Hong Kong's place in South East Asia

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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.

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[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]

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[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 Aqui, 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]

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[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

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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 porterage 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

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[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 Steward 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

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[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.

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[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.

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[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.

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[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 Chinhai 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,' War[358]. 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 camel[361] 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. Intermarriage 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.

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[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 School[374] 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

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[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.

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[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 ion 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

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[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 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

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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 intermingling[397] 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,

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[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.