

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book originates in personal motivations as well as scholarly ones; as it happens, it also originates about a mile away from the Manchester University Press editorial office. As an American post-graduate student in 1996, researching what became an article about the *Manchester Guardian's* coverage of the South African War of 1899–1902, I met a young woman from Hong Kong who was pursuing a master's degree at the University of Manchester. My knowledge of Hong Kong was strikingly limited; it is embarrassing to recall that I was surprised to discover that she considered herself Chinese rather than British. It was, of course, a lively period in Sino-British relations, less than a year before the change of sovereignty. My new-found awareness of Hong Kong fortuitously coincided with the colony's growing prominence in the news. I became increasingly interested in the history of Hong Kong, and my interest was only piqued as my new friend followed me to the United States and, eventually, agreed to marry me.

Still, I put this interest on hold. The pressures of teaching, and publishing material relating to my Ph.D. thesis, occupied my time, and beyond that, the idea of writing a book on Hong Kong seemed daunting, not least because I had never been to Asia, nor did I have a clear idea how, from my position at a small teaching-oriented college in Georgia, I would fund the necessary research trips.

Through a stroke of fortune (and David Pomfret's grantsmanship), during a 2005–06 sabbatical I had the opportunity to spend a term as a visiting faculty member at the University of Hong Kong. My first introduction to Hong Kong only reinforced my interest in studying its history. I immediately fell in love with the city, and within five days of arriving as a visitor had applied for the position I have now held for eight years, at Lingnan University. And in 2007 I began researching this book.

In writing this book, I have benefited greatly from the generous research support provided by Lingnan University's Research Committee, which made it possible for me to visit archives in the United States, Britain, and Australia. The logistics of managing research funding were entirely straightforward thanks to the efficient professionalism of Connie Lam in Lingnan's Office of Research Support. The book has benefited as well from research assistance by Timothy Wales in London, and Penelope Ching-yee Pang, Zou Yizheng, Ceci Tam, Peter Law, and James Fellows in Hong Kong. Simon Case helped with formatting and with preparing the index.

I am very fortunate to have been helped enormously by knowledgeable and generous colleagues at Lingnan University. Mette Hjort and Paisley Livingston have been invaluable mentors. Grace Ai-Ling Chou and Poon Shuk-wah have shared their knowledge of Hong Kong and Chinese history. Richard Davis, Niccolò Pianciola, and James Fichter provided crucial non-specialist perspectives on my interpretations. Law Wing Sang and Hui Po-keung shared their theoretical expertise and deep knowledge of Hong Kong culture. Vincy Au and Ann Wong run the Lingnan History Department office with a tremendous

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efficiency that makes it possible for me to find time to write, and with a cheerfulness that makes it a pleasure for me to come to work each day.

In moving into a new research field, I have benefited from a multi-continental network of colleagues both old and new. Simon Potter and Adrian Bingham, both of whom I met through my earlier interest in journalism history, gave me valuable advice, respectively, on the histories of empire and sexuality. Chi-kwan Mark and Ray Yep answered my naive queries. David Clayton shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Hong Kong-related archives and challenged me to keep my ideas of 'culture' firmly grounded (I doubt I succeeded); he also generously shared his unpublished research and helpfully critiqued my earliest writings on Hong Kong history. Barry Crosbie and Stuart Ward helped me place Hong Kong within a wider imperial context, both through conversations and through comments on specific chapters. Patrick Hase lent his expertise both as an historian and as a former colonial official. Christine Loh, during an interview at her office, very kindly answered my questions about her political activities and motivations in the late colonial period. John Carroll read the entire manuscript, answered dozens of my very specific queries, and more than anyone else convinced me that I could write this book.

I am very grateful to the archivists and librarians at some three dozen institutions whose holdings are cited in this book, and to the editorial and production team at Manchester University Press. I am also grateful to audiences at conferences and seminars at the University of Hong Kong, the University of Copenhagen, Hong Kong Baptist University, the University of York, the International Convention of Asian Scholars, the Crossroads Cultural Studies conference, the Empire State of Mind conference, the International Association for Media and History, and my post-graduate reading group in the spring 2014 term. A shorter version of [Chapter 2](#) appears in Barry Crosbie and Mark Hampton (eds), *The Cultural Construction of the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); I am grateful to the publisher for permission to reprint it.

Researching a book requires not only the cooperation of specialist scholars in sharing their knowledge, but also supportive friends and colleagues to help with various logistical matters and moral support during overseas research trips. Rohan McWilliam and Kelly Boyd have, since 1995, made me feel at home in London, and seeing them is always the high point of my trip. Peter Mandler introduced me to High Table at Cambridge, and also kindly shared research material. Tom O'Malley hosted me in Aberystwyth. Simon Potter hosted me in both Oxford and Bristol.

I dedicated my first book to Ring Mei-Han Low. Although she inspired me to write this one, I am sure she will forgive me for dedicating it instead to her father, Low Shing. As a child in Guangdong at the end of the Second World War, he escaped particularly fraught circumstances to make his way quasi-legally into Hong Kong. Despite limited education, and often having to work in the colony's shadow economy, he managed to support his daughter's earning three degrees on three continents, in Hong Kong, Manchester, and Buffalo. When colonial officials said that, in addition to the British genius of administration, it was the tremendous energies of their Chinese subjects that transformed Hong Kong from a barren rock into one of the world's great cities, they were talking about him.