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Hong Kong's place in South East Asia

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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.

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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.