



香港科技大學華南研究中心  
華南研究文獻叢刊（二）

許舒博士所藏土地及商業文書

# 北海貞泰號：商業往來文書

馬木池編

本書由衛奕信勳爵文物信託資助出版

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## **Preface**

Historians of the present day are generally agreed that there is a need to understand society from the 'grass-roots', whether it be urban or rural, and that this must be done both through direct observation (wherever possible) or by the close scrutiny of documents produced within that society.

In Hong Kong, we have been able to contribute towards this kind of research in two ways. The first is well-known. The New Territories have for many years given scholars an opportunity for fieldwork, and village studies; and varying in availability, documentation of different kinds may also be found, to support and amplify fieldwork.

The second contribution is much less appreciated. Because urban Hong Kong was a city of migrants, most of them from different parts of Guangdong, historical materials relating to the province turn up from time to time in the city's second hand and curio market. These originally belonged to deceased businessmen who made good in Hong Kong but also maintained links to their home areas, using their profits to invest in property or businesses there, on their own or their parent lineage's behalf.

Along with account books, bills of exchange, remittance papers, minute books and other business materials, there can often be found personal and family papers such as horoscopes, marriage documents, books on geomancy, and fortune telling, papers about ancestors' graves, family trusts, and legal problems, and other matters. There are also land deeds of sale, purchase and mort-

gage showing family investments and other transactions concerning shops, houses, fields, and other landed property. Genealogies, religious materials, manuals for writing letters and popular and classical literature are also included.

One can say, therefore, with some truth, that the work and interests of businessmen strongly reflected the political and social culture of China of their day.<sup>1</sup> But, as with documents relating to the village, it is rare for a large collection of business papers to be preserved intact. Where one such is preserved – and fortunately this happens from time to time – the papers in question can shed light on practices in the commercial sector, helping us to understand the structure and management practices of the Chinese family firm, and the Chinese business world.

Urban and rural collections may constitute the whole or a portion of the holdings of a village lineage, family, or business firm at a given time, or they may comprise a set of documents that have been bundled together because they have occupied some place of special importance. In regard to land deeds, the value of the collection is enhanced by the inclusion of papers recording successive transactions in the same properties through the customary practice of handing on earlier deeds to the new owners.

As in archaeology, where a find would lose most of its significance were it to be looked at without any knowledge of the context in which it was discovered, a document found within such a collection should be examined in relation to the other documents, and also to whatever else is known about its owners. What we

want is not only the information to be obtained from single documents - such as how land was mortgaged, bought or sold, the complexities of multiple ownership, and sometimes also tenancy arrangements - but the history of the family or the institution that owned them, leading (if we are fortunate in finding related information) to a fuller knowledge of the socio-political and economic situation in and of its home area. In regard to business papers, inter-connections are clearly of crucial importance to comprehension of the range and detail of commercial activities.

Needless to say, collecting is a wholly unpredictable business! One never knows what one may find. Also, it is next to impossible to know what may be hidden inside the bundles of papers, in the limited time available for scanning at the dealer's shop or stall. But takes good fortune to come across the larger collections, and in the way these papers are made available for sale, more often than not, we know nothing about their owners. Indeed, we cannot be sure we have got all the documents that belong to any one collection.<sup>2</sup>

Despite likely gaps or missing materials, there has yet been enough to encourage Professor Takeshi Hamashita of the University of Tokyo, and more recently Professor Chi-Cheung Choi and his colleagues at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, to promote research into individual collections and to publish and circulate their content. Furthermore, additional documents, resulting from continued collecting in Hong Kong over the past ten years, have now been deposited by me with Profes-

son Choi. These, too, will be made available for research purposes, possibly leading to other publications. It is hoped that when other scholars know of these collections, they may contribute by conducting detailed enquiries in the localities that they bear on, and perhaps find and make known other, related papers which may come to their attention.

Eventually, we shall be going beyond the deeds, the places and the families concerned to understand local history and commercial enterprise. And when we have more of that, perhaps we shall understand the development of Chinese society a little more, in all its marvellous richness and diversity.

In this ongoing task, I have been no more than a provider, spurred on by the interest and excitement of the chase. It has been immensely gratifying to know that my collecting is being followed up with such dedication and enthusiasm. I wish here to record my appreciation of the work that has been done to date, and to congratulate all those concerned with the research and production of the successive volumes of this ongoing series.

JAMES HAYES

Sydney / Hong Kong, February 2002.

## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> See my article “Collecting Business Papers of Chinese Enterprises in Hong Kong” at Alan Birch, Y.C. Jao and Elizabeth Sinn (eds) *Research Materials for Hong Kong Studies* (Hong Kong, Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1984), pp.51-52.
- <sup>2</sup> Given the methods by which it is recovered from old houses by street collectors and taken to second hand curio dealers, it is rare for large collections to be preserved intact. Scrap collectors and dealers were part of the business community even in Hong Kong’s earlier years. For reasons that are still obscure they were for long known as “Marine hawkers” and “Marine stores”. Today’s collectors are usually older men and women, poorly educated or even illiterate, who make a meager living by hunting around for saleable material of all kinds... The scrap collectors have their own methods. Where papers are concerned and their commercial value is uncertain, the scrap collectors do not immediately take all the papers available, but take a batch at a time, returning only if they have sold certain items. Sometimes several collectors buy from the same source. In any case they usually distribute saleable items among shops and stalls, knowing that one has a market for this item and the other for something else. These methods of acquisition and disposal, and the very limited space available for storage and holding available to any of these collectors and dealers, ensure muddle and loss (taken from the article cited in Note 1 above).



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>貞泰號啟事箋</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">北海 珠海 中海 路電 話 叁 十 號</p> <p style="text-align: center;">專辦 花紗 雜貨 代理 美孚 火油 水電</p>											
<p>第 35 年 8 月 27 日附</p> <p>少彥兄台鑒三月廿及四月初十日郵寄 式出諒蒙收到今將該信底寄上 速進款前來以應支領北布米 院生油稅左在其他各物亦隨而高 漲進款從速以免有絕食之虞是 所切望勿延為要 本月廿日接香港美孚來信委將 一九四一年之來往數目列存港號今 將美孚來信抄白一紙寄上請由 公號與美孚核計可也餘不盡及此 請 台安 貞泰本號台公 吳秀夫啟 旧力八月廿日 貞泰號書吏</p>											

七九二六號掛局報電部通交  
電綫無局用軍

圖 1：貞泰號啟事箋

東興  
 合興祥寶號  
 邵英章先生名鑑敬啟者寶號外步帳  
 項港幣壹千零四拾五元正仲花少步派伴馮  
 致隆到時應擴備寶號按揭手續此致  
 專候 宣統清理日昨已有付去和旦花  
 特再為奉達見字請早日將欠款清找  
 為盼并請示復是幸此致  
 宣  
 年月日 北海貞泰號啟

圖 2：信稿 CT-L47

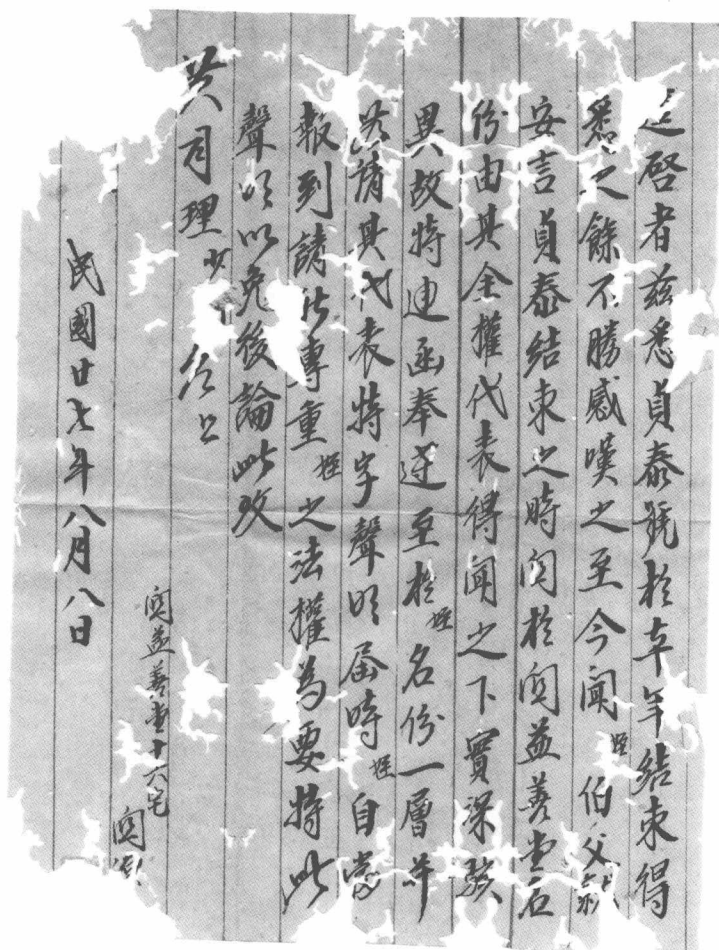


圖 3：已殘破的信件 CT-L24

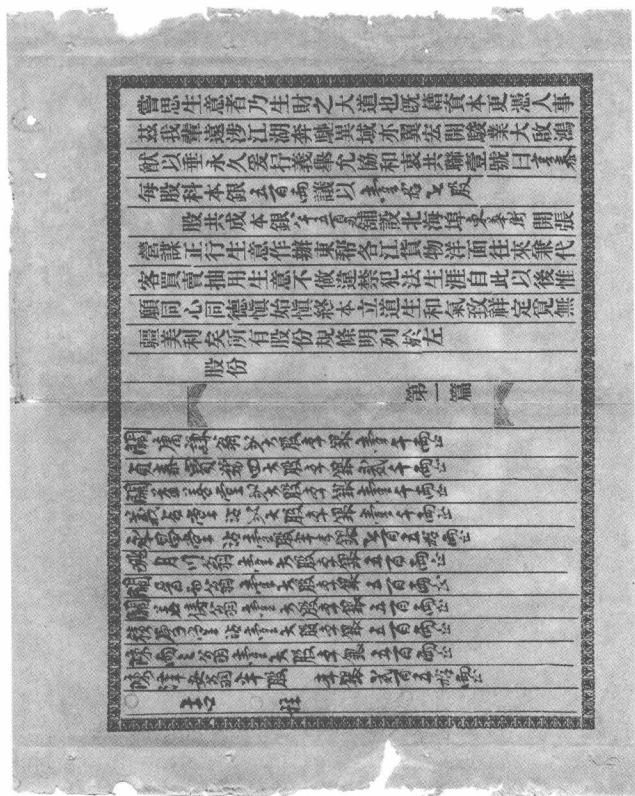
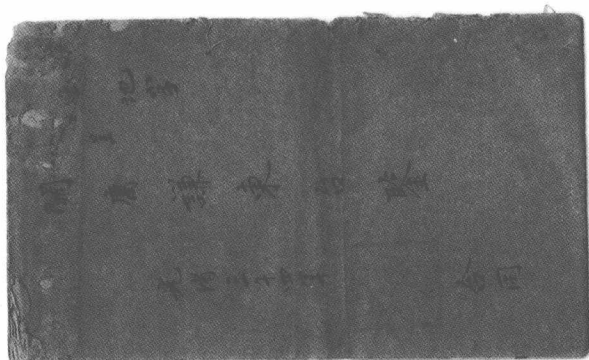


圖4：北海亨泰號1908年合同



圖 5：欽州永壽號年結

彥臣仁翁大人 青堂 啟者 日清接 尊諭 抄卷 幸切 由廣 倫統 免漢 永祥  
 銀店 玉末 銀店 玉末 瑞昌 股本 之 五 月 又 未 占 泰昌 股本 之 五 月 皆 准 手  
 登 黃星 南 為 未 占 瑞昌 股本 之 五 月 又 未 占 泰昌 股本 之 五 月 皆 准 手  
 其 餘 肆 佰 柒 拾 玖 月 〇 三 月 至 五 月 登 入 填 達 堂 作 收 珠 珍 泰 昌 退 股 股 欠  
 是 以 此 奉 復 存 稿  
 大安  
 乙 二 〇 〇 〇  
 啟者 日 前 得 接 來 示 發 悉 一 切 列 來 沽 泰昌 之 股 份 已 出  
 登 正 報 知 諸 親 友 貴 堂 所 沽 股 份 之 銀 兩 已 出 據 妥 妥 委  
 收 者 故 惟 諸 位 已 經 為 令 同 道 故 次 未 見 示 未 見 字  
 亦 再 寄 信 催 他 其 伴 考 故 但 示 糾 同 道 已 收 就 是 利 有 示  
 茂 生 竟 一 笑 買 初 一 收 盤 目 下 孔 泉 典 發 和 兩 家 做 不 要 猶  
 舖 搬 道 故 和 新 張 改 步 遂 安 公 示 永 茂 之 首 尾 還 理 道 故

圖 6：黏連在一起的信件 CT-L01

茲將來往數列呈 台鑒

接壽孔在來銀

金剛經

養月魁封、

茅由付項徽奉恩、經院刊

正月。天恩封。

由付項搬來粵乾州州國

上竹月。正長恩詩。  
癸卯

由付項撥來息班佐州州

竹月。妖鬼詩。北月。

文曲侍項拔來製西苑刊田石

竹月。正秋。惠。村。田。

由仁項補未見

臣等。謹將。各。款。開。列。如。左。

辛巳仲夏  
辛巳仲夏

十月。日。一。

利

卷之四

卷之八

卷之四

五

五下美

黃真遠堂先生

天德

卷之五

五竹月思竹

---

7

黃慎遠堂先生

笑結  
卷拾

癸丑年未日終以負

至甲子  
日竹月息  
財祖碩

連息合共來銀貳千五百貳拾六兩貳分八釐

共來銀  
同切

共來學

貞泰院書九單

圖 7：扎單



圖 8：信封



## 編輯凡例

1. 本輯所編的「北海貞泰號：商業往來文書」，為許舒博士收藏的廣東南海九江黃慎遠堂商業文書中的一部份。
2. 本輯文書分三大類，第一類是北海貞泰號的商業往來文書，第二類是貞泰號在北海的合伙商號——北海亨泰號的商業文，第三類是貞泰號在欽州的合伙商號——欽州永壽號的年結。第一類又細分為「股東表」、「會議紀錄簿」、「合約」、「札單」及「商業往來書信」五類。北海亨泰號文書，主要分「合同」、「總結」及「往來書信」三小類。欽州永壽號只有一份 1925-27 年的總結。同一類中的資料，皆依年份先後排列。
3. 扎單或稱息單，在貞泰號文書中，主要分兩批，第一批約為 1903-1907 年間給黃慎遠堂的扎單，共 13 張黏連成冊。編者將其歸於 CT-AC01。另一批共 4 張 1908 年的扎單，存放於同一信封內。現歸於 CT-AC02。
4. 貞泰號的商業往來書信，有部分仍存於信封內。當然，信封面的文字對研究者具有重要的參考價值，但編者在整理時發現，部分信封面上的文字，與信件的内容並不吻合，相信有不少是錯置的。為免造成不必要的錯誤，編者將依收到這批文書時，信件所存放的信封，不論其内容是否吻合，仍編排在一起；而以編者按語的方式，說明各信間之關係。亨泰號的商業往來書信，亦如法處理。
5. 信件中有部份為信稿，文中刪改之處甚多。現只能依其刪改後内容排印，稿件中刪去的文字從略。只在信末以編者註說明為信稿。（參看圖）