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THE HONG KONG REGION: ITS PLACE IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND PRINCIPAL EVENTS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HSIN-AN COUNTY IN 1573

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Hsin-an is a coastal county .... The edge of a coat is called pien, edge or border. A coat always starts to get worn at the edge: an article begins to wear at the edge. In the same fashion, if an officer is posted to a border district, his responsibilities are ten or a hundred times as heavy as his colleague's in an interior district. It is therefore very difficult to understand people who belittle such government posts.

These lines are taken from an inscribed tablet dated autumn 1847 commemorating the opening of the Lung-ching charitable school (*i-hsueh*) in the Kowloon walled city. They were from the brush of the then magistrate of Hsin-an, Wong Ming-ting, an officer who believed in the burden of his responsibilities.

This article seeks to examine the historical background of the Hong Kong region as seen in Chinese traditional historiography,[1] and to describe the main events of the local situation over the course of some three hundred years. A recapitulation of this kind may be useful, because Hong Kong's past is still inadequately recorded in English, (or yet in Chinese), and is too easily imagined, or glossed over, as being of no consequence. The region does possess a considerable and interesting history; though to gain the necessary perspective this has also to be seen in the context of the historiography of the neighbouring counties of this part of Kwangtung.

Ideally, this statement should be set against an account of the peoples and settlement of the area, but to provide an authoritative description here would be to lengthen this article to double its size if anything like justice were to be done to the course and com-

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[1] As defined in Chapter VII, 'Formal Classification' of Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1961). The full references to other works cited in the footnotes will be found at the end of the article.

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plexities of local settlement and the absorption of the aboriginal dwellers of the area in the past thousand years. For a general account, readers are referred to the works by Lo Hsiang-lin (1959, 1963), K.M.A. Barnett, (1957, 1967) and the earlier writings of Krone (1859), G.N. Orme (1912) and S.F. Balfour (1941) cited in the references to this article.

*Introduction**

For present purposes the Hong Kong region is defined as the present British Crown Colony of Hong Kong (403.7 square miles)[1] and the immediately adjoining parts of Kwangtung province with which there has been intermittent official concern following the establishment of Hong Kong 134 years ago. This takes in the districts round the market town of Sham Chun north of the present Sino-British frontier, occupied by British troops between 16th May and 13th September 1899[2], and the areas of Mirs and Bias Bays to the east of the Colony that were often visited by British naval forces in their suppression of piracy in local waters during much of the 19th century and well into the 20th[3]. (See map).

At the time the British occupied Hong Kong Kong island in 1841, the whole of this area, less Bias Bay, formed part of the Hsin-an district of the Kuang-chou prefecture of Kwangtung province. The place names and geographical features of the region are shown in many contemporary and earlier Chinese sources, whilst the large scale European map produced in 1866 by Msgr. Volontieri, an Italian missionary of the Propaganda, provides rather more local detail[4].

In time the British came to occupy a greater part of Hsin-an district. Their occupation of Hong Kong island in January 1841 was converted into possession by the Treaty of Nanking in August 1842. British territory was extended by the lease in perpetuity of Kowloon under a deed dated 20th March 1860 and the cession of the same area by article VI of the Convention of Peking 24th

[1] CR 1971, p. 204; this figure includes recent reclamations.

[2] See Groves, pp. 52-55.

[3] For the early period see Fox and Dalrymple Hay. Two expeditions to Bias Bay in March and September 1927 were noted in AR 1927, K16: and as late as 1947 piracy in Mirs Bay kept Hong Kong fishermen in port; CR 1947, p. 46.

[4] The KTTS of 1865 provides more detailed maps of Hsin-an and its adjoining areas than are given in the district and prefectural histories (HNHC and KCFC); see the general chart at pp. 1-2 of the opening volume. For the Volontieri map, which includes Chinese characters, see Ronald C. Y. Ng (1969) pp. 141-148 and Hayes (1970) pp. 193-196.

* For the place names of Hong Kong see *A Gazetteer of Place Names in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories*, Hong Kong Government Printer, 1960: hereafter styled *Gazetteer*.

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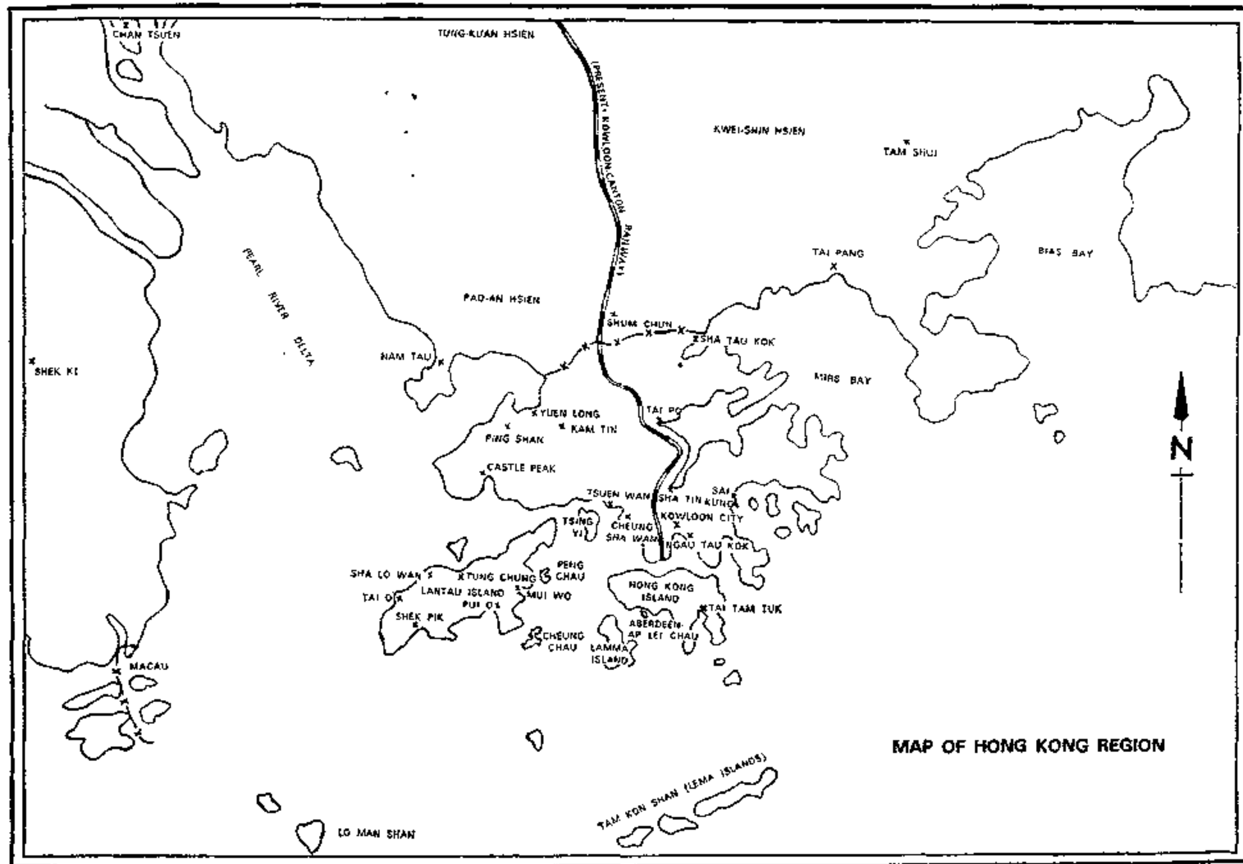

MAP OF HONG KONG REGION

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October 1860, and again by the lease of the New Territories by the Convention of Peking in June 1898[1].

The population of the region was probably around 100,000 in 1898, including boat people. These persons inhabited — in round figures — a thousand villages and a number of market centres. Seven hundred of these settlements were located within the present New Territories of Hong Kong, with many others around Sham Chun and in Hong Kong island and Kowloon. The Punti or Cantonese-speaking element accounted for rather more than half the land population, with Hakka speakers comprising most of the remainder. The boat population, mainly Tanka, lived afloat in the main.[2]

Descriptions of the geography and climate of the present British Crown Colony are generally applicable to the Hong Kong region. They have long been given in the Hong Kong annual reports. The most recent is supplied in the opening sections of chapter 18 of the report for 1974.[3]

1. *The Hong Kong Region in the wider scene: some historical and geographical considerations*

In Ch'ing times Hsin-an was one of the 14 *hsien* of theKuang-chou prefecture.[4] The designation *fu* or 'prefecture' was adopted only at the start of the Ming dynasty but the area of Canton and the Delta had long been administered under various designations that changed through the centuries and with dynastic change.[5] The oldest of its *hsien*, Nan-hai, was established in the Sui dynasty in the year 590-591; the next, P'an-yu in 703-704 during the Tang; with the rest becoming separate districts at various times until the first year of Wan Li of the Ming (1573-1574) when, finally, Hsin-an was created from one of the former commanderies of Tung-kuan district (a *hsien* of 973-974) established in the 27th year of the first Ming ruler (1394-1395).[6]

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[1] The relevant documents are given in Alabaster, III, pp. 2-4 and 6-8.

[2] See Baker 1968: 3-4. Also the Colony Census for 1911 in SP 1911: 103(27-36) and (37-38), though it does not list all the villages of the Southern District of the New Territories or of New Kowloon.

[3] CR 1974, pp. 176-178.

[4] See e.g. TCITC 41/1 and KCFC 6/10.

[5] KCFC 6/1-10 and YCKC 4/1-9.

[6] KTTC 2/93 and KTKKCY 1/1. The administrative areas to which the Hsin-an district belonged from the Ch'in dynasty (221-207 B.C.) onwards are shown in KCFC 6/24 and in HNHC 1/1. The date of the establishment of the commandery is given as Hung Wu 27 in HNHC 1/3, KTKKCY 1/1, TCITC 41/3 and KTTC 2/93, but as Hung Wu 14 in KCFC 6/24.

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This recital tells its own story. Hsin-an *hsien* was not one of the glories of the prefecture. In that useful compendium on the Kwangtung province, the *Kuang-tung K'ao-ku Chi-yao* of 1893, only the counties of Nan-hai, P'an-yu and Tung-kuan were singled out for mention in the section dealing with the customs and traditions of the Kuang-chou prefecture. These entries speak of the elegant dress and manners of Nan-hai, of its literary and cultured atmosphere, and of how every palace examination brought forth the names of successful local candidates; of the profusion of foreign and local products, and the native and foreign merchants, stationery and itinerant, and the immense shipping of the port.[1] Tung-kuan found fame as the ancient examination centre for the province; but no other place is mentioned. In scholars' eyes, the two metropolitan districts of Nan-hai and P'an-yu completely eclipsed the country and coastal districts of the prefecture like Hsin-an and another late creation, Hsin-ning, established in 1498-1499.[2] As late as 1745 the district magistrate of Hsin-an when composing an inscription for the repair of the Chau Wong memorial school at Kam Tin, styled it as a place where 'the Book of Poetry was read as early as sunrise; and culture had spread even to this remote place near the sea'.[3]

The *Kuang-tung K'ao-ku Chi-yao,* a typical work of Chinese historiography, lovingly compiled, was the work of four Hunanese who had long been employed in the province as *huan* or officials and *mu-fu* or private secretaries to senior mandarins. It deals, in 46 *chüan,* with the wide variety of subjects usually found in district gazetteers and other works on administrative geography. Those *chüan* dealing with subjects on a geographical basis included material, arranged by prefecture and district. Hsin-an is included whenever, in the opinion of the compilers, there was anything in its records that warranted an entry.[4]

As in the *chüan* on customs and tradition the entries for Hsin-an in other *chüan* are much fewer than for the older *hsien* of the

[1] KTKKCY 4/1.

[2] KTKKCY 1/1 and KCFC 7/4.

[3] Tablet dated Ch'ien Lung 10th year, 1st moon, lucky day, inside the building.

[4] There is, of course, no shortage of books dealing with Kwangtung and its many localities under similar heads, and in providing their Hsin-an material the compilers did not set out to provide a compendium of all that had ever been included in the successive editions of the standard works on the Kuang-chou prefecture and the *hsien* of Tung-kuan and Hsin-an, but rather a selection of important material. The KTKKCY seldom provides material after the end of Ming (1644).

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fu. In the long entry on hills and streams, which covers three *chuan* (6-8), only one local feature is named: the Pui To or Castle Peak hill. There is another single entry, for Tuen Mun—the old name for the settlement at the foot of Castle Peak—in the *chüan* (10) dealing with customs and check points. Only one monastery, the Hai-kuang Ssu of Hsin-an city, is included in the *chüan* (14) dealing with Buddhist and Taoist temples: by comparison, 37 columns are given to those of Kuang-chou, Nan-hai and P'an-yu, and no doubt with good cause. Only when we come to the *chüan* dealing with residences (13) and tombs and graves (15) does Hsin-an attract a little more attention from the compilers.

The entries in *chüan* 13 and 15 identify those items that most interested scholars attracted to local history and show how Hsin-an has been notable for two widely different topics. It had been one of the areas that had sheltered the last two boy emperors of the Sung in their flight and final struggles against the victorious Mongol invaders of their empire: and it was a coastal district that had forever been plagued by pirates and bandits. These entries are typical items of Chinese historiography and relevant to the scholar official view of Hsin-an.

One item, in *chüan* 13, relates to the temporary stay of the Sung court and army in Kowloon in the winter months of 1278. A watchtower had been constructed as one of the measures taken to deal with the near-starvation conditions that afflicted the fugitive army. The tower was used as a vantage point from which to look over the encampment. Relief visits were made to any dwelling from which no kitchen smoke was seen to rise in the early morning. This is a graphic and unusual way of conveying an impression of impermanence and suffering.[1] The second entry on the Sung is in *chüan* 15 which deals with noted graves and tombs. It relates to the grave of Lady Chin-fa, also in Kowloon. The brief statement is that the empress Chi-yuan lost her daughter by drowning, and that she 'filled the body with gold' for burial at Kwun Fu Mountain.[2]

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[1] KTKKCY 13/5. Two Sung 'travelling courts' are also recorded for the Hsin-an district in this section. See also Lo 1956.

[2] KTKKCY 15/2. Lo (1963) renders this as 'made a gilt statue', p. 67. The Government of Hong Kong established a Sung Wong Toi memorial park in Kowloon in 1960, and to mark the occasion the Chiu Clansmen's Association published a memorial volume edited by Jen Yu-wen entitled *Sung Wang T'ai Chi-nien Chih* which usefully brings together many old writings on this subject.

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Two other famous graves are listed for the Hsin-an district, one of them dating from the Sung period and the other from the Ming. The first concerns that ancestor of the Tang clan who married a princess of the Sung royal house.[1] The second is the epitome of the local uncertainty and danger that seems to have threatened its inhabitants down the centuries. This entry dates from the 11th year of Chia Ch'ing in the middle of the Ming period, but similar instances could be quoted from any dynasty. It commemorates two patriots named Yau and Leung who bravely resisted bandits and were buried together in one grave mound.[2]

The old records are useful for another reason. They help to remind us that the outer areas of the prefecture, such as Hsin-an, though of little general interest to scholars for their lack of history and culture, were important for officials in the scheme of coastal defence, a subject which engrossed the attention of many writers.

The importance of the islands springs not from their size or the number of their inhabitants, fields, boats or fisheries, but from their position on the seaways, commanding communications between all parts of the Kwangtung coast and the entrance to Canton, the capital of the province and the centre of the local and foreign trade for over a thousand years. They had to be garrisoned and patrolled in the days of sail because they harboured pirates and could provide supplies of food and water for pirate fleets and those of troublesome outsiders, including 'barbarian' Japanese and Western vessels.[3]

The reason for establishing the commandery at Nam Tau in the first Ming emperor's reign, and for elevating it to district status in the first year of the Wan Li reign was the insecurity of which local inhabitants complained and, probably the more decisive factor, the official emphasis on coastal defence in the twin interests of trade and internal security. A point that is often overlooked is that the seaways were far busier in the last century and before than they are today. European accounts of entry into local waters often mention seeing large fleets of fishing junks in the islands,[4] and

[1] KTKKCY 15/2. See also Sung in JHKBRAS 13, 1973:121-124.

[2] KTKKCY 15/2.

[3] KTKKCY 30/3 states 'There were two kinds of pirate on the sea in the Ming period; our own robbers and those of outside barbarians'.

[4] e.g. Collingwood p. 16 ('As we approached the coast, great numbers of junks, with mat sails and two masts, appeared the high poops of which gave them the strange aspect of plunging headlong into the water') and Des Voeux II:204 ('at Lamma Island .... there was visible a very large number of fishing junks packed closely together').

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various local accounts show that many craft came from northeast Kwangtung and elsewhere for the seasonal fishing.[1] The presence of pirate fleets, sometimes in very large numbers, was also a feature of the local scene.[2]

This activity, and the importance it gave to the local seaways is reflected by the Chinese records. The *Kuang-tung K'ao-ku Chi-yao* gives what at first appears as a disproportionately large amount of space to the subject of coastal defence.[3] The provincial gazetteer devotes many pages to maps of the coast line and the off-shore islands, and it is significant that these are included in the coastal defence section and not in that dealing with administrative boundaries.[4] Another long work, the *Kuang-tung T'u-shuo,* which deals with the administrative geography of the province, gives maps that show the outer islands in the districts on each side of the Pearl River delta. Some of these maps showing outlying areas are blank, for all but a corner of a page, but have still been included.[5] It also lists the garrisons and naval forces responsible for the area.

In the Hong Kong region, Lantau and the islands are the subject of much of an article by Hsü Tei-shan on Hong Kong and its past, included in the compendium to the exhibition of Kwangtung Culture assembled at the University of Hong Kong in 1940.[6] As is to be expected, the fall of the Sung takes up much of his attention,[7] but he then considers Lantau itself. Hsü's discursion on one of its Chinese names, Tai Yue Shan, is relevant here because it

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[1] Orme, para 53; CR 1947, p. 10.

[2] Lo-shu Fu, p. 597 has a long note on pirates in the Ladrones c. 1779-1810.

[3] KTKKTY 30/1-11. See also chüan 28 on military matters.

[4] KTTC, vol. 2, pp. 2394-2433, especially 2406-2410 for the islands between and outside Hong Kong and Macau, the Ladrones. Two chüan, 123-124, (pp. 2359-2442) deal with coastal defence. The district maps for the Delta are in chüan 83, Hsin-an at pp. 1454-5 and Hsiang-shan at 1464-5. The late Ming work *Wu-pei Chih* lists posts, garrison strengths and ships for the Central, East and West *lu* of Kwangtung; chüan 215/12-13, 15-16 and 17, 18 being of special relevance to Hsin-an and the adjoining area. The maps for the outlying parts of the Canton Delta are in chüan 210/9-10 and 215/6-7. For this work see Franke, p. 209. Ku Yen-wu's celebrated *T'ien-hsia chün-kuo li-ping shu* has eight chüan (97-104) on Kwangtung, much of which is devoted to military organisation and defence.

[5] See the general map at the beginning, 1-2, and detailed maps under reference chüan 11-12/7-9.

[6] KTWW, pp. 425-426.

[7] ibid. He gives a clear exposition of the various problems surrounding the identification of the various places at which the last struggles of the Sung occurred.

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indicates that the main users of the outer islands through the centuries were probably outsiders, and not Cantonese. Hsü points out that Fukien people use the character *yue* (*shü*) to mean a small island, and use the characters *chou* and *shan* for larger ones: whereas the Kwangtung people rarely use *yue* for this purpose. He cites this, together with the use of the homophonous character for 'fish' in the name for Lantau given in the *Ta Ch'ing I T'ung Chih* of 1738, to suggest that the persons who first gave the island this name were either fishermen or pirates from Fukien. There may be something in what Hsü says, because Giles', Eitel's and Wells Williams' dictionaries all support the Fukienese usage of 'Yue'.[1] Hsü states that the 36 'Yue' round Tai Yue Shan, mentioned in the older Chinese local sources,[2] are islands of this kind, and derive their name in this way. The use of these important local seaways by turbulent Fukienese seamen helps to explain official concern with security.

I shall conclude this section on Hsin-an in Chinese historiography by doing what the Chinese histories do not do; considering the outer islands as settlements and, for the purposes of this article, showing their former connection with parts of present-day Hong Kong.

Most of the Hsin-an and adjacent islands are shown on the 1:20,000 British maps of the Hong Kong area, published in 1948 but based on earlier mapping. They have not been included in the latest maps, now issued in full[3] because since 1949 it has no longer been possible to land survey parties on or overfly adjacent Chinese territory, to the disadvantage of all geographers and historians.

By the late 19th century, it seems, their settled inhabitants were mostly Hakkas who had strong economic ties with Hong Kong island, Cheung Chau and Tai O on Lantau. Many women came on marriage to Hong Kong and the inner islands, especially to Lantau. Private property also linked the islands and the mainland, in that some of them belonged in whole or in part to the Wong clan of Nam Tau and Cheung Chau.[4] These connections were

[1] Giles, p. 593; Eitel, p. 919; Wells Williams, p. 819. The last-named states 'An islet which has level arable land at the foot of its hills; applied to many islands on the coast of Fukien'.

[2] e.g. TMITC chüan 79.

[3] Cooper, p. 137.

[4] See Hayes 1963: 90-92 for this major local lineage.

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overlooked in 1898 when only the inshore islands were included in the territory that Britain requested be leased to her at that time.

What were the islands like? I have spoken with several old men who now live on Lantau but were born on two of the eight or more islands in the Lo Man Shan group in 1891 and 1893, and with several younger men. Their accounts show that there were long-settled villages there, with padi and sweet potato fields. There were also flourishing inshore fisheries using the largest types of stake net.[1] These were owned by village families, and the catches were salted and taken to Macau by a public ferry operated by local people. Salt, which was needed in large quantities for the stake net fisheries, was bought mostly in Cheung Chau, where it was said to be cheaper than in Macau. This was the position in my informants' youth, early in this century. Some of the islands belonged to Hsin-an *hsien,* others to Hsiang-shan, but this allocation for administrative purposes was less important than the economic and other ties which dictated the connections favoured by its inhabitants. Wind and sea also affected links in the different seasons of the year.

Hsin-an and the outlying islands were thus part of the historical, strategical, social and economic life of the Canton Delta in the late Ch'ing period. The safety of their seaways was likely always to have been an important consideration with the provincial government. This contrasts with the relative unimportance of Hsin-an's history and record of scholarship when compared with the older *hsien* of the Kuang-chou prefecture.

2. *The principal events in the local history of the Hong Kong region since the establishment of Hsin-an hsien in 1573*

As already mentioned in the Introduction, the Hsin-an district, to which the Hong Kong region belongs, was established as a separate administrative division of the Kuang-chou prefecture in 1573. The area was then separated from the old Tung-kuan district in response to problems of defence. It followed upon a petition from local persons which complained that because it was 100 *li* from Tung-kuan City, 'barbarians and dwarves',[2] had been able

[1] The village representative of Shek Pik on Lantau island (b 1899) and friends of the same age had found regular work there in their youth.

[2] HNHC 14/2. I have followed Peter Y. L. Ng's rendering of the character *i*, pp. 143-144.

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to play havoc in it. The Japanese *wo-jen* had been particularly active. In 1571 the small walled town of Tai Pang on Mirs Bay in the northeast of the district had sustained a siege of over forty days by Japanese pirates equipped with scaling ladders.[1]

The district gazetteer gives an account of the troubled times at the end of the Ming period, which brought much misery and suffering to the people of the district, since famine accompanied the disturbances.[2] These disorders lasted for a considerable time. It is reported that Tai Pang was held for nine years against all comers by a band of soldiers.[3] The clan record of the Tsui family of Shek Pik contains a vivid account of the disasters of the time, as it affected their relatives and friends in their old home near Tung-kuan city which was the centre of an unsuccessful revolt against the new dynasty.[4] These disturbances extended to the present New Territories. A former officer of the Ming, Li Man-wing, held this area on his own account between 1647 and his surrender to the new dynasty in 1656, and the walls and moats of the principal villages of the Tang clan in the New Territories are said to date from this time.[5] The land presented a pitiable sight in these years: there was much burning and pillaging and many of the inhabitants fled. During this time, it was said, 'The ground was covered with bones, in the day time nothing could be heard but the hum of flies, and at night the voice of weeping.[6]

The evacuation of the coast in the early years of the K'ang Hsi reign between 1662-1669 followed soon after these prolonged miseries and had a profound effect on the lives of the population and on the pattern of future settlement.

Under instructions from Peking, the provincial authorities required the evacuation of the coastal areas of Kwangtung. The provinces of Shantung, Chekiang, Kiangsu and Fukien were also affected to varying degrees.[7] This measure was in accordance with a five-point plan to deal with the pro-Ming ruler of Formosa, Cheng Ch'eng-kung, suggested by one of his former lieutenants

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[1] HNHC 13/7.
[2] HNHC 13/8-9.
[3] HNHC 13/9-10.
[4] JHKBRAS, 7 (1967), p. 154.
[5] Sung Hok-p'ang in HKN, VIII, No. 2:107-108.
[6] *Ibid*, presumably a quotation from the Tang clan's genealogical record. The YCKC has a lengthy entry on the disorders of this troubled time, chuan 4/46-60.
[7] Hsieh Kuo Ching, pp. 585-593.

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who had gone over to the Manchus.[1] Its adoption was due to a conviction that Cheng's compaigning against the new dynasty could not be continued if aid and supplies were denied him in this way. As the plan has it, 'the end of the enemy comes without war'.[2]

Enforcement of this drastic measure was extended to the Hsin-an and adjacent districts of Kwangtung in 1661. Two inspections determined the areas to be cleared. At the time of the first inspection up to a distance of 50 *li* from the coast, it was calculated that two-thirds of the territory of the *hsien* would be affected. A year later the boundary was extended further inland, and what remained of the district was to be absorbed into the adjoining Tung-kuan county.[3] By the 5th year of K'ang Hsi, Hsin-an had ceased to be a separate administrative district.

When the new boundaries were fixed, the inhabitants living outside them were given notice to move inland. These orders were enforced by troops. The result was that whole communities were uprooted from their native place, deprived of their means of livelihood and compelled to settle where they could. The rural people risked their lives if they ignored the government edict to move, or ventured back into the prohibited area. It is recorded that about 16,000 persons from Hsin-an were driven inland. Only 1,648 of those who left are said to have returned when the evacuation was rescinded in 1669.[4] The survivors' hardships did not end when they returned to take up their interrupted lives in their old homes, for it is recorded that destructive typhoons in 1669 and 1671 destroyed the new houses in many places.[5]

This chapter of unprecedented hardship and suffering has had a great impact on the minds of local people and their descendants. It is recalled in the genealogies and traditions of some of the long-settled clans of the district: it is commemorated in the construction and continued repair of temples to the two officials, a Governor of Kwangtung and a Viceroy of the Liang-kuang, who strove to have

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[1] Hsieh, pp. 565-566.

[2] Hsieh, pp. 566 and 580-581.

[3] For the local areas to be cleared see Lo, 1963, pp. 94-95. See also Sung 1939, which details some local events on land and sea.

[4] Barnett, 1957, p. 262. A supplementary check in 1667 gave 3,667 persons still living within the district; ibid, p. 263. We cannot be sure whether the figures relate to persons or only to males over 16; or whether they are accurate.

[5] HNHC 13/3.

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the order rescinded:[1] and it was remembered centuries later by the manufacture and sale by pedlars of images of the two men, as recorded for the Yuen Long district of the New Territories at the end of the 19th century.[2]

Wherever it touched the lives of men the Evacuation is recorded in the histories of the districts, prefectures and provinces to which they belong.[3] And as in the Hsin-an district, it appears that persons of other parts of the Kwangtung province erected temples to Governor Wong Lai-yam, and in some cases jointly to him and one or other of the viceroys of the time.[4]

I have already explained the effect of the Evacuation upon the pattern of settlement. Had there been none, it is conceivable that the number of Hakkas in the region would have been much less than the 44,375 recorded at the 1911 Hong Kong census, amounting to almost half the then rural population. However, it is also possible that the Hakka influx might have come in any case, leading to pressure on the land and to the 'wars' that occurred elsewhere in the province between the two groups. The useful summary of Hakka origins and history given by Lo Hsiang-lin in *Thirty Years of Tsing Tsin Association*[5] encourages this view. Under the title *K'o-chia Yuan-liu K'ao*, it details Hakka migration to the south and their distribution in Kwangtung.[6] Without the Evacuation, however, Hakka immigration into this area might not have been assisted by the government as it was after the order was rescinded.[7]

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[1] HNHC 7/17 lists three, styled "Wang Hsun-fu Tz'u", two of them in our region, at Sha Tau Hui and Shek Wu Hui; besides the "Chou Wang Erh-kung Shu-yuan" at Kam Tin (not listed but see Sung, HKN, VIII, Nos. 3-4:207, and Sung 1939).

[2] Hayes, 1962, p. 91 and note 50.

[3] See e.g. the statements included in the gazetteers for the Kuang-chou and Ch'ao-chou prefectures of Kwangtung: KCFC 80/20-29, and CCC, chüan 2 of the Ta Shih-chih/12-15.

[4] Besides the Hsin-an temples already mentioned, see e.g. the eight in Shun-te county noted in the prefectural gazetteer, KCFC 67/23.

[5] pp. 1-106.

[6] See especially the maps opposite pp. 34 and 56. Also Lo 1965, with its records of the movements of forty lineages.

[7] See HNHC 9/1, Lo, 1963 p. 104 and the reference to the rehabilitation work in Hummel, p. 777.

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The Manchu dynasty was at its strongest and most prosperous from the middle years of the K'ang Hsi reign on until late in the Ch'ien Lung period. This enabled the country to recover and consolidate after the disasters of the late Ming and the troubled period of transition to the Ch'ing; but it is necessary to remember that throughout these years Hsin-an remained a border region receiving new settlers. In the present New Territories this period saw many newcomers settle in old villages or found new ones. Besides the rehabilitation of old fields, there was apparently much new land to be opened for the taking. When the first ancestor of the So clan of So Uk, Kowloon, arrived in 1739 he called his new home Mau Tin Tsuen or Village of the Rough Grass Fields; and his descendants long used this name before 'So Uk' came into common usage.[1] Life for all these persons was hard, and although the empire was in good hands, it seems likely that inhabitants of these coastal areas of the southeast were often subject to attack from marauders. The Ho family of San Tsuen, Pui O, Lantau say that a founding ancestor was killed by pirates; by calculation from the clan record,[2] about the year 1710. This obliged villagers to site their settlements with care. In this period of resettlement and consolidation several of the Lantau villages, though getting a living from the sea, were by design located at some distance from it. It is only in more recent times, say the present elders, that they moved to lower sites nearer the shore.[3]

From time to time, pirates became a particular menace, and it was not possible for the authorities to ignore their activities. A period of especial distress began for the people of Hsin-an, Tungkuan and other coastal counties in the later years of the Ch'ien Lung reign. The genealogy of the Cheung clan of Pui O records:

> In the 53rd and 54th year of Ch'ien Lung, a Tung Kuan man, Tam Ah-che became a sea robber. He robbed and killed, burned houses, in great measure, took away the men as slaves and women also. The local officials and soldiers would not dare to face these robbers.[4]

The Cheungs and other villagers later took steps in their own defence. The village council held a meeting and decided to turn

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[1] Hayes, 1970, p. 158.
[2] Ho-shi Ts'u-pu; in manuscript.
[3] Removals on feng-shui grounds are excluded from this statement.
[4] Chang-shi Ts'u-pu; in manuscript.

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the settlement into a fortress to guard against marauders. This involved construction of a walled enclosure, built of stone, and the replacing of the existing wooden gateway by a stone structure on the advice of the writer of the clan record, then an old man. As the positioning of the wall and its main gate was of great importance, for geomantic reasons as well as military considerations, a message was sent to Shing Mun* to invite a man named Cheung Lam-to, presumably a noted geomancer and perhaps a distant relative, to advise on the siting and on auspicious days for carrying out the work. The record ends:

> Work began on the 13th day of the 8th moon of the 8th year of Chia Ch'ing, and the gate was fixed on the 16th day. All the village men and women co-operated in the work which took a month to complete.

Other areas of the Delta suffered in these years. In 1789, the 54th year of the Ch'ien Lung reign, an official of Hsiang-shan, the district in which Macau is situated, led an expedition in person against a considerable pirate known as the 'wave-leveller'.[1]

The scourge continued in the Delta and riverine areas of Kwangtung for over twenty years, and reached its worst proportions in the years 1807-1810. An interesting account of an enforced stay of eleven weeks and three days with a pirate fleet in 1809 was given by Richard Glasbrooke, the mate of an East Indiaman, who was captured by them. This fleet spent a long time on and near Lantau which probably suffered from their levies and depredations.[2] One of these pirates, Cheung Po-tsai, is remembered today in the Hong Kong region, where local stories link many places with his activities.[3] With the help of the Macau authorities whose squadron fought a sea battle off Lantau in January 1810, Cheung was blockaded in the shallow waters of the bay of Hsiang-shan and was induced to capitulate with over 270 junks, 16000 men, 5000 women, 7000 swords and jingals and 1200 guns.[4]

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[1] Waley, 1956, p. 176.

[2] Neumann, pp. 97-125.

[3] Lo, 1963, pp. 106-118. See also the Ch'ao-lien of Hsin-hui gazetteer pp. 281-284 and Centenary History of Hong Kong, pp. 12-14. Cheung's memory lingers strongly in the region, though most attributions are unsubstantiated and many stories are probably apocraphal.

[4] Montalto de Jesus, pp. 231-248: he calls him Cam Pao Sai or Chang Pao.

*In the Tsuen Wan sub-district of the New Territories. See *Gazetteer*, pp. 147-148.

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Pirates continued to be a local nuisance, however, and there seems to have been no end to their depredations throughout the 19th century. An inscribed tablet dated 1834 outside the Tin Hau Temple at Peng Chau, off southeast Lantau, records a petition from fishermen against the local officials' practise of using their craft as decoys to catch pirates; and the Viceroy's instruction that the commandeering of craft for this purpose should stop and that boats should be built for the work.[1] A few years later, in the early years of the Colony, the Hong Kong authorities and the British naval forces at their disposal were constantly having to take notice of piracies and attacks, great and small, that happened on their very doorstep. The pirates of the 1840s and 1850s were often in fleets, as in Cheung Po-tsai's time.[2] The Royal Navy was frequently involved in their suppression, and some major expeditions were mounted against the leading pirate fleets. Grace Fox's *British Admirals and Chinese Pirates* gives an interesting account of the period from the establishment of the China station in 1834 up to 1869.[3] It was not until controlling legislation on the registration of native craft was enacted and enforced in the late 1860s that it became more difficult for pirate craft to operate from Hong Kong's ports.[4]

The local population was the usual victims of these pests. In 1856 the captain of *H.M.S. Sampson* reported an action off Tsing Yi, close to Hong Kong, with a number of pirate junks wearing the flag of the Taipings. They were identified as pirates with stolen property by a local fisherman and others, whereupon they were pursued by the *Sampson's* boats and five of their number destroyed. The boat crews freed two market craft with several passengers who had been confined by the pirates for several days, and at least one fishing boat that they had taken from its owner.[5] Wade, then Chinese Secretary to the Hong Kong government, records (1852) how persons returning to their homes for the lunar new year preferred to travel by steamer than by passage boat, for this reason.[6]

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[1] Tablet dated Tao Kuang, 15th year, 7th month, 19th day. It was apparently one among many erected at this time in places along the Kwangtung coast.

[2] See the striking account given in *Illustrated London News*, 28th March 1857, p. 283.

[3] For local events see the chronological record for Hong Kong's early years in Mayers, Dennys and King, pp. 55-115.

[4] SP 1888, p. 258.

[5] Schofield papers.

[6] Fox, p. 120.

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Local people were placed in a difficult position when pirates or, in periods when China was at war with Britain and her allies, imperial war junks occupied their anchorages. At least two such instances occurred in the 1850s. In February 1857 two British vessels attacked war junks at the Chinese naval anchorage of Tung Chung on Lantau where there was also a fort and permanent garrison. The local population which had probably taken no part in the fighting had to make its peace with the squadron the day after it had burned the junks and dismantled some of the batteries on shore. An offering of two bullocks and some pigs, was sent with a letter from the elders begging the commander to spare their settlement.[1] The same thing happened at Tai O, also on Lantau, in November 1854, when an expedition was sent to deal with pirate junks that had fired on the chartered steamer *Queen*, an American naval vessel. After shelling and an attack by the boats of the squadron, the pirate junks and storehouses were destroyed. An American naval officer, Lieutenant G. H. Preble, captured a pirate flag, inscribed with characters which, he wrote, 'state it is the flag of Lue-ming-suy-ming of the Hong Shing-tong Company, Chief of the Sea Squadron, and that he takes from the rich and not from the poor, and his flag can fly anywhere'. Local people did not see him in quite this light, for Preble records that 'no sooner had we destroyed the piratical vessels, than a large fleet of fishing junks came into the Bay rejoicing and anchored'. These persons had to drive off a pirate attempt to take and make off in their boats during the night. The next morning a deputation of the chief men of the village came on board his steamer 'with a present of chickens, pork, fish, etc.'[2]

In this period, as at an earlier time, villagers took what measures they could to protect themselves from such villains. In the larger places like Cheung Chau, it was apparently possible for local people to prevent their being taken over by pirates as had happened at Tai O. As I have described in another place, their leaders established a Security Bureau in the early 1850s and repaired it when trouble again threatened some years later.[3] In the villages

[1] *Illustrated London News*, 9th and 16th May 1857, pp. 463, 473-474.

[2] Szczesniak, pp. 262-266. Another account of this expedition is given in Tronson, pp. 61-62. He calls the place 'Tyhoo', and Preble, 'Tyho'.

[3] Hayes 1963. Cheung Chau itself had previously been thought to *harbour* pirates: see CO 129/6, No. 26 of 21 June 1844, in PRO London.

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the inhabitants were less fortunate and had either to flee into the hills or stay to oppose or meet the pirates' demands. Walls were built or repaired, and a defence by desperate men of even these not very imposing defences might help to stave off an attack. Village refuges, into which cattle and livestock, valuables, women and children and old people were put, were also utilised. One of these places existed at Shek Pik, but was already in ruins by about 1900.[1] Most villages kept arms and even cannon available for use up to 1899 and some of these remain to this day.[2]

Nonetheless, the villagers' position was pitiful in the event of attack, and their attitude towards pirates was probably too often similar to that recorded by Commander Vansittart of *H.M.S. Bittern* from the River Min in March, 1855:

> . . . miserably poor boats followed the Brig begging assistance; one Village sent me a well drawn up petition; another a present of waste paper and Joss-stick; fishermen, and passage boats, small Traders, all telling the same pitiable story; landing on Hootow, I was quickly surrounded by Peasantry; desiring the Interpreter to ask them why so many fine looking fellows permitted strangers to molest them; they declared it was useless to resist Pirates, and so whenever Pirates came the villagers hid themselves and cried.

This extract, quoted from Miss Fox's book,[3] shows how Chinese on land and sea suffered at the hands of their less scrupulous fellow countrymen.

Things were no better on the sea at the end of the century. L. C. Arlington of the Chinese Maritime Customs, who spent six years 1893-1899 in charge of the Customs station at Cheung Chau, says;

> 'as well as other numerous islands forming the *Ladrones,* [it] was the rendezvous of pirates, who kept all of us on the qui vive, foreigners and natives alike. Gangs of pirates would get together and attack the villages, even in broad daylight, and after looting and killing, escape either to Macau or Hong Kong, where they disposed of their booty. The Customs Officers had many tussles and narrow escapes from these pests of the sea.

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[1] The elders told me about it after I had come across a reference to it as a place name in an old deed of sale of fields in the valley.

[2] R. L. Ozorio, personal communication on the village armoury of Kak Tin, Shatin Valley, 1973. These arms were, of course, sometimes used against other villages.

[3] Fox, p. 130.

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He went on to say,

> During my time in Kowloon territory, i.e. from 1893 to 1901, piracies were so common that we regarded it as extraordinary if a day passed without one. Indeed, it was the daily routine for junk masters to report at the Customs Station that they had been pirated and all of their cargo looted.

Customs duty was 'practically confined to chasing pirates and smugglers', and Arlington states that 'at one time I had no less than sixty pirates chained to old cannon to prevent them from escaping pending their transfer to Canton for trial'.[1]

Whilst some villages were blameless and the victims of raids and assaults, there were others whose innocence was doubtful. Arlington mentions one case in which pirates had disappeared with an entire cargo consisting of 250 huge vats of indigo weighing as much as 500 lbs each vat, besides 100 head of cattle and 500 pigs, of which there was no trace when a Customs cruiser arrived on the scene only two hours after the piracy was reported by signal at Cheung Chau. It was, he says, 'a safe bet that the pirates came from these villages, and had secret places to hide their booty where it was safe from discovery'.[2] The villages in question were on the mainland but he does not say where.

In the wider area, the reports of the British Consuls on the trade of Canton, Amoy, Sam Shui and Pak Hoi in the 1890s—all save the second within the Kwangtung Province—reveal a disturbed situation. One Canton report comments, 'The old free-booting spirit still survives among many who are now apparently peaceful traders and fishermen, of which we occasionally get startling proof in some unexpected daring act of piracy on the high seas or along the coast.[3] His colleague's report from Pak Hoi was more down-right. 'Piracy is in the blood of the race. A glance through the year's diary shows a monotonous record of petty coast raids, hover-ings of pirate junks (which still terrorise the neighbouring coastline) and robberies of every degree of dignity from the sacking of the larger pawnshops to the plunder of a returned emigrant from the Straits or Sumatra'.[4]

Arlington's evidence shows that the Hong Kong region was scarcely better in these respects than any other. Thus it is not

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[1] Arlington, p. 171.
[2] Arlington, p. 163.
[3] FO Report 1606.
[4] FO Report 1983.

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surprising that the Governor of Hong Kong wrote to London in April 1899, 'The Tai Po district is well known in Canton to be turbulent, that to the northeast of Mirs Bay being noted for piracy, and so ill-disposed that I am informed no Customs Official dares to land there except with the support of a revenue cruiser'.[1] When making his farewell speech to the Legislative Council of the Colony four years later, he described its residents as 'a large agricultural population with a reputation for turbulence .... and with a rooted objection to any interference with their settled habits or customs'.[2] Smuggling was common throughout the region, whether of salt or opium. The older villagers admit to their complicity in these varied activities: an old man born on Lamma Island in 1883 told me in 1960, with a twinkle in his eye, that he 'had been in all lines of business'.

During all this time the situation in inland areas of the *hsien* was apparently no better than on the sea and coast. The situation in the late 1850s was described in eloquent terms by the German missionary Krone who had been in the area since his arrival in China in 1850. He spoke of 'the large bands of robbers which frequently pass to and from through the country pillaging the villages and parties of travellers ...'.[3] He explained that 'when the Mandarins intend to levy taxes, they announce their intention to the gentry of the villages, one or two weeks, or sometimes a month, before their arrival. They then make a progress through the district, accompanied by a sufficient force to protect themselves against large bands of robbers, which sometimes have the audacity to attack the tax collectors if the escort be not strong ...'.[4] He emphasised 'how troubled and insecure the normal condition of this district is, and for a very long time has been'.[5]

Krone then noted an additional, and in southeast China characteristic, source of insecurity. 'Not only are robbers and pirates to

[1] SP, 1899, p. 528.
[2] Hansard, 1903, p. 53.
[3] Krone, p. 114.
[4] Krone, p. 119.
[5] Krone, p. 114. The wider area bore no better reputation. Writing of the Tan-shui district of neighbouring Kwei-shin *hsien*, the Hong Kong Daily Telegraph of 13th March 1879, quoting from the *Catholic Register* stated ".... now and then the Chinese authority has to send some military Mandarins with extraordinary powers to clear the place by taking up a good number of robbers: and only last year the great military Mandarin told one of our Missionaries that of one village he has dozens of names in view for the next execution".

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be feared, but internecine wars are almost always raging between some or other of the villages: and these wars, although often arising from trivial causes, are not mere temporary quarrels, but are often long-continued and sanguinary'.[1] He gives a description of these feuds, and relates one example in which the District Magistrate, even with a force of 1,000 men, was unable to restore peace, and could not even save his face without the mediation of a neighbouring village. The device that secured this, Krone comments, 'had no influence at all upon the dispute, fighting being carried on afterwards just as before'.[2]

There are several documented examples of intervillage and clan wars from the mainland New Territories at this time which indicate that Krone was not exaggerating the situation in mid century. Halls to 'martyrs' killed in these struggles were provided in at least four local temples, each containing memorials to slain heroes. These are to be found in the temples at Shek Kong (Pat Heung), Miu Kong (Tsuen Wan), Lam Tsuen, and Yuen Long (Shap-pat Heung). The Tsuen Wan memorial tells of a three year feud between the Tsuen Wan villagers and Shing Mun Pat Heung, beginning in the first year of the T'ung Chih reign (1862-1863) and ended only after eventually successful mediation by elders of neighbouring villages. During this time, the Tsuen Wan villages—their men being outnumbered according to the tablet—were invaded and left in ruins, and 17 local men were killed in the prolonged struggle.[3]

Baker gives other local and contemporary examples of these clan wars taken from genealogies and village tradition in the northern New Territories.[4] He also draws attention to the feuds that occurred *within* local lineages, including frequent fights between the Ping Shan and Ha Tsuen branches of the Tang lineage.[5] These persisted into the British period. In 1921, in his administrative report for that year, the District Officer North mentions trouble that 'assumed very serious proportions' over water rights between

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[1] Krone, p. 114.

[2] Krone, pp. 125-126.

[3] The hall at Miu Kong is entitled the I-yung Tz'u (義勇祠) and that at Yuen Long the Ying-yung Tz'u (英勇祠). In the Pat Heung temple the tablet is in the Ching-chung Tz'u (精忠祠). At Lam Tsuen there is no named hall, but a side room contains a tablet bearing the characters *jang hsiang ch'ang sheng lu wei* (攘鄉長勝祿位).

[4] Baker, 1968, pp. 167, 183 and 187.

[5] Baker, 1968, p. 188 and Baker 1965, pp. 39-41.

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the Kam Tin and Ping Shan branches of the Tang lineage, mediated by the Tai Po and Yuen Long branches of the same clan.[1]

The chronic warfare inside Hsin-an and other districts of Kwangtung was perhaps not too well known to the Hong Kong authorities, but was all too plain to the mandarins. The Viceroy of Liang-kuang, commenting on representations from the British about the alleged help given by the provincial military forces to the village bands that were opposing the occupation of the New Territories, wrote:

> The Governor of Hong Kong suspected that they were regular troops from the fact that they had guns, cannon and uniforms. He was not aware that the villagers of Kwangtung, in their constant fights with each other, are always erecting forts, and use guns and cannon, and wear uniforms. This is a matter of common notoriety.[2]

The less populated parts of the district do not seem to have experienced trouble on this scale, probably because pressure on the land was less great and there were no large lineages competing for power and struggling to retain or improve their position. However, disputes did occur and are remembered by older villagers. On Lantau, fighting between Shek Pik people and villagers from Sha Lo Wan over a grave has been mentioned to me; relations between Tong Fuk and its neighbour Shui Hau were never very good; and a fight between Pui O villagers from San Tsuen and adjoining Lo Wai took place pre-war over the mining of kaolin in a spot behind the two villages that the Lo Wai people held was disturbing the local *feng shui*.[3] It appears that in days when communications were poor and the officials at a distance, such disputes would not always come to the attention of the authorities, even if deaths occurred. This must often have been the case in the 19th century.

It was thus not without good reason that the Hsin-an magistrate of 1847, quoted at the beginning of this article, considered that his difficulties were many and real, and that they were not always appreciated as such by his colleagues and superiors.

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[1] ARDONT, 1921, J2; with some background at J2 of his 1920 Report.

[2] Quoted by Groves, p. 63, note 65. Balfour shows 23 Punti villages with outer walls at Plate 16 in JHKBRAS, 10, 1970. Many other villages, including Hakka ones, had lesser defences, as at Pui O (Lo Wai), Lantau, pp. 14-15 above.

[3] Information secured from local elders.

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However, despite the foregoing recital of disturbances over the years, many old persons in the Hong Kong region who were born between 1875 and 1900 have told me that their early years were very peaceful. This serves as a reminder not to telescope time and place too readily; and not to confuse occasional excitements with the regular rhythm of rural life. Nor too readily to deduce from them that there was a deterioration in institutions at the local level, as at the centre, in the later 19th century — a point made by Rhoads Murphey in his study of China's modernization.[1]

POSTSCRIPT

There are two other happenings that must be mentioned in this survey of events. One, the establishment and rise of Hong Kong from 1841 on, and its effect on the surrounding and adjacent territory, I do not intend to treat with here.[2] The second, rural depopulation, though it might appear to have some connection with the first, is in fact a separate phenomenon. Linked to over-population, malnutrition and disease, it is important enough to warrant a concluding notice.*

The problem of depopulation early intruded itself into my village studies through the preoccupation with *feng-shui* noted in many places, so much of it linked to a reported decline in the numbers of local populations. I have encountered this in many villages on Lantau Island[3] and in other parts of the old Southern District, in places as far distant from Lantau as Pak Lap on High Island in the Sai Kung District, and Ho Pui with Muk Min Ha in Tsuen Wan. These have also claimed depopulation in the 19th century and after. In the northern New Territories the well-known Tang clan of Kam Tin records a similar loss of population;[4] whilst at Lin Ma Hang, a large village on the present Sino British frontier,[5] a stone tablet dated in 1893 was erected to detail the geomantic

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1 Murphey: 27-30.

2 The first is well-documented, the second scarcely at all, though discussed in Potter 1968.

3 See JHKBRAS 3, 1963: 143-144; JHKBRAS 9, 1969: 156-158 and Hayes 1967:22-30.

4 Sung in HKN, VII, Dec. 1936:256.

5 See *Gazetteer:* 214.

* Especially as, in Hsin-an, it is not to be linked with devastating Taiping campaigns and official retribution, nor with Hakka-Punti wars on the scale that occurred in some parts of the province.

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steps taken to correct a decline of population that had seemingly begun several decades before.

There is other evidence in support of a large population in, say, mid century. My close knowledge of the hills and valleys of the Southern district of the New Territories suggests that practically every piece of land, high or low, that could be planted with rice had been opened for that purpose at one time or another. This presumes a large and settled population, since the opening of paddy fields and their irrigation dams and channels involves considerable labour, and once rice is cultivated there is continuous farming unless the number of cultivators available in a family or village drops to the point where fields go out of use. There was dry and shifting cultivation in addition, for ancillary crops such as peanuts and sweet potato that, old villagers say, were more extensively cultivated in the past.

A second factor that points to a larger population is the widespread and intense fishing of local waters that was such a marked feature of village life seventy and more years ago, as revealed by my enquiries all over the New Territories. If fishing at its most intensive coincided with farming at its most widespread, one may conclude that, subsidiary reasons and incentive factors apart, all this activity was mainly required to provide for the existence of a large population in the villages.

To conclude, I have here mentioned village tradition and the evidence of the countryside in support of my belief that depopulation was an event in the later history of the Hong Kong region. Using available demographic and economic materials, much work can yet be done to show that Professor Ping-ti Ho's postulation of a 'declining rate of growth' in the population of Kwangtung, 1850-1953, covers reductions as well as increases at the local level.[1]

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[1] Ho 1959: 270, 277-278. In the light of my surmises it is interesting to find that Perkins (212-214) notes a sharp reduction in the population figures for Kwangtung between 1851-1873, not fully recovered by 1893. This would, of course, take in the ravages of the Tai Ping time and the Hakka-Punti wars; but there is more to it than these, I suspect.

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