

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF HONG KONG

LIU SHUYONG



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Liu Shuyong

English translation by: Wang Wenjiong
Chang Mingyu

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Preface

Beginning in the 1840s, Hong Kong, a part of Chinese territory since ancient times, became a victim of Britain's persistent aggression against China. More than half a century ago a leading Chinese writer, Prof. Xu Dishan, wrote, "There is a toad-shaped rock on Victoria Peak [in Hong Kong]. The local people say that the rock has been working its way uphill, and believe that when it reaches the top Hong Kong will be returned to China. We all look forward to that day." Well, that day is fast approaching. With China to resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, and with the world focusing its attention on the place, a book in English setting out concisely the history of Hong Kong will perhaps help the overseas reading public to understand the question of Hong Kong better.

Written at the request of the Foreign Languages Press, this book looks at Hong Kong mainly from these perspectives: Hong Kong before its occupation by Britain, the origin of the Hong Kong question and its settlement, the important changes that have taken place in politics, economy, culture and education in Hong Kong, and Hong Kong's involvement in some of the major historical events that occurred in other parts of China.

I would like to avail myself of the opportunity arising from the publication of this book to express my deepest gratitude to my teachers, Profs. Yu Shengwu and Liu Cunkuan, for guiding me in my research into the history of Hong Kong and for the benefits I derived from their flawless scholarship. My thanks are also due to Mr. Hu Kaimin of the Foreign Languages Press for his meticulous arrangement of the publication of this book. I am also indebted to Prof. Wang Wenjiong of the Beijing Second Foreign Languages Institute and Assoc. Prof. Chang Mingyu of the Foreign Affairs College for the tremendous amount of work they put into its translation. Without their combined efforts, the book

PREFACE

could not have reached its readers in such a short time.

While this book is mainly based on my own research, I must declare that in writing it I profited greatly from research done by my colleagues. For that I extend to them my thanks.

LSY
Beijing
July 1, 1996

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Chapter 1

The Hong Kong Area Before the Opium Wars

The Hong Kong area, known as the "Pearl of the Orient," lies on China's southern border at a point where the Pearl River leaves Guangdong Province and empties into the South China Sea. The area covers approximately 1,092 sq km. It has a population of over 6,300,000, which is almost all Chinese. As a result of historical changes, this area includes Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the "New Territories." Hong Kong Island, with its surrounding islets, has an area of about 78 sq km. Kowloon, 11 sq km in area, is located south of Boundary Street on the Kowloon Peninsula with its offshore Stonecutters and other small islands. The "New Territories," which cover about 92 percent of the entire Hong Kong area, are made up of the main land of the "New Territories" part and a group of outlying islands. The main land part extends over a vast piece of land north of Boundary Street and south of the Shenzhen River. The outlying islands are a group of more than 200 islands of various sizes, with Lantau, Tsing Yi and Lamma islands being the largest among them. The unequal treaties forced on China as a result of British victories in the two Opium Wars gave Hong Kong Island (in 1842) and Kowloon (1860) to Britain. The "New Territories" were obtained by Britain in 1898.

Hong Kong's Ties with Other Parts of China as Revealed by Archeological Findings

Place names in the Hong Kong area appear relatively late in China's historical records. The name Kowloon first crops up in

The Records of the Military Commission of Cangwu, a military history of that part of frontier by Ying Jia. It was written in 1552, the 31st year of Emperor Jiajing's reign of the Ming Dynasty. *A General History of Guangdong*, written by Guo Fei in the reign of the Ming emperor Wanli (1573-1619), is the earliest book so far found that contains allusions to Hong Kong. A coastal map of Guangdong in the book shows localities marked Hong Kong, Chek Chu, Wong Nai Chung and Tsim Sha Tsui.

However, Hong Kong was inhabited in much earlier times. Extensive excavations have been made by both amateur and professional archeologists in Hong Kong in this century, and today the area possesses more than 100 ancient cultural sites. The large number of cultural relics and traces of human activity in ancient times discovered there point to the presence of Chinese inhabitants in this area in the Neolithic Age, some 6,000 years ago.

The earliest mid-Neolithic culture found in the Hong Kong area is the Tai Wan Culture, which dates back 5,000-6,000 years. Its sites are located in Sham Wan, Tung Kwu Chau, Chung Hom Wan, Hai Tei Wan, Sai Wan, Sham Wan Tsuen and Fu Tei Wan as well as Tai Wan. The pottery produced by this culture is characterized by vessels with round bases made largely from sandy clay, with a few exceptions using pure clay as the raw material. The stone tools of the culture included tree-bark beaters, adzes and multi-holed stone knives. Both the painted and plain pottery of this culture show the influence of the Daxi Culture that existed in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtse Valley.

The sites in Hong Kong dated late Neolithic (three to four millennia ago) are located in Tai Wan, Sham Wan, Yung Shue Wan, Shek Pik, Sha Chau, Tung Kwu Chau, Tai Kwai Wan, Siu A Chau, Lo So Shing and Kau Sai. These sites have yielded large quantities of polished stone tools of many types. They are better made than those of the previous culture and are among the earliest to have joints and shoulders, indicating advanced handle-fitting techniques. Other discoveries from these sites include ornaments made from quartz and other kinds of stone, such as

ornamental rings and pendants of various sizes, showing relatively fine craftsmanship. The excavated pottery is mostly decorated with geometric patterns. Also found at these sites were primitive pottery kilns capable of generating firing temperatures of more than 1,000 °C.

Graves dating from the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century B.C.) were discovered at Tai Wan on Lamma Island in 1989 by archeologists from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Zhongshan University in Guangzhou. The Kaolin Yazhang (precious ritual object) and stone and jade necklaces from Tomb 6 are considered first-class national treasures. The Kaolin Yazhang was first made during the late Neolithic Age in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River Valley, and is representative of the Shang Dynasty's Erlitou Culture. Those discovered at ~~the~~ establish links between South and North China cultures.

The Bronze Age in Hong Kong began about 1,500 B.C., and sites dating from this period include those at Tai Wan, Shek Pik, Sham Wan, Man Kok Tsui, a primary school in northern Lamma, Tai Long Wan, Yee Long, Tung Kwu Chau, Mau Tat Wan, So Kwun Wat, Ngau Kwu Wan, Ngau Hom Sha, Ngau Leng Chung, Chung Hom Wan, and Hai Tei Wan. The artifacts unearthed include weapons (small and large axes, daggers, spears and arrowheads) and bronze tools (axes with sockets for handles, thin-bladed knives and fish hooks). It is clear, judging from the pottery molds for bronze ware discovered at Tung Wan of Shek Pik, Sha Lo Wan, Sha Po Tsuen, Tai Long and Kwo Lo Wan on Lantau Island, that the Hong Kong area could have been sufficient in bronze products. During this period, with the increased use of pure clay for making pottery, earthenware made of sandy clay declined sharply. Potter's wheels had come into use, and pottery fired at temperatures high enough to make it as hard as crystal began to be produced. A new decorative pattern of dragons, called the "double-F pattern" by scholars abroad and exclusive to this period, was added to the traditional rope and geometric patterns.

As shown by the large number of unearthed artifacts, the ancient cultures of the Hong Kong area and Guangdong on the

mainland have enough features in common to prove that they were of the same origin. For instance, the painted pottery brought to light from the Neolithic sites at Tai Wan, Hai Tei Wan and Tung Kwu Chau bears resemblances to the painted pottery discovered since 1961 at the Jinlansi site at Zengcheng, the Wan-fu'an site at Dongguan, and the Greater and Lesser Meisha sites at Shenzhen, and, before 1949, at the Shakeng site at Haifeng. Most of them are alike in shape and decoration, being mostly vessels with round bases decorated with geometric patterns. The stone axes and adzes excavated from sites in Hong Kong are similar in shape, workmanship and material to those made in Guangdong Province on the mainland, especially those produced at the stone tools work sites at Xiqiaoshan. The sandy clay pottery with decorative incised or rope patterns and the later pure clay earthenware with geometric patterns discovered at Tai Wan, Sham Wan, Shek Pik and Tung Wan in Hong Kong bear strong resemblances to those excavated from the upper and lower Meisha, Hedishan and Chiwan sites in Shenzhen, Bengdishan in Bao'an, Jinlansi in Zengcheng, Hedang in Foshan, Zaogang in Nanhai, Maogang in Gaoyao and Gongbei in Zhuhai, all on the mainland. The bronze artifacts unearthed in Hong Kong might have been copied from those discovered on the Guangdong mainland; one of the things they have in common is that weapons outnumber ritual objects and containers. A bronze dagger with human face patterns from Tai Wan is almost a replica of those brought to light from the Eastern Zhou tombs in Pit 3 in Qingyuan and in the top layers of the ruins at Shixia in Qujiang. The bronze swords decorated with human face patterns and fitted with bow-shaped guards found in Shek Pik bear a striking resemblance to those unearthed in Suyuanshan in Guangdong, and Muluo Village and Shitang Township in Guangxi. Pottery with dragon and cloud-and-thunderbolt patterns (dating from the Spring and Autumn Period in 770-476 B.C. or earlier) and with double-cross patterns (dating from the Warring States Period in 475-221 B.C.) have been found both in Hong Kong and in more than 200 ancient sites and 50 to 60 tombs in Guangdong Province. Similar discoveries have also been made in Guangxi, Fujian and

Hunan provinces.

China's southeast coast area was inhabited by the Baiyue tribes in ancient times. In a note to the chapter "Geography" in *History of the Han Dynasty*, Chen Zan, a scholar of ancient China, wrote:

In an area spanning 7,000 to 8,000 li from Jiaozhi [in today's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region] up to Kuaiji [in today's Zhejiang Province] there used to live the Baiyue people with different clan names....

That accounts for the cultural identity of the Hong Kong area with Guangdong on the mainland in the Neolithic and Bronze ages.

Cliff carvings have been discovered in eight localities in the Hong Kong area—Shek Pik, Po Toi Island, Tung Lung Island, Tai Long Wan, Cheung Chau, Tai Miu Wan, Kau Sai and Tsing Shui Wan. They are mainly of two types, one consisting of rings or lines representing clouds and thunderbolts, and the other, pictures of birds, snakes, dragons and mythical animals. As these carvings look similar to some of the patterns embellishing bronze and earthenware produced in the interior regions of China in the Bronze Age, they may date either from the Spring and Autumn or Warring States periods. As most of these cliffs face the sea across large expanses of flat land, it is believed that the carvings were the works of the Baiyue people and probably have a religious connotation.

In August 1955 an ancient tomb was discovered at Lei Cheng Uk Tsuen in Sham Shui Po, Kowloon. An excavation team of students led by Prof. F.S. Drake of University of Hong Kong collected from the tomb 61 pieces of pottery, eight pieces of bronzeware and a large number of tomb bricks bearing Chinese characters or decorative patterns. The tomb was built in the shape of a cross, with a solid, finely made vaulted roof, which looked the same in structure as, but smaller than, a Han Dynasty tomb excavated in 1921 at Simagang on the eastern outskirts of Guangzhou. Tombs of this design were extensively built in the Guangdong area in the middle part of the Eastern Han Dynasty

(25-220). As would have been found in any tomb of the Han period in other parts of China, the pottery pieces in this one included jugs, goblets, pots, water containers, bowls, ladles, food containers, women's toilet cases, jars, and models of houses and barns. For instance, the ladles, tripods and goblets are much like those from the Han tomb at Yangshan Henglu in Dongshan, Guangzhou. The bronze artifacts from the Lei Cheng Uk Tsuen tomb, though smaller in number, were no less important discoveries. One of them was a set of bronze chimes. It was somewhat smaller in size than the one unearthed in 1945 on the outskirts of Guangzhou, and, like the Guangzhou chimes, was made in the Han Dynasty and typical of the sets of chimes which were quite common in southeast China. The bronze mirrors were undoubtedly of the Han period as they had bird-head patterns for decoration similar to those which embellished the mirrors found in the Han tomb at Yangshan Henglu in Guangzhou. Some of the bricks in the Lei Cheng Uk Tsuen tomb bore inscriptions in the *li* (official) script, a style of calligraphy of the Han Dynasty with traces of the earlier *zhuan* (seal) script. Some of the other bricks were decorated with animal or geometrical patterns. The script and decorative patterns were almost identical in style and shape with those found in Han tombs in inland China. Among the inscriptions there occur the formulae *Dai Zhi Li*, which was an expression used throughout China during the Han Dynasty meaning good luck, and *Pan Yu* or Panyu, a place name, showed that the burial site was within its boundary. Panyu was a county in Nanhai Prefecture during the Qin (221-207 B.C.) and Han (206 B.C.-A.D.220) dynasties, and was the seat of the prefectural government; the place is part of today's Guangzhou. The fact that the bricks bore the characters *Pan Yu* and not other place names such as Bao'an, Dongguan or Xin'an is a clear indication of the age in which the tomb was built. On the basis of all the evidence, scholars dated the tomb to the middle part of the Eastern Han Dynasty. Thus, the tomb provides strong proof that the Hong Kong area shared a cultural identity with Guangdong and, like the Guangdong Culture, had by then come under the ever-increasing cultural influence of Central China.

The Hong Kong Area in Different Historical Periods

For more than 500 years spanning the Qin, Han and Three Kingdoms (220-265) periods, and the early Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), the Hong Kong area was under the jurisdiction of the county of Panyu. When Qin Shi Huang (First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty) conquered Nanyue in the 33rd year of his reign (214 B.C.), he set up three prefectures in Lingnan. They were Nanhai, Guilin and Xiangjun. Nanhai Prefecture had four counties under its jurisdiction, one of which was Panyu. As the Hong Kong area was connected with Panyu, it conveniently came under the jurisdiction of Panyu, as attested by the inscriptions on bricks found in the Han tomb in Kowloon in 1955.

This administrative set-up remained in force until the early Eastern Jin Dynasty. From then on, for more than 400 years beginning in the sixth year of the Xianhe period (A.D. 331) of the Eastern Jin through the first year of the Zhide period (A.D. 756) of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the Hong Kong area was under the jurisdiction of Bao'an County, which was one of the six counties of Dongguan (东官) Prefecture instituted in the sixth year of the Xianhe period in the southeast part of the former Nanhai Prefecture. Both Dongguan Prefecture and Bao'an County were governed from the strategic coastal city of Nantou, with the Hong Kong area lying right next to it. In the following Southern and Northern Dynasties Period (420-589) the prefecture changed its name to Dongguān (东莞)* by a decree of Emperor Wudi of the Southern Liang Dynasty (503-557). In the Sui Dynasty (581-618) Dongguan ceased to be a prefecture, having merged with Nanhai Prefecture in the reign of the Sui Emperor Wendi. In the following Tang Dynasty the prefecture was abolished as an administrative district, but Bao'an remained a county.

In the second year of the Zhide period (A.D. 757) of the Tang Dynasty Bao'an County was re-named Dongguan and its govern-

* “官” and “莞” are homonyms but with different tones.

ment was moved to Daochong or the county seat of present-day Dongguan. For the next 800-odd years from the Five Dynasties Period (907-960) until the sixth year of the Longqing period (1572) of the Ming Dynasty, Hong Kong remained within the jurisdiction of Dongguan County.

From 1573, the year Emperor Wanli of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) succeeded to the throne, until the beginning of the British invasion of the Hong Kong area in 1841 or the 21st year of Emperor Daoguang of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) Hong Kong was governed by the magistrate of Xin'an County in Guangzhou Prefecture. Previously, a famine that broke out during the reign of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty had sparked the looting of rice at Nantou. When the looters were stopped, a country gentleman by the name of Wu Zuo, who had joined in the suppression of the rice looters, petitioned Deputy Commander Liu Wen of the Guangdong Marine Defense Command that the area be instituted as a county. Liu's petition won the support of government officials and wealthy people who argued that as the area was more than 100 li from the seat of the Dongguan County government, its effective administration was a problem, and that the place was constantly harassed by "sea marauders." The request was granted after the viceroy of Guangdong, who had received it from Liu Wen, reported it to the central government. In the first year of the reign of the Ming Emperor Wanli Xin'an County was established in a 56-li area within Dongguan County, with a population of 33,971 in 7,608 households. But its county government stayed in Nam Tau (Nantou), the former seat of Dongguan (东官) Prefecture and Bao'an County.

In the early Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) the government created a sub-district at Tuen Mun in this area. Headquartered in Tuen Mun Chai, the sub-district had a police patrol of 150 men. Later, another sub-district was established in Kuan Fu in the same area. As it was a sub-county administrative unit, its creation was an indication of tightened control of this area by the central government.

The Ming government also instituted a Kuan Fu Sub-district

in the third year of the dynasty's Hongwu period (1370) with its headquarters in Kuan Fu Chai in the proximity of what was until recently the Kowloon Walled City. By the early Qing Dynasty the headquarters buildings had fallen into disrepair, and the officers had to work from ordinary houses at Chiwei Village in Shenzhen. In the 10th year of the dynasty's Kangxi period (1671), Sub-magistrate Jiang Zhenyuan bought a piece of land in Chiwei for the construction of the sub-magistrate's office buildings. When they were completed he moved his headquarters there. Judging by the record in the "Geography" chapter in *Xin'an Gazette*, compiled by Wang Chongxi and others in the Jiaqing period of the Qing Dynasty, most of the villages under the jurisdiction of the Kuan Fu Sub-district were on today's Hong Kong Island, or in Kowloon and the "New Territories," with the exception of a few villages such as Futien, Chiwei and Lower Meisha. This means that Kuan Fu Sub-district had under its administration an area approximately the same in size as today's Hong Kong.

Endowed with excellent natural harbors, the Hong Kong area has been a transportation hub in the south since very early days. In the spring of the first year of the Dabao period (A.D. 550) of the Liang Dynasty, by a decree of Emperor Jianwen, Tuen Mun in Bao'an County was established as a town with heavy military defenses. During the Tang Dynasty Guangzhou was an important foreign trade port, and Tuen Mun, a harbor outside of Guangzhou, was the only gateway to the sea for this foreign trade metropolis. According to the section on Nanhai Prefecture in the chapter "Geography" in *New History of the Tang Dynasty*, Tuen Mun was already a town with military defenses during the Tang period.

Economy and Culture

1. The Pearl-gathering Industry

The Hong Kong area is situated by the South China Sea, and China's Xisha Islands there, which are a group of coral reefs good for the breeding of shell-fish, are rich in clams. As the sea tides

wash northward carrying clams with them, this part of the coast between the Hong Kong area and Hepu in Guangdong Province abounds in clams, or periwinkles as the natives call them. Pearls are often found growing on the inner walls of middle-aged clams in these waters. Round, smooth and lustrous, the pearls collected here are much-sought-after articles of women's jewelry.

The pearl-gathering industry in the Hong Kong area has a long history. During the Five Dynasties Period the emperors of the Southern Han, all pearl fanciers, never stopped sending pearl collectors to this area. In the sixth year of the Dabao period of the Southern Han Dynasty (A.D. 963), Liu Zhang, its last emperor, created a force called the Meichuan Sub-Garrison Force to man Haimen in Hepu and Tai Po Hoi in Dongguan (in today's "New Territories"). The garrison force, several thousand strong, was charged with the sole duty of gleaning pearls from the seabed. According to *Major Events of the Song Dynasty*,

[The pearl-collecting soldiers] had stones strapped to their feet, which took them down into the sea, sometimes to a depth of 500 *chi* [approximately 167 m]. Cases of drowning were daily occurrences among these divers.

The operation was indeed a dangerous one, but there were so many soldier-divers that the area's pearl quota was always filled, and the emperor was able to give his palace buildings a most magnificent and luxurious look by having all their beams and window drapes decorated with the harvest from the seabed.

During the Song (960-1279), Yuan and Ming dynasties, the pearl-gathering industry on this part of China's coast was monopolized by the government with intervals of decrees banning government gathering. This situation lasted until the early years of the Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign, when government monopoly of this industry was declared illegal.

2. The Salt Industry

During the Song Dynasty Hong Kong made impressive progress in its economy, as seen in its thriving salt and maritime navigation industries.

With a great number of salt-trapping mounds and grassy