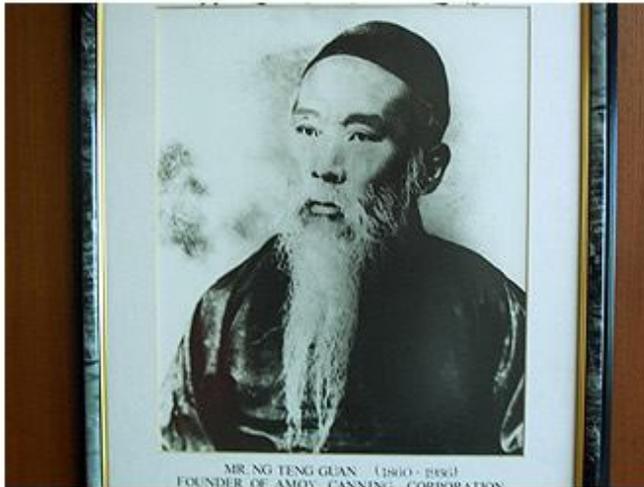
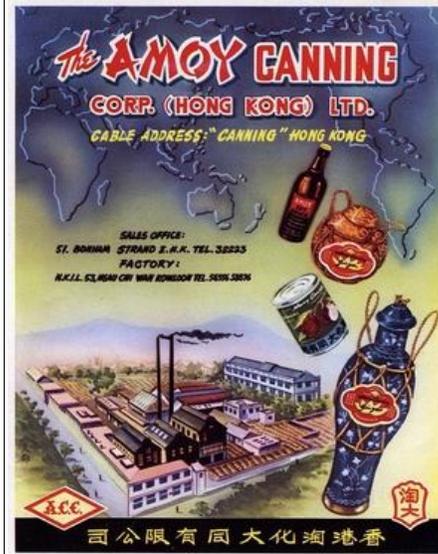


The Industrial History of Hong Kong Group: Newsletter Nine - 9th November 2013

The Amoy Canning Corporation was founded in Amoy (Xiamen), China in 1908 initially to produce soy sauce. After Amoy Canning merged with its rival Ta Tong, a branch was set up in Hong Kong in 1928, followed by a factory in Ngau Chi Wan in 1929. In 1938, its head office was moved to Hong Kong because of the war in China, and was located in Bonham Strand in Sheung Wan.



MR. NG TENG GUAN (1860-1936)
FOUNDER OF AMOY CANNING CORPORATION



The advert comes from a book published by the Hong Kong government's Department of Commerce and Industry dated 1955. (Thanks to IDJ for this image)

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Welcome

The Website is about to celebrate its first month in existence. I have had very positive comments about its design and content though naturally there are things which need to be changed, added or simply tweaked. If you feel like commenting on an article, inserting a query or answer, writing something brief or contributing a longer article **please register through the website by clicking on contribute.**

Previous Newsletters have been sent out as an email. This has now changed and if you are already on our list of Newsletter subscribers, (greetings to those who have come to us through the website,) you will know it is being published directly onto the website. All the main articles are also being individually posted. For the time being if you feel like putting something in a Newsletter email me and I'll keep putting them together. It would be very helpful if what you send is pretty much ready for inclusion and contains photos, maps or other images.

I would like to mention Dan Waters because of his support for this project. He was the very first person to respond, a year ago, to my initial enquiry to see if anyone was interested in HK's industrial history. He has written an article in four Newsletters and has offered continuous encouragement. Thanks Dan.

Many thanks to Sally Trainor for her assistance in producing this Newsletter and to Malcolm Morris <http://www.redcorner.hk/> for both setting up and maintaining the website and for being of tremendous help with the Newsletter.

Best wishes
Hugh Farmer

Ice House Street

"The Chinese characters for "Ice House Street" translates as *ice factory* not *ice house*. Ice House Street took its name from the building use to store ice brought by ship from North America in the 1840s, before it was produced in Hong Kong in the Dairy Farm complex elsewhere. Ice was never manufactured on Ice House Street!"

Andrew Yanne and Gillis Heller, *Signs of a Colonial Era*", HKUP 2009

A delightful book to be dipped into just before drifting into sleep.

HF

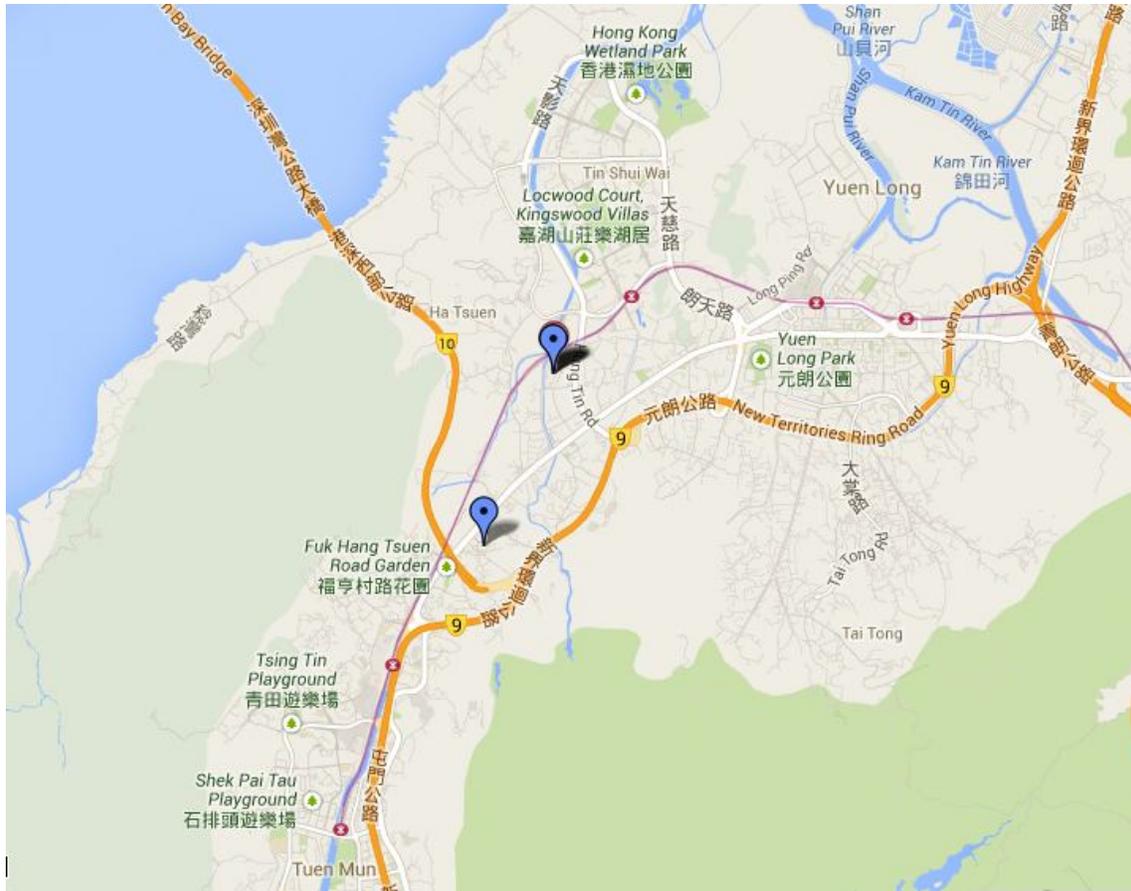
Ping Shan - proposed airport for Hong Kong - IDJ

When Hong Kong was liberated in September 1945, one of the military groups diverted to assist restoring the city's electricity, gas and water utilities and railway was the Royal Air Force's No. 5358 Airfield Construction Wing that was part of *Shield Force*. This fleet of Royal Navy Cruisers and Aircraft Carriers plus their support ships were transporting 3000 airman and all the equipment and machinery needed to construct airfields on islands close to Japan where American troops were slowly defeating the Japanese. Lancaster bombers were to follow to bomb the Japanese mainland from these airfields, although the American Army Air Force had already been doing this very effectively from bases in China and the Pacific Islands.

However before the RAF could start their task the Japanese surrendered after the dropping of atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The ships of *Shield Force* were relatively close to China and diverted to liberate and secure Hong Kong. As soon as the colony's situation had stabilised, the RAF contingent's leaders appear to have come to a decision that Kai Tak airfield was far too dangerous to use in the future and must be abandoned. However, a recent inspection of documentation in the National Archives in London reveals that the Air Ministry in the UK was involved in planning an alternative civil/military airfield even before the Japanese had surrendered.

A preliminary ground survey was made for a joint civil/military airfield at Ping Shan 20 miles from the city in the north-west New Territories. The site had been selected from maps and an elderly Hong Kong resident released from a prisoner-of-war camp guided the RAF's survey team to an area which had not been visited by Europeans since the Japanese invasion in 1941. They reported favourably on the site covering 7.5 square miles where life had hardly changed for centuries. The location seemed ideal, with approaches over the sea and through a valley which was fairly level, but hills were on either side, including the substantial mountain at Castle Peak to the west of the southern approach.

A number of villages and homesteads would have to be moved, but more importantly to the local people it would involve cutting down and the removal of several hills which were important ancestral burial grounds. Cutting across vast swathes of paddy fields, the runway was planned to be 1,800 metres (5900 feet) long and 45 metres (150 feet) wide, beginning from Nai Wui village and ending about 280 metres (920 feet) beyond Shek Po towards Deep Bay, passing through Sun Fung Wui, Chung Uk Tsuen, Tin Sum and Li Uk Tsuen. The runway was planned to be extendable by another 800 metres (2,600 feet) and double the width at a later date.



The runway would have run from Nai Wui village in the south to just beyond Shek Po in the north as indicated by the blue markers

The RAF's No. 4857 Quarrying Flight set to work on a hill of granite and they commenced digging out a new channel to divert a river. The construction squadron was moved from Kowloon to a tent camp on one side of the valley and, as might be expected, the villagers became very alarmed. Initial preparations were completed and access roads and a connecting light railway were built to a quarry which commenced producing 15,000 tons of broken granite monthly. Many high-ranking officers visited the site, including the Commander-in-Chief (Far East) Lord Mountbatten. On 27 October 1945 Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park and Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt (an earlier Governor of Hong Kong) visited Ping Shan and to impress them a special rock blast at the quarry was laid on.

Hundreds of workers were necessary and local people were trained to operate the construction equipment. The selection of trainees presented difficulties as they were mainly farmers who had little mechanical knowledge. An advertisement was placed in the local press giving two days for interviews, The RAF Officer-in-Charge (School) visited Ping Shan to find a crowd of 2,000 waiting to be interviewed, in addition to which the elders of the neighboring villages had brought a further 1,200 applicants.



Air Chief Marshall Sir Keith Park accompanied by W.A.D Brooks, Air Commanding Hong Kong, experiencing a Caterpillar bulldozer demonstration at the Ping Shan site

The period of instruction was planned to take six weeks and was divided into three sections: Tractors and Scrapers, Excavators and Galion Graders and miscellaneous plant. The organisation of the school followed that already used by similar schools in Germany's reconstruction. It was found impossible to translate the servicing schedules into Chinese as the technical terms had no absolute equivalent. It was therefore decided that tuition be confined to operating machines only, and when the operators eventually went out on sites, special servicing gangs composed of RAF personnel were formed.

The training ground covered 25 acres with disintegrated granite as its stratum, which was ideal for training purposes. It was firm and when bulldozed or scraped left a smooth bright surface. There were several raised surfaces about 3m (10 feet) high on the site which were ideal for face-shovel training and also a deep nullah where drag-lines machines could be operated. Adjoining the machinery plant school was a training area for drivers who under instruction on Tippers, were made to reverse along a difficult road to the Excavators where the advanced trainees were gradually schooled into the gentle art of filling a Tipper without knocking the body off. A third school was started for a conversion course for mechanics some of who were experienced on petrol engines, but lacked diesel experience.



American I.O.W. mobile crushing and screening units in the quarry

Things were going well, with the machinery plant school training locals to be operators on the six week courses. The road between Tsuen Wan and Tai Mo Shan Peak was rebuilt by the Construction Wing to take heavier motor traffic. The clearing of the hill outcrop at Tai Wai Shan in the Ping Shan valley needed the removal of 250,000 tons of rock.

Construction continued with high expectations and activity until March 1946 when all the frenetic activity came to a sudden halt. The UK's state airline, the British Overseas Aircraft Corporation (BOAC) had belatedly sent out a delegation to look at the site which they quickly declared as unsuitable for the needs of their future aircraft, and that it was too far away from the city. BOAC was relying on flying boats for its Empire air routes at this time, so needed water bases as well as land runways for its mix of aircraft types. Also new International Standards were coming into force dictating the design of airports world wide. These Ping Shan did not meet as the southern approach was deemed to be too narrow through the Yuen Long valley, as was the initial width of the runway, and the northern route out over Deep Bay would be too close to the Chinese border. Undeterred by this set-back, the RAF contingent was prepared to finish the construction and use the runway solely for military purposes. However, the Air Ministry in London was under pressure from the new Labour government which refused to fund it any further.

In April 1946, work was abandoned to the great relief of local residents who had objected vehemently to losing productive rice paddy fields and their ancestral homes, temples and

graves. The affected villagers, mainly from the Tang family had by this time generated substantial support from the Chinese government for their grievances and it was making strong diplomatic representations to the Hong Kong and UK governments on their behalf. The RAF did not entirely give up on the area as they stationed mobile Radar units there in the 1950s with their antenna pointing towards Deep Bay and the now communist China. This was the period of the Korean War when the UK had troops there fighting the North Koreans and the Chinese forces.

Today the agricultural land and paddy fields have disappeared under the residential tower blocks of Yuen Long town and the Tin Shui Wai residential estates. Quarries exist on the south western side of Ping Shan which are thought to be the only remains of this project. However, Tang family village ancestral halls and a pagoda do remain that have become historical attractions promoted by the tourist authority. It is doubtful whether the version of the Tang's history given to visitors ever mentions that the area very nearly became Hong Kong's international airport. A short film of Air Chief Marshall Sir Keith Parks visiting Hong Kong and the airfield's construction site is held by the Imperial War Museum archives in London.

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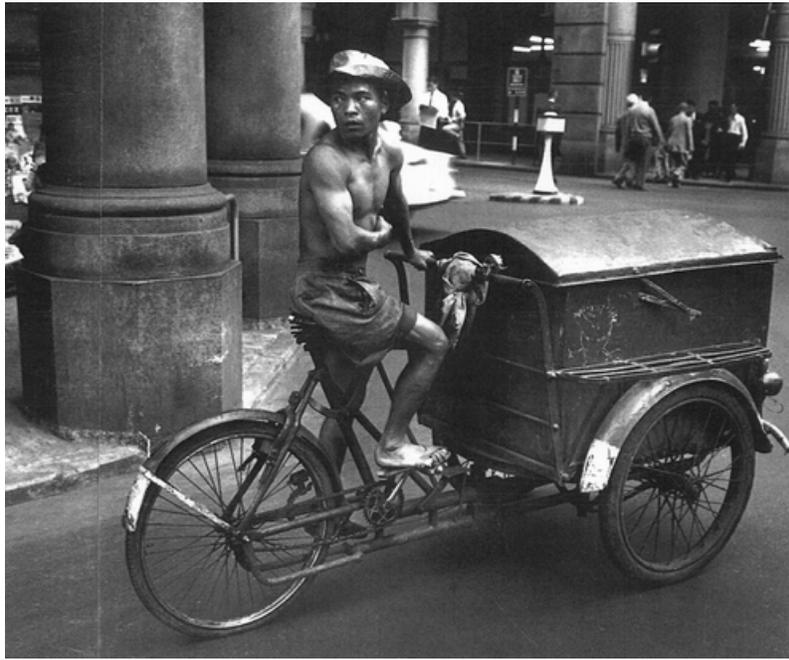
The Economics of the Tricycle Industry in Hong Kong - Fung Chi Ming

The tricycle or 'cycle rickshaw', as some people now call it, combines the characteristics of bicycle and rickshaw. Tricycles could be found in Asia and around the world, but they differed significantly in design and appearance. In Malacca and Singapore, it was a carriage with a passenger seat on the left side of the rider. In Bangkok, the rider was pedaling at the front and the passenger sat on the seat at the back. Like many other cities such as Hanoi, Jakarta and Penang, Hong Kong saw the use of a tricycle with the load situated in front of the rider.

In Hong Kong, the official English term for this mode of transport is "tricycle". Locally known as *saam-lun-che* (三輪車, Cantonese for "three-wheeled vehicle"), it remains part of Hong Kong's past that is increasingly forgotten. Privately kept for individual use before the Pacific War, it came to be available for public hire to transport passengers during 1942-45 when motorized transport facilities broke down. But the tricycle trade swiftly vanished after the Pacific War, not surprisingly because of the rapidly growing volume of other forms of traffic.

There were two different types of tricycles in Hong Kong: one for cargo-carrying and the other for passengers. The latter type had a cushioned seat to provide greater comfort for

passengers. The other type had a storage box and a flat platform mounted between two parallel front wheels. The platform was set very low, to keep the center of gravity low and to ensure that the height of the load would not block the view of the rider when the vehicle was being propelled. Moreover, it was not unusual for tricycles to have front and rear wheels of different sizes.



This snapshot was taken by Ed van der Elsken who traveled with his camera around Hong Kong in 1960. It is part of his book titled *Hong Kong, the way it was* (Stockport: Dewi Lewis Publishing, 1997)

The licensing process was one of the means by which the Hong Kong government controlled the use of vehicles on the roads. The exact date of the first licensing of the tricycle is unknown, but under regulations laid down by authorities in 1933, a vehicle licence and a driver's licence were both required in respect of each tricycle, the annual fees for which would be \$6.00 and \$0.30 respectively (*Hong Kong Blue Book, 1933*). According to police figures, the total number of tricycle licences issued during the year 1939 was 1,744 as against 1,345 in 1938, 1,129 in 1937, 993 in 1936, 797 in 1935, and 959 in 1934.

In pre-1941 Hong Kong, the tricycle was for individual use and not for carrying passengers for hire. A court case noted that "a tricycle, containing a quantity of sweets and confectionery, near Haiphong Road" was knocked over by a motorist (*The China Mail, 27 November 1935*). In another court case, a jobless man faced time in jail for stealing a tricycle from Mr. F. Donald's residence at Lincoln Road (*The Hong Kong Daily Press, 29 January 1938*). In yet another case, a

man used a knife to slash “the tyres of a tricycle” which belonged to a stall, causing damage to the extent of \$10 (*The Hong Kong Daily Press*, 16 January 1940).



These photos, taken in Yaumatei, are part of Water Poon’s book titled *Hong Kong: Feelings in Perspectives* (Hong Kong: South China Morning Post Limited, 1977)

The tricycles were often assembled by local mechanics. Two bicycle shops told the citizenry in their advertisements posted in *The Hongkong and Macao Business Classified Directory, 1940* (below) that they manufactured cargo-carrying tricycles in addition to the distribution of spare parts and sale of branded bicycles from abroad. The two shops were, namely, “Chung Hing” (中興) at 13 Hillier Street in Central and “Hop Hing” (合興) at 34 Johnston Road in Wanchai.

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Source: *The Hongkong and Macao Business Classified Directory, 1940*

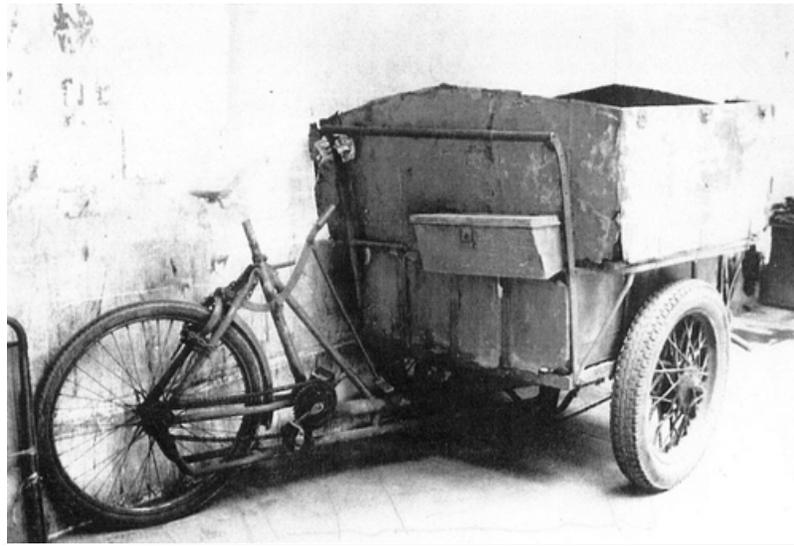
It is quite interesting to note that when the above-said Directory was issued in 1941, one of the two tricycle makers had opened a Kowloon branch at 750 Nathan Road and advertised itself as a cargo-carrying tricycle company: “合興三輪貨車公司”, see below. Such a change is revealing, indicating that there was a continuing demand for additional tricycles. In fact, a local Chinese newspaper noted that a rising number of tricycles were being stolen in Shamshuipo (深水埗), Kowloon, in early 1941 (*Tien Kwong Morning Post* 天光報, 13 February 1941).

Source: *The Hongkong and Macao Business Classified Directory, 1941*

After almost exactly 100 years of British rule, Hong Kong was conquered by the Japanese on Christmas Day, 1941, and remained in Japanese hands until August 1945. Hong Kong under the Japanese rule was quite different from what it was like under the British. During the years of Japanese presence, when motor vehicles and fuel were unobtainable there was a revival of human and animal transport. Even horse carriages began to re-appear on the streets.

According to wartime newspapers, the tricycle became a public (for-hire) vehicle to transport passengers after the cancellation of certain bus services in Kowloon in 1942-43. At that time, many tricycles sprang up in the city districts of Kowloon where they were carting people around and did so speedily; besides, it was not unusual that up to four passengers squeezed into one tricycle (*Heung Tao Yat Po* 香島日報, 15 January 1943). The fares for riding tricycles were paid in military yen (hereinafter, MY), a currency which was imposed by the Japanese, an arbitrary exchange rate of MY 1 = H.K. \$4 being fixed on 24 July 1942. Many riders were not the persons who actually owned the tricycles. On a good day, they made MY 10 after payment of MY 3 to MY 4 for vehicle rental. At times, they had to forfeit part of their earnings for paying the costs of damage incurred to the tricycles (*Wah Kiu Yat Po* 華僑日報, 29 August, 18 September, 6 October 1943).

The Chinese newspapers in Japanese-occupied Hong Kong also gave evidence that the making and renting of tricycles was often a monopoly of bicycle shops. The *Heung Tao Yat Po* (15 January 1943) noted that the riders would pay bicycle shops MY 1 per day to rent the tricycles. The *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (6 October 1943) said that enterprising individuals started to build tricycles and made them available for hire, but the tricycles did not have an overhead canopy to shield the passengers from sun or rain. An eye-witness of those days, who was living in Mongkok until the end of the war, recalls that the wartime tricycles were often assembled by bicycle shops (Wu Wai-tim, interview, 31 August 2013).



Tricycle used during World War II. Photo courtesy: Cheng Po-hung, *Hong Kong during the Japanese Occupation* (Hong Kong: HKU Museum and Art Gallery, 2006)

The “Around Town” column of *The Hong Kong News* (a Japanese-controlled, English-language newspaper which was published throughout the occupation) reported on 6 October 1943 that for the convenience of passengers, “a large number of tricycles and bicycles have been allotted for service outside the Sun Sun Hotel [新生酒店] and Po Hing Theatre [普慶戲院] in Katorido-dori [Japanese transliteration of “Nathan Road”], Kowloon. These vehicles should prove a boon to those who require urgent transportation facilities”.

The Japanese conquerors were in favor of having more tricycles on the streets, as their use would not only save gasoline but would also alleviate the transport difficulties caused by the cancellation of bus and tramcar services. But, as time dragged on the tricycle traffic soon got out of hand. The tricycles were providing service with negotiated fares and the fares charged might be exorbitant, causing intending passengers a great deal of trouble.

In 1943 the Kowloon Bicycle and Tricycle Cooperative Association was formed at the behest of the Japanese, so as to put the public hiring of bicycles and tricycles under control. Wartime newspapers reported that its inauguration ceremony was held during the second week of October 1943 when decisions for the improvement of hired transport services were taken at a meeting held at its office at Tai Nam Street (大南街), Shamshuipo. The decisions were: (i) to fix an official schedule of fares for different types of vehicles; (ii) to set aside places where the riders would wait for passengers; (iii) to assign officials at the parking places to preserve order; and (iv) to require the riders to wear uniforms and badges for identification purposes.

That same year, 1943, a number of Chinese and Japanese residents of unknown background jointly expressed an interest to form a company to operate a scheduled tricycle service that would operate on fixed routes with set fares. This service would comprise a fleet of tricycles specially built to carry two adult passengers. From Tsimshatsui (TST) the service would start at 7am daily while from Mongkok the first tricycle would leave at 7.20am. The last tricycle would depart TST at 11.30pm and from Mongkok at 10.30pm. Regular runs at 15 to 30 minutes intervals would be maintained. The fare would be MY 0.20 per trip (*The Hong Kong News*, 4 December 1943).

The Kowloon Bicycle and Tricycle Cooperative Association was replaced in August 1944 by a new organization called H.K. Island, Kowloon & New Territories Bicycle and Tricycle Syndicate, to deal with matters relating to the pedal vehicles for public hire. Messrs Tang Shiu-woon (鄧肇垣), Wong Dai-wah (黃棣華) and Chau Lum (周霖) were appointed as the divisional heads of the syndicate in different geographic areas. Amongst the 'guests' present included Major Shiozawa, the head of the police of the Japanese gendarmerie, who gave orders that all members of the Syndicate must "comply with the rules and regulations of the Syndicate".

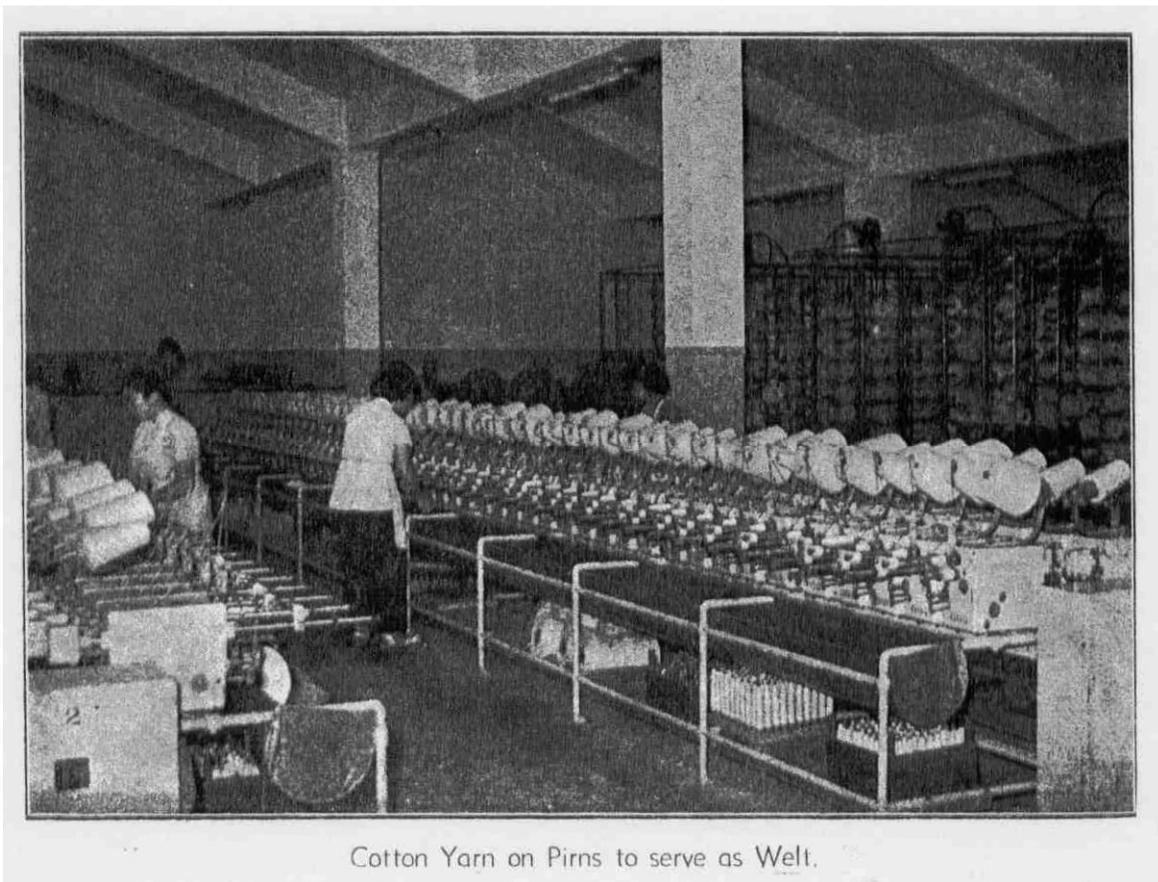
To be concluded in the next Newsletter...

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Shanghai Spinners: Pioneers of Hong Kong's industrialization, 1947-1955

Carles Brasó Broggi

During the troubled years of the war against Japan, most of the Chinese industrial base concentrated in Shanghai was lost. In 1945, only 10% of the pre-war spindles were operative and, even though the Chinese industry recovered between 1945 and 1947, the economic crisis and political instability of China forced Shanghai capitalists to diversify and relocate their businesses. In the summer of 1946, some spinners of Shanghai began to investigate the possibility of establishing cotton mills in Hong Kong, a city with a stable currency, a solid banking system and trading facilities. Despite being a British colony, Hong Kong had not built a relevant textile industry before. But in the following years, cotton spinning and weaving mills were founded by Shanghai capitalists and Hong Kong became a centre for the textile and garment industry that would eventually export to the five continents.

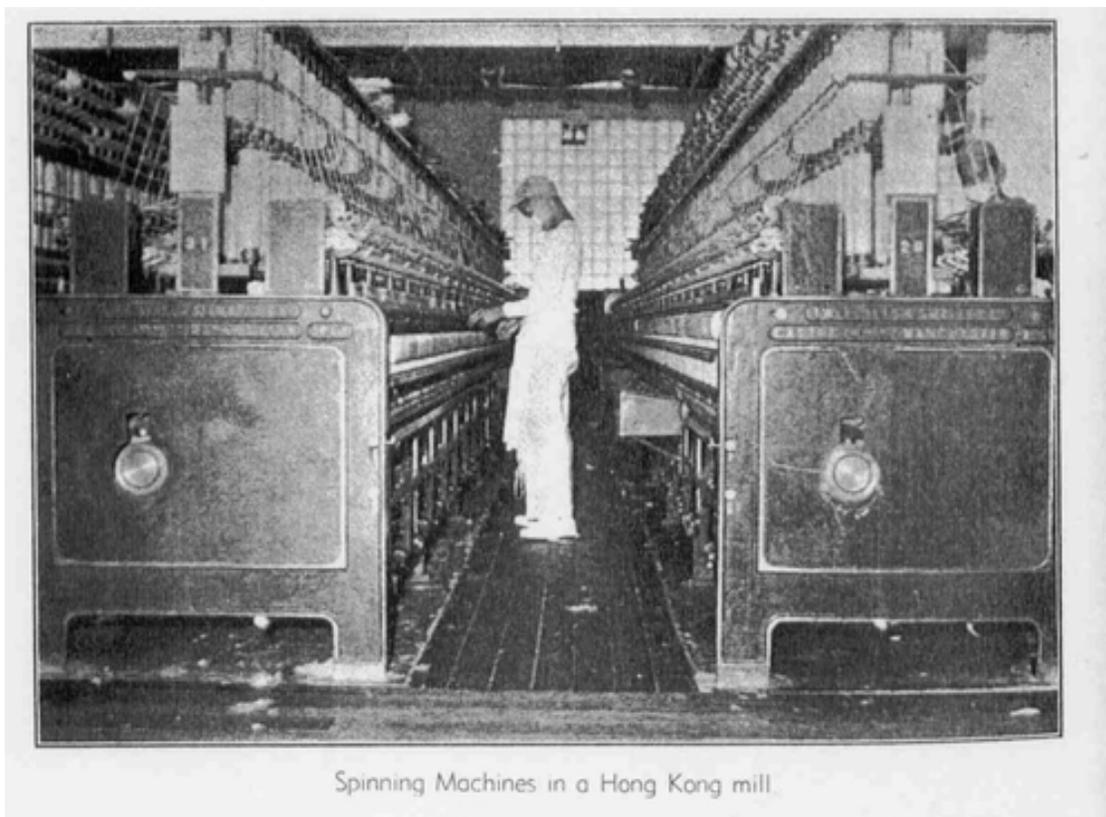


Cotton Yarn on Pirns to serve as Welt.

Reference: South China Textiles Ltd. mid 1950s (spinning production)

Source: J. M. Braga (1957): Hong Kong Business Symposium. South China Morning Post, Hong Kong.

The first company that built a spinning mill in Hong Kong was South China Textile Limited (大南纺织有限公司), a firm founded by Shanghai capitalist C. C. Lee (Li Zhenzhi). Having acquired previous experience as a manager in Shanghai's Datong Spinning and Weaving Company he settled down in Hong Kong around 1945. He started as a trading broker between both cities until he finally decided to open a factory in Kowloon. After trying unsuccessfully to train women workers from Guangdong, he brought 60 skilled workers from Shanghai. The shortage of skilled workers and labour legislation in Hong Kong were two of the main concerns of the first Shanghai spinners. Finally, in the first months of 1948, the firm started to produce cotton yarn with 5,000 spindles and a capacity to produce 12 bales of yarn per day.



Reference: South China Textiles Ltd. mid 1950s (spinning production)

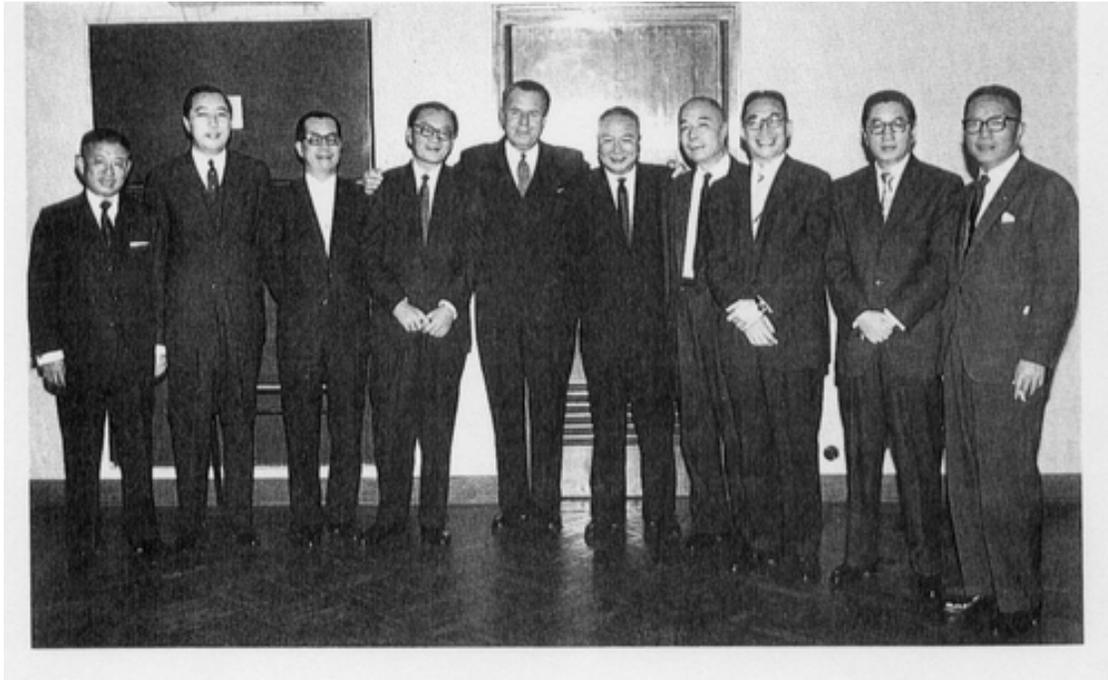
Source: J. M. Braga (1957): Hong Kong Business Symposium. South China Morning Post, Hong Kong.

The second company to spin cotton was Hong Kong Spinners Limited (香港纺织有限公司), a firm associated with Shanghai's China Cotton Mills. China Cotton Mills was a joint Sino-British company established in 1939 by C. Y. Wong, (Wang Qiyu, a merchant from Ningbo who became an industrialist in Shanghai) and William Charles Gomersall, a man with British and Chinese origins that owned China Engineers, a firm that imported textile machinery from Britain. In

1947, China Cotton Mills managed two spinning factories in Shanghai and had bought more machinery in Europe, but the difficulty in obtaining import licences drove them to put the machinery to work in Hong Kong instead of Shanghai. C. Y. Wong, a pioneer in the Chinese dyeing sector, was over sixty years old and left the new business to his son, T. Y. Wong (Wang Tongyuan), who would become one of the most important spinners in the city in the next decade. Hong Kong Spinners started operations in 1948 in a factory that was located in Kowloon's Lok Shan Road near To Kwa Wan Road. Initially, the plant (called Peninsula Spinners Limited) had a capacity of 8,000 spindles, but shortly after, a new bigger and modern mill was built in Cheung Sha Wan, with 35,000 spindles.

William Charles Gomersall had an important role as a middleman between the new industrial concerns, initiated by the Shanghai spinners, and the Hong Kong banking system, dominated by British businessmen. Gomersall had access to credit loans from the most important banks of the city, and gave financing facilities to the Shanghai spinners with a commission. He was also responsible for buying machinery in England in advance of the profits of the companies and facilitating the purchases of raw cotton in the foreign markets. Some of the machinery that was used to build the mills in Hong Kong had been ordered during the war period and were supposed to be used in Shanghai. However, as the situation in mainland China worsened at the end of the decade, it was finally placed in Hong Kong. However, some difficulties needed to be solved such as the climate, being hot and humid, and the lack of skilled workers. The first problem was solved by the introduction of air-conditioning machines; the latter by bringing experienced workers from Shanghai and recruiting them as trainers. For all these reasons, it took normally one year or more from the moment the companies were registered until they could start to produce.

Shanghai spinners in the mid 1950s with the Chairman of the HSBC



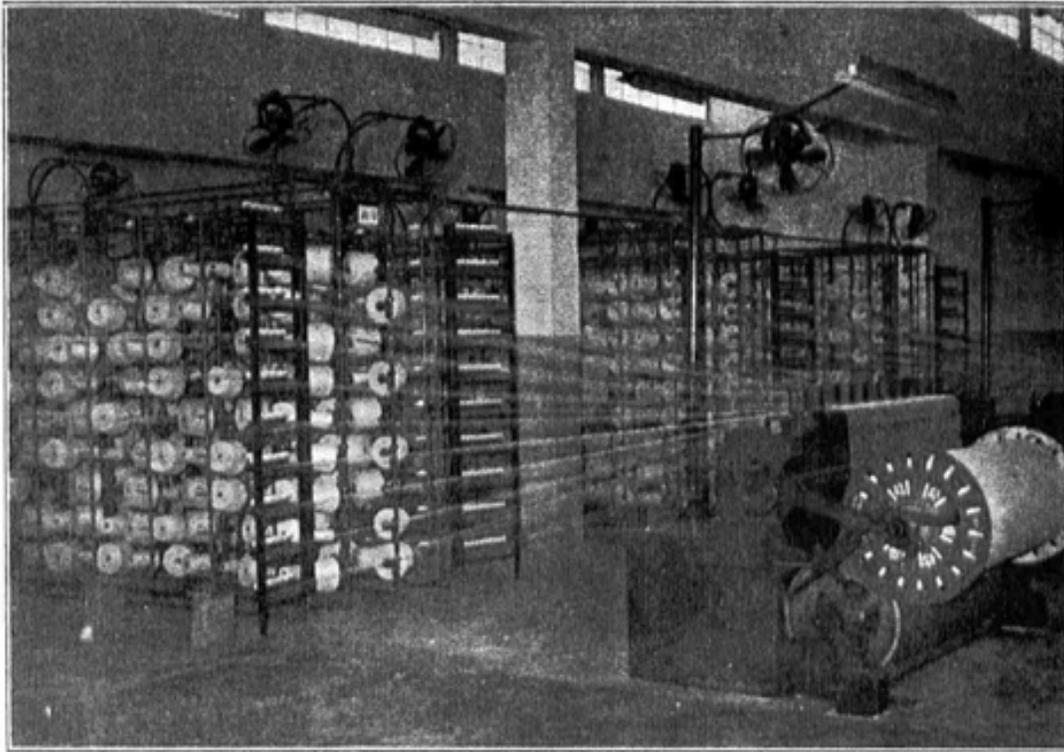
From left: Mr. Vincent Woo (Central Textiles), Mr. H. C. Yung (荣 鸿庆, Nanyang), Mr. C. S. Loh (陆菊森, Wyler), Mr. T. Y. Wong (王统元, Hong Kong Spinners), Sir Michael Turner, Mr. C. C. Lee (李震之, South China), Mr. Mou Lee (李 楸, Kowloon), Mr. Y. C. Wang (王云程, Nanyang), Mr. Z. D. Woo (何瑞棠, Hong Kong Spinners) and Mr. T. Y. Tung (童振远, South China).

Source: *40 Years of the Hong Kong Spinning Industry*, p. 58.

The next companies to settle in Hong Kong came from one of the most important Chinese industrial groups. During the 1930s, T. K. Yung (Rong Zongjing), the boss of Shenxin Group, owned 20% of the total spindles of the country and was one of the richest men in China. He was one of the most important tycoons of the golden age of Shanghai's bourgeoisie but, when the war broke out, he moved to Hong Kong where he died in 1938. Then, his extended family started a fight for control of the business. One part of the industry was moved to Nationalist Chongqing while other assets remained in occupied Shanghai. Finally, at the end of the 1940s the family was dispersed between mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In Hong Kong, Wu Kunsheng (with the support of one of the sons of Zongjing, Hongyuan) and other shareholders such as C. S. Loh (Liu Jusen) founded Wyler Textile Limited (伟伦纺织有限公司) and built a spinning factory in To Kwa Wan. At the same time, Y. C. Wang (Wang Yuncheng), grandson of Rong Zongjing registered with his relative H. C. Yung (Rong Hongqing) a company called Nanyang Cotton Mills Limited (南洋纱厂有限公司) and opened the first vertically integrated mill capable of spinning, weaving and dyeing in Kowloon (Ma Tau Kok Road in Hunghom, on

the seafront). The company was in search of more capital and found an enduring partner in Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, who became Chairman of the board of directors from 1948 until his death, in 1993. Finally, Liu Guowei who managed the Shenxin business in Chongqing during the war and his relative Mou Lee (Li Jiyao) founded Kowloon Textile Industries (九龙纺织有限公司) in 1948 where they opened a factory in Shum Tseng, near Castle Peak Road. The company started to operate in the spring of 1949. These three companies that appeared more or less at the same time came from the same family origin (the Rongs) and shared the same business legacy (Shenxin). However, they represented different factions and their relationship was rather complex.

Three more companies entered the race for cotton spinning before 1950. South Sea Textile Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (南洋纺织有限公司) was founded in Tsuen Wan by Tang Xinghai (Tang Ping Yuan) in March 1948 starting operations in January 1949. Like C. Y Wong, Tang Xinghai was a pioneer in the Chinese dyeing sector and, like the Rongs, came from Wuxi, in Jiangsu province. The Tangs were a wealthy family that sent their male members to be educated at the best universities in the US, such as Boston's MIT. However, in 1945, some members of the family were accused by the Guomindang of collaborating so it is very likely that the Tangs left China for this reason. Another company, South Textiles Limited (香港东南纺织有限公司) was founded in 1948 but started to operate in 1949 in Castle Peak Road. The firm was run by the sons of a famous textile trader and industrialist named Liu Guojun, who decided to stay in Communist China. During the war, the Liu family had already moved one factory from their native Changzhou (also in the Jiangsu region) to the safety of Shanghai's International Concessions. The sons of Liu Guojun, Liu Hankun and Jerry H. T. Liu (Liu Handong) moved to Hong Kong afterwards continuing with the textile business. Meanwhile, the daughter of Liu Guojun (Liu Biru) married Cha Jimin, a dyer who pioneered in establishing one of the first and most important finishing mills in Hong Kong: China Dyeing Works (中国染厂有限公司). Finally, a small company, Lee Tai Textile Company Limited (联泰纱厂有限公司) also started to operate in August 1948 with 5,000 spindles in Shatin. The company was founded by T. C. Ying (Ying Dingcheng) a Shanghai spinner from the region of Ningbo, like C. Y. Wong.



Courtesy: South China Textile, Ltd.

Rapid winding on a Warpers Beam.

Reference: South China Textiles Ltd. mid 1950s (spinning production)

Source: J. M. Braga (1957): Hong Kong Business Symposium. South China Morning Post, Hong Kong.

At the end of 1948, six of these mills were operating and the number of spindles totalled 120,000, with a production capacity of 7,200 bales of yarn per month, far exceeding the capacity of the weaving and knitting sector of the city. The rest of the factories would open the following year.

Shanghai spinners. Pioneers that opened business in 1948				
	Spindles	Output daily (bales)	Workers	Investment in Million HKD
South China Textiles, Ltd.	5000	10	200	4
Peninsula Spinners Ltd.	8000	16	400	5
Wylar Textiles, Ltd.	25000	50	800	20
Nanyang Cotton Mill, Ltd.	15000	30	600	25
Hong Kong Spinners Ltd.	37000	74	1200	30
South Sea Textile Manufacturing Co., Ltd.	30000	60	1000	24
Total	120000	240	4200	108

Source: FEER, 4/7/1948, pp. 336-337; FEER, 10/27/1948, p. 416-417; and FEER 3/2/1949, pp. 257-258.

The weaving and knitting industries had been the most important industrial sector (besides shipping) of the economy of Hong Kong before the war, with 550 companies employing more

than 40,000 workers in 1937. But the war dealt a severe blow to the sector mainly composed of small and middle companies and most of them disappeared. However, the development of the spinning business helped the knitting and weaving sector to recover and forge ahead at pre-war production levels making Hong Kong an important exporter of yarn and finished cloth as well.

In the beginning, the spinning mills turned to the Chinese market. But the difficulties in getting import licences under the Nationalist regime and the restrictions of the Communist Party after 1949 to import cloth made them change their minds. Then, the Korean war broke out and trade between China and Hong Kong came to a standstill. New markets were opened up for the Hong Kong spinners. The Second World War had a profound impact on the industrial powers that exported textile products to South-East Asian markets. Great Britain and Japan were not in a position to export textiles at that time (although Japan and India would become strong competitors of Hong Kong shortly afterwards). Thus, Indonesia was one of the first and most lucrative markets for the Hong Kong spinners, followed by Malaysia, South Korea, Pakistan, Burma, Taiwan, and the Philippines. During the 1950s, Hong Kong's textile industry expanded and reached other continents such as Africa (South Africa), Europe (England and West Germany), Australia and America (the United States). Although, Hong Kong had no raw cotton it was a commercial entrepôt centre that could import fibre from the South Asian cotton fields and from the USA. However, imports of raw cotton from the US were restricted by the trade blockade with China and the emergent Hong Kong industry had to find other supplies, not only in Asia (Pakistan, Burma), but also in Africa (Kenya, Sudan), Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Turkey) and America (Brazil, Argentine, Peru). Consequently, Hong Kong became a strategic textile centre that participated in a truly global trade.

At the same time, Hong Kong experienced a process of industrialization and the government provided facilities for the new industries. It changed its labor regulations so women would be permitted to work before 6am in the morning and after 8pm at night. Cotton spinning mills were provided with dormitories, medical facilities and meal and cloth subsidies for a working shift that, at the beginning, lasted 12 hours a day. However, after the first years, the government changed to three shifts of eight hours a day. The first problem that the spinners had found between 1947-58, the lack of industrial workers, was partly solved by the massive immigration of refugees who entered the colony after 1949. The continuous flow of migrants enabled cotton factories to keep salaries low while the price of yarn was high due to the postwar scarcity, securing a good margin. The mills soon doubled their size. Wyler started with a factory of 140,000 square feet which expanded to a total of 225,000 square feet very shortly afterwards. Hong Kong Spinners began with 8,000 spindles but in one year it would increase its capacity to 37,000 spindles, becoming the biggest industrial company at the end of the decade. Since all the spinning industries were concentrated in Kowloon and Tsuen Wan these places became industrialized and urbanized.

In 1950, eleven cotton spinning mills were operating in Hong Kong with a total of 165,000 spindles producing 10,100 bales of yarn per month. The success of the cotton spinning mills was related to the modernity of the factories (they all used new machinery), the price/quality ratio of the goods and the potential of trading with overseas markets. However, some markets, such as Malaysia and Africa, did not have the ability to finish textiles, and, thus were not interested in buying cotton yarn. This impelled the spinning companies to become vertically integrated installing annex mills for weaving, dyeing and knitting. The development of the spinning industry during the 1950s paved the way for the boom of apparel and knitting of the next decades. As they grew, textile companies invested in marketing and publicity, launching famous commercial brands like Golden Peak (Nanyang Cotton Mill), Flying Fish (South Sea), Camel (Wylter Textiles) and Red Rose (Hong Kong Spinners Limited).

SOUTH SEA TEXTILE MANUFACTURING CO., LTD.
 501-6 Marina House, Queen's Road, C., Hongkong.
 Tel. 36053-5 Cable Address: "SOUSEATEX"

Manufacturers of
"Flying Fish" Brand
 ALL COUNTS OF COMBED & CARDED COTTON YARN
 AND
 ALL KINDS OF COTTON PIECE GOODS



精製各支普通及精梳棉紗·各種棉布
南海紡織股份有限公司
 香港皇后大道中公主行 501-6 室
 電報掛號: "SOUSEATEX"
 電話: 36053-5

偉倫紡織有限公司
WYLER TEXTILES, LIMITED

OFFICE: Room 308, No. 9 Ice House Street, Hongkong.
 Tels. 28058, 36966. Cable Add: "WYLER"

FACTORY: Kwei Chow St., To Kwa Wan Rd., Kowloon.
 Tels. 64902, 64912.



Manufacturers of
"CAMEL" & "JUNK" BRAND
 Cotton Yarn & Staple Fibre Yarn

駱駝牌·帆船牌各支棉紗及快把紗
 香港雪廠街九號308室 電話 28058, 36966

Advertising cotton yarn brands: Flying fish and Camel

Source: *Hong Kong Textile Annual, 1956.*

In 1955, The Shanghai spinners felt the necessity to create an association to represent the interests of the 13 spinning companies that already existed. Thus the Hong Kong Spinners Association was inaugurated and its members chose C. Y. Wong (Wang Qiyu), the founder of Hong Kong Spinners, as its first Chairman and Tang Xinghai, from South Sea Textile Manufacturing, as Vice-Chairman. By this time the textile industry had become the largest industrial sector of Hong Kong's economy.

Registered spinning companies, December 1954			
	Spindles	Workers	Monthly output lbs (20s yarn)
East Sun Textile Co. Ltd.	12528	490	400000
Hong Kong Spinners Ltd.	40240	1762	1447600
Kowloon Textile Industries, Ltd.	24000	900	840000
Lee Tai Textile Co., Ltd.	10920	480	392000
Nanyang Cotton Mill, Ltd.	22200	750	700000
New China Textiles, Ltd.	10800	422	427988
Pao Hsing Cotton Mill, Ltd.	10820	425	360000
South China Textile, Ltd.	19600	750	650000
South Sea Textile Manufacturing Co., Ltd.	21780	1037	812000
South Textiles, Ltd.	6720	279	220000
Star Textile Ltd.	9000	360	300000
The Textile Corporation of Hong Kong Ltd.	13528	550	408000
Wylor Textiles, Ltd.	28646	1433	1008800
Total	230782	9638	7966388
"Cotton Mills in Hong Kong", by Ricardo, FEER, 12/16/1954, p. 797.			

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The Hongkong Rope Manufacturing Co., Ltd - Amelia Allsop

The Hong Kong Heritage Project (HKHP) Archive was established with the mission to collect, interpret and make accessible the historic records of the Kadoorie family and their business and charitable endeavours. The HKHP Archive has been accessible to the public since 2009 and holds an extensive collection of historic records and photographs. Amongst this collection are papers relating to rope manufacturing, one of the oldest industries in Hong Kong.

Due to its strength, versatility and water resisting properties, Manila hemp has long been favoured for the manufacture of commercial rope. The export of Manila hemp from the Philippines began in 1818. Hong Kong, with its shipping facilities and close proximity to the raw material source, was an ideal place to establish a rope manufacturing factory.

The Hongkong Rope Manufacturing Co., Ltd. (Rope Co.) was established in Hong Kong in 1883 by a group of nine prominent businessmen, starting operations with a modest capital of HK\$150,000. Under the management of Messrs. Shewan, Tomes and Co., the company supplied Manila Rope to the Admiralty and all leading shipping companies, its "Phoenix Brand" being world renowned. Before the Second World War, the company employed 200 hands, and used approximately 1,700 bales of hemp per month. In the immediate post-war years however, all hemp was controlled by the United States Commercial Operation, and supply was limited and difficult to obtain. The company also encountered financial difficulties due to heavy damage suffered during the war years.



Robert G. Shewan of *Messrs. Shewan, Tomes & Co.*

In the immediate post-war years the lack of raw materials, ill health of Works Manager E.J. Spradbery and general lack of skilled staff thwarted efforts to resume rope manufacturing. The *Memorandum on Manila Hemp* written by a Director of The Hongkong Rope Manufacturing Co., Ltd in 1946 outlined the company's post-war struggles: 'At present all hemp is controlled by the United States Commercial Operation, about half being manufactured locally and the balance shipped to the U.S.A. It is suggested that, as the U.S.A. is now obtaining rubber from Malaya, a telegram be sent to the Colonial Office requesting that supplies of Manila hemp be made available as a means of restarting one of the Colony's oldest industries.'



The Rope Company's property at Mau Tau Kok in the 1940s.

In 1947 the company sold their vacant factory at Mau Tau Kok to Shanghai industrialists Y.C. Wang and H.S. Yung, who together with Chairman Lawrence Kadoorie established Nanyang Cotton Mills. Incorporated in 1947, the company started operation in early 1948 with 15,000 spindles and 200 looms, which later expanded to 55,948 spindles and 547 looms. The spinning industry laid the ground-work for all subsequent development and diversification within the textile industry in Hong Kong, such as dyeing, finishing and garment making.

The collection of records held in the HHKP Archive (1933 – 1965) includes plans of the Mau Tau Kok property, Memorandum and Articles of Association.

For more information on the Hong Kong Heritage Project, visit our website at:
www.hongkongheritage.org

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The Tak Chong Kee Bamboo Steamer Company

Producing a wide variety of handmade steamers, as far as I know this company is the last remaining such enterprise in Hong Kong. Located at 12 Western Street, Sai Ying Pun, a range of other products is also on display often made with bamboo left over from making the steamers.

The craft was brought to Hong Kong from Guangzhou by manager Raymond Lam's father in the 1950s. Eventually Raymond inherited the skills and can make a regular-sized steamer in about 15 minutes. The familiar problems of rising rents and a shortage of skilled labour caused most of the production to move to China. However, even today Lam still makes tailor-made special orders for clients himself. The company's major orders come from both local and overseas Chinese restaurants.

When asked if he is worried that the craft will be lost, Lam says he thinks of what he does "purely as a business, as a means of survival, rather than a means of retaining any cultural tradition."

Whenever I go in I wonder whether on my next visit I will find a shop selling mobile phones.

HF

James Hayes became a cadet officer Class II in the Hong Kong civil service in 1956. He was District Officer, South from 1957 to 1960 and Islands from 1961-1962. He then worked in a wide variety of government departments, his final post being Regional Secretary, New Territories, 1985 to 1987. James is also a scholar and author. He has written extensively about Hong Kong, especially its rural communities. He served as member, vice-president, and president of the Royal Asiatic Society between 1966 and 1989, and edited fourteen its journals from 1967 to 1980.

Some useful sources, including the RASHKB journals, that might assist research James Hayes

It may be helpful to draw attention to the *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (<http://www.royalasiaticsociety.org.hk>) now entering its fifty-third annual issue, with which I am sure many of us are already familiar. This contains many topics of direct or related interest to subscribers in its pages. More to the point, the Journal and its contents are fully indexed, in two published indices for the first twenty issues up to and including 1980, and thereafter by an online index. Similarly, the *Journals of the Hong Kong Archaeological and Hong Kong Anthropological Societies* contain some useful information, though I am not sure whether they are indexed.

Probably much less well-known is the late Professor Cornelius Osgood of Yale's three volume work on Ap Lei Chau at Aberdeen (which he calls "Lung Chau") published by the University of Arizona Press in 1966, under the title *The Chinese, a Study of a Hong Kong Community*. Osgood, a leading anthropologist of his day spent much time there in the early 1960s, and his detailed accounts of the community, and its businesses and manufacturies, present a wealth of detailed and well illustrated information, well suited to persons with our interests. This book has never received the attention, and acclamation, it deserves, and is well-worth seeking out. It includes, amongst much else, detailed descriptions of Incense Stick and Preserved Ginger factories on the former island.



Cornelius Osgood (1905-1983)

Curator of Anthropology at the Yale Peabody Museum, New Haven, Conn, USA from 1934 to 1973.

I have made a few minor contributions myself in this line, in regard to incense manufacturing, charcoal burning, calendering, rope walks, indigo planting, blacksmithing, and the making of farming and fishing tools in the villages, also to bean curd and related manufacture, most of which can be found via the indices to the RAS Journal. My notes on these subjects were based on ground evidence, and the information provided by elderly persons in the Ap Lei Chau and Aberdeen area, and others in the villages of South Lantau from the late 1950s on. All told, they are a bit of a rag-bag, but are authentic as being assembled as opportunity offered on the spot and at times when very few enquiries were being made locally in these fields.



Shui Hau Village with its fields, and showing the South Lantau Road going through to the Shek Pik Reservoir site, both then under construction, 1959-60.

This recital reminds me that when my first book, *The Hong Kong Region 1850-1911: Institutions and Leadership in Town and Countryside* (Camden, Conn. Archon Books, 1977) was being reprinted in a paperback edition by Hong Kong University Press in 2012, I took the opportunity to add a new preface which records the work done on the ethnography of the region in the past fifty years, and lists published materials. Dependent on their interests, some readers may also find this useful.

In conclusion, splendid background information relevant for the industrial history of Hong Kong is provided by Rudolf P.Hommel's 1937 masterly compendium, *China at Work*, with its quaint sub-title, *An Illustrated record of the Primitive Industries of China's Masses, whose Life is Toil, and thus an Account of Chinese Civilization* (New York, The John Day Company, for The Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, pp.x, 366). It was reprinted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press in, I think, the late 1970s.

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The Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC; Chinese: 香港貿易發展局) is a statutory body established in October 1966 as the international marketing arm for Hong Kong-based manufacturers, traders and service providers. The organisation currently has more than 40 offices around the world, including 11 on the Chinese mainland.

Neil Morris joined the HKTDC in October 1968 after two years as an admin officer in the Secretariat Finance branch. During the following years he had a wide range of jobs including the TDC representative in Japan for two years, Paris for four and Panama for a further one year. He left Hong Kong to return to Europe in 1984.

Brief Recollections of the HKTDC in its early days - Neil Morris

I worked for the HKTDC for some 14 years in its early days (it was set up in October 1966). As a colony, HK had no network of diplomatic or commercial offices round the world, and TDC was structured as a non-government trade promotion body funded by a very small levy on exports and imports (except foodstuffs). Our job was to bring together HK producers and overseas buyers; we did not ourselves negotiate or sell.

To help manufacturers and exporters sell overseas, TDC took display space at major international trade fairs and developed its own formula of TDC-accompanied trade missions to major markets all over the world. In those early days a mission usually comprised about 60% trading firms and 40% manufacturers. The former were supposed to carry only HK-made goods, but the rule was of course unenforceable. A mission might visit three cities in two or three countries, spending one week in each.



HKTDC's Neil Morris and Judith Yuen welcome Austrian President Dr Franz Jonas to the HK exhibition at the Vienna International Trade Fair, September 1970.

A businessman who signed up for a TDC mission would send in samples of the products he wanted to display. TDC undertook the logistics of the mission: packing & shipping the samples, travel arrangements, booking hotel rooms, function rooms, interpreters etc.

We would set up an exhibition in, say, a function room of the centrally-sited hotel we stayed in, and did mail shots to get importers and local manufacturers to come along. We soon found that there was a conflict of interest between the traders, who wanted to collect visiting cards off as many visitors as possible, and the manufacturers, who rapidly realised that they didn't want their existing customers to come in to the exhibition as they risked losing them to a trader or another manufacturer on the mission!

We found that many members on our early missions were on their first business trip outside HK; the TDC formula gave them a fairly painless introduction to international markets.

I have often wondered how HK balances its books now that there seems to be no industry left at all...In (I think) 2003, during a visit to Hong Kong to see my son Malcolm, I saw an advert in the SCMP which really brought me up short: a developer had placed an ad advising all and sundry that he was seeking permission to convert an industrial building in Tsuen Wan into a hotel for groups of mainland tourists coming to visit -of all things- HK's new Disneyland park... Thirty years before, sales of land designated for industrial buildings were always awaited with keen interest by developers and produced significant amounts of revenue for the government.

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