'⁶³⁷ In his 1997 book, *Hong Kong: Culture and Politics of Disappearance*, he explored nostalgia and collective memory in Hong Kong identity, introducing the concept of hyphenation for a culture or nation without sovereignty, dependent on another place to survive. 'Hong Kong is not a nation, it's a hyphenation,' he says. Colonialism 'pioneered methods of incorporating pre-capitalist, pre-industrial, and non-European societies into the world economy and found ways of dealing with ethnically, racially and culturally different societies,' Abbas wrote, giving Hong Kong a relatively benign version that seems 'to contradict more orthodox understandings of colonialism as necessarily exploitative.'⁶³⁸

⁶³⁷ Ackbar Abbas, interviewed by Sarah Karacs, in "Born, Raised and Corrupted in Hong Kong: A Chat with Ackbar Abbas". *Zolima City Mag*, 20 September 2018. <http://zolimacitymag.com>

⁶³⁸ Abbas, *Hong Kong, Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, p3.

Perhaps that's because there wasn't much to exploit, he wonders. 'Its very lack of resources or means of being independent was always curiously enough a factor in its favor: it meant that more could be gained all around by making the city work as a port city... This was a position that both the colonizer and the colonized could agree on, a position of cute correspondence or collusion...' This made possible, or indeed required, that 'lack and dependency were somehow advantages...dependency has been turned into a fine art... Hong Kong seems to have been built on contingency, on geographic and historical accidents, shaped by time and circumstances beyond its control and by pragmatic accommodation to events...a tendency to live its own version of the 'floating world' without the need to establish stable identities.'⁶³⁹ His 'contingency' is another word for bricolage, for improvisation, mixing to make do.

Abbas admires the Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai's romantic comedy of 1994, *Chungking Express*, for showing that 'Hong Kong is not so much a mental or psychological state as it is a visual and spatial paradox, a skewed space that characters have to adjust to emotionally, with comic results. Far from being the habitat of one social group, many different groups feel equally (not) at home in it; notice how in the first part of the film, Cantonese, Mandarin, English, Urdu and Japanese are all spoken.'⁶⁴⁰ Dung Kaicheung and Leung Ping-kwan also reveal the distinctness of Hong Kong's past as a port city, open to all, productive of a splendid mishmash of multiple heritages. In *Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City*, Dung's lead character, Hong Kong, is a unique convergence of disparate elements.

In his 2009 *Postcolonial Affairs of Food and the Heart*, Leung writes of how he was inspired by his many Hong Kong friends 'who are not particularly British-colonial or not particularly revolutionary, but just simple people living in Hong Kong, and all kinds of problems they encounter. I don't want to just write political stories, so I concentrate on food and love, matters of the heart, and I think in these situations I think people are more natural, more expressive of themselves, and why they love someone, what sort of thing they see in the other people that they want to have a relationship with or what kind of food they want to eat.'⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁹ Abbas, *Hong Kong, Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, pp72, 73, and 76.

⁶⁴⁰ Abbas, *Hong Kong, Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, p55.

⁶⁴¹ Interview with Leung Ping-kwan, 5 June 2007, Hong Kong.

Writers and film makers such as Wong Kar-wei, Dung Kaicheung and Leung Ping-kwan are Hong Kong Chinese artists eager to stress what I call the essential Eurasian-ness of Hong Kong. In a direct example of Bricolage at work, and how it is specifically not only an elite occupation but relevant to all classes from the workers up, Leung uses food to describe how Hong Kong 'makes changes, it appropriated, adopted some Chinese cuisine but then the imperial kind of cuisine will become the food on the street for common people. You have the British tea, but then when you move to Hong Kong you have milk tea, which later developed into tea-coffee, a mixture of tea and coffee which is not British at all, it's for the coolie, for the common worker, when they want strong tea they have that. So this is not Chinese and not British as well. I'm interested in all these different kinds of food ... The early Western food when they came into Hong Kong is called soy sauce western cuisine [because] instead of using butter or cheese, which is not good for the Chinese stomach, they used soy sauce ... Like there's a soup called comprador soup, [named after] the go-betweens, the people who make profit by dealing with business ... it's shark fin soup with cream, so it's a Western-Chinese mixture in a very strange way.

'People talk a lot about East meets West. Of course, the meeting itself is worth looking into—it could be a power struggle, it could be a domination, it could be a friendly relationship, it could be a lot of opposition as well. So I always see a simplification when people give slogans like 'East meets West' and 'Hong Kong is lively urban city,' a cosmopolitan city, and so on. What actually is happening, how are people living and dealing with everyday life? I'm interested in wanting to know... Hong Kong people are very receptive of other kinds of things, of course they like Cantonese soup, but also they enjoy Malaysian curry, Indian curry. In a way Hong Kong has always been very open to all kinds of culture, and that is a good thing.'⁶⁴² Speaking just ten years after the handover, he saw himself and fellow Cantonese as another minority in Hong Kong, as Mandarin-speaking mainlanders arrived at the rate of at least one hundred a day. He lamented that the colony's new rulers could not imagine Hong Kong could have developed its own culture and so failed to take it seriously.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴² Interview with Leung Ping-kwan, 5 June 2007, Hong Kong.

⁶⁴³ Interview with Leung Ping-kwan, 5 June 2007; Leung Ping-kwan died on 5 January 2013.

The writer Han Suyin saw the writing on the wall just a few years after the war, insisting on what she called her 'foolishness' in lauding her mixed identity. She wrote that being deeply cross-cultural was the way of the future. 'We must carry ourselves with colossal assurance and say: 'Look at us, the Eurasians! Just look. How beautiful we are, more beautiful than either race alone. More clever, more hardy. The meeting of both cultures, the fusion of all that can become a world civilization. Look at us, and envy us, you poor one-world people, riveted to your limitations. We are the future of the world. Look at us'.⁶⁴⁴

Hong Kong as Home to all

What comes through in one memoir after another is that Hong Kongers, including Eurasians, saw themselves as a distinct community. They were assuredly not part of China (and as details emerged of communist rule, had no wish to be); nor were they wholly British, no matter what passports they held. As Hong Kong entered a new, almost post-imperial world marked by massive refugee influxes, local unrest, and uncertainty, that sense of Hong Kong and its people as something apart only grew even though, as usual, the metropolises in London and Beijing ignored it.

Expressing a typically simplistic view of colonial life, sociologist Henry Lethbridge claims, 'Hong Kong's population in 1941 was split into two main groups, Europeans and Asians, poised against each other.'⁶⁴⁵ He saw prewar Hong Kong as 'rigidly stratified, Victorian-colonial... dominated by the Peak... and the 'Peak' mentality,' and pronounced the collapse of 'the British Mandarinate' in 1941. Yet in the same essay he is forced to admit that there was in fact 'very little racial bitterness or political agitation' and governance was 'widely consultative.' Perhaps what he means is that the British rulers of Hong Kong were now hedging as much as its Eurasians and other citizens felt the need to do. Pre-war certainties had imploded.

Instead of James Hayes' tale of two cities where 'Chinese' and 'Europeans' ran separate lives, we now know that most people, most of the time, lived somewhere in between. There were clear reasons for each minority group to feel badly treated, but most of them, most of the time, held on to their idea of Hong Kong as home.

⁶⁴⁴ Han Suyin, *Love Is a Many-Splendoured Thing*, p230.

⁶⁴⁵ Lethbridge, 'Hong Kong Under Japanese Occupation,' pp79ff.

Eurasians and others risked their lives for their vision of Hong Kong, and returned in 1945 ready to implement it. Not until 1967, and then 1997, did this ground shift.

For so long as Hong Kongers have been able to convince themselves that their home was special and different, they have stayed. As Jürgen Osterhammel notes, domination by foreigners was not necessarily perceived by its subjects as illegitimate; indeed, in Hong Kong a long history of local collaboration is what made it work. Osterhammel also says collaboration is not always a dirty word.⁶⁴⁶ Most Hong Kongers were collaborators in that they chose to come to Hong Kong, they were self-selected. They went on to become proud active players in the place. These people existed thanks only to the colonial system, yet turned that system on its head. The result, unsurprisingly, is a vast spectrum of experience, from racism and violence at one end to creative innovation and true love at the other, with many, many variations in between. Douglas Kerr describes it as 'one of the allegories of empire. The imperial project can come to nothing unless contact is made with the native, but contact is felt to risk disaster, loss of identity, even forfeit of the soul. And so they go on together... [there is] no profit without knowledge, no knowledge without contact, no contact without transgression.'⁶⁴⁷

Other variations came in the different Chinese-nesses, described by Leung Ping-kwan and others. Helen Siu notes that Chineseness is 'not an immutable set of beliefs and practices, but a process', stressing Hong Kong's fluid and negotiated qualities.⁶⁴⁸ The numerical majority of people in Hong Kong has always been some kind of Chinese but this includes those who came from Southeast Asia, or from wildly different parts of China, or who arrived in Hong Kong after lives in California, the South Island of New Zealand, or even from the local-born families of Hong Kong's pre-global fishing villages. Lynn Pan found that not until 1981 was more than half of Hong Kong's population actually born in Hong Kong (other sources suggest it was the 1960s). She also found Hong Kong's Chinese are different, they are *sui generis*, neither ancestral nor overseas Chinese but 'those who succeed in becoming truly bicultural, behaving in a Western mode without a debasement of their own. They are different from the Anglicized subjects of the British Empire in Southeast Asia... the

⁶⁴⁶ Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, p14.

⁶⁴⁷ Kerr, 'Three Ways of Going Wrong,' p24.

⁶⁴⁸ Siu, 'Cultural Identity and the Politics of difference,' pp19-43, p19.

treaty-port Chinese of Hong Kong are a world away from the people of China; while their Chineseness is denied by nobody, it is unlike anything you will find in China proper... The treaty-port Chinese are better able to do that difficult thing, snap the tough thread of Chinese history and achieve the happy balance which has always eluded their cousins in China: the balance between modernity and Chineseness, between moving with the times and remaining themselves.⁶⁴⁹

Whose Hong Kong Now?

All this would change after 1997. Beijing chose to embed its rule amid the tycoon class, appointing a committee that 'elected' Hong Kong's first chief executive, the shipping tycoon Tung Chee-hwa. Yet even participants in the hybrid system of Hong Kong governance admit that its failure is systemic. Tung had to resign after a million Hong Kongers marched in 2003 against the idea of a National Security Law. His successor, a former civil servant under British rule, Donald Tsang, eventually left office under a cloud of corruption allegations (he was jailed and then acquitted). His successor, C. Y. Leung's time in office was marked by the 79-day mass civil disobedience campaign of 2014 known as Occupy.

The Occupy movement surprised an older generation of democracy advocates, and terrified Beijing's appointees in Hong Kong. Here was a fresh new young generation of Hong Kongers, born after the 1997 handover, keen to save what they saw as their identity in a free, in-between place. In no mood for compromise, they rejected an electoral system imposed on them in which they could choose neither the candidates nor who voted for them. This group of school-leavers, led by the now-famous Joshua Wong, Nathan Law, and Agnes Chow, had already fought off attempts to inject more 'patriotic,' meaning pro-China, material into school curriculums.⁶⁵⁰ They joyfully camped out for more than two months with banners, seminars, study areas to keep up with schoolwork, dispensing stations for water and food and medical care, and platforms where they debated their hopes for a future in which they would have a say. Crucially, Occupy had broad public support, far beyond those upset at

⁶⁴⁹ Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, pp373–74.

⁶⁵⁰ Their group, Scholarism, and its campaign was mediated by government adviser Anna Wu, a former member of Hong Kong Observers, founded in 1975, which had announced their hopeful goal to engage in the governance of Hong Kong. Relative to the times, this was almost as radical as Scholarism's twenty-first-century agenda.

how the traffic was messed up. Middle-class parents made sure offspring were fed and sheltered. Office staff and off-duty civil servants joined the throng after work, singing along to anthems including 'Do You Hear the People Sing,' from the French musical *Les Misérables*. Among those camping out were Nepalis, Indians, Filipinos, and more, all claiming their part in Hong Kong's fight for a future.

Clearly the old line that Hong Kong was just a financial centre whose people didn't care about politics was not true. Throughout its history, Hong Kongers have shown a marked tendency to express themselves, from protests against discriminatory anti-Chinese laws in the nineteenth century, to strikes and boycotts to support Chinese republicans in the early twentieth. Port workers and seamen, tram drivers and maids all joined mass actions for greater rights under British rule. Hong Kongers kept up the habit under Chinese rule, too.

When, in 2020, the latest 'mayor' backed by Beijing, Carrie Lam, planned a law providing for the extradition of Hong Kong people to the Chinese legal system, she sparked the largest mass protests ever seen in Hong Kong. First, one million people marched through the streets, then two million. Only when a tiny group attacked the legislature physically did the government agree to drop the planned bill. By then it was too late, and through a long, hot, wet summer the movement grew. Only a sweeping new National Security Law and the covid pandemic cleared the streets.

It was all a heady reminder of the spirit of a Hong Kong that refuses to bow down. Or it was the last foolishness of people who should have known better than to be so very provocative. Or both. Either way, Hong Kong now knows it is under new management. Tellingly, in early 2021, China's long-standing refusal to recognize dual nationality was extended to Hong Kong. In other words, if one was born in Hong Kong and had Hong Kong or Chinese passports, then the concept of consular protection by any other passport one might hold would no longer apply. Western governments were soon warning their passport holders in Hong Kong that this carried risks for all holders of more than one formal identity.⁶⁵¹ The risks to those of multiple or ambiguous identities only intensified.

⁶⁵¹ Primrose Riordan and Robert Wright, 'UK Says Hong Kong Authorities No Longer Recognise Dual Nationality,' *Financial Times*, 9 February 2021.

Arrests, jailings and long-drawn out trials ensued – including that of 47 democratic representatives who planned a primary to choose candidates to win a plurality in the Legislative Council. This was now subversion; subsequent restrictions of candidates and voting choices is described by government loyalists as an ‘improvement’. So, too, with the media. By arresting Jimmy Lai, then freezing his assets, the government eliminated bestselling local newspaper *Apple Daily*, the most vibrant Chinese voice for a free Hong Kong. Jimmy Lai had swum to Hong Kong as a child and worked his way up to millionaire status with clothes groups, canny investments, and media enterprise. What he loved about Hong Kong was its freedom, and, unlike many local tycoons, he joined the crowds on the streets to defend just that. His steadfast Catholic faith, his daring to call live on a BBC broadcast for people in China to stand up, his very success as a businessman—all this and more mean that Jimmy, already in his seventies and holder of a British passport, is facing the rest of his life in jail. A long string of Chinese-language news sites and enterprises has since folded. The government insists press freedom exists as strongly as ever.

Further proof that Hong Kong was under new management came with the near-total closure of its airport. Long after other countries, and particularly its competitor as Asian financial hub, Singapore, had decided to live with the coronavirus, arrivals in Hong Kong still had to run the gamut of hazmat-gear-wearing inspectors enforcing weeks-long quarantines in hotels in which one could neither open the window nor escape. Once-throbbing airport hallways for arrivals and departures were now busy only on the nights when overbooked planes carried out groups of weepy Hong Kongers, especially its younger, educated people. They were carrying their cats: they were not coming back. Hong Kong recorded a net loss of 130,000 residents in the first half of 2022 alone.⁶⁵² Numbers released by the Census and Statistics Department on 20 February 2024 show Hong Kong’s population rising to around 7,503,100, largely with the arrival of mainland Chinese. The government also admitted a clear drop in the number of people aged between 20 and 34; in 2014 there had been 1.54 million people in this age range and now there were 1.23 million. Chief Executive John Lee (a former policeman) noted a loss of 200,000 workers in recent years.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵² The British government opened a route to residence (involving a five-year wait and money to live off) under its British Nationality Overseas passports; about 140,000 have chosen this so far.

⁶⁵³ Hutton, Mercedes. ‘No. of young adults in Hong Kong continues decline, despite year-end population growth of 0.4% to 7.5 million’. *Hong Kong Free Press*, 21 February 2024.

In the harbour of Hong Kong, where it all began almost two centuries ago, the ferries still puff back and forth, carrying commuters to and from their island homes, and crisscrossing from 'Hong Kong side' to Kowloon. Since the restrictions surrounding the Covid pandemic were eased (in 2022), those ferries are again taking tourists to the bus to the cable car to the Peak, that vertiginous viewpoint over all Hong Kong, and destination for its constantly aspiring classes. In many ways, the view and the sound of the city is the same. That constant hum rises from crammed streets made into canyons by high-rise hotels, banks, and window-to-window apartment blocks. On a clear day the mountains marking out the natural border between Kowloon and the more distant New Territories, beyond which lies China, stand firm. There, too, can be found the shape of a crouching lion, which gives us Lion Rock and, inevitably, the Lion Rock Spirit. Tracing how the definition of that spirit has evolved already tells us how the view changes, depending on when you look.

Lion Rock spirit in its earliest elaboration is a Hong Kong version of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps, the sheer grit and determination to start from nothing and get ahead. Mid- to late-twentieth-century administrations loved it; a popular television soap opera, 'Beneath Lion Rock' lauded it; Hong Kong's homegrown post-war Cantonese took it as their own. Attempts by more recent governments to hijack that 'spirit' have failed. Down on the streets of the city, there are more ill-fitting suits, more bad sunglasses and obvious earphones. Hong Kongers now know they are being watched. Victoria Park, once site for annual commemorations of the Tiananmen Square massacre, is now a circumscribed place. Highway construction has cut off one side, and the large ball courts where masses used to gather are more often fenced off. Lion Rock, meanwhile, became a site for physically challenging and politically daring acts of civil disobedience: intrepid rock climbers have managed to hang huge bright yellow banners from Lion Rock with simple messages such as 'Democracy' or 'Freedom.' Each time, the huge banners, visible even from the Peak across the harbour, were torn down, but still the climbers have not been caught.

No more grey zones

This new regime was not only shutting down its thinking persons within, it was happily demolishing the *raison d'être* of Hong Kong as port city, as global waystation, as gathering place to all comers. A powerful new narrative is being

disseminated, and believed by Hong Kong's many ready quislings, that all those political troubles were nothing to do with Hong Kong being made into China at all. The official line is that all the unrest is the fault of foreign forces, specifically the U.S., funding subversion and even paying those millions to march on the street. Said senior government member Regina Ip in July 2022: 'Colluding with foreign forces is a definite no-no because of the current geopolitical situation. Some Western countries are targeting China. The U.S. is roping in allies to target China. Such action to contain China forces our country to stay vigilant.' Almost daily changes since then in everything from public language and books permitted in libraries to evolving rules on the stock market show China has asserted a level of day-to-day governance far beyond anything imagined even a few years ago. Among recent comments from the Beijing-appointed government in Hong Kong is the claim that 'foreign agents' first initiated the 2003 protest as a 'trial run' for all that followed.⁶⁵⁴ We are also regularly told Hong Kong must remain 'vigilant' as the threat of such 'terrorism' and 'soft resistance' is ever-present.

This, to put it mildly, is an entirely new way of looking at Hong Kong's traditional openness to people, ideas, and enterprises from around the world; it willfully ignores the large extent to which today's Hong Kong was made by the many non-Chinese people and ideas from around the world. Hong Kong may never have been seen as fully a place on its own ground - such notions of independent agency are anathema to all ruling nation-states. Yet Hong Kong people have lived more freely, openly, and with greater education and cosmopolitan sense than those on the Chinese mainland. Merging groups with such disparate values could never be easy. Precisely because of its different history, because of the mixing of peoples and ideas from the whole world that has helped to make Hong Kong, that fit would not be smooth. The gray zone that had allowed Hong Kong and its multiple, mixed-up peoples to thrive is becoming, step by step, more black and white.

Just as Philip Mansel saw that the key to his Levantine port cities was their non-state nature, so too for Hong Kong.

⁶⁵⁴ Hong Kong SAR Secretary for Security Chris Tang speaking in a video on his facebook page, reported by the Hong Kong Free Press, 3 August 2023.

Others never subscribed to the idea of a cosmopolitan Hong Kong and spurn it as a romantic, overidealized nostalgia for something that never was. One five-generation Hong Kong family's matriarch says, Well, so long as we are making money here, we don't care; our children will go to boarding school anyway. A gracious China coast aristocrat laughed sadly at the failure of democratic dreams in Hong Kong, knowing, from her family's flight from Shanghai in the 1940s, what little chance there had been. Meanwhile, some in-between people of perhaps Eurasian, Jewish, Indian, or Portuguese heritage in Hong Kong have awoken to the discriminations and brutalities of British rule in their family's pasts, even as they adjust to newer Chinese realities. One confided his family had been treated as second-class citizens by the British and were now third-class under the Chinese. He had no illusions that the Chinese would be as forgiving of his darker skin as the British had been. Luckily, he has a European wife and homes around the world.

The Eurasian organization, the Welfare League, now finds it hard to find people to spend the money on, says Michael Tse, one of its leaders: 'The Welfare League has lost its reason for existence because there are no Eurasians anymore. We are descendants, but not a community. We only meet in weddings and funerals; at the latter, sometimes no one turns up. Yes, Eurasians, Armenians, Jews, Parsis were the backbone of Hong Kong's first one hundred years. When it was set up, Eurasian down-and-outs were really outcasts and had no government support. But the community has disappeared.' It also struggles because two obstructive personalities block initiatives – another sign that whatever community feeling there was back in the 1930s is now no longer strong enough to prevent atrophy setting in.⁶⁵⁵

Parsis now number around just 200 in Hong Kong, even with their more liberal definition of a Parsi even if one of their parents has married 'out' (in contrast to Bombay orthodoxy which requires both parents to be Parsi to breed Parsis). For some, it remains inconceivable to ever leave their home: 'It's almost as though the city is Eurasian, just like us.'⁶⁵⁶ For many others, the time is overdue for new lives elsewhere as they grapple with whether any port city can survive without the freedoms – of expression, assembly, information and legal certainty – it once had.

⁶⁵⁵ Interview with Michael Tse, 10 April 2018.

⁶⁵⁶ Zimmern *The Eurasian Face*, p16. Another contributor says Eurasians 'move between worlds', and that's fine 'because it is something so undefined', p106, p11.

Others have chosen to toss off that in-betweenness and embrace the (new) motherland. A member of the judiciary, descendant of one of the first Portuguese to set foot in Hong Kong, Susana Maria d'Almada Remedios, is now one of the judges hand-picked by the government to act in National Security trials, and is one of the three judges for Jimmy Lai's trial. One scion of a Eurasian family that fled to Australia in 1967 chose to return to the thriving financial centre of Hong Kong, where, he believed, his children could more fully embrace what he called the 'Asian century'. Even when he took his family to Singapore to get them into school during Covid times, he insisted he would go back to Hong Kong, refusing to engage with the thought that it's tough when the only way to vote is with one's feet. Two years on, however, he admits Singapore is now home; he sees Hong Kong is stagnating. Others say the future lies in a new version of Hong Kong's past, as an offshoot of the thriving trading world of south China, of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and newer satellite cities over the Pearl River delta, which the new regime calls the Greater Bay Area. Perhaps some still dream, as in the old adage, that the mountains are high and the emperor far away – despite China's 'ethno-nationalist authoritarianism.'⁶⁵⁷

That Triestean feeling

If war was the crucible in which Eurasian Hong Kong found a fresh commitment to a Hong Kong which, though British-ruled was the only home they knew, the post-war decades would pose new questions. In this chapter I have considered what I call that Triestean feeling to evoke the rise and fall of a place due to a shift in the tectonic plates of empire which surround it. Just as Trieste had its time as a hub for empire, so did Hong Kong. Just as Trieste fell into insignificance with the rise in powerful states around it, so too with Hong Kong. The comparison cannot go much further than that but hints at the melancholy present among many who once called Hong Kong home.

We have seen Hong Kong's port city people living through 1967, 1979, 1997, 2014 and 2019, as that home transitioned from a relatively open and cosmopolitan place into something more cribbed and confined by Chinese communist state power.

⁶⁵⁷ Jamil Anderlini, 'China's 'Recolonisation' of Hong Kong Could Soon Be Complete,' Financial Times, 11 November 2020.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

This thesis began by asking not what, but Who was Hong Kong: who were the vital, but oft-ignored, people who helped to shape Hong Kong's first century, where did they come from, what did they do, what networks did they form? The goal of this enquiry was to shine a light on an important slice of Hong Kong society which has so far been given little space in formal histories. By so doing I hoped to illuminate key aspects of what has made Hong Kong special (and different to mainland China). Re-setting the historical record also helps to show that Hong Kong is much more than just another Chinese city. Instead, it grew out of a global chain of Port Cities, with specifically Eurasian characteristics.

In order to understand Hong Kong's place in a global trading world, I first described the map of Asian exchange pre-dating its birth as a port. Hong Kong's emergence was due to pre-existing figurations, namely, patterns of commodity exchange practised by long-standing and far-flung networks of peoples from across Eurasia. These networks of inter-connected people chose to come to Hong Kong, whose founding as a British colony was enabled by the weakness of China at a time of powerful Western imperial expansion. The opium trade was its siren call, not territorial conquest or missionary fervour. A loose imperium emerged to manage that emporium, which functioned thanks to its core population of Eurasian trading diasporas with all their knowledge, experience, alliances and linked port-cities.

In this bazaar, networks that long predated Hong Kong could flourish and grow. Parsi networks brought names such as Ruttonjee, Kotewall, Shroff and Master. From elsewhere in India came the Armenian Chater, his best friend Mody, the Venetian Jew Belilios, and the Baghdadi clans of Sassoon and Kadoorie. From Southeast Asia came descendants of the Kapitan Cina, namely Chui Leep Chee, whose offspring would intermarry with Hong Kong Eurasians of the Ho, Lo, and Ho Tung clans. From Macao, Malacca, Galle, Goa and beyond came the Portuguese. So too came Malays and Manilamen, Lascars and their recruiters. A clear symbiosis underpinned this bazaar: the British relied on Asian networks in order to function, and these networks needed that casual overlordship in order to thrive. Nation-state, ethnic or faith boundaries were less relevant than the networks of trading diasporas and the multi-layered, multi-ethnic intimate connections between women and men.

London's ambivalence about, and often disinterest in, the building of a lasting settlement in Hong Kong was both because of, and encouraged by, the reality that Hong Kong's roots lay more in the Asian trades and trading networks to its south than in the metropole. Hong Kong was periphery.

With a unique trove of hitherto unpublished material, we have dived deep into the world of the Parsis who moved from Bombay to Canton and so Hong Kong. Their strong kinship networks, starters' advantage, and shared knowledge of the China trade supported their role not only as traders but manufacturers, financiers and ship-owners. Above all, close ties with the British, and the Parsi ability to mix easily with everyone, explains the persistent success of the close-knit, cosmopolitan Parsis.

We then met the women and men who first mixed with each other, birthing the first indigenes of the city of Hong Kong, whose descendants continued to mix through almost two centuries, across taboos of race, class and faith. The goal here was not only to discover John Darwin's 'agents of empire', the physical embodiments of far-flung imperialism. It was also to track what Geert Mak has described as the oligarchization of power. In a family's search for certainties, family is put before everything else. On meeting their successor Eurasians, who often held large sway in Hong Kong, we discovered the importance of the networks they formed among themselves, and across boundaries of race, class and faith. Names such as Chater, Kadoorie, Li, Mody, Macumber Churn, Anderson, Remedios, Kotewall and many more forged networks in which can be found new foci of belonging.

Whereas first-generation Eurasians such as (Sir) Robert Ho Tung still felt the need to claim status through lavish statements of marriage and wealth, second- and third-generation Eurasians gained in confidence and felt less need for display. They were able to consolidate their communities despite the early twentieth-century backdrop of rising nationalism, sharper definitions of identity, and cross-border conflict. When World War Two hit Hong Kong, its Eurasians faced a situation where definitions of identity became a matter of life and death. Ambiguity offered choices and the chance to escape; it also brought new meaning to the word 'collaboration', and showed that the line between enjoying the best of both worlds, or the worst, was indistinct. Most extraordinary, in this context, is the strength of belief in their idea of Hong Kong that spurred its diverse peoples to be ready to die for it and to return to it.

The post-war world would bring new challenges, not least the arrival of millions of new arrivals from now-communist China. These migrants shared the earlier drive for new opportunities but their presence would change Hong Kong fundamentally. Still, Hong Kong's port city people, albeit often let down by the British, saw a future in a Hong Kong that stood between empires, navigating a post-war Cold War era, jostling with China and wider Asia. How long that belief lasted would vary from family to family as voices both Eurasian and Chinese began expressing new senses of identity through the upheavals of 1967, 1989, 1997 and 2019. New lines drawn over nationality in both British and Chinese law were a direct threat to Eurasians.

Within two decades after the 1997 handover, Hong Kong had become a different place. It was no longer the Eurasian port city thronged by foreigners of all kinds building a place with its own personality. Hong Kong's new management has blamed 'foreigners' for its problems, and made 'foreign collusion' a serious crime, willfully ignoring the extent to which today's Hong Kong was made by the many non-Chinese people and ideas from around the world.

Just as Philip Mansel found his Levantine port cities were both communal and cosmopolitan, so too was Hong Kong. Just as he saw that the key was their non-state nature, so too for Hong Kong. We have seen that the mixed origins and subsequent mixing of port city peoples, beyond families into networks, was key to Hong Kong.

Peoples and Prosopography

It was possible to reach this conclusion through the use of prosopography. Rather than focusing on theories of colonialism or elite-formation, I chose a granular approach, tracing specific people, families and networks as they arrived and contributed to the development of Hong Kong. Again, this was because not enough of this work has yet been done in this way, and also because this approach helps define a group I have called Eurasian. My definition of this ambiguous term has been as wide as possible, to include peoples from all of (geographical) Eurasia, in order to include not simply the products of liaisons between Western men and Chinese women but whole networks of people originating in Armenia, Iberia, Persia, India, China, Iraq and Southeast Asia. As a result I have been able to discover the in-

between people, exploring the daily life of diverse peoples to take us beyond the binary of 'Chinese city' or 'British colony'. One learns who matters by what they do. These people found the gaps between empires and made them their own, becoming indispensable to any empire's functioning.

Such an approach was necessary as we have seen that narratives from both British and Chinese metropolises fail to account for Hong Kong's special nature. Viewing Hong Kong through the prisms normally applied to British empire – from the assumption that racism or labour exploitation were founding principles, for example, or that liberation from the (British) imperial yoke would bring liberation – also don't readily apply to Hong Kong. Of course there was racism in Hong Kong, but we have also seen how poor people of all races mixed cheerfully while wealthy Parsis mixed socially with Europeans, and the sports and business communities were racially mixed; only the top of colonial government was strictly British. More concern was expressed at the time about 'classes' than 'races'.

It is also hard to argue that Hong Kong was founded on racism as most of the 'colonized' people chose to come to Hong Kong precisely because it was a port run by foreigners. In addition, neither racism nor labour exploitation have been the monopoly of the British. Chinese nationality law is explicitly race-based and attitudes to those of different hue can be deeply discriminatory. The first traders in their own people, as 'coolies' from east to west, were Chinese; class collusion between wealthy Chinese and British produced the most effective exploitation of the migrating poor out of China. The difficulty of applying grand theories about empire here is also seen when the Chinese Communist People derides what it calls the failure of a younger generation of pro-democracy Hong Kongers to 'decolonize'. In this CCP frame, British imperialism becomes a pernicious source of evils such as liberalism and individual rights. No one word or theory fits all. The fundamental trouble with castigating British imperialism in a Hong Kong context is that without the former, the latter would not exist. Just as imperial history frames have their limits, so does Area Studies, as it is impossible to place Hong Kong solely within either the China or Southeast Asia Studies basket. Only when the *longue durée* and the conceptual framework of Global History is used, alongside the work of a new generation of Hong Kong historians, do we find Eurasian Hong Kong.

Malleable ethnicities, the mixing of people and their movements and thus a diasporic perspective focused on mobility allows identity to become more fluid, hybrid, and fragmented. We have seen Tim Harper, John Darwin, Chris Bayly and others calling for fresh biographical work on key figures to show complex and contradictory layers of belonging around empire. This helps, too, says Darwin, for showing that British cultural imperialism was not equivalent to biological racism. Despite arrogance and prejudice, 'the potential for equality among persons of all races remained the formal position in law, in institutions and in official ideology.'⁶⁵⁸

Non-elite Europeans were perhaps freest to love where they chose, bound neither by religious orthodoxy, nor any money at stake. Hong Kong made new lives possible – as when Ho Chi Minh used British law to avoid a French death penalty,⁶⁵⁹ or one Carvalho Yeo switched nationalities to conduct fraud and (almost) get away with it.⁶⁶⁰ For Munn, despite the racism and discrimination, Yeo's subsequent trial and the people around it 'suggest a diversity and fluidity that complicate the usual colonial stereotypes.' When a (Chinese) clerk in the Treasury was threatened by Yeo's crime, his bosses defended him strongly due to an 'implicit trust built on long experience, mutual respect, and common interests that transcended cultural differences.'⁶⁶¹ That diversity and fluidity was, as seen in the 1940 Evacuation, badly served by blinkered bureaucrats. The point is that it existed. Bayly insists on the need to study these more complex interactions. He discards claims that a global narrative denies or ignores the powerless, the downtrodden, the brown, the female and the idea that global history is complicit with imperialism. His objection is - as we have seen in Hong Kong – that everything is more fluid, ambiguous and interesting.⁶⁶²

David Pomfret's study of colonial Vietnam and Hong Kong shows they both featured multi-ethnic populations which acquired significance out of all proportion to their numbers.⁶⁶³ But, he notes, knowledge of this reality has been almost lost: 'The presence of several generations of people of mixed European and Chinese heritage went almost entirely unacknowledged in official circles. Even the small but

⁶⁵⁸ Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, p416.

⁶⁵⁹ Sinn and Munn, *Meeting Place*, p172.

⁶⁶⁰ Sinn and Munn, *Meeting Place*, p154

⁶⁶¹ Sinn and Munn, *Meeting Place*, pp172–73.

⁶⁶² Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, p9.

⁶⁶³ Pomfret, 'Raising Eurasia,' p314.

influential cohort of Eurasians that had risen to important positions within the developing colonial state was obscured in official discourse by the tendency to identify them as Chinese.⁶⁶⁴ Perceptions of a racial category often relied on things that were not 'racial' at all, but were about language, dress, behaviour, and class. British scholarship has, compared to the Dutch, largely ignored its Eurasians; in Hong Kong, too, a dearth of historical attention has been paid to a core part of early Hong Kong.⁶⁶⁵ It is this lacunae that this thesis attempts to address. After 1841, Helen Siu notes, 'A multiracial merchant culture developed with close ties to India, London, and Guangzhou,' concluding that 'It would be naive to judge Hong Kong society as being more or less "authentically Chinese"'. For over a century and a half, its population was racially and culturally composite.⁶⁶⁶ This thesis has looked in granular detail at that composite.

As a result, this research has revealed a great many of the variations and nuances of Hong Kong society, daily life and networks of power, beyond the standard clichés of 'East' and 'West'. This thesis cannot cover everybody however, and thus shows that much more can be done, to fill in the details of women's lives, of laws, practises and taboos, and to build in-depth biographies of key people and networks.

This thesis has found the many children of inevitable liaisons that occurred between all racial and religious groups of Muslims loving Chinese, or Parsis mixing with Malay and Chinese, or half-Jewish Chinese marrying Belgians. It has found power in the margins between British and Chinese societies, in a multiracial core that, though numerically small, was nonetheless pivotal in early Hong Kong. It has found that Hong Kong was never 'just another Chinese city.' It ranked with the great port cities from Genoa to Smyrna, from Salonica to Calcutta, from Canton to Makassar to Nagasaki. It grew out of a specific chain of Asian port cities, first seeded by the Portuguese at Malacca and Macao, then with the Dutch at Batavia and Galle, and finally the British at Penang and Singapore. Only then did Hong Kong come into its own, with its visceral connection its Asian trades, and thus to its Asian traders.

⁶⁶⁴ Pomfret, 'Raising Eurasia,' p318.

⁶⁶⁵ Questions could include: what were marriage laws and related taboos; who benefitted / was punished by racial restrictions, or was it tougher to be a Poor White than a rich Indian; and etc.

⁶⁶⁶ Siu, 'Cultural Identity and the Politics of difference,' pp19-43, 28-9.

What made Hong Kong special?

As a result of the investigation into the people and personality of Hong Kong in this thesis, it has become clear that Hong Kong's existence depended not on formal lines of control or fixed borders and laws. Rather it grew out of the mixing of peoples and networks. Power lay precisely where ethno-nationalist divisions were blurred — from the bedroom to the board room and beyond. Only in its essentially Eurasian character can Hong Kong be fully understood.

That character relies partly on geographical peculiarity. Due to the closed nature of China for periods of Hong Kong's existence, and how far away it was from its metropolises (both London and Beijing), Hong Kong stood alone. Other port cities were tightly tied in to their hinterlands. Canton was clearly in China, Nagasaki in Japan, Batavia in the East Indies and so on. Hong Kong was a logical outgrowth of Britain's nineteenth century colonial expansion through Penang, Singapore and so to the north. However, Penang, Singapore, Malacca and other Malay states became part of various combinations (the Federated Malay States, Straits Settlements, Malaya, and eventually the nation states of Malaysia and Singapore). Apart from its own hinterland, the New Territories running up to the border with China (and that only for 99 years), Hong Kong sat on the edge of a vast empire which it could often not reach (and from 1949-79, barely communicate with). This was orphan, not offspring.

Hong Kong was different to other port cities, even those within the British imperial network, in other ways too. Although Stamford Raffles, who first claimed Singapore for Britain, was focused on the need to attract the Buginese traders, knowing that without them his port would not work, later British administrations in Singapore and the Straits Settlements, were more hands-on, importing distinct groups of people of specific ethnic origins to perform specific tasks; in Hong Kong, people came and went as they chose. Hong Kong had the façade of British rule, and the security umbrella of Britain and (later) the US, which did indeed intrude into local lives. Behind that lay multiple other worlds. This looseness of control required individuals to improvise, to bricoleur, to forge their own networks. We have seen in Hong Kong, in contrast to more ordered Singapore and the Straits Settlements, that its waterfront and university exist thanks to Armenians, Parsis and Chinese friends.

In Dutch-ruled Batavia, as in Singapore, ethnic division was ordered and even legislated. But in Hong Kong, in contrast to the racially segregated courts of Batavia and Singapore, the legal system was based on Common Law for all. Hong Kong had no separate courts for other races or faiths; it allowed more room for difference.

Again, in contrast to other port cities of the nineteenth century, Hong Kong's mixing took place regardless of government edicts or policies. It was by no means universal within Hong Kong as discriminations and prejudices did affect who mingled with whom and how. However, we have seen that the culminative effect of the mixing underway in Hong Kong since the first arrivals of the 1840s has made for an especially tangled web. Perhaps government neglect let this community go ahead regardless. Claiming 'Britishness' (with all its evasions, elisions and euphemistic qualities) was a way to deny Hong Kong's fundamentally mixed personality. By contrast, in Singapore, where an ethnic and linguistically Chinese majority holds power the government feels the need to encourage creation of a more multi-ethnic identity which boasts of bodies specifically to 'support' Eurasians.

Port cities around the world share Hong Kong's essential characteristic in its first century of being open to all arrivals, of any faith, ethnicity or occupation, offering a home to many diasporic communities. But several other differences stand out: the scale and contribution of the Parsi community to Hong Kong significantly outstrips its presence in other Asian port cities. The scale and contribution of the Portuguese to Hong Kong was probably greater than in other non-Portuguese colonies.

Importantly, once arriving in Hong Kong, these and other communities did not keep to themselves. They, their kin, and their networks interacted with each other, producing variations of culture, food, language and new kin networks of fascinating diversity. In addition, Hong Kong was the only home known to these diasporas, including Scots and other Europeans, many of whom can count more than six generations in Hong Kong. This Eurasian core foundationally shaped Hong Kong.

Alongside the contrasts are the similarities between Hong Kong and its Asian port city siblings, such as revenue farming. Notes Munn: 'Like its Singapore counterpart, the Hong Kong opium monopoly linked imperial processes with local trading systems and played an important role in creating Chinese capital and strengthening

Chinese elites.⁶⁶⁷ Hong Kong's farms were less profitable than Singapore's but Hong Kong was also servicing a massive opium trade across the Pacific, it was the central depot for opium exports to China, and ran a large local retail trade. The government 'experienced special difficulties in coming to terms with its local collaborators', as it 'found no indigenous elites or expatriated *kongsi* to help them manage a rapidly growing, largely unassimilated, and partly transient Chinese population.'⁶⁶⁸ This could only be solved with the growth of a local – largely Eurasian – elite.

As we have seen, Hong Kong's openness came under special pressure around World War One, as it did in Singapore. But whereas in Singapore, as Harper notes, pressure came from the British emphasizing 'a more exclusive form of colonial identity...'⁶⁶⁹, in Hong Kong, pressure also came from China's rising nationalists, demanding a more 'purely Chinese' identity. In between were the many people living beyond ethnicity in what Harper calls a *limicole* world, based on the latin word for mud-dwellers, the birds that inhabited the shorelines.⁶⁷⁰ Harper's travelling revolutionaries knew they would be freer in Hong Kong than in Singapore. Regional traders also chose Hong Kong, such as Aw Boon Haw, the Rangoon-born inventor of tiger balm. British rule in Singapore revitalized old Malay habits of movement and trade and so became a centre of overlapping diasporas. So too in Hong Kong, albeit on emptier ground, without pre-existing societal habits: earlier diasporic patterns made a new place.⁶⁷¹

Hong Kong was a Eurasian Port City

We have seen how port cities are the milestones marking the multiples journeys of Eurasians and their diasporas across the world. Nineteenth-century port cities might be on western or eastern shores, directly under a colonial yoke or guided by (Ottoman-era) Capitulations and later versions of extra-territoriality. They might be encouraged by local powers eager to secure the advantages of international trade without needing to change local governance structures or state borders significantly; they might be created in an otherwise unknown harbour as result of conquest

⁶⁶⁷ Munn, 'The Hong Kong Opium Revenue', in Brook and Wakabayashi. *Opium Regimes*, p105.

⁶⁶⁸ Munn, 'The Hong Kong Opium Revenue', in Brook and Wakabayashi. *Opium Regimes*, p106.

⁶⁶⁹ Harper, 'Singapore 1915', pp1797-98.

⁶⁷⁰ Harper, 'Singapore 1915', p1807.

⁶⁷¹ See Bayly, 'The Evolution of Colonial Cultures', in Porter, *Oxford History of the British Empire*.

and/or agreement; or, they might be a barely-tolerable excrescence on the shore, preferably ignored. Whatever their precise iteration, port cities firstly have an existence above, beyond, or in-between fixed state boundaries.

Secondly, port cities are open to all comers, offering opportunities to attract the diverse peoples, diasporas and their networks. That attraction is key to making port into marketplace. This implies at least some degree of openness to different faiths and ethnicities; it also implies an openness to other ways of thinking and behaving.

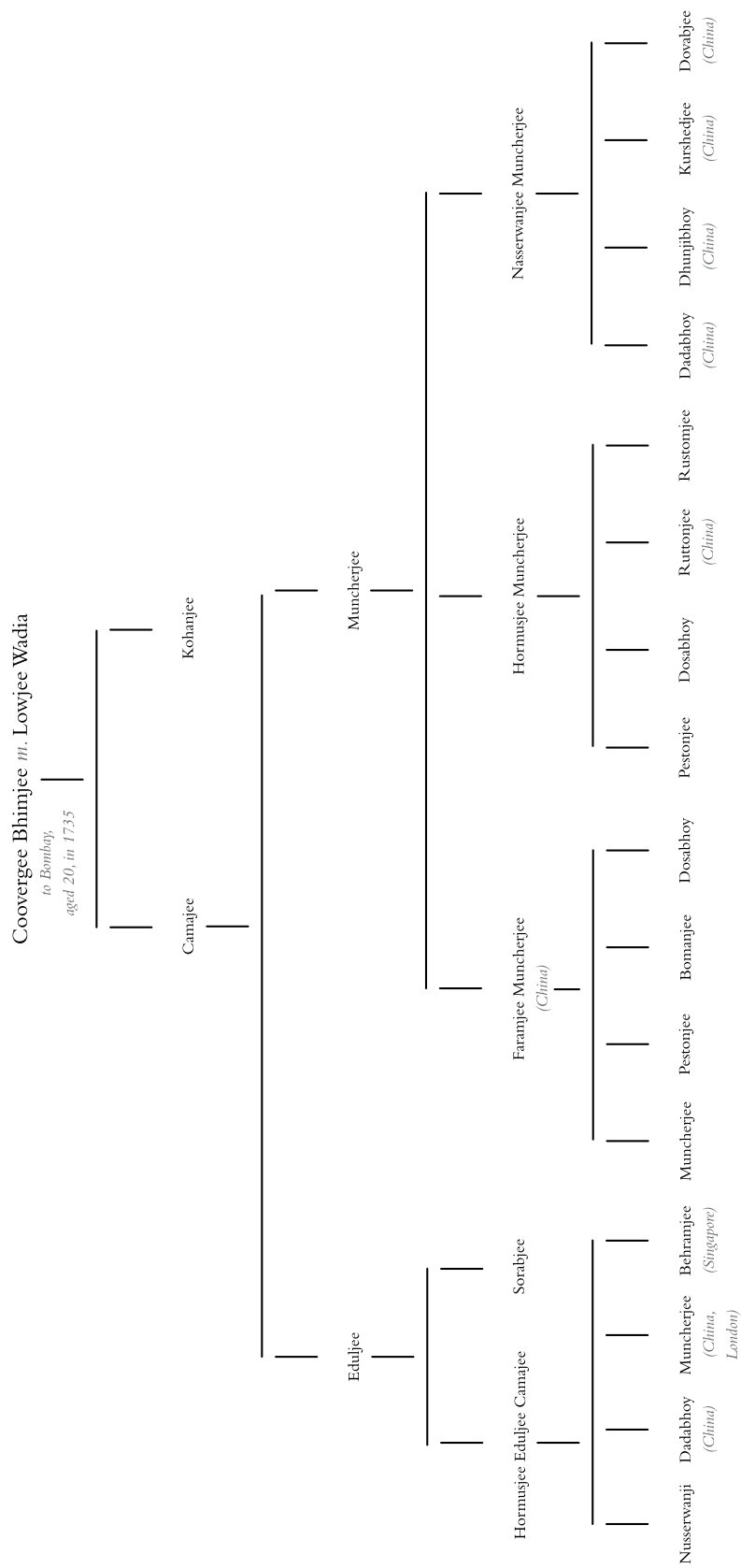
Thirdly, some form of governance over port cities is required to provide a basis of even limited trust; this is necessary, for example, for an agreed-upon set of weights and measures, and for trust in contracts, and for knowing how to resolve conflicts that might arise. This implies some basic provision of trustable information too, even if not a fully-fledged free press. Port cities need ways of operating which can be interpreted, trusted and used by diverse peoples trading diverse goods.

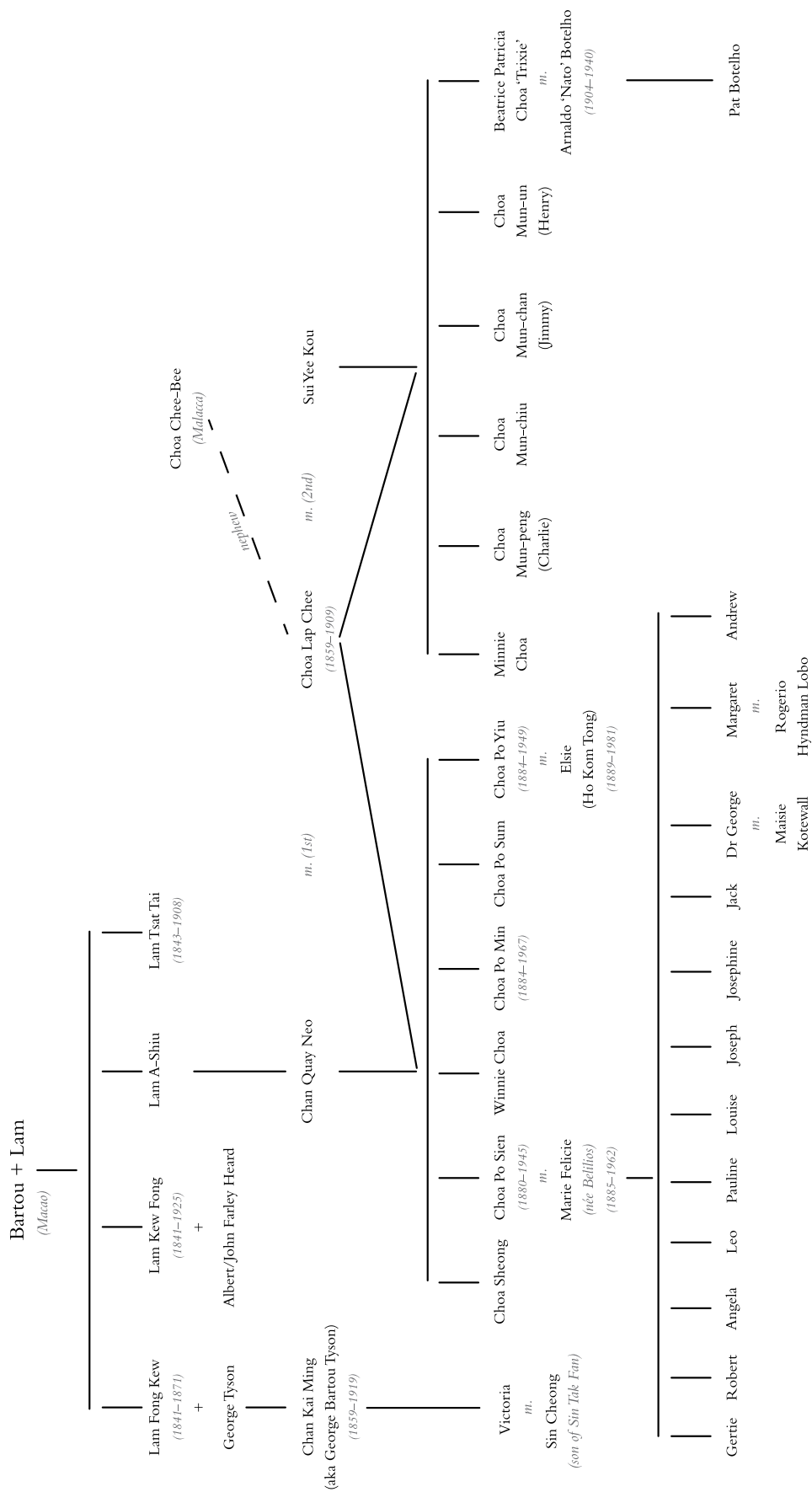
Fourthly, that governance is best not too concentrated: port city peoples prefer not to be interfered with too much. They are adept bricoleurs, preferring to improvise and make their own way. Grey zones – over what constitutes smuggling, for example, or what social mores might apply – allow the port to function easier than if it was shrouded in today's mazes of legal complexities. Nineteenth-century port cities generally allowed for a minimal amount of governance to make sure trade worked, at the same time as minimal interference in traders' ways of life.

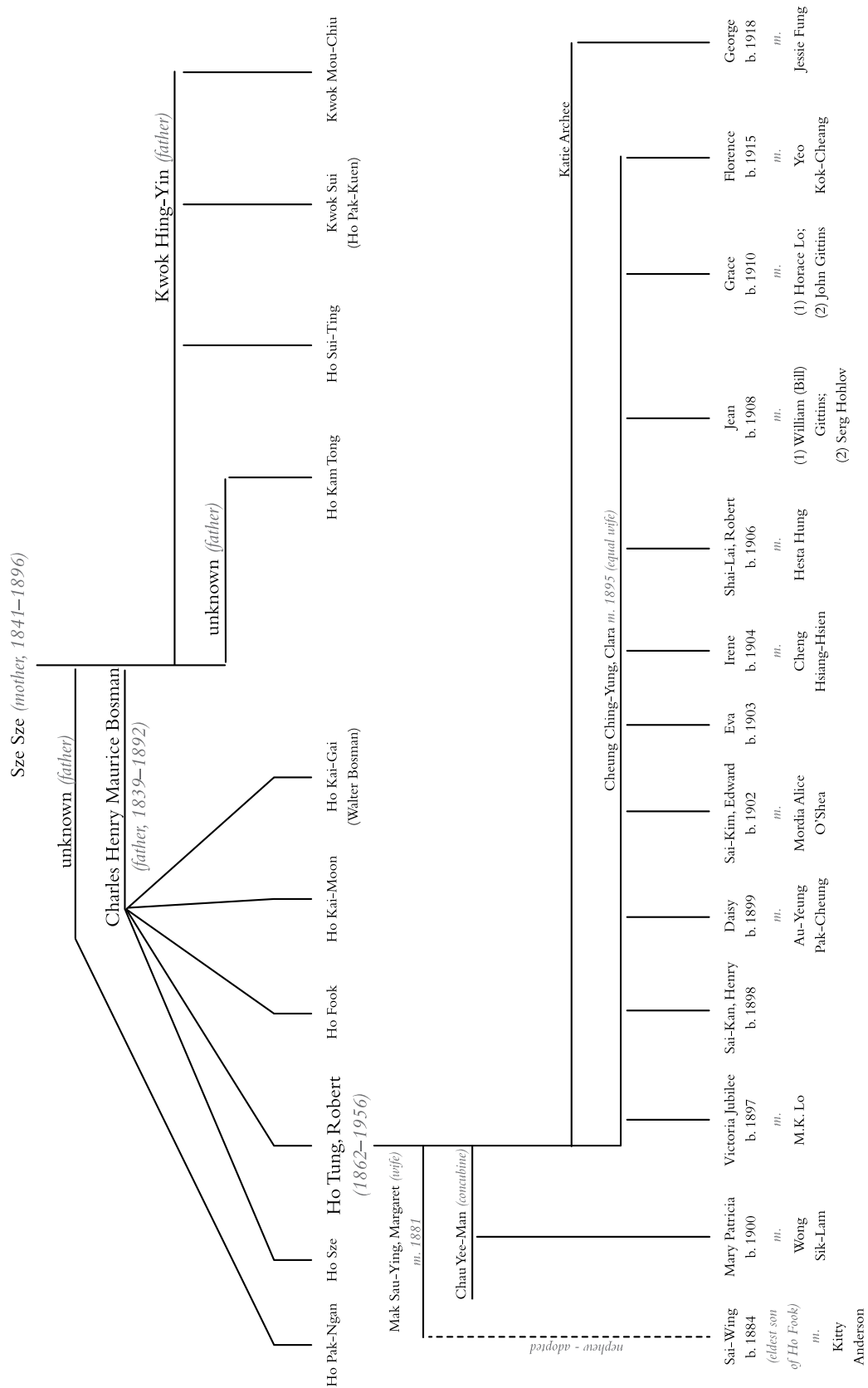
Now a quarter century after that handover of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to China, the fundamental contradiction between a free-wheeling port city, rooted in a cosmopolitan, mixed-race, outward-looking past, and a one-party communist state apparatus has become blindingly clear. Its high times were when it was neither wholly British, nor wholly Chinese — but between empires.

APPENDIX – Simplified Genealogical Tables

1. Camajee
2. Lam, Bartou
3. Sze, Ho Tung
4. Kotewall, Zimmern
5. Macumber Churn



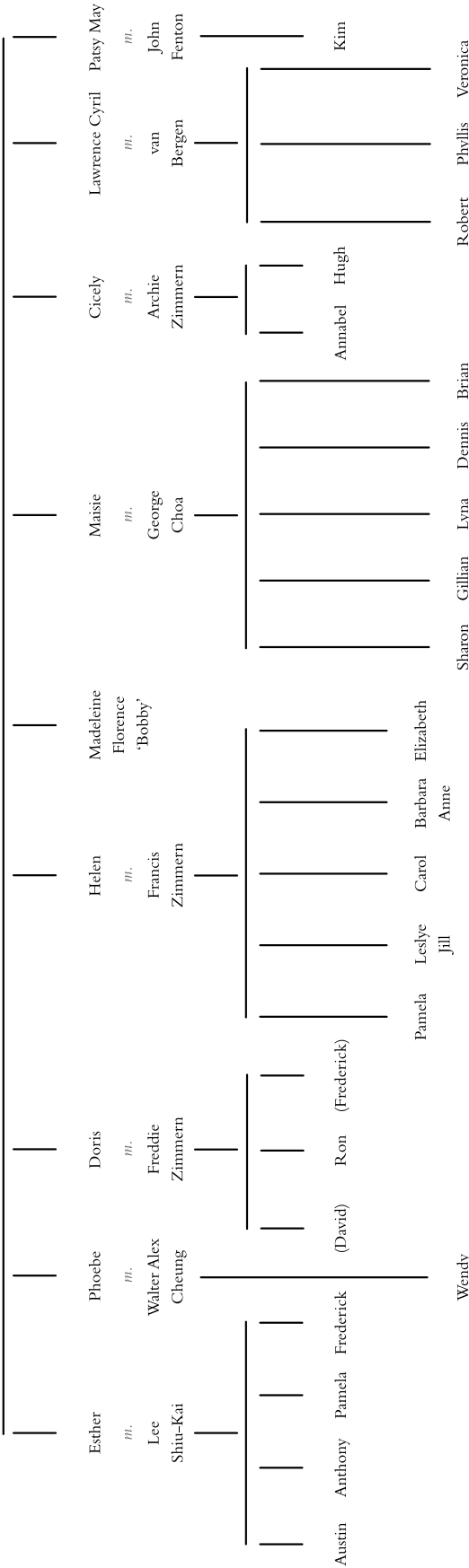


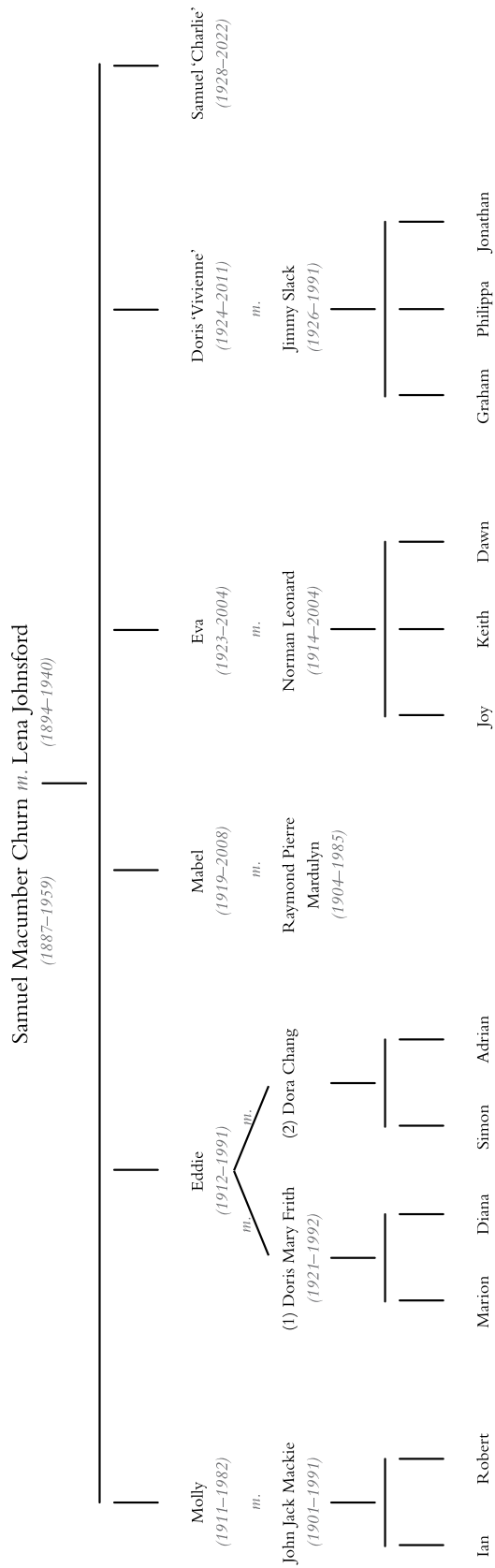


Rustonjee Hormusjee Kotewall *m.* Ah-Cheung



Robert Kotewall *m.* Edith Lowcock
(1880-1949) (1889-1956)





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HSBC Archives, Hong Kong and London

Jardine Matheson Archives, Cambridge University Library Manuscripts Room, UK;
thanks to the Syndics of Cambridge University Library

Jewish Community Centre Library

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Archives, Geneva

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Kotewall Papers, by permission

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