

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

BARBARIANS ON THE SHORE:

GLOBAL TRADE AND EVERYDAY LIFE ON THE SOUTH CHINA COAST, 1780-1860

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

CARL ERNEST KUBLER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
NOMENCLATRURAL NOTE	ix
FIRST PROLOGUE	1
SECOND PROLOGUE	2
INTRODUCTION	4
1. SOJOURNERS: CHINESE MIGRANTS AND INTERMEDIARIES IN THE WESTERN WORLD, 1780–1840	12
2. SPEAKING WITH DEVILS: TRANSLINGUAL ENGAGEMENT AND EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION ON THE SOUTH CHINA COAST	71
3. MAKING MONEY, NOT WAR: HABITUAL OPPORTUNISM AND GRASSROOTS COMPROMISE	126
4. INTREPID PETITIONERS: SINO-WESTERN DEBT AND RECOMPENSE AT THE GRASSROOTS AND BEYOND	160
5. CONTINUITY: EVERYDAY LIFE AFTER THE OPIUM WAR	204
CONCLUSION	235
EPILOGUE	239
BIBLIOGRAPHY	246
CODETTA: PROBLEMATIZING PIDGIN—FROM <i>BUSINESS</i> BACK TO <i>BUSYNESS</i>	282
APPENDIX 1.1: PARTIAL CHINESE-PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE GLOSSARY FROM MACAO, CA. 1830	285
APPENDIX 1.2: SAMPLE CHINESE PIDGIN RUSSIAN DIALOGUES IN KIAKHTA, CA. 1850	294

APPENDIX 2:
SAMPLE RANKINGS OF CHINESE MERCHANTS, BY THE SUPERCARGO
OF THE AMERICAN SHIP *CONFEDERACY*, 1804

297

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: MAP OF THE PEARL RIVER DELTA AND OUTLYING ISLANDS	xi
FIGURE 2: DETAIL OF WHAMPOA ANCHORAGE AND SURROUNDINGS	xii
FIGURE 3: DREADNOUGHT SEAMEN'S HOSPITAL	44
FIGURE 4: CHINESE SEAMEN AT QUARTERS IN AMSTERDAM	65
FIGURE 5: SAMPLE <i>YIYU</i> MANUALS	100
FIGURE 6: CHINESE FISHING ALONG THE ITANHÉM RIVER	133
FIGURE 7: LETTER FROM PUNQUA WINCHONG TO THOMAS JEFFERSON	170
FIGURE 8: PETITION FROM THE CHINESE COMMERCIAL COMMUNITY OF MACAO, 1794	178
FIGURE 9: THE ENGLISH ALPHABET, AS PRESENTED IN ROBERT THOM'S <i>CHINESE AND ENGLISH VOCABULARY</i> (1843)	213
FIGURE 10: SAMPLE PAGE FROM TONG'S <i>INSTRUCTOR</i>	215

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: EARLY EUROPEAN LANGUAGE GLOSSARIES IN CHINA

104

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No dissertation would be complete without an acknowledgement of the debts it has accumulated along the way.

First and foremost, I wish to thank my advisor Ken Pomeranz and committee members Leora Auslander and Mark Philip Bradley for their generous mentorship. The time and energy that they have devoted to reading drafts, writing recommendation letters, and nudging my research in new directions cannot be quantified in hours alone, and I hope this dissertation can do some small measure of justice to their labors.

Guy Alitto, Jacob Eyferth, and Johanna Ransmeier have each in their own way shaped my understanding of the history of modern China. I am additionally grateful to the many faculty in other fields who have contributed to my training as a historian at the University of Chicago: Matt Briones, Susan Burns, Jan Goldstein, Jim Hevia, Jim Ketelaar, Bill Sewell, and Mauricio Tenorio. At Yale, undergraduate courses with Valerie Hansen, Jonathan Spence, and Jing Tsu first helped lay a foundation for my future studies in the history of China and the Sinophone world, although I did not realize it at the time. The guidance of so many excellent teachers and mentors notwithstanding, any errors that remain are of course mine alone.

I am grateful to a number of institutions for their support. The Fulbright Foundation, Social Science Research Council, and Council on Library and Information Resources made possible my extended migrations through archives in China, Western Europe, and Southeast Asia in 2020 and 2021. A Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship supported a final year of dissertation research and writing. At the University of Chicago, the Center for East Asian Studies, Center for International Social Science Research, and Nicholson Center for British

Studies provided timely pre-dissertation research funding and supplemental grants for access to digital sources during the COVID-19 pandemic. I also benefited from two Foreign Language and Area Studies grants for Japanese training in Chicago and Hokkaido, and from a Kathryn Wasserman Davis Fellowship for Portuguese study at Middlebury College. External grants from the Boston Athenaeum, Esherick-Ye Family Foundation, and Harvard Business School facilitated several auxiliary research trips.

Above all I wish to thank my family. I thank my wife, Allyson Ettinger, for her loving support, biting wit, generous indulgence of my frequent trips to distant archives, and never-ending inspiration for me to be the best human I can be.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my parents, Cornelius and Jerling Kubler, who have always been both my most ardent fans and my most critical readers. Their boundless love, compassion, and wisdom have left a greater mark than can be expressed in words. I thank them for instilling in me the courage to follow my dreams in the manner of my choosing, and I apologize only that it has taken so long to bring those dreams into fruition. Vati and Mama, this volume is for you.

ABBREVIATIONS

AHM	Arquivo Histórico da Marinha, Lisbon
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon
AMJL	<i>Aomen jilüe</i> 澳門紀略
ANTT	Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon
BA	Boston Athenaeum, Boston
BL	British Library, London
CUL	Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and Archives
FHA JJC SYD	First Historical Archives, Beijing, <i>Junjichu shangyudang</i> 軍機處上諭檔
FSL	Fu Ssu-nien Library, Academia Sinica, Taipei
LMS	London Missionary Society Archives, SOAS, London
NAH	Nationaal Archief, The Hague
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
PRO	Public Records Office, Hong Kong
SHA	St. Helena Government Archives, Jamestown
TANAP	<i>Resolusies van die Politieke Raad van die Kaap die Goeie Hoop</i> (http://databases.tanap.net/cgh/)
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom, London
YZDS	<i>Yapian zhanzheng dang'an shiliao</i> 鴉片戰爭檔案史料

NOMENCLATURAL NOTE

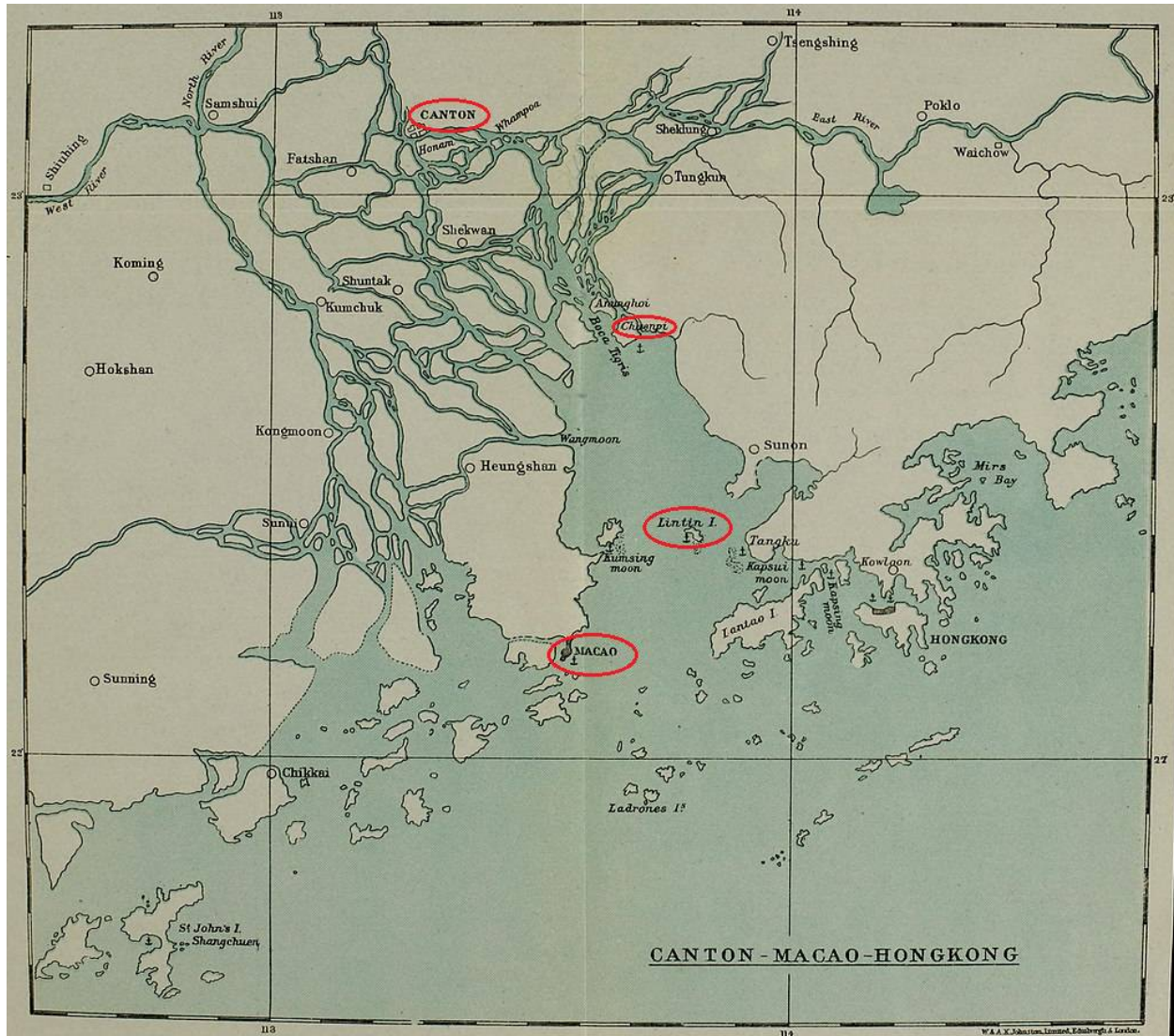
The historical individuals discussed in this dissertation used a variety of words to describe themselves, their experiences, and the people around them. Certain expediencies are necessary to render those words—across differences of language, dialect, and temporal context—into a form legible to a twenty-first-century Anglophone audience.

As a general rule, I use the *pinyin* system of romanization for Chinese terms, people, and place names, except where a different spelling would be more familiar (Hong Kong, Macao) or where phonology performs an argumentative and not merely descriptive function (such as in Chapter 2, which uses Yale romanization in discussing Cantonese-inflected pidgins). Where possible, I render personal names in the individual's topolect of preference. Thus, the Cantonese “Assam” (Asaam 亞三) instead of Mandarin “Yasan.” In the many cases where the names of Chinese individuals are known only through their romanizations into Dutch, English, German, Portuguese, Spanish, or other languages, I have retained the spellings used in the non-Sinitic sources, even where this has resulted in some inconsistencies across the text. (For instance, many Dutch renderings of Hokkien or Fukienese names differed significantly from English or Portuguese renderings of Cantonese names, even when those names consisted of the same Chinese characters.)

At the time of the events discussed in this dissertation, the relationship between human speech and written language was not nearly as rigid as it is in today's world of standardized national languages and prescriptive grammars. Spellings and orthographies varied, and the boundaries between languages themselves were far from fixed. It is my hope that readers of this volume can endeavor to navigate the linguistic diversity of its contents with the same spirit of

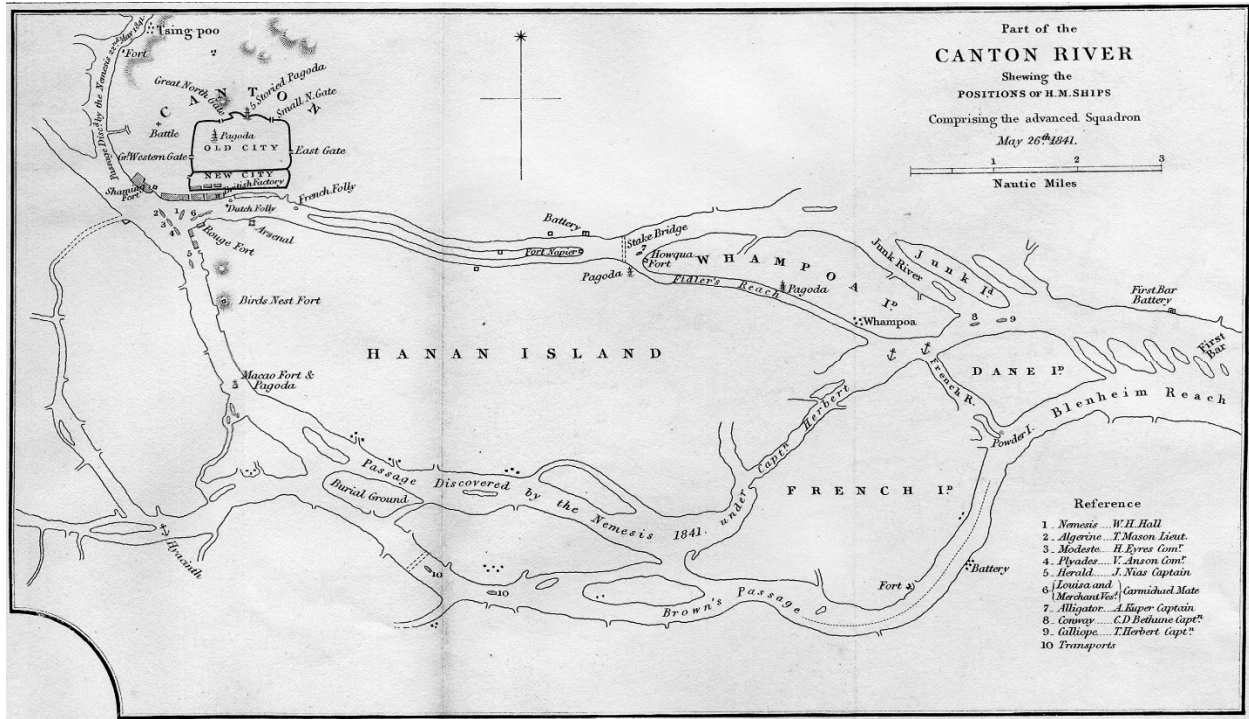
flexibility that the enterprising, adaptable residents of the South China Coast lived their lives some two centuries ago.

Figure 1. Map of the Pearl River Delta and Outlying Islands



Adapted from H.B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910), 1.

Figure 2. Detail of Whampoa Anchorage and Surroundings



Adapted from William Dallas Bernard and William Hutcheon Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis, from 1840 to 1843*, vol. 1, second ed. (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), end of volume.

FIRST PROLOGUE

The journey from Kwangtung out into the Great Western Ocean is long, uncertain, and full of possibilities. It begins in the lower reaches of the Pearl River, below the customs station at Tiger's Mouth. A broker's boat meets you at the appointed spot, and from there you head downriver to Lingding Island, or perhaps directly to Bay Gate, where the foreign ships are waiting.

On board, another Kwangtung man shows you your quarters. It is a dark, hammocked space below deck, and for the next eight or ten moons this will be your home. The voyage will take you to many distant regions: down into the South Sea, perhaps to Gelaba, past the City of the Small Western Ocean, to Sandieli, then northward out into the Great Western Ocean and onward to the foreigners' homelands. Your new companions on board have other names for the places you pass: *Mar da China*, *Batavia*, *Goa*, *St. Helena*, and similar words whose pronunciations you have yet to master.

In Wang Dahai's *Desultory Account of the Islands of the Sea*, it is written that there is a place on the edge of the Great Western Ocean which the foreigners call the Cape, and that somewhere on the northward journey from the Cape there is a dark part of the sea, where neither sun nor moon can be seen. If you proceed onward, however, after three or four days these again appear.

In Confucius's *Analects*, it is written that within the Four Seas, all are brothers. But the Great Western Ocean lies beyond the Four Seas, and its peoples are strange—could they possibly be your brothers, too?

SECOND PROLOGUE

In a sunlit corner of Boston Common's Central Burial Ground, nestled among the graves of local luminaries and Revolutionary War soldiers, lies the earliest recorded resting place of a Chinese person in America. The tombstone reads:

Here lies interr'd the Body of CHOW MANDERIEN a native of China.
Aged 19 years: whose death was occasioned on the 11th Sept. 1798 by a fall from the
Masthead of the ship Mac of Boston.
This Stone erected to his Memory by his affectionate master JOHN BOIT JR.

Boit himself had been only nineteen years old when, a few years earlier in the summer of 1794, he captained his first trading voyage to China. It was there that Chow joined Boit's crew. Little is known about Chow's early life, but surviving records suggest that the two young men grew quite close during their time together. After returning from South China to Boston, Boit and Chow set out again in 1796, this time for Mauritius, and according to family documents Boit and his "faithful servant Chou" took a house on the island, where they "kept Bachelor's hall" together and "passed a few months away in quite an agreeable though dissipated manner" before returning to Boston during the summer of 1798.¹ Tragedy then cut Chow's life short, and while his remembrance on an elaborate tombstone in Boston Common is unusual, he was hardly the first Chinese seaman who would join an American or European ship's crew, nor would he be the last.

In his 1959 travelogue *The Silent Traveller in Boston*, Chinese poet Chiang Yee 蒋彝 (1903-1977) stumbles upon the grave of Chow and reflects on the global circumstances that brought the teenage sailor to American shores. In particular, Chiang notes the unevenness of

¹ Robert Apthorp Boit, *Chronicles of the Boit Family and Their Descendants and of Other Allied Families* (s.l.: s.n., 1915), 32.

historical narratives and historiographies about encounters between China and the West, in which so much more is known and told about the Westerners who went East than about their counterparts. “It should not be difficult to find out who was the first Boston man to land on Chinese soil if I wanted to,” muses Chiang. “But it has not been easy for me to locate who was the first Chinese to come to Boston.”² (Although Chiang styled himself a “silent traveler,” he was in fact far from silent, leaving a trail of best-selling novels, poems, and written commentaries in the wake of his wanderings: between 1937 and 1963, he published eleven English-language books in *The Silent Traveller* series, spanning locations from Oxford and Edinburgh to Paris and San Francisco.)

This is not a dissertation about Chow or Boit, nor about Chiang Yee. But it is about men and women like them—historical travelers both muted and noisy, along with the countless more men, women, and children who never left their native shores but who interacted on a daily basis with the foreign people who had come for trade or adventure in their lands: how they lived, wrote, were written about, or weren’t written about, at the shifting interstices of a rapidly shrinking world. Above all this is a dissertation about the contours of global encounter—between people who were different in some ways and similar in others—and the possibilities and limits of narrating such encounter in the present day. Along the way, I have striven to interrogate the silences, of historical figures and archives, and ask what silence can tell us; and probe where the loudest proclamations might conceal the quietest truths. Only thus can we tell the full story.

² Chiang Yee, *The Chinese Traveller in Boston* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1959), 184.

INTRODUCTION

On the afternoon of September 23, 1821, Woman Kwok was selling fruit, as she often did. Like countless other boatpeople living along the lower reaches of the Pearl River, Kwok earned much of her livelihood catering to foreign sailors and merchants who had come to do business at Canton, the southern Chinese seaport that was then at the heart of the Qing empire's maritime trade with the Western world. Sculling her sampan through the throngs of local fishermen, washerwomen, ferrymen, marketers, barbers, prostitutes, and other waterborne professionals who plied their trades up and down the Pearl River each day, Kwok would move from one merchant vessel to the next, hawking her wares to the men onboard and haggling in pidgin over prices. It was a hectic but routine part of life in the early nineteenth-century Pearl River Delta, and had her fortunes been different, her stop that September afternoon beside the American ship *Emily* might have been like any other. Instead, within a few short hours of pulling up alongside the Baltimore-bound vessel, Woman Kwok was dead and Francis Terranova, a sailor aboard the *Emily*, stood accused of her murder.

Historical records have left us with two principal versions of what transpired between the Chinese boatwoman and the Sicilian American sailor. The first version, based on testimony from Terranova, his companions on the *Emily*, and several American and English captains from neighboring ships, holds that Kwok's death was an accident. According to this account of affairs, Terranova had lowered an earthenware jar to Kwok's sampan to be filled with fruit and then returned to his noontime meal while she was filling it. When he came back, he saw the sampan floating some distance away with no one on board. Unsure what had happened during his

absence, he surmised that an eddy had caught her boat and knocked her into the water, where she drowned.³

Qing records, however, offer a more sinister alternative. According to Chinese witnesses, an argument had broken out between Terranova and Woman Kwok while they were haggling over the fruit's price. Rather than lowering the jar down to Kwok as he claimed, Terranova had thrown it at the boatwoman in frustration, hitting her in the head and knocking her into the water, where she drowned.

Regardless of how, precisely, events unfolded on the afternoon of September 23, all sides agree on the sequence of events that followed. First, Qing authorities demanded Terranova's surrender, which the captain of the *Emily* refused. Unwilling to transfer his crewmember to Chinese custody, the captain acquiesced by allowing a trial to be held on board the *Emily*. On October 6, the presiding Chinese magistrate pronounced Terranova guilty of striking Kwok with the jar and causing her death, but the Americans in attendance and many of their British colleagues decried what they regarded as a mockery of justice. With Qing authorities claiming Terranova's guilt and much of the foreign community proclaiming his innocence, the port's "Hoppo" (*Yuehai guanbu* 粵海關部) or chief customs officer ordered an embargo on American trade until Terranova could be handed over and retried. At this point—for reasons that will become clearer in Chapter 4 of this dissertation—the captain of the *Emily* relented. In a subsequent hearing, held within the city of Canton and closed to foreign counsel, Qing authorities convicted Terranova of murder, and the sailor was publicly executed by strangulation

³ The current in the Pearl River was indeed known to be strong, and drownings while swimming or bathing were a tragic but not infrequent occurrence among Canton's foreign population. For examples of such drownings, see the lists in Appendix 4.3 and Appendix 4.5 in Paul Van Dyke, *Whampoa and the Canton Trade* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2020).

the following day.⁴ The tale of Terranova's demise at the hands of Chinese authorities reverberated across the nineteenth-century Anglophone world, and in the years that followed, Terranova's fate became one of the most cited examples in Americans' and Europeans' discussions of the need for extraterritorial rights in China and, eventually, a prominent part of the rhetorical justifications for the first Opium War (1839-1842).

Taking their cues from incidents like the "Terranova affair," many historians have painted a similarly bleak portrait of encounters between China and the West in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with stories of cross-cultural misunderstanding, legal disputes, and opium smuggling taking center stage in a conflict-centered narrative of the years preceding the first Opium War. This dissertation, however, pushes back against that narrative. Through a bottom-up reexamination of the daily lives and incentives of Chinese, Europeans, and Americans on the South China Coast in the years before and after the first Opium War—including merchants, sailors, interpreters, coolies, cooks, laundrywomen, prostitutes, and pirates, among others—I argue that mutually incentivized problem solving, rather than conflict, better characterized transnational relations on the ground level. Ordinary women and men such as Kwok and Terranova remain under the spotlight, but rather than reducing such individuals' lives to neatly packaged anecdotes like the one above, I strive to examine them within a broader frame that investigates how their diversity of lived experiences informed and shaped their interactions.

⁴ For relevant primary sources, see the documents in *Yapian zhanzheng dang'an shiliao* 鴉片戰爭檔案史料, ed. Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan 中國第一歷史檔案館 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1992), vol. 1: 30-31; H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), vol. 4, Appendix X, 11-13, 23-37, and Appendix Y, 28, 35; U.S. Department of State, *Political Relations between the United States and China: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of State upon the Subject of the Political Relations between the United States and the Empire of China, January 25, 1841* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1841), doc. 71: 9-55. For the two most detailed secondary reconstructions of the Terranova affair, see William J. Donahue, "The Francis Terranova Case," *The Historian* 43:2 (1981): 211-24, and Joseph B. Askew, "Revisiting New Territory: The Terranova Incident Re-examined," *Asian Studies Review* 28:4 (2004): 351-371.

How did they engage with one another? How did they communicate? How did they solve problems? And what did they do when their problem-solving methods failed? By centering these everyday processes of negotiation and relationship building rather than the easily sensationalized but only occasional conflicts that sometimes resulted, I offer not only a substantial revision to how scholars understand the global history of modern China but also a more sensitive understanding of how people from different parts of the world, holding different worldviews, could make sense of and engage with one another in their daily lives.

Although the story of Terranova's trial, conviction, and execution by Qing authorities is well known to historians of nineteenth-century China, relatively few have paid attention to the mundane circumstances that gave rise to this controversial event. Scholars have tended to focus instead on the incident's outcome, treating the "Terranova affair" as simply another prominent episode in an apparent long line of Qing-foreigner clashes that seemed to typify relations under the so-called "Canton system" of trade (1757-1842), which had made Canton (Guangzhou) the designated point of entry for Western maritime commerce, and which provided various ancillary stipulations that structured interactions between Chinese and foreigners.⁵ Such a focus has led

⁵ The "Canton system" consisted of a series of regulations for governing interactions between Chinese and foreigners at Canton. Foreign supercargoes wishing to trade at Canton would apply for a permit at Macao before hiring a local pilot to navigate the vessel up the Pearl River Estuary and to the Bocca Tigris customs station. After officials inspected the permit, an "inside pilot" would take command of the ship and guide it upriver, past a series of treacherous shoals and sandbars, to the designated anchorage at Whampoa. A member of the consortium of state-authorized "Hong" (*hang* 行) security merchants would then be enlisted to secure the ship, assume responsibility for the conduct of its crew, oversee the payment of various port charges and customs duties, and trade with the foreign vessel. A comprador was also hired to provision the ship while it was berthed at Whampoa, and a state-licensed linguist or interpreter helped oversee commercial transactions between the foreign supercargo and his designated Hong merchant. A group of thirteen "factories" served as the designated living quarters and warehouses for the foreign merchants while they stayed in Canton and conducted their business. For more detailed discussion of these

historians to highlight the macro-political consequences of this case and others like it, in particular how foreigners' subjection to Qing law served as what one scholar has described as "a crystallization of incompatible Chinese and Western ideas of justice and equity" and inflamed demands for extraterritorial protection and adjacent political freedoms in China.⁶ On top of this common narrative of Sino-Western conflict, research into the conditions of trade at Canton has also exposed many of the system's failures in mediating Qing-foreigner relations: how the seemingly monopolistic constraints on commerce, physical and bureaucratic restrictions imposed on foreigners, recurrent insolvency of the state-sanctioned Chinese Hong merchant consortium, and pressures of the opium trade all amplified the frictions of transnational intercourse.⁷ Partly as a result of an implicit historiographical tendency to connect the origins of the first Opium War (1839-1842) to the dysfunctions of the Canton system, it has become standard for narratives of early nineteenth-century Qing-foreign relations to prioritize conflicts and failures in their discussion of the pre-Opium War period.

trading conditions, see Paul van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

⁶ Eileen P. Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 36. See also Morse, *Chronicles*; Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910); Earl H. Pritchard, *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1929); John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). For specific discussion of jurisdictional conflicts in homicide cases, see also R. Randle Edwards, "Ch'ing Legal Jurisdiction over Foreigners," in *Essays on China's Legal Tradition*, eds. Jerome Cohen, R. Randle Edwards, and Fu-mei Chang Chen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 222-269.

⁷ See, e.g., Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800-42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); Frederic Wakeman, "The Canton Trade and the Opium War," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 10, eds. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Jacques M. Downs, *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784-1844* (Bethlehem: LeHigh University Press, 1997); Weng Eang Cheong, *The Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997). The Terranova case and the *Lady Hughes* affair of 1784 are the best-known examples, but the historical record is filled with similar incidents such as the *Neptune* affair of 1807, the 1817 *Wabash* incident, and the *London* shooting of 1820. For detailed discussion of the *Lady Hughes* affair, see Li Chen, *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

Yet in this narrative emphasis on conflicts and failures also lies a risk: that in looking too teleologically toward the outbreak of the first Opium War, we normalize conflicts and misunderstandings that, when examined in their full social and historical context, may not have been so normal after all. We risk overshadowing everyday practices and behaviors that were integral features of the Canton system's daily operation, but which do not fit neatly into a story of collapse and failure. Conflict does not capture the full picture. In fact, for global trade to function at all—for thousands of individuals to continue transacting millions of dollars' worth of goods year in and year out, right up to the eve of war, and then immediately again thereafter—conflict, misunderstanding, and failure had to have been the exception, not the norm.

Since the landmark publication of Paul van Dyke's *The Canton Trade* in 2005, a growing body of scholarship has begun to show that the Canton system was in fact far more flexible, and effective, at structuring global trade than many historians as well as the system's nineteenth-century contemporaries have recognized. Drawing upon a vast multilingual source base that integrates materials from the Danish, Dutch, French, and Swedish East Indies companies in addition to more commonly considered British, American, and Chinese accounts, Van Dyke and his followers have painstakingly corrected many previous misconceptions about the personal and financial operations of the Hong merchants and local intermediaries such as the compradors and linguists who facilitated day-to-day interactions with foreign traders.⁸

At the same time, recent work by Stephen Platt has also raised new challenges to some of the macro-political teleologies pertaining to the Opium War itself, by pushing back against a

⁸ Significant publications in this vein include Paul Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the South China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005); Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011); Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016); Van Dyke, *Whampoa and the Canton Trade: Life and Death in a Chinese Port, 1700-1842* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2020).

common perception of Anglo-Chinese conflict as having been a somehow inevitable product of incompatible worldviews and politico-economic priorities.⁹ The outbreak of widescale conflict was far from preordained and, indeed, an anomalous occurrence that broke with rather than built upon historical precedent. As Platt emphasizes, for “nearly all parties concerned, including even the government ministers who launched it, the war was all but unthinkable until it actually began.”¹⁰

Taken together, Van Dyke’s and Platt’s research have laid the groundwork for writing a new social and economic history of the period preceding the first Opium War. Unlike Van Dyke, whose work is grounded most firmly in the eighteenth century, this dissertation pushes the story forward through the middle of the nineteenth century and across the historiographical divide of the first Opium War; and expanding on Platt’s Anglocentric political history centered on the agency of key historical figures, I demonstrate how a focus on the everyday lives of ordinary people both complements Platt’s argument against the inevitability of conflict and complicates broader narratives of engagement between “China” and “the West.” Along the way, I argue for a more expansive approach to interpreting instances of historical conflict, through a reading of sources that is attentive as much to process as to outcome. Above all, I show how looking beyond conflict¹¹ can offer a richer set of explanations about everyday life at the intersections of the Chinese and Western worlds in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

This dissertation proceeds in three parts. The first section reframes the spatial and linguistic contours of Sino-Western contact and in doing so sets the stage for a reconsideration of

⁹ Stephen Platt, *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China’s Last Golden Age* (New York: Knopf, 2018).

¹⁰ Platt, xxviii.

¹¹ CKUB note: *Beyond Conflict: Everyday Relations between China and the West, 1780-1860* is the prospective title for the book manuscript.

the dynamics of grassroots interaction. The second section examines a range of examples of transnational problem solving, both successful and unsuccessful. The final section reflects on the first Opium War and its place in historiographical production. What does it mean to write global Chinese history in the present day, and how can we do so better?

In support of this structure, each of the dissertation's five chapters focuses on a different aspect of Sino-Western interaction: voyaging, communication, cooperation, conflict, and continuity. Chapter 1 recontextualizes the identities and experiences of the Chinese who interacted with foreigners on the South China Coast, showing that many coastal inhabitants were already transnational actors with a wealth of experiences beyond Chinese shores—as sailors, servants, merchants, migrant craftsmen—whose behaviors back in China were informed by their own prior endeavors in contact zones abroad. Chapter 2 draws on historical linguistic data, including language manuals for learning Chinese Pidgin English and Chinese Pidgin Portuguese, to argue that routine translingual communication was likely more flexible and effective than most historians appreciate. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 interrogate in turn the capacities and limitations of problem solving. Individual case studies illustrate when and why negotiations succeeded or failed: what happened when a drunk American sailor smashed a china shop, a Dutchman disagreed with his barber about the quality of his haircut, or an enterprising Macanese-Chinese merchant in the company of French-Mauritian pirates became stranded in Rio de Janeiro during the Napoleonic Wars, among other examples. Chapter 5 crosses the historiographical divide of the first Opium War and shows that despite structural changes in state-to-state relations, for people at the grassroots, everyday cross-cultural negotiations and practices remained relatively unchanged in the areas that mattered most.¹²

¹² N.B. These chapter divisions are not exclusive, and many examples despite their positioning in a particular section of the dissertation build cumulatively upon claims from earlier chapters. This method is intentional, as one of my

CHAPTER ONE

Sojourners: Chinese Migrants and Intermediaries in the Western World, 1780–1840

On May 5, 1821, Napoleon Bonaparte died in exile on the island of St. Helena, and his two Chinese cooks were left without a job. For the past four years, Arung and Asum had manned the kitchens in Napoleon's residence at the Longwood House, the sole stalwarts among a rotating cast of Francophone chefs. The latter had left for varied reasons: one hated the weather, two fell in love, and another stormed off after Napoleon insulted his soup.¹³ Throughout it all Arung and Asum abided the demands of their life abroad, chopping vegetables, roasting meats, and baking breads as they helped manage an arsenal of provisions for Longwood's officers and staff: each day some fifty pounds of beef and veal, fifty pounds of mutton or pork, and more than sixty bottles of wine, cognac, and malt liquor, in addition to the four ducks, two geese, two turkeys, twelve pigeons, and nine other fowl that were delivered from the Cape per week, plus a "roasting pig" for Sundays.^{14 15} But now, faced with the establishment's closure and the impending

aims is to showcase the interweaving, overlapping factors at play—of how voyaging, communication, and commercial cooperation and conflict worked together in producing both expected and unexpected outcomes—in a period of history that has all too often been narrated in clear-cut terms.

¹³ BL: Add MS 20125, f. 358.

¹⁴ Details on the provisions supplied to the Longwood House taken from the auction description and document scans of Woolley and Wallis, lot no. 67, 23 September 2015, "Napoleon at St Helena: A contemporary hand-written inventory of the 'Schedule of the Allowance of Wines, Provisions, etc. forwarded to the Establishment at Longwood in the Island of St Helena together with the Names of the persons comprising the Establishment,' signed Denzil Ibbetson ACG and dated 13th October 1820,"

<https://www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk/departments/paintings/pw230915/view-lot/67/>. The auction description misinterprets a few details about the deliveries, but the accompanying scans are sufficiently clear for these to be correctable errors. For comparison, see BL: Add MS 20118, ff. 517-519, which contains earlier statements of rations supplied to the Longwood House for the three quarters from 1 October 1816 through 30 June 1817.

¹⁵ Arung and Asum were not the first Chinese cooks to work under the broader umbrella of Napoleon's employ. Another cook had left St. Helena a few years earlier and returned to China by way of Berlin, and in his firsthand but often unreliable account of Napoleon's exile, Emmanuel de Las Cases mentions a Chinese man encountered on one of the ships passing by St. Helena who had allegedly worked in Egypt as a cook for the French revolutionary general Jean-Baptiste Kléber some two decades earlier. Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné, comte de Las Cases, *Le mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, vol. 3 (Paris: Garnier, 1823), 74. Another Chinese man, one of Napoleon's former stewards circa 1815, went on to open a wholesale business in New Orleans.

termination of their rations and wages, Arung and Asum had little reason to remain, and they left St. Helena together with the rest of the core Longwood personnel on May 27, reaching London in early August.¹⁶ Asked by the Board of Admiralty to “dispose of [the] two Chinese cooks” now that their services were no longer required, the East India Company’s Committee of Shipping arranged to have Arung and Asum returned to their native country on the next available ship, and by the end of January 1822, after spending four years of their lives preparing dinners and déjeuners for the former Emperor of France, the two peripatetic cooks were back in China.¹⁷

Arung and Asum were not alone. Although scholars have typically conceptualized the “Sino-Western encounter” through the framework of Europeans’ going to Asia, it is clear from the historical record that Asians were for nearly just as long also going to the West: not just as cooks and scullions but as merchants, servants, indentured laborers, slaves, students, carpenters, stonemasons, metalsmiths, gardeners, painters, caulkers, sailors, stowaways, and others.¹⁸

Moreover, as I outline in this chapter, upwards of twelve thousand Chinese in the late eighteenth

¹⁶ NAK: ADM 37/6175, muster book of the *Camel*.

¹⁷ Data on the names and itineraries of the two cooks were pieced together from various sources, including: BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/35, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 7 August 1821; BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 24 March 1824; BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/34N, crew and passenger lists of the *Scaleby Castle* and journal entries dated 21 January 1822 through 25 January 1822; and NAK: ADM 37/6175, muster book of the *Camel*. Arung and Asum remain unnamed during the Committee of Shipping’s discussion of the “two Chinese cooks, lately belonging to the Longwood establishment at St. Helena” and are referenced in Admiralty records simply as “China Man No. 533, cook” and “China Man No. 307, cook” (per ordinal naming conventions for Chinese laborers on St. Helena in the early nineteenth century), but a careful reading of the passenger lists of ships that stopped at St. Helena, London, and China, when cross-checked with the cooks’ approximate dates of travel, makes it possible to confirm the identities and itineraries of the two men. Scattered references to Napoleon’s Chinese cooks and other Chinese staff at Longwood also appear in a number of French primary and secondary sources, such as Gilbert Martineau’s *La Vie quotidienne à Sainte-Hélène au temps de Napoléon* and the edited collection *Documents pour servir à l’histoire de la captivité de Napoléon Bonaparte à Sainte-Hélène*, but the 1821-1822 passenger list of the *Scaleby Castle* is the sole document I have encountered that records the names of the two men, and it requires the muster book of the *Camel* and various Committee of Shipping minutes to triangulate their identities. Arung and Asum were the only members of Napoleon’s Chinese staff who were brought to England; the rest were discharged before the Longwood establishment’s departure from St. Helena, which was home to a community of several hundred Chinese laborers, artisans, and household servants in the 1810s and 1820s.

¹⁸ For example, Chinese barbers were setting up shop in Mexico City by the early seventeenth century, with over a hundred Chinese barbershops reported in 1667. See Homer H. Dubs and Robert S. Smith, “Chinese in Mexico City in 1635,” *Far Eastern Quarterly* 1 (1942): 387-389; Déborah Oropeza, “La migración asiática libre al centro del virreinato novohispano, 1565-1700,” *Relaciones: Estudios de historia y sociedad* 37:147 (2016): 355.

and early nineteenth centuries not only traveled to the Western world but also returned to China, bringing back with them a variety of experiences and skills as well as newly acquired capital and connections that they used to cultivate new roles for themselves in the globally inflected microeconomies of the South China Coast: as shopkeepers, compradors (purveyors of provisions), secretaries, interpreters, pilots, peddlers, pimps, and other local intermediaries who facilitated a range of interactions between Chinese and foreigners. Many of these sojourners settled back down in China and established themselves as fixtures of their local communities. Others became habitual itinerants who found alternative means of leveraging their overseas experiences, as in the case of Chinese sailors who worked their way up the British and Dutch maritime ranks from landsman to ordinary seaman to able seaman to boatswain, in which role they then helped recruit and oversee fresh new waves of Chinese globetrotters.

Scholars have long surmised the existence of such Chinese migrants, but a dearth of documentation on their experiences has led us to underappreciate both the volume and the impact of these early travelers to the West. At the same time, the liminal status of these sojourners has also contributed to a significant lacuna in scholarship on the Chinese diaspora, which with few exceptions has focused on the better documented proliferation of Chinese communities in Southeast Asia in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries and the mass migrations to the Western world beginning in the 1850s, while paying comparatively little attention to the period in between.¹⁹ Thus the sojourners of the early nineteenth century have remained on both the

¹⁹ On these migrations, see Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986); Shelly Chan, *Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008); Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001); Wang Gungwu, *Don't Leave Home: Migration and the Chinese* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2001); Wang, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge, MA:

figurative and the literal peripheries of history, tucked away in kitchens or hidden elsewhere in plain sight whilst they cooked food, tended crops, and performed other tasks in support of the “real” historical actors in our narratives.

Yet although such migrants are not easy to track, they are not untrackable. Once one starts looking for them in earnest—on payrolls and ships’ manifests, in medical reports and captains’ logs, in committee minutes and household correspondence—they begin turning up in the seemingly unlikeliest of places, from Napoleon’s kitchens to makeshift migrant camps on the Ilha das Cobras off the Brazilian coast, from consular offices in Cadiz, Hamburg, and Rotterdam to gardens on the island of Bioko in the Gulf of Guinea.²⁰ They go to court against prostitutes in London, build ships for the fugitive Portuguese navy during the Napoleonic Wars, and engage in some fruitless but nonetheless illuminating transnational speculations during a mulberry-bush-growing craze that swept across New England in the 1830s. And having done all of these things, several decades in advance of when we usually think about Chinese as having gone to the West, they returned to China, reintegrated into their native communities, and assumed a range of roles in which they helped shape the course of Sino-Western relations on the ground.

Our failure to properly account for these early transnational actors has left us with a distorted vision of Sino-Western relations in the years leading up to the first Opium War, one that is predicated on a vestigial assumption that “Chinese” and “foreigners” had little contact with or knowledge about one another before Europeans and Americans began arriving in large numbers in the nineteenth century. To be sure, for many Chinese and Europeans this assumption

Harvard University Press, 2000); Wang, *China and the Overseas Chinese* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991).

²⁰ AHU-Macau, caixa 36, doc. 7, anexo (30 July 1814): “Relação nominal dos Chinas que se acham aquartelados na Ilha das Cobras;” BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 11 January 1824; BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/40, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 11 October 1826; NAK: ADM 101/100/1/6, ff. 34-35.

was justified: Qing scholar-officials indeed had little prior exposure to Europeans and entertained a range of misguided ideas about the cultural predilections and physical constitutions of the “foreign devils,”²¹ just as European writers and statesmen were misinformed about “the Chinese;” and lower down the socioeconomic spectrum, a multitude of stereotypes captivated the cross-cultural imaginaries of Chinese commoners and their foreign counterparts as well. Yet although the South China Coast was the primary locus of Sino-Western exchange in the early nineteenth century, it would be a mistake to consider it in a vacuum. As the experiences of individuals such as Arung and Asum attest, the proverbial “Sino-Western encounter” was a process that in crucial ways had also begun earlier, in kitchens, on ships, in brothels, and in other negotiated spaces beyond the shores of China itself. By shaping the experiences and worldviews of the nascent global actors who navigated these encounters, these interactions both directly and indirectly informed the conduct of relations back in China. Former sailors became interpreters-for-hire; coolies became private shopkeepers or wholesalers; Christianized servants became secretaries in foreign firms. For the growing numbers of Chinese who had gone to the West and then returned to the South China Coast in the decades preceding the first Opium War, working for and with the “foreign devils” had become a routine, even normal undertaking. By foregrounding these transnational experiences and examining the entangled movements and

²¹ Most of these ideas were relatively harmless, but at least one would prove to have tragic consequences: the belief that controlling access to rhubarb could be an effective means of controlling Europeans (who would allegedly become incapacitated by indigestion without it), which underpinned certain aspects of the Qing military response during the first Opium War. As one Chinese scholar-official explained of the British in the early 1830s, “Foreigners are fond of cheese, which blocks their stomach and intestines. Only rhubarb and tea can clear their bowels and cleanse their bodies. Once they fail to obtain these foods, they quickly fall ill.” Tellingly, restricting access to rhubarb was a tactic applied to managing other foreign populations as well. As the *Canton Register* reported in March 1830 in response to renewed Qing hostilities with the Khanate of Kokand and the Āfāqī Khojas of present-day Xinjiang, “At Ili, an interdict against the sale of Rhubarb and Tea to foreign tribes has been issued.” Xiao Lingyu 蕭令裕, *Ji Yingjili* 記英吉利 (1832), in *Jindai Zhongguo dui xifang ji lieqiang renshi ziliao huibian* 近代中國對西方及列強認識資料彙編, ed. Hu Qiuyuan 胡秋原 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1972), 776; *Canton Register* 3:5 (March 1830): 18.

relationships mediated by men and women who through a variety of contexts had already become familiar with one another, I aim to recontextualize “who” the Chinese and Westerners were who interacted on the South China Coast.

Methodologically, I also aim to work toward a more nuanced and globally integrated understanding of nineteenth-century Chinese history that meaningfully combines a “China-centered” approach with one that takes seriously the impact of the West. Ever since John King Fairbank’s seminal 1954 treatise *China’s Response to the West* and Paul Cohen’s critiques in the 1980s and 1990s of Fairbank, imperialism, and related scholarly paradigms that situated China in a passive historical role, one of the enduring methodological challenges underlying the study of nineteenth-century China has been how to evaluate the impact of changing global circumstances on developments within China itself.²² Should modern Chinese history best be understood as a series of responses to the West, or are the catalysts of change better sought internally?²³ My dissertation approaches these questions with the conviction that it would be unproductive to downplay the significant material impact of growing Western influence in China in the nineteenth century, just as it would be misleading to discount preexisting internal factors. By focusing on the experiences of individuals who moved between China and the West, I chart an intermediate course while shifting the question in a different direction. Rather than stake any

²² John King Fairbank, *China’s Response To The West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954); Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), and also *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

²³ This is of course an oversimplification, but the basic problem still stands: regardless of where one falls on the spectrum from Fairbank to Cohen regarding the relative impact of the West, the premise has always been Europeans’ going to Asia, with little to no attention given to the reverse. If our goal (as I believe it should be) is to work toward a more “China-centered” history that is nonetheless attuned to global factors, then it makes little sense not to also consider the significant numbers of Chinese who were going to the Western world and then returning to precisely those sites in China where “Sino-Western impact” was most being contested. Methodologically, this kind of bidirectional integration is something that scholars of the New Qing History and others interested in the multiethnic intersections across China’s Inner Asian frontiers have increasingly employed to good effect over the past decade or so, but we have yet to really apply it to rethinking the history of Qing relations with the West (at least before the first Opium War).

epistemological claims about the relative significance of exogenous versus endogenous factors in explaining the trajectory of nineteenth-century Chinese history, I strive instead to uncover the diverse ways in which ordinary Chinese individuals took advantage of the exceptional-seeming but quickly normalized challenges and opportunities presented by this encounter as they traveled to the Western world themselves or leveraged the presence of foreigners in other ways, in a manner that addresses head-on the impact of the West while remaining attentive to the agency and reciprocal inputs of Chinese actors.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. First, based on data culled from over six hundred captains' journals, logbooks, and crew lists from East India Company ships that stopped in China between 1800 and the end of the EIC monopoly in 1834 (covering nearly thirteen hundred voyages in all), in conjunction with estimates based on Dutch and other records, I establish some baseline numbers for how many Chinese left for the Western world and returned to China in the early nineteenth century, and I outline the typical duration and financial terms of their voyages. Second, I reconstruct the daily lives of these sojourners while abroad: what they did for work, what they ate, where they slept; with whom they worked, with whom they ate, with whom they slept. Third, I describe what they did upon returning to China and show their impact upon the societies and commercial communities of the South China Coast. I argue that well before the mass migrations of Chinese into Britain, the United States, Latin America, Australia, and the Caribbean in the second half of the nineteenth century, not only were significant numbers of Chinese making excursions to the Western world, but the vast majority of these Chinese sojourners returned to China and, in particular, returned to a concentrated handful of sites in the Pearl River Delta—Macao, Whampoa (黃埔), Lintin Island (伶仃島), Chuenpi (穿鼻), and the Second Bar (蠔墘) (see Figure 1), which were precisely those areas that foreigners themselves

most frequented—where these Chinese returners leveraged their skills, entrepreneurial instincts, and personal relationships to forge new social and economic roles for themselves at the center of the Sino-Western contact zone. Abroad as well as at home, these sojourners proved to be adaptable, enterprising, and determined, and they became part of a key social stratum of Chinese for whom “dealing with barbarians” had become not just a lucrative but a familiar and routine endeavor in the years leading up to the first Opium War. This has critical implications for how we understand the dynamics of Sino-Western relations on the ground. As the following chapters demonstrate, the sorts of individuals produced by these transnational interactions were able and willing to engage with foreigners in ways quite contrary to what many histories of nineteenth-century China would lead us to expect.

Jack Tar, Meet Tom Jack

When Arung and Asum arrived in London at the beginning of August 1821, the Board of Admiralty had its hands full dealing with other, more eminent transplants from St. Helena: General Henri-Gratien Bertrand, Napoleon’s faithful aide-de-camp whose fictionalized persona would cameo in *Les Misérables* as well as *The Count of Monte Cristo*; the Marquis de Montholon, whose wife Albine had been the reputed mistress of both Napoleon and the late governor of St. Helena, and who had already left the island in 1819 with a third man, a rakish young lieutenant named Basil Jackson; and other dignitaries, a mix of diehard Bonapartists and listless British officers sent to play the part of gaoler.²⁴ No one could be bothered to entertain two Chinese cooks as well, so John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty, paid the two men

²⁴ Albine de Montholon gave birth to two daughters while on St. Helena, Napoléone Marie Hélène de Montholon (1816-1907) and Joséphine-Napoléone de Montholon (1818-1819), both of undetermined parentage.

their outstanding wages and promptly asked the Committee of Shipping to take them off his hands.²⁵

Barrow was in luck. “[T]here is now an opportunity of returning the men to China, provided they can be sent to [us] on or before Saturday next the 11th,” replied the Committee on August 7, “[with] the expenses attending the same to be borne, as usual, by his Majesty’s government.”²⁶ The Committee of Shipping had by this time developed a sophisticated organizational apparatus for receiving, housing, and repatriating the droves of Chinese men who had begun crowding London’s dockyards each year, and when it sent Arung and Asum aboard the tea trader *Scaleby Castle* for its eighth biannual pilgrimage from the Thames to the Pearl River Delta, the pair of cooks joined more than two hundred and fifty other Chinese passengers who were returning from England on the Company vessel—and the *Scaleby Castle* was just one of eight EIC ships carrying Chinese passengers to China that season.²⁷

Most of these men had come to London as sailors. “The inhabitants of Canton are now in the habit of shipping themselves on board our India-men whenever hands are wanted,” observed English naturalist Joseph Banks in 1788.²⁸ This was due to European crews’ high attrition rates on trips to Asia—between ten and fifteen percent on a typical voyage, and even higher on ships with an outbreak of cholera or typhoid—and as a result of the indiscriminating predations of

²⁵ Barrow, who enjoyed a forty-year career as Second Secretary to the Admiralty as well as the distinction of being a best-selling travel writer, was one of the rare British statesmen of the era who had been to China himself, having accompanied Lord Earl Macartney on his 1792-1794 embassy to the Qianlong emperor. Barrow’s 1804 *Travels in China*, based on his memories of the embassy and his own studies of Chinese language and culture, was considered one of the era’s foremost Western treatises on the “manners, customs, and character of the Chinese nation” and enjoyed considerable popularity during his lifetime, although after his death it would become the subject of considerable controversy and critique. See, e.g., William Jardine Proudfoot, “*Barrow’s Travels in China*”: *An Investigation into the Origin and Authenticity of the “Facts and Observations” Related in a Work Entitled “Travels in China, by John Barrow, F.R.S.”* (London: G. Philip, 1861).

²⁶ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/35, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 7 August 1821.

²⁷ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/34N, crew and passenger lists of the *Scaleby Castle*.

²⁸ Letter from Sir Joseph Banks to William Devaynes, 27 December 1788, in *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection, 1768-1820*, ed. Neil Chambers (London: Imperial College Press, 2000), 116. Banks was trying to entice Chinese horticulturalists from Honam to Calcutta.

disease, desertion, and accident, ships regularly needed to replenish their crews. Starting in the eighteenth century it became common practice to draw on Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Malay sailors to fill the ranks during stopovers in Asian ports.²⁹ As ships in Batavia, Canton, and Macao prepared for their homeward journey, captains would coordinate with their local comprador to round up the desired number of hands. In China's Pearl River Delta, where Qing regulations restricted Chinese outmigration and governed foreign trade, compradors smuggled men out from many of the same littoral enclaves that served as entrepôts for opium trafficking, such as Lintin and Cumsingmoon (金新門).³⁰ Meanwhile, in colonial Batavia, a succession of government-authorized labor brokers acted as official *leveranciers* or suppliers of Chinese sailors for VOC ships. Although some men enlisted spontaneously, in general the hiring of Chinese sailors was a premeditated and intentional process: the journal of the *Warren Hastings*,

²⁹ Dutch VOC ships began systematically recruiting Asian sailors during the labor shortages of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), when the Hoge Regering in Batavia formalized the employment of Chinese sailors on every VOC ship in intra-Asiatic trade. This practice soon spread to encompass homeward voyages to Amsterdam as well: by the late eighteenth century, more than a third of VOC sailors passing through Dutch stopover ports such as the Cape of Good Hope were Chinese, and the Cape became known to Qing travelers as a major foreign rendezvous point for Chinese sailors. British EIC recruitment of Chinese and Indian sailors likewise expanded during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784) and Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), as significant portions of the European merchant marine were impressed for naval service. As Matthias van Rossum has detailed, such hiring was not without precedent, with Chinese sailors having begun entering Dutch crews as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, due to the VOC presence at Fort Zeelandia in western Taiwan; but the second half of the eighteenth century still marked a significant watershed in formalizing and spreading the practice. As Paul van Dyke has noted, a related factor was also the declining competitiveness of the Southeast Asian junk trade and corresponding displacement of Chinese sailors from native ships, which led more of them to seek employment elsewhere. Wang Dahai 王大海, *Haidaoyizhi* 海島逸誌 (Zhangyuan cangban 漳園藏板, 1806), *juan* 3:11; J.R. Bruijn, F.S. Gaastra, and Ivo Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979), 153; Bruijn, "De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee en aan boord, bezien in Aziatisch en Nederlands perspectief," *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 91:2 (1976): 230; Van Dyke, "Operational Efficiencies and the Decline of the Chinese Junk Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Connection," in *Shipping Efficiency and Economic Growth, 1350-1800*, ed. Richard Unger (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 223-246; van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld: Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600-1800* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 98-102.

³⁰ On the comprador system within the context of Chinese foreign trade, see Paul Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 51-75. As Van Dyke has noted, Lintin's rise as an alternative provisioning depot farther out in the delta, beyond the regular reach of Qing maritime patrols, facilitated its growth as a major node in local contraband networks from 1820 onward, as many compradors relocated to the island. See Paul Van Dyke, "Smuggling Networks of the Pearl River Delta before 1842," in *Americans and Macao: Trade, Smuggling, and Diplomacy on the South China Coast*, ed. Paul Van Dyke (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 49-72.

for example, notes how the ship's sailmaker was "employed making hammocks for the Chinese" several days before any Chinese arrived, and on those occasions when the comprador returned with more than the desired number of conscripts, many captains sent back the surplus.³¹ Because Qing law forbade long-term overseas travel, the admitted men would typically board in the outer reaches of the Pearl River estuary, beyond the patrols of Qing ships, and often under cover of night.³²

It should come as no surprise that such men³³ existed, at least in some number; but how many of them were there? Were they just a few intrepid souls, driven by circumstances to brave the great unknown? Or were they perhaps more numerous: bands of intentional itinerants who traversed the seas and back? The available evidence points decidedly to the latter. Ships' records indicate that they numbered at least in the thousands, and probably closer to ten or possibly twenty thousand. In order to track the numbers and itineraries of such men, I perused over six hundred EIC ships' journals and crew and passenger lists, covering nearly every Company voyage between England and China in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.³⁴ Over

³¹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/9N, journal of the *Warren Hastings*.

³² When Qing officials managed to intercept would-be migrants, they punished both the men themselves and the compradores who helped hire them. (Their would-be foreign employers tended to get off with a stern warning.) In June of 1820, for example, the Select Committee reported to the government of St. Helena that "20 Chinese laborers about to proceed on board the *Bridgewater* for St. Helena...were seized by the Mandarines [sic], with the exception of one man, who conveyed himself on board, and a large fine was extorted from the person who had been employed to procure them." BL: IOR/G/32/85, St. Helena: Public Consultations, 19 June 1820. In contrast to the border control policies of twenty-first century states, which seem more concerned with immigration and the entry of people, the Qing's restrictive attitude toward emigration fits oddly parallel with what we know about many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century states' border control concerns, which showed greater concern with individuals' leaving than their entering, since population retention had clear implications for taxation and military recruitment. Cf. the discussion in John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³³ Most such early Chinese migrants to the West were male. This was largely a product of skewed sex ratios among urban populations like Canton's (ca. 130 or 140 men for every 100 women) and cultural factors that selected for male migrants (e.g., the gendered nature of sailors' work was an effective gatekeeping mechanism).

³⁴ Two journals were on display at the National Maritime Museum and could not be consulted at the time of my fieldwork, three dozen journals had incomplete crew or passenger lists, and journals were missing for several additional voyages on which the ship was captured by belligerents, wrecked at sea, or lost due to fire. Where possible I supplemented incomplete or missing journals with data drawn from pay books and ledgers, of which I

this period, nearly a third of all EIC ships trading between London and Canton had Chinese men on board before even reaching the South China Coast, as Chinese sojourners made some six thousand verifiable direct trips from England back to China. (This omits those who died en route or sailed from England to other destinations, such as Bombay or Singapore; including those numbers and accounting for the trip from China to start with, the total recorded traffic of Chinese sojourners aboard EIC ships alone reached thirteen thousand in three decades.)

This is a conservative estimate with a fairly hard floor (it represents the number of names that I personally counted in EIC journals from ships that stopped in China over this period) and almost certainly much higher ceiling. Given that this figure only includes those who completed direct Company voyages from London back to China and does not account for the many Chinese who returned from the West on private English ships³⁵ or on American, Dutch,³⁶ Portuguese, Danish, and other vessels, nor accounts for those who made multileg returns over more than one ship via intermediate stopovers at Batavia, Bombay, the Cape of Good Hope, Penang, St. Helena, and other ports, nor accounts for the chronic underreporting of Chinese in later years, I expect the actual number of Chinese who returned from sojourns in the Western world to be

consulted a selection of around one hundred and fifty, but these typically only listed Chinese employed from China to England, not those registered as passengers on the way home.

³⁵ We know from the minutes of the Committee of Shipping that Chinese were also returning on private ships (principally to Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras), since these made regular note of private offers to take Chinese seamen off the Company's hands. For example, the *Streatham* in 1809 returned with a crew of 44 British sailors, 16 other Europeans, 33 Chinese, and 40 lascars. William Hickey, returning to England in 1808, returned with a crew of "nine Americans and eighteen Chinese. Certainly we had not more than ten English seamen on board." Looking beyond the British East India Company, Dutch and Portuguese colonial correspondence of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is also filled with the wanderings of Chinese sojourners: discussions of Chinese sailors on ships returning from Dutch Batavia, exchanges of Chinese and Iberian sailors on Portuguese ships, and navy requests for indentured laborers in Santa Cruz to return to Macao via a Dutch ship moored at the port of Rio de Janeiro. See, e.g., NAH: Canton 54, resolution no. 6, 13 September 1792, and Canton 96, 19 and 29 January 1795; AHU-Macau: cx. 26, doc. 1 (10 January 1806); AHU_ACL_CU_017, cx. 276, doc. 19121 (28 June 1816).

³⁶ For some old estimates of Chinese seamen aboard Dutch VOC ships, see Ingrid Dillo, *De Nadagen van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie 1783-1795: Schepen en Zeevarenden* (Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1992), 105, 162.

significantly higher.³⁷ Based on the data I have seen for the first three decades of the nineteenth century and extrapolating forward for the years not covered by EIC records, I estimate that, between 1800 and the eve of the first Opium War, Chinese sojourners took at least twelve thousand cumulative trips from the Western world back to the South China Coast.³⁸

Despite Qing restrictions against emigration and the general perils of maritime life, Chinese interest in working for foreigners and journeying to the Western world was substantial, well above the capacity to accommodate it.³⁹ As one longtime East India merchant testified before the House of Commons in 1811,

when I left China, six or seven years ago, there were sixteen Indiamen that wanted hands to navigate the ships home, perhaps to the amount of from ten to twenty in each ship; I am convinced that, to supply that limited number, there were ten times the number lying

³⁷ We can tell that undercounting was a problem from the scattered references to Chinese seamen who appear in individual journal entries or ships' sick lists even when no Chinese are listed in the crew and passenger lists.

³⁸ Here let me address two potential criticisms of these numbers: first, the problem of knowing how many of this number were distinct travelers, versus repeat travelers; second, how to know that these sojourners, upon returning, overlapped with and interacted with foreigners. The lack of detailed identifying information on crew lists (beyond a Romanized given name and sometimes a record of which ship the Chinese seamen had previously served on) makes the first question difficult to answer; but it may not matter. Even if, say, only half of the twelve thousand figure were unique individuals, the total cumulative number of trips was the same. In more abstract terms, if we imagine a comparison between 100 sojourners each with 1 unit of experience and 50 sojourners each with 2 units of experience, the expected value is the same. One might even argue that the 50 more experienced sojourners would be likelier to have a bigger impact, depending on the assumption one makes about how scales. Moreover, although China was large and twelve thousand people in relative terms may not seem significant, all of these sojourners returned to a concentrated handful of sites in the Pearl River Delta—Chuenpi, Lintin, Macao, Second Bar, and Whampoa—which were precisely those areas that foreigners themselves most frequented. While some probably left the Pearl River Delta for other pastures, all of them were there for at least some time, and many likely remained in the region. And the kicker, of course, is that even those Chinese who were making repeat voyages abroad and who were thus gone from China for large chunks of time—and of whose impact we might otherwise be skeptical due to their regular absences—were by default back in China during exactly those intervals when they overlapped with Westerners (due to the cyclical nature of the trading season, and because they came and went on the same ships). Thus, for the purpose of thinking about Sino-Western interaction, it does not even matter that repeat sojourners were repeatedly away, because the Westerners were away too—and in fact both groups were “away” together, on the same ships, where those interactions continued.

³⁹ Qing prohibitions against permanent emigration were rooted in historic skepticism about the character of individuals who were willing to estrange themselves from their homeland. These concerns dated to the Qing conquest of China, when many loyalists to the fracturing Ming state sought refuge in the littoral border regions of Southeast Asia, refused to adopt the Manchu hairstyle, and dated documents using fictional Ming reign periods even after the official fall of the dynasty. Under Qing law, Chinese merchants traveling abroad were expected to return within a year or risk punishment. In practice, however, enforcement was sporadic. On this topic, see Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986), 133-135.

in boats at the entrance of the river...and these men expressed great disappointment at not being received on board our ships.⁴⁰

Economic incentives, combined with perhaps a sense of adventure, were such migrants' main motivating factors. China's coastal provinces had long boasted a robust seafaring tradition, which normalized the maritime world as a viable alternative to the toils of terrestrial life. Inspired by vernacular adventure tales such as Ling Mengchu's "The Man Whose Luck Has Turned Chances upon Dongting Tangerines" (Zhuanyunhan yukong Dongtinghong 轉運漢遇巧洞庭紅), which chronicles the rags-to-riches journey of a hapless indigent who goes to sea, encounters a Persian merchant, and turns a basket of tangerines and a tortoise shell into a fortune worth fifty thousand silver taels, impoverished young Chinese men readily set their sights and imaginations on foreign lands. As the protagonist of Ling's fable muses when he spies a few compatriots loading their ship by the docks, "Being [in such dire straits] with no means of making a living, why don't I join them on their seafaring journey? If I get to see what lies there beyond the seas, I won't have lived my life in vain....I'll be spared worries about where my next meal is to come from, and I'll get to have some fun."⁴¹

Real-life rags-to-riches stories proved even more inspiring than literary ones, with successful Chinese sailors-turned-businessmen held in high esteem by their compatriots.⁴²

⁴⁰ "Minutes taken before the Committee, appointed to consider of supplying the West-India Colonies with Laborers," in *Papers Presented to the House of Commons on the 7th May 1804, Respecting the Slave-Trade* (1804), Appendix 1 [1811]: 37.

⁴¹ Ling Mengchu, *Slapping the Table in Amazement: A Ming Dynasty Story Collection*, translated by Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 16-17; Ling Mengchu, *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇, juan 1. Yang and Yang translate 一身落魄 at the beginning of the quoted passage as "[b]eing a loser," but I prefer the connotation of "being in such dire straits." Ling's 1628 collection of short stories about extraordinary things happening to ordinary people, with its emphasis on society's return to moral rectitude at a time of widespread socioeconomic precarity, remained popular throughout the Qing period. It and its 1632 sequel are often grouped together with three earlier collections by Feng Menglong as the *Three Words and Two Slaps* (*Sanyan Erpai* 三言二拍), which have canonic status in the world of late imperial Chinese vernacular short fiction.

⁴² William C. Hunter, *The 'Fan Kwae' at Canton Before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London: K. Paul Trench & Co., 1882), 102-103.

Despite racially differentiated pay, service aboard foreign ships was a profitable undertaking for the multitudes of mobile young men in the urban centers of Guangdong and Fujian. The typical salary for entry-level Chinese sailors aboard EIC vessels was thirty shillings per month, or two-thirds the rate of Europeans at the rank of able seaman and three-fourths that of ordinary seamen, and equal to or greater than the pay of lascars⁴³ on Company ships.⁴⁴ Between two and three months' salary was advanced to sailors as imprest for use during the voyage (e.g., to purchase clothing for the voyage or curios or better food while in port) or as early remittance to their families, with the remainder paid at the end, less any applicable deductions.⁴⁵ In the case of the Chinese crew aboard the *Albion* in 1808, for example, each man received an imprest of £4-10s and netted a further £7-17s-10d for eight months and twelve days of work.⁴⁶ Per diem, an average Chinese sailor's wages aboard an EIC ship were thus twenty-five to thirty percent higher than a typical Chinese day laborer's wage of around 0.1 taels per day in Canton in the 1830s—while affording the added benefits of guaranteed work for six to eight months at a time, on top of

⁴³ In general, the term “lascar” designated seamen originating from the Indian subcontinent, but considerable slippage existed in application of the term, and it could encompass men from a range of “Asiatic” backgrounds—Indians, Chinese, Malays, Javanese, Filipinos—as well as, at times, Afro-Caribbeans from the West Indies, indigenous Brazilians who claimed Portuguese citizenship, Arabs, and others. On the recruitment and treatment of Chinese and lascar sailors, see Iona Man-Cheong, ‘Asiatic’ sailors and the East India Company: Racialisation and Labour Practices, 1803–15,” *Journal of Maritime Research* 16:2 (2014): 167-181.

⁴⁴ Chinese ordinary sailors on VOC ships earned between nine and eleven florins per month in the late eighteenth century, equal to their Dutch counterparts, although they often received fewer months of advance pay (*handgeld*) than Dutch sailors. On some English vessels, Chinese sailors also earned the same pay as European seamen of equal rank; this happened primarily on ships that only hired one or two experienced Chinese seamen and did not treat them as a distinct sub-category of the crew. On one ship, the Chinese boatswain's mate was even paid more than the British boatswains, although I do not know why. See BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/170J(1) and BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/172II(1), ledgers of the *Henry Addington* and the *Glatton*, and BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/94U(1), ledger of the *Duke of York*. On lascar sailors' wages, see Michael Fisher, “Working across the Seas: Indian Maritime Labourers in India, Britain, and in Between, 1600–1857,” *International Review of Social History* 51:S14 (December 2004), 27-28.

⁴⁵ These deductions included “Absence Paid the Attorney” (typically none for Chinese sailors), which went toward clearing debts that had accumulated in the sailor's absence, such as rent or family food expenses; the unrecouped costs of any personal effects that remained unsold at the end of a voyage; and the mandatory Greenwich Hospital Duty, a standard levy of six shillings per month that went toward the maintenance of a hospital for sick and disabled seamen. On VOC ships, common deductions included the cost of the seaman's clothing and, if applicable, the *vaderlandse schuld* or home debts (functionally equivalent to Absence Paid the Attorney).

⁴⁶ In practice, however, many Chinese sailors did not get to keep their imprest, as they were expected to hand these advance wages to the local recruiter who hired them, as a kind of commission.

the food and lodging provided as conditions of their employment.⁴⁷ Coupled with the opportunity for private speculation in trade goods, as evidenced by the commercial activities of Chinese sailors in London's docklands and the propensity of many to return with packages of items acquired abroad, as well as the allure of profit as a sailor-turned-merchant back in China, it is easy to understand the appeal that foreign maritime work held despite its risks. (Moreover, if a seaman died during the voyage, next of kin could collect pro-rated wages on their behalf, as in the case of *Albion* sailor Aqui, who collected £6-11s-3d "for service by Awar my brother" upon reaching London.)⁴⁸

Wages were even higher for Chinese in other positions. On the ship *Canton* in 1809, for example, the Chinese boatswain John Assam earned forty-five shillings per month and the boatswain's mate forty shillings per month.⁴⁹ Two Chinese ship's cooks aboard the *Walmer Castle* also received forty shillings per month.⁵⁰ The going rate for Chinese carpenters was fifty shillings, and Assam the captain's cook earned fifty-five shillings per month on the *Orwell* in 1827.⁵¹ The more important the position, the higher the pay: the Chinese caulkers Assee and Assam, for example, netted ten pounds each at a rate of sixty shillings per month during their half-year of employment aboard the *Walmer Castle* in 1807. This placed them among the highest-paid members of the crew, between the third and fourth mates.⁵² Similarly, Napoleon's cooks Arung and Asum each earned two shillings per diem, on par with the caulkers and double

⁴⁷ Calculations based on a compilation of Chinese net wage data from ships' ledgers between 1798 and 1831 and wage data and currency conversions from the following: Robert C. Allen et al., "Wages, prices and living standards in China, 1738-1925: in comparison with Europe, Japan, and India," *Economic History Review* 64:S1 (2011): 8-38; John Robert Morrison, *A Chinese Commercial Guide, Consisting of a Collection of Details Respecting Foreign Trade in China* (Canton: Albion Press, 1834); William Waterston, *A Manual of Commerce* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1840), 154.

⁴⁸ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/81T(2), pay book of the *Albion*.

⁴⁹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/288P(1), ledger of the *Canton*.

⁵⁰ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/181N(1), ledger of the *Walmer Castle*.

⁵¹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/172II(1), ledger of the *Glatton*; BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/20L(1), ledger of the *Orwell*.

⁵² BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/181N(1), ledger of the *Walmer Castle*.

the rate of common sailors, in addition to enjoying other perks such as the complimentary daily bottle of wine that Napoleon liked to bestow upon his Chinese staff (much to the chagrin of the British administrators who were footing the bill).⁵³

Although Western stereotypes of nineteenth-century Chinese workers often center on the figure of the coolie or unskilled manual laborer, coolies were in fact far from the only Chinese who regularly entered into foreign employ. The growing numbers of itinerants who were recruited into essential if unglamorous roles as carpenters and shipwrights, cooks, and blacksmiths found themselves in positions that conferred considerable trust and responsibility. Shipbuilding, for example, was a high-stakes endeavor: the East Indiamen engaged in the China trade required monumental investments of time and capital to construct, and prior to the advent of steamship technology and the introduction of iron and steel hulls later in the nineteenth century, carpenters played critical roles given the importance of watertight assembly; even a few instances of substandard craftsmanship could undermine an entire venture.⁵⁴ Ships' cooks likewise occupied key positions of confidence, as poorly distilled drinking water or a bad batch of stew could render an entire crew ill for days,⁵⁵ and the risks posed by fire aboard a moving wooden vessel also demanded care and attention.⁵⁶

⁵³ Norwood Young, *Napoleon in Exile: St. Helena (1815-1821); With Two Coloured Frontispieces and One Hundred Illustrations Mainly from the Collection of A.M. Broadley* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1915), 161, 338; Woolley and Wallis, lot no. 67, 23 September 2015. Napoleon distrusted most of the English servants that his British overseers assigned to him, many of whom were originally soldiers or sailors stationed on St. Helena and in his view either spies or incompetent, and he expressed a general preference for employing Chinese servants whenever possible. See, e.g., BL: Add MS 20118, f. 357, and BL: Add MS 20208, ff. ## (25 May 1818).

⁵⁴ English East Indiamen cost around £19 per ton to build in the 1780s and £30 per ton in the 1820s. Construction costs of Dutch East Indiamen ranged between £15 and £18 per ton in the late eighteenth century. Peter M. Solar, "Opening to the East: Shipping Between Europe and Asia, 1770–1830," *The Journal of Economic History* 73:3 (2013): 641; Femme S. Gaastra and Jaap R. Bruijn, "The Dutch East India Company's Shipping, 1602–1795, in a Comparative Perspective," in *Ships, Sailors, and Spices: East India Companies and Their Shipping in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries*, eds. Jaap R. Bruijn and Femme S. Gaastra (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1993), 205.

⁵⁵ This was a particular problem as tropical temperatures heightened the risk of food poisoning.

⁵⁶ For this reason it was common practice to cease all cooking whenever gunpowder was being loaded onto a ship, and also whenever a ship was listing heavily.

Chinese carpenters and other craftsmen enjoyed a reputation as industrious, inexpensive, high-quality workers, and foreigners recruited them actively for this reason.⁵⁷ One early advocate for the use of skilled Chinese labor abroad was Miguel José de Arriaga Brum da Silveira, the ombudsman (*ouvidor*) of Macao from 1802 to 1810. On March 6, 1809, he wrote to the recently transplanted Portuguese royal court in Rio de Janeiro and recommended Chinese carpenters and stonemasons for use in the construction of the new capital, “it being known how energetic and industrious the Chinese are.”⁵⁸ Expert potters and tea cultivators followed soon thereafter, and wartime exigencies also led to the hiring of many Chinese carpenters in the naval shipyards of Rio, at the rate of thirty patacas (about twenty-five shillings) per month.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Macao’s authorities sent Chinese artisans elsewhere in the Portuguese empire as well, such as six carpenters and blacksmiths dispatched to Timor in 1815 as part of a “plan to attract hardworking craftsmen” to that settlement.⁶⁰

As was standard for Chinese sailors on EIC and VOC ships, the shipwrights sent to Rio were led by a headman (Ch. *toumu*; Port. *cabeça*), who drafted and wrote a contract stipulating the terms of the men’s labor. The undersigned workers agreed to the following terms prior to their departure in 1815:

First, that the costs of our passage and daily maintenance on the ship to [Rio de Janeiro] will be covered, and each of us will be permitted to bring a chest of belongings.

⁵⁷ In many cases, carpenters were the first Chinese migrants to European settlements. For example, the two earliest known settlers of New South Wales (an “Ahuto” in 1803 and the better-known John Shying or Mak Saiying 麥世英 in 1818) were both carpenters. Like many other diasporic Chinese of the era, Shying maintained ties with his native place, returning to Canton from 1831 to 1836 and only heading back to New South Wales to remarry after the death of his wife Sarah Jane Shying (née Thompson) in Parramatta.

⁵⁸ AHU-Macau, caixa 28, doc. 17. See also AHU-Macau, caixa 32, doc. 32.

⁵⁹ AHU-Macau, caixa 33, doc. 43; AHU-Macau, caixa 36, doc. 43; AHU-Macau, caixa 38, doc. 20; AHU_ACL_CU_035, caixa 22, doc. 1818, letter from D. João de Almeida de Melo e Castro to José Joaquim da Silva Freitas, 1811. For further discussion of these early migrations to Brazil, see Carlos Francisco Moura, *Chineses e chá no Brasil no início do século XIX* (Macao: Instituto Internacional de Macau, 2012).

⁶⁰ AHU-Macau, caixa 38, doc. 12, letter from Miguel de Arriaga Brum da Silveira to António de Araújo e Azevedo, 31 January 1815. See also AHU-Macau, caixa 41, doc. 30.

Second, that we will be advanced thirty patacas each, which amount will be deducted and repaid from our salary after our arrival.

Third, that we will serve a term of ten months in [Rio] at the rate of ten patacas per month, with three patacas deducted per month to go toward repaying [the advanced money].

Fourth, that after arriving in [Rio] we will eat yam noodles⁶¹ twice per day; we will furnish vegetables of our own accord. However, since three patacas will be deducted from our wages each month, and out of concern that vegetables will be expensive in [Rio] and our wages insufficient, we request that you bestow us with additional favors and money [if this is the case].

Fifth, that upon the conclusion of the ten months we be allowed to seek other work opportunities elsewhere. If the wages we receive elsewhere are higher, and if your lordship is willing to match the wages we can find elsewhere, then we are willing to forgo other work and continue serving you. Any dwellings we build or other endeavors we undertake will be done according to regulations in Rio. If your lordship gives us an order, we will absolutely listen and obey.

Sixth, that if among the ten of us there is one who is extremely diligent or clever, we request your lordship to bestow us with favor and grant additional compensation. The above six regulations we will follow according to what has been written, and we will not renege on this agreement.⁶²

These advance payments paralleled the imprest money forwarded to sailors, and the contract's provision for allowance to "bring a chest of belongings" likely reflects not only needs of personal convenience but also broader Asian maritime traditions, whereby migrant workers were accustomed to bringing private goods for trade on ostensibly non-commercial ventures, and sailors on Southeast Asian junks often received payment as a cargo allowance in lieu of cash.⁶³ Although it is unknown if the abovementioned carpenters utilized their luggage allowance in this way, it is evident that other Chinese migrants to Brazil did so, such as a company of tea

⁶¹ The wording in the Chinese contract is *chi shanyao mian* 吃山藥麵, while the Portuguese-language version simply states that the men will be given "bread flour for cooking" (*farinha de pão para fazer a comida*) twice per day. The men's reference to yam noodles probably reflects their low socioeconomic status; rice was the most common staple in South China, but commoners often cultivated hardy crops such as yams and sweet potatoes on hilltop plots and other marginal lands around the Pearl River Delta.

⁶² AHU-Macau, caixa 38, doc. 20; see also AHU-Macau, caixa 35, doc. 4 and caixa 38, doc. 20. As I argue elsewhere, European colonial experiences with exporting Chinese labor through these forms of indenture, which were relatively benign at the outset, were key precursors to much more exploitative forms of labor management with the rise of the Asian "coolie trade" later in the nineteenth century.

⁶³ Jennifer Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1993), 105-106.

cultivators who had been recruited to Brazil just a few years prior and signed on comparable terms, with a similar advance of thirty patacas paid to their families prior to departure.⁶⁴ The carpenters' contract's fourth clause, which highlights the potential "concern that vegetables will be expensive in [Rio]," may reflect the earlier experiences of these tea cultivators, who in an 1812 report back to their comrades in Macao complained about the cost of food in Brazil, which they had to pay for out of their wages.⁶⁵

Governmental figures such as Brum da Silveira were not the only ones who lauded and recruited skilled Chinese labor. Far removed from the political imperatives of empire building and maintenance, captains of individual ships also recognized the utility and reliability of Chinese craftsmen. In 1788, for example, fifty Chinese "shipped as an experiment" joined an Anglo-Portuguese fur trading expedition to the Pacific Northwest. These men were a mix of carpenters, smiths, and "sailors who had been used to the junks which navigate every part of the Chinese seas."⁶⁶ The sailors helped man the ship, and the captain employed the craftsmen in managing repairs and constructing the frame and molds of a forty-ton sloop called the *North West America* after the party reached Nootka Sound. Like the witness who testified to the House of Commons that surplus Chinese sailors "expressed great disappointment at not being received on board our ships," the British fur trader who launched the expedition noted that a "much greater number of Chinese solicited to enter into [his] service than could be received; and so far did the spirit of enterprise influence them, that those [refused]...gave the most unequivocal marks of mortification and disappointment."⁶⁷ By all measures, this transnational "experiment"

⁶⁴ AHU-Macao, caixa 35, doc. 4; Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied, *Reise Nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt: Heinrich Ludwig Brönnner, 1820), 244. See discussion in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁶⁵ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/10/001502. For comparison on wages, see also ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/8/001101.

⁶⁶ John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, from China to the North West Coast of America* (London: Logographic Press, 1790), 3, appendix 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

was a success: as Captain John Meares remarked of his experience with Chinese artisans, “during the whole of the voyage there was every reason to be satisfied with their services,” and his partners returned to Nootka Sound with more Chinese artisans the following summer.⁶⁸

The readiness of some Chinese to go abroad again and again attests to the lucrative rewards of foreign employment. Several Chinese seamen employed aboard the Dutch vessel *Voorschooten* during its 1786-1787 voyage from Amsterdam, for example, were sufficiently satisfied with their experience that upon coming home they made an express trip to the Dutch trading factory in Canton to convey their desire to remain with the VOC and serve on other ships to the Netherlands.⁶⁹ Although individual Chinese seamen are difficult to track in historical records due to the high frequency of repeat names and the lack of unique identifying information, it is clear that some of these men signed on time after time as they plied the shipping lanes between the South China Coast and foreign metropolises. One such man, who is known in the records simply by his English sobriquet “Mackenzie,” was active on at least eight different ships between Bombay, London, and the Pearl River Delta from 1802 through the early 1820s.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2. Meares’s partner James Colnett employed three Chinese sailors, seven carpenters, five blacksmiths, five bricklayers and masons, four tailors, four shoemakers, and a cook aboard the fur trader *Argonaut* in 1789, as well as additional Chinese on a voyage to Nagasaki in 1791. The success of Meares’s Chinese “experiment” also impressed local Spanish officials, who, following a jurisdictional conflict over Nootka Sound that led to the temporary seizure of Meares’s vessels and impressment of his Chinese crew, advocated for the increased hiring of Chinese on their own ships. James Colnett, *The Journal of Captain James Colnett, aboard the Argonaut, from April 26, 1789 to Nov. 3, 1791*, ed. F. W. Howay (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 15-16, 231-232, 238; José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutca, por Don José Moziño, botanico de la expedicion de N.E. y la delimites al norte de Californias*, WA MSS S-1514 (1793): 152, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

⁶⁹ NAH: Factorij Canton, 1.04.20, inv.nr. 93, ff. 65, *Dagregister* dated 4 November 1787. See also NAH: VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 6753, journal and ledger of the *Voorschooten*.

⁷⁰ See the crew and passenger lists of BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/293U, BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/193C, BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/36O, BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/38E, BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/30E, BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/30F, and BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/14-O. His name was also spelled Mackenzie and McKinsey; his Chinese surname was probably 麥. Although it is possible that multiple Chinese seamen by the name of Mackenzie were in operation in the early nineteenth century, the name is distinctive enough that to me the odds seem fairly low, and in no case do available records place any of the Mackenzies as having been in multiple locations at the same time. Since Mackenzie does not always show up in EIC records in consecutive trading seasons despite continuing to surface in new locations, it seems likely that he also worked on some private ships in intervening years.

As more and more residents of the South China Coast looked beyond Southeast Asian waters and to the West as well, large numbers of Chinese—most often in groups of ten or twenty, but in a few cases by the mid-1810s upwards of a hundred at a time—began appearing on EIC crew lists. Most were registered just by given names, such as “Ahong,” “Assam,” or “Ayou,” with no other recorded identifiers.⁷¹ Spellings varied according to the ears and whims of the commanding officer who recorded the names when the men boarded.⁷² Faced with a litany of similar-sounding and frequently repetitive names, many captains resorted to assigning ordinal suffixes to help distinguish among crewmembers (e.g., “Assam 1,” “Assam 2,” “Assam 3,” and “Assam 4,” as seen in the crew of the *Marquis Camden* in 1826).⁷³ In response to Western sailors’ struggles to tell apart their new peers, some Chinese seamen also began assuming new names and identities as they embraced their roles abroad. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Chinese were regularly appearing in crew and passenger lists with Anglicized monikers—some self-chosen, others probably bestowed upon them—such as “Tom Jack,” “China John,” “Chinamanjohn,” “Portuguese Jack,” “Yankee Jack,” and “Shortman.”⁷⁴ Jack Tar’s aura loomed

⁷¹ In just a handful of cases were the Chinese characters of a seaman’s name recorded, typically in pay books of ships that only employed one or two Chinese, who sometimes signed for themselves. When larger numbers were employed, most captains included all of the Chinese in a single entry and signed off for them. However, my sense from the limited data available is that literacy and numeracy rates among Chinese seamen were not necessarily low. Recorded ages from a small sample of twenty Chinese sailors admitted for hospital treatment in London place their Whipple Index in the 150-170 range for the first half of the nineteenth century, in line with what Baten et al. have found for Chinese emigrants in the mid-nineteenth century but much lower than that indicated among a data set of fifty Chinese sailors in Japan. See Joerg Baten, Debin Ma, Stephen Morgan, and Qing Wang, “Evolution of Living Standards and Human Capital in China in the 18-20th Centuries: Evidences from Real Wages, Age-Heaping, and Anthropometrics,” *Explorations in Economic History* 47:3 (2010): 353-355, especially ff. 24.

⁷² Perhaps the most unfortunate romanization was for a co-passenger of Napoleon’s cooks Arung and Asum, a sailor presumably surnamed Fūk 福, whose name was recorded in the ship’s passenger list as “Fuckyou.” BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/34N, crew and passenger lists of the *Scaleby Castle*.

⁷³ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/58D. Alternatively, in the case of workers returning to China from St. Helena, captains sometimes used the numbers that were already assigned to them when they registered as laborers upon arriving on the island. For example, Arung and Asum were recorded as “China Man, No. 533” and “China Man, No. 307” in the muster book of the *Camel*, and in 1824 the ship *General Harris* received 151 Chinese passengers at St. Helena with numbers ranging from 6 to 255. BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/32F, journal of the *General Harris*.

⁷⁴ Other recorded names include China Jack, China Tom, China Sam, John Toms, Tom Mow, Yankee Jack, Jack Young, Jemmy Harrison, Thomas Brown, Tom Tick, John Tuck, John Young, John William, John Williams, John Anthony, John Philips, John Stanson, John Johnson, Thompson, George, William, Vincent, Jackson, McKenzie,

large at sea, and it should come as no surprise that variations of “John” and “Jack” were the most common names adopted by Chinese seamen.⁷⁵ Indeed, lest we as Anglophone readers in the twenty-first century engage in the same Eurocentric otherizing that Western sailors did when faced with droves of Assams and Ahongs piling onto their ships, we would do well to recognize that English naming practices probably seemed just as odd to the Chinese as Chinese naming practices seemed to the English. In a world where Johns, Jacks, and Williams ran amuck, the ordinal suffixes used to differentiate “Assam 1” and “Assam 2” applied to European crewmembers as well, as when the captain of the *Windham* reported in May of 1816 that he had “confined in irons William Smith 1st and William Smith 2nd for mutinous conduct.”⁷⁶ (The third William Smith aboard the *Windham* was apparently not implicated.) Similarly, the Chinese seaman called “China John” found himself in good company, with a full thirty-three of his ship’s hundred and forty-two non-Chinese crewmembers also being named John.⁷⁷ Other Chinese seamen picked up on the trend too: of the sixteen Chinese who returned from England aboard the *Warley* in 1815, for instance, more than half went by Anglicized names, seven of which were some version of “John.”⁷⁸

Moreover, although some of these Johns were not quite like the others, Chinese were far from the only outsiders aboard merchant vessels. If they stood out, to one degree or another so did everyone else: Indiamen housed not just the crew but a variable assemblage of military

Whampoa, and Davis. A small number were listed with both Chinese and English names, such as “Anghee or Portuguese Jack,” “Akhory or Tom Wilks,” “Attock or Dick,” “Ackow or Tom,” “Atchung or William,” and “Appory or Pilot.” See, e.g., BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/150N, crew list of the *Royal Charlotte*.

⁷⁵ Cf. also European names such as George Brasil and John Seaman; and João Antônio, which was the most common Portuguese name adopted by Chinese.

⁷⁶ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/230I, journal of the *Windham*, entry dated 21 May 1816.

⁷⁷ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/36M, crew and passenger list of the *Princess Amelia* (1812-1814).

⁷⁸ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/36L; BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/182J. The adoption of Anglicized names was particularly common among those registered as Chinese boatswains or boatswains’ mates. It is worth noting that boatswains and boatswain’s mates with English names tended to earn more than those without them. See, e.g., IOR/L/MAR/B/9HH(1).

detachments, women and children, newborn infants, missionaries, convicts, prisoners of war, disabled soldiers, private passengers, stowaways, and livestock, fluctuating in number with every stop at port or transfer at sea; and the crew itself was also far from uniform, sporting not just Chinese and lascar seamen but a heterogeneous company of drifters, adventurers, and social outcasts that included Italians, Irishmen, Scotsmen, Swedes, Greeks, Prussians, Latvians, Danes, black sailors from the West Indies, and American-born Loyalists, each with their own cultures, languages or dialects, and superstitions.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, in other ways the Chinese stood out less than usual, as the long braided queues of Chinese men, which were the target of extensive otherizing in Western media and popular consciousness, were perhaps not quite so out of place in a maritime setting where long hair and queues were commonplace among sailors of all nationalities.

The most common duty of ordinary Chinese seamen was picking oakum to make caulking, a task they shared with seasick crewmembers, soldiers en route to British India, and disabled men headed home. Other routine responsibilities included standing watch at night, holystoning and scraping the deck, and pumping bilgewater from the hold. Experienced Chinese sailors (“able seamen”) bore more or less the same responsibilities as their European counterparts, while cooks, boatswains, and craftsmen performed tasks according to station. When they were off duty, they gambled in groups or catnapped in hammocks in their own

⁷⁹ By the late eighteenth century, multinational crews were the norm. For example, whereas in 1607 only 5% of Dutch crews to Asia consisted of sailors not from the Lowlands, by 1780 this proportion had increased nearly tenfold, with foreign-born sailors representing 46% of the typical crew on an East Indies voyage. Jelle van Lottum, *Across the North Sea: The Impact of the Dutch Republic on International Labour Migration, c. 1550-1850* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2007), 214.

section of the orlop deck, and, as one passenger observed on his way to India, “sometimes amused themselves with a thoughtful game, not unlike chess.”⁸⁰

Jack Tar and Tom Jack subsisted on the same fare: a bland but calorie-rich, high-protein diet of salted pork and herring, hardtack, oatmeal, dried peas, stews, and beer, supplemented by whatever fresh provisions they could procure in port or at sea.⁸¹ In the quest for comestibles, as in so many other areas of life, Tom Jack proved himself an intrepid opportunist. The logbook of the *Princess Amelia* reported that during a lull in the voyage one October afternoon, there “being very little wind a Chinaman got overboard unperceived and swam after some albatrosses settled in the water near the ship.”⁸² The astonished crew lowered a boat and retrieved the free-swimming albatross hunter before an errant wave could sweep him away, but realizing that he may have been onto something, the rescue party soon turned into a fowling expedition of its own, catching several birds with a boathook, and soon the rest of the ship’s company, armed with more hooks, had joined the fray.⁸³

Such escapades notwithstanding, we should not over-romanticize shipboard life: picking oakum was bloody, nail-breaking business, coarse tarred rope teased apart fiber by fiber, the kind of brutalizing drudgery that Victorian prison wardens would task to petty thieves and con artists,

⁸⁰ James Wathen, *Journal of a Voyage, in 1811 and 1812, to Madras and China* (London: J. Nichols, 1814), 11. The game described might have been go, which was a common pastime among Chinese elites as well as commoners, but it is impossible to tell without additional context.

⁸¹ On VOC ships, however, the situation seems to have been different, as Chinese seamen prepared and ate separate foods, which sometimes led to requests for extra firewood to accommodate the additional cooking. See, e.g., TANAP: C. 219, 15 November 1793; C. 220, 24 December 1793.

⁸² BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/360, journal of the *Princess Amelia*, 21 October 1816.

⁸³ Contrary to what literary tradition would have us believe, many sailors hunted albatrosses whenever the opportunity presented itself, as they were happy to get their hands on whatever fresh meat they could. Common recipes for sea pie recommended skinning albatrosses and soaking them in freshwater overnight to lessen the fishy taste before cooking, although when served on their own the fishiness could also be masked with a heavy sauce. The English botanist Joseph Banks, who accompanied James Cook on his first voyage to the South Pacific from 1768 to 1771, remarked that the ship’s stewed albatrosses dressed with sauce “were so good that every body commended and [ate] heartily of them [although] there was fresh pork upon the table.” *The Endeavour: Journal of Joseph Banks*, 5 February 1769, State Library of New South Wales, ref. 446937.

and pumping a leaking twelve-hundred-ton Indiaman was just as interminable a chore. Sometimes it was downright terrifying. In late May of 1807, the company of the *Ganges* watched with mounting dread as seawater crept up the sides of their leaking vessel, inch by inch, despite frantic efforts to stave off descent. Day and night for the better part of a week they battled the deep, Chinese and non-Chinese seamen and passengers alike alternating at the pumps. By May 24 there were twenty-four inches of water in the hold. Weary pumpers used their breaks jettisoning everything from cannons and tea chests to passengers' cargo and spare masts, but to no avail: by May 28 the hold's water level had risen to over six feet, and the situation "so distressing to all on board" was, as the captain put it, "no longer tenable." He logged on May 29: "At 3 PM 8 feet water in the well, and the ship sinking fast. At 4 PM 9 feet water in the well." His scribbles stopped soon after: "Lat.^{de} 38° 22' S. where the Journal of this ill fated ship closes for ever!!!"⁸⁴

The captain turned out to be mistaken—a nearby Indiaman, itself leaking but finally persuaded of the situation's urgency after tailing the *Ganges* for several days, managed to rescue everyone on board, Chinese included, and the survivors landed at St. Helena a few days later. The captain's journal, with its forty-seven entries of "Chinese at the pumps" or "Chinese constantly at the pumps," continued on to London, but these Chinese had seen enough, and taking their imprest money they caught the next ship back to Macao.⁸⁵

Despite such trials and tribulations, Chinese seamen overall seem to have made the most of their opportunities and acquitted themselves well. Captains, many of whom held reputations as fastidious, even despotic masters, must have been satisfied with their private Chinese cooks

⁸⁴ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/86M, journal of the *Ganges*, entries dated 24 May 1807 to 29 May 1807.

⁸⁵ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/86M, crew and passenger list of the *Ganges*; BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/140L, crew and passenger list of the *Alfred*.

and stewards or they would not have kept engaging them in such intimate roles, and in several instances captains rehired a cook upon reaching China. As for the ordinary Tom Jack, shipboard life was demanding but tolerable, and his employers treated him with at least a modicum of concern.⁸⁶ As London-based surgeon William Docker reported to the Committee of Shipping in December of 1803, “the Chinese on board the outward bound ships *Glatten*, *Cirencester*, *Winchelsea*, and *Walmer Castle* are in want of clothing, and...the officers on board those ships had informed him [that they] had been of great use and had behaved extremely well,” with the company “very glad to have them on board.”⁸⁷

With upwards of several hundred and sometimes a thousand Asian men reaching London each shipping season, the housing and repatriation of Chinese and lascar seamen became a veritable industry unto itself. Throughout the early nineteenth century, the Committee of Shipping fielded a continuous stream of offers from private and Company vessels alike to return Chinese seamen at the rate of twelve to fourteen pounds per head, and London’s manufacturers

⁸⁶ Of course, there were exceptions. In 1783, the Chinese crew of the VOC ship *Java* mutinied on Christmas Eve due to abusive treatment, killing several Dutch officials before the Chinese seamen were rounded up and summarily thrown overboard. At least through the early nineteenth century, however, mistreatment of Chinese sailors was more individual than systematic. Although corporal punishment was a routine part of maritime life and prompted occasional complaints by Chinese boatswains upon their arrival in London, logbooks suggest that most captains endeavored to treat Chinese seamen fairly and when prescribing punishments were no crueler than toward European seamen. For example, consider the following two entries from the captain’s journal of the ship *Alnwick Castle*, which concern thefts committed by a British and a Chinese seaman, respectively, in February of 1813. On February 2, “At 10 AM confined Geoffrey Williams in irons on suspicion of theft,” and on February 4, “At 2 PM punished Geoffrey Williams, seaman, with two dozen lashes, a theft being fully proved against him;” and one week later, on February 12, “Confined in irons a Chinese, on suspicion of theft,” and on February 13, “PM Punished the Chinese with two dozen of lashes, the charge being fully proved against him.” However, the relative lot of Chinese sailors and other Asian seamen worsened over the course of the nineteenth century, as the spread of steam power both fixed the menial status of Asian coal crews relative to that of European sailors, and, at the same time, threatened European sailors’ livelihoods by reducing the general need for skilled maritime labor, which helped fuel a culture of abuse toward subordinates. BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/189F, journal of the *Alnwick Castle*. For one perspective on the rise of interracial tensions among maritime crews in the second half of the nineteenth century, see John T. Grider, “I Espied a Chinaman’: Chinese Sailors and the Fracturing of the Nineteenth Century Pacific Maritime Labour Force,” *Slavery and Abolition* 31:3 (2010): 467-481.

⁸⁷ IOR/L/MAR/C/27B, Minutes of Committee of Shipping, 30 December 1803. In fact, as Docker’s letter suggests, one of the greatest challenges facing South Chinese sojourners was not the adjustment to shipboard work but London’s winter climate.

competed for lucrative contracts to supply jackets, trousers, hammocks, and bedding for Chinese and lascars as well as for the military detachments headed to Asia on many of the same ships.⁸⁸ After the Company in 1795 stopped subsidizing individual shipowners for Chinese sailors' room and board, local lodging houses likewise lobbied for contracts to accommodate the men during the winter off-season.

It was to these lodging houses that Tom Jack retired upon reaching England. Originally at least three in number, by the early nineteenth century they had been whittled to one, run by a man named John Anthony, in Shadwell on the north bank of the Thames. John Anthony was himself a former Chinese sailor, who had left China at the age of eleven, adopted an English name, and in his own words had been in England "since the American war, backwards and forwards."⁸⁹ Having converted to Christianity and taken an English wife, he would in his later years become the first Chinese to undergo the rare and expensive process of naturalization as an English citizen, which required an Act of Parliament.⁹⁰ In the meantime, he served as an intermittent interpreter for the EIC and was amassing a considerable fortune through his post in Shadwell: by the time of his death he owned a country house in Essex in addition to his properties near the Thames, and more than two thousand alms-seekers and neighborhood mourners attended his funeral.

⁸⁸ The Company coordinated the repatriation of Chinese laborers throughout other parts of the British empire as well. For example, in October of 1835, the captain of the *Lord Hobart* was paid £56 to the cover the passage of four Chinese men from St. Helena back to China. BL: IOR/G/9/17, Cape of Good Hope: Factory Records Volume 17, ff. 367.

⁸⁹ *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18041205-56, December 1804 trial of Ann Alsey and Thomas Gunn.

⁹⁰ Without this action, his wife Esther could not inherit his property when he died. Naturalization was rare among Chinese sailors abroad, but John Anthony was not the only example from the early nineteenth century. In January of 1819, at the age of sixty-six, a man named William Macao became the first legal Chinese Scotsman, a distinction that he maintained for two years before a court overturned the ruling that had granted him this status. *The Gentleman's Magazine* 75:2 (August 1805), 779; William Cobbett, *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 3 (R. Bagshaw, 1812), 630; NAK: PROB 11/1429/185, "Will of John Anthony, Gentleman of Layton, Essex."

Located along Ratcliff Highway between Limehouse and Wapping, nineteenth-century Shadwell was the sordid epicenter of the East End, a warren of clothiers and slop-sellers, unbonneted lasses hawking wares in thick highland brogues, barrows laden with fish juxtaposed by chronometers and curios, crimps and pimps and boarding-house touts stalking liquor-livened streets, no fine Tenerifes and Cape wines like for Napoleon at Longwood but jigger gins and arrack in the dram-shops and public-houses of Shadwell. This was the world that greeted Tom Jack and Jack Tar after half a year at sea.

Chinese crews came in together and, whenever possible, stayed together, which was the preference of both the Company and the men themselves.⁹¹ Carts met them at the docks to take their bedding and personal effects to quarters. The “Depot at Shadwell,” as Company records called it, consisted of simple, wooden-floored rooms “lime-washed immediately before receiving the men,” with a stove per chamber.⁹² The EIC furnished each newcomer with a “blue jacket, guernsey frock, pair of trousers lined, pair of stockings, pair of shoes, [and] worsted cape,” with the compound’s medical supervisor making additional garment requests as necessary.⁹³ Health was a constant concern, given the men’s congested quarters and poor acclimatization to London’s winter, but doctors found attempts to establish sick wards “impracticable, the sick having insuperable objections to being removed from [their] crews, [and] the crews also generally refusing to allow the sick to be removed from their care.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Up through the early 1820s, the EIC kept Chinese and lascar seamen in separate quarters. On lascar experiences see Michael Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travelers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 137-179; and Fisher, “Making London’s ‘Oriental Quarter,’” in *Subalternity and Difference: Investigations from the North and South*, ed. Gyanendra Pandey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 79-96.

⁹² BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/902, vol. 1, “Memorandum of the Regulations for Native Seamen in England,” 76.

⁹³ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 29 July 1823.

⁹⁴ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/902, vol. 2, 14 December 1814. For further discussion of the medical care of Chinese sailors in London, see Po-ching Yu, “Chinese Seamen in London and St. Helena in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Law, Labour, and Empire: Comparative Perspectives on Seafarers, c. 1500-1800*, ed. Maria Fusaro (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 287-303.

Every morning at eight o'clock, the Depot's attendants doled out rations in one of several mess halls, "and the men themselves cook[ed] the victuals at such times and in such manner as they like[d]."⁹⁵ The Chinese at Shadwell did not enjoy quite the vast spreads that Arung and Asum prepared at Longwood, but they ate well enough: each day "three quarters of a pound of beef without bone, one pound of rice, and one or two white herrings, according to the size, with tea, sugar, onions, pepper and salt, and an unlimited allowance of vegetables and potatoes" per man, at an estimated cost of 1s-4d to the Company.⁹⁶ On alternate days they also received ale or an ounce of tobacco. The beef and rice allotments alone would have amounted to nearly 2,500 calories per day, well above the subsistence level of 1,940 calories that historical economist Robert Allen has suggested for Cantonese wage laborers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; even conservative caloric conversions and modest interpretations of the "unlimited allowance of vegetables and potatoes" would suggest that Shadwell's Chinese were well supplied.⁹⁷

Attendants distributed candles at four o'clock in the afternoon, and until the Depot's gates closed at eleven the men were left to their own devices. Many enterprising Chinese sold their guernsey frocks and other accoutrements to neighborhood residents and Chandler's shops, much to the Company's annoyance. Sick men redealt their medications until Shadwell's

⁹⁵ BL: Parliamentary Papers 1816 (279), "Reports of the Parliamentary Enquiry, viz, Report from the Committee on Lascars and other Asiatic Seamen," 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 5; BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/902, "Statement of the circumstances attending the maintenance and return of lascars and Chinese," 11 February 1811. See also BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, 29 July 1823, which lists a slightly higher composition of provisions a decade later, at one pound of meat and one and a quarter pounds of rice daily. In partial testament to British attempts at culturally-sensitive social engineering, lascars and Chinese sailors received differentiated rations, with mutton substituted for beef, although this practice was discontinued by the early 1820s, after John Anthony and his co-proprietor had passed away.

⁹⁷ Given that many Chinese seamen abroad had been dockhands and manual laborers with diets similar to the Cantonese laborers on whom Allen bases his data, it is unsurprising that many seamen did not consume their full allotments and instead resold their rations in the local community. Robert C. Allen et al., "Wages, prices and living standards in China, 1738-1925: in comparison with Europe, Japan, and India," *Economic History Review* 64:S1 (2011), 19, 41-42; caloric conversions follow Allen et al.'s assumptions of 3,620 calories per kilogram of rice and 2,500 calories per kilogram of non-fish meat.

physician stopped prescribing the more saleable items, and others sold their tobacco and provisions, prompting one observer to quip that “three-quarters of a pound [of rice rations] would be quite sufficient.”⁹⁸ When he was not off peddling for profit, Tom Jack, like foreigners of all stripes transiting through the docklands, took advantage of London’s nightlife, obliging the Depot’s gatekeeper to go out “every night from half past ten till quarter before eleven to the public houses in the neighborhood, which [stayed] open till eleven o’clock,” since it was “impossible to get the men in until they...closed.”⁹⁹

For Chinese seamen and other sojourners wintering among the pimps and publicans of the docklands, life on land came with its own perils. In December of 1804 a recently arrived Chinese seaman named Erpune, assisted by Shadwell proprietor John Anthony as interpreter, gave the following testimony in court after being robbed by a prostitute following payday:

[*Question*]: What [happened]? – [*Answer*]: I went to [Mr. Gunn’s] house, and wanted a girl; Mrs. Gunn sent a boy to bring that girl to the house; I gave the dollars¹⁰⁰ into Mr. Gunn’s hand for the girl.

Q. How many dollars had you about you? - A. I had nineteen¹⁰¹ dollars, in a cloth.

Q. Did you take those dollars out of your pocket while Gunn and the girl were by? - A. I took the nineteen dollars out of my pocket, and put them upon the table, that every one saw them.

Q. After you had done this, did you, and Gunn, and the girl, go any where? - A. The girl went first with me, and the man followed after to the public-house to get the dollar changed...I gave Mr. Gunn one dollar for the girl, and changed another for liquor; they took the dollar for 4 s. 2 d. and took for the beer, and then I took the change.

Q. After you had had the beer, did you come back to Gunn’s house? - A. After we had drank the liquor, I went back to Gunn’s, and went to-bed.

Q. Who did you go to bed with? - A. That girl.

Q. Did you undress? - A. I undressed, and only kept my waistcoat on.

Q. Where were your dollars? - A. In my waistcoat...

Q. Were you quite sober? - A. Yes.

Q. Did you fall asleep? - A. Yes.

⁹⁸ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/902, vol. 2, 14 December 1814; BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 29 July 1823.

⁹⁹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 29 July 1823.

¹⁰⁰ Although wages were calculated in pounds sterling, the East India Company paid Chinese seamen in Spanish dollars, this being their preferred currency since the piece of eight commanded a premium over other denominations of foreign specie in circulation in China.

¹⁰¹ I.e., a little over three pounds.

Q. When you awoke again, did you find your dollars in your pocket? - A. When I awoke, my dollars were gone, and the girl was gone.¹⁰²

Newspaper coverage of the incident reported that the Gunns' was located just "some few doors off" from the Chinese lodgings in Shadwell, and Erpune was no doubt not the only seaman, Chinese or otherwise, who patronized the Gunns' or similar establishments in the nineteenth century—he was just unlucky enough to be robbed.¹⁰³ We can imagine how devastated he was upon discovering that three months' pay was the price for his late-night romp. Although the magistrate found the culprits guilty, it was likely of little consolation to Erpune, whose dollars had long since been dealt to a local pawnbroker.¹⁰⁴

What is most notable about this affair, however, is how mundane it seems: here was a guy who was just excited to celebrate payday after seizing his moment, trekking halfway across the world, and working hard to make a living. In certain ways, Erpune was not so different from his victimizers: they, too, were just people trying to make a living, taking advantage of whatever opportunities came their way. (In fact, Chapter 4 will discuss a parallel case that occurred in Canton, when two Chinese prostitutes and a boatman cheated a pair of British sailors and a fight erupted after the sailors rejected the boatman's attempt at making amends.)

Venereal diseases and other illnesses were common among Chinese sailors in London. Despite the avowed difficulties that Shadwell's attendant surgeon encountered in establishing sick wards in the men's quarters, medical records from the Dreadnought Seaman's Hospital at Greenwich show that some Chinese sailors made good use of the compulsory medical duty levied on their wages. From the early nineteenth century onward, increasing numbers availed

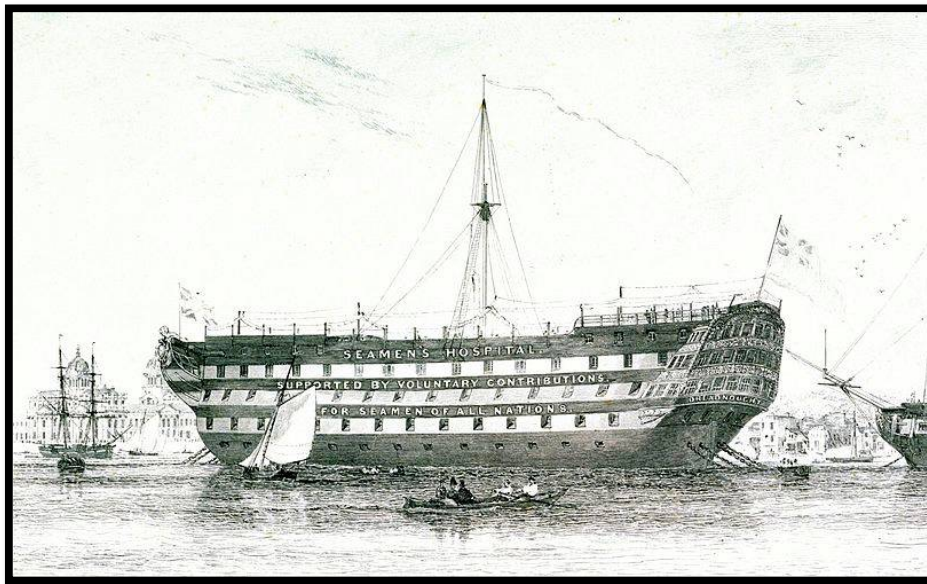
¹⁰² *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18041205-56, December 1804 trial of Ann Alsey and Thomas Gunn.

¹⁰³ "Old Bailey, Wednesday, Dec. 5," *The Times*, 6 December 1804.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the more active intervention of the Qing state, which endeavored to get pawnbrokers to return stolen goods. ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/10/001379.

themselves of the health services offered to sick and debilitated seamen, averaging a two-week stay on the lazaretto (quarantine ship). For example, on August 15, 1835, seven Chinese sailors from the *Duke of Argyle* were admitted together to the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital complaining of various ailments including ophthalmia, ulcers, skin eruptions, and a contused back. The Chinese sailors, all natives of Whampoa, included a boatswain, steward, able seaman, and four ordinaries; the boatswain and steward had logged over five decades of service on English ships between the two of them, while the ordinaries had between one and three years' experience each.¹⁰⁵

Figure 3. Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital.



Edward William Cook, *The Dreadnought, 104 Guns, until Recently Lying off Greenwich*, ca. 1857. Royal Museums Greenwich, PAD6061.

Hospital records suggest that patients with venereal disease tended to go alone to the hospital, sometimes multiple times, although their illnesses appeared to do little to deter further

¹⁰⁵ NMM, *Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital Admission Registers*, DSH/5:32.

promiscuity. In one instance, a Chinese sailor who spent eighteen days convalescing on account of bubo, a painful swelling of the lymph nodes that is a common symptom of gonorrhea, syphilis, and tuberculosis, was found reengaged in his affliction's precipitating behavior barely a week after his discharge from the hospital.¹⁰⁶ Although in the early nineteenth century most liaisons between Chinese men and English women occurred at night in establishments such as the Gunns', in later years seasoned sojourners with a lay of the land did not hesitate to solicit local women in more casual, less clandestine contexts. As a self-described "unfortunate girl" named Catherine Gregory remarked of her interactions with a Chinese sailor accused of burglary in 1861, "on Friday morning, 23d August, about 2 o'clock, I saw the prisoner at the top of York-road, Commercial-road [in Limehouse, near Shadwell]—he asked me if I would sleep with him [and] I said I did not mind."¹⁰⁷

As the experiences of Erpune and his compatriots illustrate, the habits of early Chinese sojourners abroad were perhaps less alien than their foreign counterparts might have cared to admit. Chinese seamen in the docklands passed the time through more or less the same leisure activities that occupied landbound sailors anywhere: sex, drinking, gambling, sporadic employment, and the occasional brawl.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes their presence incurred local resentment, such as in 1813 when a gang of Irish lumpers attacked Chinese seamen employed as temporary dockhands, notwithstanding the fact that the Chinese were working their own ship, on which they had come to England.¹⁰⁹ Most of the time, however, outright conflicts between Chinese and

¹⁰⁶ NMM, *Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital Admission Registers*, DSH/15:173.

¹⁰⁷ *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18610923-748, September 1861 trial of Chip Lye.

¹⁰⁸ According to the Committee of Shipping, Chinese seamen, unlike their European or lascar counterparts, were not reputed to be heavy drinkers, as many preferred to sell the alcohol that they received as part of their rations; but for some such as Erpune, downing a beer or two to celebrate payday was clearly not out of the question.

¹⁰⁹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/902, vol. 2, f. 83. For further discussion of this and similar conflicts involving Asian seamen in London, see Michael Fisher, "Making London's 'Oriental Quarter,'" in *Subalternity and Difference*, ed. Gyanendra Pandey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 89.

locals were uncommon. More frequent were quarrels between Chinese and lascars or among the Chinese themselves, typically stemming from gambling debts, disagreements among Chinese of different ethnic or linguistic groups, or residual interracial tensions that developed aboard ships which had concurrently employed Chinese and lascar crews.¹¹⁰

Nonetheless, despite the organizational systems in place and the relative infrequency of problems—as one observer noted, discipline was generally good and “[p]unishments very seldom happen which is a matter of surprise considering that there is sometimes 1600 men at quarters”—the seasonal influx of large numbers of Chinese caused persistent headaches for the Committee of Shipping, which were compounded by the lumpy accumulation and redistribution of the men.¹¹¹ The EIC preferred Chinese visitors to depart England as soon as possible. For example, apprehensive about the burden of maintaining “upwards of five hundred” recently arrived Chinese seamen,” with “fifty more [to] be expected” aboard forthcoming ships, the Committee opined in May of 1816 that “if some measures are not taken to return these men to their native country at an early period they will...have to remain here until the departure of the direct China ships of next season, a period of ten months, which will not only be attended with considerable expense to the Company, but be productive of much inconvenience.”¹¹²

Sometimes the men refused to return, at least initially. The most common reason was missing or incorrect pay. It typically took two to three weeks after their arrival to receive their wages at the East India House, and in the Company’s haste to offload Asian seamen as soon as practicable, men could sometimes be ordered to board a return ship before they had even been

¹¹⁰ For examples see *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 7 October 1806, p. 3; *Morning Chronicle*, 22 November 1816, p. 1; *The Times*, 20 May 1823, p.3; *The Times*, 17 Dec. 1841, p.7; *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18420103-505, January 1842 trial of Antrehman and Samut.

¹¹¹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/902, “Statement of the circumstances attending the maintenance and return of lascars and Chinese,” 5 March 1812.

¹¹² BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/31, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 29 May 1816.

paid. Other times they stood their ground when they believed that they had received an incorrect amount. For example, when in April of 1829 the Committee of Shipping tried to send off nine Chinese seamen who had recently arrived aboard the *London*, the men refused and the Chinese boatswain lodged a complaint with the Office of the Navy, “claiming wages for four whole months” despite the fact that this was “one day more than they had been borne on the ship’s books.”¹¹³ The boatswain also demanded an allowance of “one dollar and tea per month, as customary in other ships.” More importantly, the men objected to the proposed rate of compensation—then twenty-five shillings per month—wishing instead to be paid at “the former usual rate [of thirty shillings per month],” which had been the standard earlier in the century.¹¹⁴ Until these demands were met, the men refused to leave. Their claim to higher wages reflects both their awareness of earlier rates and the fact that Chinese sailors, like sailors anywhere, were avid gossipers: stuck for weeks or months on end in Shadwell, they almost certainly shared stories, experiences, complaints, and tactics and would have been well aware of what each other earned.¹¹⁵ For the sake of expediency, with it “appearing that if the men should not return on one of the ships now under dispatch, the Company will incur the expense of their maintenance in England for several weeks,” the EIC quickly acquiesced to their demands.¹¹⁶ Both parties kept their word: the captain of the *London* recalculated the wages and amended the books after the

¹¹³ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/43, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 20 April 1829. The source of the discrepancy is unclear, but the ledger does indeed show one fewer day than that claimed by the Chinese sailors; it is possible this is due to a difference between the Gregorian and lunar calendars (although if that is the case, the discrepancy over a four-month period should be greater than one day). BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/1SS(1); BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/1SS(2).

¹¹⁴ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/43, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 20 April 1829. Pay records show that by the 1820s, even as the end of the Napoleonic Wars reduced the demand for foreign seamen, Chinese sailors had begun to close the wage gap on ships, as Chinese seamen in many cases successfully fought to be paid at wartime rates even as naval wages decreased across the board.

¹¹⁵ For one of these stories shared, see the beginning of Chapter 3, which discusses a rumor passed from Chinese seamen to British merchants and eventually the British government that Chinese sojourners on St. Helena were smuggling Napoleon’s letters off the island between the soles of their shoes.

¹¹⁶ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/43, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 20 April 1829.

European crewmembers had been paid, and the nine Chinese accordingly left London in early May and disembarked at Macao four months later.¹¹⁷

On the return trip, although Chinese “charter party passengers” were typically expected to work their passage back without additional wages, they found other sources of income. Some smuggled alcohol and leftover rations to sell onboard. A few weeks after twenty Chinese boarded at Portsmouth in January of 1801, for example, the captain of the *Albion* reported punishing a crewmember with a dozen lashes for secretly buying liquor from one of the Chinese, and he gave the guilty vendor a dozen lashes as well.¹¹⁸ Other enterprising sailors purchased goods abroad to bring back to sell or trade. The *Thames* in July of 1822 spent half a day “receiving private trade and sundry stores, baggage, etc.” for the outward-bound voyage, including “71 Chinamen with several packages,” and the Shipping Committee noted in February 1815 the case of two Chinese men arrived from Riga, who came accompanied by two chests of items substantial enough to “cost between two and three pounds to clear [customs].”¹¹⁹ For those without the means or foresight to invest in their own ventures, theft of others’ items on the return voyage was also an available fallback.¹²⁰ And even though the East India Company expected Chinese seamen to work the homecoming passage without additional pay, individual captains could, and did, at their discretion reward returning Chinese passengers for their service.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/34S, journal of the *Scaleby Castle* (5 March 1829 to 18 October 1830); BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/1SS(1); BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/1SS(2). Pages 74 and 76 in BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/1SS(1) are partially sealed shut, likely to prevent others from going back and checking them.

¹¹⁸ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/81H, journal of the *Albion*.

¹¹⁹ BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/8P, journal of the *Thames* (1821-1824); BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/29, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 10 February 1815. The commercial practices of Chinese sailors on East India vessels is consistent with what Jennifer Cushman has suggested about the economic behaviors of sailors on Chinese junks in Southeast Asia, wherein “crew members of a Chinese junk were merchants first and sailors second.” Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1993), 99.

¹²⁰ See, e.g., BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/138L, journal of the *Exeter* (1803-1804), entries dated 23-25 July 1803.

¹²¹ See BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/32F, journal of the *General Harris*, entry dated 20 October 1824, in which the captain notes that he “remunerated 27 of [the Chinese] for their service from England.”

Arriving back in China in late fall or early winter, these men disembarked as they had left some eighteen or twenty months earlier: in huddled groups in the outer reaches of the Pearl River estuary, beyond the patrols of Qing ships, and often under cover of night.¹²² On occasion a comprador's boat picked them up.¹²³ Some of the boatswains would have already agreed to return in a few months' time for a second or third go-around. Most of these sojourners, however, now went their own way, some disappearing into the background, others returning with perhaps a bow-legged swagger, stories of sex and Shadwell, shipwrecks and pirates evaded, fortunes lost or made: a parcel or two of items acquired, watches and hard-earned Spanish dollars stowed furtively in their waistcoats, and spent perhaps less furtively in Canton's shops.

Of one thing we can be certain: these sojourners were not the same as when they left. Although it is difficult to measure how much their travels changed them, all of these enterprising itinerants returned with at least one and a half years' worth of new experiences in the Western world, and most of them with more money. Not only had they been to Western lands, but they had worked for and with Western men, worn Western clothes, eaten Western foods, slept in Western beds (sometimes with Western women), and sold and smuggled Western goods.¹²⁴ Many had taken Western names and learned some Western speech.¹²⁵ Above all, by their own

¹²² Macao and Lintin were the most common debarkation points, although on occasion sailors stayed hidden onboard until reaching the foreign anchorage at Whampoa, farther upriver.

¹²³ See, e.g., BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/43D, deck log of the *Moffat*, entry dated 19 January 1825.

¹²⁴ Same-sex relations involving Chinese seamen naturally also occurred, although records of such relations are rare before the late nineteenth century. For one example, see *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18630817-1028, August 1863 trial of Awa. Aboard ships, sodomy was a regular but repressed part of the fabric of maritime life. The religious mores of the era held that sexual relations between men risked bringing misfortune upon a ship's voyage, and even when religious concerns were not foregrounded, captains condemned and punished male-male intimacies because they believed these negatively affected shipboard discipline. Although we should assume the occurrence of sexual relations both between Chinese men and between Chinese and non-Chinese men, the cases that caught the attention of authorities and thus entered the historical record most often involved a crossing of racial lines. For an example of a Chinese seaman aboard the *Scaleby Castle* who was whipped and confined in chains after being accused of taking "improper liberties" with the gunner's boy, see BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/34J, journal of the *Scaleby Castle*, f. 28.

¹²⁵ Chapter 2 will discuss communication in more detail, but it is clear that at least some sojourners demonstrated sufficient English, Portuguese, and Dutch proficiency to execute commands on ships, lobby for higher wages in

initiative or by necessity, they had become more adept at interfacing with Westerners in a variety of contexts, alone as well as in groups, in back rooms as well as courtrooms, with resourcefulness, adaptability, and resolve. They were, undeniably, still Chinese, but they were Chinese for whom the prospect of dealing with “foreign devils” was no longer quite so strange, and perhaps even normal. These were the sojourners who were returning, by the hundreds each year, to concentrated pockets of the Pearl River Delta in the decades leading up to the first Opium War.

Back in China

One such sojourner was a man nicknamed “Boston Jack” (*bōsàhnjāk* 波臣則), who in his youth had traveled to New England as a steward aboard an American ship. After leaving Boston on the fur trader *Cossack* in May of 1815 and returning to China twenty months later via Cape Horn, Honolulu, and the northwest coast of America, Boston Jack established himself as a comprador at the foreign anchorage of Whampoa. Having been a ship’s steward and seaman himself, he could relate firsthand to foreign sailors’ dietary laments and needs, and in his role as comprador he furnished a range of provisions catered to Western tastes, from fresh beef and biscuits to milk, butter, and cheese. Like many local middlemen licensed as compradors, he also expanded his operations beyond the scope of mere provisioning and engaged in an assortment of auxiliary commercial activities, including interpretation and recruitment services, which positioned him at the front lines of Sino-Western interaction. As one American visitor described him,

“Boston Jack” is familiarly known to the European population as a kind of interpreter and furnisher of provisions for vessels, and a commissioner to provide servants, coolies, and

naval offices, prepare and modulate meals according to captains’ tastes, and in extreme cases such as Chutang Ahoo’s even maintain written correspondence with Western merchants.

to make purchases of various Chinese articles. He...is ready to do any kind of business between the foreigners and Chinese. He is said to be worth a hundred thousand dollars; treated us to beer, and gave us some to take on the way. He had much to say of his son who lives in New York, and was very polite, inviting us to call again.¹²⁶

Boston Jack was a mainstay of American diaries, receipts, and memoirs from the 1830s through 1850s, which testify repeatedly to the respect and admiration that the prosperous and gregarious ex-steward commanded both before and after the first Opium War.¹²⁷ Among his foreign friends, he was “very fond of relating his experiences [at sea], particularly off the Horn, where, as he would say, ‘too much strong gale; sea all same high masthead—no can see sky, no can see water,’ meaning that in the turmoil of the elements one could see nothing.”¹²⁸ As a longtime resident of Canton recalled, Boston Jack was both esteemed “as a very ‘great gun’” by his countrymen and “a favourite with the Americans,” and when he passed away “at a good old age, [he was] ‘universally regretted’ and much missed!”¹²⁹

Among Chinese contemporaries, however, even better known was a former sailor and sojourner by the name of Xie Qinggao (謝清高, 1765-1821). Born to a lower-middle gentry family in Jiaying¹³⁰ county in northeastern Guangdong, Xie was reputed to have been “smart, brave, and talented at learning languages since his early years,” and under other circumstances he might have pursued a career as a scholar-official.¹³¹ However, he demonstrated little interest in a

¹²⁶ Benjamin L. Ball, *Rambles in Eastern Asia, including China and Manila, during several years' residence* (Boston: J. French and Company, 1855), 99.

¹²⁷ For examples, see Tiffany Osmond, *The Canton Chinese; or, the American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: J. Munroe and Company, 1849), 21, 267; Thomas Jefferson Jacobs, *Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific Ocean* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 347.

¹²⁸ William C. Hunter, *The 'Fan Kwae' at Canton Before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London: K. Paul Trench & Co., 1882), 102-103.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

¹³⁰ Present-day Meixian 梅縣, about 200 miles from Canton.

¹³¹ Preface written by Lü Tiaoyeng, in An Jing 安京, ed., *Hailu jiaoshi* (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2002), 331.

bureaucratic career, and after accompanying a local merchant on a business trip to the island of Hainan as an adolescent, he decided to embark on a future in maritime trade.¹³²

Xie's seafaring career got off to an inauspicious start: he was eighteen years old when the Chinese ship on which he was sailing sank in a storm. However, like the shipwrecked Chinese aboard the *Ganges* in 1807, Xie was fortunate, and after being rescued by a European trading vessel, he joined its crew and spent the next fourteen years working intermittently as a sailor on foreign ships. He was a prodigious traveler, with his wide-ranging peregrinations taking him not just up and down the Chinese coast but also to the Japanese archipelago, the Korean peninsula, Southeast Asia, British India, and Western Europe. In between, he parlayed his foreign experiences into side jobs as an interpreter and small-time businessman in Macao.¹³³

Perhaps most significantly, Xie left a written record of his travels: the *Hailu* 海錄, which was compiled in 1820 by Yang Bingnan 楊炳南, a visiting *juren* (intermediate-level graduate of the triennial provincial examinations) from Xie's hometown who became captivated by Xie's stories during a visit to Macao.¹³⁴ Xie by this time was near-blind and had retired permanently to the Portuguese colony, where in his old age and feeble condition he had resorted to selling fruits and vegetables for a living.¹³⁵

The scope of the *Hailu* spans the Malay Archipelago, islands of the Indian Ocean world, African coast, and various locations in Europe and the Americas, which Xie describes in the

¹³² Preface written by Yang Bingnan, in An Jing 安京, ed., *Hailu jiaoshi*, 329.

¹³³ *Yixian sanzhi* (1870): 15:6; *Jiaying zhoushi* (1899): 29.

¹³⁴ Although the *Hailu* was one of the earliest written accounts of a Chinese person's travels in Europe, it was not the first. The earliest known first-person Chinese account of Europe is the 1721 *Shenjian lu* 身見錄, by Catholic convert Fan Shouyi 樊守義 or Luigi Fan (1682-1753), who spent a decade in Italy after traveling to Rome by way of Macao, Batavia, Salvador da Bahia, and Lisbon.

¹³⁵ Chinese records contain conflicting information about the timeline of Xie's return to Macao and nature of his subsequent occupation, whether as interpreter, merchant, or peddler. It appears most likely that he returned intermittently over the course of his "fourteen years at sea" and engaged in a range of commercial activities. For more on this, see Chapter 3.

narrative's final section. In the eyes of this nineteenth-century Chinese sailor, the distant homelands of Canton's foreign visitors were filled with marvelous sights, such as London's multistoried houses and the sophisticated waterworks connecting English households to the Thames.¹³⁶ His descriptions draw upon a mix of personal experience and hearsay. For example, Xie uses St. Helena as a reference point for orienting the journey around the Cape of Good Hope to Portugal and England—two countries that he likely visited in person—but he is misinformed about the geographical position of other locations, such as France.¹³⁷

Among other topics, Xie devotes particular attention to recording the social mores and sartorial habits of European women, whose visibility in Lisbon and London appears to have left an impression. “If a woman commits adultery or other crimes but wishes to reform,” he writes, “she enters a temple and confesses to a monk. The monk sits in a small niche with a window open to the side,” with strict punishments to be meted out if details of the matter leave the confessional booth.¹³⁸ Commenting on his perceptions of female propriety and décolletage in Portugal, Xie observes that “While young women reveal part of their breasts, elderly women cover themselves in long shawls.”¹³⁹ Of London, he notes how despite the large number of children born to prostitutes, illegitimate children were still raised and care for.¹⁴⁰

As a formerly shipwrecked sailor, Xie also praised British laws stipulating the rescue and beneficent treatment of shipwrecked seamen.¹⁴¹ His maritime experiences and interests informed his emphases elsewhere, too. Concerning the United States—which he described as an island to the northwest of St. Helena, formerly part of England and still sharing its customs, called by the

¹³⁶ Xie, *Hailu* (1870 [1820]), juan 2:22b-23a.

¹³⁷ For example, Xie claims that “England...is to the southwest of France, facing the sea.” Xie, *Hailu*, juan 2:22a.

¹³⁸ Xie, *Hailu*, juan 2:17a.

¹³⁹ Xie, *Hailu*, juan 2:16a. For comparison, see *Huang Qing zhi gong tu* 皇清職貢圖 (1761), 1:50-51, which portrays and discusses the cleavage of Swedish women.

¹⁴⁰ Xie, *Hailu*, juan 2:23b.

¹⁴¹ Xie, *Hailu*, juan 2:23b.

Chinese “Huaqi” or “flowery flag” based on the flags flown by American ships in Canton—he noted the use of “fire-wheel ships,” or steamships, which would not reach Asia for another decade and a half.¹⁴²

Although it would take a few decades for the *Hailu* to achieve wider recognition, Xie’s travels did not go unnoticed by early Chinese audiences. Commenting on Xie’s travelogue in 1821, the Jiangsu geographer and essayist Li Zhaoluo 李兆洛 (1769-1841) wrote that “the contents are well organized, and [people and places] across the rolling waves of countless tens of thousands of *li* are described as if one saw them in the corner of a hall. One can even find every detail about how England, the Netherlands, and other countries have occupied strategic points in small coastal principalities and built forts at key places, along with sundry miscellaneous information.”¹⁴³

In 1840, the earliest English-language review of the *Hailu* assessed that Xie’s “memoranda and reminiscences... would, in the hands of modern book-makers of the west, easily have been expanded into a thick quarto, and in due form styled ‘Voyages round the world,’” like the memoirs and travelogues left by so many Western voyagers to China. While lamenting that the “making of such voyages, the Chinese do not yet understand,” the reviewer called Yang

¹⁴² When American merchants first began reaching Canton in the late eighteenth century, some of their Chinese counterparts had a difficult time differentiating them from the British, owing to the fact that traders from the two Anglophone countries spoke the same language, seemed to share a culture, and until recently had been part of one nation. Locals identified the newcomers’ *huaqi* or “flowery flag,” which flew from American ships, as a distinguishing feature. Similarly, Xie called Prussia “Danying” or the country of the “single eagle” after the eagle on its flag, and Austria “Shuangying” or country of the “double eagle” after the two-headed eagle on the imperial banner and coat of arms of the Holy Roman Empire. Although such epithets died out in the early twentieth century, certain vestiges of this nomenclature remain. For example, Citibank, which was the first American bank to establish operations in China with the opening of its Shanghai office in 1902, is to this day still called *Huaqi Yinhang* (花旗银行) or “Flowery Flag Bank” in Chinese.

¹⁴³ Li Zhaoluo, *Haiguo jiwén xù* (1821), 16b. Li was the director of the Zhenru Academy in Anhui, and when the governor of Anhui, Kang Shaoyong, was transferred to the governorship of Guangdong in 1820, Li followed his patron. Li became interested in European affairs during the year that he spent in Guangzhou. See Arthur Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period (1644-1921)*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 448-449.

Bingnan's compilation of Xie's travels "the best [Chinese travelogue] we have ever seen."¹⁴⁴ In fact, the *Hailu* became popular reading for Chinese literati following the first Opium War. Lin Zexu, the Qing official who led the fight against opium trafficking, read it, and excerpts from Xie's narrative appeared in scholar-official Wei Yuan's 魏源 influential *Haiguo Tuzhi* 海國圖志 (1843) and Xu Jishe's 徐繼畲 *Yinghuan zhilue* 瀛寰志略 (1849), as Qing intellectuals sought to make sense of China's changing relationship vis-à-vis foreign nations over the course of the nineteenth century. Nor was Xie the only Chinese sailor cited by Wei Yuan: the *Haiguo Tuzhi* also contained excerpts of other maritime descriptions of England from the *Huang Qing siyikao* 皇清四裔考, attributed to a Qianlong-era Chinese sailor who visited Liverpool.¹⁴⁵

Today, Xie enjoys widespread acclaim as the "Chinese Marco Polo," an epithet bestowed upon him by Chinese media and history books in recognition of his wide-ranging travels. To be sure, Xie lived an extraordinary life, and his *Hailu* has received extensive and deserved scholarly attention.¹⁴⁶ (Many of its claims, also like those of Polo, contain at least as much fiction as they do fact.) But Xie's stories take on new resonance when considered in the broader context of Chinese sojourns in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While Xie was remarkable for leaving a record of his travels, the fact that he went abroad, and returned, was not. In fact, it was quite normal.¹⁴⁷ If there is anything that this chapter has tried to show, it is that individuals

¹⁴⁴ *The Chinese Repository*, vol. 9 (1840): 22.

¹⁴⁵ Yang Xianyi 杨宪益, *Yiyu Oushi* 译余偶拾 (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2006), 121.

¹⁴⁶ See, among others, Ronald C. Po, "Maritime Countries in the Far West: Western Europe in Xie Qinggao's *Records of the Sea* (c. 1783-93)," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 21:6 (October 2014): 857-870; Po, *The Blue Frontier: Maritime Vision and Power in the Qing Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 195-206; Zhang Shuqiong 张淑琼, "Xie Qinggao de Xiyang guan" [Xie Qinggao's view of the West], *Zhongshan daxue yanjiusheng xuekan* 25:4 (2004): 53-61; An Jing 安京, "Hailu zuozhe, banben, neirong xinlun" 《海录》作者、版本、内容新论 [A new study of the author, edition, and contents of the *Hailu*], *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi yanjiu* 13:1 (2003): 48-58.

¹⁴⁷ The experiences of maritime sojourners such as Xie also highlight the divide between what Matthew Mosca has called the Qing state's "geographical agnosticism" toward foreign lands and the often far richer, albeit uneven, foreign knowledge of people on the ground. Individuals were often quite geographically/culturally cognizant,

like Xie were working alongside Westerners and even visiting the Western world by the thousands in the decades leading up to the first Opium War, each returning with their own tales and experiences.¹⁴⁸

Less well known than the adventures of Boston Jack and Xie Qinggao but no less instructive are the exploits of a Chinese servant named Chutang Ahoo. Chutang Ahoo grew up in an unidentified village about eighty miles outside of Canton, and like thousands of other Chinese who saw opportunity in the foreign presence, his pursuit of success took him far away from home and back. After moving to Canton from his home village, he became a servant to the merchant John Perkins Cushing, the head of one of China's most prominent American trading houses in the 1810s and 1820s and the cousin of Caleb Cushing, who would later serve as U.S. consul in China and play an instrumental role in articulating American foreign policy toward the Qing.¹⁴⁹ When John Perkins Cushing retired from China in 1831, he brought his servant Ahoo with him, along with a Chinese cook and a coolie. Over the next decade, Ahoo traveled twice from China to his employer's estate in Watertown, Massachusetts, staying for several years each time. In America, Ahoo ran a variety of errands. He went into town a few times a week, bringing back tidings of ship arrivals and overseeing a range of mercantile deliveries, including chests of tea, boxes of shawls and satins, and assorted furniture.¹⁵⁰ He attained functional proficiency in

although this oral knowledge rarely entered the written record before the second half of the nineteenth century. On the cartographical agnosticism of eighteenth-century Qing scholars toward the non-Chinese world, see Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 101-126.

¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, even greater numbers of Chinese migrants were of course sojourning through Southeast Asia, where they crossed paths with Europeans, Americans, and other non-Chinese in various contexts. For a comparable and roughly contemporaneous travelogue, see Wang Dahai 王大海, *Haidao yizhi* 海島逸誌 (Zhangyuan cangban 漳園藏板, 1806). For discussion, see the epilogue of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁹ Caleb Cushing spearheaded the signing of the Treaty of Wanghia in 1844, which granted the United States most favored nation status and extended extraterritorial protections to American citizens in China.

¹⁵⁰ Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal A, 6 September 1834, 9 September 1834, 15 September 1834.

not just spoken but also written English, and he enjoyed Cushing's close confidence, as evidenced by his management of upwards of five hundred dollars at a time on behalf of his patron.¹⁵¹ At the same time, he maintained close epistolary contact with his father and brothers in China while abroad.¹⁵²

After leaving the United States on the *Levant* in April of 1835 and arriving back in China a few months later, Ahoo also maintained an active correspondence with his former employer.¹⁵³ For Ahoo, as for Boston Jack, the return trip had left a memorable impression. As a relieved Ahoo reported to Cushing, he had been just two days' journey from Lintin when "a great Tifong blew badly destroy great many things on our country was we Lucky see our country again. Thank God for that."¹⁵⁴ From the late 1830s to early 1840s, the pair exchanged nearly a dozen letters, a mixture of personal correspondence and business. Ahoo had grown close to Cushing's wife and son during his stay in Watertown, and in his letters he frequently asked Cushing to "give [his] best remember" to the family, especially Cushing's "little Dear Son," about whom Ahoo thought "more than any body [in] the world."¹⁵⁵ Carved wooden toys and other gifts accompanied a number of the letters, and upon learning from their mutual friend Captain Philip Dumaresq of the *Levant* that a second son had joined the first, Ahoo immediately packed up "a box of dried Liajee [lychee] marked J.P.C." and mailed it to Massachusetts in celebration.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Equivalent to about USD \$14,000 in 2020.

¹⁵² Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal A, 22 November 1834.

¹⁵³ Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal A, 24 April 1835.

¹⁵⁴ Harvard Business School, Baker Library, MSS: 766, Bryant and Sturgis Collection, vol. 14, ff. 1 (Letters to J.P. Cushing, 1829-1838), 18 December 1835.

¹⁵⁵ Harvard Business School, Baker Library, MSS: 766, Bryant and Sturgis Collection, vol. 14, ff. 1 (Letters to J.P. Cushing, 1829-1838), letters dated 18 December 1835, February 1836, 12 March 1838, 10 August 1838; Boston Athenaeum [letterbook], letter dated 3 April 1837.

¹⁵⁶ Harvard Business School, Baker Library, MSS: 766, Bryant and Sturgis Collection, vol. 14, ff. 1 (Letters to J.P. Cushing, 1829-1838), letter dated 10 August 1838.

Cushing reciprocated, too, sending Ahoo gifts including textiles and cherry brandy for over a decade after the latter's return to China.¹⁵⁷

When he was not mailing lychees and children's toys, Ahoo was busy trying to establish himself as a merchant in his own right, like many other Chinese who had sojourned abroad. At first, Ahoo continued running errands on Cushing's behalf, orchestrating deliveries of teas, sugared candies, and citrus plants while entreating his former mentor to "write to the Amarecan [sic] gentlemen of my Character" and recommend him as a comprador to Canton's newcomers.¹⁵⁸ Later on, Ahoo also leveraged his relationship with Cushing to embark on speculative ventures of his own.

Most notable among these speculations was Ahoo's foray into New England's burgeoning market for mulberry seeds. In April 1837, Ahoo purchased fifty-four pounds of mulberry seeds, packed them up into boxes, and sent them on the long journey from Canton to Boston.¹⁵⁹ At the time, it must have seemed like a foolproof venture. The American price of the Chinese mulberry or *Morus multicaulis* had skyrocketed since the tree's introduction to New England less than a decade earlier, and the "miracle plant from China," which promised to revitalize American sericulture like never before, had arrested the attention of farmers, businesspeople, and political figures alike as advocates embraced the belief "that every man, woman, and child, would speedily amass a fortune by attending to the business [of growing mulberries]."¹⁶⁰ Whereas in 1831 *multicaulis* saplings had been available at New England auctions for around three dollars per hundred, by 1835 their value had risen ten-fold, with sales

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal D, 24 March 1845; Journal E, 20 July 1849.

¹⁵⁸ Harvard Business School, Baker Library, MSS: 766, Bryant and Sturgis Collection, vol. 14, ff. 1 (Letters to J.P. Cushing, 1829-1838), letter dated 18 December 1835.

¹⁵⁹ Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal A, 4 May 1837.

¹⁶⁰ *New England Farmer* 18:9 (Sept. 4, 1839): 76.

ranging from \$25 to \$40 per hundred; and by early 1839, prices would rise nearly ten-fold again, with completed sales of up to \$200 per hundred trees and some listings at more than double that.¹⁶¹ Genuine *multicaulis* seeds, which Chutong Ahoo purchased for less than two dollars per pound in Canton, were selling for up to \$480 per pound in Albany, New York and Northampton, Massachusetts by the fall of 1836.¹⁶² Ahoo stayed abreast of the latest global news through his contacts in Canton and Boston, and over the next year and a half he shipped three chests of seeds for Cushing to auction off on his behalf, at an initial investment of two hundred and forty-three dollars.¹⁶³

The *multicaulis* bubble burst soon after: most of the imported seeds failed to germinate, and many of the mulberry's ardent promoters turned out to have little interest in the arduous labor of actually cultivating the plants, raising silkworms, and producing silk.¹⁶⁴ Those plants that did grow were devastated by a blight that swept through mulberry orchards in 1839, with thousands of individuals suffering steep losses. As one New England farmer recounted decades afterward, "We don't know many furrin tongues here in this town, but there's one Latin name we ain't a-goin' to forget; you can't say *Morus multicaulis* now in the store or in town meeting 'thout makin' every middle-aged man in the room madder'n thunder thinkin' what a fool he was."¹⁶⁵ Chutong Ahoo was one of the lucky ones. Cushing graciously took the blame upon

¹⁶¹ *New England Farmer* 7:14 (Oct. 16, 1833): 111; 14:1 (July 15, 1835): 7; 14:7 (Aug. 26, 1835): 55; *Fessenden's Silk Manual and Practical Farmer* 1:6 (Oct. 1835): 95.

¹⁶² *The Genesee Farmer* 7:1 (Jan. 7, 1837): 2-3.

¹⁶³ Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal A, 3 April 1837, 13 April 1837; Harvard Business School, Baker Library, MSS: 766, Bryant and Sturgis Collection, vol. 14, ff. 1 (Letters to J.P. Cushing, 1829-1838), letter dated 28 October 1838.

¹⁶⁴ This sericulture mania swept over other increasingly globally connected communities too, including St. Helena. In the 1820s, the island's governor, Alexander Walker led an effort to introduce silkworms from India in order to establish a new and profitable industry in the British colony. After the Indian silkworms died en route, a Chinese coolie who claimed expertise in sericulture responded to Walker's call and volunteered to retrieve silkworms from China. Although these worms survived and a farm was established on the island, these efforts ultimately petered out. Philip Gosse, *St. Helena, 1502-1938* (London: Cassel and Company, 1938), 294.

¹⁶⁵ Alice Earle Morse, "A Gallant Silken Trade," *New England Magazine* 22 (1900): 563.

himself, lamenting that he “was probably the cause of [Ahoos] undertaking the speculation,” and decided to reimburse his Chinese friend for his losses. As Cushing wrote to Ahoos on October 21, 1838:

...Our family are all well, + desire their kind requests to you, Mrs. Cushing recd the watch cases and purses you sent her, + the boys the toys, with which they were much delighted—As the loss you will sustain from the Mulberry seed which you have sent will be serious to you I have concluded to bare [sic] it myself as I was probably the cause of your undertaking the speculation. + know by this opportunity requested [Robert Bennet] Forbes to pay you the cost of the whole which from the memos which accompanied the different parcels, I make out to be as follows, viz

Per Emily Taylor	1 Box 40 catty cost	120
Per Oneida	1 “ 41 ½ “ “	83
Per Champlain	1 “ 20 “ “	40

\$243, say two hundred + forty three dollars,
which M Forbes will pay you + charge to me. I should not recommend your buying Mulberry seed again as I believe it is a hopeless case.¹⁶⁶

Two hundred and forty-three dollars was no trivial sum (equivalent to about USD \$6700 in 2020), and Cushing’s willingness to reimburse Ahoos for his losses testifies to the strength of their relationship even after Ahoos had returned to China.¹⁶⁷

Although Ahoos’s mulberry speculations failed to bear fruit, his other business ventures met with greater success. By 1847, when Salem native and longtime Macao resident Rebecca Kinsman hosted him during a visit to Canton, Ahoos had established himself as a distinguished merchant in his own right, whose reputation had even begun to eclipse that of his long-retired patron. In Kinsman’s words:

Several Chinese gentlemen called today. Among others Ahoos [Ahoos],¹⁶⁸ formerly Mr. Cushing’s servant, who went twice with him to America, but now a Tea Merchant. He

¹⁶⁶ Bryant and Sturgis records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, vol. 12, 368-369.

¹⁶⁷ Cushing himself was a conservative investor, who eschewed then-popular speculations in lands and municipal bonds of the American West in favor of more developed industries, such as banking and insurance, with a view toward securing income from earnings. For an overview of his financial dealings after retiring from China, see Henrietta M. Larson, “A China Trader Turns Investor: A Biographical Chapter in American Business History,” *Harvard Business Review* 12:3 (1934): 345-358.

¹⁶⁸ Kinsman gives his name as “Ahoos,” but her reference to him as “Mr. Cushing’s servant” makes clear that he is the same Chutong Ahoos.

speaks perfectly good English and is a fine looking Man—He was splendidly dressed in Mandarin Satin.¹⁶⁹

It is unclear if Ahoo was in fact a “tea merchant” or if his primary business lay elsewhere. In all probability, like other Chinese sojourners-turned-entrepreneurs, he was a jack of multiple trades; a year before Kinsman hosted him, British authorities had also cited Ahoo as a reputable informant in a local report on the state of the Anglo-Chinese cotton trade.¹⁷⁰ We know little about Ahoo’s later life, but it is clear that the former Chinese servant in Watertown, now “splendidly dressed in Mandarin Satin,” was not just still kicking but thriving into the 1840s and beyond. When Chutong Ahoo eventually passed away in 1885, he died a creditor of the American government, due a balance of \$61.42 (some \$1600 in contemporary currency) for his investments in railroad securities in Michigan.¹⁷¹ Although the multinational investments of prominent Chinese merchants such as Howqua are well known to historians—encompassing stocks and bonds of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad and its subsidiaries, among other securities—the example of Ahoo is one of the first indications that even ordinary Chinese speculators made such far-reaching investments as well.¹⁷²

In addition to highlighting the global entanglements of Chinese sojourners’ lives, the collective experiences of Boston Jack, Xie Qinggao, and Chutang Ahoo underscore just how lucrative foreign work could be, even for relative commoners: sailors and servants who could become “great gun[s]” and achieve a reputed net worth, whether accurate or not, of “a hundred

¹⁶⁹ Mary Kinsman Munroe, “The Daily Life of Mrs. Nathaniel Kinsman in Macao, China, Excerpts from Letters of 1845,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 88 (1952): 79.

¹⁷⁰ H.R., “Remarks on the Cotton Trade,” *The Chinese Repository* 16 (1846): 136.

¹⁷¹ “A Statement of Balances Due to and from the Government of the United States, in Response to a Resolution of the House of Representatives, Passed on the 27th Instant,” in *United States Congressional Serial Set*, vol. 2403 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), 4.

¹⁷² On Howqua’s investments in American railroad securities, see John D. Wong, *Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 189-196; Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China: Peasants, Technology, and the World Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), 116-117.

thousand dollars;” who could author travelogues that became recommended reading for a generation of Qing scholar-officials; and who had the knowledge, means, and chutzpah to invest in agricultural bubbles and national industrializing projects halfway across the world.

To be sure, Boston Jack, Xie Qinggao, and Chutang Ahoo were success stories; it is due in no small part to their successes that sufficient sources on their lives exist at all. But for the droves of unemployed young men on the South China Coast, it did not take much improvement in their condition for a venture to be deemed a success, and sojourning certainly offered a route to do so. Even young boys, as Boston Jack and John Anthony once were, could earn meaningful wages at sea: for example, four dollars a month in the case of a Chinese boy named Amowee, at rank of landsman, on the American ship *Nautilus* in the late eighteenth century.¹⁷³ Xie Qinggao, although he died destitute, earlier in life had accumulated enough through his seaman’s wages and subsequent ventures to be able to loan 150 Spanish dollars to a Portuguese cotton merchant.¹⁷⁴ And even if Cushing had not bailed out Chutang Ahoo, the fact that Ahoo could afford his mulberry speculations in the first place testifies to the profitability of his time abroad. As seen in this chapter’s earlier discussion of sailors’ wages, Chinese sojourners’ financial gains were not trivial, whether they just saved their income or, like the two Chinese seamen from Riga, returned with chests of items worth several pounds in customs fees alone. If even a common coolie could return a hundred and eighty dollars richer, as did a coolie named Ashung in 1835 after four years abroad, then foreign work was lucrative indeed.¹⁷⁵ One of Cushing’s cooks likewise returned to China having earned three hundred and twenty-five dollars for a little under

¹⁷³ Charles Bishop, *The Journal and Letters of Captain Charles Bishop on the North-West Coast of America, in the Pacific, and in New South Wales, 1794-1799*, ed. Michael Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 265.

¹⁷⁴ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/6/000767.

¹⁷⁵ Boston Athenaeum, Mss.L144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal A, 19 October 1834. \$180 in 1835 is equivalent to a little over \$5,000 in 2020.

two-and-a-half years of service, including fifty dollars paid in an advance installment less than two weeks before the cook's departure, likely as spending money to invest in goods for the return trip.¹⁷⁶ For sojourners who not only had minimal expenses but also speculated on the side, it was not difficult to save a small fortune, and when these men returned, they could leverage their savings and experiences to parlay their lot into better prospects, and as they had heard and seen many others do.

For many, sojourning as a sailor or servant was not an end in itself but a stepping stone toward other ventures. These sojourners' experiences thus remind us of the limitations and plasticity of the labels we use to categorize and talk about humans and their experiences. It is tempting to think of sailors as holding a fixed identity, but the category of "seaman"—as well as "prostitute," "merchant," and a range of other identifications that could be used to describe individuals discussed in this dissertation—was far less rigid than the label suggests. Going to sea, like selling sex or transacting any number of other goods or services, was simply one in a toolbox of economic options available, out of choice or out of desperation, to mobile, underemployed men and women, whether in China or the West.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

One of the central methodological challenges of writing history has always been how best to balance the general with the particular. As scholars, we aspire to draw broad conclusions that

¹⁷⁶ Boston Athenaeum, Mss.LL144, Papers of John Perkins Cushing, Journal B, 5 June 1838.

¹⁷⁷ In his classic study of seamen's experiences and the maritime economy in eighteenth-century New England, historian Jesse Lemisch has insightfully argued that despite the conceptual divide between land and sea, sailors were not fundamentally different from people on land, and "Jack Tar seems to have been simply the landsman gone to sea, indistinguishable from his fellows ashore, and, together with them, on his way to prosperity." I see no reason why the same could not be said of Tom Jack and his fellows in China. Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (July 1968), 374.

hold weight beyond the individual examples that we study. Yet at the same time we also believe in paying close attention to historical details that are nuanced, specific, and contingent.

With this tension in mind, this chapter has endeavored to provide a panoramic view of human experience, punctuated by individual examples, examining some twelve thousand Chinese sojourners' experiences both in aggregate and in the particular, from Tom Jack to Boston Jack. I have focused on Chinese sojourners to England, particularly seamen, because they were the most numerically significant and the best documented. However, although Shadwell may have been the most prominent of Tom Jack's homes away from home, versions of the same sorts of transcirculations were taking place all around the world, in Bombay, Boston, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Ostend, and other nodes of empire. I have provided glimpses into these other travels, of Chinese sojourning through the Portuguese empire or to North America; other scholars have discussed their experiences in sites such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen.¹⁷⁸

As Leonard Blussé has shown, for example, Chinese sailors were a familiar sight at the VOC wharf in Amsterdam as well.¹⁷⁹ Although historical details on Dutch experiences are sparser than those pertaining to London, VOC *Dagregisters* suggest that the men approached their travels to the Netherlands in a comparable mindset. An undated drawing by insurance broker Jacob de Vos Willemsz (1774-1844) shows them living mundane lives abroad: cooking and eating, drying clothes, shaving, smoking, and resting until their return to China the

¹⁷⁸ On Chinese sailors in Copenhagen, see Paul van Dyke, "A Ship Full of Chinese Passengers: *Princess Amelia's* Voyage from London to China in 1816-17," in *Early Modern East Asia: War, Commerce, and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Kenneth M. Swope and Tonio Andrade (New York: Routledge, 2018), 166-196; Benjamin Asmussen, "Networks and Faces between Copenhagen and Canton, 1730-1840," Ph.D. diss. (Copenhagen Business School, 2018), 167-169; Julius Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl: Med Handelsfregatterne rundt Kap omkring Aar 1800* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1935), 93. According to Lehmann, the Danish Asiatic Company paid Chinese sailors seven piastres a month (equivalent to about 25 shillings in 1780) and provided them with "shelter and necessary entertainment" in exchange for manual labor during their stay in Copenhagen.

¹⁷⁹ Leonard Blussé, "John Chinaman Abroad: Chinese Sailors in the Service of the VOC," in *Promises and Predicaments: Trade and Entrepreneurship in Colonial and Independent Indonesia in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Jeroen Touwen and Alicia Schrikker (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2015), 101-112.

subsequent shipping season. Other sources attest that Dutch port authorities leveraged circulating Chinese mariners in Rotterdam as useful informants on conditions in China and topics such as the whereabouts of delayed VOC ships from Batavia. Meanwhile, Chinese sailors from London used Dutch ports as transit stations to other places in Europe, such as Berlin.¹⁸⁰

Figure 4. Chinese seamen at quarters in Amsterdam.



“Chinese Matrozen in het Gasthuis” (Chinese Sailors in the Guesthouse). Undated drawing by Jacob de Vos Willemsz (1774-1844). Collectie Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap Amsterdam. Rijksmuseum-Stichting Amsterdam.

In these other contexts, Tom Jack assumed alternative names and identities—no longer Tom or John, but João Antonio, João Francisco, or Jozé Joaquim Souza, among others—but his

¹⁸⁰ “Extract uit een Brief van Canton den 1 December 1790,” *Rotterdamse Courant*, August 9, 1791; “Inland: Halle,” *Allgemeine Preussische Staats-Zeitung* (Berlin), 21 June 1823.

motivations were the same.¹⁸¹ As one Chinese tea cultivator in Brazil wrote to his brother in 1812, a few months after arriving in Rio, “no matter if the tea grows or not, once my three years are up, I will return to China.”¹⁸² Indeed, although some individuals went abroad again and again, most seamen and similar itinerants appear to have been more fleeting sojourners, who used their maritime experiences as launching pads for other pursuits.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, there were of course already large Chinese populations in Batavia, Manilla, and similar entrepôts as well, circulating along local trade routes established long before Europeans superimposed new colonial structures upon their communities. All these people were going to Canton and other Chinese ports too, in less documented but no less significant ways, each with their own impact.

Moreover, as subsequent chapters will illustrate, Chinese sojourners to the West were far from the only Chinese who worked for or with foreigners. Thousands more did so without ever leaving the Pearl River Delta. Like the dockland residents of the East End, the Chinese residents of Canton’s environs gravitated toward the foreign presence: boatmen ferrying foreigners up and down local waterways; washerwomen flocking to clean sailors’ laundry; pidgin-speaking vendors hawking wares in Canton’s bustling streets and back alleys; teams of coolies hauling goods, repairing masts, and recaulking hulls at the foreign anchorage of Whampoa; barkeeps

¹⁸¹ Biblioteca Nacional (Brasil), 352.387: “Representação dos chineses domiciliados no Rio de Janeiro a S.M. solicitando a nomeação de Domingos Manuel Antônio como intérprete e representante de seus interesses,” 6 September 1819.

¹⁸² ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/8/001101.

¹⁸³ Details on Chinese seamen’s life trajectories are scarce, but foreign hospital admission records can give us a sense of their ages and lengths of maritime experience, since this information was recorded for patients when available. Data from a small sample size (n=19) of Chinese seamen who were admitted to the Dreadnought Seamen’s Hospital between 1823 and 1841 exhibits a bimodal distribution wherein almost all Chinese sailors in the sample listed fewer than three years’ experience or more than ten years’ experience aboard British ships, with a handful of stewards, cooks, and boatswains boasting two, three, or more decades of experience. Although the data is limited and might be skewed upward (toward more experienced seamen, who were knowledgeable about and willing to seek hospital treatment), the data’s bimodal distribution makes intuitive sense, as one would expect to see a large number of sojourners who went on just one or two voyages before reallocating their capital and experiences toward other pursuits, along with a smaller number of “lifers” who, having found their initial forays satisfactory, ensconced themselves in more specialized roles and treated such work as a permanent profession.

distilling grain alcohols and seaman's samshoos in the liquor houses of Hog Lane and China Street.

In analyzing the Sino-Western encounter, these are the sorts of people who rarely take center stage, yet who are precisely those we should situate at the forefront of our scholarship and historical imaginations: versatile intermediaries who, at home as well as abroad, learned to adapt and adjust as they navigated unfamiliar circumstances among people different from yet similar to themselves. I make no claims that they were all friends or even got along (although in some cases, like Ahoo's, their relations were clearly close); but everything I have seen suggests that growing numbers of them were becoming familiar with one another and learning to engage through a range of interactions, and by the sheer volume, variety, and duration of their global entanglements, I cannot help but conclude that for a significant minority of Chinese on the South China Coast, "dealing with barbarians" had become not just a lucrative but a familiar and routine endeavor in the years leading up to the first Opium War. It is time to revise our conventional image of isolation and non-contact before European "arrival," because the "Chinese" and "foreigners"—at least those at the forefront of Sino-Western interaction—were not quite the same people we have thought they were.

At the same time, thinking about their movements and local interactions also helps us collapse some of the differences between "Chinese" and "non-Chinese" when we consider the large numbers of Chinese who were visiting the Western world and returning to China. Like modern-day tourists, nineteenth-century Chinese sojourners came with their benefits, and whether they were selling surplus provisions, hiring prostitutes, pawning off their guernsey jackets to local shops and families, or buying goods to trade back in China, Tom Jack and his fellows were probably good for the local economy. Indeed, despite occasional frictions, many

locals were happy that they were around. As Shadwell's proprietor commented in the 1820s of Chinese sojourners' presence in the docklands, "persons in the neighborhood rather like the residence of these people than otherwise."¹⁸⁴

In this way, too, Tom Jack was not so different from Jack Tar. Western sojourners in China brought their own share of benefits to the local economy, helping establish a pattern of mutual economic interaction that extended well past the outbreak of the first Opium War. Sometime around 1860, an undated memorial details the case of a common Chinese boatman named Liang Yaman who was caught serving on a British gunboat during the second Opium War. The twenty-year-old boatman gave the following testimony:

On most days I operate a small boat in the provincial rivers with my father Liang Huashe. In the ninth month of this year, I became acquainted with the foreign devil *Yi-li-bi* because he often hired my boat when he went to and from Lianxing Street.¹⁸⁵ On the first day of the tenth month *Yi-li-bi* was in the provincial river and hired me to go to his boat and work as a sailor for 1.2 silver dollars per day. The crew consisted of ten-plus foreign devils and two Chinese traitors counting me. The other one was named Chen Quandai and was also a sailor. That boat often went to Hong Kong [and later we joined the crew of a gunboat]....There were twenty or thirty Chinese traitors and seventy or eighty foreign-devil soldiers [on board]....I was only a sailor on the ship once when they cannoned [Qing] imperial troops; I most decidedly did not attack imperial troops together with the foreign devils. My father Liang Huashe is blind and did not engage in the business of being a Chinese traitor. This is the truth.¹⁸⁶

For the Qing authorities in Canton, Liang's conduct represented the epitome of treason: the despicable case of a good-for-nothing commoner who was willing to demean himself by working for foreign devils, on a gunboat that was bombing Chinese ships and soldiers, no less. The

¹⁸⁴ BL: IOR/L/MAR/C/37, Minutes of the Committee of Shipping, 29 July 1823.

¹⁸⁵ Also known as *Leung hingkae* or *Leuenhing Keae*, a popular commercial area to the west of the foreign quarter. Maria Kar-Wing Mok, "Trading with Traders: The Wonders of Cantonese Shopkeepers," in *The Private Side of the Canton Trade, 1700-1840: Beyond the Companies*, eds. Paul van Dyke and Susan E. Schopp (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018), 68, ff. 15.

¹⁸⁶ Guangdong Provincial Archives, G2014-QDYM-1848. See also NAK: FO 931/1848. For similar examples, see FO 931/1826, FO 931/1849.

memorial ends before reaching a verdict, but the outcome probably was not good for Liang: exile at best, and more likely death by strangulation.

Liang Yaman's voice is muted in the historical record; all we know is that, under interrogation, he confessed to his crime and begged the authorities to spare his father. He was, the memorial tells us, a "Chinese traitor" (*hanjian*). But if we were able to ask Liang today, I doubt he would have seen things the same way. His stint as a sailor on foreign ships was a normal outgrowth of Sino-Western interaction, just as it had been for so many of the South China Coast's intentional itinerants before him and would be for so many after. One might wonder if he knew when he signed on that his ship was going to war against Qing forces—or if he even would have cared.

It was normal for Chinese to work on foreign ships, just as it was normal for them to ferry foreigners from place to place or sell them fruit. In the nineteenth-century Sino-Western world, the message on the ground was clear: no matter what your age or background, if you were willing, there could be a job for you so long as you seized your chance. Liang Yaman was not simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was in, what was for him, the right place. Like thousands of Chinese, from sailors seeking pleasure in East End brothels to boatswains seeking higher wages in the Navy Office, from shipwrights in Rio to carpenters in Timor, from the cooks in Napoleon's kitchens to the plucky albatross hunter who snuck overboard looking for a snack, Liang Yaman was just one more Tom Jack in search of new opportunities, taking advantage of the exceptional-seeming but quickly normalized challenges and opportunities presented by Chinese intercourse with the West.

This normalization cut both ways. Even as the putative Orient retained its grip on the Western imagination writ large, for the growing numbers of Europeans and Americans who

crossed paths with Chinese aboard ships and in other interstitial spaces stretching from the Pearl River to the Thames, individual Chinese were becoming a little less foreign, a little more mundane. They were people who cooked your food, made your things, sold you liquor and guernsey jackets, even played with your kids and mailed them toys. At the same time, even as many Chinese sojourners and residents of the South China Coast retained a significant degree of cultural scorn toward the “foreign devils,” they were discovering that Westerners could be negotiated with, confronted, and collaborated with more or less like anyone else. Most of the time, whether in Canton or elsewhere, Chinese as well as Westerners were just normal people doing normal things.

CHAPTER TWO

Speaking with Devils:

Translingual Engagement and Everyday Communication on the South China Coast

“I scarcely believed I was so fortunate as really to be in China,” recalled a Scottish seaman named John Nicol of his first visit to the Middle Kingdom. As the *King George* sailed up the Pearl River in November of 1787, twenty-six months since leaving London, the thirty-one-year-old veteran of the American Revolutionary War “cast [his] eyes from side to side,” eager to witness firsthand the customs and milieu of “this strange people” on the other side of the world.¹⁸⁷ Upon arriving, however, he was surprised to find that many of the locals were speaking English. As Nicol noted, the Chinese laundrywomen who cleaned sailors’ clothes “all spoke less or more English and would jaw with the crew as fast as any women of their rank in England,” and local beggars would beseech him for a “lillo rice” whenever he passed by.¹⁸⁸ Nor were beggars and laundrywomen the only ones familiar with the foreign devils’ tongue. Numerous sources from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries attest that to varying degrees, the English language and its derivatives were in regular use by the multitudes of merchants, shopkeepers, tailors, tinkers, greengrocers, fishmongers, ferrymen, coopers, peddlers, pimps, prostitutes, and other tradespeople of the Pearl River Delta, decades before the Treaty of Nanking (1842) formalized Canton’s status as a foreign treaty port and established Hong Kong as a British colony.

¹⁸⁷ John Nicol, *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1822), 96–97. A fur trader, the *King George* had spent the previous two years up and down the western coast of North America, hence Nicol’s unusually long transit time from England to China.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

What should we make of such observations about the place of English within the globalizing social fabric of the South China Coast long before the first Opium War? On the one hand, to be sure, scholars should take reports such as Nicol's with no small grain of salt. Sailors often embellished memoirs for narrative purposes, and the skeptical reader can point to no shortage of Anglophone visitors who bemoaned the broken "pidgin English" (trade English) that locals spoke. But on the other hand, observations on the prevalence of English as the de facto lingua franca of Sino-Western intercourse appear so frequently in the historical record that it is surprising how little attention historians have given to the dynamics of routine communication between Chinese and foreigners. Although Chinese Pidgin English and Chinese Pidgin Portuguese have long held a prominent place in linguistic scholarship on early modern contact languages,¹⁸⁹ most historians of late imperial China have glossed over the problem of everyday Sino-Western communication, either explaining it away by pointing to the handful of designated "linguists" or official interpreters (Ch. *tongshi* 通事; Port. *linguas*) licensed by Qing authorities to facilitate trade, or focusing on more myopic matters of diplomatic interpretation and translation, such as the maintenance of appropriate channels for translingual correspondence or

¹⁸⁹ On these pidgins, see Umberto Ansaldo, Stephen Matthews, and Geoff Smith, "China Coast Pidgin: Texts and Contexts," *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 25:1 (2010): 63–94; Umberto Ansaldo, *Contact Languages: Ecology and Evolution in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184–212; Philip Baker, "Historical Developments in Chinese Pidgin English and the Nature of the Relationship between the Various Pidgin Englishes of the Pacific Region," *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 2:2 (1987): 163–207; Philip Baker and Peter Mühlhäusler, "From Business to Pidgin," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 1:1 (1990): 87–115; Anton Bauer, *Das Kanton-Englisch: Ein Pidginidiom als Beispiel für ein soziolinguistisches Kulturkontakphänomen* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975); Kingsley Bolton, *Chinese Englishes: A Sociolinguistic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Michelle Li and Stephen Matthews, "Portuguese Pidgin and Chinese Pidgin English in the Canton Trade," in *Ibero-Asian Creoles: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Hugo C. Cardoso, Alan N. Baxter, and Mário Pinharanda Nunes (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), 263–288; Dingxu Shi, "On the Etymology of Pidgin," *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 7:2 (1992): 343–347; Dingxu Shi, "Learning Chinese Pidgin English through Chinese Characters," in *Atlantic Meets Pacific: A Global View of Pidginization and Creolization*, eds. Francis Byrne and John Holm (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993), 459–465; Uchida Keiichi 内田慶市 and Shen Guowei 沈國威, eds., *Gengo sesshoku to pijin: 19 seiki no higashi Ajia 言語接触とピジン: 19世紀の東アジア* (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 2009).

the navigation of particular semantic concerns.¹⁹⁰ Where historians have addressed everyday communication, it has typically been to emphasize how poor such communication was and how cultural barriers and the limitations of pidgin contributed to frequent misunderstandings and conflicts.¹⁹¹

While the existing historiographical privileging of official communication organs has deepened our understanding of diplomatic affairs as well as the institutional mechanisms of trade, it has left us with more limited insight into translingual contact and engagement on the ground level.¹⁹² This is problematic. After all, the vast majority of Sino-Western communication, like most Sino-Western socioeconomic interaction in general, occurred in informal contexts beyond official parameters: in the winding lanes and alleys of Canton, alongside ships in the Pearl River, and on or around outlying islands and waterways of the delta. At the same time, scholarly assumptions such as one historian's assertion that pidgin and the limits of communication "practically guaranteed that the *fan kwei* [Westerners] and the Celestials [Chinese] would hold each other in the lowest possible esteem" have in effect discouraged rather

¹⁹⁰ Henrietta Harrison, "A Faithful Interpreter? Li Zibiao and the 1793 Macartney Embassy to China," *The International History Review* 41:5 (2018): 1076–1091; Harrison, *The Perils of Interpreting: The Extraordinary Lives of Two Translators between Qing China and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Lisa Hellman, *This House Is Not a Home: European Everyday Life in Canton and Macao, 1730–1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 137–174; Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 70–107; Wang Hongzhi 王宏志, "Magaerni shi Hua de fanyi wenti" 馬嘎爾尼使華的翻譯問題 [The translation problems of the Macartney embassy to China], *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊 63 (2009): 97–145.

¹⁹¹ For example, see Jacques M. Downs, *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784–1844* (Bethlehem: LeHigh University Press, 1997), 74; Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840–1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 86.

¹⁹² For the most authoritative survey of the state-licensed linguist system, see Paul van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 77–93. For a more recent overview of linguists' multifaceted roles in managing the boundaries of transnational trade and contact, see also Van Dyke, "The Canton Linguists in the 1730s: Managers of the Margins of Trade," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 57 (2017): 7–35. Van Dyke and other scholars, many of them his former students, have in recent years produced a growing body of detailed scholarship on Canton's licensed linguists, both as individuals and in aggregate, but considerations of foreign language acquisition and use among the general Chinese populace remain lacking.

than encouraged more substantive investigations of the societal ramifications of foreign language acquisition and proficiency on the South China Coast.¹⁹³ Although such emphases on communication barriers feed neatly into longstanding narratives of Sino-Western misunderstanding in the years leading up to the first Opium War, they become more troubling when juxtaposed with individual observers' sundry experiences.¹⁹⁴ Where do we fit the remembrances of men like Nicol into this narrative? How do we include women like the laundry girls he met, or countless other boatpeople and shopkeepers whose livelihoods were intertwined with the foreign presence? If "English" and its pidgin variants were indeed in as widespread use as Nicol suggests, it behooves us to ask: how well could Chinese and Westerners communicate outside of official contexts, and what can a deeper understanding of the capacities and limitations of their communications tell us about the history of their interactions?

In this chapter, I foreground this "communicative question" under a two-fold premise: first, that language is a critical aspect of human interaction and merits serious examination in historical scholarship; and second, that language is first and foremost a means of communication, not a barrier to it. In any study of interactions between peoples from different geographic regions and cultures, it is imperative we pay close attention to questions of language—what people said, how they said it, how well others understood them—because we cannot fully understand the history of inter-societal contact without understanding the lived discourses and modes of

¹⁹³ Fay, *The Opium War*, 86.

¹⁹⁴ The notion of "pidgin," often treated as a shorthand for "non-standard language," is capacious, and like other artificial categorizations of human linguistic diversity, its application can often be as misleading as it is useful. What many Western observers deemed pidgin was simply English/Portuguese/*yiyu* ("barbarian/foreign" language) to most Chinese, and not until the second half of the nineteenth century, as transcultural contacts (and educational contacts in particular) deepened, did Chinese observers differentiate meaningfully between South China's European pidgins and the "standard" variants of those languages. Thinking about these varieties of language as categorically different specimens, rather than mutually consistent means of communication operating along a shared spectrum of intelligibility, runs the risk of reifying barriers that in practice were overcome more often than they meaningfully kept people apart.

communication that this contact generated. Language was not just a barrier to be crossed. How people spoke was not secondary to what they did; it *was* part of what they did.

As this chapter demonstrates, Chinese people at all levels of society have had a long history of active engagement with foreign languages, and this has important ramifications for how we think about intercultural contact in late imperial China. In an effort to better understand everyday Sino-Western relations in the Pearl River Delta before the first Opium War, this chapter examines the production, circulation, and adoption of English—and, to a lesser extent, Portuguese—as tools for navigating both matters of trade and a range of informal interactions and relationships that developed out of the delta’s position as a nexus for human and material exchange. I show that the local inhabitants of South China’s littoral regions sought out and embraced opportunities to learn *yiyu* 夷語 (“barbarian/foreign language”), through work abroad as well as self-study at home.¹⁹⁵ For example, driven by economic incentives, adaptable Chinese youths converted to Christianity with foreign language acquisition and pecuniary gain in mind, and fathers sent their sons abroad to learn English.¹⁹⁶ Shopkeepers and household servants learned the rudiments of *yiyu* through reading and reciting from commercialized translingual primers written in Chinese characters. Meanwhile, retired sailors and other returned sojourners leveraged their language skills to open shops, work as commercial intermediaries, or become interpreters or language instructors themselves. Although the Qing state viewed with measured distrust the growing numbers of Chinese who learned *yiyu*, economic incentives drove more and

¹⁹⁵ Debates over linguistic incommensurability surrounding the translation of the Chinese character *yi* 夷, traditionally rendered as “barbarian” or “foreign(er),” have in recent years given rise to a tendency to leave *yi* untranslated in English-language scholarship. In the context of discussing *yiyu* or *yi* language, however, I find that the varying meanings of the term—referring sometimes to English, sometimes to Portuguese, and sometimes to a range of other non-Sinitic languages—often make it more confusing to leave it untranslated, and I have therefore opted to render it according to context as I see appropriate.

¹⁹⁶ If “gold, God, and glory” were the proverbial motivators behind early modern European colonialism, it does not seem far off the mark to suggest that for many Chinese “God and glory” (i.e., converting to Christianity and/or adventuring abroad) were primarily means to get “gold.”

more ordinary people to do so, and in practice the state tolerated such behavior so long as it was not accompanied by other problems.¹⁹⁷ As a result, in many contexts, Chinese people and foreigners became able to communicate and navigate a range of matters without undue difficulty—and, in fact, with increasing facility—in the years leading up to the first Opium War.

Accessing these sorts of personal motives and relationships is not easy, and three methodological challenges complicate the study of everyday communication between Chinese and Westerners in the late imperial period. The first is that our historical subjects are all long deceased, and so we must attempt to reconstruct oral communications using textual representations thereof; for obvious reasons these synchronic snapshots are imperfect.¹⁹⁸ The second is that linguistic categories are mobile, mutable targets. Speaking “English” represents something quite different to a twenty-first century Anglophone academic than it did to an eighteenth-century Englishman, or an eighteenth-century Scotsman, or a Yankee, or a Dutchman, not to mention a boatman or laundry girl in late imperial China. The reconstruction of such individuals’ conversations and interactions involves an act of mimetic ventriloquy that by its nature is fraught with uncertainty, even more so than in most acts of historical interpretation in which present-day analytical categories do not map smoothly back onto their historical referents. The third challenge is that in a twenty-first-century world in which nation-states and languages possess relatively defined boundaries and there exist strong putative ties between one’s native language and one’s national identity, multilingualism occupies a different place in human societies than it did in the recent past, and the act of learning a secondary or tertiary language

¹⁹⁷ In Chinese records, *yiyu* is the most common term used to describe European languages, followed by *fanyu* 番語 and *fanhua* 番話. *Yihua* 夷話 also appears in some documents, but with much fewer attestations. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the alternative *guihua* 鬼話 gains popularity in South China and Taiwan.

¹⁹⁸ This is one of the reasons that most scholarship on translingual contact in late imperial China has focused on issues of textual translation rather than communication more generally.

arguably connotes a greater degree of imagined difficulty than it likely would have presented to historical actors for whom both national identities and linguistic boundaries were less reified and less rigidly compartmentalized than in the present day.¹⁹⁹

Fortunately, however, these are surmountable challenges. A lack of living speakers of Chinese Pidgin English and Chinese Pidgin Portuguese has not prevented historical linguists from reconstructing these topolects' basic parameters and lexicons, which scholars in other disciplines can employ to inform their interpretations. Such investigations are facilitated by the generally high but underappreciated level of phonological awareness that characterized late imperial China's philological and literary traditions, a consequence of the Qing empire's multiethnic, plurilingual character. In frontier towns and urban centers from Canton to Kyakhta, Qing officialdom as well as the general populace were not unused to encountering people of different native places or ethnicities, speaking in different accents, dialects, or languages. Indeed, officials from the Yuan dynasty onward increasingly categorized bodies of plurilinguistic knowledge which were in many cases already known to people on the ground, who navigated frontier contact zones as part of their daily lives. Although we cannot resurrect these people and watch them interact, we can use the texts they left us: a rich range of ethnographic reports and thick descriptions of interactions, as well as Chinese learners' manuals and bilingual glossaries

¹⁹⁹ This is my own speculation; if there is some literature on this, I am not familiar with it. I do suspect, however, that (monolingual) people nowadays have more of a mental block surrounding secondary language acquisition than people in the past probably did, and I suspect that this has something to do with the increased rigidity of national states and identities and their associated languages compared to, say, two centuries ago. (It is probably worth noting that the rigidity of present-day national boundaries of course also has political implications for how we draw our linguistic units: e.g., Yue 粵 (Cantonese), Southern Min 閩南, Kejia 客家 (Hakka), etc. are mutually unintelligible with Mandarin but are considered Chinese dialects, while Dungan is a Sinitic language that shares mutual intelligibility with Central Plains Mandarin 中原官話 but is considered a separate language and is written in Cyrillic, owing to the history of Soviet rule over Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.) On Soviet linguistic interventions involving Dungans and other predominantly illiterate Chinese minorities in the Soviet Union, see John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 87-108. On the ideological ramifications thereof, one can read between the lines of Hai Feng 海峰, *Zhongya donggan yuyan yanjiu 中亞東干語言研究* [A study of the Dungan language of Central Asia] (Urumqi: Xinjiang University Press, 2003).

for languages including English and Portuguese. Even if the texture of the resulting snapshots of daily life might be somewhat fuzzy, the available sources let us establish the parameters of what such historical interactions looked and sounded like, which in turn brings new dimensions to our understanding of ground-level relations between China and the West. And while I do not mean to suggest that every Chinese resident of the Pearl River Delta was somehow fluent in English or Portuguese, I do ask readers to momentarily suspend any disbelief they may hold about the challenges of translingual engagement and think more expansively about the possibilities of human communication in a nineteenth-century world where people's lives and motivations were in many ways just as entangled, mobile, and interconnected as ours today.

As Chapter 1 has already shown, the Chinese inhabitants of the Pearl River Delta were adaptable, motivated, and capable of crossing vast putative and practical divides in the pursuit of self-sustenance, capital accumulation, and related objectives. Although translingual engagement presented its own set of challenges, for many of the versatile sojourners and opportunity-driven residents of South China, language proved to be just one more surmountable barrier: a peculiar means to an end intelligible to people of all nations.

Talking the Devils' Talk: Incentives and Practices of Translingual Engagement

From the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, Portuguese served (alongside Malay) as the European lingua franca of the Indian Ocean world and much of maritime Southeast Asia. Its impact was felt in China as well. As seen in the case of Chinese sailor Xie Qinggao, nautical employment offered one common context through which enterprising Chinese could gain proficiency in the Portuguese language, after which sailors could move on and try their luck in trade or other business ventures closer to home. Awareness of foreign languages was highly

mobile: even after individual seamen returned from Lisbon or Goa, the fluidity of the maritime labor market meant that Chinese sailors proficient in European languages were not limited to European ships, with some individuals circulating interchangeably between Chinese and European vessels.²⁰⁰ As early as the first half of the seventeenth century, for example, a Japan-bound VOC ship reported encountering seamen on a Chinese junk off the southwestern coast of Kyushu “who spoke tolerable Portuguese” and were able to help navigate a translingual encounter on the high seas between the Dutch and Chinese parties.²⁰¹

The other context through which Chinese people learned Portuguese was in China itself. Until the early eighteenth century, Macao held a dominant position in Sino-European trade, and Portuguese was the primary European language learned by Chinese inhabitants of the South China Coast. While Qing officials lamented the perceived ill consequences of increasing fraternization between Chinese and Europeans, they accepted as common knowledge the fact that “residents of Macao are semi-proficient in [foreign languages],” as a result of which many local inhabitants “work for foreign trading firms and open shops in Canton that deal in Western goods.”²⁰² Local engagement with European languages increased with the growing influence of the British East India Company over the eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, English had supplanted Portuguese as the Pearl River Delta’s commercial lingua franca, although many Portuguese-derived terms retained currency, and Portuguese itself remained in common use in Macao and among Macao-based locals. For example, when Genevan merchant Charles-

²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Portuguese-based pidgin terms also spread along trade routes to more distant locations such as the Hawaiian Islands, as in the trading use of “pikaninny” [Port. *pequenino/a*] for “small.” William Ellis, *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii, or Owhyhee; with Observations on the Natural History of the Sandwich Islands; and Remarks on the Manners, Customs, Traditions, History, and Language of Their Inhabitants* (London: H. Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1828), 392.

²⁰¹ J.A. van der Chijs, *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India, anno 1664* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1893), 503.

²⁰² *Qing Shilu* (1986), 35:937. Year: 1831.

Samuel de Constant arrived in China in service of the Ostend Company in 1779, he described hiring a pilot boat from Macao whose five occupants all “spoke quite fluently a corrupt Portuguese,” which served as Constant and his guides’ mutual medium of communication.²⁰³

From the late eighteenth century onward, increasing numbers of Chinese journeyed abroad or apprenticed themselves to foreign merchants in Canton with the explicit aim of learning English or Portuguese and preparing for commercial careers of their own.²⁰⁴ One longtime American trader recalled that foreigners’ Chinese servants, despite working in ostensibly menial roles, “never considered themselves menials...[but worked] in order to become familiar with [pidgin] English, that in due time they could become pursers or clerks in Chinese Hong [行] or shops trading with [Westerners].”²⁰⁵ Similar motivations undergirded other quid pro quos. In one instance of serendipitous language exchange, a Chinese seaman named Yong Saam Tak, who arrived in London in August of 1804 but was abandoned by the vessel that had brought him to England, found himself enlisted as Chinese tutor for missionary Robert Morrison during the latter’s preparations for the first Protestant mission to China. Like many other Chinese seamen, Yong had not planned to make sailing his permanent profession, and he had instead left China out of a “desire of acquiring such a knowledge of English, as would enable him to act as an interpreter and teacher of it at Canton.”²⁰⁶ Morrison and Yong enjoyed a tumultuous linguistic

²⁰³ Charles-Samuel de Constant, *Récit de trois voyages à la Chine (1779-1793)*, ed. Philippe de Vargas (Beijing: 1939), 5.

²⁰⁴ Of course, Chinese migrants learned other European languages too. French Sinologist Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat reported the presence of a Chinese merchant in Batavia “who spoke and read French, and who had even collected in his library the principle classics of [French] literature.” A former steward named Ah Sing, who had served Napoleon on St. Helena just a few years before the cooks Arung and Asum, was reputed to be fluent in French as well, and after a stint in London, where he assumed the name John Nipson, he established himself as a merchandiser and importer in New Orleans. Abel Rémusat, *Mélanges Asiatiques; Ou, Choix de Morceaux de Critique et de Mémoires, Relatifs aux Religions, aux Sciences, aux Coutumes, à L’histoire et à la Géographie des Nations Orientales* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré père et fils, 1825), 2:244; “Steward to Bonaparte,” *The Courier* (Brisbane), 27 August 1856.

²⁰⁵ William C. Hunter, *Bits of Old China* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1855; Reprint, Shanghai: Kelley and Walsh, 1911), 8.

²⁰⁶ “Religious Intelligence,” *The Christian Observer*, vol. 4 (Dec. 1805): 773. As Susan Stifler has suggested, an additional factor influencing Yong’s readiness to tutor Morrison in Chinese was the excuse that this provided to

relationship. Although the latter helped Morrison build a foundation in Chinese while in London, upon returning to Canton he showed little interest either in further assisting Morrison with his language training or in continuing his religious studies begun in England.²⁰⁷ Instead, he parlayed his newfound English skills into a role as clerk to the Hong merchant Gowqua (謝有仁, who went by the commercial name 鰲官), in addition to moonlighting as Morrison's personal comprador. While Yong sought Morrison's occasional assistance in correcting English-language business letters that he wrote, he outsourced the missionary's language instruction and printing needs to Chinese acquaintances, for whom he served surety.²⁰⁸

Other sojourners left upon the encouragement of relatives who urged them to learn English. One such man was a Xiangshan native named Feng Assing (Feng Yaxing 馮亞星, also Fung Asseng, 1792/3-1889?). When Feng was five years old, his father died and Feng moved in with his uncle, a customs official in Canton. Working as his uncle's secretary and assistant in supervising foreign trade, Feng acquired a basic knowledge of English.²⁰⁹ Meanwhile, his uncle had "become friendly with several English ships' captains" through his customs work, and he repeatedly encouraged his nephew to visit Europe.²¹⁰ This the young man did for the first time in 1816, taking a Portuguese vessel to Macao and from there shipping on an EIC ship to St. Helena, where he stayed for three and a half years as a member of Napoleon's kitchen staff, overlapping

leave the Christian boarding house where he had been interned after his abandonment in London. At this missionary school in Clapham, Yong shared accommodations with a group of African students from Sierra Leone, whom the Chinese sailor "disliked...thoroughly;" he left them and moved in with Morrison upon becoming his Chinese tutor. Susan Reed Stifler, "The Language Students of the East India Company Canton Factory," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 69 (1938): 58.

²⁰⁷ Christopher Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 92-93, 111-112; ff. 27.

²⁰⁸ Eliza Armstrong Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839), 167-168, 217, 237-238.

²⁰⁹ Historical records do not mention whether Feng's uncle had any children of his own. It is possible that Feng was adopted as his uncle's son, as was relatively common in such situations in late imperial times.

²¹⁰ Lorenz Oken, "Ueber die zwei in Deutschland reisenden Chinesen," *Isis oder Encyklopädische Zeitung* (Jena: 1822), 417.

with Arung and Asum.²¹¹ In 1819, Feng Assing left Napoleon's service and returned to China, where he was already married and the father of two children.²¹² Setting out again in 1821, he passed through St. Helena a few weeks after Napoleon's death and this time proceeded on to London, as a ship's interpreter for a British captain and his Chinese crew.²¹³

At London's East India House, where seamen collected their wages, Feng Assing and a Whampoa native named Feng Ayue, the son of a Cantonese silk dealer, made the acquaintance of a traveling Dutch waffle baker and showman named Heinrich Lasthausen. The three entrepreneurial travelers signed a contract in which Assing and Ayue agreed to "accompany [Lasthausen] to the Continent and let themselves be exhibited for money."²¹⁴ In this fashion, the two Fengs spent the next two years touring the German cities of Weimar, Jena, and Halle. After reaching Berlin in 1823, they caught the attention of Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, who paid off Lasthausen, released them from their contract, and sent them to the University of Halle to serve as Chinese tutors for Sinologist Wilhelm Schott. They received German lessons in return, and in 1828 Assing produced a Chinese translation of Martin Luther's *Kleiner Katechismus*, among other biblical works.²¹⁵ Feng Ayue remained in Germany and settled down in Potsdam, and for a while it seemed that Feng Assing would stay too. In 1826, the latter Feng married an

²¹¹ This would explain why some of the earlier St. Helena documents list three Chinese cooks as being employed in the kitchen but by the time of Napoleon's death there were only two. Although St. Helena might seem like a random place for Chinese sojourners to pass through, it was not an altogether unusual destination, and the island was home to a semi-permanent Chinese population of some 520 individuals in 1819.

²¹² Chinese families preferred young men to get married if possible before sojourning abroad, as this provided parents with the labor of a daughter-in-law as well as some assurance that the son would return home. However, it was not uncommon for young men to remarry while abroad without the knowledge of their families in China, due to the conjugal and linguistic benefits provided by partnership with local women. For the men, this usually also entailed a conversion to Christianity.

²¹³ The German sources call him a *Dollmetscher* (interpreter), but his registered station most likely would have been that of a "Chinese boatswain."

²¹⁴ "Inland: Halle," *Allgemeine Preußische Staats-Zeitung* (Berlin), 21 June 1823.

²¹⁵ "Der kleine Catechismus Lutheri," translated by Fung Asseng," 1828, Libri sin. 228, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz. <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0000958C0000000>. Fung appended a brief German-language autobiography at the end of his translation.

eighteen-year-old German woman named Johanne Kraftmüller, the daughter of a local stocking-maker, and although the origins of their relationship are unclear, it is apparent that Feng and Kraftmüller had been partners for some time: church records note that they had already had a child out of wedlock, who was baptized on the same day as their marriage.²¹⁶ Feng Assing's stay in Germany would prove to be temporary, however, and after Kraftmüller's death in 1836, Feng returned to China and finally leveraged his language skills to embark on the commercial career that his uncle had envisioned for him two decades earlier.²¹⁷

In other instances, Chinese parents encouraged their children to enroll in missionary schools and convert to Christianity with the aim of learning English. Arguably the most famous individual who studied *yiyu* under such circumstances was a man named Yung Wing (Rong Hong 容闳, 1828-1912). Yung grew up in the village of Nam Ping (Nan Ping 南屏), on an island just southwest of Macao. In 1835, when he was seven, Yung's parents sent him to the Portuguese settlement to study at a missionary boarding school that had just opened.²¹⁸ In Yung's recollection, his parents enrolled him through their connections with a local man who served as comprador for the Protestant missionary Karl Gützlaff, and who also "happened to come from

²¹⁶ Erich Gütinger, *Die Geschichte der Chinesen in Deutschland: Ein Überblick über die ersten 100 Jahre ab 1822* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2004), 106-107. As Gütinger notes, church authorities sanctioned the marriage under two conditions: first, Feng's own baptism, and second, the receipt of special permission from King Frederick William III, as Feng had been previously married in China and could not produce a death certificate for his Chinese wife. Baptism was also sometimes a prerequisite in other contexts, such as when Chinese men married freed slavewomen at the Cape of Good Hope, but conversion to Christianity appears to have been a less stringent expectation when their wives were not of European descent. Over the course of the eighteenth century, Chinese at the Cape submitted some three dozen manumission requests for slaves they owned, in some cases in order to marry them. James C. Armstrong, "The Chinese Exiles," in *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, edited by Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2012), 101-127.

²¹⁷ Lorenz Oken, "Ueber die zwei in Deutschland reisenden Chinesen," *Isis oder Encyklopädische Zeitung* (Jena: 1822), 417-432; "Inland: Halle," *Allgemeine Preußische Staats-Zeitung* (Berlin), 21 June 1823. For discussion of the lives of the two Fengs, see Rainer Schwarz, who corrects many previous misconceptions about the itineraries and services of these two men in Berlin. Schwarz, "Noch einmal zu Heinrich Heines 'zwey chinesischen Gelehrten,'" *Monumenta Serica* 64:1 (2016): 173-200.

²¹⁸ This school was the Morrison Education Society School, which opened doors on September 30, 1835 with an enrollment of twelve girls and two boys.

the village I did and was, in fact, my father's friend and neighbor."²¹⁹ (Meanwhile, Gützlaff's wife Mary ran the school; since her husband was often away distributing religious tracts along the Chinese coast, she assumed most of the responsibility for actually feeding, clothing, and educating the school's pupils.) While claiming it was a "mystery...why my parents should take it into their heads to put me into a foreign school, instead of a regular orthodox Confucian school, where my brother much older than myself was placed," Yung attributed his parents' decision to their aim of "put[ting] one of their sons to learning English that he might become one of the advanced interpreters and have a more advantageous position from which to make his way into the business and diplomatic world."²²⁰

After Mary Gützlaff left Macao and the school closed, Yung returned home and resumed studying the Confucian classics. His parents' prescient bet on his English-language schooling, however, soon paid off. In the fall of 1840, Yung's father died, and the twelve-year-old Yung began hawking candy in a neighboring village to help his family make ends meet. He and his sister also took to gleaning leftover rice grains from local fields after the fall harvest. On one occasion, while chatting with the harvesters, Yung's sister divulged the story of her brother's foreign schooling. The head harvester was intrigued—like most peasants, he had had less cause than many of his countrymen to interact with South China's growing foreign population—and he "asked [Yung] whether [he] wouldn't talk some 'Red Hair Men' talk to him" in exchange for a gift of rice.²²¹ After reciting the English alphabet for the curious foreman, Yung went home "loaded with joy and sheaves of golden rice." Although he had not dreamt that his "smattering knowledge of English would serve [him] such a turn so early in [his] career," his English skills

²¹⁹ Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (New York: H. Holt, 1909), 2.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²²¹ Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America*, 9.

would continue to open doors: the former candy hawker and rice gleaner went on to attend Yale, becoming in 1854 the first Chinese graduate of an American university.²²²

To be sure, the degree of Yung Wing's eventual success and prominence was unusual—clearly not every *yiyu* learner ended up at Yale. But the pragmatic motivations underlying Yung Wing's enrollment in a mission school were far from atypical, and they illustrate the practical economic aspirations that drove residents of the South China Coast to seek opportunities to learn the foreign devils' tongue. Writing of another young Chinese missionary pupil, who had ostensibly “declined going home at the usual vacation, which is at the New Year, on account of the idolatrous [Chinese] ceremonies in which he would be obliged to take part,” Macao resident Rebecca Kinsman offered the following assessment of the economic considerations intertwined with foreign language learning:

[W]hen he did go home a little later, [he] described the difficulties he had...in getting permission to return to the school, particularly from his Mother, who wished to avail herself of his knowledge of the English language, to get service in some family and make it profitable in earning *money*, the God of their idolatry.²²³

Kinsman does not say whether this particular young convert stuck with his studies or soon yielded to family pressure, but historical records suggest that many Chinese Christians did take quite utilitarian attitudes toward their schooling. For instance, American doctor Benjamin Ball recalled encountering a Chinese co-traveler in Amoy who spoke “English very well,” having “been to the missionary school [in Singapore] for ten years, when, having a good knowledge of English, he commenced trading for himself.” In Ball's estimation, this tendency among some

²²² *Ibid.*, 10.

²²³ “The Daily Life of Mrs. Nathaniel Kinsman in Macao, China. Excerpts from Letters of 1845.” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 87 (1951): 122.

“Chinese [to] learn English in the schools of the missionaries, and afterwards turn it to their own advantage for trading purposes...in the Chinese character...seem[ed] natural.”²²⁴

While we should not accept uncritically Ball’s sweeping generalization of “the Chinese character,” his perception of Chinese conduct speaks to the visible utilitarianism with which many ordinary Chinese people approached their engagement with the West. Before, during, as well as after the first Opium War, the economic incentives for learning *yiyu* were clear to residents of the delta. The value of translingual skills was obvious to foreigners, too, and they made it a point to recruit English-speaking or Portuguese-speaking servants and other intermediaries with such abilities. As one prominent American merchant instructed his contacts in Canton, “[please] procure a lad of 16 to 22 [years] of age, who is active and has been employed in a Factory, and send him to us [in Massachusetts]....He should speak some English or he will be useless to us. If two of this description could be got, we should prefer it.”²²⁵ Foreign language proficiency was also an asset for household servants in China, whose employees likewise valued their multilingual skills. As the wife of one Boston merchant wrote to her husband of her new home in Macao while he traded in Canton, “I like my new establishment exceedingly....Ahssu seems a very good boy, and he likes children, and can speak Portuguese. I trust I shall have no men changes.”²²⁶ For similar reasons of convenience, Western merchants and sailors gravitated toward *yiyu*-speaking Chinese shopkeepers, for whom such proficiency facilitated advertising and relationship building with foreign clientele.

²²⁴ Benjamin L. Ball, *Rambles in Eastern Asia, Including China and Manila, during Several Years’ Residence* (Boston: J. French, 1855), 317.

²²⁵ BA: Mss.L289, “Extracts from Letterbooks of J. & T.H. Perkins et al., 1786-1838,” Thomas H. Perkins to John P. Cushing, 19 June 1805.

²²⁶ BA: Mss.L556, “Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis,” box 1, f. 53, Mary Sturgis to Russell Sturgis, 3 March 1835.

Opium dealers represented another demographic that benefitted from foreign-language proficiency. In many instances, traffickers began as professionals in other trades, through which they gained familiarity with *yi**yu*, before starting to deal narcotics on the side when opportunity struck. For example, consider the case of two captured opium dealers named Zhong Ya'er and Zhong Yakui, of whom the investigating official reported:

Your humble servant has investigated the matter, and it turns out that Zhong Ya'er and Zhong Yakui, natives of Xiangshan County, live in Macao and make a living as moneychangers; they have frequent interactions with foreigners of all nations and are proficient in the foreigners' language. In November 1837, Zhong Ya'er learned that a black slave in the Western barbarians' Factory was secretly dealing opium, and that the price was low, so he came up with a plan to peddle opium for profit. Subsequently, he used foreign money, 10 or 20 yuan at a time, to buy 20 or 30 *jin* of opium and brought it home to resell in bits and pieces to various individuals whose names are not known, which he did countless times.²²⁷

These sorts of stories are common in Qing case records involving opium dealers, which highlight local Chinese people's dealings with a range of individuals, from official representatives of the various East Indies companies to private merchants and their servants and slaves. Translingual skills allowed Chinese smugglers to capitalize on opportunities that leveraged their relationships with foreigners and information acquired by word of mouth, and Qing officials' complaints about the alleged link between foreign language proficiency and opium trafficking became an increasingly common refrain as commercial intercourse deepened. As the Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang lamented in 1834, not only did local scoundrels purchase opium from foreigners, but "there were even some dastardly Guangdong merchants who learned the foreigners' language, associated frequently with foreigners in Macao, and enticed them to come to Fujian [to sell opium]."²²⁸ Other smugglers not only "learned to speak and write the foreigners' language" but also "communicated in writing to check opium prices" so that they

²²⁷ YZDS, 1:754.

²²⁸ YZDS, 1:141.

could optimally time their forays out to the opium depot on Lintin.²²⁹ It was due in part to their growing suspicion that Chinese opium traffickers were writing foreign-language correspondence to facilitate their activities that customs officials often seized and inspected mail convoys' bundles of letters that foreigners sent to each other between Canton, Macao, Lintin, and other places of the delta, much to the inconvenience of everyone involved.²³⁰ (Such inspections were not without precedent, as sporadic orders to inspect foreign correspondence date to at least the High Qing era, especially in during periods when missionary activity was under heightened scrutiny.)²³¹

In addition to helping local Chinese residents pursue opportunities with foreigners, translingual skills could also yield lucrative business opportunities with other Chinese, as was the case for a Henan native named Zhang Yahua. In the spring of 1837, Zhang was on the road when he crossed paths with a man named Tan Sheng, who hailed from Zhang's same home county in Henan but had since established himself in Macao. The two men struck up a conversation, and "because Zhang Yahua was familiar with *yi*yu, Tan concocted a scheme to form a partnership [with Zhang] and traffic opium together."²³² Zhang consented to the plan, they each contributed an initial outlay of a hundred yuan, and leveraging this pooled capital, Zhang spent the next six months serving as an intermediary between his newfound business partner and foreign opium traffickers. Zhang and Tan collaborated on at least ten occasions before deciding to go separate ways in the face of increasing crackdowns by local officials. Although Tan was apprehended

²²⁹ YZDS, 1:308. More common was the standard process by which buyers would pay in Guangzhou shops and take a receipt out to receiving ships, but references to Chinese smugglers who knew English and wrote orders themselves suggest that this also happened. On smuggling order logistics, see Peter Thilly, "Opium and the Origins of Treason in Modern China: The View from Fujian," *Late Imperial China* 38:1 (2017), 163.

²³⁰ FHA: 04-01-01-0772-026; 04-01-01-0787-019.

²³¹ FHA: 04-01-01-0399-023.

²³² YZDS, 1:760.

after another opium dealer, under interrogation, betrayed him to the authorities, Zhang disappeared with his earnings and remaining stock and was never heard of again.

Enticed by such economic opportunities made possible by translingual proficiencies, many residents of the South China Coast became avid learners of the “barbarian tongue,” even as Qing authorities viewed with suspicion the acquisition of European language skills by anyone other than the government’s appointed linguists.²³³ By the mid-eighteenth century, the normalization of Chinese inhabitants’ translingual engagement was well known to Chinese officials: “Although Western languages are strange, because [Europeans] have lived in China for a long time and Chinese have become accustomed to them, there are many [locals] who can speak [European languages].”²³⁴

Some picked up just a few words or phrases sufficient to attract customers, while others achieved higher levels of proficiency or engaged in systematic language study. Commenting on the droves of waterborne sex workers who frequented Western ships docked at Whampoa, an Irish-born American businessman in the service of Tsar Alexander I noted that “an unrestrained intercourse is as common at Whampoa as at London or Portsmouth. Certain boats, having licenses from the Mandarins, visit the ships as soon as it is dark, literally loaded with women. Many of these, as well as the washerwomen, speak English, Hindostanee, and Portuguese.”²³⁵

²³³ The association of multilingual ability with illicit behavior has a long history in official discourse beyond China as well, with one scholar of the early modern Atlantic world arguing that in maritime contexts, where the boundary between legitimate trade and piracy was often difficult to delineate, “plurilingualism became... a marker of guilt and complicity in piratical activity” in the eyes of colonial officials, who viewed such abilities with suspicion despite the fact that it was normal for ships of all kinds to employ multinational crews whose travels and shared work environment facilitated non-native language acquisition. Sally Delgado, *Ship English: Sailors’ Speech in the Early Colonial Caribbean* (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2019), 70-73.

²³⁴ AMJL, 2:53b.

²³⁵ Peter Dobell, *Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of a Residence in China* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), 2:140. Cf. also Dobell’s comparison with the London docklands (discussed in Chapter 1): “In no place is the tar better taken care of than in Canton. That part which the women and publicans of Shadwell and Blackwall perform towards him, is here admirably played by the Chinamen.” Dobell, *Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia*, 213.

Another author, echoing John Nicol, described how upon reaching Whampoa sailors would become surrounded by “buxom girls, who came on board and begged our clothes to wash.”

English was the medium of communication. As he recounts:

They took us by the hand, and, looking in our faces with their mellow black eyes, accompanied by what were meant for witching smiles and a peculiar singing voice, recognised us as old acquaintances, whether they had seen us before or not, in their broken English, ‘My chin-chin you; me savee [i.e., know] you lass voyage; my washe you muche good; can do all the same now; muchee good sweetmeats you savee.’²³⁶

As we shall see in Chapter 3, citing a prior relationship during a previous trading season was a common business tactic employed by locals, regardless of whether such a prior relationship existed or not.

Meanwhile, on commercial thoroughfares such as Hog Lane, well known as the “chief place of rendezvous” for foreign sailors, local shopkeepers adopted Anglophonic names and advertised their eponymous businesses with catchy English-language placards: “‘Old Jemmy Apoo;’ ‘Old Good Tom, old house;’ ‘Jemmy Good Tom;’ ‘Young Tom, seller of wines of all kinds and prices;’ and other signs of similar character.”²³⁷ As one early nineteenth-century visitor observed:

Every China-man almost in Hog-lane goes by some name that may attract the notice of the sailors; as *Jolly-Jack*, *Ben-Bob-Stay*, *Tom-Bowline*, &c. which he has painted on the outside of his shop; besides a number of advertisements...in the true *nautic idiom* and *style*...on each side of the street.²³⁸

Some of these shopkeepers’ and publicans’ monikers were “given...by [drunk] sailors in the height of their conviviality,” through which “[m]any a Chinaman...[could] boast of a Christian

²³⁶ Thomas Jefferson Jacobs, *Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific Ocean* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 347.

²³⁷ *Chinese Repository*, vol. 4 (1835), 45.

²³⁸ James Johnson, *An Account of a Voyage to India, China &c.* (London: R. Phillips, 1806), 72.

name by which he [was] well known in the neighbourhood.”²³⁹ For instance, the name “Tom Bowline” (or “Bowling”), referenced above, was a common nickname for sailors akin to “Jack Tar,” based on a popular eighteenth-century sea song by composer Charles Dibdin.²⁴⁰ Other names the proprietors had acquired themselves, during their own travels beyond Chinese shores. “Old Jemmy Apoo,” who plied liquor to Western sailors out of a street-side stall on Hog Lane, had spent over a decade of service in the British merchant marine, reaching the rank of able seaman in the employ of shipping insurance brokerage J.R. Williams and Company before returning to China and opening a liquor stall by the mid-1830s.²⁴¹ His extended experience at sea, coupled with an unbroken half-year stay in London while receiving treatment for venereal disease in the Dreadnought Seaman’s Hospital in 1827, gave him ample opportunity to hone his English skills.

In other instances, instead of opening shops or liquor stalls, returned Chinese sojourners assumed posts as English teachers in Canton’s environs. One such individual was Henry Martyn Alan 胡蘭, a Whampoa native who had traveled to Philadelphia in 1823, at the age of twenty-one, and studied for two years in Cornwall, Connecticut under sponsorship of the Female Society of Philadelphia for the Education of Heathen Youth. Founded in 1817 as an immersive training ground for non-white missionaries, the Cornwall Mission School was home to a diverse student body by the time of Alan’s arrival, with boys and young men hailing from Hawai’i, Indonesia,

²³⁹ Charles Toogood Downing, vol. 2, *The Fan-Qui in China* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), 213-214.

²⁴⁰ A bowline was a kind of nautical knot, while a bobstay was part of the rigging designed to counteract upward tension on the bowsprit exerted by the sails.

²⁴¹ NMM, *Dreadnought Seamen’s Hospital Admission Registers*, DSH/1:69. Although data limitations prevent us from establishing for certain that the “Jemmy Apoo” admitted to the Seamen’s Hospital in January 1827 was the same individual as “Old Jemmy Apoo” in 1830s Canton, the distinctiveness of the name and coherence of the chronology lend credence to this likelihood. Given Jemmy Apoo’s extended maritime service and prolonged stay in London, coupled with what we know of Chinese sojourners’ entrepreneurial habits in general, it makes sense that Apoo would have sufficient interest and cross-lingual ability to open a liquor stall that he advertised in English. Apoo’s unusually lengthy stay (166 days) at the Seamen’s Hospital was coordinated by his employer, J.R. Williams and Company.

Polynesia, and China, as well as a large contingent of Native Americans. Alan arrived at Cornwall together with a younger cousin, Alum, with whom he had reunited by coincidence in Philadelphia after the latter, who had left China two years prior as a seaman aboard a ship to Amsterdam, also made it to the United States; and the pair joined another cousin, Asee, who was already at the Cornwall Mission School, having reached New England by way of Calcutta and spent a year or two as a street peddler in Boston before enrolling in the spring of 1822.²⁴²

School records suggest that Alan assimilated well, and the Cornwall Historical Society holds a copy of an illustrated “friendship album,” annotated in neat English penmanship and Chinese characters, which he and a few schoolmates assembled for a Cornwall girl named Cherry Stone.²⁴³ However, such interracial friendships caused tension in Cornwall’s rural community, and romantic entanglements between the “heathen” youths and local white women brought heightened scrutiny upon the school, which erupted in controversy in 1824 after a Cherokee pupil married a white Cornwall girl from an upstanding family. Tensions climaxed the following year when a second local girl announced her betrothal to a Cherokee student as well; Alan and Alum left the Cornwall Mission School soon thereafter, and statewide backlash precipitated the institution’s shuttering in 1826. As one of the newlyweds’ sisters reported to a

²⁴² *Religious Miscellany*, vol. 1 (1823), 389-390; *Missionary Herald*, vol. 30 (1824), 379; United Church Board for World Ministries, *Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1822), 76. The fact that all three men should be described as “cousins” is probably too much of a coincidence and may have reflected the sensationalized evangelical reporting of Protestant missions, combined with nineteenth-century America’s monolithic image of Chinese people, but the men’s prior acquaintance or relation by blood is also not out of the question, given the key place of kinship in influencing migration patterns and economic behavior in South Chinese society as well as the broad application of kinship labels. The history of Chinese diaspora is replete with examples of individuals who left home for distant lands because they heard that a cousin or other relative had established themselves there, or who after going abroad reconnected with an acquaintance from the same village or lineage network.

²⁴³ For detailed discussion of this album and its context, see Karen Sánchez-Eppler, “Copying and Conversion: An 1824 Friendship Album ‘from a Chinese Youth,’” *American Quarterly* 59:2 (2007): 301-339.

friend in August of 1825, “Alun [sic] left Cornwall immediately after the affair was settled, he did not wait to see the agents, for fear of being expelled. He has gone to England.”²⁴⁴

By the 1830s, Alan had returned to China and established himself in Canton, where he worked as a part-time trader and English tutor for Chinese servants in the foreign factories. In May of 1834, the American missionary Samuel Wells Williams reported that Alan still spoke English “with considerable freedom” and was teaching the language to “three [Chinese] scholars in our hong [building]” while also serving as a paper supplier for the just-established Chinese printing press of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which Williams oversaw.²⁴⁵ Like many other returned sojourners, Alan was able to put his language skills, cross-cultural familiarity, and business acumen to good use. Little is known about the servants studying with him, but in all likelihood they were learning English with similar goals in mind. Contemporary accounts reported the presence of several such “schoolmasters” like Alan, who were “employed to instruct beginners in the shops and hong,” with most pupils moving on to commercial pursuits after learning the basics.²⁴⁶

More commonly, local Chinese people without access to qualified teachers could also learn European languages through self-study, using one of a number of commercially available primers that employed Chinese characters to express useful words and phrases in English, Portuguese, or Russian. As longtime South China resident William C. Hunter recalled in his memoir of life in China before the first Opium War,

In the Canton book-shops near the Factories was sold a small pamphlet, called ‘Devils’ Talk.’ On the cover was a drawing of a foreigner in the dress of the middle of the last

²⁴⁴ Letter from Catherine Gold to Herman Vaill, August 10, 1825, in Theresa Strouth Gaul, *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823-1839* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 126. As Gaul notes, it is unclear whether “Alun” here refers to Alan or Alum, but both men left the Cornwall Mission School in 1825.

²⁴⁵ ABC, 16.3.8, 1:220, 18 May 1834; *Missionary Herald* 31 (1835), 413.

²⁴⁶ *Chinese Repository*, vol. 4 (Jan. 1836): 431-432.

century—three-cornered hat, coat with wide skirts, breeches, and long stockings, shoes with buckles, lace sleeves, and in his hand a cane. I have now one of these pamphlets before me. It commences thus, ‘Yun’ [i.e., *yàhn* 人], and under it is its ‘barbarian’ definition, expressed in another Chinese word whose sound is ‘man’ [i.e., *màhn* 文]. After many examples of this kind come words of two syllables—thus, ‘kum-yat’ [i.e., *gāmyaht* 今日] with their foreign meaning expressed by two other Chinese characters pronounced ‘to-teay’ [i.e., *douhdē* 度爹] to-day—and so on to sentences, for which the construction of the language is peculiarly adapted. This pamphlet, costing a penny or two, was continually in the hands of servants, coolies, and shopkeepers. The author was a Chinaman, whose ingenuity should immortalise him. I have often wondered who the man was who first reduced the ‘outlandish tongue’ to a current language.²⁴⁷

Although Hunter may have often pondered the identity of this manual’s architect, the pamphlet that he describes in his memoir was far from the first of its kind. As a result of the Chinese state’s continual contact with non-Sinitic peoples over the Silk Road and along its Inner Asian and southwestern frontiers, the introduction and transcription of foreign terms into Chinese has a lengthy history that dates to at least the first millennium BCE. While much scholarship on this topic has focused on the influx of Japanese-mediated Western loanwords and concepts in the late nineteenth century, earlier Chinese watersheds of foreign language contact were pivotal in shaping and informing these processes of translingual engagement before they percolated down to the grassroots.²⁴⁸

Foremost among these was the introduction and spread of Buddhism from the first century BCE onward. Due to the inadequacy of existing Chinese philosophical terms for articulating the new concepts of Buddhist doctrine, monks increasingly transliterated religious

²⁴⁷ William C. Hunter, *The ‘Fan Kwae’ at Canton before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London: K. Paul, Trench & Co., 1882), 63-64.

²⁴⁸ Literary scholar Lydia Liu has coined the term “translingual practice,” which she defines as “the process by which new words, meanings, discourses, and modes of representation arise, circulate, and acquire legitimacy within the host language due to, or in spite of, the latter’s context/collision with the guest language,” to describe the discursive translation of Western modernity into a Chinese context, but other forms of Chinese translingual contact and practice significantly predated the late nineteenth-century influx of Western epistemologies. Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: University Press, 1995), 26.

terms from the source languages rather than seek to translate them, and they developed a sophisticated system for representing Sanskrit and Pali sounds using Chinese characters.²⁴⁹ Regional variations in Chinese topolects and pronunciations also spurred other transliterational innovations as scholars developed novel techniques for representing Chinese phonetics across linguistic divides, such as use of the *fanqie* 反切 system to split phonetic subject characters (*zhuyin zi* 注音字) into their onset (initial consonant) and final through the use of upper and lower character subscripts (*shangzi* 上字 and *xiazi* 下字) that indicated the intended pronunciation, a method that gained widespread lexicographic acceptance in literary rhyme dictionaries as well as more general compendia including the influential *Kangxi Dictionary* (1716).²⁵⁰

Following the introduction of Buddhism, the transcription of foreign terms into Chinese continued increasing as a result of expanding commercial intercourse with the Islamic world during the Tang (618-907) and Song dynasties (960-1279) and the Mongol invasion and administration of China under the Yuan (1279-1368).²⁵¹ The establishment of an imperial interpretation bureau (Huitongguan 會同館) in 1276 and translation bureau (Siyiguan 四夷館) in 1407 created official state apparatuses for managing translingual communications with various

²⁴⁹ Walter Fuchs, “Zur technischen Organisation der Übersetzungen buddhistischer Schriften ins Chinesische,” *Asia Major* 6 (1930): 84-103; Stanislas Julien, *Méthode pour déchiffrer et transcrire les noms sanscrits qui se rencontrent dans les livres chinois* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1861), 1-63, 83-232; Sun Bojun 孙伯君, “Huayi yiyu Hanzi zhuyinfa kaoyuan” ‘华夷译语’汉字注音法考源 [An examination of Chinese transcription methods in the *Huayi yiyu*], *Beifang minzu daxue xuebao* 2 (2020): 122-127; Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 3rd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 31, 39-40.

²⁵⁰ David Prager Banner, “The Suí-Táng Tradition of *Fānqiè* Phonology,” *History of the Language Sciences / Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaften / Histoire des sciences du langage*, vol. 1, edited by Sylvain Auroux (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 36-55; Wen HSU, “The First Step toward Phonological Analysis in Chinese: *Fanqie*,” *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 23:1 (Jan. 1995): 137-158. For a detailed discussion of *fanqie* in the context of late imperial Chinese phonology, particularly in connection with the Manchu language, see Mårten Söderblom Saarela, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China,” Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2015), 82-90, 344-425.

²⁵¹ For a chronological overview of the transcription of non-Sinitic terms into Chinese, see Geoff Wade, “Chinese Transcription of Foreign Words prior to the 19th Century,” *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10:1 (September 2005): 1-20.

non-Han frontier peoples including Manchus, Mongols, Hui Muslims, Miao minorities, and other demographics with whom the Chinese state came into frequent contact.²⁵² One of the responsibilities of these bureaus was the compilation of official “Sino-barbarian vocabularies,” called *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語, which recorded essential vocabulary in dozens of different minority languages ranging from Persian and Uyghur to Ryukyuan and Loloish.²⁵³ Most glossaries included between four hundred and two thousand entries each and followed a consistent organizational logic that arranged entries according to a subset of up to twenty standardized categorical schema, including celestial matters (天文), geography (地理), time (時命), colors (采色), the body (身體), people and professions (人物), tools and implements (器用), buildings (宮室), food (飲食), clothing (衣服), geography (方隅), literary classics (經部), jewelry and money (珍寶), history and knowledge (文史), birds and beasts (鳥獸), numbers, (數目), common phrases (通用), medicines (香藥), flora (花木), and human affairs and actions (人事).²⁵⁴ In addition to reflecting imperial Chinese ontological frameworks for compartmentalizing variation in the human and natural worlds, these pamphlets also served practical, didactic purposes, as instructional material for frontier personnel.

²⁵² Paul Pelliot’s 1948 genealogy of the Ming and Qing translation bureaus (*siyiguan* 四夷館, later 四譯館) remains the most exhaustive study on the subject. Paul Pelliot, “Le Sseu-yi-kouan et le Houei-t’ong-kouan,” in “Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l’histoire des Ming,” *T’oung Pao* 38 (1948): appendix 3, 207–292. On the role of the Siyiguan, see also Kanda Kiichirō 神田喜一郎. “Min no Shiikan ni tsuite” 明の四夷館に就いて [On the Ming Bureau of Translators], *Shirin* 史林 12:4 (Oct. 1927): 519–534; Chun Hua 春花, Li Ying 李英 and Guo Jinfang 郭金芳, “Qing Qianlong nian bian ‘Huayi yiyu’ shulun” 清乾隆年編《華夷譯語》述論 [A study of *Huayi yiyu* compiled in the Qianlong era of the Qing dynasty], *Gugong xuekan* 故宮學刊 1 (2018): 380-396.

²⁵³ As Victor Mair and S. Robert Ramsey have noted, Ming and Qing references to such disparate languages as *fangyan* 方言 support that notion that “dialect” is a poor English-language translation for the Chinese term. Mair, “What Is a Chinese ‘Dialect/Topolect’? Reflections on Some Key Sino-English Linguistic Terms,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 29 (1991): 1-31; Ramsey, *The Languages of China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 32.

²⁵⁴ In some versions, the section on colors was instead “colors and sounds” (聲色), and “buildings” was instead “palace buildings” (宮殿). In most versions, the sections on “useful phrases” and “human affairs and actions” were the longest and accounted for the greatest variation in length among different *Huayi yiyu* texts.

After the Manchu invasion and rule of China from the seventeenth century onward, the Qing court's careful maintenance of Manchu identity and parallel governance of a largely non-Manchu populace precipitated the closure of the translation bureau's Mongolian and Manchu sections as well as its symbolic renaming, from Siyiguan 四夷館 to the near-homophonous Siyiguan 四譯館, with the *yi* character meaning “foreign/barbarian” replaced by the *yi* character meaning “translation,” in order to downplay the foreign origins of Qing rule.²⁵⁵ Reworking the Ming-era *Hua-Yi* (“Chinese-foreigner” or “civilized-barbarian”) binary, mid-Qing ideology articulated an alternate space for situating Inner Asian peoples such as Manchus and Mongols.²⁵⁶ In 1748, the emperor Qianlong (r. 1736-1795) merged the interpretation and translation bureaus into a single institution under the Ministry of Rites and commissioned revised editions of every existing *Huayi yiyu* as well as first editions for languages not yet covered, including those of “all overseas *yi*,” such as Europeans, who were coming into increasing contact with the officials and ordinary inhabitants of China's coastal provinces.²⁵⁷ With the assistance of German-Jesuit missionary Florian Bahr—who had just returned to Beijing that same year—the newly combined Huitong Siyiguan 會同四譯館 compiled detailed translingual glossaries for French, German, Italian, Latin, and Portuguese, all modeled on the extant Tibetan glossaries. A sixth, English-

²⁵⁵ On the politics of maintaining Manchu identity, see Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁵⁶ Matthew Mosca, “Neither Chinese Nor Outsiders: Yi and Non-Yi in the Qing Imperial Worldview,” *Asia Major* 33:1 (2020): 103–146.

²⁵⁷ *Qing Shilu*, 13: 352. As a result of significant military and bureaucratic expansion, the mid-eighteenth century was a period of active ethnographic work for the Qing state. In 1751, just a few years after commissioning dozens of new *yiyu* glossaries, Qing officials began work on the *Huang Qing zhigong tu* 皇清職貢圖 [Collection of Portraits of Subordinate Peoples of the Qing Dynasty], a massive illustrated compendium of tributary states and subjects with whom the Qing state was in contact, including European nations. For detailed discussion of this compendium, see Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001); Hostetler, “The Qing Court and Peoples of Central and Inner Asia: Representations of Tributary Relationships from the *Huang Qing Zhigong tu*,” in *Managing Frontiers in Qing China: The Lifanyuan and Libu Revisited*, eds. Dittmar Schorkowitz and Ning Chia (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 184–223. Richard J. Smith, *Mapping China and Managing the World: Culture, Cartography and Cosmology in Late Imperial Times* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 48–88.

language glossary was produced by officials in Guangdong, per the usual policy of outsourcing linguistic data collection to local officials on China's frontiers.²⁵⁸ These comprised just part of a collection of ninety-eight volumes covering three dozen minority languages, including nine Tibetan dialects, fifteen volumes on languages “of natives living on the southwestern border of China,” and miscellaneous volumes for Siamese, Ryukyuan, and Sulu in addition to the European languages.²⁵⁹

It is within this context—of Qing imperial language projects and normalized foreign language engagement—that we should view the translingual “Devils’ Talk” pamphlet which William C. Hunter saw “continually in the hands of servants, coolies, and shopkeepers” of Canton.²⁶⁰ (In fact, it was Qianlong’s own studies of Tibetan in 1748 that had compelled him to commission new *Huayi yiyu* texts in the first place, since he was frustrated with inaccuracies in the existing Tibetan-language volumes.)²⁶¹ A descendent of these imperial language codification projects, Hunter’s pamphlet provides an apt example of how Qing epistemologies of ethnolinguistic representation expanded beyond the imperial domain and acquired new meanings and applications as they metastasized and spread through society at large. Although the exact edition that Hunter describes does not appear to have survived, similar editions—which follow the same organizational principles and similarly advertise themselves with a depiction of a

²⁵⁸ Walter Fuchs, “Das erste deutsch-chinesische Vokabular vom P. Florian Bahr,” *Sinica Sonderausgabe* 1 (1937): 68-72; Nie Daxin 聂大昕, “‘Yingjili guo yiyu’ bianzuan liucheng kao” 《·英咭喇国译语》编纂流程考 [An investigation of the compilation process of the ‘Yingjiliguo yiyu’], *Beifang minzu daxue xuebao* [Journal of the Northern University of Nationalities] 145:1 (2019): 108-115. As Nie has shown, this division of labor accounts for the marked differences in length and transcription consistency between the English-language glossary (734 entries, based on Cantonese; one or two pages missing) and the other European-language texts (ca. 2070 entries each, based on Mandarin), since Bahr and his missionary colleagues’ command of French, German, Italian, Latin, and Portuguese was much stronger than the Guangdong compilers’ command of English.

²⁵⁹ Walter Fuchs, “Remarks on a new ‘Hua-I-I-Yü’ 華夷譯語,” *Bulletin No. 8 of the Catholic University of Peking*, (Peiping: Catholic University of Peking Press, 1931), 91-99.

²⁶⁰ Qing officials took an active interest in compiling similar *yiyu* glossaries of minority languages and dialects throughout the empire. For example, see, LJFZL 麗江府志略, 2:37a-39a.

²⁶¹ *Qing Shilu*, 13: 352.

Portuguese *fidalgo* wearing a “three-cornered hat, coat with wide skirts, breeches, and long stockings, shoes with buckles, lace sleeves, and in his hand a cane” on the text’s cover—suggest a traceable lineage from the Qing government’s *Huayi yiyu* texts to commercialized primers on the street.

Figure 5. Sample *Yiyu* Manuals



Portrayal of a Portuguese gentleman in the *Aomen jilüe* (1751), preceded by a Chinese Pidgin Portuguese glossary in five sections modeled on categories of the *Huayi yiyu*: heaven and earth (天地類), people and professions (人物類), clothing and food (衣食類), numbers (器數類), common phrases (通用類).²⁶²

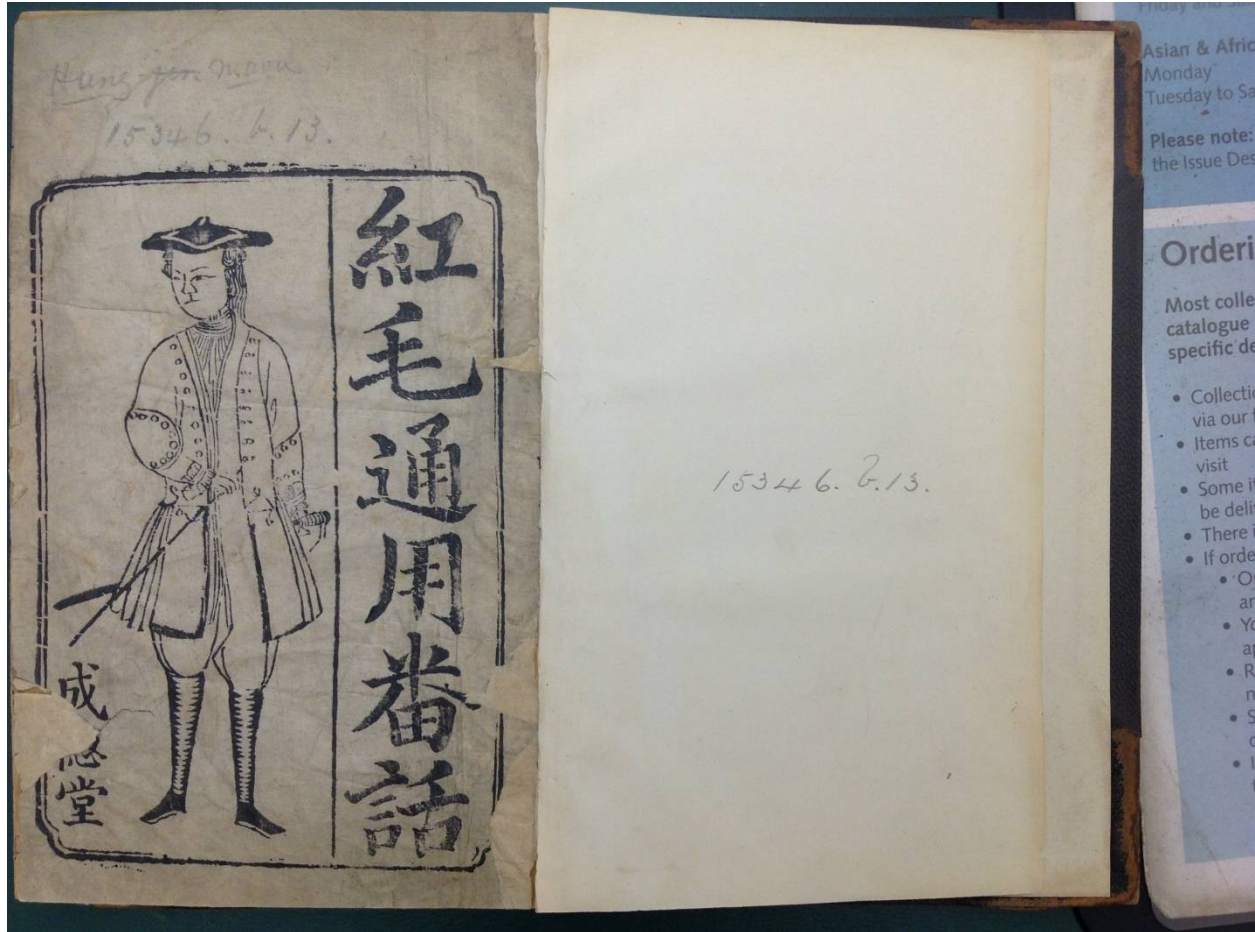


Front cover of *Aomen fanyu zazi quanben* (ca. 1820-1830), covering Portuguese terms in sixteen sections (of which seven survive: heaven and earth (天地門), people and professions (人物類), the body (身體門), common phrases (言語通用門), questions and answers in business transactions (買賣問答), clothing (穿着門), food (食用門).²⁶³

²⁶² See AMJL, *juan* 2, 54a-59b; and *tu* 1. Note that the glossary in the *Aomen jilüe* is much shorter than most *Huayi yiyu* texts (containing less than a fifth of the number of terms) and condenses several of the imperial glossaries' categories. Because the compilation of the *Aomen jilüe* predated the Portuguese *Huayi yiyu* by a few years, it likely used existing *Huayi yiyu* models for other languages, rather than the court-sponsored Portuguese compilation, as its organizational model.

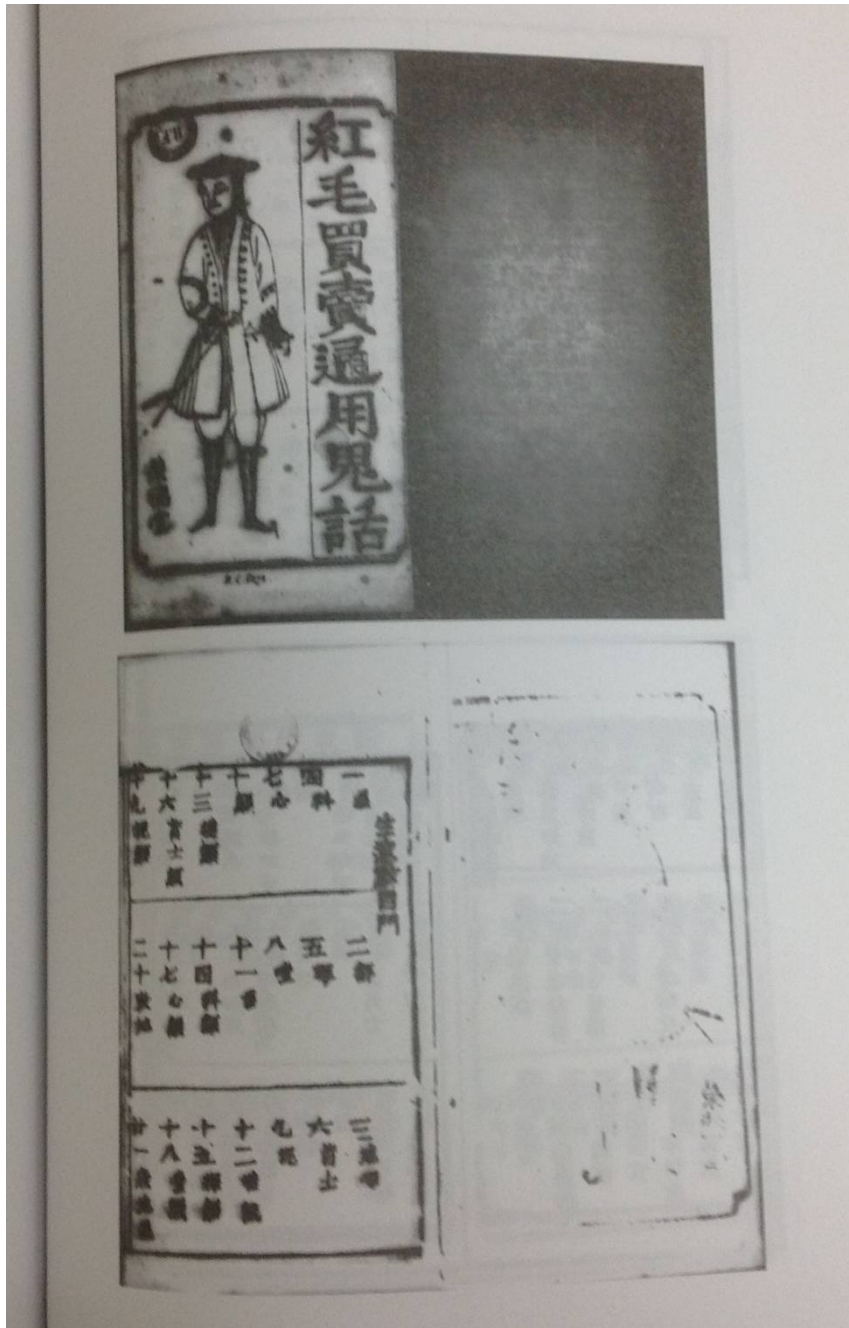
²⁶³ Fragment; judging from the index, a little over half of the pages are missing.

Figure 5, continued



Front cover of *Hongmao tongyong fanhua* (ca. 1830), covering four hundred English terms in four sections: numbers used in business (生意書目門), vernacular language about people and things (人物俗語門), common phrases (言語通用門), food and miscellaneous (食物雜用). N.B. There are two versions of this text, cut and printed by different publishers, but with the exception of some typographical errors that vary from version to version, the contents are identical. British Library: 15346.b.13.

Figure 5, continued



Hongmao maimai tongyong guihua (ca. 1830); functionally identical to the *Hongmao tongyong fanhua* (above). I have not seen this one in person, but scans are available in Uchida Keiichi 内田慶市 and Shen Guowei 沈國威, eds., *Gengo sesshoku to pijin: 19 seiki no higashi Ajia* 言語接触とピジン: 19世紀の東アジア [Language Contact and Pidgins: Nineteenth-century East Asia] (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 2009), 183-187.

A total of seven such popular texts from the first half of the nineteenth century still exist. (Many more examples have survived from the second half of the nineteenth century.) The earliest and best known is a Chinese Pidgin Portuguese glossary incorporated into the *Aomen jilüe* 澳門紀略 or *Monograph of Macao*, compiled by local official Yin Guangren 印光任 between 1743 and 1746 and edited and published by his colleague Zhang Rulin 張汝霖 in 1751, a few years after Zhang succeeded Yin as sub-prefect of Qianshan 前山 (Port. name: Casa Blanca), near Macao. The *Aomen jilüe* stands out as the most detailed Qing account of Macao and covers various facets of local life, including commercial matters, Catholicism, military installations, local maps, and an overview of Portuguese people and customs, along with a Portuguese-language glossary of three hundred and ninety-five basic terms and useful phrases.

Although authorship and publication details on the other texts are sparse, the Portuguese and English *Hongmao* primers all appear to have been local productions, which were designed and sold for commercial purposes. The printing houses that produced these texts also actively published works in other genres, including novellas, folk tales, and songbooks, alongside more conventional educational primers such as the *Thousand-Character Essay* (*Qianziwen* 千字文) and lists of classical idioms (*chengyu* 成語). Several of the printing houses expanded their operations into Hong Kong after it became a treaty port and survived well into the Guangxu era (1875-1908), suggesting that they maintained a considerable level of financial stability and demand for their productions.

Table 1. Early European Language Glossaries in China

Title of Work	Base Language(s)	Publication Year/Location	Authorship/ Edition	Source
<i>Huayi yiyu</i> 華夷譯語	English, French, German, Italian, Latin, Portuguese	ca. 1750 (Beijing) (begun 1748)	[Imperial manuscripts]	Palace Museum, Beijing
<i>Aomen jilüe</i> 澳門記略	Portuguese	1751 (Macao) (drafted 1746)	Yin Guangren (local official)	[Various known printings/reprints]
<i>Aomen fanyu zazi quanben</i> 澳門番語雜字全本	Portuguese	ca. 1820-1830 (Guangdong)	省城第五甫 [舖] 五桂堂藏版	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz: Libri sin. N.S. 849.
<i>Hongmao tongyong fanhua</i> 紅毛通用番話	English (Portuguese man on cover)	ca. 1830 (Guangdong)	成德堂 edition	British Library: 15346.b.13
<i>Hongmao tongyong fanhua</i> 紅毛通用番話	English (Portuguese man on cover)	ca. 1830 (Guangdong)	璧經堂 edition	British Library: 15346.b.12
<i>Hongmao maimai tongyong guihua</i> 紅毛買賣通用鬼話	English (Portuguese man on cover)	ca. 1830	榕[?]德堂 edition	Bibliothèque nationale de France: CHINOIS 9118
<i>Hongmao fanhua maoyi xuzhi</i> 紅毛番話貿易須知	English (Englishman on cover)	ca. 1850?	富桂堂 edition	Bibliothèque nationale de France: CHINOIS 9120
<i>Hongmao [J]hua maoyi xuzhi</i> 紅毛[]話貿易須知	English (Englishman on cover)	Unknown (新刻紅毛番話)	以文堂 edition	Fu Ssu-nien Library, Academia Sinica: ref. 9800362
[Chinese Pidgin Russian glossaries]	Russian	ca. 1800-1850 (Kyakhta)	Unknown	[various, no longer existing] ²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Language manuals also existed for Chinese Pidgin Russian, which spread along the trade routes of the Amur River region and served as a lingua franca in major frontier entrepôts such as Harbin, Khabarovsk, and Vladivostok from the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries. The use of Chinese Pidgin Russian accelerated in the late Qing with the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway (1897-1902) before declining as a result of demographic and political shifts in the 1930s. Although descriptions exist of commercial Russian manuals in the early nineteenth century, to my knowledge none of those manuals have survived, with the earliest surviving texts dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. For early accounts of these manuals, see Egor Fedorovich Timkovskii and

The contents of these texts are all similar, covering numbers and business terms, conversational phrases, and common places, occupations, and descriptions.²⁶⁵ Following the transcriptional techniques employed in the *Huayi yiyu*, each entry in these texts consists of two sets of Chinese characters: the first to capture the semantic content of the entry, and the second to approximate (when read in Cantonese) its pronunciation. For example, the entry for 水手 (sailor) is followed by the characters 些利文 *sēleihmàhn* (i.e., “sailor-man”), 女人 (woman) by 烏文 *wūmàhn* (“woman”), and so on and so forth.²⁶⁶ While some phoneticizations better approximate the English than others, most are reasonably understandable if one is willing to make some allowances for consonants and vowel combinations that do not carry over cleanly, and if one recognizes that some of the “English” entries actually correspond to terms of non-English origin (primarily Portuguese, but also Malay, Hindi, and Swedish).²⁶⁷ Some further examples include

Johann Adolf Erdmann Schmidt, *Reise nach China durch die Mongoley in den jahren 1820 und 1821*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: G. Fleischer, 1825-1826); Sergey Cherepanov, “Kyakhtinskoe kitajskoe narecie russkogoazyka” [The Kyakhta Chinese dialect of the Russian language], *Izvestiya Akademii nauk po otdeleniyu russkogoazyka i slovesnosti* 2 (1853): 370-377. There is also a long history of Russian and Latin language learning in official contexts in Beijing, including through the “Russian College (*Eluosi Wenguan* 俄羅斯文館) established in 1708, but that history, which centers around diplomatic and intellectual contacts, is secondary to the everyday contexts under discussion here. For one example Russian primer from the second half of the nineteenth century, see Liu Jianmin 劉建民, *Jinshang shiliao jicheng* 晉商史料集成 [Collected historical materials about the Shanxi merchants] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2018).

²⁶⁵ For a brief comparison of these texts, see Qiu Zhihong 邱志红, “‘Guihua’ donglai: ‘Hongmao fanhua’ lei zaoqi yingyu cihui shu kaoxi “‘鬼话’东来: ‘红毛番话’类早期英语词汇书考析” [The introduction of ‘Guihua’: an examination of early English vocabulary books such as the ‘Hongmao fanhua’], *Qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 (2017: 2): 113-121.

²⁶⁶ See, e.g., BL: 15346.b.12 and BL: 15346.b.13. In several instances the transcribed phoneticization deviates significantly from that of modern standard Cantonese. This is in part due to certain vowel shifts that have developed in spoken Cantonese since the nineteenth century (e.g., the diphthong shift /i/ → ei); it could also be due to the influence of other varieties of Cantonese that were commonly spoken in the region, such as Taishanese (Hoisanese), which like Cantonese is a dialect of the Yue branch of Chinese but has some differences in pronunciation. Taishanese was a common language among maritime migrants from South China, and due to the Taishan region’s outsize role in sourcing Chinese outmigration, Taishanese was the dominant language of overseas Chinese in North America through the first half of the twentieth century.

²⁶⁷ Bolton, *Chinese Englishes*, 286-287, notes a-z, aa-cc.

gūkmàhn 谷文 (“cook-man”), *gō sip* 苛涉 (“go [aboard] ship”), *gō sitdeih* 苛洩地 (“go [into the] city”), *yit* 噎 (“eat”), *gungsīnsih* 貢仙士 (Port. *consciencia*, “honest”).²⁶⁸

In conjunction with the general economic incentives for Chinese inhabitants to learn English in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these texts helped facilitate on a wider scale the systematic acquisition of oral English proficiency in South China. As a feature article in the October 1837 issue of *The Chinese Repository* remarked of the *Hongmao maimai tongyong guihua* (“Devils’ Speech of the Red-Haired People Commonly Used in Business”):

Similar books are very common among the people of Canton, and it is deemed one of the first steps to the acquisition of English, to copy out one of these manuscripts. Not only the names of articles but idioms, phrases, and rules of etymology, are sometimes found in them, thus making a partial grammar.²⁶⁹

Comparable Chinese grammars for the Russian language are known to have circulated in the frontier towns of Kyakhta and Altanbulag (Ch. Maimaicheng 買賣城; lit. “city of buying and selling”), which were the primary conduits of Sino-Russian trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁷⁰ The available evidence suggests that bilingual phrasebooks were relatively common in Sino-Western entrepôt communities, where opportunistic Chinese inhabitants took learning foreign languages seriously.

These sorts of texts fit into a longstanding Chinese tradition of non-elite knowledge transmission—and not just for literate learners, as Western observations might suggest. As

²⁶⁸ BL: 15346.b.12 and BL: 15346.b.13.

²⁶⁹ *The Chinese Repository*, vol. 4 (Jan. 1836): 432. The spelling and translation here are my own, modernized and converted to Mandarin Pinyin for easier comprehension. The original text of *The Chinese Repository*, with its approximation of Cantonese pronunciation, is “*Hungmaou mae mae tung yung kwei hwa, or those words of the devilish language of the red-bristled people commonly used in buying and selling.*” The British Library contains a copy of a similar work, “*Hongmao Tongyong Fanhua*” (“Common Speech of the Red-haired Foreigners”). For an overview of that text, see Umberto Ansaldo, ed., *Pidgins and Creoles in Asia*, 69-71. See also *The Chinese Repository* 6:6 (Oct. 1837): 276.

²⁷⁰ For discussion on these texts, see Roman Shapiro, “Chinese Pidgin Russian,” *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 25:1 (2010): 5-62; Sayana Namsaraeva, “Border Language Chinese Pidgin Russian with a Mongolian ‘Accent,’” *Inner Asia* 16 (2014): 126.

multiple scholars have shown, rote memorization through vocalized repetition was a cornerstone of traditional Chinese education and a central part of developing literacy and numeracy throughout late imperial times.²⁷¹ For example, reading primers such as the *Three-Character Classic* (*Sanzijing* 三字經), the *Hundred Family Names* (*Baijiaxing* 百家姓), and the *Thousand-Character Essay* (*Qianziwen* 千字文) were typically expected to be memorized before learners ever encountered them in written form. The texts' structured sequences of rhyming or otherwise semantically paired couplets facilitated the memorization process. For the student, having an internalized aural guide then made easier the process of eventually matching the sounds up to the symbols. Mathematical knowledge, from basic numeracy to more complicated algebraic operations, could also be transmitted in similarly versified form.²⁷²

Notably, such methods of vocalized learning were prevalent not just in literati families but among the lower classes as well. Peasant children learned basic jingles about the ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches (*tiangan* 天干), as well as weather divination and fortune-telling methods relevant to agricultural life. Fishermen recited verses such as the 980-word *Seven-words-a-line Song of Fish Names* (*Yuming qi yan ge* 魚名七言歌), which they chanted while they worked.²⁷³ In many cases, illiteracy did not pose a significant barrier to the

²⁷¹ See, among others: Andrea Bréard, "On the Transmission of Mathematical Knowledge in Versified Form in China," in *Scientific Sources and Teaching Contexts Throughout History: Problems and Perspectives*, eds. Alain Bernard and Christine Proust (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 155-185; Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Yu Li, "Character Recognition: A New Method of Learning to Read in Late Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 33:2 (December 2012): 1-39; Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979); Zhang Zhigong, *Chuantong yuwen jiaoyu chutan* (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1962).

²⁷² On the notion of "primer literacy," see Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 276-277.

²⁷³ Wang Ermin, *Zhongguo chuantong jisong zhi xue yu shiyun koujue* 中國傳統記誦之學與詩韻口訣 [Chinese traditional recitation methods and Arts of Rhyming], *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindai shi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊 [Journal of the Institute of Modern Chinese History at the Academia Sinica] 23 (1994): 149.

widespread learning of such rhymes and the use of comparable texts, and it is plausible that the printed *Hongmao* primers fit into this pre-existing tradition of oral learning.²⁷⁴

As Evelyn Rawski has argued about late imperial Chinese literacy rates, such oral practices and literacy traditions had long been closely tied to economic incentives. As previously outlined, learning to speak the “devils’ talk,” too, offered clear pecuniary rewards; in the words of one contemporary observer, it was a medium “which all the Hong merchants and even the inferior tradesmen and mechanics find it worth their while to acquire.”²⁷⁵ For example, when Charles Tyng, an American cabin hand who made four separate trips to Canton between 1815 and 1821, explained his and his companions’ patronage of Jemmy Young Tom’s bar, he cited both Tom’s personalized service and his language skills: “The principal resort of sailors was at Jemmy Young Tom’s. He spoke pretty good English and we used to go to his place, and get what we wanted to eat and drink. He...was always very good to me.”²⁷⁶

In addition to facilitating more widespread acquisition of English, these texts also appear to have effected a partial standardization of Chinese Pidgin English in the 1830s, through providing an identifiable and accessible model toward which speakers could strive.²⁷⁷ (One of the initial challenges of routine spoken communication between Chinese and Westerners was that the ad hoc nature of pidgin resulted in a wide variety of pronunciations, vocabularies, and grammatical formulations between interlocutors.) For example, one clue that points toward a standardization of CPE in the early nineteenth century is a marked shift in first-person pronoun

²⁷⁴ Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch’ing China*; “Functional Literacy in Nineteenth-century China,” in *Literacy in Historical Perspective*, ed. Daniel P. Resnick (Washington: Library of Congress, 1983), 85-103.

²⁷⁵ Barrow, *Travels in China* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1804), 615.

²⁷⁶ Charles Tyng, *Before the Wind* (New York: Viking, 1999), 34. Jemmy Young Tom also flew a small American flag over his door, to attract Canton’s growing American population.

²⁷⁷ Similar trends have been observed on the Sino-Russian border, where Chinese merchants from Shanxi and adjacent regions used character phrasebooks for learning basic Russian and the use of such texts contributed to the codification of Chinese Russian. Shapiro, “Chinese Pidgin Russian,” 11.

usage.²⁷⁸ As Philip Baker has shown through his detailed survey of English-language CPE sources,²⁷⁹ in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries CPE speakers used both “I” and “me” to signify the subject, object, and possessive forms of the first-person pronoun. They used these forms somewhat interchangeably: for example, “I want dīn dāalaa” or “me want dīn dāalaa” (“I/me want ten dollars”). In the 1830s and 1840s, however, both “I” and “me” fell out of fashion, and “my” quickly became the predominant first-person form (e.g., “My want din dāalaa”), despite the fact that “my” barely appeared at all in earlier sources.²⁸⁰ While this convergence on a single term to represent all first-person forms is likely due at least in part to substrate pressure,²⁸¹ and while we should certainly be wary of mistaking correlation for causation, the timing of this shift coincides so neatly with the spread of the *Hongmao* texts in the 1830s that one cannot help but think that the proliferation of printed pidgin phrasebooks played no small part in facilitating such a rapid lexical change.²⁸²

Indeed, while additional data on the topic is sparse, it seems logical to surmise that the existence of written primers facilitated significant lexical codification of spoken Chinese Pidgin English as new learners gravitated toward the model in the texts. As multiple contemporary observers had noted, these manuals were both inexpensive and widely used. The fact that all known versions of the *Hongmao tongyong fanhua* were nearly identical, sharing some 360 of 370-380 terms, also supports the case for standardization, as even learners using different *Hongmao* editions would have been studying from essentially identical texts. The assumption of

²⁷⁸ Linguistically, pronouns are useful data points because they are such fixtures of speech and therefore tend to remain relatively stable over time.

²⁷⁹ Baker, “Historical Developments in Chinese Pidgin English,” 1989.

²⁸⁰ The fact that one sees a pronounced shift toward a grammatically *less* correct form (“My want din dāalaa” instead of “I want dīn dāalaa”) might also suggest that the change was not simply the result of natural language contact.

²⁸¹ I.e., because Cantonese—the substrate language for Chinese Pidgin English—has a single form for the first-person subject, object, and possessive pronoun.

²⁸² And in fact, upon examination, the *Hongmao* texts list *meih* (“my”)—not *àih* (“I”) or *mih* (“me”)—as the phoneticization of the first-person pronoun. *Hongmao*, British Library 15346.b.12/13.

most historians has generally been that pidgin was a limited medium that hindered more than aided communication, but if the *Hongmao* texts were as widely used as they seem to have been, and if they helped standardize spoken communication in the 1830s, then perhaps it is time for us to take a more sanguine view of pidgin's effectiveness and of the general effectiveness of everyday Sino-Western communication as a whole.

To be sure, many of CPE's "English" words were far from perfect renditions, and many would have sounded odd or even been unrecognizable upon first hearing them. For example, while numbers such as *wān*, *fō*, and *sīksih* are relatively easy to recognize as "one," "four," and "six," others such as *dilih* ("three") or *sām* ("seven") are less readily recognizable. Similar variations in comprehensibility exist throughout CPE. Terms like *sip*, ("ship"), *ting* ("thing"), *nàihfuh* ("knife"), *dākdáa* ("doctor"), and *bāabahmàhn* ("barber-man") are simple enough to figure out, but others like *yīk* ("egg") and *sōubūk* ("shoe buckle") are less straightforward.

The key, however, is that the *Hongmao* texts increased consistency. Speakers' pronunciations of some words might have sounded "off," but if they all sounded off in the same way, then it was much easier for listeners to adapt. So even if to Anglophone ears "dilih" does not sound all that much like "three," if everyone is saying "dilih" to mean "three," listeners can adapt pretty quickly. The same is arguably true for vestigial non-English terms reproduced in the *Hongmao* primers, such as "gaalàanhdeih" (i.e., "grande") to mean "big": the texts standardized the pronunciation and usage of terms, increasing consistency and improving communication.

In other words, the *Hongmao* texts provided a way out of the proverbial jungle of language contact: by streamlining and standardizing the language that foreigners and Chinese used, they increased the clarity and flexibility of everyday interaction at the same time that they made possible the spread of pidgin's use into new contexts. This underexplored history—which

suggests better communication and improving rather than deteriorating relations in many aspects of everyday life, particularly in the early nineteenth century—helps set the stage for an alternative framing of the broader, conflict-oriented narratives that we have typically told about the Opium Wars that followed in the middle of the century.

Conversations

Whether individuals learned *yiyu* from commercially available primers, from instructors in Canton, or through their own sojourns abroad, the available evidence suggests that many residents of the South China Coast attained a level of foreign language proficiency sufficient for facilitating a range of conversations and negotiations, which extended beyond the more limited contexts of barter or trade.

In maritime contexts, this often involved the communication of essential information, such as warnings about inclement weather. As one Englishman recounted of his homeward voyage,

...the Chinese, prior to our sailing, strongly predicted the weather we have experienced, and particularly cautioned us to be aware of the consequences, using their own broken English, “All man talkee Joss [i.e., “God,” from Port. *Deos*] too muchee angeree; you too muchee take care,” &c. &c.: meaning that it was the common talk of the country that the Almighty was very angry, and would in consequence punish the earth with tempests, which we must be guarded against....[T]hat their predictions were verified, the whole of the homeward-bound China Fleet have afforded serious and ample testimony of.²⁸³

Meanwhile, in domestic contexts, *yiyu* became a medium for handling a variety of household matters and home-adjacent errands. For Salem native Rebecca Kinsman, the language that she called “China English” met diverse needs. “I write a note, for instance, & call the boy and say, ‘Boy, Sendy go Missy Lichy house, wait answer’—(send this note to Mrs. Richie and

²⁸³ Thomas Lynn, *Star Tables, Number 1, for the Year 1822, for more readily ascertaining the Latitude and Longitude at Sea during the Night* (London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, & Allen, 1821), 143.

wait for answer”),” Kinsman offered as an example in a letter to her family. Another example: “The boy has just come in, and I said to him, ‘Speaky that cook, make custard pudding children’s dinner, all same same gentleman’s dinner—Savy?’ to which he answers affirmatively, ‘Savy’—(I understand),” using a pidgin term derived from the Portuguese *saber*, meaning “to know.”²⁸⁴ Although Kinsman admitted that speaking “China English” was an adjustment for her at first, her writings suggest that it was a more than capable medium for household management.²⁸⁵

In other instances, pidgin facilitated everyday commiserations and exchanges that built rapport between foreigners and locals.

“Well, Houqua,” you would say on some visit, “hav got news to day?”
“Hav got too muchee bad news,” he would reply; “Hwang Ho [the Yellow River] hav spilum too muchee.”
“Man-ta-le [official; i.e., “Mandarin”] hav come see you?”
“He no come see my, he sendee come one pice ‘chop.’” He come to-mollo. He wantchee my two-lac [200,000] dollar.”
“You pay he how much?”
“My pay he fitty, sikky tousand so.”
“But s’pose he no contentee?”
“S’pose he, No. 1, no contentee, my pay he one lac [100,000].”²⁸⁶

This dialogue not only illustrates CPE’s capacity to convey factual information about a local official’s visit to Houqua but also highlights the camaraderie that Houqua felt with his foreign interlocutor, expressed through an inside joke between the two men about how much the Hong merchant plans to contribute to Yellow River flood relief. At the same time, Houqua’s intention to negotiate his contribution also speaks to the flexibility with which Chinese commercial actors

²⁸⁴ “Letters of Rebecca Chase Kinsman to Her Family in Salem,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 86 (1950): 35.

²⁸⁵ Some European and American children in Macao grew up speaking what their mothers called “China English” or “Macao Portuguese” as a result of their mixed linguistic environments, influenced not just by the native languages of their parents but also the pidgins and patois variants employed by the domestic servants with whom they had regular contact. BA: Mss.L556, “Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis,” Box 1, No. 52, 29 November 1834.

²⁸⁶ Hunter, *The ‘Fan Kwae’ at Canton before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1882; reprint, Taipei: Ch’eng-wen Publishing Co., 1970), 37.

endeavored with approach their interactions with local officials: as in their interactions with foreigners, compromise was the guiding principle of the day.

In still other instances, although most Chinese only learned to speak *yiyu*, some learned to write it as well. The ability to recognize and differentiate Latin letters had long been a useful skill in trade, as EIC, VOC, and other company logos and trademarks testified to the quality and trustworthiness of particular goods, and individual Chinese shopkeepers likewise adopted the practice of branding their merchandise with random assortments of letters.²⁸⁷ Local opium traffickers learned to speak and read English (or became traffickers in the first place because they knew English, as seen in the case of Zhang Yahua above), and some even exchanged letters in English to check on opium prices.²⁸⁸ Other Chinese intermediaries learned enough English to maintain detailed correspondence with Western merchants even long after they left China:²⁸⁹

To John P. Cushing on December 18, 1835:

Sir

I last arrived at home on 7th day of Aug, + am find my family well, but my poor Father; + my wife been sick befor [sic] I get home. I have nothing New to write only one danger befor [sic] we get Chines [sic] 2 day befor we made Lintian [sic] was a great Tifong blew badly destroy great many things on our country was we Lucky see our country again.

Thank God for that. I was recived [sic] a letter from you on 6th day November + am with delighted thank you. I give them Chines [sic] of your regard + they return to you all the same but Cum[qua?] I see him not since I get Canton. Those things which you write me to get was partly ready I may send home to you before this time. But my father sick continue send me home at the country, about 80 miles from Canton. Therefore in [*I cannot go*] Canton to do any thing at all. Father was wrote me on the same day I received your letter. I am obliged go home for his acct + Leave every thing at Canton. I stay country from that time to this to take care of Father but his sickness was worst + worst of every day, poor Father he die on 13 of day of December—he didn [sic] take a Glass 2 or 3 days before he part this World—for your seek; I spined [sic] good silk mony [sic] From Father sick to his death, after [*I*] went up Canton I learn Mr. W. V[?] Snow come to this country take Amarica [sic] Council's place + am hope you will write to him to take me

²⁸⁷ Elijah Coleman Bridgman, *A Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* (Macao: S. Wells Williams, 1839), 242.

²⁸⁸ FHA: 04-01-01-0787-019. DG18. “...諳習夷語夷字間通書信查詢烟價。”

²⁸⁹ On occasion, Chinese merchants with a high degree of European-language proficiency maintained written correspondence with their trade partners in European languages, but this was not the norm. For one example, see Poankeequa's letter in Spanish to the EIC in BL: IOR/E/1/49 Miscellaneous Letters Received 1767.

for his compradore—or write to the Amarecan [sic] gentlemen of my Character. I shall be very much oblige [sic], I service to Mr. John M Forbes at Messrs. Russell + Co if you want any more thing. Hope you will write me again. I will do it for with great pleasure. I have 6 of ½ chest young hyson Tea left at Mr. John C. Brown for sale hope you will till [sic] him send me amt after he was sale the goods.-----
Please give my best remember of your Family----also I do think of your son more than any body the world.
I hope that I shall have pleasour [sic] see him again about 2 years.
Your Humble servant
Chutong Ahoo

We thus can see a range of language abilities, exercised in a variety of contexts, on the South China Coast, which like countless other frontier entrepots around the world was home to a diverse array of translingual and transcultural interactions. Among the varied contents that Chutang Ahoo discusses in his letter, particularly noteworthy is his request for Cushing to recommend him to other American merchants, which is a thematic thread that we will pick up again in later chapters when we turn to considering the importance of reputation and interpersonal connections in shaping transnational conflict resolution in the delta.

Speaking Like Celestials

This chapter's study of transnational language practices also raises new questions about historians' understanding of Qing attitudes toward Chinese language learning by foreigners. While Westerners' acquisition of Chinese was much more limited in scope and context than Chinese people's learning of *yiyu*, for the sake of completeness let me briefly discuss it here. The scholarly consensus has long been that the Qing state forbade Europeans and Americans from learning Chinese, an impression that was cemented in the nineteenth-century imagination through the intermittent apprehension of Chinese instructors as well as, in some cases, Chinese-speaking European interpreters who overstepped prescribed bounds. In one prominent case in 1759, for example, an East India Company interpreter named James Flint was seized and

incarcerated for three years after he circumvented standard communication channels in Canton and sailed up the Chinese coast to Tianjin to file a direct petition to the Qianlong emperor. In addition to seizing Flint, Qing officials went to significant lengths to punish Flint's Chinese helpers, publicly executing a Sichuanese merchant who had assisted Flint in writing the petition and seizing and likewise executing a Batavia-based Fujianese translator who had helped edit the document, despite the latter's geographical remove from Qing territory. More than half a century later, the aftershocks of the so-called Flint Affair continued to reverberate in the minds of Sinologists such as Robert Morrison, who admitted in an 1814 letter to the British Select Committee that "the duties of Chinese Translator are attended with considerable personal hazard," as demonstrated by instances where Chinese officials "have persecuted and revenged themselves on the individual translator; the treatment of Mr. Flint...[is but one case which occurs] to my recollection."²⁹⁰ Together with other well-known instances in which native Chinese teachers were seized and tortured by local officials, such cases have cemented the historiographical view that the Qing state banned foreigners from learning Chinese.

In practice, however, the situation was more muddled, and foreigners' learning of Chinese was treated like many other nominal offenses under Qing law: officially verboten, but in general often tolerated unless it was accompanied by concurrent transgressions that were more directly problematic in the eyes of the state, such as opium smuggling or the promulgating of heterodox ideologies. Language learning alone was rarely enough to merit punishment, and Chinese officials' disapprobation of foreign language learning can be better attributed to the associated byproducts of such behavior—such as increased opium smuggling or missionary activities—than to any inherent hostility toward translingual engagement itself. In this sense,

²⁹⁰ Eliza Armstrong Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839), 421.

Qing attitudes toward foreigners' learning of Chinese were similar to their attitudes toward Chinese people's learning of *yiyu*, which officials did not suppress unless it was accompanied by other problematic behavior.

As evidence of the Qing state's default ambivalence toward foreign language learning in isolation, consider the experience of Guo Tingzhu, a fifty-one-year-old Ningbo man who in 1793 unexpectedly found himself hauled before Qing authorities under suspicion of having enticed foreign merchants to sail up the Chinese coast to trade at Ningbo instead of Canton. Although the interrogating officials' focus was on the violation of trade regulations that had occurred (since the premise of the Canton system of trade was that all foreign maritime trade should take place at Canton and not elsewhere), a particular point of contention was Guo's alleged proficiency in *yiyu*, which court interrogators highlighted as further evidence of his wrongdoing.

Guo found this sudden scrutiny puzzling. As he explained, his deceased father—not he himself—was the one who spoke *yiyu* and had had dealings with foreigners, and his own contact with Europeans had been limited, not only in the past in the 1750s but also now in 1793:

...My father worked formerly as a comprador in Guangdong, but I was young and did not know the details. In 1755, when foreigners came to Ningbo, I was only twelve years old and did not leave the house, nor did I see or get to know any English foreigners. My father previously transacted with foreigners in Ningbo; this matter is known to everyone in our village. Moreover, my father's shop and financial accounts were all left in arrears as a result of the foreign merchants...after which the English ships never came again to Ningbo, and my father never returned to Guangdong, merely staying around Suzhou and doing some local trading. He definitely did not exchange letters with the foreign merchants.

Although my father and I did learn some foreign speech in the past, it was just a few phrases. It's been twenty years since my father passed away...and I've basically forgotten all the [English] that I learned. Plus, I don't even know the affairs of business, so how could I have had any dealings with foreigners?²⁹¹

²⁹¹ FHA: JJC SYD, QL58.10.29, 1.

As Guo emphasized, the only reason he had learned any *yiyu* at all was through overhearing his father practice the foreigners' language during Guo's childhood, but what he had picked up amounted to "no more than chitchat." Moreover, his father stopped trading with foreigners nearly forty years ago and at the time of the court's inquest had been dead for two decades, so why now—especially when the elder Guo's past commercial dealings in Guangdong and Ningbo had been no secret—did the state suddenly care so much about his childhood contact with the foreigners' language?

The fact that Guo's and his father's knowledge of *yiyu* could have been tolerated for four decades but come under scrutiny the moment foreign merchants began circumventing Qing trading regulations and attempting to trade farther up the coast, underscores the extent to which the state's concerns centered around common associated byproducts of *yiyu* learning rather than such language acquisition itself. At the same time, the Qing state's general penchant for decentralized governance notwithstanding, Guo's experience also showcases the far reach of the state, spatially and temporally, through its ability to put its foot down and care about relative minutiae when authorities decided to concentrate their gaze.

Officials paid similar attention to the putative links between foreigners' learning of Chinese and their behavior. Some Qing commentators in fact readily admitted that foreigners could attain high levels of proficiency, although they took pains to downplay the implications thereof when reporting to their higher-ups. In 1816, the Qing court conducted what can be best described as a background check on George Thomas Staunton, then chief of the EIC factory at Canton and one of the West's foremost Sinologists of the era. As a boy, Staunton had studied Chinese alongside John Barrow, the former geographer and eventual Admiralty official who wound up coordinating Arung and Asum's return from London to China after the death of

Napoleon. In 1792, at the age of twelve, Staunton had traveled to China as part of the Macartney mission to the Qianlong emperor, as his father was secretary to the British mission. Staunton's Chinese improved rapidly during this mission, and he even had the opportunity to showcase his skills during the British embassy's audience with Qianlong, when the emperor asked the boy to speak a few words. After a few years back in England, Staunton returned to Canton as a young man and began working for the East India Company in various capacities starting in 1798. It was in this context that he caught the renewed attention of Qing officials.

Rather than emphasize Staunton's considerable fluency in Chinese and thus risk drawing the scrutiny of the Qing court, the report's compiler downplayed Staunton's remarkability and emphasized that despite his language abilities, he had not overstepped normative bounds. As the official summarized:

...he can speak crude Chinese and also knows how to write Chinese characters, but he is not at all well versed in painting. It is not unusual for outer *yi* who have traded in Guangdong for many years to be able to speak some Chinese and write Chinese characters, and Staunton is not the only one. Staunton's stay in Guangdong for many years has not reached the point of inappropriateness, and he has not incited any unrest or suspicious activities.²⁹²

Staunton's reported lack of expertise in painting and calligraphy also points to how Qing officials often oscillated between commending and distrusting Westerners' assimilation into Chinese culture. In broad strokes, officials' attitudes could be described as a combination of magnanimity, with respect to their indulgence of foreigners' interest in learning from Chinese culture, and wariness, in their recognition of the risks involved when such learning led foreigners to build close ties with members of the local population, who Qing officials believed could be easily misled.²⁹³

²⁹² Royal Asiatic Society Archives, GB 891 SC1/3.

²⁹³ This in turn raises bigger questions about Qing officialdom's treatment of language proficiency as a proxy for Chineseness, and the need that officials felt to regulate the bounds of Chineseness and maintain a meaningful Hua-

Although Qing officials were hazy on the particulars, they also maintained peripheral awareness of Western efforts to employ sites and personnel in Southeast Asia for the purpose of learning Chinese. As the *Haiguo Tuzhi* (1843) noted, “In some year [unknown to the author], the British established [in Malacca] an Anglo-Chinese school, where some English reside and learn Chinese characters, and they also established a school in Singapore, where some Americans reside and learn Chinese characters...with people from Fujian and Guangdong as teachers.”²⁹⁴ In contrast to reports of foreign merchants or local Chinese who learned to speak a basic level of their counterparts’ languages, it is worth noting that the emphasis here was on the fact that these foreigners were learning not spoken Chinese but Chinese characters (*xue hanzi* 學漢字), which represented a level of acculturation that Chinese literati had traditionally marked as distinct. Some commentators attributed such efforts to foreigners’ “admiration for Chinese culture,” developed from their prolonged stays in South China, but the real reasons—whether for merchants or for the missionaries who prepared for China missions in Southeast Asia—tended to be more pragmatic.²⁹⁵

For at least one early nineteenth-century Guangzhou prefect, foreigners’ learning of Chinese was even something to be encouraged, as long as it was pursued and expressed in an appropriate manner. He wrote:

Since foreigners don’t know Chinese characters [*hanzi* 漢字], they may use foreign letters [*yizi* 夷字]. This deserves particular sympathy. Now...[it appears that some] foreigners are willing to learn to write Chinese characters. Previously foreigners often made reports in Chinese. I grant them permission to write petitions in Chinese, [but] they should write in clear and lucid characters; their characters cannot be sloppy (*liaocao* 潦

Yi distinction, as was evident in contacts zones such as the Southwest, where the regulation of interactions between Chinese migrant-settlers and Miao indigenes was a pressing issue; but detailed exploration of this topic lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.

²⁹⁴ HGTZ, *juan* 53. The Anglo-Chinese College (*Ying Hua shuyuan* 英華書院) was founded in Malacca in 1818 by Robert Morrison and William Milne, the two first Protestant missionaries sent to China. In 1843 the school relocated to Hong Kong.

²⁹⁵ HGTZ, *juan* 53. 而英吉利商粵久，效慕華風，多通漢文，書漢字，蓋自順治來。

草). Official letters should be sealed with the chops of the foreign companies, and there is no need for them to be labeled with foreign letters.²⁹⁶

This prefect's attention to the quality of foreign petition writers' calligraphy echoes investigators' emphasis on Staunton's lack of expertise in painting and suggests that Chinese officials saw foreigners' acquisition of Chinese language through a lens of cultural gatekeeping with symbolic significance beyond the practical utility of improved communication.

Foreigners' acquisition of basic Chinese language skills, although unusual, was not limited to missionaries and the professional interpreters of the various East India companies.²⁹⁷ Adopting the mantle of amateur linguist, some of the more enterprising foreign merchants wrote their own phonetic guides to Chinese numbers or common words alongside the conversion tables they compiled for Chinese and European currencies, weights, and measures, and a handful made earnest efforts to learn the rudiments of the language.²⁹⁸ As commercial intercourse expanded, Western sailors began picking up some Chinese, too. For example, in July of 1852, a Chinese ship's cook named Ho Yaou Tou testified in English criminal court that an Irish seaman had approached him near the London Docks and was able to ask in intelligible Chinese, "My friend, have you got any money?" before assaulting him and stealing his pocket watch, which the Irishman had seen Ho check moments before.²⁹⁹ To be sure, Westerners' learning of Chinese was

²⁹⁶ Royal Asiatic Society, SC1/1.

²⁹⁷ Portuguese authorities in Macao also recruited and trained local Portuguese children to serve as in-house interpreters, although their numbers were limited. AHM: cx. 20, doc. 21.

²⁹⁸ Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Samuel Coverly: Trading memoranda, GBR/0012/MS Add.9639, ff. 6-7; Samuel Ward, "A Chinese dictionary by Col. Sam.I Ward" (1800), RB243: <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:583600/>. For discussion of another early Chinese dictionary by a Western merchant, Benjamin Bowen Carter's *Xiuxiang hongmao fanzi* 繡像紅毛番字, see also Man Shun Yeung, *An American Pioneer of Chinese Studies in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Benjamin Bowen Carter as an Agent of Global Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 68-159.

²⁹⁹ *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18520705-726, 5 July 1852 trial of Cornelius M'Carthy. Although records of this case provide no further details about M'Carthy's Chinese language abilities, the testimony of a witness, who stood only a yard away and reported that she "did not understand anything that was said," lends credibility to Ho's assertion that the Irishman approached him in Chinese rather than English.

far less common than Chinese people's learning of English, and most Westerners' proficiency in Chinese remained limited. Outside of missionaries' proselytizing purposes and the specific interpretational needs of the East India companies, Europeans and Americans simply had little incentive to learn Chinese, especially with many locals more than happy to learn *yiyu*, and those foreigners who did apply themselves to studying Cantonese, Mandarin, or Fukienese rarely went beyond learning a few polite greetings or other courtesy phrases for small talk with their trading partners. Nonetheless, the fact that even a random Irish seaman could gain rudimentary levels of proficiency—without the benefit of full immersion in the target language (compared to what Chinese sailors enjoyed during their multi-month tenures on foreign ships and their more prolonged sojourns in Western cities)—speaks to the organic consequences of increasing global contact.³⁰⁰

Conclusion

Although John Nicol may have been surprised upon reaching China to discover that many locals spoke English, he should not have been. Learning *yiyu* was simply good business. As one Chinese servant-turned-shopkeeper explained to American doctor Benjamin Ball in 1848, “a Chinaman who speaks both English and Chinese can make ‘plenty money’ in China.”³⁰¹

This shopkeeper's candid admission found itself echoed in the actions of Chinese sojourners elsewhere as well, as they capitalized on opportunities to make “plenty money” in other translingual contact zones, too. Among diasporic Chinese communities in British India, for

³⁰⁰ Increasing language contact also gave rise to unique translingual neologisms, as in one English newspaper's waggish 1837 description of a Canton shop, once “extensively engaged in the opium trade,” which as a result of suppression efforts was “now *funged*—or sealed up” (from Cantonese *fūng* 封 or Mandarin *fēng*, meaning “seal”). *Canton Register* 10:2 (1837): 6.

³⁰¹ Benjamin L. Ball, *Rambles in Eastern Asia, Including China and Manila, during Several Years' Residence* (Boston: J. French, 1855), 91.

example, the spread of English-language newspapers in the late eighteenth century provided itinerant entrepreneurs with new avenues for advertising their services and differentiating themselves from both their Chinese peers and local Indian competitors. Within just a few weeks of the publication of the inaugural issue of the *Calcutta Gazette* in 1784, Chinese businessmen were already placing English-language advertisements for their services, such as one by a man named “Tom Fatt”—who like many sojourners wore multiple hats, in his case simultaneously as a rum distiller, sugar refiner, cabinetmaker, and gardener—and on this occasion offered to clean water tanks, alongside a boast “that he can finish the work quicker than any Bengal people.”³⁰²

Meanwhile, looking beyond European *yi*yu, Chinese people also maintained a robust tradition of translingual engagement with other non-Sinitic languages closer to home. On China’s maritime frontier, this included the early modern practice of *bitan* 筆談 (Jap. *hitsudan*) or “brushtalk,” which employed Chinese characters as a *scripta franca* in a variety of both official and non-official contexts, including diplomatic communications between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean parties, transmission of Buddhist sutras, and communications with shipwrecked sailors on the peripheries of the East China Sea. Although inhabitants of the three East Asian countries spoke linguistically disparate languages, many people’s shared ability to read classical Chinese meant that to a limited extent, the logographic rather than alphabetic nature of written characters allowed speakers of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese to circumvent the need for translation in certain contexts. Meanwhile, on the Qing empire’s Inner Asian and Southwest frontiers, state-organized multilingual corps, in collaboration with indigenous informants, were active in gathering linguistic and ethnographic information from frontier regions. As growing internal migration into Qing borderlands brought newcomers and

³⁰² *The Calcutta Gazette; or, Oriental Advertiser*, 1 April 1784, p. 8.

indigenous inhabitants into closer contact, translingual brokerage and mediation became increasingly normal facts of life.

For many individuals navigating these contact zones, pragmatic opportunity-seeking was what drove these behaviors. People were both willing and increasingly able to engage translingually, and much as many people do today, many residents of China's coasts learned foreign languages with purpose. As early as the 1760s, foreign commentators were lauding Chinese cooks for their translingual and transcultural abilities, with one observer noting that they "could speak the English language pretty well" and, furthermore, "dressed our victuals after the English manner as well and as expeditiously as our own cooks."³⁰³ Even Commissioner Lin Zexu 林則徐 (1785-1850), the Qing official famous for clamping down on opium smuggling and helping precipitate the first Opium War, "had a vocabulary of foreign languages," observed Scottish trader James Matheson, and during interrogations of suspected opium smugglers would punctuate his speech "by the occasional use of an English or Portuguese word."³⁰⁴ A rudimentary level of English ability was fairly widespread—much more so than historians have assumed, and enough to have had a meaningful impact on the dynamics and contours of Sino-Western communication and interaction. And on the upper bound, a small number of individuals even commanded quite excellent levels of spoken, and sometimes written, English.

Was everyone proficient in English (or Portuguese)? Of course not—vide, for instance, the peasants whom Yung Wing encountered as a boy in Nam Ping, who were so intrigued by his recitation of the alphabet that they gifted him some rice in return. But for those Chinese people

³⁰³ Charles Frederick Noble, *A Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748; Containing an Account of the Islands of St. Helena and Java, of the City of Batavia, of the Government and Political Conduct of the Dutch, of the Empire of China, with a Particular Description of Canton: and of Religious Ceremonies, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants* (London: Printed for T. Becket and P.A. Dehondt; and T. Durham, 1762), 224.

³⁰⁴ Letter from James Matheson to William Jardine, 1 May 1839, MS JM/C5/4, Jardine Matheson & Company Archives, Cambridge University Library.

who had regular contact with foreigners, they had clear incentives to learn *yiyu*, and as outlined in this chapter, many of them availed themselves of opportunities to do so. When we write the social history of Sino-Western relations, these are the people we should be placing front and center: those individuals who had the most frequent and substantive interactions with their counterparts from the West, yet who rarely feature more than in passing in our narratives.

One of history's most enduring tropes about the nineteenth-century encounter between China and the West—and arguably about many other episodes of transnational encounter between empires and societies elsewhere in the world—has been that translingual communication and cross-cultural understanding were poor, and misunderstandings frequent. When viewed in the broadest of strokes, as an encounter between states or, more polemically, as what some scholars have termed a “clash of civilizations,” there is a grain of truth in this characterization: relations between late imperial Chinese bureaucrats and the gunboat diplomats of the nineteenth-century West were indeed frictionous, and contrasting assumptions, prerogatives, and political-economic calculations played no small part in shaping the very real conflicts that transpired.³⁰⁵ However, when considered more granularly—as an encounter between thousands of individual people, played out day after day on a globalizing stage that stretched from the South China Coast to distant imperial entrepôts and back again—the historical picture is much more muddled. Although the assumptions, prerogatives, and political-economic calculations of states and individuals often overlap, they rarely do so completely, and it is in the spread between the priorities of states and the priorities of individuals that some of the most dynamic motivators of historical change can be found. This distinction has all too often been lost in histories of the

³⁰⁵ For representative formulations of this thesis as they pertain to China, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Lydia Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

South China Coast, where even as Chinese and Western states literally and metaphorically did not always speak the same language, the conversations of individuals on the ground—however discordant they might have sounded to outside observers—were often closely aligned in intent and meaning.

CHAPTER THREE

Making Money, Not War: Habitual Opportunism and Grassroots Compromise

“Show a Chinaman a dollar and he will never rest till he gets it, for as far as worshipping money goes, they may be truly called the Yankees of the East.”³⁰⁶

—Nathaniel Ames, British mariner, 1830

“The morality of the Cantonese is rather low....Not only do the common people desire to obtain money and do all they can to get it, but the gentry talk of nothing else but money.”³⁰⁷

—Wu Xiongguang, Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, 1807

“Nobody goes to the Indies except to make his fortune.”³⁰⁸

—Jacob Gotfried Haafner, Dutch mariner, 1806

In the spring of 1818, a rumor began circulating among British authorities on St. Helena that transiting Chinese sailors were helping Napoleon smuggle letters to Europe, despite an embargo on the former emperor’s communications with the Continent. As the president of the EIC Select Committee at Canton, James Brabazon Urmston, reported to St. Helena’s garrison commander,

[A] Chinese now on board the *Royal George* declares that Bonaparte last year succeeded by a bribe in getting letters conveyed from Longwood through some Chinese who were working in the grounds—And that letters were transmitted to England, between the soles of the Chinamen’s shoes—by some of the Chinamen on board the ships passing St. Helena last year....The Chinese who asserts this, says he casually heard it, from some Chinese in England just before he landed from England last April.³⁰⁹

Urmston went on to explain that “[his] friends the Chinese...will undertake anything for money,” and where the possibility of pecuniary gain was concerned, island authorities would do well to

³⁰⁶ Nathaniel Ames, *A Mariner’s Sketches* (Providence: Cory, Marshall and Hammond, 1830), 117.

³⁰⁷ *Qingdai waijiao shiliao: Jiaqing chao* 清代外交史料: 清嘉慶 (Beiping: Gugong bowuyuan, 1932), vol. 2, 8a-9a.

³⁰⁸ Jacob Gotfried Haafner, *Lotgevallen op eene reize van Madras over Tranquebaar naar het eiland Ceilon* (Haarlem: A. Loosje, 1806), 11.

³⁰⁹ BL: Add MS 20228, ff. 53-54, letter from James B. Urmston to Thomas Reade, 4 Dec 1817. See also BL: Add MS 20120, ff. 309-310.

put nothing past the sojourning sailors, indentured laborers, and artisans who had formed a semi-permanent establishment on St. Helena.³¹⁰

Urmston's note alarmed colonial administrators, who were tasked with not just safeguarding Napoleon but also curating the flow of information surrounding his conditions in exile. Napoleon's continued ability to communicate with European outlets had long confounded his guardians. British authorities had already dismissed his personal physician and several attachés for their roles in leaking sensitive details to the European press, and now the island's population of some six hundred Chinese men, too, came under heightened scrutiny, with Urmston repeating his assertion a few months later even as he continued coordinating the transfer of more Chinese cooks and laborers from the Pearl River Delta to St. Helena.³¹¹

Despite the efforts of island authorities, however, no concrete culprits could be identified, and surviving sources make it impossible today to establish for certain whether sojourning Chinese sailors really did help Napoleon smuggle letters to Europe "between the soles of [their] shoes."³¹² Nonetheless, beyond merely highlighting specific British anxieties surrounding Napoleon's safekeeping, the readiness of colonial administrators to lend credence to such allegations also speaks to their broader impression of Chinese people's inclination to "undertake anything for money"—no matter the task, no matter the location, under even the most niche of circumstances.

Perceptions that Chinese migrants and coastal inhabitants possessed a deep and perhaps even singular affinity for pecuniary accumulation were widespread in the Western imagination of

³¹⁰ BL: Add MS 20228, ff. 53-54, letter from James B. Urmston to Thomas Reade, 4 Dec 1817.

³¹¹ BL: Add MS 20122, f. 131, letter from James B. Urmston to Hudson Lowe, 18 April 1818.

³¹² Napoleon was known to have a soft spot for his "Chinese domestics," who had close access to him at a time when Napoleon's suspicions led him to try and keep British servants and functionaries at arm's length.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³¹³ “There is nothing be it of what nature it will, clean or dirty, honest or dishonest...which a Chinese will not readily do for money,” pronounced English botanist and explorer Sir Joseph Banks after his travels through the Malay Archipelago. “[T]hey work diligently and laboriously, and loth to lose sight of their main point, money getting.”³¹⁴ These assertions parallel observations that we have seen elsewhere, such as Rebecca Kinsman’s lament in Chapter 2 that some Chinese students in missionary schools felt pressured by their families to learn *yiyu* primarily for the sake of “mak[ing] it profitable in earning *money*, the God of their idolatry.”³¹⁵

Although such stereotypes about cupidity’s prevalence in Chinese communities should be taken with a grain of salt, they also reflect at least a grain of truth. As a general rule, significant economic insecurity characterized the lives of the peasant smallholders, urban laborers, boatpeople, and aspiring Sino-Western intermediaries who crowded around Canton’s environs.³¹⁶ Under such precarious conditions of subsistence, it is unsurprising that profit-seeking behaviors should have played an important role in the lives of ordinary Chinese people, and therefore we should not downplay the extent to which prospects of monetary gain shaped individuals’ practical calculus. These structural pressures operated beyond the Pearl River Delta, too. After all, the search for improved economic prospects was the primary driver that had led Tom Jack and his fellow sojourners to leave the South China Coast in the first place, just as it was the motivation that drew so many local inhabitants to take advantage of opportunities

³¹³ Chinese commercial prowess was similarly reputed, and in the minds of European adventurers of the eighteenth century, Chinese merchants shared Europeans’ mantle as the quintessential traders of the early modern world. See, e.g., the comparisons in NLS: RCLOS MS 959.984 DAL, “Mr. Dalrymple’s account: Fort St. George, April 1763.”

³¹⁴ Joseph Banks, “The Endeavour Journal of Sir Joseph Banks,” State Library of New South Wales, Series 03: Joseph Banks - Endeavour journal, 25 August 1768 - 12 July 1771, ref. 446937. Project Gutenberg, 2005, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0501141h.html>. Vol. 2, 1770 December 31, “Some Account of Batavia.”

³¹⁵ “The Daily Life of Mrs. Nathaniel Kinsman in Macao, China. Excerpts from Letters of 1845.” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 87 (1951): 122.

³¹⁶ Insert statistic.

created by the growing foreign presence in the Pearl River Delta (which presence in turn was also grounded in economic incentives).³¹⁷ While the precepts of Mammon were by no means unique to late imperial China, the effects of people's acquisitive impulses were in any case conspicuous in everyday Chinese life—and perhaps especially so in ordinary people's interactions with foreigners—so we should incorporate them proportionately into our historical explanations.³¹⁸

This chapter teases out the practical implications of ordinary people's willingness to go to great lengths for pecuniary gain, with particular attention on how such attitudes informed everyday situations of conflict and problem solving on the South China Coast. Social behaviors that nineteenth-century observers attributed to Chinese people's presumed moral turpitude and cupidity are instead best thought of as products of what I call habitual opportunism. In modern usage, "opportunism" holds a negative connotation, but at its root the word simply refers to the timely seizure of opportunities; it is in this sense that I use it here. By "habitual opportunism" I mean the regular tendency for individuals to take advantage of circumstances that could benefit their economic wellbeing.

Habitual opportunism offers a productive lens through which to view a range of activities that were central features of Sino-Western interaction in late imperial China, including economic

³¹⁷ Money has long held a prominent place in Chinese culture. On the pervasiveness of money in daily life and the popular imagination since the late Ming, see Richard Von Glahn, "The Enchantment of Wealth: The God Wutong in the Social History of Jiangnan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51:2 (Dec. 1991): 651-714. On the performance of new economic imaginaries in late imperial China, see also Ariel Fox, *The Cornucopian Stage: Performing Commerce in Early Modern China*.

³¹⁸ Chinese people like Tom Jack and his fellows really *were* willing to go to great lengths for money—but of course so, too, were most ordinary people elsewhere. In light of the general precarity that characterized the lives of non-elite peoples around the globe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, another way to frame the commercial activities of men like Tom Jack and women like Woman Kwok would be to say that most scholars interested in better understanding the lives of historical actors in the early modern and modernizing worlds, whether in China or outside it, could probably benefit from better recognizing the extent to which economic incentives were powerful, universal motivators that shaped a range of behaviors.

migration and sojourning, both large- and small-scale commercial speculations, various kinds of brokerage, opium trafficking, and work in the sex industry, among others. It also helps us better appreciate how the economic impulses and incentives that underlay such behaviors could motivate both problem-solving and conflictual tendencies. At times, a desire to “undertake anything for money” could drive conflict, through encouraging one-off exploitations such as theft or grift. At other times, it could also incentive active problem solving and cooperation, especially when the involved parties faced the prospect of continuing, iterative interaction over the span of weeks, months, or even years.³¹⁹ Paying closer attention to the economic incentives and motivations at play in a range of Sino-Western interchanges helps us arrive at a deeper understanding of how routine profit-maximizing tendencies created the conditions for both the outbreak and the resolution of everyday conflicts. In particular, it underscores the fact that compromise was often simply good business practice, and that efforts to maximize individual gain often yielded an increased willingness to flexibly resolve matters before they escalated. For the majority of the entrepreneurial, adaptable individuals who made their living at the intersection of the Chinese and foreign worlds in the Pearl River Delta and beyond, it was better to make money, not war.

Habitual Opportunists

Traditional Chinese society was divided into four classes (*shinonggongshang* 士農工商): gentry, peasants, artisans and craftsmen, and merchants. Merchants stood at the nominal bottom

³¹⁹ Common examples of opportunistic crime include dishonest salesmanship and small-time swindles ranging from the forgery of tax receipts or travel papers to outright impersonations. Mark McNicholas, *Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China Popular Deceptions and the High Qing State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016). Impersonation was of course also common elsewhere in the early modern world. For one prominent example, one need look no further than Natalie Zemon Davis’s classic *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

of this social hierarchy, but in practice, the extensive commercialization of society by the late imperial period had blurred these distinctions, and commercial operations were important to the lives of virtually all people regardless of station. Gentry families leveraged social and economic capital to build sprawling business networks, peasants speculated in cash crops such as mulberries and tobacco, and itinerant artisans sold their labor to willing bidders in China and beyond, before many of them went on to invest their earnings in commercial enterprises of their own.

Generally speaking, Chinese individuals took a flexible approach to their economic undertakings. This was especially true for the poorest and most marginalized members of society, who due to their uncertain financial footing were among those individuals particularly likely to gravitate toward new opportunities such as employment as sailors or coolies in the service of foreigners. We have already seen glimpses of such individuals' habitual opportunism at work, not only in sojourners' decisions to enter foreign employment but also in their behaviors while abroad, through activities such as their selling of their rations and guernsey jackets or their smuggling of alcohol onto China-bound ships to sell to European crewmates.³²⁰ The plucky seaman from the *Princess Amelia* who snuck overboard to swim after some albatrosses, too, was a kind of opportunist, as were the Chinese missionary students who parlayed their English skills

³²⁰ As one scholar of the Chinese junk trade with Siam wrote of the Chinese sailors who worked those routes, "crew members of a Chinese junk were merchants first and sailors second." A similar sentiment applies here, although as Matthias van Rossum has argued, seamen's interest in petty trading does not necessarily make Chinese sailors different from European ones—who likewise routinely conducted private trade on the side, with officers often receiving a freight allowance and ordinary seamen more surreptitiously collecting saleable items such as ginseng during stopovers—nor should it undermine the importance of maritime work as a form of wage labor *alongside* the commercial opportunities that such work provided. Jennifer W. Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 99; van Rossum, "Werkers van de wereld: Globalisering, maritieme arbeidsmarkten en de verhouding tussen Aziaten en Europeanen in dienst van de VOC," Ph.D. diss. (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2013), 97-98. During a stopover on shore in Prince William Sound, for example, John Nicol and the ship's quartermaster discovered and collected a large quantity of snakeroot, which they concealed from their companions and sold at Whampoa. Nicol, *Life and Adventures*, 92.

into work as trading house clerks or traders in their own right. As Chapter 1 also highlighted, while a minority of Chinese sailors did treat foreign maritime work as a viable long-term career, many more treated it as a means to further opportunities rather than an end in and of itself.³²¹ When Chinese sojourners traveled abroad in pursuit of economic opportunities, they tended to pursue these endeavors with an open mind, and many were accustomed to segueing from one opportunity to another. This tendency for Chinese sojourners to use one opportunity as a stepping stone for another was true in other contexts as well, such as when coolies engaged to work as tea planters in Brazil.

In 1815, the German naturalist and explorer Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied (1782-1867) led a pioneering expedition to southeastern Brazil to study the region's natural history and indigenous peoples. Having obtained a leave of absence from the Prussian army after nearly a decade of military service during the Napoleonic Wars, the former pupil of Alexander von Humboldt spent two years collecting specimens of South American flora and fauna and writing detailed ethnographies of local inhabitants. The resulting album, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* ("Journey to Brazil in the Years 1815 to 1817"), extended the European ethnographic gaze into the heart of the Latin American jungle and became recognized as one of the era's most significant contributions to global knowledge of Brazil.

While touring plantations on the banks of the Itanhém (Alcobaça) River, Maximilian observed among the local inhabitants the presence of "nine Chinese," remnants of the labor force recruited by the Portuguese government to cultivate tea in Rio in 1814. Most of the original laborers had by this time relocated to Caravelas or dispersed elsewhere throughout the greater

³²¹ For evidence of the relative proportion of Chinese sailors who treated maritime work as a long-term endeavor versus those who only engaged in it on a short-term basis, see Chapter 1, p. 66, f. 183.

Bahia region, and one of these nine had converted to Christianity and married a young indigenous woman. Maximilian reported that all nine of the Chinese, however, “maintained the customs of their homeland,” including holiday celebrations and dietary habits, and “they spoke to us in very broken Portuguese of their beloved homeland, and how it was so much better there than in Brazil.”³²²

Figure 6. Chinese Fishing along the Itanhém River. “Fischender Chinese am Fluss Alcobassa. Januar, 1816.” Thomas Ender.³²³



As further conversations made clear, the promise of gainful employment in tea cultivation was not the only enticement that had drawn these sojourners to Brazil. Many of the men had come prepared for alternative career paths. During one of Maximilian’s visits to the hut where the nine Chinese laborers congregated, the men “opened for us their chests, in which they

³²² Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied, *Reise Nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt: Heinrich Ludwig Brönnner, 1820), 244.

³²³ Despite these Chinese laborers’ professed preference for their homeland over Brazil, the artist here portrays their life abroad in a somewhat more idyllic light, fishing along the banks of the Itanhém River. See also the illustrations in Gilberto Ferrez, *O Brasil de Thomas Ender, 1817* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundacao Joao Moreira Salles, 1976), of tea planters in Rio and an opium smoker in Santa Cruz.

had safeguarded some bad porcelain and numerous fans of all varieties, which they had brought with them to sell.”³²⁴ Other early nineteenth-century observers noted that the reason few Chinese tea cultivators remained in Rio lay not in their aversion to agricultural work but simply because they had sought more profitable pursuits elsewhere, “with most of them having moved to town to peddle assorted Chinese wares, especially cotton textiles and fireworks.”³²⁵

The willingness of the Itanhém Chinese to haul chestfuls of trinkets some thirteen thousand miles from Canton to Salvador da Bahia and safeguard and hawk the contents over a period of years, all while they continued relocating uncertainly from one Brazilian plantation to the next, speaks volumes to both the tenacity and the opportunistic spirit with which these men approached their endeavors abroad. In this context, the Chinese sailors returning from London or Riga or Rotterdam who traveled with their own chests of goods, as the East India Company’s Committee of Shipping noted (see Chapter 1), were clearly not outliers.³²⁶ As was the case for Chinese coolies or seamen in contact zones around the world, foreign employment was just a stepping stone.

We have also seen such stepping stones at work closer to home, such as in Chapter 2’s discussion of two *yiyu*-speaking Chinese moneychangers and an African slave in one of the European factories who took advantage of their circumstances to traffic opium. Although systematic opium smuggling attracted the greatest attention of Qing authorities and has likewise held a prominent place in historical scholarship on the buildup to the first Opium War, small-time smuggling was an equally salient feature of local society. It is important to note that within

³²⁴ Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied, *Reise Nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt: Heinrich Ludwig Brönnner, 1820), 244.

³²⁵ Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, *Reise in Brasilien auf Befehl Sr. Majestät Maximilian Joseph I., Königs von Baiern: In den Jahren 1817 Bis 1820 Gemacht und Beschrieben* (München, M. Lindauer, 1823), 1:183.

³²⁶ Another example: Chinese indentured laborers on St. Helena who started a side business selling ducks and wine to European sailors who were passing through. SHA: Quarter Sessions, “Assing v. G. M. Boorman,” 29 April 1824.

the cultural milieu of the South China Coast, such small-time smuggling was often an enterprise of opportunity rather than of premeditation. Given the high demand for and relatively ready access to opium in the late imperial period, petty trafficking and dealing offered a kind of social safety net to individuals from all walks of life who were struggling financially and felt in need of a quick hit to get back on their feet.³²⁷

In other instances, opportunistic Chinese merchants with no prior connections to the opium trade became traffickers somewhat by accident. On March 31, 1815, the Governor of Guangdong and Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi penned a joint memorial about a group of South China Coast tea and textile merchants who had fallen into the role of opium dealers as a result of debts incurred through their trade with foreigners. The two officials reported:

[In the summer] of 1814, Zhu Meiguan, Zhu Zhetang, Chen Rongxi, and Xu Mingyang each went to Macao and sold tea and textiles. Zhu Meiguan and the others traded their tea and textiles with a Portuguese merchant named António in exchange for pepper, sea cucumbers, and other goods. After accounting for the goods exchanged, António still owed \$3480 Spanish dollars to Zhu Meiguan, \$2300 to Zhu Zhetang, \$1220 to Chen Rongxi, and \$3400 to Xu Mingyang. In mid-July of 1814, Xu Juye, Xu Xiuguan, Yun Shuitang, and others brought more goods to Macao, selling \$1200 worth of goods to António on credit.

António remained in debt, but in September he prepared to depart for home [in Portugal]; his ship left Xiangshan County and entered the ocean [*waiyang* 外洋]. When Zhu Meiguan heard of this, he rushed out and caught up to António's ship and pressed him about his debt. There was another foreign ship nearby, of which the name is unknown, from which Antonio tried to borrow silver to pay his debts, but it didn't have any silver, only opium, which he borrowed and offered as collateral against his debts. Because António was about to leave for home, Zhu and the others had to make a quick decision, and they accepted António's offer [to clear his debt with opium instead of specie]. Accordingly, António gave Zhu Meiguan 80 chests of opium, each weighing two catties and seven or eight *liang*; he gave Zhu Zhetang 60 chests; Chen Rongxi 40 chests; Zheng Huaikui and Xu Xiu 40 chests total; 80 chests to Xu Mingyang; and thus he settled his debts.

³²⁷ Example: YZDS, 1:308. Two caveats: first, people often downplayed their culpability by claiming that it was a crime of opportunity rather than one of premeditation, in an effort to try and lessen their punishment. Secondly, we should also keep in mind that amateur criminals who committed a crime of opportunity were probably more likely to be caught than professionals, and thus amateurs might be overrepresented in the archive.

Because of the strict prohibition against opium on the Chinese mainland [*neidi* 內地], Zhu Meiguan and the others did not dare reenter port and instead resold the opium bit by bit out on the open seas to passing boatpeople and various other individuals whose names are unknown.³²⁸

These particular offenders were caught and sentenced to imprisonment and frontier military service, but given the porous transfers of goods throughout the waterways of the delta, it is likely that many others in similar situations were never detected.

This case highlights the spirit of flexibility in which Chinese individuals tackled problems that arose in their transactions with foreigners. To be sure, António's departure for Portugal without clearing his debts was dishonest, to say the least, and surviving case records feature no shortage of opportunistic individuals, both foreign and Chinese, who made comparable attempts to abscond without resolving debts or delivering promised goods; some of these situations sparked conflicts of their own, examples of which are discussed in Chapter 4. However, in order for the Canton system of trade to function at all, such instances of dishonesty had to have been by necessity the exception, not the norm. Moreover, whether traders' counterparts were attempting to swindle them or not, the intrinsic fluidity of movements and transactions in the delta demanded a baseline level of flexibility that manifested in people's actions. Just as António's opportunism helped motivate his attempt to leave without paying his debts, the opportunism of Zhu and his fellow merchants is what made them willing and flexible enough to come up with a creative solution to the problem of António's impending departure—after all, it was better to get something than nothing, and opium in any case was a highly liquid asset, as demonstrated by their ability to resell such a large volume of the drug “bit by bit...to passing boatpeople and various other individuals.” (And while many of these customers likely

³²⁸ Royal Asiatic Society, SC1/2.

made their purchases for personal consumption, it is also possible that some of these passersby were opportunistically looking to resell it themselves.)

This case also serves as a reminder of the impact that the seasonal structure of trade had in shaping Sino-Western encounters, even on the micro level. Due to the seasonal nature of trade and the common practice of maintaining extended debts, foreign merchants sometimes had not cleared their debts yet before they had to leave China, which caused problems as the end of the season approached. (In some ways this mirrors some of the wage disputes we saw involving Chinese sailors in London, in cases where the East India Company's Committee of Shipping tried to send sailors on return ships to China before they had received their pay.) Chapter 4 discusses the impact of this temporal dynamic in further detail.

Moreover, as the final encounter between António and his Chinese trading partners demonstrates, Chinese and foreign parties did not have to trust or even like each other to be able to devise creative solutions to the problems they faced. Economic pressures could be sufficient to force an acceptable compromise.

Foreign observers recognized the importance of such economic motivations to the inhabitants of the South China Coast. One editorial in the *Chinese Courier* remarked:

The Foreign Trade has made Canton a place essentially different from any other city of the Empire; it has collected from all quarters innumerable persons who depend entirely upon that trade for their means of existence, and who would be immediately thrown into a state of hopeless destitution by its discontinuance. The entire stoppage of the Trade would produce incalculable distress, and the Chinese government is too fearful of popular tumult to risk an insurrection which might be the consequence of so great a number of individuals being suddenly cast out of employment.

Although the author's conclusion—that foreign trade was so important to the lives of people on the South China Coast that Qing officials would not be willing to shut it down—rests on a fundamental miscalculation about the indispensability of the Canton trade to the Qing state, his

point stands about its importance to the lives of ordinary people: where their economic prospects were concerned, local inhabitants really were willing to go to great lengths. At the same time, this observation also underscores the value of separating state-centered history from people-centered history, for even if economic pressures turned out to be insufficient to force the Qing state's behavior in the expectation fashion, it exerted a powerful effect on the lives and behaviors of ordinary people every day.

In less exigent situations, in combination with the economic incentives often at stake, another factor that helped shape the dynamics of conflict occurrence and resolution was reputation-conscious behavior. Both foreign and Chinese merchants recognized the importance of reputation and credibility in ensuring the smooth functioning of Sino-Western transactions. This was especially true given foreigners' close reliance on local intermediaries for a range of tasks, including the procurement of foodstuffs and the delivery and safeguarding of monies and trade goods.

In November of 1827, the Select Committee of the EIC convened to discuss the case of a Chinese man named Afow, employed as the Company's cashier, whose trustworthiness had recently come under suspicion. The Committee's meeting minutes describe that Afow had been accused of abusing his position to steal from the Company's cash deposits, which was both a grave potential offense given the sizeable sums of cash that Afow helped oversee and a credible-seeming accusation in light of prevailing Western beliefs about Chinese people's inclination toward avarice.

However, Select Committee president Charles Marjoribanks offered a firm defense of Afow that not only cleared the cashier of suspicion but also acknowledged and underscored the importance of trust and reputation as key pillars of the social and economic structure of

transnational exchanges on the South China Coast. In the absence of any evidence of wrongdoing and with mere rumors underlying the accusations against Afow, Marjoribanks argued that the cashier was more likely the victim of spurious allegations cast by Chinese rivals, which were “calculated to injure the character of Afow, or excite suspicion in the minds of the members of the Committee of the safety of the Honorable Company’s cash deposited in the treasury.” With nothing concrete to substantiate the allegations, Marjoribanks maintained “that a public acquittal of Afow was due to him from his correct conduct during the period he had served the Company as much as to evince our restoration of that confidence which much be the basis of our intercourse with the natives of this country [emphasis in original].”³²⁹

Most importantly for Afow’s sake, Marjoribanks asserted that a mere exoneration by the Committee’s members, behind closed doors, was insufficient; paramount was that Afow be not only “declared innocent of fraud but...declared innocent in the manner he was entitled to expect,” either in public “before his countrymen,” as Marjoribanks emphasized, or in writing.³³⁰ As Marjoribanks elaborated,

The system upon which our commerce with China is conducted is one of much reciprocal confidence, and individual responsibility, and I think it dangerous in any way to subvert that system. Commercial transactions of great extent are conducted by the Company’s servants with the Hong Merchants by mere verbal agreement. Very large balances are often owing to them without any acknowledgement they remaining satisfied with the security which the high name and reputation of the Company give to every branch of their business in China, and with the state of their accounts being inserted in the Company’s books, and this system of confidence reposed, communicate itself, though perhaps in a diminished degree to their dependents as well as to the natives in the employ of the Company, and it is alone in my opinion by satisfying them that we consider them worthy of trust, where valuable property is confided to their charge, that we can ensure having respectable natives in our service.³³¹

³²⁹ BL: IOR/G/12/275 (1825-1829), 26 November 1827, f. 45.

³³⁰ BL: IOR/G/12/275 (1825-1829), 26 November 1827, f. 45.

³³¹ BL: IOR/G/12/275 (1825-1829), 26 November 1827, f. 45.

Marjoribanks's highlighting of "reciprocal confidence" as the key underpinning of Sino-Western trade speaks to the importance of trust and reputation. Not only was trust integral to commercial transactions, but in order to be able to continue securing reliable Chinese employees, foreign authorities also needed to invest them with sufficient trust, and Marjoribanks was hesitant to make any changes to the "established and successful system which has stood the test of two centuries." Moreover, Marjoribanks extended his logic beyond the more structured contexts of foreign trade with the Hong merchants and Company employment of local intermediaries, arguing that this recognized culture of trust "extended even to smuggling transactions," with the "trust reposed in dealers in sycee silver and opium, and in the persons engaged in such traffic, many of whom can be considered little better than outlaws...[being without] a parallel in any part of the world." If trust could be "safely reposed [even] in such men," argued Marjoribanks, then "so much safer must it be in men [like Afow]...whose character and life would be the forfeit of detected villainy, and irretrievable ruin be at the same time incurred by their kindred and connections."³³²

Marjoribanks's stalwart defense of Afow, with its emphasis on providing a public, performative acquittal to the Company's cashier, highlights the extent to which both foreign and Chinese parties recognized the importance of cultivating and maintaining mutual trust to ensure the success of multinational trade. While the strongest bonds of trust lay in employer-employee relationships of patronage—as exemplified by instances of genuine goodwill such as John Perkins Cushing's willingness to absorb the losses incurred by Ahoo's mulberry speculations, even long after Ahoo had left his employment (see Chapter 1)—a baseline of trust was necessary in less intimate relationships as well.

³³² BL: IOR/G/12/275 (1825-1829), 26 November 1827, ff. 45.

One outgrowth of many Chinese merchants' and shopkeepers' penchant for adopting Anglophone names, in addition to facilitating easier transactions with foreigners, was that by tying their business to a recognizable name and reputation they also increased accountability. This had an impact both on their immediate relations with foreign partners in China and their prospects for future business. As Charles Downing noted, "[t]hose shopkeepers who have never been detected in trying to cheat their customers get a good name among the foreigners, and are recommended by them to [newcomers]."³³³ In addition to advertising their storefronts with English-language signboards as discussed in Chapter 2, Chinese merchants also leveraged the reputations of their foreign personas in more concrete ways, leaving business cards with prospective foreign trading partners, which likewise displayed their Anglophone names. For example, one British merchant recalled that on the morning of New Year's day, 1838, he received "34 cards left by Hong merchants + other Chinese," which prompted him to call upon several of those merchants in turn over the following days.³³⁴

In fact, Canton's foreign traders regularly wrote reviews of their local partners or even ranked them for the benefit of future visitors. "We found 'Atchou' to be a very careful and correct Linguist with good assistants," noted one trader, "but if he should not be in business, I should recommend 'Tom Conqua,' who I think well acquainted with his business and otherwise a very good linguist."³³⁵ "'Ayoung' was our house Compradore, 'Tom Shing' our ship compradore, and if I was going again, I should give them the preference."³³⁶ Added this

³³³ Downing, *The Fan-Qui in China*, 2:53.

³³⁴ *William Almack: Journal*, 1 January 1838, GBR/0012/MS Add.9529, Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives.

³³⁵ Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, "Samuel Coverly: Trading memoranda," GBR/0012/MS Add.9639, f. 10.

³³⁶ Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, "Samuel Coverly: Trading memoranda," GBR/0012/MS Add.9639, f. 11.

reviewer: “As silk merchants I should recommend Namchong, Washing, Yunshing³³⁷ + Lunshing, in the order their names stand above....For China ware, I should give the decided preference to Powchong, he a man that seems very desirous of establishing a character as a fair dealer, + sells his goods as reasonably as anyone, next to him I should recommend Cumchong, but who is rather higher in his prices than the former.” Another merchant, Robert Waln, Jr. of Philadelphia, provided a systematic ranking of Canton’s principal painters, graded on criteria of “Standing” (“No. 1,” “No. 2,” or “No. 3”)³³⁸ and “Character” (“good” or “middle”), along with details on each painter’s address and artistic specialization (“paintings,” “miniature painting,” “likenesses,” or “ships”).³³⁹

Such rankings and evaluations highlight the fact that in Canton’s business environment, where shared consumer advice heavily informed the commercial decision-making of both newcomers and old China hands, local businesspeople’s reputations mattered significantly. Foreigners selected their partners with care. When new arrivals looked for compradors, for example, they regularly sought referrals from established compradors who could recommend candidates and stand surety for them, thus placing their own reputations on the line as part of the vetting process. Established compradors, in turn, complied with this practice because it let them expand their networks of influence by recommending relatives or other close acquaintances, whose personal indebtedness to the recommender both helped ensure satisfactory performance of their duties and yielded ancillary benefits such as reciprocal referrals or sizeable monetary gifts during the Lunar New Year. With a candidate thus recommended, employers interviewed

³³⁷ Ibid., ff. 8-9.

³³⁸ The numbers here are not ordinal but qualitative; Waln evaluates five painters according to his three-tiered scale.

³³⁹ Robert Waln, Jr., *The Waln Papers*, comp. Library Company of Philadelphia, unknown vol. (1819), quoted in Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings, and Exotic Curiosities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors’ Club, 1991), 54.

prospective employees in person and double-checked their character with any previous foreign employers he may have had. If satisfied, they could then take on the new comprador for a trial period before finalizing the arrangement.

In his Chinese language textbook *Easy Lessons in Chinese*, missionary Samuel Wells Williams provides a practice conversation between a foreign employer and prospective Chinese comprador that outlines what such an onboarding interview might sound like:

1. What is your name?
It is Alai.
7. If I hire you, how much wages do you wish to have each month?
Five dollars a month.
8. In what gentleman's house have you already lived?
In Mr. P.'s hong a long time.
9. What did you attend to there?
I assisted the comprador to manage his affairs.
10. I think of employing you to act as my comprador, who will stand surety for you?
My cousin, who acts as comprador to Mr. ***; I think you know him; is it so?
11. I have heard his name, but I have not made his acquaintance; if he has leisure ask him to come and see me.
Very well.
12. I will take you one or two months, on trial as comprador; when will you bring your things?
I will now go back, and immediately bring them here.
13. How many men are necessary to employ in this establishment?
Two coolies, one cook, one doorkeeper, and four personal servants, are enough.
14. All that these men are to be employed in doing is your concernment, and for whatever they may do you will be accountable.
Certainly; I know the dispositions of every one of them very well.³⁴⁰

With the reputations of past foreign employers and local referees (in this case, Alai's cousin) on the line, strong structural incentives were in place for satisfactory performance.

Payment practices provided similar incentives. For example, when Mary Sturgis wanted to send some silverware from Macao to her husband in Canton one morning in February of 1835,

³⁴⁰ S. Wells Williams, *Easy Lessons in Chinese: Or, Progressive Exercises to Facilitate the Study of That Language, Especially Adapted to the Canton Dialect* (Macao: Printed at the Office of the Chinese Repository, 1842), 85-87. I have eliminated the corresponding Chinese phrases from this quotation for the sake of clarity.

she paid him three dollars, or ten percent, up front, and included a note with her package of cutlery and tumblers that her husband should pay the remaining twenty-seven dollars upon receipt.³⁴¹ This sort of arrangement, split between a small advance payment and a larger sum upon receipts of goods, was a common way for foreign parties to navigate the uncertainties of relying on local intermediaries to send goods up and down river, with the staggered payments and prospect of future business helping to ensure reliable delivery.

In order to gain the trust of prospective employers, Chinese intermediaries sometimes kept written testimonials that attested to the excellence of their past work for foreigners. For instance, some pilots collected certificates of service, signed by foreign ships' captains after a successful navigation past the Lema Islands and Ladrones to Macao or upriver to Whampoa, which they would show as credentials to the captains of future ships. This practice dated to at least the eighteenth century. John Dixon reported that after his ship signaled for a pilot upon reaching the vicinity of the Lema Islands in November of 1787, "an old Chinaman came on board as a pilot, bringing certificates from a number of Captains whom he had taken to Macao," and after some haggling the two parties struck an agreement.³⁴²

Pilots' letters of recommendation also point to another critical feature of the environment in which locals and foreigners interacted: the importance of individuals' reputations. We have seen earlier how sailors like John Nicol and Charles Tyng were able to rekindle friendships with Chinese acquaintances for years after their initial acquaintance. The frequency with which sailors describe the rekindling of long-lost friendships bespeaks a certain level of stability in the local

³⁴¹ BA: Mss.L556, "Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis," box 1, no. 1, folder 18, 3 February 1835.

³⁴² William Beresford and George Dixon, *A Voyage Round the World, but more Particularly to the North-west Coast of America: Performed in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788, in the King George and Queen Charlotte, Captains Portlock and Dixon* (London: George Goulding, 1789), 287. The practice of citing certificates of service sometimes led individuals to pretend to know the name of the foreign ships' captain and feign having worked for them on a previous voyage.

economy; it suggests that individual merchants, restaurateurs, barbers, washerwomen, and others often remained employed in the same positions for years at a time.³⁴³ Such conditions in turn underscore the importance of reputation-conscious conduct for most locals at Canton. Honest and reputable behavior built a good name for local businesspeople.

Unsurprisingly, foreign merchants often preferred hiring local intermediaries with whom they were familiar from a previous voyage. “[At] ½ past 7 took along a compradore on board ‘all the same last voyage’—a good tempered fellow, speaks English very well,” wrote William Almack shortly after reaching the Pearl River Delta in December of 1837.³⁴⁴ The selection of a comprador who advertised his services by declaring that “all [would be] the same [as on the] last voyage” speaks both to foreigners’ increased willingness to employ compradors with a history of satisfactory service and to compradors’ own recognition that leveraging such reputation-based relationships was one important way to outcompete his peers. Moreover, even in cases where the local intermediary had not worked previously for a prospective foreign employer, letters of reference could serve as an effective proxy for satisfactory prior service. And the comprador’s knowledge of English was, of course, also a boon, which Almack highlights.

In the same way that some Chinese sailors worked their way up maritime labor ranks from ordinary seaman to boatswain or upon the end of their tenure segued their experiences and savings into commercial ventures in other contexts, Chinese servants also leveraged their starting positions to pivot into new roles. For example, one night watchman for an American family in Macao, having proven his reliability, transitioned into a role as chair bearer for the matron of the family; and having proven his competence in that intimate role, he then transitioned into a role as

³⁴³ Many local stores had even been in operation for generations, including an ink manufacturer started by the proprietor’s great-grandfather and a jewelry store that had operated since the eighth year of Yongzheng (1730). *The Canton Press*, Sept. 1836 and Nov. 1840.

³⁴⁴ GBR/0012/MS Add.9529, *William Almack: Journal*, 24 December 1837.

boatman responsible for the family's deliveries of letters and goods between Macao and Canton.³⁴⁵

As a product of economic pressures and incentives, many Chinese intermediaries enjoyed a reputation for honesty and reliability. "My father speaks of the strict honor of the Chinese merchant, and sums up with, 'I never saw in any country such a high average of fair dealing as there,'" recalled Sarah Forbes Hughes of her father's business experiences in China.³⁴⁶ This emphasis on the positive effects of a reputation-conscious trading environment is not to ignore the fact that Canton's trading environs also contained its share of cheats, but we have no reason to think that dishonesty was more common on the South China Coast than anywhere else in the world. As one foreign visitor noted to himself after being robbed of his handkerchief, "I must tell Barugh there are pick-pockets on this side of the world, [just] as on Ludgate Hill."³⁴⁷

In fact, as one American merchant cautioned his agent before a trip to Canton, it was not the Chinese but other foreigners of whom he had to be wary. The merchant wrote in his instructions for purchasing teas: "Fresh teas are much better and take up less room in the box; weight and colour the best criterions. The new teas are heavy in the hand, greenish, with no red leaves. Foreigners in Canton will try to put off old teas on you. Better deal with the Chinese."³⁴⁸ Another merchant warned: "It is y'r duty to warn the Chinese against the wiles of our Countrymen."³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ BA: Mss.L556, "Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis," box 1, no. 1, folder 38, 5 July 1835.

³⁴⁶ Sarah Forbes Hughes, ed., *Letters and Recollections of John Murray Forbes*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 86.

³⁴⁷ CUL: GBR/0012/MS Add.9529, *William Almack: Journal*, 28 December 1837.

³⁴⁸ Correspondence from Thomas Handasyd Perkins to James Magee, 21 June 1798, Mss:766 1820-1891, Box 27, Russell & Company Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

³⁴⁹ Correspondence from Thomas Handasyd Perkins to James Magee, 31 March 1806, Mss:766 1820-1891, Box 27, Russell & Company Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

Such warnings serve as a reminder that foreign traders in China, despite often appearing as unified, homogenous actors, were after all commercial rivals in a competitive environment. Americans, British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and others who fell under the category of “Westerner” distrusted or disliked one another to varying degrees that often tracked the rise and fall of geopolitical tensions closer to home. These tensions found themselves expressed in ways ranging from subtle jabs, such as one British gentleman’s snide emphasis on the fact that “The Americans...are called by the Chinese ‘second chop Englishmen,’” to physical altercations between British and French sailors and sporadic disputes over where, and how prominently, the representatives of various foreign nations could fly their national flags.³⁵⁰ Nor did merchants’ rivalries and allegiances simply fall along national lines. The American merchants from New York disliked the merchants from Boston, and for that matter they also disliked the other merchants from New York, because they were all rivals with one another, and competition against their countrymen was top of mind. Just as we should be wary of homogenizing Chinese actors, we should also be wary of homogenizing Western ones.

Compromise and Cover-ups

Compromise was a salient feature of trade and trade-adjacent grassroots interactions, since the escalation of conflicts and the increased government oversight that often resulted from escalation were detrimental to business. For instance, when opportunistic customs officers charged foreigners frivolous fees, haggling was common. Reported one merchant: “Today I was called on for 12 dollars being the duty on my goods, and chattels landed about 6 weeks ago! What was it for? Not for a chest of drawers filled with wearing apparel etc. nor for 2 boxes of

³⁵⁰ *William Almack: Journal*, 13 November 1837, GBR/0012/MS Add.9529, Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives.

sundries nor for a trunk full of books, but for a folio volume, being illustrations to Maccartney's embassy to China! I compromised the matter by paying 8 dollars."³⁵¹

Similar tendencies to try and “compromise...the matter” also shaped more serious situations, such as accidental injuries or deaths. On the relatively rare occasions when injury or death resulted from altercations between locals and foreigners, it was in the interest of both parties to prevent the matter from escalating and to settle it out of court rather than involve the Qing authorities.³⁵² If the authorities became involved, trade would be stopped, the foreign culprit would be liable to be punished under Qing law, and the victim or victim's family would lose nearly all opportunity for remuneration.³⁵³ “Out-of-court” settlements were therefore the norm. References to such settlements are scattered throughout the historical record; many more probably occurred, of which we are unaware precisely because they were covered up so effectively. Following are a few illustrative examples of how potentially serious incidents were often resolved.

³⁵¹ *William Almack: Journal*, 5 March 1838, GBR/0012/MS Add.9529, Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives. Hagglng, although common, could also backfire. In June of 1835, Mary Sturgis reported to her husband: “The new chair cooley wishes \$6 a month, he says he should like to stay but cannot for \$5.” Upon hearing this, Mary “told Ahong [her comprador] to get another.” BA: Mss.L556, “Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis,” box 1, no. 1, 30 June 1835.

³⁵² In his work on Qing civil litigation, Philip Huang has argued that although Chinese commoners did not always shy away from litigation, the majority of civil disputes were still settled out of court. Specifically, he has argued for a kind of “third-realm justice,” in which the very filing of a plaint helped disputes be resolved by informal mediation, without continuing the process and resorting to formal adjudication. A similar phenomenon seems to have occurred in the context of Qing-foreigner disputes, albeit with less formal filing. When foreigners' actions led to locals' injuries or deaths, the threat of formal adjudication (and knowledge of how that adjudication would likely turn out) incentivized both parties to resolve matters through informal channels. The Hong merchants were often the mediators of this “third-realm justice,” but not always; plenty of foreigners and locals resolved their disputes on their own as well.

³⁵³ Locals were not “rewarded” for bringing such cases to the attention of the authorities. At most they would receive a small sum paid as damages for their injuries or to cover the burial of the victim, but there was no guarantee that they would receive anything at all, and even the amount they would receive was typically a mere pittance compared to what they could negotiate for themselves. In general, therefore, they were better off negotiating with foreigners directly, just as foreigners were better off negotiating directly with victims or their families and preventing matters from being made public.

In March of 1823, a Portuguese resident of Macao killed a Chinese local, but “[b]y a timely interference on the part of the Portuguese to satisfy the relatives of the deceased by the payment of 1000 Dlls. previous to any report being made to the local Government the accident was adjusted.”³⁵⁴ Monetary inducements paid to the relatives of the victim also settled a death caused by members of the *Lady Melville* in 1821. In fact, paying hush money for injuries both great and small was such a common practice that locals sometimes even tried to stage accidents that they could then blame on foreigners in hopes of earning a quick buck. On one occasion in 1824, when the *Earl of Balcarras* felt itself harassed by a local bumboat that would not cease its solicitations, a midshipman tossed a small piece of wood onto the covering of the bumboat that was alongside. Those in the boat below “immediately placed a dying man in the compradore’s boat that was astern of the ship, alleging that he had been killed by the piece of wood: 3,000 dollars were demanded as a compensation for the man’s life; this sum was ultimately reduced to 300.”³⁵⁵ In this as in so many other cases, a small bribe quickly resolved the matter before it was brought to the attention of the higher authorities.

Sometimes injuries and the compensation paid for them took different forms. When John Nicol’s dog Neptune bit a Chinese boy who was meddling with Nicol’s belongings, Nicol apologized by paying the child a few copper coins. A short while later, the boy returned with his insistent father in the lead, and Nicol, apprehensive, expected trouble, “but the father only asked a few hairs out from under Neptune’s foreleg, close to the body. He...stuck them all over the wound. He went away content.”³⁵⁶ Nicol and the boy’s father took matters into their own

³⁵⁴ Morse, *Chronicles*, Vol. 4: 80.

³⁵⁵ Peter Auber, *China: An Outline of Its Government, Laws, and Policy, and of the British and Foreign Embassies to and Intercourse with that Empire* (London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1834), 310.

³⁵⁶ Nicol, *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol*, 105.

hands—Nicol by paying the boy, and the boy’s father by making a different request, which Nicol granted—and they settled the matter without any further incident.

The “*Neptune* affair” of 1807 (referring not to Nicol’s dog but to the English ship of that name) provides an example of how this common practice for resolving low-level conflicts between foreigners and locals applied to more escalated disputes as well. In March of 1807, Edward Sheen, a sailor aboard the *Neptune*, was accused of causing the death of a Chinese commoner named Leao-a-teng. For several days the Hoppo blockaded trade, and tensions ran high as the British man-of-war *Lion* prepared for possible engagement. In the end, however, Sheen was “allowed to redeem himself from the punishment of death by strangulation, by the payment of a fine (amounting to about 4*l.* 3*s.* sterling) to the relations of the deceased, to defray the expenses of the burial, and then be dismissed to be governed in an orderly manner in his own country.”³⁵⁷ The driving force behind this resolution was the intervention of the Hong merchants, who had been suffering tremendously from the halt on trade. In the end, “the bribe necessary to procure acquiescence of the parties interested...did not cost the security merchants less than 50,000 [pounds],” the costs of which were partly passed on to the British.³⁵⁸ Here, although the authorities did become involved, a bribe was still able to smooth things over, and trade able to continue.

³⁵⁷ Archibald Campbell, *A Voyage Round the World, from 1806 to 1812; in which Japan, Kamschatka, the Aleutian Islands, and the Sandwich Islands were Visited; including a Narrative of the Author’s Shipwreck on the Island of Sannack, and His Subsequent Wreck in the Ship’s Long-boat; with an Account of the Present State of the Sandwich Islands, and a Vocabulary of Their Language* (New York: Van Winkle, Riley, and Co., 1817), Appendix: 203-204. See also Auber, *China*, 227-228; the Hong merchants suggested that payment of a bribe to the relations of the deceased would suffice.

³⁵⁸ Note the discrepancy between the amount the merchants paid as a bribe (“50,000*l.*”) and the amount of the fine that went to cover the victim’s burial (“4*l.* 3*s.* sterling”). Both the victim’s family and the merchants involved would have benefited from resolving the situation before the authorities became involved: the locals because they probably could have extracted more than 4*l.* 3*s.* through direct negotiations, and the foreigners because they surely would have been able to bribe the victim’s family for far less than the 50,000*l.* ultimately paid to the authorities.

Bribes and cover-ups were commonplace even in more benign situations resulting from circumstantial tragedy rather than overt conflict or disagreement between parties. For instance, on the afternoon of January 27, 1802, VOC authorities discovered the body of a Chinese man who had drowned in the well of the Dutch factory at Canton, which “upon examination turned out to be the same as that of a Dutch ship comprador named Ap-hing, who had been missing for four days.”³⁵⁹ Further investigation revealed that Ap-hing, like many Chinese compradors who had borrowed significant amounts of capital in order to establish themselves as foreign victualers, was under pressure from his creditors in advance of the Lunar New Year.³⁶⁰ Unable to clear his debts in time and apparently “despairing of his ability to provide for his family,” Ap-hing threw himself down the well.

Ap-hing’s suicide presented Dutch authorities with a quandary: although the tragedy occurred through no direct fault of the company, Ap-hing’s employment as a Dutch ship comprador and his untimely death on the company factory’s grounds were sure to draw unwelcome scrutiny from local authorities. Despite general tolerance of the transnational labor arrangements ubiquitous throughout the delta, whenever incidents arose most Qing officials leapt at the opportunity to highlight the allegedly injurious effects of excessive Sino-Western intercourse. Fearing a heavy fine and other possible complications, the VOC waited until nightfall and then, with the assistance of the compound’s Chinese staff, covered up the suicide: “In the night the corpse was casketed and before dawn taken out of the Company’s House, as quiet as possible so as not to disturb the Mandarins.”³⁶¹ The VOC factory comprador, Tan

³⁵⁹ NAH: Factorij Canton, 1.04.20, inv. nr. 98, *Dagregister* dated 27 January 1802.

³⁶⁰ Local custom dictated that debts should be cleared before the Chinese New Year, as it was considered inauspicious to begin a fresh year in debt; the pressures of debt collection around the time of the new year has led to elevated suicide rates in China even up to the present day.

³⁶¹ NAH: Factorij Canton, 1.04.20, inv. nr. 98, *Dagregister* dated 28 January 1802.

Assoun, was tasked with facilitating the cleanup, and eighty Spanish dollars were paid to Ap-hing's family as hush money.

Also party to the cover-up was Charles Mackinnon, deputy surgeon to the English factory at Canton. Mackinnon was himself a habitual opportunist of sorts, who alongside his medical duties engaged in a range of private speculations and also served as commercial agent for Gregory Marcar Baboom, a prominent India-based Armenian merchant.³⁶² As a result of his active dealings in rhubarb and opium, Mackinnon found himself recalled to London in 1805 on charges of commercial malfeasance; he was later reposted to Prince of Wales Island, but six months into his tenure as the island's head surgeon he was suspended again, on allegations of spending too much time trading instead of fulfilling his official medical duties.³⁶³ Habitual opportunism was clearly not limited to Chinese sojourners. As Paul van Dyke has highlighted, foreign sailors at Whampoa were often just as opportunistic as their Chinese counterparts, with shipping records recording no shortage of instances in which Europeans were caught stealing items to sell to passing Chinese boatpeople or trade for alcohol.³⁶⁴

Closer relationships between foreign and Chinese merchants facilitated a variety of cover-ups. Another example comes from the recollections of Salem native Harriet Low, who moved to Macao at the age of twenty-one and stayed with her uncle for four years while he

³⁶² H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company, Trading to China, 1635-1834*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926-1929), 365. For a sketch of Baboom's activities in China, see Carl T. Smith and Paul Van Dyke, "Four Armenian Families," *Revista de Cultura* 8 (Oct. 2003), 47-49.

³⁶³ Mackinnon's active involvement in commercial speculations while in Canton were partly a function of his circumstances, as his position as deputy surgeon was unsalaried. While on Prince of Wales Island, Mackinnon worked closely with a Canton native named Lowe Ammee, who had spent some time in Calcutta before establishing himself as a broker and contractor in Penang, and who helped Mackinnon handle tasks like the hiring of Chinese cooks for the local hospital. Charles Mackinnon, *Mr. Mackinnon's Memorial to the Honorable Court of Directors of the Hon. East-India Company* (London: Lewis and Roden, 1806); "Extract from Prince of Wales Island Gazette [containing a memorial by C. Mackinnon to the Court of directors of the East India company]" (London: W. Lewis, 1811).

³⁶⁴ Paul Van Dyke, *Whampoa and the Canton Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2020), Appendix 4.7, "Men Caught Stealing and Selling Items to Chinese."

traded at Canton. Particularly memorable for Low was an unauthorized trip she made from Macao to Canton in the fall of 1830. To limit the permanence of the foreign presence on the Chinese coast, Qing regulations had forbidden foreign women from visiting Canton (even the male traders themselves were only allowed to visit for half of the year, and had to retire to Macao or elsewhere the rest of the time). Low and her aunt, however, followed the wives of several British traders in making a clandestine visit to Canton. They were discovered not long after their arrival. Discussing the Hong merchant Mouqua's (Lu Wenjin 盧文錦; i.e., Mouqua II, second son of Lu Guanheng 盧觀恒, 1746-1812) good-humored handling of the situation, Low recalls:

He [Mouqua] said that, when Mrs. Baynes came up, he told the Viceroy that her husband was very sick (which was false), and that she had to come up and take care of him. When Mrs. Turner came, the Viceroy sent for him again, and he said that she was Mr. Baynes's cousin, "and he so sick he wanchy too much to see her." Now, he says, that we have come, "I can no talky sick any more. Now I know not what talky."³⁶⁵

In the end, the Hong merchant arranged for Low and her aunt to return to Macao about two weeks later. And although Low remembers Mouqua's behavior critically—she was frustrated at not being permitted to remain in Canton—Mouqua's conduct actually reveals a considerable amount of sensitivity to the situation. It epitomizes the Hong merchants' positions as critical power brokers between foreign merchants and the state authorities: Mouqua was willing and able to find creative solutions to unexpected difficulties, but he also recognized when he had reached his limits and needed to take a definitive stance. At the same time, he was able to explain his position with wit and empathy, showing that he had both the language skills and the diplomatic tact to mollify both parties and prevent the situation from escalating.

³⁶⁵ Harriet Low, journal entry, Nov. 15, 1830, in Harriet Low et al., *The China Trade Post-Bag of the Seth Low Family of Salem and New York, 1829-1873*, ed. Elma Loines (Manchester, ME: Falmouth Publishing House, 1953), 133.

Family business

Anecdotal evidence suggests that delta Chinese often entered into foreign employment in tandem with their relatives. For example, in one staff registry of eleven servants hired as watchmen for British premises in Macao in the early nineteenth century, all but two watchmen shared both a surname and hometown with at least one colleague.³⁶⁶ The register included three men surnamed Rong 容 from Nanping 南屏, two surnamed He 何 from Nancun 南村, two surnamed Wu 吳 from Shanyi 山場, and two surnamed Bao 鮑 from Shanyi. While the surviving records do not indicate for certain that the constituent members of these sets of watchmen were related, the odds are low that such paired distributions of names and hometowns were purely accidental.

Such employment patterns parallel what we know of many Chinese sailors' propensity to join European crews alongside relatives and neighbors from the same village. Both employers and employees benefitted from labor force agglutination based on individuals' social networks. For prospective sailors, joining a foreign crew alongside a few familiar faces from one's native village or kinship network helped mitigate the length and uncertainties of maritime work. Meanwhile, for ships' captains, who often needed to hire one or two dozen men at once before embarking on a return voyage, the fact that Chinese sailors came in preassembled groups both made it easier for captains to fill their labor needs and, due to there being some degree of preexisting social cohesion among the men, contributed to better discipline onboard.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ NAK: FO 1048/29/7. The list is undated but based on adjacent records is likely from the first half of the nineteenth century.

³⁶⁷ This preassembly reflected both the preexisting ties between the men and the role of local labor brokers in sourcing workers.

With employees motivated by both their own economic interests and, in many cases, the need to be mindful of not just their own but also their relatives' reputations, hiring based on social networks also had the side effect of helping to increase workplace accountability. Chinese compradors, linguists, and merchants often recommended their younger cousins or other relatives for positions as clerks in the foreign factories, and employers in turn found it advantageous to hire based on family or acquaintance recommendations. As one merchant recommended, "great care should be taken that [Chinese servants] be well recommended for honesty by some reputable Chinese merchants; otherwise they may soon hurt you by stealing...Sometimes the petty merchants will offer their sons to you for servants, in order to be taught the English language, and to qualify them for carrying on trade with the Europeans."³⁶⁸ If difficulties later arose in the workplace, seeking out the mediation of the referring relative or guarantor was one tactic that employers could try to address the problem.

In April of 1835, Mary Sturgis alerted her husband Russell to the fact that her house comprador in Macao, named Ahsung, was encountering unexpected difficulties managing the rest of her Chinese household staff. Although several of the Russells' letters are missing, those that have survived make clear that Mary was having trouble with servants who were circumventing Ahsung's authority and going straight to her in an effort to override the comprador's supervision, especially when Ahsung was attempting to discipline them. In such a situation, where Ahsung held nominal authority over household staff but Mary Sturgis's closest relationship was with her personal servant, Ahyoung, "It is perfectly easy to see where the difficulty is," responded Russell Sturgis:

³⁶⁸ Charles Frederick Noble, *A Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748. Containing an Account of the Islands of St. Helena and Java, of the City of Batavia, of the Government and Political Conduct of the Dutch, of the Empire of China, with a Particular Description of Canton : and of Religious Ceremonies, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants* (London: Printed for T. Becket and P.A. Dehondt; and T. Durham, 1762), 225.

Ahyoung and the other servants have found out that through the former they can have direct access to you and of course they no longer fear or regard the displeasure of Ahsung. You are paying a Comprador without having the advantage of one. I will go and see Uncle James and have a talk with him about Ahsung—If he says “place confidence in Ahsung” I shall recommend to you decidedly to say to Ahyoung and all the servants “You hold all your places at Ahsung’s pleasure and if you do not satisfy him you will lose them—and if you come to me I shall have you sent off for doing so.”

Russell continued:

I have now got your letter...No. 8, and I have had a long talk with Uncle James. By the former I see that you are quiet for the present, and Uncle James and I, on comparing notes, have both the impression that if we make Ahsung absolute, and let the others know clearly that their only chance is to mind him, that peace can finally be secured. However you need do nothing as Uncle James proposes to see an old relative of Ahsung’s here [in Canton] and let him know so that he may write to Ahsung what will be required of him and what authority we are disposed to confer on him. You shall have it arranged in some way or other for you so that you shall have no trouble. I have no doubts the fear on Ahsung’s part that he should not be supported if he undertook to play Comprador, combined with an impression on that of Ayoung and the others, that they could appeal to you, has been the principal[sic] cause of trouble. But you shall be relieved of it, I promise you some way or another.³⁶⁹

In the end, Russell Sturgis’s decision to confer with his more experienced uncle, who in turn sought the intervention of Ahsung’s relative in Canton, helped lead to an amicable resolution of the situation, and in the letters that followed, Mary expressed no more complaints about the management of her household staff.

Conclusion

Only rarely in the history of trade and industry have businesspeople expressed a desire for greater government regulation and oversight. Rather, the general preference has been for less, because one of the keys to commercial exchange as a positive-sum endeavor lies in the flexibility that two sides have to optimize outcomes. This was true not just for the British private traders

³⁶⁹ BA: Mss.L556, “Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis,” box 1, no. 1, folder 8, 22 April 1835.

who clamored for an open China but also for the masses of habitual opportunists who made their living on and off Chinese shores in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

While habitual opportunism was not, as some Western observers believed, patterned into Chinese people's DNA, it was built into ordinary people's lived circumstances.³⁷⁰ Perceptions and practices of Chinese habitual opportunism had two effects. Rhetorically, in the metropole, Western discourses about the supposed cupidity of Chinese people had the effect of souring broader views of "China" and "the Chinese," as the residents of the South China Coast became increasingly otherized with the increasing circulation of sensational stories about commercial dishonesty or like behaviors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At the same time, however, the pressures underlying habitual opportunism at the grassroots also had practical effects, as they created the conditions for both the outbreak and the resolution of everyday conflicts.

To summarize, we can say that three primary factors drove foreign and Chinese parties to solve problems that occurred between them. In order of prevalence, these were shared economic incentives, the threat of litigation or comparable complications that would escalate the problem,

³⁷⁰ A brief note on historians and writing about money: It is difficult to overstate the precarity with which ordinary people lived their lives in the early modern and modernizing worlds. For the average resident of the South China Coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, much of life really was all about the money: an investment of time, labor, and capital with the goal of improved or at least continued subsistence.

Economic incentives are powerful motivators, but historians do not often enough write about money, at least not as a motivator for human action; this we tend to leave to economists. I think this neglect is informed partly by our own positionality as (mostly) Western-trained academics. Academics are by their nature professionals who have specialized in a single, narrow line of work, who pursue their areas of research for its intellectual value and not, as is commonly joked, "for the money"—there are few things more anathema to the life of the mind than a utilitarian focus on pecuniary gain. In thinking about the past, historians prize empathy: the ability to cross divides of time, space, and personal identifications such as race, culture and class in order to relate to historical subjects and provide thicker descriptions of their actions. One possible result of this emphasis on historical empathy is that scholars are wont to ascribe to historical subjects motives that are like our own, and to read people of the past in our own likeness. But outside the academy, for most people in the world from the very poor to the very rich, money has long been at the forefront of human thought and action; this was as true two hundred years ago as it is today. Although historians recognize the power of economic motivations for driving human action, we tend not to sufficiently center human greed and individual economic incentive in explaining historical actions, even when such factors exerted clear and palpable effects on people's lives.

and personal goodwill. (To a large extent, however, the latter two were derivative of the first: much of the time, solving problems before they escalated or on the basis of personal goodwill was simply good business sense.)

An examination of habitual opportunism also shows that whether they were smuggling opium in their boats or Napoleon's letters in their shoes, many ordinary Chinese folk were accustomed to engaging with foreigners beyond the normative parameters of interaction circumscribed by the state. Up and down the waterways of the delta, Chinese boatpeople and coolies did in fact smuggle many things for foreigners on the South China Coast: letters, trinkets, provisions, and more. There was a culture of evading or outright ignoring the watchful eye of the state.³⁷¹

Ultimately, in Canton's trading environment where nearly everyone suffered when conflicts escalated, it made sense for locals and foreigners alike to work together to minimize frictions. Prominent incidents that seem at first glance to suggest the contrary—like the Terranova case, the *Lady Hughes* affair, and other such conflicts—were, at their root, anomalous occurrences. The very fact that we do not hear of more such incidents over the nearly century-long span of the Canton system underscores the extent to which the economic incentives outlined above were able to structure and successfully mediate interactions between foreigners and locals.

This chapter has highlighted the practices and effects of the habitual opportunism that characterized the behaviors of many ordinary Chinese people in the late imperial period, on the South China Coast and beyond. With this framework of incentives and practices having been

³⁷¹ Among other things, the networks that facilitated the trafficking of opium also facilitated the trafficking of people, and while such latter trafficking was only sporadic in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the second half it would blossom into an industrial nexus of its own.

outlined, the following chapter turns to particular case studies of conflict negotiation and resolution.

CHAPTER FOUR

Intrepid Petitioners: Sino-Western Debt and Recompense at the Grassroots and Beyond

In the summer of 1839, as Lin Zexu intensified his efforts to suppress opium trafficking along China's coasts, the Chinese commissioner took what appeared to be an extraordinary step: he wrote a direct letter of appeal to Queen of Victoria of England, in which he condemned foreign opium smuggling and sought Victoria's assistance in putting an end to British involvement. Justifying the Qing position through a series of moralistic hypotheticals, Lin's now-famous letter asked the young queen:

Let us suppose that foreigners came from another country, and brought opium into England, and seduced the people of your country to smoke it, would not you, the sovereign of the said country, look upon such a procedure with anger, and in your just indignation endeavor to get rid of it?

Lin continued:

Suppose the subject of another country were to come to England to trade; he would certainly be required to comply with the laws of England....Now it is a fixed statute of this empire, that any native Chinese who sells opium is punishable with death, and even he who merely smokes it, must not less die. Pause and reflect for a moment: if you foreigners did not bring the opium hither, where should our Chinese people get it to re-sell?...Let your highness immediately, upon the receipt of this communication, inform us promptly of the state of matters, and of the measure you are pursuing utterly to put a stop to the opium evil.³⁷²

Concluding the letter in characteristic Qing bureaucratic fashion, Lin signed off with the following advice for the British monarch: "Please let your reply be speedy. Do not on any account make excuses or procrastinate. A most important communication."³⁷³

³⁷² *The Chinese Repository* 8:10 (Feb. 1840): 502-503.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 502-503.

Lin Zexu's appeal to Queen Victoria went unanswered, however, and the modern scholarly consensus is that the commissioner's letter was most likely never received.³⁷⁴ Nonetheless, Lin's reflections on the nature of China's opium crisis have served as the basis for considerable counterfactual speculation ever since. What if Victoria had read the letter? How might she have responded? Might the first Opium War—and all that followed in its wake, from the cession of Hong Kong and the proliferation of foreign treaty ports across China to the “mimesis of Western imperialism” that launched Japan on its own expansionist path in Asia later in the nineteenth century—have been averted?³⁷⁵

With such questions at the fore, Lin's letter today is well known among Chinese and Western audiences alike. In American and British high school classrooms and college survey courses, the letter is the frequent subject of open-ended “document-based questions” for students, and it also features prominently in introductory textbooks and curricular guides to global history.³⁷⁶ In China, Lin's appeal to Queen Victoria and the moral indignation underlying his

³⁷⁴ Lin entrusted delivery of his letter for Victoria to Captain Warner of the *Thomas Coutts*, which had run the British blockade on Canton and secured Chinese permission to continue trading so long as it carried no opium. (Warner, who had just arrived from the comparatively less restricted trading environment at Singapore and was impatient to unload his cargo of cotton, rattan, and pepper, felt that British superintendent Charles Elliott had overstepped his legal mandate by placing a moratorium on foreign trade as hostilities grew between Chinese and British authorities.) When Warner arrived back in London in January of 1840, however, the British Foreign Office rebuffed efforts to deliver Lin's letter to Foreign Secretary Palmerston. Although English translations of Lin's memorial circulated publicly after being printed in *The Chinese Repository* in Canton on February 15, 1840 and in *The Times* in London on June 11, 1840, respectively, there is no evidence to suggest that they reached Queen Victoria's eyes.

³⁷⁵ On the roots of Japan's mimetic imperialism during the Meiji period, see Robert Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan,” *American Historical Review* 107:2 (April 2002): 388-418.

³⁷⁶ Lin Zexu's appeal to Queen Victoria and an earlier letter written by the Qianlong emperor to King George III in 1793 are probably the two most commonly cited Chinese documents in this vein; one is hard-pressed to find a single major textbook or curricular guide that addresses nineteenth-century China's interactions with the West without discussing these texts. See, e.g., Ssu-yü Têng and John King Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923, with a New Preface* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 24-28; William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *The Essential World History, Seventh Edition* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013), 571-573; *Readings in Global History, Vol. II*, edited by Anthony Snyder and Sherri West (Dubuque: Kendall-Hunt Publishing, 1997), 149-188; Columbia University's online “Asia for Educators” curricular guide to Chinese history, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/ps/ps_china.htm; and the American Historical Association's teaching resources guide on “Imperialism in China,” <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and->

rhetoric are also commonly invoked in support of nationalistic narratives about China's "century of humiliation" (*bainian guochi* 百年國恥) and imperialist victimization at the hands of Western and Japanese powers from the 1830s to the mid-twentieth century.³⁷⁷ Reformulations of this narrative continue to exert considerable influence in the present day, at virtually all levels of Chinese society ranging from primary school up to the highest echelons of the Communist Party.³⁷⁸ Indeed, the legacy of Chinese suffering at the hands of foreign powers is arguably the single greatest rhetorical motivator underlying modern Chinese geopolitics, coloring a range of issues from China's territorial ambitions in the South China Sea and the development of the Belt and Road Initiative to policies toward Hong Kong and relations across the Taiwan Strait.

In focusing on Lin's letter as a basis for counterfactual debate or nationalizing rhetoric, however, scholarly as well as popular discourses in both China and the West have largely ignored the potential light that the very decision to appeal to the Queen of England can shed onto local attitudes and practices surrounding dispute resolution in late imperial China. Although we have typically chosen to view Lin's appeal as an interesting but ultimately isolated instance of one indignant Qing scholar-official's willingness to take his problems all the way up to the Queen of England, Lin's letter should not be viewed in isolation. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Lin Zexu was far from the only Chinese plaintiff who opted to appeal to a foreign government, and Queen Victoria was far from the only foreign authority who found herself the target of a Chinese petition. Rather than treat it merely as a counterfactual teaching

[learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/teaching-and-learning-in-the-digital-age/imperialism-european-american-and-japanese/imperialism-in-china.](#)

³⁷⁷ The moralizing undertones of this narrative are particularly evident in school curricula in Hong Kong, where there exists a distinction between the co-existent subjects of "Chinese History," which embraces the victimization narrative, and "History," which does not. See Flora Kan and Edward Vickers, "One Hong Kong, Two Histories: 'History' and 'Chinese History' in the Hong Kong School Curriculum," *Comparative Education* 38:1 (2002), 73-89.

³⁷⁸ See, e.g., Zheng WANG, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 39-40.

exercise or rhetorical fuel for nationalistic propaganda, we should see Lin's letter as symptomatic of a broader Chinese tradition of memorializing upward and appealing to higher authority, which permeated not just the formal bureaucracy but virtually all strata of Qing society. As I highlight in this chapter, Chinese merchants and migrants adopted this same practice and judiciously extended it to addressing a range of commercial and personal problems, with not only Chinese but also foreign parties, on the South China Coast and beyond.³⁷⁹

Foreign authorities who found themselves the object of Chinese commercial complaints in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries included not just Queen Victoria but also kings João V and João VI of Portugal, presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison of the United States, Prince Metternich of Austria, the viceroy of the state of Brazil, at least a dozen judges and juries in the federal and state courts of Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York, and a diverse cast of governors, civil servants, and municipal councilmembers in locations ranging from Macau and Batavia to Stockholm and Rio.³⁸⁰

The scattered but illuminating examples that have entered the historical record suggest that Chinese merchants were intrepid petitioners. When they felt wronged, they refused to suffer in silence. They proactively wrote letters, filed lawsuits, and if necessary appealed to the highest authorities in the land in order to address their grievances. Although historians of late imperial China have long recognized such attitudes toward litigation and various forms of escalative problem solving between Chinese parties, we have taken little note of Chinese merchants' and migrants' extension of these same cultural practices to addressing disagreements with foreigners. Nor have we adequately considered the implications thereof for the broader landscape of

³⁷⁹ Among other things, this suggests to me that many people did not necessarily see "a conflict with foreigners" and "a conflict with other Chinese" as being all that different.

³⁸⁰ AHU-Macau, cx. 2, doc. 76; 19:34 and 19:49; 50:30.

commercial dispute resolution in the context of growing global trade and transnational contact in the nineteenth century.³⁸¹

The significance of such appeals is two-fold. At their most basic level, records of these petitions can help scholars uncover the individual agency and resolve of disparate Chinese actors who navigated the challenges and opportunities produced by expanding intercourse with the West. At the same time, such appeals can also shed new light onto the customary practices, attitudes, and mechanisms that Chinese actors adopted in their efforts to achieve their desired objectives. In many cases, letters and lawsuits contained details of earlier, less confrontational methods that individuals tried and exhausted before they resorted to petitioning, litigation, and adjacent means. In other instances, Chinese individuals' known willingness to escalate matters if necessary even demonstrated an apparent prophylactic effect, wherein the threat could be as powerful as the execution: just the knowledge that the opposing party was unafraid of escalation could cause more complication-averse parties—especially commercial players (such as opium smugglers) wary of increased bureaucratic oversight—to settle rather than risk the messiness, and potential financial costs, of protracted disagreement.

Although Lin Zexu's bureaucratic rank and influence made him an outlier in terms of social station, his willingness to appeal to a foreign authority was not extraordinary in and of itself. Many more examples exist, ranging from Chinese tea planters at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Rio de Janeiro who appealed to Macao's Chinese authorities for intervention when their labor conditions diverged from what was stipulated in their contracts, to Chinese sailors in London who went to criminal court after one of them was robbed by a local prostitute, to coolies

³⁸¹ On these strategies in Chinese legal practice, see Philip C. Huang, *Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); and Melissa Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture: Litigation Masters in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

in Havana whose appeals to the Qing state half a century later would lead to the Chinese government's first international diplomatic interventions abroad.³⁸²

Chinese merchants could go to great lengths to pursue their claims. As Frederic Grant has detailed in his research on Chinese debt collection in the United States, one form that this took was through formal arbitration in American federal and state courts.³⁸³ Grant identifies at least a dozen different Chinese merchants who filed actions in American federal and state courts in the early nineteenth century. While these litigants included prominent Hong merchants such as Conseequa (Pan Changyao 潘長耀; trade name Pan Kunshuiguan 潘崑水官 or “[Pan] Conseequa”) and Pacqua (Li Guangyuan 黎光遠; also “Exchin,” a trade name shared with his father and brother), a little over half of the plaintiffs were so-called “outside merchants” or secondary shopkeepers external to the Hong.³⁸⁴

As a result of Chinese merchants' efforts to pursue claims abroad, clerks to foreign trading houses in China often found themselves occupied with facilitating these transnational

³⁸² For the letter authored by the headman of the Chinese tea planters in Brazil, see ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/10/001484; for robbery cases involving Chinese sailors in London, see *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, t18000917-106, September 1800 trial of Mary Bush, Sarah Clarke, and Elizabeth Smith; and t18000917-29, September 1800 trial of William Rayner and Charles Moren. For a brief overview of late Qing diplomatic efforts concerning the coolie trade, see Robert L. Irick, *Ch'ing Policy toward the Coolie Trade: 1847-1878* (Taipei: Chinese Materials Center, 1982); Steffen Rimmer, “Chinese Abolitionism: the Chinese Educational Mission in Connecticut, Cuba, and Peru,” *Journal of Global History* 11:3 (2016), 344-364; and China Cuba Commission, *The Cuba Commission Report: A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba: The Original English-language Text of 1876* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

³⁸³ Frederic Delano Grant, Jr., “Hong Merchant Litigation in the American Courts,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 99 (1987): 44-62; Grant, *The Chinese Cornerstone of Modern Banking: The Canton Guaranty System and the Origins of Bank Deposit Insurance, 1780-1933* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 156-157. See also Charles C. Stelle, “American Trade in Opium to China, Prior to 1820,” *Pacific Historical Review* 9:4 (December 1940): 436-437. Records exist for cases filed in the federal courts of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island and state courts of New York and Pennsylvania, and as Grant notes, “[i]t is almost certain that other lawsuits were filed by Chinese merchants for which records have not been found...[or] have been lost.” Grant, *The Chinese Cornerstone of Modern Banking*, 156, ff. 35.

³⁸⁴ Many of these comparatively smaller shopkeepers nonetheless transacted significant volumes of business, but the fact that they, outside the formal apparatus of state-licensed, could still go to the lengths of filing lawsuits in foreign courts speaks to the power of individual initiative in addressing issues that arose over the course of trade. (Of course, it also speaks to the significant financial interests at stake.)

efforts.³⁸⁵ As Edward Delano, granduncle of future American president Franklin D. Roosevelt, wrote in his diary one August day while clerking for Russell and Company as a young man in 1841, he had spent “all day and evening making out powers of attorney for various Hong merchants to the end that they may recover back monies for teas &c. sold by them to a man calling himself an American under the cognomen of T. Woodhouse Stevens...[who] has absconded to Bombay on his way to England and France.”³⁸⁶ This Stevens—who went by various first names including Thomas and John, and whom a British court in 1847 described as an itinerant businessman-turned-swindler “formerly of Calcutta, East Indies, then of Canton, in the empire of China, then of No. 42, Dorset-street, Baker-street, Portman-square, then of Paris, in the kingdom of France, then of Antwerp, in the kingdom of Belgium, then of Washington, United States, America, then of No. 34, Connaught-terrace, Edgeware-road, Middlesex, then of Trieste, in the empire of Austria, then of Washington aforesaid, then of Oak-lodge, near Watford, Hertfordshire, then of York-terrace, Regent’s park, Middlesex, then of Rio Janeiro, Brazil, then of Upper Stamford-street, Blackfriars-road, Surrey, then of Scarborough, Yorkshire, then lodging at the Queen’s Hotel, Manchester, Lancashire, then of No. 284, Stretford New-road, Manchester aforesaid, then of Hampton-villa, Bristol, Somersetshire, then and late of Upper Stamford-street, Blackfriars-road aforesaid, and also of No. 21 Austin-friars, in the city of London, Merchant”—owed some £24,000 to his Chinese creditors in Canton by the time he appeared in a London debtor’s court in 1847.³⁸⁷ Stevens died in prison a year later, and it does not appear that either his

³⁸⁵ Since Chinese merchants generally relied on their American trading partners to file suits on their behalf, these Americans’ willingness to file lawsuits against their compatriots at a time of heightened patriotism during the War of 1812 also testify to an extent to the strength of their relationships with their Chinese counterparts.

³⁸⁶ “Diary of Edward Delano” (1841), 9 August 1841, Papers Collected by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Box 119, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.

³⁸⁷ *London Gazette* 2 (1847): 2118-2119; *Allen’s Indian Mail and Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India and All Parts of the East* 5 (1847): 410.

Chinese or his Western creditors were able to recover their funds.³⁸⁸ In other cases, however, Chinese merchants were more successful.

Although these American examples stand out for their formal involvement of the judicial system, Chinese merchants did not refrain from petitioning distant authorities in other national contexts as well. For example, Paul van Dyke has shown that individual Hong merchants such as Poankeequa (Pan Zhencheng 潘振承 or Pan Wenyan 潘文巖, 1714-1788; trade name Pan Qiguan 潘启官) occasionally wrote directly to East Indies company representatives in London or Gothenburg to lobby for their interests when they felt that circumstances were sufficiently pressing, despite Qing prohibitions against Chinese merchants' direct communications with contacts in Europe.³⁸⁹

In at least one case, a Chinese creditor even pursued his foreign claims in person. In 1807, a Canton shopkeeper known to American audiences as Punqua Winchong (Rong Zhang 榮章; trade name Binguan 斌觀 or "Punqua") arrived in Nantucket, Massachusetts with the goal of redeeming banknotes issued to him by the firm Shaw and Randall some years earlier.³⁹⁰

Revolutionary War veteran Samuel Shaw had founded the firm two years after leading the first American commercial expedition to China in 1784, but despite some early successes, Shaw and

³⁸⁸ *Allen's Indian Mail and Register of Intelligence* 5 (1847), 410; *The London Gazette*, part 2 (1847), 1945; *The London Gazette*, part 3 (1848), 3307.

³⁸⁹ Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2016), 70-72. As a youth, Poankeequa was something of a sojourner himself, having lived in the Philippines and gained fluency in Spanish while accompanying his father on business. After his father passed away, Poankeequa worked for Philippines-based relatives involved in China-Manila trade before returning to the South China Coast in the 1730s. His formative experiences abroad continued to shape his activities in Canton, where trade with Manila remained a cornerstone of his business throughout his commercial career. For detailed coverage of Poankeequa and his family's commercial activities, see Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 61-96. For an example of Poankeequa's written correspondence in Spanish, see BL: IOR E/1/49 Miscellaneous Letters Received 1767.

³⁹⁰ "Punqua Winchong" was a combination of Punqua's trade name and given name. For his Chinese signature, see College of William and Mary, Special Collections, Mss. 40 T79, "Letter, 1808 July 22, 'City of Washington,' [D.C.] to Thomas Jefferson, n.p."

Randall's business had worsened in the decades since. Although it was not uncommon for Chinese as well as and foreign merchants to carry extended debts, Punqua's patience had worn thin, prompting the in-person trip.

At the time of Punqua's arrival, the United States was in the midst of navigating the collateral impacts of the Napoleonic Wars, which had made American merchantmen the target of the British and French navies as each side sought to disrupt American trade with the other. In response to European molestation of American merchant shipping—particularly the routine seizure of American ships as “contraband” and the impressment of American sailors for service in the British Royal Navy—Congress enacted a general trade embargo against all foreign nations. Under the Embargo Act of 1807, no American merchant ship could sail for foreign ports, including China.

As a result of the embargo, Punqua Winchong found himself stranded in the United States almost immediately upon his arrival. Moreover, it turned out that the firm of Shaw and Randall had long since dissolved, leaving Punqua unable to redeem his banknotes. With no reason to remain but also no end to the commercial shipping moratorium in sight, Punqua petitioned Thomas Jefferson to grant an exception to the embargo and permit a single ship to sail for China, on which Punqua could return. Viewing the situation as a diplomatic opportunity in which favorable treatment of Punqua might ingratiate the young United States with the Qing empire, Jefferson consented.³⁹¹

Dubbed “Jefferson's Mandarin” by the American press, Punqua soon found himself embroiled in controversy surrounding the U.S. President's decision to allow a ship to sail for China. New York real estate magnate and opium smuggler John Jacob Astor was the lucky

³⁹¹ Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *John Jacob Astor, Business Man, vol. 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 421-423.

businessman granted permission to charter a ship, the *Beaver*, to Canton. Unsurprisingly, this decision incensed all of America's other China traders, who remained subject to the embargo and could do nothing but watch as one of their most prominent competitors loaded Punqua's transport ship with trade goods and prepared to set sail. As one piqued merchant complained in a letter to Jefferson, "It would be cruel to the highest degree for any person to object to [Punqua and his servant's]...return to their native country, but why is a ship of five hundred Tons necessary to carry them (and to return with a full Cargo)?" This same anonymous correspondent, who claimed to know Punqua from China, also took issue with Astor's rather generous portrayal of Punqua as a "Mandarin" or Qing official, arguing that while it was true the Canton man held "notes of Shaw & Randall's to a large amount and...came to this country for the express purpose of collecting the same," he was a mere shopkeeper, not a government representative, who had in fact left Canton surreptitiously in order to evade the very class of official that Astor made him out to be. American newspapers' reports that Punqua Winchong had "acquired sufficient knowledge of the English tongue to make himself tolerably well understood," rather than affirming Punqua's purported status as a member of the Chinese educated elite (as Astor claimed), suggest that Punqua was likely little different than other Chinese sojourners in the early nineteenth century: an economic migrant and opportunist who had acquired basic levels of *yi*yu competency over the course of his dealings with Westerners.³⁹²

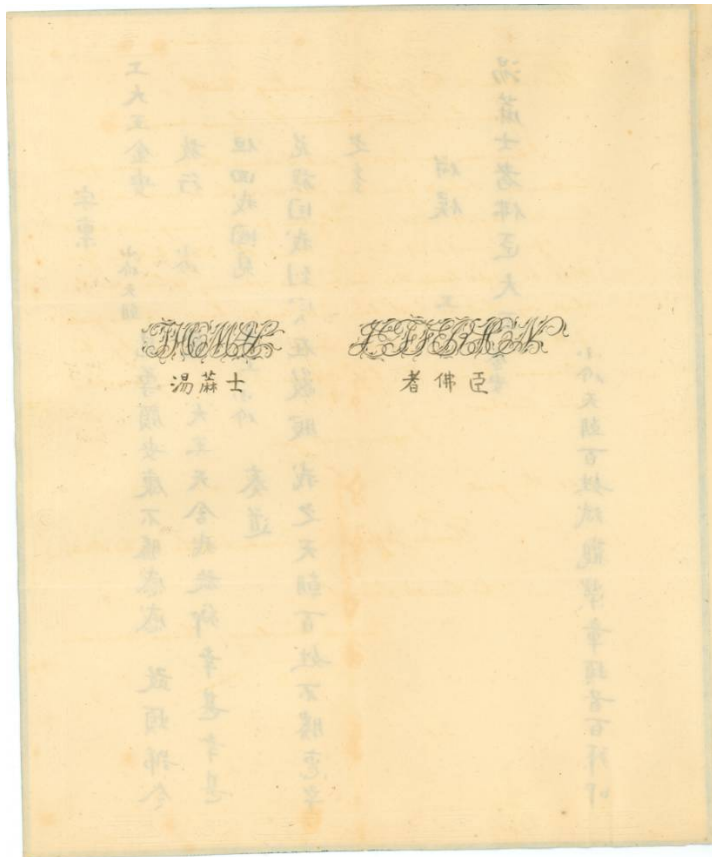
Nonetheless, the *Beaver* sailed, Punqua returned to Canton, and Astor enjoyed his windfall.³⁹³ Although Punqua's voyage on this occasion did not fulfill its immediate objectives, the Chinese merchant maintained his ties to the United States. On February 5, 1809, Punqua

³⁹² *Alexandria Daily Gazette* (Alexandria, VA), 27 Aug. 1808.

³⁹³ As one merchant who persuaded Astor to let him ship a consignment of goods wryly commented to Houqua, "The embargo operates in favor of the goods you consigned to me." NYPL: MssCol 4221, "Oliver Wolcott Letterbook, 1803-1808," Letter from Oliver Wolcott to Houqua, 16 August 1808.

Wingchong wrote a thank-you letter to newly elected President James Madison, and he followed it up a year later with a gift for First Lady Dolley Madison, sent through his business acquaintance Jesse Waln. Nor would this be the last of his dealings with the United States: New York newspapers flew an advertisement for his shop in 1811, and later that decade he made another in-person visit. In January of 1818, New York's *Evening Post* reported another visit to the United States by Punqua Winchong, "the same who visited Boston in 1808," but details on this follow-up trip are sparse.³⁹⁴

Figure 7. Letter from Punqua Winchong to Thomas Jefferson



Letter addressed to Thomas Jefferson, written in the hand of Punqua Winchong. College of William and Mary, Special Collections, Mss. 40 T79, "Letter, 1808 July 22, 'City of Washington,' [D.C.] to Thomas Jefferson, n.p."

³⁹⁴ *The Evening Post* (New York, NY), 22 Jan. 1818.

Other merchants likewise felt the economic impact of the embargo and America's embroilment in European geopolitics. In February of 1814, after his lawsuits in American courts had yielded only middling success, the Hong merchant Conseequa wrote to James Madison for assistance. Once again, a well-connected John Jacob Astor was at the center of things, as Conseequa had tasked the New York businessman with helping orchestrate his foreign litigation efforts.

Written in Chinese and accompanied by a Spanish translation, the letter explained that Conseequa had "for many years had extensive dealings in Commerce with the Subjects of the United States," that "from the correct and honorable deportment of many amongst them he was led to give them Credits for large amount," and "that whilst Trade was flourishing, he heard no Complaints from them, and many returned to China and made good their engagements."³⁹⁵ In recent years, however, more and more American merchants had defaulted on their debts, and even those "who do not labour under inability to pay their debts, or who do not acknowledge that they are unable, object to pay them."³⁹⁶ Unlike in the case of Punqua Winchong, Conseequa's petition to the President of the United States does not appear to have elicited a response, although the Hong merchant's lawsuits did bear some fruit.

Such petitioning was not limited to influential and well-connected Chinese merchants, who could leverage preexisting business relationships or have their foreign contacts file cases abroad and help collect debts on their behalf. Smalltime traders and individual creditors, too, could turn out to be tenacious petitioners determined to pursue their claims up to the highest

³⁹⁵ Conseequa spoke French, "having learned it when young from officers of French ships" during the heyday of Sino-French trade in the late eighteenth century; I am unsure about Spanish proficiency in his case, although many of the Chinese Manilla traders did know some Spanish. Peabody Essex Museum, Bryant P. Tilden Journals, subseries A, "Second and Third Voyages to China, in Ship *Canton*, 1816-1819," 93.

³⁹⁶ Conseequa to James Madison, 10 February 1814. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/03-07-02-0242#JSMN-03-07-02-0242-fn-0001>.

authorities. One such petitioner was a Chinese merchant named Alon, who in 1799 was a passenger aboard the Spanish ship *Boa Viagem*, bound on a return trip from the Brazilian coast to Mauritius by way of Montevideo, when local authorities detained the vessel after it made an illegal stopover at the port of Palaty.³⁹⁷ The attempts of the Manilla-registered ship to circumvent local trading regulations aroused the suspicions of the local authorities, who seized the ship and escorted it and its crew to Rio de Janeiro, where all of the non-Portuguese passengers aboard the *Boa Viagem* found themselves under heightened scrutiny.³⁹⁸ “[D]ue to lacking the proper documentation [for his goods],” Alon was detained, along with three French privateers who were suspected of being smugglers; Alon’s goods were confiscated, and he himself was held on the outskirts of Rio and his property kept from him while local authorities investigated the matter.³⁹⁹ For the following two years, Alon lobbied in vain for the restitution of his property and the liberty to return home and repay his creditors.

One could easily be forgiven for thinking that under such dire circumstances—stranded thousands of miles from his native land, lacking the usual support of Chinese kinship or confraternal networks, and caught amidst the collateral vagaries of European geopolitics—Alon

³⁹⁷ Until 1808, mercantilist policies limited access to Brazilian ports to Portuguese and British ships, with vessels from other nations permitted to enter only in case of distress. However, it was common for free traders and smugglers to feign distress or present minor self-induced damages in order to gain access. As one American merchant instructed his supercargo, “Proceed to Rio Janeiro, where you will stop under pretence of watering, and there endeavour to dispose of y’r goods; should you not be able to do anything there you will go to the River La Plata and report in distress and set your ship a leaking, and make representations that it is necessary for you to remain for some time, when you will unquestionably be able to sell y’r goods to advantage.” Harvard Business School, Russell and Company Records, Box 27, Mss:766, 20 July 1804.

³⁹⁸ To Alon’s misfortune, his fellow passengers aboard the *Boa Viagem* turned out to include several French smugglers, among them Jeanne d’Entremeuse, arguably one of the South Atlantic’s most prolific smugglers of the era. French by birth, d’Entremeuse had fled to Mauritius in 1792, at the height of the Reign of Terror, and from Mauritius the widower and mother of two established herself as a key player in a sprawling smuggling network that operated between French, Portuguese, and Spanish colonies in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. On d’Entremeuse, see Ernst Pijning, “‘Can She Be a Woman?’ Gender and Contraband in the Revolutionary Atlantic,” in *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800*, eds. Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 215-250.

³⁹⁹ Letter from José de Almeida Vasconcelos Soveral de Albergaria to João VI, April 30, 1801, AHU_CU_017, cx. 199, doc. 14121; and letter from the Overseas Council to João VI, August 18, 1802 AHU_CU_017, cx. 203, doc. 14308.

might lose hope. Alon, however, did not despair. His unrelenting efforts to reclaim his property and sail home eventually reached the ears of Fernando José de Portugal e Castro, Viceroy of the State of Brazil. “For two years the supplicant has been unable to deliver his seized goods...and he has come to this court with [several dispatches] to plead that I deign to have his goods delivered for transport to [Mauritius], and to inform his creditors,” wrote the viceroy; “therefore [he has] my real pity.”⁴⁰⁰ Under guidance from none other than João VI, prince regent of Portugal, Brazilian authorities ultimately granted Alon a full pardon and ordered him to be compensated for his losses.⁴⁰¹ Soon after, Alon was back in China, although he did not stay there long: in March of 1805, the intrepid merchant set out once more—this time for a different destination, and unaccompanied by French smugglers—on his way to London.⁴⁰²

How Alon navigated what Castro described as the itinerant merchant’s “remote situation...among mysterious customs and laws” speaks volumes to the tenacity with which Chinese commercial actors could pursue their claims.⁴⁰³ Whether in China or in distant lands, merchants both major and minor demonstrated a readiness to launch their own appeals to foreign authorities. On occasion, even ordinary Chinese sailors joined in on the act. In Chapter 1, we already saw how one ship’s crewmembers took a wage complaint up to the Navy Office and threatened to remain in London until they received what they felt were their correct wages. After the end of the EIC monopoly on Chinese trade and its centralized oversight of Asian seamen, it was more common for sailors to encounter the opposite problem: how to return home when the private traders who had conveyed them to England did not make another voyage to China or

⁴⁰⁰ AHU_CU_BRASIL, caixa 199, doc. 14121.

⁴⁰¹ Meanwhile, the three Frenchmen had launched their own letter-writing campaign, which proved to be less successful. On the efforts of Moufflé, Sauvaget, and Bonnafou to have themselves and their goods returned to Mauritius, see AHU_CU_017, caixa 203, doc. 14308.

⁴⁰² BL: IOR/L/MAR/B/107F, journal of the *Taunton Castle*.

⁴⁰³ Letter from José de Almeida Vasconcelos Soveral de Albergaria to João VI, April 30, 1801, AHU_CU_017, cx. 199, doc. 14121.

otherwise neglected to hire them for an outbound voyage. On October 3, 1835, *The Times* of London reported the case of four stranded Chinese sailors “who had been abandoned by the captain and owners of the vessel which brought them to England” and were seeking assistance in returning to their homeland.⁴⁰⁴ Starting in August of that year, the men had already twice petitioned the mayor of London for aid, but although their case had bounced between the mayor’s office and various local commercial committees, they had yet to secure a passage home. Therefore, “perceiving that the humane interference of the Lord Mayor with the East India Company, or the forwarding of his letter to the Board of Trade, and then to His Majesty’s Commissioners of the Treasury, obtained for them no temporary relief, nor the prospect of a passage home, [the sailors] determined on petitioning His Majesty.”⁴⁰⁵

The original Chinese petition has been lost, but a translation of the men’s petition to King William IV appeared in *The Times* a few months later, along with some parenthetical glosses by the retired missionary who translated it:

With profound respect we presume to inform your Majesty that during your reign an English vessel arrived at our country requiring sailors; your four petitioners were engaged, for \$7 per month from the time that we left Linting, having to allow two months’ wages to the person who hired us. On our arrival in England there was due to each of us \$14. The captain’s name is Ka-na-fa (Crawford), and the name of the ship Hwuy-lin Lo-sze (probably the William Ross). After being four months and a half at sea, we arrived at Po-loo-chin (probably Portsmouth). On the residue of our wages being paid, we were ordered on shore, and no further care was taken care of us. Being uncomfortably situated, we proceeded to Lun-ton (London), where we have been about six months, depending on the uncertain sale of a few toys in the streets, till we were met by an Englishman, to whom we could communicate our distress, when he went with us, about a month since, to the Lord Mayor, Min-che-tsa (Winchester), who referred us to the East India Company. The East India Company not rendering us any assistance, we four men therefore now look up to you, the Great Emperor, that you will be pleased to issue an order for us to go on board the first ship bound for China, that we may return to our native country, and not be suffered to die here of cold and hunger. We humbly bed that you will grant this favour.
A-Sze

⁴⁰⁴ *The Times*, “Poor Chinese.” October 3, 1835.

⁴⁰⁵ *The Times*, “The Destitute Chinese,” January 21, 1836.

A-Hwae

A-Kin

10th day of the 9th month of the 13th year of the Emperor Taou-kwang⁴⁰⁶

The details of the sailors' employment are consistent with what we know of Chinese maritime sojourning more generally, including their salaries and the treatment of their imprest or advance wages as a headhunter's fee distributed to the Chinese broker who facilitated their hiring.⁴⁰⁷ The men's testimony that they made a living selling toys also echoes the experiences of other itinerants such as Asee, the ex-seaman and Cornwall Mission School student who had similarly sold toys in the streets of Boston before enrolling at the missionary school (see Chapter 2). Eventually, the men's efforts paid off, and on January 4, 1836, some five months after submitting their first petition, the men boarded a Calcutta-bound ship and began their journey homeward.⁴⁰⁸

Closer to home, Chinese petitioners also did not hesitate to appeal to foreign authorities when an appropriate opportunity presented itself. A regular subject of transnational Chinese petitions in the early nineteenth century was Miguel de Arriaga, the Procurador of Macao who had himself often been the target of Chinese appeals due to his reputed empathy for Macao's Chinese inhabitants.⁴⁰⁹ In addition to spearheading Brazil's first importations of Chinese laborers for service in Rio's palace gardens and naval shipyards following the relocation of the Portuguese royal court during the Napoleonic Wars (see Chapter 1), Arriaga was also instrumental in coordinating pirate suppression efforts in the Pearl River Delta and outlying

⁴⁰⁶ *The Times*, "The Destitute Chinese," January 21, 1836. The petition does not list the name of the fourth sailor.

⁴⁰⁷ Treatment of imprest money as a headhunter's fee that went directly to the labor broker was the norm among Chinese labor recruiters in Batavia and for men recruited to work on St. Helena.

⁴⁰⁸ *The Times*, January 21, 1836.

⁴⁰⁹ The Procurador was the chief Portuguese civil officer in Macao and the member of the Senate responsible for handling Chinese affairs. Referred to as the *yimu* 夷目 or "superintendent of foreigners" in Chinese correspondence, the Procurador was accredited by Qing authorities to deal directly with local officials and thus served as the primary conduit of formal Sino-Portuguese relations until the mid-nineteenth century.

island groups such as the Ladrões archipelago. Throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century, Arriaga regularly offered the services of Portuguese vessels to Chinese authorities and also pushed the Leal Senado (Municipal Council of Macao) to authorize pirate-fighting naval sorties, which both earned him the praise of Qing officials and ingratiated him with local merchants, whose business had long suffered from marauders' disruptions to their trade. In particular, Arriaga's active collaboration with Qing authorities in stymying Great Britain's abortive attempts to occupy Macao during the Napoleonic Wars boosted his local standing, despite his reputation as a major opium smuggler.⁴¹⁰

However, Arriaga's unusually close involvement in Chinese affairs drew the unwelcome scrutiny of officials back in Lisbon, and on multiple occasions he faced accusations of corruption. In February of 1803, nine leading members of Macao's Chinese merchant community wrote a petition to João VI in which they defended Arriaga against these accusations and praised the Procurador for his beneficent treatment of Macao's Chinese inhabitants.⁴¹¹ (They were not alone in doing so: also in February of 1803, a group of ten leading Portuguese residents likewise petitioned Dom João on Arriaga's behalf.) Two more Chinese petitions in support of Arriaga followed when Arriaga again found himself under scrutiny a few years later (1809), this time authored not just by the merchant community but also by the magistrate of Xiangshan County. "Arriaga has been in Macao for many years, handling matters fairly and maintaining amicable relations with the Chinese," wrote the magistrate, who like the private residents of

⁴¹⁰ Great Britain made two attempts to occupy Macao, in 1802 and 1808, in both cases under the pretext of keeping Macao from falling under French control. After the French invasion of Portugal in 1807, the British Governor General of India authorized an expedition to occupy Macao, but English forces desisted in the face of Portuguese and Chinese opposition (and after news of the Treaty of Amiens, which temporarily halted English and French hostilities, reached the British forces anchored near Macao). Arriaga cited British India as a reason that Qing authorities should be wary of British expansionism with respect to its attempts to occupy Macao.

⁴¹¹ AHU-Macau, cx. 23, doc. 5.

Macao protested Arriaga's dismissal.⁴¹² In particular, the magistrate cited Arriaga's instrumental role in fighting pirates as justification for why he hoped he could stay. When Arriaga's would-be replacement arrived in Macao, the local magistrate wrote again, with the backing of the broader Chinese commercial community, and through their persistence they managed to retain Arriaga in office.

The Chinese commercial community's support for a foreign official was not without precedent. Records from the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino show that on at least two prior occasions, in 1793 and 1794, following the recall of Vasco Luís Carneiro de Sousa e Faro as Governor of Macao (also on allegations of corruption), a consortium of Chinese residents claiming to represent "the Hong merchants and general populace of the city of Macao" had authored letters of support for the erstwhile governor.⁴¹³ Although one might question to what extent most Chinese inhabitants would have actually concerned themselves with the machinations of city politics, the letters do not appear to have been the random acts of a few individuals either. The petition from 1794, for example, bore the seals of nearly a hundred and twenty Chinese residents.⁴¹⁴ Citing their desire for continued "great success" in Sino-Portuguese relations, the petitions asked for Sousa e Faro's reappointment as governor. Chinese merchant associations in diaspora are also known to have used similar petitions to influence the retention of European officials with the aim of ensuring a stable commercial environment, such as in Johor.

⁴¹² ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/8/001003.

⁴¹³ AHU-Macao, cx. 19, doc. 49; cx. 20, doc. 6. From what I can tell, the charges of corruption had little to do with

⁴¹⁴ AHU-Macao, cx. 20, doc. 6.

Figure 7, continued



AHU-Macao, cx. 20, doc. 6 (Nov. 23, 1794). Most of these seals are Chinese, but a few are in Manchu, a few are bilingual Manchu-Chinese seals, and one bears only the individual's Romanized name ("Taicun").

Debt and Recompense at the Grassroots

Interpersonal debts were among the most common causes of transnational dispute and conciliation on the South China Coast. As a function of the formal structures of trade as well as informal, trade-adjacent activities, both Chinese and foreign parties routinely lent money or supplied credit to one another. This occurred at the very highest levels, between the Hong

merchants and East India companies, as well as at the very lowest, involving interpersonal loans and systems of credit between local residents and foreigners.

Most financial histories of Chinese foreign trade have focused on the largest commercial players, principally the East India companies and their Hong merchant counterparts. Much scholarship has accordingly emphasized the crippling debts of the latter and shown how the perennial insolvency of many Hong merchants destabilized transnational relations, heightened political-economic tensions, and contributed to changing Western perceptions of Chinese people and culture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴¹⁵ Looking beyond the commerce of the companies, recent scholarship has also demonstrated how private traders' fragile systems of credit—in particular their reliance on high-interest loans—compounded Hong merchants' unstable financial footing and eventually collapsed into a global financial crisis that helped precipitate growing British imperial interventions in China and India from the eighteenth century onward.⁴¹⁶

Less well understood, however, are lower-level, routine arrangements between individual Chinese and foreign parties. Although in terms of financial value these transactions were dwarfed by the trade of the East India companies, such exchanges and the relationships that they entailed had a far greater impact on people's daily lives. Business partners, shopkeepers and customers, landlords and tenants, and neighbors in Macao's mixed residential environment regularly lent money to one another or made purchases on credit. Since financial arrangements between Chinese and foreign parties varied in type, duration, and context, a general degree of flexibility was expected in the making and enforcement of agreements.

⁴¹⁵ See, e.g., Kuo-Tang Anthony Ch'en, *The Insolvency of the Chinese Hong Merchants, 1760-1843* (Taipei: The Institute of Economics, Academia Sinica, 1990).

⁴¹⁶ Jessica Hanser, *Mr. Smith Goes to China: Three Scots in the Making of Britain's Global Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

Financial loans relied on a range of written contracts and oral agreements. The form of agreement (whether written or oral) was not necessarily a function of the volume or value of the transaction; it was typically determined by whatever the two individuals making the agreement found preferable or could agree upon. When one or both parties desired greater assurances to formalize the agreement, they might draw up a written contract, which often was notarized by the Portuguese authorities. (In these cases, where a contract was deemed necessary, I have seen almost no instances where the contracting parties produced only a Chinese version of the contract: either the document was bilingual, with separate Chinese and Portuguese versions, or it was just in Portuguese, which suggests that Chinese parties were more willing to trust verbal agreements than their counterparts were. In those cases where the contract existed only in a Portuguese-language version, it was typically notarized by the Portuguese authorities in Macao, which seemed to provide sufficient assurances for the Chinese party to the agreement.) In other cases, both sides might forego a formal contract, but the lending party often kept an account book in which the borrower was expected to sign their name upon making each repayment, to serve as documentation in case of disputes. In yet other cases, typically when the transacting parties were already familiar with one another, they relied solely on oral agreements in lieu of written documentation.

Whether lenders charged interest likewise depended on a number of factors, including the expected duration of the loan and the level of familiarity and trust between the contracting parties. Qing case records suggest that among ordinary people, many loans between Chinese and Western parties began interest-free but often came with an informal understanding that the lender could share in the profits of the venture, with interest to be added later if the borrower took too long to repay the principal. Since lenders held a vested interest in borrowers' success, many

preferred to wait before burdening borrowers with interest charges. In this way, lenders could hold the threat of charging interest over borrowers' heads as a socially sanctioned tactic for hastening a loan's repayment, while leaving themselves the option of deciding when to start charging interest, so as to afford maximum flexibility in ensuring repayment of capital without dampening the prospects of borrowers' ventures. When charged, interest often compounded monthly (e.g., two percent per month), although flat interest rates existed as well. In most informal arrangements, lenders did not specify terms of default, which often led to disagreements over how long it was taking a borrower to repay the principal and any accumulated interest, as well as differences in interpretation of when (and how much) interest could be charged.

Extended debts were not uncommon. Reported one Chinese petitioner, named Tan Sheng:

In the sixteenth and seventeenth years of Daoguang [ca. 1836-1837], I engaged in trade with one 'Feili Shandu' [Filipe Santos]. Because of doing one business deal after another, I owed him several sums of money.

After the two of us had settled accounts in person, I still owed him a total of 216.50 silver dollars. Of the money that I owed him, there were also 80 silver dollars owed in the name of one Lü Jun'en from Jiangmen.⁴¹⁷ As a result, we wrote up an account of the debts owed, and I gave it to Filipe Santos for safekeeping and to retain as proof.

However, on that account there wasn't anything written about paying interest. From the time that that account was written up, there were no further business transactions between Filipe Santos and me. After this, on a number of different occasions, I repaid a total of 96.50 silver dollars to Filipe Santos, which he received. Now Filipe Santos won't produce the original agreement that we wrote to examine it, but he obstinately demands that interest be computed. This greatly exceeds all reasonableness.

⁴¹⁷Jiangmen (江門) was a town in the western Pearl River Delta located about 45 miles from Macao and 70 miles from Canton. In historic times Jiangmen had been situated directly on the sea, but its commercial and political importance waned as ecological changes in the river delta increasingly limited its water access, and despite opening as a treaty port in 1904 it was largely overshadowed by other South China entrepôts. Nonetheless, Jiangmen retained societal and cultural significance as a hub for Chinese out-migration. For example, the Siyi (四邑) or "Four Counties" that constituted Jiangmen's immediate hinterland accounted for an estimated eighty percent of total Chinese immigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. United States Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and Janet Hume Nunn, *Commercial Travelers' Guide to the Far East* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), 116-117; Lynn Pan, *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 36.

Upon examination, there are many business transactions between Chinese people and foreigners in Macau, and interest has never had to be paid on the bills for goods. Moreover, according to the sheet that we wrote up earlier as proof, there wasn't written anything about having to pay interest. So how can he now presume to be so greedy?⁴¹⁸

Tan Sheng's petition continued by appealing to the Portuguese procurador's conscience:

Brilliant old sir, you have always been famous for handling matters between us Chinese and foreigners and you are respected by all. I entreat you to put forth efforts to make Feili Shandu find that sheet of debts that we wrote up. Sir, please examine clearly the handwriting on that sheet. If there is language about paying interest, then naturally I should pay accordingly. But if there *isn't* such language, then I should only return the money that I owe for the goods.

Moreover, I, Tan Sheng, have no other job besides working as a dispatcher—that kind of job—and I'm poor and my life is bitter, and it's hard for me to support my family, who are crying piteously for food. Fuel and candles don't suffice in my family now.

If I reflect on this matter, at this moment it truly would be very difficult for me to repay the whole amount. I can only according to the figure owed pay month by month on an installment plan; perhaps in this way I can make up the amount owed.

Now I very humbly entreat you, sir, to take the money that is owed in my, Tan Sheng's, name and deduct the 96.50 from it that I have already paid him, and then [figure out] how much money I actually still owe him, and justly analyze and judge the situation and separate the installment dates so that I can repay what I owe. Of course, I should listen to you about the matter. I feel limitless gratitude to you for your great virtue.

Tan's emphasis that "there are many business transactions between Chinese people and foreigners in Macau, and interest has never had to be paid on the bills for goods" highlights his expectation that charging interest was an uncommon practice unless otherwise specified. Moreover, with Tan Sheng's petition coming some four years after entering a business relationship with Filipe Santos, this case also speaks to the long duration of some loans.

Seasonality

Seasonal factors also influenced financial transactions and social relationships on the South China Coast. Although hitherto under-explored in scholarship on everyday Sino-Western relations, the influence of seasonal effects should not be overlooked.

⁴¹⁸ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, PT/TT/DCHN/1/10/001359.

Seasonal effects mattered in two ways. The first related to the cyclical nature of the trading season itself, which until the widespread adoption of steamship technology largely tracked the rise and fall of the Indian Ocean's monsoon winds, from late summer through winter. The second stemmed from the Chinese custom of debt settlement before the Lunar New Year, since prevailing cultural norms held that it was inauspicious to begin a new year in debt. Because the end of Canton's trading season roughly coincided with the approach of Chinese New Year in late January or February, the last few days of each trading season tended to be hectic affairs. Tensions could run high as lenders tracked down borrowers, compradors settled accounts, and local vendors tried to part sailors with any remaining unspent dollars. Debt repayment was a serious matter; recall, for instance, the suicide of VOC ship comprador Ap-hing, who drowned himself in the well of the Dutch factory at Canton in January of 1802 after he despaired of being able to clear his debts before the new year.

Like the shopkeepers and brothel owners of London's docklands, who were well aware of when it was sailors' payday at the East India House, local residents of the South China Coast were attuned to the comings and goings of foreign ships. This informed their actions accordingly. When a ship's departure was imminent (a fact known locally because the coolies that had been loading the ship were relieved of their duties), unscrupulous shopkeepers were more likely to cheat foreign customers: with their business relationship coming to a close, there was a greater incentive to try and earn as much money as they could in any final transactions rather than leverage a good relationship for future business opportunities, as in most cases there was no guarantee that a particular customer would return to Canton in the future. Hard numbers on these temporal influences are difficult to come by, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many conflicts

occurred late in the trading season, and that many of those that occurred earlier in the season involved crewmembers of ships scheduled for an early departure, like the *Emily*.⁴¹⁹

Chinese court testimonies often point to the approach of Lunar New Year as the aggravating cause of worsened relations, even between parties that had hitherto enjoyed a relatively frictionless relationship.

For example, on January 15, 1792, Qing authorities in Macao reported the case of a Chinese woman surnamed Lam who was seeking to recover a loan that her husband had made three years earlier to a Portuguese woman named Maria. According to the report, in 1789, Woman Lam's husband had loaned forty Spanish dollars to Maria at an interest rate of four *liang* per month. Lam maintained an account book in which Maria had signed her name each time she made a repayment, but Maria was poor, and she was struggling to repay the loan in full. Ever since Lam's husband died, the Chinese widow had been imploring Maria to repay her remaining debt, but the Portuguese woman kept stalling, and on Lam's most recent visit, her confrontation with Maria had turned physical.⁴²⁰

The local sub-prefect explained that on the thirteenth of January, Woman Lam had gone as usual to Maria's home to seek repayment, but to no avail. On the nineteenth of January, Lam returned, and Maria stalled again, promising to repay her the following year. Wearing by Maria's prevarications and "in a state of urgency on account of Chinese New Year," a frustrated Woman Lam "exchanged a few heated words with [Maria]," whereupon Maria, alleged Lam, "ordered an African slave to shove her out the front door." Lam fell and injured her head. As Lam told the

⁴¹⁹ Example: Huckey.

⁴²⁰ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/2/000118.

investigating authorities, not only did she still have the account book that documented the history of their financial relationship, but she also still had the bloody clothes to prove the injury.⁴²¹

When the Portuguese authorities investigated this same incident, Maria claimed that she had already paid over a hundred and fifty *liang* in interest and that Lam, in the course of frantically beseeching her to repay the loan, had torn Maria's clothes while the two of them were wrangling on Maria's doorstep. The investigating Chinese officials, however, found these claims to lack credibility.

The case of Maria and Woman Lam also serves as a reminder that while the formal trading environment in Canton was a male-dominated sphere, women were active players in everyday financial transactions. This was true among Westerners as well as among the Chinese. Since European and American wives who accompanied their merchant husbands to Asia resided alone in Macao for approximately half of the year while business was conducted at Canton during the trading season, many married women enjoyed considerable autonomy and were accustomed to managing household finances of their own accord. Common responsibilities included paying and reimbursing household servants—typically at least a household comprador, a cook, and an errand boy—as well as hiring a regular laundrywoman, paying boatmen for deliveries of mail and personal items, and coordinating the delivery of accessory foodstuffs such as milk. While some couples consulted each other regularly on financial matters, frequent consultation was cumbersome due to the time involved in writing and responding to correspondence that had to be delivered ninety miles up or down the Pearl River each way, as well as the occasional uncertainty of mail delivery and receipt. Many husbands were content to rely on spousal judgment in handling household affairs while they themselves tended to business

⁴²¹ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/2/000118.

in Canton, and surviving marital correspondence suggests that it was far more common for wives to alert their husbands of financial decisions after the fact than to seek input ahead of time.⁴²²

Uprooted from their social networks back home in Europe or the United States and with their husbands largely absent for much of the year, many merchants' wives also turned to each other for support while abroad. Like the gossiping Chinese sailors in London who compared notes on wages and working conditions under different sea captains, foreign women in China conferred and compared notes about the charges they incurred for services rendered by their respective Chinese associates. As Mary Russell reported to her husband one day in October,

I asked [Mrs. Fearon] what her wood + coal cost her per month, she says \$3.00 and oil \$2.00....[W]e must be cheated in both of them for our account is nearly seven dollars a month more than hers....I must try to find out the [reason] for to be cheated of \$84 per year is rather too much also in the washing I think we have been cheated for your and my account last month is \$8.50 and allowing your 60 pieces per week [that] could not be more than \$3.00 and I did not have half as many as you say \$2.00 this would have been 350 pieces to be used for the house, and this is quite impossible. I will send the things a particular day and have them brought at the stated time, and will see these counted myself.⁴²³

Mary's letters offer illuminating insight into the financial lives of Western women in China, and they suggest that negotiations like Maria's with Woman Lam were a regular if often invisible part of the fabric of daily life.

For Salem native Rebecca Kinsman, life in Macao likewise entailed regular financial negotiations with her Chinese acquaintances. Prominent among the issues that occupied her time was the maintenance of a cow that could supply fresh milk for her family, which entailed employing a "cow-man" to look after the animal's wellbeing and sporadic negotiations with her household comprador to procure a new cow whenever her old one died. She reported to her sister in May of 1845:

⁴²² See, e.g., the examples in BA: Mss.L556, Box 1.

⁴²³ BA: Mss.L556, Box 1, Mary Sturgis to Russell Sturgis, 18 October 1834.

On [Monday, May 4], our cow died, making the third we have lost within the year. Both Comprador and Cow-man were very much concerned for her. She seemed at first to have a violent cold and afterward a *fever*. Everything was done for her that could be done but without avail—the death is a great misfortune to us. We now buy milk at 15 cts a bottle, which answers for tea, though not very good, and [a neighbor] sends me goat's milk to feed the Baby twice a day, which is very good for him....I was called down just here to look at a *cow*, which the Comprador had brought for me to look at, a China cow. The man asks (at least so says the Comprador) the exorbitant sum of \$55 for her—Probably at least \$10.00 of this sum, is added for his own share of profit.⁴²⁴

Wearied by the continual upkeep costs of cow care and replacement, Kinsman opted not to replace the family cow and instead contracted with a local man “who has a very good Cow to bring her here morning and evening, and milk her,” for which she paid \$16 per month. As she emphasized to her sister, although this sum might have sounded exorbitant, “we used to pay \$12 a month for our cow-man and the food we provided—and then the risk of the cow's dying was I think greater than the extra 4 dollars—Mrs. Ritchie bought a very fine cow the other day—or rather a short time since, for which she paid \$100—and it was thought quite a bargain—and she lived only a month afterward.” Kinsman's letters describe a range of financial dealings with Chinese household staff, their auxiliaries, and other locals, and they make clear that it was normal for her and women like her to navigate such transactions on a regular basis.

In general, Chinese authorities preferred for Chinese and foreign parties to resolve their conflicts through official channels, especially when financial matters were involved. In December of 1825, an assistant to the magistrate of Xiangshan County issued a memorandum providing guidance on this matter:

In Macao, as everyone knows, Chinese people and foreigners live mixed together. All the stores, tailors' shops, commercial establishments, laborers, etc. often engage in business with foreigners, but they do all their business on credit. In cases involving people who know each other well, they will even lend each other money. This has long been the custom. These kinds of matters that involve indebtedness are very common and nothing special.

⁴²⁴ “The Daily Life of Mrs. Nathaniel Kinsman in Macao, China. Excerpts from Letters of 1845.” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 87 (1951): 127-128.

Elaborating on the Xiangshan magistrate's preferred method for solving disputes, the memorandum continued:

If a foreigner doesn't repay your money, you should naturally point out the foreigner's name to the superintendent of foreigners (*yimu*) so that the superintendent can seek repayment on your behalf; this is the best way to solve the problem. Why quarrel back and forth and bring trouble to yourself?... You in Macao may not take action on your own without authorization or fight or cause trouble. If anyone intentionally dares to disobey, no matter if they're right or wrong, I'll catch the one who started it. I'll be very strict in punishing them and will hang a cangue on them with characters of warning.⁴²⁵

The magistrate's admonishments notwithstanding, few Chinese merchants turned to local authorities as their first course of action. Official involvement and the investigations that it entailed brought what was often unwelcome scrutiny upon the commercial activities of the litigant, and even if plaintiffs felt convinced they were in the right, the outcome of judicial rulings could be uncertain (or risked blowing back on the plaintiff's head, if the foreign party was found to be engaged in opium smuggling or other such illicit activities). Besides, in practice, Qing officials were more tolerant of "tak[ing] action on [one']s own without authorization" than their stated preferences suggested, especially when such efforts resolved matters without further escalation. Chinese and foreign parties therefore preferred to try and resolve issues among themselves and brought matters to the attention of local authorities only when their informal efforts did not yield a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

The Case of Blind Man Qing

In autumn of 1806, a Portuguese businessman named António Rosa complained to the Chinese authorities in Macao about a local blind man called Qing. According to Rosa, "Blind

⁴²⁵ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/10/001321.

Qing” (盲清) rented a small storefront from him but had failed to pay rent in over two years, and Rosa wanted assistance in collecting what was due. The Chinese authorities launched an investigation, and on September 14, 1806, the local sub-prefect sent a copy of his findings to the Procurador’s office.⁴²⁶

As it turned out, the man known locally as “Blind Qing” was none other than Xie Qinggao, the itinerant Chinese sailor and smalltime merchant who had worked intermittently aboard European ships for fourteen years before retiring permanently to Macao (see Chapter 1).⁴²⁷ The *Hailu* had yet to be written, and although Xie had been able to pursue various business ventures in his youth, the now-forty-one-year-old man’s eyesight had faded considerably, and he had had to resort to selling fruit for a living. It was for this purpose that Xie was renting a storefront from Rosa, at the rate of seven-and-a-half Spanish dollars per annum.

The situation, however, was more complicated than Rosa had initially let on. As the Chinese sub-prefect additionally reported, more than a decade earlier, in 1793, Xie had loaned a hundred and fifty dollars to a local textile merchant named António Fonseca, who also happened to be the nephew of Xie’s landlord António Rosa. Fonseca’s textile business had struggled, and for a long time Fonseca had failed to repay Xie’s loan. After extended negotiations with Xie, Fonseca agreed to pay a two-percent monthly interest on his unresolved debt, but in 1799 his payments stopped coming. This state of affairs dragged on for two more years until 1801, when Xie and Fonseca renegotiated terms and reached a new agreement: since Fonseca lacked ready

⁴²⁶ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/6/000767. In total, the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo holds five documents pertaining to this case. They are also reproduced in Lau Fong and Isaú Santos, *Chapas sínicas: Macau e o Oriente nos Arquivos Nacionais Torre do Tombo: documentos em chinês* (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1997). Lau and Santos’s compilation contains transcripts from most of the Arquivo Nacional’s “Chapas Sínicas” collection of Qing documents, the majority of which have since been digitized and made viewable on the website of the Arquivo Nacional. However, a few of the most damaged Chinese-language documents remain available only on microfilm.

⁴²⁷ It is a little surprising that Xie Qinggao is referred to not by his surname (i.e., “Blind Xie), but rather by part of his given name. However, it is clear from the case records that this is the same Xie Qinggao who worked as a sailor aboard European ships and whose exploits would later become the subject of the *Hailu*. See discussion in Chapter 1.

funds to repay Xie in cash, the Portuguese merchant proposed that his Chinese creditor could instead collect rent on his behalf from a storefront that Fonseca managed at a place called Hongchuangmen Street, in order to pay off the outstanding debt and accumulated interest. The rent that Fonseca authorized Xie to collect on the Hongchuangmen property was twenty-four dollars a year, and they signed a contract attesting to this agreement. The Prosecutor of Macao notarized the contract, Xie began collecting rent on Fonseca's behalf, and it appeared that matters had reached an amicable resolution.

At this point, however, Fonseca's uncle intervened. Evidently displeased by the arrangement between Xie and his nephew, Rosa interceded and physically stopped the blind Chinese man from collecting rent on the Hongchuangmen property. Historical records are unclear as to why Rosa intervened; Qing authorities simply describe him as a "treacherous foreigner" (*jianyi*) whose predations on the blind man resembled those of a "barbarous wolf."⁴²⁸ Reading against the grain of this discourse, it is possible that Rosa did not want his nephew interfering with his business (it appears that the Hongchuangmen property was actually Rosa's, which his nephew managed on his behalf), or perhaps he simply did not believe that Fonseca could be so deeply indebted to Xie. In any case, by the time local Qing authorities investigated the matter for a fourth time, in March of 1807, they determined that the remaining capital and interest that António Fonseca owed to Xie Qinggao had grown to over three hundred Spanish dollars.⁴²⁹ Xie sent repeated entreaties to the office of the Prosecutor for assistance, but Portuguese officials continued to drag their feet in helping Xie collect his debt. It was under these circumstances—near-blind, his health ailing, thus far unable to recover his money from

⁴²⁸ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/7/000935.

⁴²⁹ ANTT: PT/TT/DCHN/1/6/000831.

Fonseca, and prevented by Fonseca's uncle from collecting rent on the Hongchuangmen property as agreed upon—that Xie had foregone paying his own rent to Rosa in 1805 and 1806.

After two years without receiving Xie's rent, Rosa turned to the Chinese authorities and filed a suit against his longtime tenant for the overdue fifteen dollars of rent.⁴³⁰ Hearing this, Xie turned to the Chinese authorities as well and opened a renewed investigation against Fonseca, asking them to help him recover *his* missing hundred and fifty dollars, plus the accumulated interest, since the Prosecutor's office had so far been unhelpful. As long as this debt remained unpaid, Xie was unwilling to pay rent to his debtor's uncle.

The Chinese authorities investigated the matter and reached the following conclusions. First, they confirmed that Xie and Fonseca had indeed signed a contract, and that Xie really had lent a hundred and fifty dollars to Fonseca. They also determined that Xie owed two years' rent to Rosa and was not exempt from paying it despite his current financial difficulties. To assist him in covering this overdue charge, they ordered the Portuguese Prosecutor to apprehend Fonseca and force him to settle his debts with Xie.

At this point the archival trail unfortunately runs cold; we do not know if Xie ever recovered his loan. We do know, however, that the former sailor lived for another thirteen years from the time of the last extant memorial on this matter in 1808, so he must have been able to support himself somehow, and it seems plausible that he was able to collect some if not all of what was due to him. Without additional context, the identities of the two Antónios are difficult to determine; as with European-language transliterations of Chinese names, Chinese documents' transliterations of Portuguese names lack specificity. (For instance, the characters corresponding

⁴³⁰ In his report of March 8, 1807, the sub-prefect noted that prior to this dispute, Xie had paid rent for two decades years without any issues, which both highlights the stability of Xie's tenant-landlord relationships up to this point and suggests that Xie, like other maritime sojourners, maintained a permanent foothold in the Pearl River Delta even as he repeatedly came and went over the span of several decades.

to “Fonseca” could also easily imply “Francisca.”) Precise identification is also complicated by Portuguese nomenclatural practices, which often combine multiple given names and family names into a single title, referenced in different ways by different speakers. (For example, Miguel José de Arriaga Brum da Silveira, the *ouvidor* of Macao who first sent Chinese carpenters and tea planters to Rio in 1808, is called “Miguel de Arriaga” in some Portuguese records, “Brum da Silveira” in others, and simply “Arriaga” in most Chinese transcriptions.) One possibility is that the uncle referred to in Xie’s debt disputes was António Vicente Rosa, an influential Macao-born merchant and one-time Procurador (in 1797) about whom Portuguese and Chinese-language archives contain several other cases of unpaid debts from the 1820s.⁴³¹ If António Vicente Rosa was indeed Xie’s landlord, Rosa’s past political prominence and connections might explain his successors’ reluctance to prosecute his nephew.

Regardless of Rosa’s and Fonseca’s precise identities, however, there are several ways to read this case.

The first approach is one of skepticism. After all, at first glance, Xie’s encounters with Fonseca and Rosa look like a prime example of Sino-Western problem solving gone awry: Xie struggled at almost every turn to recover his loan, and neither informal negotiations nor formal involvement of the Chinese and Portuguese authorities readily yielded the desired result. If even someone like Xie—an experienced sailor-turned-businessman who spoke some Portuguese and was familiar with Europeans from his years of maritime service aboard foreign ships—encountered such difficulties, then how much hope did the average Tom Jack have in navigating a similar situation?⁴³² Such a reading would seem to cast doubt on one of the core arguments of

⁴³¹ The Chinese transcriptions of António Vicente Rosa’s name use different characters, although this could also be due to decade-plus separating the two sets of cases, with a different Chinese scribe doing the transcription.

⁴³² To be fair, it should be noted that Xie was blind (or nearly so), which probably significantly undercut any practical leverage that he had in this situation.

this dissertation: namely, that mutual incentives drove most Chinese and foreigners flexibly to resolve disagreements before they escalated, and that conflict was the exception, not the norm.

However, there is also another way of interpreting Xie's experiences, one which focuses less on the contingency of particular results and more on the processes that they highlight. Let us imagine for a moment that Rosa, the uncle, had not entered the picture. How would Xie and Fonseca's interactions have looked then?

Framed in this way, with a focus on Xie and Fonseca's multi-year process of engagement and negotiation up until the moment of Rosa's intervention, Xie's encounters with Fonseca are in fact quite illustrative of what successful grassroots negotiation and problem solving looked like. First, an enterprising Chinese sojourner, having returned home after accumulating some capital abroad, decided to invest in a Portuguese acquaintance's textile venture. As fate would have it, business was poor, and his acquaintance struggled to repay the loan. After some negotiations, the two agreed on a two-percent monthly interest on the outstanding loan due to the extended delay in repayment. When Fonseca struggled to meet those payments, the pair renegotiated and reached a new agreement, whereby the Portuguese man proposed that his Chinese creditor could collect rent from a storefront he managed, in order to pay off the outstanding debt and accumulated interest. The matter then appeared settled: they signed a new contract, Xie collected a few installments of rent in lieu of direct repayments from Fonseca, and in this way the situation was on track to reach an amicable conclusion until the unexpected intervention of Fonseca's uncle.

Were it not for Rosa's unforeseen intervention, we would be calling this a success story. In fact, it was only due to Rosa's intervention that this matter reached the attention of the authorities—and thus entered the historical record—at all: first when Rosa opened the case

against Xie for his overdue rent, and again when an indignant and desperate Xie complained of Fonseca's own outstanding debt. But herein lies the rub, which complicates so much historical research into conflict resolution of any kind, whether in late imperial China or elsewhere: it was only Rosa's intervention that created a paper trail for historians to follow in the first place, and so without Rosa's derailing of the resolution process, we most likely could not call this affair a success story because we would not know about it at all. (The contract between Xie and Fonseca, although still existing in 1806-1808, does not appear to have survived.) Historians would know Xie Qinggao as no more than the traveler whose sojourns informed Yang Bingnan's *Hailu*. (And meanwhile, were it not for the *Hailu*, Xie would just be another nameless, unrecorded Chinese seaman.)

Xie's story underscores the contingent nature of not only historical outcomes but also historical research, interpretation, and narration. Although scholars have long been attuned to the role that contingency plays in shaping the course of historical events, contingency's narrative implications are not always as fully explored. This is problematic given the necessarily packaged form that historians give to their objects of study, in the form of narrative.

Historians as a rule are wary of counterfactuals, and with good reason: historical research is best grounded in what happened, not what did not, and routine forays into a warren of "what ifs" does scholarship few favors. At the same time, the popularity of such speculative inquiries in historical fiction and adjacent literary genres has further contributed to counterfactuals' somewhat suspect academic reputation.

Despite these caveats, however, counterfactuals can hold useful explanatory power, especially when applied to analyzing the relative significance of historical events' outcomes. The study of history is at least as much about process as it is about outcome—about how things

happened rather than just what happened—and yet when it comes to narrating historical events such as the first Opium War, historians’ explanations of causative processes have often succumbed to a teleology that privileges the narrative order of an acknowledged result at the expense of the amorphous, heterogeneous lived experiences lying underneath. (In other words, our knowledge of a particular endpoint or watershed moment—that the Opium War occurred and resulted in the establishment of foreign treaty ports, the cession of Hong Kong, etc.—predisposes us to tell historical stories that make sense of and bring order to that moment.) The core analytical utility of counterfactuals lies in their capacity to shift us away from the potential fallacies of such results-oriented thinking and toward more process-centered histories, in which the processes illuminated by a particular event can point to broader societal patterns that extend beyond an event’s specific occurrences.

When recontextualized in this way, with a focus on the processes and practices in which historical actors such as Xie Qinggao and António Fonseca engaged, it becomes apparent that events which historians have configured and narrativized as conflicts can often be just as illustrative, if not even more illustrative, of non-conflict than of conflict.

Such a reframing that shifts our focus from outcome to process can also deepen our understanding of some of history’s most prominent Sino-Western disputes, including the “Terranova affair” outlined in this dissertation’s introduction. We have already seen how Woman Kwok’s tragic death in September of 1821 precipitated a series of events that resulted in the trial and public strangulation of Francisco Terranova outside of the foreign factories of Canton. What we have not yet discussed are the active backstage efforts that both Chinese and foreign parties undertook to avoid this outcome; nor have we unpacked the contingent circumstances that ultimately foiled a more amicable resolution. Let us turn to those factors now.

After Woman Kwok drowned on the afternoon of September 23, word of her death spread quickly. By 8:00 o'clock the next morning, news of the altercation between Terranova and Kwok had reached the ears of Benjamin Wilcocks, the acting American consul at Canton. Wilcocks and his Chinese associates took immediate action. As Wilcocks later reported to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams,

I lost no time in assembling the hong merchant, Howqua Pacqua [Exchin], (who secured the ship) and the linguist, and strongly recommended that immediate steps should be taken to bribe the family of the deceased, (the usual mode of proceeding on these occasions,) and thus prevent the matter being made public. Pacqua stated that proper persons had been despatched [sic] by him to Whampoa, early in the morning, with orders to that effect; and that there was no doubt a few thousand dollars, properly bestowed, would effect a compromise.⁴³³

The reactions of Wilcocks and Pacqua highlight the “usual mode of proceeding.” From the outset, both the *Emily*'s Hong merchant guarantor and its linguist shared the American consul's desire to “prevent the matter being made public,” since Qing trading regulations held these Chinese intermediaries responsible for foreigners' conduct. This was the same reason that the Hong merchant Manhop (Guan Chengfa 關成發), for example, had been “anxious for a settlement before the case became important” when customs officials a few years earlier had caught sailors of the ship *Essex* in the act of smuggling opium.⁴³⁴

In the Terranova affair as in similar situations, both local and foreign parties recognized that bribery was the conventional and most desirable method of settling matters, and it was to this end that Pacqua had dispatched individuals to bribe the victim's family early on the morning of September 24, even before the American authorities had been notified. Two contingent

⁴³³ U.S. Department of State, *Political Relations between the United States and China*, Doc. 71, “Letter from Mr. Wilcocks to Mr. Adams.”

⁴³⁴ Morse, *Chronicles*, vol. 3: 356. By the end of that same day Manhop had “ensured the silence of the Mandarins,” for the price of 6,000 dollars—far greater than the value of the 10-12 pounds of opium being smuggled, but nonetheless far more desirable than the economic and other consequences that would result if the affair were not contained.

factors, however, hindered the effective resolution of matters and caused the situation to escalate: first, the fact that Captain William Cowpland of the *Emily* was a newcomer to Canton and less amenable to the “usual mode” of dispute resolution, especially since he professed to believe in Terranova’s innocence and was unwilling to commit to a bribe. This led to Cowpland’s and Wilcocks’s insistence on a trial to prove Terranova’s innocence.

The second factor that hindered swift resolution of the matter was the fact that the hold of the *Emily* happened to be full of contraband opium. The *Emily* had come to China bearing 180 piculs of Turkish opium, and by September 19, three days before the ship was scheduled to depart, she had unloaded only forty-seven of her 180 chests.⁴³⁵ Following Terranova’s initial trial, once it became clear to the captain that Chinese authorities were unwilling to let the American sailor walk free, Cowpland began fearing that the *Emily* would be searched in an effort to seize Terranova by force if he did not comply with the demand to hand him over. With Cowpland increasingly anxious about the security of his hidden cargo, the captain soon acquiesced to continued Qing demands to surrender Terranova, and the sailor was executed by strangulation on October 28.

The failure of the “usual mode of proceeding” in this case suggests that the Terranova affair was an outlier rather than the norm. If we could replay a hundred times the interactions between Francis Terranova and Woman Kwok, in how many iterations do we think the outcome would have been the same? How many fruit exchanges would have resulted in a homicide and an execution? Skeptics might argue, understandably, that such a line of hypothetical questioning is a moot point, as the only scenario that matters is the historical reality in which Woman Kwok died and Terranova was executed for her murder. But variations of this scene *were* playing out dozens

⁴³⁵ Baker Memorial Library: Perkins and Co. to J. & T.H. Perkins, September 19, 1821.

if not hundreds of times every day, up and down the Pearl River, in contact zones from Batavia to Lisbon and Boston to St. Helena, as foreign sojourners and their local counterparts engaged in these and other trade-adjacent activities. Few of those interactions ended in homicide and execution. In fact, even in those instances that did turn violent, outcomes like what transpired in the Terranova affair were unusual. As Joseph Askew has pointed out, out of nearly two dozen murder cases involving foreign sailors who killed Chinese victims in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, only three ended in the execution of the foreign culprit.⁴³⁶

Askew interprets this statistic through a racial lens, arguing that the Qing government, quite contrary to the impression left on Western sensibilities and in Western histories by sensational incidents such as the Terranova incident, was actually quite loath to execute British or American subjects while being comparatively more willing to execute sailors of southern European origin. What we should see as the biggest takeaway from Askew's observation, however, is that so few foreigners were executed at all. It suggests not only that the Terranova case was an outlier, but that even in cases where the Qing state became involved, both parties still gravitated toward more flexible, less conflictual compromises, such as fines paid as compensation to the victim's family.

Conclusion

Scholars' continuing remembrance of the Terranova affair and similar conflicts as exemplars of Sino-Western cultural and legal incompatibilities is problematic.

One of the methodological challenges of studying non-conflict is that non-conflict leaves few historical traces. By their very nature, legal case records focus on infractions of the law, not

⁴³⁶ Joseph Askew, "Re-Visiting New Territory: The Terranova Incident Re-examined," *Asian Studies Review* 28 (Dec. 2004): 366.

compliance with it. Meanwhile, sources such as diaries and interpersonal correspondence tend to highlight anecdotal deviations from the norm—surprising encounters, notable incidents, memorable conversations, and the like—rather than the quotidian milieu which serves as the narrative foil for such deviations.

This structural bias in the written record poses particularly acute challenges for the study of late imperial China, where many of historians' richest sources—legal records and court memorials stored in the First Historical Archives in China or various local archives that recorded comparable aspects of bureaucratic functioning—naturally skew toward the problems and concerns of the Qing authorities who created these records: floods and famines, banditry, rent disputes, and other societal troubles that demanded officials' attention.

One solution to this disproportionate slant toward conflict in the archival record is to recognize that records of conflict can be unpacked to reveal useful insights about processes of non-conflict as well. Through highlighting the mechanisms tried, regardless of their success or lack thereof in particular cases, cases such as the Terranova affair are in fact often better read as a catalogue of missed opportunities than as evidence of consistent, irreconcilable conflict. The fact that a few cases ended in dramatic confrontation does not mean grassroots dispute resolution was ineffective.

At the same time, the behind-the-scene negotiations coloring the Terranova affair also highlight how local individuals were often far more adept at interfacing with foreigners than the official representatives and state organs designated for that purpose, which reinforces broader themes that we have seen discussed earlier. For instance, during Terranova's initial board trial on board the *Emily*, when a nearby boatwoman testified that she had seen “the jar thrown, and [Kwok] fall overboard in consequence of the blow,” the Americans in attendance requested that

the Chinese witness “should speak...in English, as she understood it far better than the linguist” designated by the Qing magistrate to interpret proceedings. This request was denied, but it speaks to the fact that in some respects, at least, unofficial channels of communication often worked better than official ones.

Nor was this an uncommon disparity. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many local Chinese possessed higher levels of foreign language proficiency than the Qing state’s official linguists, either because they had previous overseas experience or because their day-to-day professional activities had led them to develop increased levels of language proficiency. Describing a meeting with Lin Zexu in 1840, a British surgeon aboard the bark *Sunda* reported that the “tedium of waiting so long was somewhat relieved by the conversation of the linguists and their assistants, one of whom appeared a very intelligent young man, and had been in London for nearly eight years along with the late Mr. Elphinstone. He speaks English remarkably well...and I regret much that he did not act as our interpreter [instead of the official linguist, who] stammered so much, and was so flurried, that we had great difficulty in understanding him.”⁴³⁷

On the whole, it is not clear that the cultural and political differences that influenced transnational interactions in the Pearl River Delta made dispute resolution fundamentally more difficult than in other mixed commercial environments around the world.⁴³⁸ If the port of London or New York harbor were to serve as our barometer, the conflicts that occurred, were resolved, or failed to be resolved on a daily basis in Canton’s environments may not look so noteworthy

⁴³⁷ *Chinese Repository*, vol. 8 (Jan. 1840), 483.

⁴³⁸ If anything, if we consider that Francis Terranova, Woman Kwok, and their peers lived in a world where mutinies among sailors trapped in port for weeks and sometimes months on end, drunken brawls on land, thefts among and between people of all nationalities, and other misdeeds were a normal occurrence, we could arguably expect even more conflicts to have occurred.

after all. The contours of daily life on the South China Coast certainly appeared no less disorderly in Singapore (where British administrators had virtually free reign to shape commercial affairs as they wished), and much less so than in a place like Manilla, of which one American supercargo who was familiar with both Canton and Manilla (as well as Calcutta) proclaimed, “There is not perhaps on Earth a place that requires greater secrecy, precaution, and circumspection in the accomplishment of your views than at Manilla.”⁴³⁹ Such comparisons speak not to the strength of the Qing regulations that defined the “Canton system” of trade, but rather to the commercial incentives that these systems provided for people on the ground to resolve things smoothly amongst themselves. In general, money was a powerful motivator—of both conflict and conflict resolution—regardless of where merchants went.

If we zoom out for a moment, modulo the particular structural constraints that Qing officials imposed on the Canton system of trade, the interactions that we witness on the South China Coast do not look all that different from those elsewhere. Men and women from all walks of life traded and bartered, trusted and bribed, cheated and compromised, in contexts both central and secondary to the high-volume transfers of tea, opium, silver, and other goods in and out of China. So why, then, is it that when an Englishman cheats an Englishman in London, we chalk it up to “merchants being merchants,” but when a Chinese shopkeeper cheats a European or American in Canton or Macao, a cultural or even racial lens becomes the most important frame through which to view and comprehend this interaction?

Part of this difference may be psychological: it is tempting to correlate difference with causation, but culture as a determining factor was in many cases just a red herring, for in the context of global trade centered on the South China Coast, cultural factors were as a general rule

⁴³⁹ Sea journal kept by the supercargo of the ship *Confederacy* during a voyage from New York City to Calcutta, Canton, and Manilla (1804), Winterthur Library, Downs Collection, fol. 153.

secondary to economic ones. To be sure, grassroots dispute resolution was not always successful, but there is little to suggest that it was dramatically harder or different than in Canton than in any other major port city in the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

Continuity: Everyday Life After the Opium War

The First Anglo-Chinese War, more commonly known as the first Opium War, began sometime between the fall of 1839 and the summer of 1840, and it ended on August 29, 1842 with the signing of the Treaty of Nanking between the British and Qing empires.⁴⁴⁰ Chinese treaties with other Western powers followed soon thereafter, including the United States (Treaty of Wanghia, July 3, 1844) and France (Treaty of Whampoa, October 24, 1844), as foreign nations jostled to claim equal rights to diplomatic representation, extraterritorial protection, and free trade in the newly opened “treaty ports” of Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai, which became designated entrepôts for foreign commerce.

⁴⁴⁰ Many detailed histories of this conflict exist, which I shall not recapitulate here. The best recent account is Stephen Platt, *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China’s Last Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018), which makes a forceful argument that conflict between the Qing empire and Western powers was far from inevitable, and that rather than resulting from an unavoidable “clash of civilizations” (as the Opium War is often understood in the West) or as the culmination of “some grand imperial master plan” (as it is often understood in China), for “nearly all parties concerned, including even the government ministers who launched it, war was all but unthinkable until it actually began” (Platt, xxviii). Other notable monographs on the subject include Song-Chuan Chen, *Merchants of War and Peace: British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017); Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drug, Dreams, and the Making of China* (London: Picador, 2011); James Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (University of North Carolina Press, 1975); John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

N.B. The first Opium War’s dating and nomenclature remain matters of some dispute among historians. Although scholars agree that the conflict ended on August 29, 1842 with the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, the commencement of the war is dated more contentiously, with historians in the People’s Republic of China preferring a June 1840 origin that marks when the British expeditionary force arrived in China while historians in the West traditionally date the outbreak of war to September 4, 1839, when the first shots were fired during the so-called Battle of Kowloon. (This skirmish between Chinese and English vessels off the Kowloon Peninsula resulted from Chinese efforts to enforce a trade embargo following the death of a Chinese villager named Lin Weixu at the hands of six drunken British sailors in July of that year.) These differences in dating are compounded by the fact that neither side in the conflict formally declared war on the other, and as late as April 1840, British officials were still debating the proper course of action in response to Lin Zexu’s seizure of foreign traders’ opium stores, so the temporal bounds of the conflict that we have come to call the Opium War are far from clear-cut.

On a structural level, the first Opium War and its ensuing treaties brought a forceful end to the longstanding Canton system of trade, which in various instantiations had ordered Chinese politico-economic relations with the Western world since the early eighteenth century.⁴⁴¹ The opening of the treaty ports and the establishment of Hong Kong as a British colony, alongside Qing jurisdictional concessions in key areas of legal and fiscal governance, have led some historians to describe the Treaty of Nanking as marking the onset of “semi-colonialism” in China.⁴⁴² Other scholars, sidestepping the semi-colonial question and its corresponding implications about the Qing state’s perceived failures, have instead highlighted the sweeping economic, military, and scientific reforms that Chinese officials and intellectuals undertook in the second half of the nineteenth century in response to growing foreign encroachment. This reform-oriented line of inquiry has in turn stimulated productive debates about whether such Qing initiatives were too little, too late or might, under alternative contingent circumstances, have yielded a different fate for China’s last dynasty.⁴⁴³ (According to this line of reasoning, it is actually quite impressive how much the Qing state did manage to reform in the second half of

⁴⁴¹ Standard chronologies date the origins of the “Canton system” to a 1757 imperial edict that banned all European nations except Russia from trading at northern ports and restricted their activities to the southern port of Canton, under what became known as the *yikou tongshang* (“single-port commerce system”). However, as Paul van Dyke has argued, such a restrictive dating belies the fact that most of the key features of the Canton system, from port fees to brokerage practices, had already been established over decades of trade before the 1757 edict, and a more expansive dating better captures the contours of Sino-European commercial interactions in the Pearl River Delta since the early eighteenth century.

⁴⁴² On the “semi-colonial” question, see Jürgen Osterhammel, “Semi-colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis,” in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, eds. Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 290-314; Tani Barlow, “Colonialism’s Career in Postwar China Studies,” *positions* 1:1 (1993): 373-411; Bryna Goodman, “Improvisations on a Semicolonial Theme, or, How to Read a Celebration of Transnational Urban Community,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 59:4 (2000): 889-926; Anne Reinhardt, *Navigating Semi-Colonialism: Shipping, Sovereignty, and Nation-building in China, 1860-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

⁴⁴³ See, among others: Wenkai He, *Paths Toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); William Rowe, *China’s Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Scholarship on late Qing reforms has not limited itself to the latter half of the nineteenth century, and for a recent work that examines Qing attempts at reform centered around an earlier period of crisis, see also Wensheng Wang, *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

the nineteenth century, especially considering the circumstances, which included not just the constraints of foreign encroachment but also growing domestic unrest and several outright rebellions that undermined the central state's effective control of significant portions of Qing territory.) However, what both semi-colonial and reform-centered approaches have in common, in academic as well as popular discourses, is that both have framed the first Opium War as being nothing short of a watershed moment—arguably *the* key watershed moment of modern Chinese history, at least until the revolutions of the twentieth century—and the narrative magnitude of this inter-imperial conflict has only grown in the two centuries since.

Beneath the top-level changes effected by the treaties of the 1840s, however, where ordinary people's everyday experiences were concerned, the first Opium War was perhaps less of a watershed. At the very least, it lacked much of the immediate narrative clarity that later generations have assigned to it and its place in modern Chinese history. Measured by the social and cultural practices that knitted together human interactions and relationships on the ground level, the grassroots world of the 1840s and 1850s was not so radically different from that of the 1830s, especially for those individuals who had lived through it. If a war had taken place, not everyone knew about it or even cared. Chinese sailors continued serving on foreign ships as before—first on gunships in lieu of merchant vessels during the conflict itself, and then, in even greater numbers, back in the merchant marine once the dust had settled—just as the reverberations of wars on the European continent had, over the previous century, helped precipitate their entry into Western crews in the first place.⁴⁴⁴ The business of compradors and shopkeepers, laundrywomen and boatmen, and barbers and prostitutes grew in volume, but with

⁴⁴⁴ In at least one documented and sensationalized case, a Chinese boy whose parents were killed during the conflict wound up working as a servant aboard a British ship. The boy, christened “Henry,” learned to speak, read and write English while serving aboard the ship *Conway* and arrived in Portsmouth in 1842. See Barclay Price, Chapter 3.

the exception of a few specific structural changes—the expanding functions of compradors chief among them—this business grew organically, out of established customs and relationships that had developed over the preceding century of global trade and daily intercourse.⁴⁴⁵

If anything, the war marked not a break from but an acceleration of preexisting trends of social and commercial engagement on the South China Coast, and many of the shifts in Sino-foreign intercourse that occurred after 1842 are better described as adaptations to evolving circumstances than as wholesale replacements of what had come before. Through an examination of the trajectories of transnational migration, communication, and commerce at the grassroots in the 1830s and 1840s, this chapter makes a case for key aspects in which the first Opium War is better seen through a lens of continuity, rather than rupture.

Wartime Trade

As tensions increased in the fall of 1839 and spring of 1840, Qing authorities placed a sweeping embargo on Sino-Western trade. Although it may be tempting, in retrospect, to view such an embargo as the first step toward war, a moratorium on foreign trade was in and of itself hardly unprecedented, as Qing officials had employed similar tactics on previous occasions when attempting to exert pressure on the European merchant community. In real time, to even the most informed observers, the likely outcome of these tensions was unclear. As Howqua wrote to John Perkins Cushing in December of 1840—months after the conflict had begun, regardless of which

⁴⁴⁵ Historians portray the “Canton system” as having ended with the first Opium War, after the Treaty of Nanking opened up new treaty ports and forcibly broke the Canton Hong merchants’ institutional monopoly on foreign maritime trade. This was true in a political-economic sense: as a formal system of international trade, the Qing policy of *yikou tongshang* 一口通商 indeed ended with the conclusion of the war, and the establishment of new institutions such as the Imperial Maritime Customs brought other structural changes alongside. But in a socioeconomic sense, the system of interpersonal practices and commercial norms that developed over three centuries of transnational engagement in Canton, Macao, Whampoa, Lintin, and other outlying islands of the Pearl River Delta did not so much end as spread.

of the two conventional start dates one uses—“[t]he difficulties with the English are still unsettled, and it is still impossible to say when they will be, but negotiations are pending which I am inclined to believe, will result in an amicable arrangement, but it may be otherwise—and fortunately I am not called upon by the mandarins to take any part in what is going on.”⁴⁴⁶ Howqua did not go so far as to call the conflict a “war,” and his framing of affairs suggests that he did not necessarily see the conflict as being of a categorically different nature than other “difficulties” that had arisen between Chinese and foreign parties in recent decades, which had similarly elicited temporary trade stoppages and a spate of imperial decrees targeted at addressing the situation at hand.

As stressful as this state of uncertainty was for prominent merchants such as Howqua, who had millions of dollars at stake and stood in the precarious position of being answerable to both Chinese and foreign parties, it also presented opportunities for ordinary people on the South China Coast. The stoppage of official trade was an inconvenience, to be sure, but like the ban on opium smuggling that had helped precipitate the whole affair in the first place, it was not an insurmountable barrier. In fact, in many respects informal commercial exchanges increased rather than decreased (or simply shifted in location) as formal trade ground to a halt.

The inefficacy of a trade embargo was apparent even during the war, as provisioners, coolies, peddlers, and other denizens of the delta embraced the commercial opportunities brought by the increased presence of foreign soldiers and personnel. “If the English do take possession of an island [off the Chinese coast],” predicted British merchant William Almack in May of 1840,

⁴⁴⁶ Howqua to John Perkins Cushing, 27 December 1842, “Howqua letterbook, 1840-1865,” Ms. N-49.32, Massachusetts Historical Society.

“the Chinese will trade with them in spite of all their govt. can do to prevent them. There is not a more commercial people under the sun.”⁴⁴⁷

These commercial trends continued after the war. “It was astonishing how quickly they got accustomed to our habits, and were able to supply all our wants,” wrote Scottish botanist Robert Fortune of his time in Dinghai, Zhejiang Province. “Bread baked in the English mode was soon exposed for sale in the shops, and even ready-made clothes were to be had in any quantity.”⁴⁴⁸ Like the shopkeepers and intermediaries of the Pearl River Delta who adopted European-language monikers to facilitate their transactions with foreigners,

The shopkeepers in Tinghae [Dinghai] supposed an English name indispensable to the respectability of their shops and the success of their trade, and it was quite amusing to walk up the streets and read the different names which they had adopted under the advice and instruction of the soldiers and sailors to whom they had applied on the subject. There were “Stultz, tailor, from London;” “Buckmaster, tailor to the army and navy;” “Dominic Dobbs, the grocer;” “Squire Sam, porcelain merchant;” and the number of tradesmen “to Her Majesty” was very great, among whom one was “Tailor to Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria and His Royal Highness Prince Albert, by appointment,” and below the name was a single word, which I could not make out for some few seconds,—*Uniformsofalldescriptions*.⁴⁴⁹

As in earlier years, Chinese intermediaries continued leveraging their past relationships with foreign employers. This was the case whether they had actually worked for them previously or not. One visitor recounted of his interactions with local washerwomen:

They took us by the hand, and, looking in our faces with their mellow black eyes, accompanied by what were meant for witching smiles and a peculiar singing voice, recognised us as old acquaintances, whether they had seen us before or not, in their broken English, ‘My chin-chin you; me savee [i.e., know] you lass voyage; my washe you muche good; can do all the same now; muchee good sweetmeats you savee.’⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ CUL: “William Almack: Journal,” MS Add.9529, 8 May 1840.

⁴⁴⁸ Robert Fortune, *Three Years’ Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China, Including a Visit to the Tea, Silk, and Cotton Countries* (London: J. Murray, 1847), 70-71.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁴⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson Jacobs, *Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific Ocean* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 347.

The author's emphasis that washerwomen ingratiated themselves with prospective employers in this way "whether they had seen us before or not" highlights the opportunistic strategies that Chinese intermediaries employed. Chinese Pidgin English remained the medium of communication, and although foreign interlocutors continued likening it to "broken English," in situations like the one above it proved a sufficient medium for communication.

The business of pilots, too, boomed after the war. New entrants to the industry, who lacked the benefit of signed certificates of service from previous employers, found creative ways to feign such relationships nonetheless and position themselves advantageously relative to their peers. Remarkd one merchant of Pearl River pilots:

Their first care, upon coming on board, is to enquire, of the first person they see, what the captain's name is, and what ship he commanded before, which information having been obtained, they then go up to the captain, and pretending to recollect a well-known face, address him with, "Ah captain Smith, how you do, I 'member you last voyage." In order to test the accuracy of this assertion, the captain will, probably reply, "Do you, what ship was I in." For this the Chinaman is prepared, and immediately answers correctly.⁴⁵¹

In this observer's recounting, the interaction between pilot and captain assumes something of a performative aspect, as the savvy applicant finds a clever ploy to navigate the captain's test. The fact that even prospective pilots with no prior experiences aboard a foreign vessel know how to navigate the hiring practices of the South China Coast is consistent with what we have seen in earlier chapters. (Likewise, as in earlier years, many of these "pilots" were likely to be opportunistic fishermen or river-dwellers who leveraged their knowledge of local shoals to make some money on the side.)

⁴⁵¹ R.N. Hutton [Charles Henry Newmarch], *Five Years in the East* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 1:250.

Language

The first Opium War also spurred the further spread and development of Chinese pidgins and adoption of *yiyu* for use in a variety of contexts. With “the ‘tolah’ [dollar] and ‘loopee’ [rupee] becoming most familiar terms, a *lingua franca* rapidly sprung up, composed of words and sounds from the European, Asiatic, and Chinese languages,” recalled military officer John Bingham of his time during the British expedition in China.⁴⁵² Of course, this *lingua franca* was not a new invention, as Chapter 2 has shown, with *yiyu* in its various forms already long entrenched in the contact zones of the South China Coast—but as new individuals like Bingham arrived in China for the first time and new *yiyu* speakers embraced the opportunity to sell goods and services to newcomers like Bingham and his compatriots, this linguistic medium spread along the Chinese coast with the movement of foreign military personnel and the caravans of indigenous intermediaries and vendors who trailed them.⁴⁵³

In order to meet this burgeoning demand, new textbooks and translingual primers began circulating for the use of Chinese learners, including works of European as well as Chinese authorship. Robert Thom (1806-1846), a clerk for Jardine, Matheson & Co. who served as one of Great Britain’s official interpreters during its treaty negotiations and later became British consul in Ningbo, published in 1843 a text called the *Chinese and English Vocabulary*, which introduced key English vocabulary aimed at Chinese learners. Observed Stanislas Julien, chair of

⁴⁵² John Elliott Bingham, *Narrative of the Expedition to China, from the Commencement of the War to the Present Period*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), 342.

⁴⁵³ A growth in new learners of *yiyu* also coincided with the migration of existing *yiyu* speakers, as the sudden profusion of demand in the newly opened treaty ports led many English-speaking Cantonese intermediaries to move their operations wholesale to Shanghai and other sites. Individuals like Chapter 2’s Guo Tingzhu, the fifty-one-year-old Ningbo man who in 1793 had been a relative outlier in Ningbo and found himself the target of unexpected state scrutiny due to his and his father’s knowledge of *yiyu*, were now no longer such outliers. On the postwar migrations of *yiyu* speakers from Canton to Shanghai, see Si Jia 司徒佳, *Jindai Zhongying yuyan jiechu yu wenhua jiaoliu* 近代中英语言接触与文化交涉 [Modern language contact and cultural interaction between Chinese and English] (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2016), although Si’s work has some problems.

Chinese at the Collège de France and one of the nineteenth century's leading European sinologists:

Hitherto, the almost exclusive object of sinologists has been to compile dictionaries for the services of Europeans; but the opening of four new ports has given birth to new wants, and, among its other consequences, has created a sort of necessity for the publication of the vocabulary which we have now the pleasure of announcing.⁴⁵⁴

Thom's text included bilingual entries of useful terms and phrases alongside Chinese transcriptions, and its outline of the Latin alphabet incorporated Manchu transcriptions as well. Distinguished in the words of his contemporaries as the era's "only sinologue of standing who spoke the Peking mandarin," Thom based his *Chinese and English Vocabulary* on Beijing rather than Canton pronunciation, unlike the transcriptions in the *Hongmao* primers.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, 3:13 (1844): 462-463.

⁴⁵⁵ Robert Thom, *Esop's Fables* (Canton: Canton Press, 1840), preface.

Figure 9. The English alphabet, as presented in Robert Thom's *Chinese and English Vocabulary, Part I* (1843)⁴⁵⁶

英 文 字 頭 分 別 總 目					
各 字 音 韻 分 別 用 法	行 書		楷 書		次 第
	小 字	大 字	小 字	大 字	
也 同 相 千 乞 之 文 清 耶 阿 又 亞 音	a	A	a	A	一
同 畧 ㄅ ㄆ 之 文 清 耶 噉 音	b	B	b	B	二
同 畧 ㄗ ㄘ 之 文 清 耶 西 音	c	C	c	C	三
同 畧 ㄉ ㄊ 之 文 清 耶 咆 音	d	D	d	D	四
同 畧 ㄝ ㄞ 之 文 清 耶 衣 音	e	E	e	E	五
同 畧 ㄟ ㄠ 之 文 清 耶 噉 音	f	F	f	F	六
同 畧 ㄣ ㄤ 之 文 清 耶 哈 音	g	G	g	G	七
同 畧 ㄥ ㄨ 之 文 清 耶 嚙 音	h	H	h	H	八
同 畧 ㄛ ㄜ 之 文 清 耶 喚 音	i	I	i	I	九
同 畧 ㄝ ㄞ 之 文 清 耶 噉 音	j	J	j	J	十
同 畧 ㄗ ㄘ 之 文 清 耶 噉 音	k	K	k	K	十一
同 相 ㄌ ㄎ 之 文 清 耶 啦 音	l	L	l	L	十二
同 相 ㄇ ㄏ 之 文 清 耶 咪 音	m	M	m	M	十三
同 相 ㄋ ㄏ 之 文 清 耶 呢 音	n	N	n	N	十四
同 畧 ㄛ ㄜ 之 文 清 耶 噉 又 阿 音	o	O	o	O	十五
同 畧 ㄝ ㄞ 之 文 清 耶 被 音	p	P	p	P	十六
同 畧 ㄟ ㄠ 之 文 清 耶 舊 音	q	Q	q	Q	十七
同 相 ㄨ ㄩ 之 文 清 耶 耳 音	r	R	r	R	十八
同 相 ㄗ ㄘ 之 文 清 耶 吐 音	s	S	s	S	十九
同 畧 ㄉ ㄊ 之 文 清 耶 體 音	t	T	t	T	二十
同 畧 ㄝ ㄞ 之 文 清 耶 友 音	u	U	u	U	廿一
同 畧 ㄟ ㄠ 之 文 清 耶 啡 音	v	V	v	V	廿二
同 畧 ㄨ ㄩ 之 文 清 耶 武 音	w	W	w	W	廿三
同 畧 ㄝ ㄞ 之 文 清 耶 鑿 音	x	X	x	X	廿四
同 畧 ㄗ ㄘ 之 文 清 耶 外 音	y	Y	y	Y	廿五
同 畧 ㄟ ㄠ 之 文 清 耶 曉 音	z	Z	z	Z	廿六

⁴⁵⁶ Digitized version accessible through the National Library of Australia: <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/506640>.

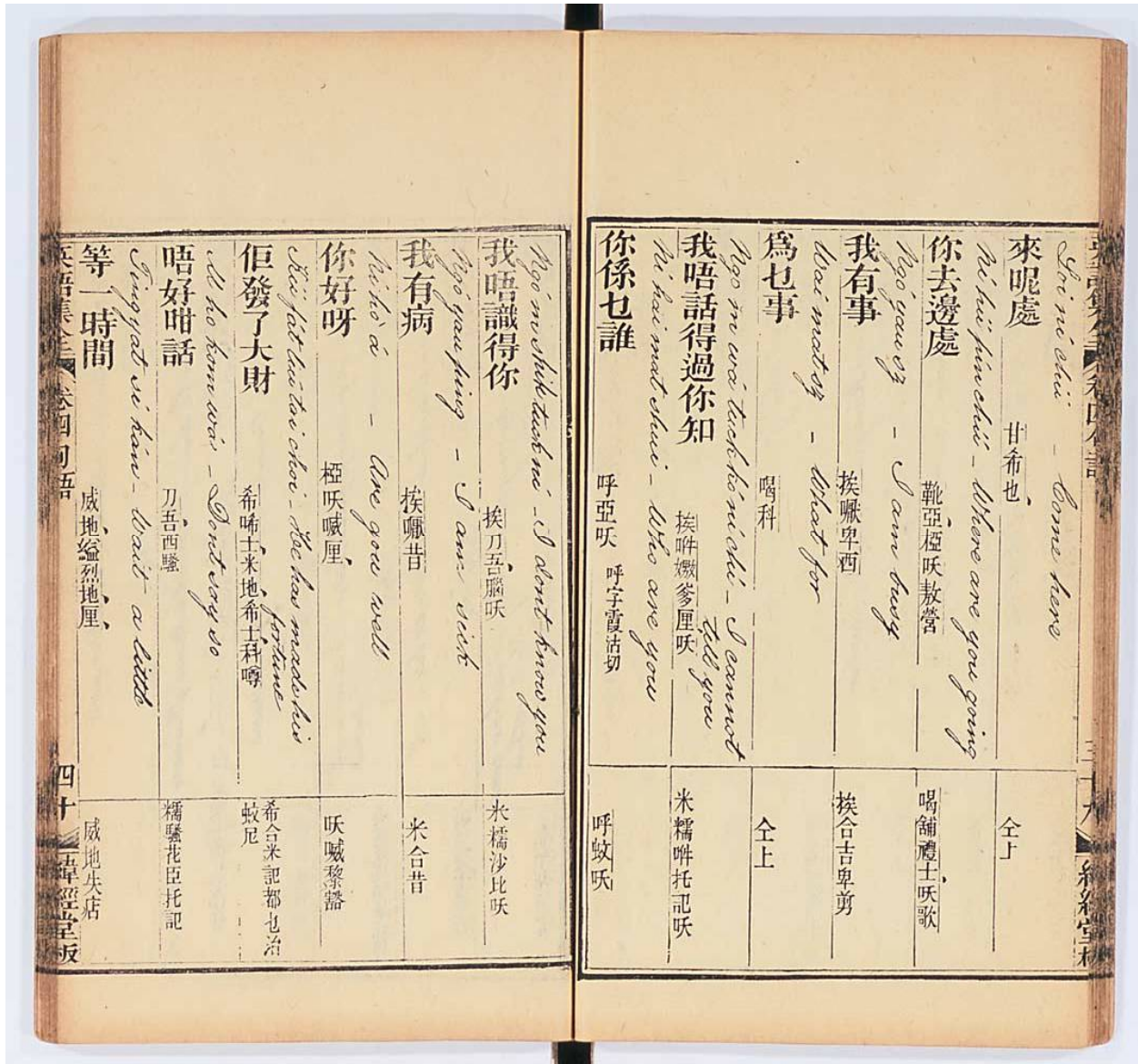
More sophisticated texts followed soon thereafter. The most significant of these was *The Chinese and English Instructor* (*Yingyu jiquan* 英語集全, 1862), compiled by the Chinese interpreter, comprador, and businessman Tong King-sing (唐景星, 1832-1892).⁴⁵⁷ As a child, Tong had studied alongside Yung Wing at the Morrison Education Society School in Macao, where he enrolled in 1841 and developed a foundation in the English language; both of Tong's brothers studied at the school too. Leveraging his language skills and familiarity with European cultural norms, Tong built a career working for the British colonial government in Hong Kong in various capacities, including as interpreter (1851-1857) and later chief secretary (1857-1861) for the Chinese Maritime Customs Service. After a successful tenure as chief comprador for Jardine, Matheson & Co., he went on to serve as general manager of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company (1873-1884).

Running a total of 524 pages over six volumes, with alphabetic entries alongside Chinese characters, Tong's *Instructor* represented an attempt to more systematically introduce "English" proper to a Chinese audience. In addition to employing the *fanqie* transcription system alongside standard Cantonese pronunciations, the text in its fourth and sixth volumes also provided standard and pidgin equivalents side by side, to assist Chinese learners in transitioning toward more standard pronunciations.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ For more detailed comparisons of these texts and contemporary works, see Bolton, *Chinese Englishes*, 122-196; Keiichi Uchida, *A Study of Cultural Interaction and Linguistic Contact: Approaching Chinese Linguistics from the Periphery*, transl. Alan Thwaites (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 131-150.

⁴⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of Tong's text, see Michelle Li, Stephen Matthews, and Geoff Smith, "Pidgin English Texts in the *Chinese English Instructor*," *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10:1 (2005): 79-167.

Figure 10. Sample page from Tong's *Instructor*



As even greater numbers of coastal inhabitants found reason and opportunity to learn the foreigners' tongue, Chinese perceptions of that tongue evolved, too. The expanding corpus of available *yi-yu* texts, alongside deepening educational contacts through the spread of missionary schools beyond the South China Coast, helped usher in a more phonologically and grammatically sophisticated standard of language instruction among self-learners as well as classroom pupils.

Chinese Pidgin English, which foreigners had long derided but tolerated as a necessary compromise in order to manage daily affairs, slowly began being stigmatized by Chinese speakers in favor of more standard Anglophone pronunciations. One British officer stationed in Canton in 1860 reported that one of his Chinese contacts not only acknowledged the distinction between standard English and Chinese Pidgin English but likened the difference, in his view, to that between Beijing Mandarin and the local vernacular:

Sing-chong used to think that we had, like them, a mandarin dialect and a vulgar tongue, the latter being that called pigeon [pidgin]....All with whom we dealt appeared desirous to learn our mandarin dialect.⁴⁵⁹

This gradual shift to recognizing pidgin qua pidgin represented a change from the linguistic landscape earlier in the century, in which Chinese speakers had made few granular distinctions between the different variants of *yiyu* even while recognizing that the version spoken by Englishmen and Americans was different from that spoken by the Portuguese. Chinese intermediaries' new desire "to learn [the] mandarin dialect" of English would grow over the late nineteenth century, and stigmatization of Chinese Pidgin English as a distinct, "vulgar" variant would result in the medium's decline in the early twentieth century.

The underlying pressures for *yiyu* or English acquisition, however, remained little different from years past, as local inhabitants gravitated in increasing numbers toward foreign enclaves on the Chinese coast. As Chinese intermediaries' foreign language abilities improved further, their improved capacity for translingual communication facilitated the growth of new partnerships and collaborations, too. For example, Sing-chong, the abovementioned informant who likened Chinese Pidgin English to the "vulgar" dialect of *yiyu*, worked as a contractor hired to lay down telegraph line near Canton during the second Opium War, and after the lines were

⁴⁵⁹ Arthur Fisher, *Personal Narrative of Three Years' Service in China* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 98.

laid he even had the opportunity to exchange a telegraph message with his son on one occasion when they were at opposing stations.⁴⁶⁰ By the middle of the nineteenth century, the fact that ever-growing numbers of Chinese inhabitants could “speak with devils” was an increasingly normalized part of life.

The Commercial Landscape of the Pearl River Delta

Everyday commercial negotiations, whether mediated through *yiyu* or not, retained much of the informal and negotiated character of earlier years. Hagglng and compromise remained the norm. “At noon...a pilot boarded us, and named 25 dollars as his price, for taking us in. After some talk he came down to five, which the Capt. gave him,” recounted one observer of a negotiation with a prospective pilot in August of 1848.⁴⁶¹ Another visitor wrote of his experience purchasing a piece of artwork:

The shopman asked three dollars for it; I offered him one in a tone of indifference, and turned to something else. He then asked two. Just before quitting the shop, I again offered one. He then came down to “one dollar one rupee,” a favorite sum of theirs, to show, I suppose, their extensive knowledge of the English language. I left the shop, but had not gone half a dozen yards, when half a dozen voices shouted, “Leilo [foreigner]! one dollar;” so I did *return*, and carried off the drawing. In traffic the people of Ningpo are not unlike their countrymen at Macao.⁴⁶²

Commercial opportunism, facilitated by just enough foreign language knowledge, remained the norm. As the author concluded, when it came to commercial matters, the residents of Ningbo and those of Macao were little different.

Many such interactions were harmless, as local merchants and shopkeepers leveraged their *yiyu* proficiency and business acumen to build rapport with prospective customers. “One

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁶¹ BA: Mss.L825, “Journal kept during a China voyage in the ship Thomas W. Sears, W.B. Graves, Master.” 1848.

⁴⁶² Anon., *The last year in China, to the peace of Nanking: as sketched in letters to his friends, by a field officer, actively employed in that country* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), 114-115.

has any quantity of the Chinese shopkeepers stopping you while perambulating these streets, to know if you ‘wantche buy something curious,’” wrote one visitor. Recounting his interactions with local shopkeepers, his dialogue continued:

“Oh yes what you name, you English, or American gentleman?”

“My name Mr. Wright English gentleman.”

“Oh very good name you come see my shop here got anything—you come gentleman Mr. Wright + smoke cigar in my shop, and talke’ [sic] the news.”⁴⁶³

In other instances, as in years past, a culture of habitual opportunism among Chinese economic actors in the delta could also result in misunderstandings and tensions, as boatpeople, for example, seized upon opportunities to take advantage of foreigners unfamiliar with local environs. Recounting a planned garden visit, one man wrote:

This afternoon, started with Mr. Boker, to visit a garden...On our way, stopped at Tinquas pack house, where Mr. B. had some goods to examine. Being detained longer than he expected, he proposed to me, to go over alone. The boatmen, pretended to know where the place was, but on getting ready to start, they asked me some questions, that led me to suspect their ignorance, and on pressing them closely, they confessed, they knew nothing about it.

“This is just the way, with all chinamen,” concluded Graves; “they say yes, yes, to everything.”

Without a doubt, Graves was not the only victim of an opportunistic boatman’s attempt to pass himself off as a knowledgeable, responsible guide. But was such an interaction really so specific to China and Chinese people? Opportunistic servicepeople, motivated by commercial pressures and ready to take advantage of customers unfamiliar with local conditions, were hardly unique to nineteenth-century Canton. Even in the present day, the experience of suffering through a suspiciously long and probably circuitous taxicab route, at the hands of a driver who may or may not know where he or she is going, is a common one for visitors in a foreign city. Such

⁴⁶³ PRO: HKMS143-1-1, “Diary of Mr. J.F.E. Wright,” July 17, 1850.

experiences are better attributed to basic pressures of urban commercial environments than to anything particular about foreigners' interactions with Chinese.

However, when scholars have written about the history of global trade and international relations in Canton and its environs, we have tended to do so with a focus on the Sino-foreign aspect of these interactions, rather than principally through a framing that focuses on the South China Coast's features as a commercial environment. Both before and after the first Opium War, the South China Coast was a commercial contact zone first and foremost, and Chinese second. The idiosyncrasies of particular Qing-imposed trade regulations aside, the basket of everyday interactions evident in this environment—of haggling and deception, of compromise and collaboration—better resembled mixed trade environments in any maritime commercial center of the modernizing world, be it New York or London or Havana, than anything peculiar to China.

In fact, with increasing numbers of Europeans and Americans entering China in the wake of the first Opium War, it is worth recognizing that relations between people of different Western nations were often just as conflict-prone (if not more so) as relations between Chinese and Westerners. The inter-imperial rivalries that hung over affairs in the second half of the nineteenth century serve as a strong reminder of the often fractured and heterogeneous nature of “Western” actors as well as Chinese ones. This sometimes took grand form, but it also operated in more mundane contexts.

Anglo-French tensions, for example, were a particular sore point among personnel on the ground. British-born sojourner John F.E. Wright, who worked as a post office clerk in Hong Kong for five years in the late 1840s and early 1850s, recalled that one controversy involved the public display and positioning of different nations' respective flags. He wrote one day in 1853:

This morning several officers + two boats crews from the “Capricious” French frigate, came into the factory gardens to plant a flag staff before the house of the French

consulate....An immense majority of the English + other foreigners in Canton are against this proceeding. The French Officers...informed the English + others collected around the spot where they wished to dig the holes, what their intention was. The English particularly held out against their placing a flagstaff in the gardens. When the officers sent for the sailors to come without arms which they did, + used force to push the English away from the spot where they wish to dig the whole. This appears to be all the majority of the community required, because they had already given the commanding officer of the French forces here a written protest against this proceeding. I was very much afraid that something grievous [page break] would have occurred from the appearance of things, however after a little pushing about, the French sailors commenced digging the required hole for placing the flagstaff to fly the tricolor on, + why should they not as well as the English, American, + Danish, the flag staffs at present in the gardens. This business has not ended with the whole being dug + I fear it may turn to an affray – the French sailors appear perfectly willing + many of the merchants + clerks of this place wished to put the Frenchmen out of the gardens.⁴⁶⁴

Tensions eventually subsided, but this serves as a good reminder of the fact that “Western” actors were far from homogenous.

The Same Players, in a Slightly Expanded Game

After the war, many Chinese individuals who had played important roles as intermediaries in the Pearl River Delta remained in business and continued thriving. Chapter 1 has already discussed how John Perkins Cushing’s servant Chutang Ahoo returned to China and established himself as a tea merchant and authority on the cotton trade by the mid-1840s. Let us now turn to additional examples.

When Baltimore native Tiffany Osmond (1823-1895) visited Canton as a young man in September of 1844, one local Chinese middleman who left a deep impression—just as he had left an impression on a generation of foreign visitors before him—was Boston Jack, whose prominence at the intersection of Sino-Western trade on the South China Coast had only grown over time. Upon arriving, “[w]e were introduced by our fellow-countrymen to a native, known to

⁴⁶⁴ PRO: HKMS143-1-1, “Diary of Mr. J.F.E. Wright,” March 19, 1853.

all Americans as ‘Boston Jack,’” recalled Osmond. “He had been to Boston many years ago, spoke English quite fluently, and seemed to consider himself the internuncio of Whampoa. Jack has an account book, and in justice to him keeps it honestly, and supplies the vessels with the best of fresh meats and vegetables every day; he makes a present to the captain as he is about to leave, and when the vessel is weighing anchor, he comes alongside, and puts into the hands of an urchin a pack of crackers to set fire to, as a chin chin, or farewell, or bon voyage.”⁴⁶⁵

With the foreign anchorage at Whampoa no longer the sole nexus of trade, Boston Jack’s deliveries had by this time expanded to Hong Kong as well, where he delivered supplies such as fresh bread and barrels of beef and pork.⁴⁶⁶ Like many other intermediaries, Boston Jack had grown his operations into a family business. “As soon as a ship arrives,” added one commentator, “...[Boston Jack] visits the ship to pay his compliments, and to introduce his daughters Nell and Tom, two very fairy, young, and buoyant girls...who will cater most admirably for the table and washing affairs of the officers and ship.”⁴⁶⁷

Another local intermediary whose business ventures continued flourishing in the postwar years was a man known as Ayou. Another of John Perkins Cushing’s servants who had accompanied him to the United States, Ayou returned from Massachusetts a few years after Chutang Ahoo and embarked on a career as a merchant in his own right. Like Boston Jack, Ayou expanded his operations to Hong Kong after the war, where American doctor Benjamin Ball encountered him one day in 1848:

At one of the Chinese shops, where I was making some inquiries, I saw a Chinaman who spoke good English, and appeared so polite that I stopped a while, and entered into conversation with him. He told me his name was Ayou; that he had lived two years in

⁴⁶⁵ Tiffany Osmond, *The Canton Chinese; or, the American’s Sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: J. Munroe and Company, 1849), 21.

⁴⁶⁶ HBS, Comstock Papers, receipt from Boston Jack, 2 May 1847.

⁴⁶⁷ Robert Burts, *Around the World: A Narrative of a Voyage in the East India Squadron under Commodore George C. Read* (New York: C.S. Francis, 1840), 248.

Boston; that formerly he was comprador to Mr. Cushing at Canton, and afterwards lived with him in America. Preferring his own country, he returned, and now has a large alum establishment, in which, he says, he is doing a good business.⁴⁶⁸

Like many other returned sojourners, Ayou leveraged his translingual skills and accumulated capital to start a business upon returning home, and the comprador's experiences abroad appear to have positioned him well. In fact, Ball's recounting suggests that Ayou's proficiency in English and familiarity with Western conversational norms and pleasantries were precisely those features that had enticed the doctor to "stop...a while" at his shop. While further details about his "large alum establishment" are not known, Ayou's ability to continue "doing a good business" in the postwar years suggests that the skills that served him well in the 1830s continued to be an asset a decade later.

A Man Named Whampoa, Son of Whampoa, Son of Whampoa, Sells Bread in Singapore

While the main thrust of this dissertation is focused on everyday Sino-Western interactions in China itself, such contact was obviously not limited to China. Beyond the territorial bounds of Qing jurisdiction, Chinese merchants and itinerant intermediaries with commercial ties to the South China Coast also continued engaging in many of the same business practices and problem-solving practices that had come to shape the contours of grassroots relations in the preceding decades.

In October of 1884, a dispute arose between an American woman named Sophie Studer and her Chinese comprador, named Whampoa, over the quality of bread that he was supplying. Whampoa (Hoo Ah Yip 胡亞業, ca. 1838-1887) was a native of Singapore but traced his descent

⁴⁶⁸ Benjamin L. Ball, *Rambles in Eastern Asia, Including China and Manila, during Several Years' Residence* (Boston: J. French, 1855), 91. For records of Ayou's commercial activities, see also Bryant and Sturgis papers and "Comprador Ayou waste book," HBS: Robert Bennet Forbes Papers (E-3).

from a line of Cantonese compradors from the Pearl River Delta, who had adopted the sobriquet “Whampoa” in homage to the island anchorage where they originally lived and worked. As was not uncommon among Chinese intermediaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this adopted name had passed successively from father to eldest son, as each in turn assumed responsibility for the family business.⁴⁶⁹ Although Whampoa of Singapore no longer lived on the South Chinese island anchorage that had given rise to his name, he continued making a living like his forefathers, as a commercial middleman who supplied Europeans and Americans with provisions and personnel.

His grandfather, the first Whampoa of their line (Hoo Weng Kan?), had worked as a ships’ comprador at the Whampoa anchorage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Hoo Ah Yip’s father (Hoo Ah Kay 胡亞基, 1816-1880) moved to Singapore in 1830, at the age of fifteen, where he and his father Hoo Weng Kan managed the family provisioning business, titled Whampoa and Company. The new British colony of Singapore had been growing rapidly since its founding in 1819, and the Whampoas’ services were in high demand. Whampoa the second spoke excellent English, and after the death of his father he inherited Whampoa and Company and expanded its operations considerably. “Immense quantities of provisions and ship-stores are accumulated in his extensive warehouses, so that he can supply orders to any extent in an incredibly short space of time,” reported one Austrian customer. “Within two days, Whampoa had completely victualled the ship for six months, besides supplying her from the adjoining stream with 100 tons of good water, which was brought alongside in boats specially constructed for the purpose, and thence pumped through hose into the iron water-tanks in the hold, an

⁴⁶⁹ Another example: *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 70, p. 311, “young Cockeye, the son of old Cockeye.” This naming practice also speaks to the value of maintaining and leveraging a good reputation.

operation which in any European port would have taken thrice the time required here.”⁴⁷⁰ Robert Tomes, the government-appointed chronicler of Commodore Matthew Perry’s expedition to Tokugawa Japan in 1853-1854, recalled that when Perry’s expedition stopped en route at Singapore, Whampoa hosted the delegation “with the truth spirit of hospitality” and came off as “a man of courteous bearing and great intelligence, and who had made considerable progress in the English language, which he spoke with some fluency.”⁴⁷¹ In addition to rising to prominence as a leading businessman in his adopted home of Singapore, the second Whampoa served as Consul to Russia, Japan, and China, and in 1869 he had the honor of becoming the first ethnically Chinese member of Singapore’s Legislative Council.

Recognizing the benefits of cross-cultural and linguistic fluency, the second Whampoa sent his eldest son, Hoo Ah Yip, to be educated in England in his youth. Hoo Ah Yip’s experiences abroad appear to have left an impression. Exercising his command of Scottish slang, the third Whampoa would recount to a family friend decades later,

I had been to dear Edinburgh when I was a bairn and...spent some years picking [up] and adapting the tongue of the language that I now use to express to you...I believe I was the first Chinese that ever lived in the northern-most part of the Great British Isles!⁴⁷²

The youngest Whampoa was mistaken in his belief that he was the first Chinese to visit Scotland—that distinction likely belonged to a servant named William Macao, who in 1819, at the age of sixty-six, became the first legal Chinese Scotsman (see Chapter 1, p. 28, f. 78)—but his time in Scotland was notable nonetheless. In addition to providing Hoo Ah Yip with a

⁴⁷⁰ Karl Ritter von Scherzer, *Narrative of the Circumnavigation of the Globe by the Austrian Frigate Novara, in the Years 1857, 1858, and 1859*, vol. 2 (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1862), 168-169.

⁴⁷¹ Robert Tomes, *The Americans in Japan: An Abridgment of the Government Narrative of the U.S. Expedition to Japan, under Commodore Perry* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857), 59.

⁴⁷² H.A.Y. Whampoa to Hume, 16 April 1887, “Volumes of Bound Correspondence belonging to Hoo Ah Kay (Whampoa)’s family,” NAS: 10/1990, 28-29.

foundation in the English language, his foreign schooling also yielded some unexpected consequences. As one mutual acquaintance later recounted,

Dear old Whampoa's eldest son was sent to England for education, and while there became a Presbyterian. When I was in Singapore, years after, the young man returned, and had the assurance to reappear before his father, fresh and well, but minus a tail [i.e., his queue, worn according to Manchu fashion], and consequently was banished to Canton until it regrew and he consented to worship the gods of his fathers.⁴⁷³

His father's displeasure notwithstanding, H.A.Y. Whampoa (as he signed his name) was able to leverage his foreign education and facility with Western mores to follow in his father's footsteps, and when his father passed away in 1880, he inherited the mantle of Whampoa and Company.

Surviving business records and personal correspondence suggest that H.A.Y. Whampoa strove to manage the family business much as his forefathers had, through a combination of adroit interpersonal skills and flexible conflict management. His father's death had left large shoes to fill, however, in addition to diminishing Whampoa and Company's personal ties with many of its longstanding clients, and the youngest Whampoa's assumption of the mantle was not without bumps. It was within this context that H.A.Y. Whampoa's bread troubles began with Sophie Studer, the adult daughter of an American diplomat in Singapore.

"Dear Mr. Whampoa, [f]or a long time past your bread coolie has been bringing the second quality of bread at 6 cents a pound, instead [of] the first quality at 8 cents a pound what we always have paid for," wrote Studer one day. "My father has lately been staying with a friend in the country who also gets your bread at 8 cents a pound and he noticed that the kind we get at the same price is inferior in quality. We spoke to the coolie about it and he said that we have been getting the kind at 6 cents. This annoyed me, and I told him that we would stop taking bread from him if he did not always bring us the right kind and he said we better write you about it. Will you please give orders to the baker to send us in future the kind of bread we pay for and oblige?"⁴⁷⁴

Whampoa's response arrived later that day:

Dear Miss Studer,

⁴⁷³ Henry Keppel, *A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Company, 1899), 80.

⁴⁷⁴ Letter from Sophie Studer to H.A.Y. Whampoa, 13 October 1884, "Volumes of Bound Correspondence belonging to Hoo Ah Kay (Whampoa)'s family," 10/1990: NA 1491, National Archives of Singapore.

On receipt of your kind note I made enquiries and have been told that the bread applied to you was the first quality and if there should have been any mistake it must be the fault of the other man who put bread into the baskets every morn before daybreak. To prevent such blunder being made in the future I have however given strict orders to the man whose duty to put bread into the baskets to have your bread of the first quality tied up separately and hope thus to avoid all annoyance I was so sorry that such thing should have occurred.

With kind regards to your father your sister and self

Yours very sincerely
H.A.Y. Whampoa⁴⁷⁵

Matters, however, did not end here. A few months later, in February of 1885, a new set of bread troubles arose between Whampoa and the Studer household. This time it was Sophie Studer's father, the U.S. consul at Singapore, who wrote the letter.

I intended to write you right after paying on the 28th ult. my bread bill for December, but was very busy [so] I put it off till now. Your bill for Dec...called for 52 lbs best white bread @ 8 c/ \$4.16 [and though] it seemed unusual[ly] large in view that I had no more persons in my family or entertainments (rather less on December) I did not demure in the least when your bill solicitor presented it [and] paid it without saying anything. I then made close enquiries about the receipts of bread from your carrier, and learned that, as usual before December, he left and still leaving every morning 1 ½ lb a loaf of one and a loaf of a half pound of bread. I asked the breadboy, who receives it in his room (deposited there by the carrier whether he is in or not) whether at any time more than 1 ½ lb was demanded or received by any one, and he answered me that he was prepared to swear that more than 1 ½ pounds were never received for the house and that he never knew of any one else in the house to receive either any bread for himself or, in excess of 1 ½ lbs for the house, and that I was made to pay for more bread than was delivered by your bread carrier according to his statement. I received in December 31 days 1 ½ lb per day = 46 ½ lbs @ 8 c/. \$3.72 and paid you 44c/ in excess of the actual amount due. He answers me that the same statement holds good for the January bread deliveries. Of course we are liable to mistake, however positive the breadboy is that there is none in this matter. My daughter who keeps house says also she being up early every morning that 1 ½ lb are delivered per diem and that she knows no more and that no greater quantity per day is needed. Please investigate the matter and find out from the carrier whether any one...of the servants received bread in excess of the quantity claimed by the breadboy on the pretense that it was for us, and if so, to identify the persons for the best, all considered, I think it would be best to all bread tickets or cheques calling for 1 or for ½ or for 1 ½ or 2 pounds of best white bread to customers that wish for such as arrangement, to be sold at your place of business or by your bill collector. That would prevent mistake

⁴⁷⁵ Letter from H.A.Y. Whampoa to Sophie Studer, 13 October 1884, "Volumes of Bound Correspondence belonging to Hoo Ah Kay (Whampoa)'s family," 10/1990: NA 1491, National Archives of Singapore.

or thefts by servants which fall upon your customers such an arrangement would suit me mostly and I am prepared to begin at once, if you wish.

Believe me,
Yours most sincerely,
A.G. Studer⁴⁷⁶

In a series of exchanges over the following week, Whampoa and Adolf Studer tried to resolve their differences in a variety of ways. In addition to sending copies of bookkeeping entries from Whampoa's bakery, the comprador supplied Studer with a passbook in which Adolf and Sophie could record the quantity of bread delivered each morning. He also proposed implementing a refined order system, whereby the Studers could submit daily orders slips, which Whampoa would supply to be filled out each evening based on the Studer family's needs, rather than rely on a standing order. Adolf Studer, for his part, disagreeing about the accuracy of Whampoa's bread receipts and maintaining that he had been overcharged for the bread received, countered with alternatives to streamline the bread deliveries and reduce the probability of future errors.

After the U.S. consul questioned his household baker and Whampoa's delivery boy each in turn about the precise quantities of bread delivered and emphasizing that he was willing "with this evidence...[to appear] before a court if [Whampoa] desire it," the comprador relented.⁴⁷⁷ While Whampoa maintained his innocence based on the receipts and records available to him, continued disagreement with the Studers was not worth the risk of further escalation. He accepted Adolf Studer's imputation that one of Whampoa's staff somewhere along the chain of

⁴⁷⁶ Letter from Sophie Studer to H.A.Y. Whampoa, 5 February 1885, "Volumes of Bound Correspondence belonging to Hoo Ah Kay (Whampoa)'s family," 10/1990: NA 1491, National Archives of Singapore.

⁴⁷⁷ Letter from Adolf Studer to H.A.Y. Whampoa, 18 February 1885, Volumes of Bound Correspondence belonging to Hoo Ah Kay (Whampoa)'s family," 10/1990: NA 1491, National Archives of Singapore.

command was responsible for the discrepancy in bread received, and he refunded the difference. “I fear we were both victorious,” concluded Adolf Studer in his final letter on this matter.

Although Singapore may seem far removed from the South China Coast, examples such as Whampoa’s interaction with the Studers nonetheless serve as useful data points that can help us more broadly contextualize everyday relations in the Pearl River Delta. Comparison and connection are the two central methodologies for doing global history, and consideration of trade and grassroots dispute resolution in Singapore—in an analogous commercial environment that was also closely connected, economically and socially, to the Pearl River Delta—lets us employ both comparative and connective methods, in tandem with our knowledge of practices on the South China Coast, to achieve a more robust understanding of Sino-Western dispute resolution in its varied contexts.

Two hundred years ago, the differences between Singapore and Canton were less pronounced than they are today. British administrators in Singapore viewed Chinese settler-colonists on the Malay Peninsula as Chinese people from China—where indeed many of them were from—even if those Chinese saw themselves through the frameworks of other primary identifiers (e.g., their identities as Hokkienese, Hakka, Cantonese, etc.). Meanwhile, at the grassroots, many aspects of trade and daily life did not look all that different between the two sites. Chinese significantly outnumbered Europeans, and they chafed at restrictions on commerce, but plenty of individual Chinese and their European counterparts were able to work toward mutual economic goals. Conflicts that did occur were just as often among Chinese themselves—as was also the case in Canton, in Shadwell, and in many other places where Chinese and Western populations overlapped but Sino-Western conflict has been taken out of its local context.

On the one hand, Singapore offers a useful point of comparison that helps us contextualize the frictions that did occur on the South China Coast, because it highlights how even in a place where foreign (British) traders could shape the local commercial system more or less as they saw fit, some amount of conflict still occurred and, indeed, was to be expected; in this respect Singapore was no different than Canton or any other hub of trade and migration, such as New York or London. At the same time, Singapore's experiences also show that when conflicts *did* occur, parties on both sides tried to resolve them in much the same fashion as on the South China Coast, with flexibility and a generally shared desire to prevent matters from escalating.⁴⁷⁸

Conclusion

Tiffany Osmond, the American sojourner who wrote of the warm impression left on him by Boston Jack, ended his account of his four-month visit to Canton with a reflection on “the Chinese as a nation.” As Osmond confessed in the preface to his work, he recognized the limitations of his observations, given his brief stay and candid admission of his “utter ignorance of the Chinese language.”⁴⁷⁹ Nevertheless, concluded Osmond of the Chinese,

They have always been an unique people; they have been the same, yesterday and to-day, and though they have several times been overrun with Asiatic hordes, and now obey the will of a mere handful of Tartars, they have never changed. Their masters have adopted their manners and customs in a great degree...[China's] language today is the same as in the age of Confucius, [and] its great wall has been built two thousand years.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ This also raises some questions about why the Chinese in Singapore could become normalized to an extent within the Western imagination, while those in China remained “otherized;” but this question is probably beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁴⁷⁹ Osmond, *The Canton Chinese*, ix.

⁴⁸⁰ Osmond, *The Canton Chinese*, 264.

The idea of a static China, unchanging for thousands of years, was not new in Osmond's time, and to a certain extent this idea's corresponding implications for seeing China as a cultural monolith continue to resonate in popular discourses today, in both the West and China itself. What is striking is the degree of prescience with which Osmond foreshadowed ideas about China and Chineseness that would extend into and be debated into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These ideas—from the supposed singular homogeneity of China's vast population, to the capacity for Chinese culture and civilization to assimilate foreign others such as the Mongol (Yuan) and Manchu (Qing) conquest dynasties, to key referents of national identity such as Confucian tradition, the Great Wall, and some ineffable sense of linguistic unity that purports to cross all differences of topolect and unite the Sinophone world both within the borders of the Chinese state and in diaspora, which together symbolically fix present identity to that of a distant past—have contributed to maintaining the perception of Chinese stasis through time.

In contemporary discussions of the first Opium War, the decline of the Qing state, and the accelerating reforms of the second half of the nineteenth century, however, we are faced with the opposite problem: an image not of a static, unchanging China, but of a China changed—fundamentally and irrevocably—in large part by its engagement with the West.⁴⁸¹ The truth lies somewhere in between. Without a doubt, the Qing empire's governance of its coastal domains and its epistemological understanding of its place in the world underwent seismic shifts in the

⁴⁸¹ Outward-looking histories of China's nineteenth century have also cast the first Opium War as a major turning point. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, a combination of domestic and global pressures—including the Australian and Californian gold rushes (1848-1850s), the societal fallout of the Taiping rebellion (1850-1864), and the "coolie trade" or trafficking of Asian indentured laborers following the incremental abolition of slavery in the Atlantic world—kindled new mass out-migrations that pushed Chinese peoples and cultures into increasing contact with a range of European, American, and African peoples beyond Chinese shores. But these migrations were new only in scale, not in character. Rather than marking a radical, typological break in the pattern of Sino-Western engagement, these encounters simply built on and accelerated preexisting trends of transnational opportunity seeking, which had long paid little heed to ostensible national or linguistic boundaries as Chinese individuals from all walks of life sought to make the most of opportunities at hand.

wake of the first Opium War. At the same time, however, our deserved historiographical attention to these high-level political and intellectual transformations has often overshadowed the extent to which much also remained the same in their aftermath, especially where the contours of daily life were concerned. While postwar features including foreign tribunals and mixed courts introduced new venues for adjudicating transnational issues such as commercial disputes, for many people informal, grassroots problem-solving methods retained primacy, with formal dispute arbitration serving as only a secondary option. (And for many Chinese people, when they did utilize these courts, one of the primary benefits of such venues for arbitration lay not necessarily in their capacity to resolve conflicts but rather in the particular protections they offered—from the Qing state—to Chinese civilians in the treaty ports’ areas of foreign jurisdiction.)

If the first Opium War marked a watershed, it lay most clearly in the way that the Qing state, led by Chinese scholar-officials, began to think differently about the West. Prior to the Treaty of Nanking, while ordinary people had long been accustomed to dealing with “foreign devils” in their daily lives, there existed for example no widespread Chinese equivalent to the *Rangaku* or Dutch studies tradition of Tokugawa Japan, which, despite the far tighter grip on transnational commerce exerted by officials at Dejima than at Canton, facilitated the diffusion and translation of key foreign technological, medical, and geographical treatises, oftentimes with the support of the Tokugawa state. With respect to such knowledge, Qing scholar-officials’ myopia was real. The depth of high-Qing ethnolinguistic knowledge and knowledge production about the European world, as expressed through eighteenth-century avenues such as the Siyiguan’s translingual glossaries and illustrated compendia like the *Huang Qing Zhigong Tu*, paled in comparison to the longstanding Sinological traditions of Europe. (Indeed, “China”

loomed so large in the early modern European imagination that there was perhaps no small grain of truth to the eighteenth-century joke that the average Frenchman could say more about China than about many parts of his own country.) The Chinese state's level of foreign knowledge and understanding also lagged far behind that of many of its subjects. Following the first Opium War, Qing intellectuals such as Ruan Yuan needed to rely on sojourner-informants like Wang Dahai and Xie Qinggao (excerpts of whose writings made their way nearly verbatim into the *Haiguo tuzhi*) and translator-interpreters like Chinese Christian converts Liang Jinde and William Botelho (Liao Ah-see), the latter of whom had been one of Henry Martyn Alan's classmates at Cornwall.

But if the state is not a central part of the story we are trying to tell, the first Opium War looks less pivotal. Indeed, one of the implicit arguments I have made throughout this dissertation is that the entity which we have come to know as the Chinese nation-state *should* be less a part of the story we are trying to tell, because conceptions of “the state” were not the predominant framework through which most people understood their lived experiences. For the four hundred million or so individuals outside of the Qing state's formal bureaucracy who inhabited Qing domains in the early nineteenth century and its adjoining decades, pecuniary matters of commerce and subsistence were by far the most important practical concerns and epistemological frameworks through which they viewed the world around them. The state—except on those particular occasions when it intruded directly into people's lives—was largely an afterthought. When measured by the economic motivations and other quotidian concerns that occupied people in their daily lives, the shifts we see in mid-nineteenth-century China are not so much a radical break from the past as an extension of established trends.

It is hard, however, not to tell a state-centered story of China's late imperial period. Both the sources available to historians and our very frameworks of periodization (for example, "late imperial" as a less Eurocentric alternative to the sliding scale of "modernity") are inherently centered around the state. New periodizations of Qing history have increasingly begun dating the start of the Qing period to 1636 (when Hong Taiji, a Jurchen chieftain and second khan of the Later Jin, renamed his domains the *Da Qing* or "Great Qing") instead of the traditional date of 1644 (when Manchu forces seized the Ming capital of Beijing and began their lengthy conquest and rule of China proper), but this historiographical reorientation is still only partial and is, in any case, merely a redrawing of the state's temporal boundaries rather than an effort to adopt alternative units of analysis. Meanwhile, since the robust holdings of the First Historical Archives of China, the premier repository for records from the Ming and Qing dynasties, are by their nature state-centered materials, historians naturally gain ready insight into the inner workings of the Qing bureaucracy and its concerns, while use of other types of sources often entails more piecemeal approaches. Other commonly utilized sources, such as county gazetteers and lineage records, hold different preoccupations than the memorials stored in Beijing but are generally still written with at least one eye on the state, if for no other reason than that their compilers and readers drew largely upon literati ranks of aspiring or actual bureaucrats.

Writing of the origins of the Canton trade in the eighteenth century, noted South China Coast historian Paul van Dyke has described Qianlong's 1757 decree that restricted European maritime commerce to Canton as merely formalizing a *fait accompli*, since the reality was that the port had already, and more organically, been the center of Sino-Western trade for decades. Despite a longstanding practice of treating the 1757 edict as a critical juncture that separated the commercial landscape of the South China Coast into two distinct stages, Van Dyke highlights

how the social and economic continuities that wove together transnational interactions across that historiographical divide in many ways make it more logical to abandon this artifice and treat the two halves as part of a unified whole. Such a view is slowly gaining traction, at least in the English-language literature.

Historians have had fewer qualms about identifying the first Opium War and the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 as the endpoint of the Canton system of trade. To be sure, the structural changes that ensued in the treaty's wake—the cession of Hong Kong, abolition of the Hong merchant consortium, and opening of foreign treaty ports, among other developments—were significant, and the scale of changes, too, was far more sweeping than in 1757. But at the grassroots, the impacts of these changes on the lives of ordinary people were less evident, and for the most part the customary practices and interpersonal relationships that had configured Sino-Western interaction for the preceding century remained in place. Merchants and their counterparts interacted much as they did before, and in many ways still do, in globally entangled contact zones stretching from Canton and Singapore to London and New York.

Conclusion

Choice is imbricated in the politics of making history legible: how we choose to remember the past, and which pasts we choose to recollect, revive, and recreate in dialogue with the present.⁴⁸²

“What a most extraordinary nation is this!” declared naval commander John Bingham after his service in China during the first Opium War. “They will trade with you at one spot, while you are fighting, killing, and destroying them at another.”⁴⁸³ Although Bingham found this dissonance remarkable, it is unlikely that his Chinese counterparts would have shared his sense of wonder. The ordinary Chinese folk who stood at the center of Sino-Western encounter—boatmen and laundrywomen, greengrocers and compradors, interpreters and coolies—were comfortable straddling multiple categories, roles, and storylines.⁴⁸⁴ To what extent can we say the same of the narratives that we have written about them? For people at the grassroots, it was not a problem to be “Chinese” yet conduct business with foreigners during a state-imposed embargo, or even to work as sailors aboard foreign gunships during a war between the British and Qing empires. Nor was it a problem to both convert to Christianity for the practical advantages it offered and, notwithstanding Christianity’s monotheistic claims, also maintain

⁴⁸² Every work of history is a product of selections and omissions, some explicit and others less so, which shape the contours of its contents. The most prejudiced decision that I have made in this dissertation lies in the work’s centering of the lives of Chinese, Europeans, and Americans; Indian and Arab traders as well as circulating individuals from elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region feature less prominently. This focus is a product of both of argumentative interest, as my primary historiographical target is the story of Chinese engagement with the Western world, and practicality, as the work would risk losing narrative cohesiveness with too broad a framing.

⁴⁸³ John Elliott Bingham, *Narrative of the Expedition to China, from the Commencement of the War to the Present Period*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), 413.

⁴⁸⁴ An overriding notion of “China” had yet to replace the imagined or real communities and identifications of the Pearl River Delta Chinese as men and women from Whampoa or Lintin or one of the many hometowns of the delta, even if monolithic notions of “China” had already crystallized in the Western imagination.

indigenous beliefs. It has been more of a problem, however, for historians to reconcile these simultaneous and often conflicting narratives and para-narratives.

As this dissertation has shown, a linear story of conflict, culminating in the first Opium War, is not the only or even most representative paradigm through which to think about everyday relations between China and the West in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rather than conflict, a culture of active and flexible conflict resolution, motivated by economic incentives and mediated by longstanding practices of social and translingual engagement, characterized Chinese-foreign relations on the South China Coast. In everyday situations, conflict was the exception, not the norm.

Historians have two primary tools in their analytical arsenal: data, and theoretical or methodological frameworks for interpreting that data. Data and frameworks each shape the conclusions we can support. A history of diplomacy based on newspaper reports, for example, looks rather different than a history of diplomacy based on political memos. Meanwhile, a legal historian reads the inheritance stipulations of a will much differently than a gender historian. In examining the past, scholars can find and incorporate new data, or we can apply new frameworks; good histories often do both. But our fetishization of archival sources should not belie the fact that there is also value in reading familiar data within new frameworks and with new questions in mind, because doing so equally imbues them with new meaning. Historians—like archaeologists, evolutionary biologists, folklorists, and other scholars who study the physical or cultural fossils of humanity—rarely can access enough data to reconstruct the entirety of a distant past. Even the thickest descriptions are thin in places, and given the patchiness of the historical record, reinterpretation can be just as valuable as reconstruction.

In reexamining the history of Chinese-foreign relations and grassroots dispute resolution in the decades leading up to the first Opium War, this dissertation does not question the overarching contours of Sino-Western engagement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It does, however, offer a set of counternarratives that thrusts that story in a new light, no longer written under the teleological shadow of the first Opium War. Shifting the historical lens to the grassroots and retelling the familiar story of China's early nineteenth century with macropolitical conflict on the margins instead of at the center opens the doors to new and significant possibilities for narrating the periods of history that ordinary people inhabited. Conflict, as judged by the habits and practices of people on the ground, was far from inevitable.

Moreover, even once war had begun and ended, the culture and practices of grassroots dispute resolution did not disappear. Historians portray the Canton system of trade as having ended with the first Opium War, after the Treaty of Nanking opened up new treaty ports and forcibly broke the Canton Hong merchants' institutional monopoly on foreign maritime trade. This was true in a politico-economic sense: as a formal system of international trade, the Qing policy of *yikou tongshang* 一口通商 indeed ended with the conclusion of the war, and the establishment of new institutions such as the Imperial Maritime Customs brought other structural changes alongside. But in a socio-economic sense, the system of interpersonal practices and commercial norms that developed over three centuries of transnational engagement in Canton, Macao, Whampoa, Lintin, and other outlying islands of the Pearl River Delta did not so much end as spread.

The first Opium War is an event that has long been freighted with meaning, but one cargo with which it has rarely been freighted is a sense of possibility: of alternative narrative potentialities that can supply it with a different semantic and interpretive load. What I have tried

to do in this dissertation is lay out an alternative set of analytics for thinking about and narrating the history of Sino-Western engagement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in which actors in that history, such as Woman Kwok and Francis Terranova, take center stage not as players in a drama centered on the first Opium War but as actors in a different, parallel-running story.⁴⁸⁵

Not only is this adjacent storyline itself a useful counternarrative that, with its increased attention to a broad milieu of everyday interactions and experiences, casts in a new light the dynamic social landscape of Canton's environs, but the tension and disjuncture between these two parallel narrative threads also provide a productive site for building a more robust understanding of this history in a broader perspective. This is why it is so important to read historical experiences like Xie Qinggao's, for example, in the manner that I have illustrated, because doing so offers a way to uncover, consider, and reconcile disjuncture in places where we have not previously recognized it. As I have argued, people from a variety of backgrounds were able to resolve their conflicts more often than not, and even instances of conflict can often tell us just as much about non-conflict as about those contingent situations in which routine problem-solving methods and incentives failed. In this sense, the juxtaposition of narratives and counternarratives does not have to only create contrast; it can also create unity. A centering of the grassroots world of the Pearl River Delta shows that beyond conflict, too, there lies a story worth telling.

⁴⁸⁵ CKUB: I have mixed feelings about Prasenjit Duara's notion of "bifurcated" histories, but maybe I should mention it here.

EPILOGUE

In the year 1783, a Chinese literatus named Wang Dahai 王大海, whose given name translates to “Great Ocean,” left the port of Amoy and set out for what would prove to be a decade-long sojourn around the Malay Archipelago. A native of Longxi 龍谿 county in southern Fujian Province, Wang had received a classical education in his youth and was reputed to possess “irrepressible vigor of mind,” but after failing to progress in the imperial examinations and, in the words of one biographer, “scorning to submit his lucubrations to the criticisms of the examining officer,” he “gave up his prospects of advancement to official rank” and contented himself with a life of private scholarship and reflection.⁴⁸⁶ After debts and misfortune depleted his family inheritance, the impoverished Wang, like so many sojourners before and after him, “suddenly thought of going abroad; and embarking on board a merchant vessel, he soon landed in Batavia.”⁴⁸⁷

It was here that Wang Dahai would make a name for himself. Commencing a career as a part-time trader and part-time family tutor for the children of wealthy Peranakan families, Wang followed his wanderlust and commercial interests across Dutch colonial Java and back, from Batavia to Pekalongan and Semarang and in between. Along the way, Wang encountered and wrote about a host of foreign beings: Dutchmen, with “high noses and red hair;” Englishmen,

⁴⁸⁶ Wang’s uncle and secondary biographer provide the same rationale, explaining that “in the year 1783, when speculating on the means of subsistence, [Wang] crossed the seas.” Between the lines, however, we can also discern the frustrations of a once-aspiring scholar-official who still yearned to uphold a Confucian worldview even though Qing officialdom offered no place for him in it. Ong Tae Hae [Wang Dahai], *The Chinaman Abroad; or, a Desultory Account of the Malayan Archipelago, Particularly of Java*, trans. Walter Medhurst (Shanghai: Mission Press, 1849), vi, viii. N.B.: Unless otherwise indicated, translations in this section are taken from Medhurst’s 1849 edition, but I have also crosschecked them with the Chinese original, which reveals one strange inconsistency, discussed below. For the Chinese version, see Wang Dahai 王大海, *Haidaoyizhi* 海島逸誌 (Zhangyuan cangban 漳園藏板, 1806?).

⁴⁸⁷ Ong, *The Chinaman Abroad*, vi.

hailing from the “north-west corner of the ocean;” Malays, “very much addicted to piracy;” Javanese, whose “writing resembles crawling worms;” Frenchmen, whose “dispositions are violent and boisterous;” Buginese, even more “boisterous and violent” than the French; Spaniards, whose “physiognomy resembles in some respect that of the Chinese;” even orangutans, with “bellies...like drums.”⁴⁸⁸ Wang’s quixotic musings merge fact, hearsay, and fiction. Interspersed with reports about Chinese seamen at the Cape of Good Hope and modest insights into French Revolution-era European geopolitics (“The kingdom of France is large and the population numerous, so that the English are somewhat afraid of them”), Wang fills his account with fanciful anecdotes about Dayak tribesmen with six-inch tails and rumors about hot air balloons, which had just entered into use in the late eighteenth century and, like the steamships that Xie Qinggao would mention in his *Hailu* a few decades later, reached Chinese ears long before reaching Chinese shores.⁴⁸⁹

In 1791, shortly before returning to China for good, Wang began composing an account of his travels: the *Haidao yizhi* 海岛逸志 or *Desultory Account of the Malayan Archipelago*, first published in 1806 and reprinted several times over the course of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Ong Tae Hae, *The Chinaman Abroad; or, a Desultory Account of the Malayan Archipelago, Particularly of Java*, trans. Walter Medhurst (Shanghai: Mission Press, 1849), 30, 32, 33, 37, 53.

⁴⁸⁹ A fascination with hot air balloons runs through several turn-of-the-century Asian maritime accounts about the European world, with a crew of shipwrecked Japanese sailors who traveled to Russia, Alaska, England, Brazil, and Hawaii between 1792 and 1804 having similar things to say after witnessing the first hot air balloon launch in St. Petersburg in 1803. See Ōtsuki Gentaku 大槻玄沢, *Kankai Ibun-ki* 環海異聞 [Strange Tales of a Circumnavigation] (1807), GB 102 MS 55942, School of Oriental and African Studies Archives.

⁴⁹⁰ Extant scholarship agrees that the first edition of Wang’s book is the “Zhangyuan cangban” dating to 1806, with additional editions published beginning in the 1840s. However, both of the Chinese versions that I have been able to locate, although they indicate “Zhangyuan cangban” on the cover and claim to have been printed in the eleventh year of Jiaqing (i.e., 1806), contain added details of events set between 1811 and 1814: namely, the British invasion of Java in the fall of 1811, before the Convention of London restored Batavia to Dutch control in August 1814. This suggests that there was also an intermediary, perhaps more local reprint of Wang’s *Haidao yizhi* before the 1840s, and that some of the purported 1806 editions actually date from circa 1813 or 1814. On the acknowledged editions of Wang’s work, see Zheng Yong 郑镛 and Lian Xinhao 连心豪, “Lun *Haidao yizhi* de shixue jiazhi,” *Xiamen Daxue xuebao* 1 (2009): 75-76; Claudine Salmon, “Wang Dahai et sa vision des « Contrées insulaires » (1791),” *Études chinoises: bulletin de l’Association française d’études chinoises* 13:1-2 (1994): 222. In 1996 Wu Langxuan 吴琅璇 outlined similar suspicions about the conventional dating of the editions, but his observations seem to have

Wang's narrative is noteworthy in two respects. It is noteworthy first and foremost as a work of ethnography, which features detailed accounts of Chinese and Javanese life on the Malay Archipelago along with wide-ranging descriptions of local flora and fauna. But the *Haidao yizhi* is also noteworthy as a work of historiography, which evaluates the trajectory and development of Chinese lived experience at the intersection of European colonial rivalries in a globalizing Asian maritime world.

About a quarter of the way into the text, interpolated between Wang's descriptions of Dutch Batavia and Chinese merchant communities, lies an abrupt condemnation of opium trafficking, written and interjected by a second, unknown Chinese author sometime after Wang first composed his *Haidao yizhi*. Narrative details suggest that the addition dates to circa 1813 or 1814. In this section, titled "A Further Account of Batavia," the unidentified commentator writes:

It is now several hundred years since the Dutch barbarians, by artifice, obtained possession of the soil of Batavia....The Javanese..., coveting the wealth of Europeans, have gradually fallen into their snare; but who could have calculated on the conquerors proceeding to invent the black fumes of opium to tempt and delude the natives; urging them to consume this drug as a luxury, until they became so weak and emaciated, so dispirited and exhausted, that they could no longer think of regaining their land, nor conceive the idea of revenging their wrongs. The Javanese, being originally [an] ignorant race, were readily overcome by this poison, and lost all care for themselves; but we Chinese...have also been deluded by them; for no sooner do we partake of this substance, than we lose all anxieties about our native land, have no further concern for father or mother, wife or children, and are plunged into unspeakable misery.⁴⁹¹

The passage continues with a lengthy diatribe against foreign opium trafficking, a foreshadowing of discourses that would resonate with increasing force and familiarity as the nineteenth century wore on:

been forgotten by more recent scholarship; see Wu, "Wang Dahai yu *Haidao yizhi*" 王大海与《海岛逸志》, *Shehui kexue* (1996:4): 26, 64-67.

⁴⁹¹ Ong, *The Chinaman Abroad*, 18.

At the same time Europeans forbid their people the use of this drug, and severely punish those who offend; how is it then that we Chinese, together with the Javanese, are so thoughtless as to fall into the snare!...We [Chinese], coming from a distance to traffic here [on Java], were formerly allowed to take the proceeds of our commerce, and either lay in a new stock, or carry back the hard cash to our native land, as we found it convenient. But after a time it was strictly forbidden to export silver from the colony, and we were compelled to expend our profits in the purchase of goods, before we could spread our sails, and return.⁴⁹²

The villains in this narrative are the Dutch, not the English, but the overarching story related here is a familiar one: a tale of increasing foreign exploitation and Chinese victimization from the early nineteenth century onward, which in various formulations has remained a bedrock of Chinese nationalism and political identity to the present day. In this condemnation of Europeans' hypocritical smuggling of opium and its stifling effects on Chinese silver flows, readers familiar with nineteenth-century Chinese history can recognize echoes—or, more precisely, premonitions—of Lin Zexu's complaints to Queen Victoria in 1839.

But the *Haidao yizhi*'s version of this story comes with a twist. In this interpolated telling of nineteenth-century Chinese history, written around 1813, the author provides a happy, not tragic, ending. After condemning the evils of Dutch opium trafficking and VOC restrictions on Chinese affairs in colonial Java, the passage concludes:

Just at this [moment of] crisis, who would have thought that the red-haired English foreigners...in the 14th year of [Jiaqing] came with a fleet of vessels to attack the colony. [After an initial setback], they prepared another fleet, and besieging the fort with their shells soon mastered it. The Dutch, not daring to resist, returned to their native land, and now...the territory of Batavia is all under the authority of the English, who have abolished the oppressive laws of the Dutch, and invited people to trade as formerly. Everyone renders them willing obedience, and merchants from far and near carry on an uninterrupted intercourse. The spirit of the English is really heroic,⁴⁹³ and in this affair we see how true it is, that artful plans are not to be relied upon, and that cunning trickery is of no avail. When men injure others in order to benefit themselves, the powers above will not endure them; a truth which in this instance is abundantly exemplified. We have therefore recorded it for the examination of posterity.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² Ibid., 19.

⁴⁹³ “紅毛之勢可謂雄矣。” Wang, *Haidao yizhi*, *juan* 2, 7b.

⁴⁹⁴ Ong, *The Chinaman Abroad*, 20.

“Who would have thought,” indeed? In this telling, British gunships and free traders assume the mantle of savior, a world apart from the narrative villains that they would become just a few decades later. The author extolls the Englishmen’s courage and righteousness in expelling the Dutch, whose alleged greed and moral turpitude drove them to peddle opium and restrict Chinese commerce. In the end, we are told, heaven rights all wrongs, and exempla like this one should be preserved “for the examination of posterity.”

This passage with its casting of the British as saviors did not appear in Wang’s original manuscript, which was drafted in 1791 and first printed in 1806 and thus could not have included details of events from the 1810s; nor did it appear in Chinese reprints from the 1840s onward, by which point the English occupation of the Dutch East Indies had amounted to no more than a brief interregnum, the first Opium War had been waged and ended, and an English savior narrative no longer made sense.⁴⁹⁵ What, in retrospect, should we make of this fleeting exegetical snapshot in Wang Dahai’s text?

Looking back on this particular passage in the *Haidao yizhi* some two centuries later, readers are reminded just how limited historical observers are by their present moment, just how quickly historical narratives can change, and just how dramatically new narratives can obscure past truths. After all, the outbreak of the first Opium War a few short decades after British imperialists’ “heroic” intervention in Dutch Batavia would forever change the writing of modern Chinese history.

⁴⁹⁵ These details do, however, make their way into Medhurst’s 1849 translation based on the “1806” original, which corroborates my suspicion that a local edition of the *Haidao yizhi*, with the additional passage on Dutch opium trafficking inserted, was released after 1806 but before the mid-century reprints acknowledged in the scholarly literature. The fact that the inserted passage is missing from the index supports this conclusion; it is likely that whoever added the passage forgot to update the index. See Wang, *Haidaoyizhi, mulu*, 2a-3a; *juan 2*, 6a-7b.

At the same time, reading the *Haidao yizhi*, we are also reminded that although history as a discipline is the study of the past, history as analytical practice is more precisely the study of the present, in the past. Contrary to popular perception, its object of study is therefore not a frozen sequence of historical actions and events, which we have inherited sprung fully-formed from the head of History and which wait to be excavated and reconstructed by the diligent scholar, but rather an infinite series of particular, shifting moments in time and space, which in their unfolding contain every bit as much dynamism, uncertainty, and possibility as our own present. More explicitly recognizing the presentness of historical pasts is critical to helping us write better histories. Despite what the teleologies of later historical narratives might suggest, Wang Dahai and his contemporaries lived in a world of ever-shifting transcultural and globally entangled possibilities, in which the first Opium War and its consequences for the Qing state were far from preordained and, indeed, would have been far from the likeliest of outcomes imaginable at the time.

As members of that collective posterity addressed by the author, we today should read this obscure passage of commentary and its uncharacteristically positive assessment of British actions not as simply the product of some kind of temporal myopia, whose value should be considered voided in hindsight by the broader trajectory of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Rather, we should recognize that it holds authentic value of its own: that for a brief moment around the fourteenth year of Jiaqing, Chinese commentators could live in a world where the British really could be seen as their allies and not enemies, in a past present that genuinely suggested alternative futures, other than the one that culminated in the first Opium War and the Treaty of Nanking.

In much the same way, the diverse spectrum of negotiated, flexible, and oftentimes successful everyday interactions between Chinese and foreigners, on the South China Coast and beyond, should not be voided historically by the outbreak and aftermath of the first Opium War. These interactions—every bit as real and significant to the lives of the individuals who lived them as the macropolitical shifts of the nineteenth century were to the Qing state—have been unjustly overshadowed by the narratives we have told of surrounding events. In practice, active Sino-Western problem solving at the grassroots coexisted with the tensions that produced conflict, and regardless of whether it was successful or unsuccessful in particular instances, the culture of everyday transnational conflict resolution never went away, both during the war and after. To read the first Opium War teleologically backward into the decades that preceded it, as our historical narratives have often done, is to deny significance to all those synchronous dynamics and phenomena that also helped constitute the social fabric of the South China Coast but which did not contribute directly to the outbreak of the conflict that has come to be seen as one of the defining moments of modern Chinese history. As we look back on that history from our position in the present, the stories of Woman Kwok and Francis Terranova and others like them are worth retelling, not so much because of the supposed representativeness of how they ended but because of their representativeness of the dynamic social processes and experiences that lay underneath.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished Primary Sources

Academia Sinica, Fu Ssu-nien Library

ref. 9800362 *Hongmao [J]hua maoyi xuzhi* 紅毛[]話貿易須知
[useful foreign phrases for business]

Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino

CU-Brasil series Conselho Ultramarino—Brasil
CU-Macau series Conselho Ultramarino—Macau

Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo

DCHN series *Chapas sínicas*

Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil

352.387 Representação dos chineses domiciliados no Rio de Janeiro a S.M.
solicitando a nomeação de Domingos Manuel Antônio como
intérprete e representante de seus interesses, 6 September 1819

Bibliothèque Nationale de France

CHINOIS 9118 *Hongmao maimai tongyong guihua* 紅毛買賣通用鬼話
CHINOIS 9120 *Hongmao fanhua maoyi xuzhi* 紅毛番話貿易須知

Boston Athenaeum

Mss.L144	Papers of John Perkins Cushing
Mss.L289	Extracts from Letterbooks of J. & T.H. Perkins et al., 1786-1838
Mss.L556	Correspondence of Russell and Mary G. Sturgis
Mss.L825	Journal kept during a China voyage in the ship <i>Thomas W. Sears</i> , W.B. Graves, Master (1848)

British Library

Add MS 20118	Barry Edward O'Meara, surgeon to Napoleon I on St Helena: Medical reports of N. Buonaparte's health: 1816-1818
Add MS 20125	John Verling, Surgeon RN: Correspondence, while in attendance on N. Bonaparte: 1818-1821
Add MS 20208	Original letters of orderly officers at Longwood to Sir Hudson Lowe and Major Gorrequer, Military Secretary, reporting events, etc.
IOR/E/1	Miscellaneous Letters Received 1767
IOR/G/12	East India Company Factory records
IOR/L/MAR/B	East India Company ships' journals 1702-1856
IOR/L/MAR/C	Minutes of the Committee of Shipping
15346.b.12	<i>Hongmao tongyong fanhua</i> 紅毛通用番話
15346.b.13	<i>Hongmao tongyong fanhua</i> 紅毛通用番話

Brown University Library

“Chinese dictionary with manuscript notes in Latin” (1800).

<https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:583600/>

Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives

MS JM Jardine Matheson & Company Archives

GBR/0012/MS Add.9529 *William Almack: Journal*

GBR/0012/MS Add.9639 Samuel Coverly: Trading memoranda

College of William and Mary Special Collections

Mss. 40 T79 Letter to Thomas Jefferson, 1808 July 22

Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum

Diary of Edward Delano

Guangdong Provincial Archives

QDYM Qing Yamen collection

Harvard Business School, Baker Library Historical Collections

Bryant & Sturgis Records

Comstock Family Business Records

John Perkins Cushing Business Records

Robert Bennet Forbes Papers

Russell & Company Records

Hong Kong Public Records Office

HKMS143-1-1 Diary of Mr. J.F.E. Wright

Massachusetts Historical Society

Ms. N-49.32 Houqua letterbook, 1840-1865

Nationaal Archief

1.04.20 Inventaris van het archief van de Nederlandse Factorij te Canton,
1742-1826

VOC 4374-4444 Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie Archief: Overgekomen
Brieven and Papieren uit China 1729-1790

National Archives of the United Kingdom

ADM Admiralty and Navy Department records

FO Foreign Office correspondence

National Archives of Singapore

10/1990 Volumes of Bound Correspondence belonging to Hoo Ah Kay
(Whampoa)'s family

National Library of Singapore

RCLOS MS 959.984 DAL "Mr. Dalrymple's account: Fort St. George, April 1763

National Maritime Museum

DSH Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital Admission Registers

New York Public Library

MssCol 4221 "Oliver Wolcott Letterbook, 1803-1808"

Peabody Essex Museum

Bryant P. Tilden Journals

School of Oriental and African Studies Archives

GB 102 MS 55942 Ōtsuki Gentaku 大槻玄沢, *Kankai Ibun-ki* 環海異聞 [Strange Tales of a Circumnavigation] (1807)

LMS series London Missionary Society Archive

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Libri sin. 228 "Der kleine Catechismus Lutheri," translated by Fung Asseng

Libri sin. N.S. 849 *Aomen fanyu zazi quanben* 澳門番語雜字全本

St. Helena Government Archives

Accounts on Chinese Labour, 1814-1817

Blue Books, 1836-1850

EIC Quarter Sessions, 1793-1836

Royal Asiatic Society Archives

GB 891 SC1

Miscellaneous Chinese documents on foreign trade regulations

Winterthur Library

Downs Collection

Digital Archives

Founders Archive

Consequa to James Madison, 10 February 1814.

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/03-07-02-0242#JSMN-03-07-02-0242-fn-0001>

Proceedings of the Old Bailey

t18000917-29	September 1800 trial of William Rayner and Charles Moren
t18000917-106	September 1800 trial of Mary Bush, Sarah Clarke, and Elizabeth Smith
t18041205-56	December 1804 trial of Ann Alsey and Thomas Gunn
t18420103-505	January 1842 trial of Antrehman and Samut
t18630817-1028	August 1863 trial of Awa
t18520705-726	July 1852 trial of Cornelius M'Carthy

Visual and Miscellaneous Media

Willemsz, Jacob de Vos. “Chinese Matrozen in het Gasthuis” [Chinese Sailors in the Guesthouse]. Watercolor. Year unknown. Collectie Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum-Stichting Amsterdam.

Woolley and Wallis. 23 September 2015. Lot no. 67. “Napoleon at St Helena: A contemporary hand-written inventory of the ‘Schedule of the Allowance of Wines, Provisions, etc. forwarded to the Establishment at Longwood in the Island of St Helena together with the Names of the persons comprising the Establishment,’ signed Denzil Ibbetson ACG and dated 13th October 1820.”

<https://www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk/departments/paintings/pw230915/view-lot/67/>.

Published Primary Sources

Allgemeine Preußische Staats-Zeitung. 1819-1843.

The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany. 1843-1845.

An, Jing 安京, ed. *Hailu jiaoshi* 海錄校釋 [An annotated *Hailu*]. Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2002.

Anonymous. *The Last Year in China, to the Peace of Nanking: as Sketched in Letters to His Friends, by a Field Officer, Actively Employed in That Country*. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843.

Alexandria Daily Gazette. 1808-1812.

Ames, Nathaniel. *A Mariner's Sketches*. Providence: Cory, Marshall and Hammond, 1830.

- Auber, Peter. *China: An Outline of Its Government, Laws, and Policy, and of the British and Foreign Embassies to and Intercourse with that Empire*. London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1834.
- Ball, Benjamin L. *Rambles in Eastern Asia, Including China and Manila, during Several Years' Residence*. Boston: J. French and Company, 1855.
- Banks, Joseph. *The Endeavour: Journal of Joseph Banks*. 1768-1771. State Library of New South Wales, ref. 446937.
- Barrow, John. *Travels in China: Containing Descriptions, Observations, and Comparisons, Made and Collected in the Course of a Short Residence at the Imperial Palace of Yuen-Min-Yuen, and on a Subsequent Journey through the Country from Peking to Canton; in Which It Is Attempted to Appreciate the Rank That This Extraordinary Empire May Be Considered to Hold in the Scale of Civilized Nations*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1804.
- Beresford, William and George Dixon. *A Voyage Round the World, But More Particularly to the North-west Coast of America: Performed in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788, in the King George and Queen Charlotte, Captains Portlock and Dixon*. London: George Goulding, 1789.
- Bernard, William Dallas and William Hutcheon Hall. *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis, from 1840 to 1843, and of the Combined Naval and Military Operations in China, Comprising a Complete Account of the Colony of Hong-Kong and Remarks on the Character and Habits of the Chinese*. Second edition. London: Henry Colburn, 1844.
- Allen's Indian Mail and Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India and All Parts of the East*. 1843-1857.

- Bingham, John Elliott. *Narrative of the Expedition to China, from the Commencement of the War to the Present Period*. 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1842.
- Bishop, Charles. *The Journal and Letters of Captain Charles Bishop on the North-West Coast of America, in the Pacific, and in New South Wales, 1794-1799*. Edited by Michael Roe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Bridgman, Elijah Coleman. *A Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect*. Macao: S. Wells Williams, 1839.
- Burts, Robert. *Around the World: A Narrative of a Voyage in the East India Squadron under Commodore George C. Read*. New York: C.S. Francis, 1840.
- The Calcutta Gazette; or, Oriental Advertiser*. 1784-1818.
- Campbell, Archibald. *A Voyage Round the World, from 1806 to 1812; in Which Japan, Kamschatka, the Aleutian Islands, and the Sandwich Islands were Visited; Including a Narrative of the Author's Shipwreck on the Island of Sannack, and His Subsequent Wreck in the Ship's Long-boat; with an Account of the Present State of the Sandwich Islands, and a Vocabulary of Their Language*. New York: Van Winkle, Riley, and Co., 1817.
- The Canton Press*. 1835-1844.
- The Canton Register*. 1827-1843.
- Chambers, Neil, ed. *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection, 1768-1820*. London: Imperial College Press, 2000.
- The Chinese Courier*. 1831-1833.
- The Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette*. 1831.
- The Chinese Repository*. 20 vols. Canton: The South China Mission, 1832-1852.
- The Christian Observer*. 1802-1874.

The Courier. 1861-1864.

Downing, Charles Toogood. *The Fan-Quy in China, in 1837-7*. 3 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1838.

Great Britain, and William Cobbett. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*. London: R. Bagshaw, 1804-1812.

Colnett, James. *The Journal of Captain James Colnett, aboard the Argonaut, from April 26, 1789 to Nov. 3, 1791*. Edited by F. W. Howay. Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940.

Constant, Charles-Samuel de. *Récit de trois voyages à la Chine (1779-1793)* [Account of three voyages to China]. Edited by Philippe de Vargas. Beijing: 1939.

Dobell, Peter. *Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of a Residence in China*. 2 vols. London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830.

Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la captivité de Napoléon Bonaparte à Sainte-Hélène, ou recueil de faits curieux sur la vie qu'il y menait, sur sa maladie et sur sa mort [Documents for the history of Napoleon Bonaparte's captivity on St. Helena, or a collection of interesting facts about the life he led there, his illness, and his death]. Paris: Pillet aîné, 1821.

Ellis, William. *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii, or Owhyhee; with Observations on the Natural History of the Sandwich Islands; and Remarks on the Manners, Customs, Traditions, History, and Language of Their Inhabitants*. London: H. Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1828.

The Evening Post. 1832-1920.

Fairbank John King and Ssu-yü Têng. *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923, with a New Preface*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

- Ferrez, Gilberto. *O Brasil de Thomas Ender, 1817* [The Brazil of Thomas Ender, 1817]. Rio de Janeiro: Fundacao Joao Moreira Salles, 1976.
- Fessenden's Silk Manual and Practical Farmer*. 1835-1837.
- Fisher, Arthur. *Personal Narrative of Three Years' Service in China*. London: Richard Bentley, 1863.
- Forbes, John Murray. *Letters and Recollections of John Murray Forbes*. Edited by Sarah Forbes Hughes. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899.
- Fortune, Robert. *Three Years' Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China, Including a Visit to the Tea, Silk, and Cotton Countries*. London: J. Murray, 1847.
- Gaul, Theresa Strouth, ed. *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823-1839*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- The Genesee Farmer*. 1831-1839.
- The Gentleman's Magazine*. 1731-1922.
- Gugong bowuyuan. *Qingdai waijiao shiliao* 清代外交史料 [Collected documents on foreign relations of the Qing dynasty]. 10 vols. Beijing: Gugong bowuyuan, 1932.
- Haafner, Jacob Gotfried. *Lotgevallen op eene reize van Madras over Tranquebaar naar het eiland Ceilon* [Adventures on a journey from Madras via Tranquebar to the island of Ceylon]. Haarlem: A. Loosje, 1806.
- House of Commons. "Minutes taken before the Committee, appointed to consider of supplying the West-India Colonies with Laborers." In *Papers Presented to the House of Commons on the 7th May 1804, Respecting the Slave-Trade* (1804).
- Hunter, William C. *Bits of Old China*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1855.

Hunter, William C. *The 'Fan Kwae' at Canton Before Treaty Days, 1825-1844*. London: K. Paul Trench & Co., 1882.

Hutton, R.N. [Charles Henry Newmarch]. *Five Years in the East*. 2 vols. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844.

Hu Qiuyuan 胡秋原, ed. *Jindai Zhongguo dui xifang ji lieqiang renshi ziliao huibian* 近代中國對西方及列強認識資料彙編 [Historical documentary collection on modern Chinese understanding of the West and Great Powers]. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1972.

Isis oder Encyklopädische Zeitung. 41 vols. 1817-1848.

Jacobs, Thomas Jefferson. *Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific Ocean; or, the Islands of the Australasian Seas, during the Cruise of the Clipper Margaret Oakley, under Capt. Benjamin Morrell*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844.

Jiaying zhoushi 嘉應州志 [Jiaying prefecture gazetteer]. 1898. 32 vols. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1968.

Johnson, James. *An Account of a Voyage to India, China &c. in His Majesty's Ship Caroline; Performed in the Years 1803-4-5, Interspersed with Descriptive Sketches and Cursory Remarks*. London: R. Phillips, 1806.

Keppel, Henry. *A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns*. 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Company, 1899.

Las Cases, Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné, comte de. *Le mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* [Memorial from St. Helena]. 3 vols. Paris: Garnier, 1823.

Lau, Fong and Isaú Santos. *Chapas sínicas: Macau e o Oriente nos Arquivos Nacionais Torre do Tombo: documentos em chinês* [Chapas sínicas: Macao and the Orient in the National

- Archive of Torre do Tombo: documents in Chinese]. Macau: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1997.
- Lijiang fu zhilüe* 麗江府志略 [Abridged gazetteer of Lijiang prefecture].
- Li Zhaoluo 李兆洛. *Haiguo jiwén xù* 海國紀聞序 [Introduction to the account of overseas countries]. 1821.
- Ling, Mengchu. *Slapping the Table in Amazement: A Ming Dynasty Story Collection*. Translated by Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018.
- Ling Mengchu. *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇 [Slapping the table in amazement]. 17th century. Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2003.
- Liu Jianmin 劉建民, *Jinshang shiliao jicheng* 晉商史料集成 [Collected historical materials about the Shanxi merchants]. 88 vols. Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2018.
- London Courier and Evening Gazette*. 1798-1804.
- The London Gazette*. 1665-present.
- Low, Harriet. *The China Trade Post-Bag of the Seth Low Family of Salem and New York, 1829-1873*. Edited by Elma Loines. Manchester, ME: Falmouth Publishing House, 1953.
- Lynn, Thomas. *Star Tables, Number 1, for the Year 1822, for More Readily Ascertaining the Latitude and Longitude at Sea during the Night*. London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, & Allen, 1821.
- Mackinnon, Charles. "Extract from Prince of Wales Island Gazette [containing a memorial by C. Mackinnon to the Court of directors of the East India company]." London: W. Lewis, 1811.
- Mackinnon, Charles. *Mr. Mackinnon's Memorial to the Honorable Court of Directors of the Hon. East-India Company*. London: Lewis and Roden, 1806.

- Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied. *Reise Nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* [Journey to Brazil in the years 1815 to 1817]. Frankfurt: Heinrich Ludwig Bröner, 1820.
- Mearns, John. *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, from China to the North West Coast of America*. London: Logographic Press, 1790.
- The Missionary Herald*. 1821-1934.
- The Morning Chronicle*. 1769-1862.
- Morrison, Eliza Armstrong. *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*. 2 vols. London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839.
- Morrison, John Robert. *A Chinese Commercial Guide, Consisting of a Collection of Details Respecting Foreign Trade in China*. Canton: Albion Press, 1834.
- Morse, Hosea Ballou. *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834*. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926.
- Moziño, José Mariano. *Noticias de Nutca, por Don José Moziño, botanico de la expedicion de N.E. y la delimites al norte de Californias* [News from Nootka, by Don José Moziño, botanist of the expedition to the northwest and the frontiers to the north of California]. WA MSS S-1514 (1793). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- Munroe, Mary Kinsman. "Letters of Rebecca Chase Kinsman to Her Family in Salem." *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 86 (1950): 15-40, 257-284, 311-330.
- Munroe, Mary Kinsman. "The Daily Life of Mrs. Nathaniel Kinsman in Macao, China. Excerpts from Letters of 1845." *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 87 (1951): 114-149, 269-305, 388-409.
- Munroe, Mary Kinsman. "The Daily Life of Mrs. Nathaniel Kinsman in Macao, China, Excerpts from Letters of 1845." *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 88 (1952): 28-99.

New England Farmer. 1848-1860.

New England Magazine. 1831-1834.

The New Monthly Magazine. 1814-1884.

Nicol, John. *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1822.

Noble, Charles Frederick. *A Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748; Containing an Account of the Islands of St. Helena and Java, of the City of Batavia, of the Government and Political Conduct of the Dutch, of the Empire of China, with a Particular Description of Canton: and of Religious Ceremonies, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants*. London: Printed for T. Becket and P.A. Dehondt; and T. Durham, 1762.

Ong, Tae Hae [Wang Dahai]. *The Chinaman Abroad; or, a Desultory Account of the Malayan Archipelago, Particularly of Java*. Translated by Walter Medhurst. Shanghai: Mission Press, 1849.

Osmond, Tiffany. *The Canton Chinese; or, the American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire*. Boston: J. Munroe and Company, 1849.

Proudfoot, William Jardine. "*Barrow's Travels in China*": *An Investigation into the Origin and Authenticity of the "Facts and Observations" Related in a Work Entitled "Travels in China, by John Barrow, F.R.S."* London: G. Philip, 1861.

Qing Shilu 清實錄 [Veritable records of the Qing]. 60 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju: 1986.

Religious Miscellany.

Rotterdamse Courant. 1738-1811.

- Scherzer, Karl Ritter von. *Narrative of the Circumnavigation of the Globe by the Austrian Frigate Novara, in the Years 1857, 1858, and 1859*. vol. 2 London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1862.
- Thom, Robert. *Esop's Fables, written in Chinese by the Learned Man Mun Mooy Seen-Shang and Compiled in Their Present Form by His Pupil Sloth*. Canton: Canton Press, 1840.
- Thom, Robert. *Hua Ying tongyong zahua 華英通用雜話 / Chinese and English Vocabulary, Part I*. 1843.
- The Times*. London: 1785-present.
- Tomes, Robert. *The Americans in Japan: An Abridgment of the Government Narrative of the U.S. Expedition to Japan, under Commodore Perry*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857.
- Spix, Johann Baptist von and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius. *Reise in Brasilien auf Befehl Sr. Majestät Maximilian Joseph I., Königs von Baiern: In den Jahren 1817 Bis 1820 Gemacht und Beschrieben* [Journey to Brazil under the command of His Majesty Maximilian Joseph I, King of Bavaria; made and written in the years 1817 to 1820]. München, M. Lindauer, 1823.
- Timkovskiĭ, Egor Fedorovich. *Reise nach China durch die Mongoley in den jahren 1820 und 1821*. Translated by Johann Adolf Erdmann Schmidt. 3 vols. Leipzig: G. Fleischer, 1825-1826.
- Tong, King-Sing. *The Chinese and English Instructor / Yingyu jiquan 英語集全*. 6 vols. Canton: Weijing tang, 1862.
- Tyng, Charles. *Before the Wind: The Memoir of an American Sea Captain, 1808-1833*. New York: Viking, 1999.

U.S. Department of State. *Political Relations between the United States and China: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of State upon the Subject of the Political Relations between the United States and the Empire of China, January 25, 1841*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1841.

United Church Board for World Ministries. *Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners*. Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1822.

United States Congressional Serial Set.

Wang, Dahai 王大海. *Haidaoyizhi* 海島逸誌 [Desultory account of the islands of the sea]. Zhangyuan cangban 漳園藏板, 1806.

Waterston, William. *A Manuel of Commerce*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1840.

Wathen, James. *Journal of a Voyage, in 1811 and 1812, to Madras and China; returning by the cape of Good Hope and St. Helena; in the H. C. S. the Hope, Capt. James Pendergrass*. London: J. Nichols, 1814.

Wei Yuan. *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 [Illustrated treatise on maritime kingdoms]. Guwei tang: 1844.

Williams, Samuel Wells. *Easy Lessons in Chinese: Or, Progressive Exercises to Facilitate the Study of That Language, Especially Adapted to the Canton Dialect*. Macao: Printed at the Office of the Chinese Repository, 1842.

Xie Qinggao 謝清高. *Hailu* 海錄. 2 vols. Youyin jingshe: 1870 [1820]).

Yin Guangren 印光任 and Zhang Rulin 張汝霖, eds. *Aomen jilüe* 澳門紀略 [The Monograph of Macao]. 1751.

Yixian sanzhi 縣三志 [The third gazetteer of Yixian county]. 1870. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1983.

Yung, Wing. *My Life in China and America*. New York: H. Holt, 1909.

Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan 中國第一歷史檔案館. *Yapian zhanzheng dang'an shiliao* 鴉片戰爭檔案史料 [Historical documents on the first Opium War]. 7 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1992.

Secondary Sources

Allen, Robert C., Jean-Pascal Bassino, Debin Ma, Christine Moll-Murata, and Jan Luiten van Zanden. "Wages, prices and living standards in China, 1738-1925: in comparison with Europe, Japan, and India." *Economic History Review* 64:S1 (2011): 8-38.

An Jing 安京. "Hailu zuozhe, banben, neirong xinlun" 《海录》作者、版本、内容新论 [A new study of the author, edition, and contents of the *Hailu*]. *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi yanjiu* 13:1 (2003): 48-58.

Ansaldo, Umberto, Stephen Matthews, and Geoff Smith. "China Coast Pidgin: Texts and Contexts." *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 25:1 (2010): 63-94.

Ansaldo, Umberto. *Contact Languages: Ecology and Evolution in Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Armstrong, James C. "The Chinese Exiles." In *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, edited by Nigel Worden, 101-127. Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2012.

Askew, Joseph B. "Re-Visiting New Territory: The Terranova Incident Re-examined." *Asian Studies Review* 28:4 (2004): 351-371.

- Asmussen, Benjamin. "Networks and Faces between Copenhagen and Canton, 1730-1840." Ph.D. diss. Copenhagen Business School, 2018.
- Baker, Philip and Peter Mühlhäusler. "From Business to Pidgin." *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 1:1 (1990): 87–115.
- Baker, Philip. "Historical Developments in Chinese Pidgin English and the Nature of the Relationship between the Various Pidgin Englishes of the Pacific Region." *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 2:2 (1987): 163–207.
- Banner, David Prager. "The Suí-Táng Tradition of *Fǎnqiè* Phonology." *History of the Language Sciences / Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaften / Histoire des sciences du langage*, vol. 1, edited by Sylvain Auroux, 36-55. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).
- Barlow, Tani. "Colonialism's Career in Postwar China Studies." *positions* 1:1 (1993): 373-411.
- Baten, Joerg, Debin Ma, Stephen Morgan, and Qing Wang. "Evolution of Living Standards and Human Capital in China in the 18-20th Centuries: Evidences from Real Wages, Age-Heaping, and Anthropometrics." *Explorations in Economic History* 47:3 (2010): 347-359.
- Bauer, Anton. *Das Kanton-Englisch: Ein Pidginidiom als Beispiel für ein soziolinguistisches Kulturkontakthänomen* [Canton English: an idiomatic pidgin as example of a sociolinguistic cultural contact phenomenon]. Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975.
- Blussé, Leonard. "John Chinaman Abroad: Chinese Sailors in the Service of the VOC." In *Promises and Predicaments: Trade and Entrepreneurship in Colonial and Independent Indonesia in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Jeroen Touwen and Alicia Schrikker, 101-112. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2015.

- Blussé, Leonard. *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986.
- Boit, Robert Apthorp Boit. *Chronicles of the Boit Family and Their Descendants and of Other Allied Families*. s.l.: s.n., 1915).
- Bolton, Kingsley. *Chinese Englishes: A Sociolinguistic History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Bréard, Andrea. “On the Transmission of Mathematical Knowledge in Versified Form in China.” In *Scientific Sources and Teaching Contexts Throughout History: Problems and Perspectives*, edited by Alain Bernard and Christine Proust, 155-185. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014.
- Bruijn, J.R., F.S. Gaastra, and Ivo Schöffer. *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. 3 vols. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979.
- Bruijn, J.R. “De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee en aan boord, gezien in Aziatisch en Nederlands perspectief.” *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 91:2 (1976): 218-248.
- Carroll, John M. *China Hands and Old Cantons: Britons and the Middle Kingdom*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.
- Chan, Shelly. *Diaspora’s Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.
- Ch’en, Kuo-Tang Anthony. *The Insolvency of the Chinese Hong Merchants, 1760-1843*. Taipei: The Institute of Economics, Academia Sinica, 1990.
- Chen, Li. *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

- Chen, Song-Chuan. *Merchants of War and Peace: British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017.
- Cheong, Weng Eang. *The Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997.
- Cherepanov, Sergey. “Kyakhtinskoe kitajskoe narecie russkogo yazyka” [The Kyakhta Chinese dialect of the Russian language]. *Izvestiya Akademii nauk po otdeleniyu russkogo yazyka i slovesnosti* 2 (1853): 370-377.
- China Cuba Commission. *The Cuba Commission Report: A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba: The Original English-language Text of 1876*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Chun, Hua 春花, Li Ying 李英 and Guo Jinfang 郭金芳. “Qing Qianlong nian bian ‘Huayi yiyu’ shulun” 清乾隆年编《华夷译语》述论 [A study of *Huayi yiyu* compiled in the Qianlong era of the Qing dynasty]. *Gugong xuekan* 故宫学刊 1 (2018): 380-396.
- Cohen, Paul. *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Cohen, Paul. *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Crossman, Carl L. *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings, and Exotic Curiosities*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors’ Club, 1991.
- Cushman, Jennifer. *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1993.

- Daily, Christopher. *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- DeFrancis, John. *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.
- Delgado, Sally. *Ship English: Sailors' Speech in the Early Colonial Caribbean*. Berlin: Language Science Press, 2019.
- Dillo, Ingrid. *De Nadagen van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie 1783-1795: Schepen en Zeevarenden* [The latter years of the VOC, 1783-1795: ships and seafarers]. Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1992.
- Donahue, William J. "The Francis Terranova Case." *The Historian* 43:2 (1981): 211-24.
- Downs, Jacques M. *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784-1844*. Bethlehem: LeHigh University Press, 1997.
- Dubs, Homer H. and Robert S. Smith. "Chinese in Mexico City in 1635." *Far Eastern Quarterly* 1 (1942): 387-389.
- Duiker, William J. and Jackson J. Spielvogel. *The Essential World History, Seventh Edition*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013.
- Edwards, R. Randle. "Ch'ing Legal Jurisdiction over Foreigners." In *Essays on China's Legal Tradition*, edited by Jerome Cohen, R. Randle Edwards, and Fu-mei Chang Chen, 222-269. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

- Elliott, Mark C. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Elman, Benjamin. *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Eskildsen, Robert. "Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan." *American Historical Review* 107:2 (April 2002): 388-418.
- Fairbank, John King. *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953.
- Farrington, Anthony. *Catalogue of East India Company Ships' Journals and Logs, 1600-1834*. London: British Library, 1999.
- Fay, Peter Ward. *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
- Fisher, Michael. *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travelers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004.
- Fisher, Michael. "Making London's 'Oriental Quarter,'" in *Subalternity and Difference: Investigations from the North and South*, edited by Gyanendra Pandey, 79-96. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011.
- Fisher, Michael. "Working across the Seas: Indian Maritime Labourers in India, Britain, and in Between, 1600-1857." *International Review of Social History* 51:S14 (December 2004): 21-45.
- Fuchs, Walter. "Das erste deutsch-chinesische Vokabular vom P. Florian Bahr" [The first German-Chinese vocabulary, by P. Florian Bahr]. *Sinica Sonderausgabe* 1 (1937): 68-72.

- Fuchs, Walter. "Remarks on a new 'Hua-I-I-Yü' 華夷譯語." *Bulletin No. 8 of the Catholic University of Peking*. Peiping: Catholic University of Peking Press, 1931.
- Fuchs, Walter. "Zur technischen Organisation der Übersetzungen buddhistischer Schriften ins Chinesische" [On the technical organization of translations of Buddhist scripture into Chinese]. *Asia Major* 6 (1930): 84-103.
- Gaastra, Femme S., and Jaap R. Bruijn. "The Dutch East India Company's Shipping, 1602–1795, in a Comparative Perspective," in *Ships, Sailors, and Spices: East India Companies and Their Shipping in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries*, edited by Jaap R. Bruijn and Femme S. Gaastra, 177–208. Amsterdam: NEHA, 1993.
- Goodman, Bryna. "Improvisations on a Semicolonial Theme, or, How to Read a Celebration of Transnational Urban Community." *Journal of Asian Studies* 59:4 (2000): 889-926.
- Grant, Frederic Delano, Jr. *The Chinese Cornerstone of Modern Banking: The Canton Guaranty System and the Origins of Bank Deposit Insurance, 1780-1933*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Grant, Frederic Delano, Jr. "Hong Merchant Litigation in the American Courts." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 99 (1987): 44-62.
- Greenberg, Michael. *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800-42*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.
- Grider, John T. "'I Espied a Chinaman': Chinese Sailors and the Fracturing of the Nineteenth Century Pacific Maritime Labour Force." *Slavery and Abolition* 31:3 (2010): 467-481.
- Güttinger, Erich. *Die Geschichte der Chinesen in Deutschland: Ein Überblick über die ersten 100 Jahre ab 1822*. Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2004.
- Hai Feng 海峰. *Zhongya donggan yuyan yanjiu* 中亞東干語言研究 [A study of the Dungan language of Central Asia]. Urumqi: Xinjiang University Press, 2003.

- Hanser, Jessica. *Mr. Smith Goes to China: Three Scots in the Making of Britain's Global Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.
- Harrison, Henrietta. "A Faithful Interpreter? Li Zibiao and the 1793 Macartney Embassy to China." *The International History Review* 41:5 (2018): 1076–1091.
- Harrison, Henrietta. *The Perils of Interpreting: The Extraordinary Lives of Two Translators between Qing China and the British Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Hellman, Lisa. *This House Is Not a Home: European Everyday Life in Canton and Macao, 1730-1830*. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- He, Wenkai. *Paths Toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Hostetler, Laura. *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Hostetler, Laura. "The Qing Court and Peoples of Central and Inner Asia: Representations of Tributary Relationships from the *Huang Qing Zhigong tu*," in *Managing Frontiers in Qing China The Lifanyuan and Libu Revisited*, edited by Dittmar Schorkowitz and Ning Chia, 184-223. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Hsu, Wen. "The First Step toward Phonological Analysis in Chinese: Fanqie." *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 23:1 (Jan. 1995): 137-158.
- Huang, Philip C. *Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Hummel, Arthur. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1921)*. 2 vols. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943.

- Hunt, Michael. *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
- Irick, Robert L. *Ch'ing Policy toward the Coolie Trade: 1847-1878*. Taipei: Chinese Materials Center, 1982.
- Julien, Stanislas. *Méthode pour déchiffrer et transcrire les noms sanscrits qui se rencontrent dans les livres chinois* [Method for deciphering and transcribing Sanskrit names found in Chinese books]. Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1861.
- Kan, Flora and Edward Vickers. "One Hong Kong, Two Histories: 'History' and 'Chinese History' in the Hong Kong School Curriculum." *Comparative Education* 38:1 (2002): 73-89.
- Kanda, Kiichirō 神田喜一郎. "Min no Shiikan ni tsuite" 明の四夷館に就いて [On the Ming Bureau of Translators]. *Shirin* 史林 12:4 (Oct. 1927): 519-534.
- Kuhn, Philip A. *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Larson, Henrietta M. "A China Trader Turns Investor: A Biographical Chapter in American Business History." *Harvard Business Review* 12:3 (1934): 345-358.
- Lehmann, Julius. *Til Østen under Sejl: Med Handelsfregatterne rundt Kap omkring Aar 1800* [To the East under Sail: with merchant frigates around the Cape around the year 1800]. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1935.
- Lemisch, Jesse. "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (July 1968): 371-407.

- Li, Michelle and Stephen Matthews. "Portuguese Pidgin and Chinese Pidgin English in the Canton Trade." In *Ibero-Asian Creoles: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Hugo C. Cardoso, Alan N. Baxter, and Mário Pinharanda Nunes, 263–288. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012.
- Li, Michelle, Stephen Matthews, and Geoff Smith. "Pidgin English Texts in the *Chinese English Instructor*." *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10:1 (2005): 79-167.
- Liu, Lydia H. *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Liu, Lydia H. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: University Press, 1995.
- Lovell, Julia. *The Opium War: Drug, Dreams, and the Making of China*. London: Picador, 2011.
- Macauley, Melissa. *Social Power and Legal Culture: Litigation Masters in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Mair, Victor. "What Is a Chinese 'Dialect/Topolect'? Reflections on Some Key Sino-English Linguistic Terms." *Sino-Platonic Papers* 29 (1991): 1-31.
- Man-Cheong, Iona. 'Asiatic' Sailors and the East India Company: Racialisation and Labour Practices, 1803–15." *Journal of Maritime Research* 16:2 (2014): 167-181.
- Martineau, Gilbert. *La Vie quotidienne à Sainte-Hélène au temps de Napoléon* [Everyday life on St. Helena during the time of Napoleon]. Paris: Hachette, 1966.
- Mazumdar, Sucheta. *Sugar and Society in China: Peasants, Technology, and the World Market*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998.
- McKeown, Adam. *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

- McKeown, Adam. *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- McNicholas, Mark. *Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China Popular Deceptions and the High Qing State*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016.
- Mok, Maria Kar-Wing. “Trading with Traders: The Wonders of Cantonese Shopkeepers.” In *The Private Side of the Canton Trade, 1700-1840: Beyond the Companies*, edited by Paul van Dyke and Susan E. Schopp, 64-84. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018.
- Morse, Hosea Ballou. *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*. 3 vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910.
- Mosca, Matthew. *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.
- Mosca, Matthew. “Neither Chinese Nor Outsiders: Yi and Non-Yi in the Qing Imperial Worldview.” *Asia Major* 33:1 (2020): 103–146.
- Moura, Carlos Francisco. *Chineses e chá no Brasil no início do século XIX* [The Chinese and tea in Brazil in the early nineteenth century]. Macau: Instituto Internacional de Macau, 2012.
- Namsaraeva, Sayana. “Border Language Chinese Pidgin Russian with a Mongolian ‘Accent.’” *Inner Asia* 16 (2014): 116-138.
- Nie, Daxin 聂大昕. “‘Yingjili guo yiyu’ bianzuan liucheng kao” 《‘英咭喇国译语’编纂流程考》 [An investigation of the compilation process of the ‘Yingjiliguó yiyu’]. *Beifang minzu daxue xuebao* [Journal of the Northern University of Nationalities] 145:1 (2019): 108-115.
- Nunn, Janet Hume. *Commercial Travelers’ Guide to the Far East*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926.

- Oropeza, Déborah. “La migración asiática libre al centro del virreinato novohispano, 1565-1700.” *Relaciones: Estudios de historia y sociedad* 37:147 (2016): 347-363.
- Osterhammel, Jürgen. “Semi-colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis.” In *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, edited by Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, 290-314. London: Allen and Unwin, 1986.
- Pan, Lynn. *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Pelliot, Paul. “Le Sseu-yi-kouan et le Houei-t’ong-kouan” [The Siyiguan and the Huitongguan] in “Le Hōja et le Sayyid Hūsain de l’histoire des Ming” [The Hōja and Sayyid Hūsain of Ming history]. *T’oung Pao* 38 (1948): appendix 3, 207–292.
- Pijning, Ernst. “‘Can She Be a Woman?’ Gender and Contraband in the Revolutionary Atlantic.” In *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800*, edited by Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell, 215-250. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Platt, Stephen. *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China’s Last Golden Age*. New York: Knopf, 2018.
- Po. *The Blue Frontier: Maritime Vision and Power in the Qing Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Po, Ronald C. “Maritime Countries in the Far West: Western Europe in Xie Qinggao’s *Records of the Sea* (c. 1783-93).” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 21:6 (October 2014): 857-870.
- Polachek, James. *The Inner Opium War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

- Porter, Kenneth Wiggins. *John Jacob Astor, Business Man*. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- Pritchard, Earl H. *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1929.
- Qiu, Zhihong 邱志红, “‘Guihua’ donglai: ‘Hongmao fanhua’ lei zaoqi yingyu cihui shu kaoxi “‘鬼话’ 东来: ‘红毛番话’ 类早期英语词汇书考析” [The introduction of ‘Guihua’: an examination of early English vocabulary books such as the ‘Hongmao fanhua’], *Qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 (2017: 2): 113-121.
- Ramsey, S. Robert. *The Languages of China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Rawski, Evelyn. *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch’ing China*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979.
- Rawski, Evelyn. “Functional Literacy in Nineteenth-century China.” In *Literacy in Historical Perspective*, edited by Daniel P. Resnick, 85-103. Washington: Library of Congress, 1983.
- Reinhardt, Anne. *Navigating Semi-Colonialism: Shipping, Sovereignty, and Nation-building in China, 1860-1937*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018.
- Rémusat, Abel. *Mélanges Asiatiques; Ou, Choix de Morceaux de Critique et de Mémoires, Relatifs aux Religions, aux Sciences, aux Coutumes, à L’histoire et à la Géographie des Nations Orientales* [Asian medley; or, selected pieces of criticism and memoirs, relating to the religions, sciences, customs, history, and geography of the Oriental nations]. 2 vols. Paris: Dondey-Dupré père et fils, 1825.
- Rimmer, Steffen. “Chinese Abolitionism: the Chinese Educational Mission in Connecticut, Cuba, and Peru.” *Journal of Global History* 11:3 (2016): 344-364.

- Rowe, William. *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Saarela, Mårten Söderblom. "Manchu and the Study of Language in China." Ph.D. diss. Princeton University, 2015.
- Salmon, Claudine. "Wang Dahai et sa vision des « Contrées insulaires » (1791)" [Wang Dahai and his vision of "Island Countries." *Études chinoises: bulletin de l'Association française d'études chinoises* 13:1-2 (1994): 221-257.
- Sánchez-Eppler, Karen. "Copying and Conversion: An 1824 Friendship Album 'from a Chinese Youth.'" *American Quarterly* 59:2 (2007): 301-339.
- Schwarz, Rainer. "Noch einmal zu Heinrich Heines 'zwey chinesischen Gelehrten.'" *Monumenta Serica* 64:1 (2016): 173-200.
- Scully, Eileen P. *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Shapiro, Roman. "Chinese Pidgin Russian." *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 25:1 (2010): 5-62.
- Shi, Dingxu. "Learning Chinese Pidgin English through Chinese Characters," in *Atlantic Meets Pacific: A Global View of Pidginization and Creolization*, edited by Francis Byrne and John Holm, 459–465. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993.
- Shi, Dingxu. "On the Etymology of *Pidgin*," *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 7:2 (1992): 343–347.
- Si Jia 司徒佳. *Jindai Zhongying yuyan jiechu yu wenhua jiaoliu* 近代中英语言接触与文化交涉 [Modern language contact and cultural interaction between Chinese and English]. Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2016.

- Smith, Carl T. and Paul Van Dyke. "Four Armenian Families." *Revista de Cultura* 8 (Oct. 2003): 20-39.
- Smith, Richard J. *Mapping China and Managing the World: Culture, Cartography and Cosmology in Late Imperial Times*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Snyder, Anthony and Sherri West. *Readings in Global History*. Dubuque: Kendall-Hunt Publishing, 1997.
- Solar, Peter M. "Opening to the East: Shipping Between Europe and Asia, 1770–1830." *The Journal of Economic History* 73:3 (2013): 625-661.
- Stelle, Charles C. "American Trade in Opium to China, Prior to 1820." *Pacific Historical Review* 9:4 (December 1940): 436-437.
- Stifler, Susan Reed. "The Language Students of the East India Company Canton Factory." *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 69 (1938): 47-50.
- Sun, Bojun 孙伯君. "Huayi yiyu Hanzi zhuyinfa kaoyuan" '华夷译语' 汉字注音法考源 [An examination of Chinese transcription methods in the *Huayi yiyu*]. *Beifang minzu daxue xuebao* 2 (2020): 122-127.
- Thilly, Peter. "Opium and the Origins of Treason in Modern China: The View from Fujian," *Late Imperial China* 38:1 (2017): 155-197.
- Torpey, John. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Uchida Keiichi 内田慶市 and Shen Guowei 沈國威, eds., *Gengo sesshoku to pijin: 19 seiki no higashi Ajia* 言語接触とピジン: 19世紀の東アジア [Language contact and pidgin: nineteenth-century Asia]. Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 2009.

- Uchida, Keiichi. *A Study of Cultural Interaction and Linguistic Contact: Approaching Chinese Linguistics from the Periphery*, translated by Alan Thwaites. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.
- Van der Chijs, J.A. *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India, anno 1664* [Dagregister kept in Castle Batavia, 1664]. Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1893.
- Van Dyke, Paul. “A Ship Full of Chinese Passengers: *Princess Amelia*’s Voyage from London to China in 1816-17,” in *Early Modern East Asia: War, Commerce, and Cultural Exchange*, edited by Kenneth M. Swope and Tonio Andrade, 166-196. New York: Routledge, 2018).
- Van Dyke, Paul. “The Canton Linguists in the 1730s: Managers of the Margins of Trade.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 57 (2017): 7–35.
- Van Dyke, Paul. *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- Van Dyke, Paul. *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011.
- Van Dyke, Paul. *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016.
- Van Dyke, Paul. “Operational Efficiencies and the Decline of the Chinese Junk Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Connection.” In *Shipping Efficiency and Economic Growth, 1350-1800*, edited by Richard Unger, 223-246. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Van Dyke, Paul. “Smuggling Networks of the Pearl River Delta before 1842.” In *Americans and Macao: Trade, Smuggling, and Diplomacy on the South China Coast*, edited by Paul Van Dyke, 49-72. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.

- Van Dyke, Paul. *Whampoa and the Canton Trade: Life and Death in a Chinese Port, 1700-1842*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2020.
- Van Lottum, Jelle. *Across the North Sea: The Impact of the Dutch Republic on International Labour Migration, c. 1550-1850*. Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2007.
- Van Rossum, Matthias. *Werkers van de wereld: Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600-1800* [Workers of the world: Globalization, work, and intercultural encounters between Asian and European sailors in service of the VOC]. Hilversum: Verloren, 2014.
- Von Glahn, Richard. "The Enchantment of Wealth: The God Wutong in the Social History of Jiangnan." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51:2 (Dec. 1991): 651-714.
- Wade, Geoff. "Chinese Transcription of Foreign Words prior to the 19th Century." *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10:1 (September 2005): 1-20.
- Wakeman, Frederic. "The Canton Trade and the Opium War. In *The Cambridge History of China*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, vol. 10, 163-212. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Waley, Arthur. *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958.
- Wang, Ermin 王爾敏. *Zhongguo chuantong jisong zhi xue yu shiyun koujue* 中國傳統記誦之學與詩韻口訣 [Chinese traditional recitation methods and Arts of Rhyming]. *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindai shi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊 [Journal of the Institute of Modern Chinese History at the Academia Sinica] 23 (1994): 33-64.
- Wang, Gungwu. *China and the Overseas Chinese*. Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991.

- Wang, Gungwu. *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Wang, Gungwu. *Don't Leave Home: Migration and the Chinese*. Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2001.
- Wang Hongzhi 王宏志, "Magaerni shi Hua de fanyi wenti" 馬嘎爾尼使華的翻譯問題 [The translation problems of the Macartney embassy to China]. *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊 63 (2009): 97–145.
- Wang, Wensheng. *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Wang, Zheng. *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Wu Langxuan 吴琅璇. "Wang Dahai yu Haidao yizhi" 王大海与《海岛逸志》 [Wang Dahai and the *Haidao yizhi*]. *Shehui kexue* (1996:4): 64-67.
- Wong, John D. *Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Yee, Chiang. *The Chinese Traveller in Boston*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1959.
- Yeung, Man Shun. *An American Pioneer of Chinese Studies in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Benjamin Bowen Carter as an Agent of Global Knowledge*. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Young, Norwood. *Napoleon in Exile: St. Helena (1815-1821); With Two Coloured Frontispieces and One Hundred Illustrations Mainly from the Collection of A.M. Broadley*. Philadelphia: Winston, 1915.
- Yu, Li. "Character Recognition: A New Method of Learning to Read in Late Imperial China." *Late Imperial China* 33:2 (December 2012): 1-39.

- Yu, Po-ching. "Chinese Seamen in London and St. Helena in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Law, Labour, and Empire: Comparative Perspectives on Seafarers, c. 1500-1800*, edited by Maria Fusaro, 287-303. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Zhang Shuqiong 张淑琼. "Xie Qinggao de Xiyang guan" [Xie Qinggao's view of the West]. *Zhongshan daxue yanjiusheng xuekan* 25:4 (2004): 53-61.
- Zheng Yong 郑镛 and Lian Xinhao 连心豪. "Lun Haidao yizhi de shixue jiazhi" 论《海岛逸志》的史学价值 [Essay on the historical value of "Haidao yizhi"]. *Xiamen Daxue xuebao* 1 (2009): 75-81.
- Zhang, Zhigong 张志公. *Chuantong yuwen jiaoyu chutan* 传统语文教育初探 [Preliminary study of traditional language education]. Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1962.
- Zürcher, Erik. *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. 3rd ed. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

CODETTA

Problematizing Pidgin: From *Business* back to *Busyness*

Linguists typically define pidgin as a simplified, non-native language used between two or more groups that lack a language in common, and which is often employed in situations of trade. In fact, prevailing theories about the etymology of the word “pidgin” specifically point back to the history of European trade with China, arguing that “pidgin” itself is a pidgin term derived from the approximated Cantonese pronunciation of the English word “busin[ess].”⁴⁹⁶ In other words, speaking pidgin was what one did when conducting business.

While this etymology and the corresponding labeling of pidgin as a trade language are useful conceptually, they also carry a risk of oversimplification. Pidgin could be used for more than just trade, and when examined in its fuller sociohistorical context, the seemingly straightforward business-pidgin paradigm quickly becomes less clear-cut. After all, languages are fluid, and they evolve to fit the demands of their contexts.

As British trade with China grew in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English terms began filtering into the Portuguese pidgin then in use in the Pearl River Delta. Amalgamated phrases such as “Carei glandi hola, pickenini hola?” (“Do you want the large whore or the little whore?”), reportedly posed to a British sailor by a local pimp nicknamed “Jack,” bear testament to the evolving makeup of the foreign presence through a combination of Portuguese and English pidgin words (from “*Querer* [Port.] *grande* [Port.] *whore* [Eng.] *pequenino/a* [Port.] *whore* [Eng.]?”).⁴⁹⁷ British trade expanded rapidly in the eighteenth century, and outside of Macau, Chinese Pidgin English replaced Chinese Pidgin Portuguese as the lingua

⁴⁹⁶ Baker and Mühlhäusler, “From Business to Pidgin” (1990); Shi Dingxu, “On the etymology of *pidgin*” (1992).

⁴⁹⁷ Charles Frederick Noble, *A Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748* (London, 1762), 240.

franca of the China trade by the close of the century. Yet together with linguistic changes came social ones, too. The Chinese pimp's query hints at some of the oft-overlooked but equally important side effects of expanding commercial intercourse, illuminating a world in which people could be commodified as readily as goods, and in which foreigners and Chinese regularly interacted in a variety of secondary contexts only loosely connected to what we typically think of as the main conduct of Sino-Western commerce.

As new needs arose, new terms and structures entered into use, and the linguistic medium that had originally evolved for transacting goods such as tea and porcelain lent itself to appropriation for new purposes. The encroachment of the Anglophonic *hola* into the otherwise Portuguese solicitation above provides just one example of this evolutionary process. "Do you want?", "big," and "little" were all words or phrases that had straightforward applications in a commercial context.⁴⁹⁸ A new term, "whore," then slotted into this existing framework as new demands arose. In addition to being tied to the growing British presence, this Anglophone development likely also reflected demographic differences between the British and Portuguese populations: unlike the Macau-based Portuguese, who commonly brought spouses from home or intermarried with Malay or Indochinese women, many British personnel involved in the China trade were unmarried itinerants. It was not uncommon for lonely sailors, stuck at the Whampoa anchorage for several months on end while their supercargoes conducted business, to turn to local prostitutes or enterprising boatwomen for the fulfillment of their sexual desires. (In this respect they were not so different from lonely Chinese sailors stuck in London, who as we have seen took advantage of similar opportunities in the docklands while waiting for the next season's

⁴⁹⁸ For example, the appearance of all three Chinese Pidgin Portuguese terms in the *Aomen fanyu* attests to the regularity of their use. The entries for 大 "large" and 小 "small" correspond to *muito grande* "very large" and *muito pequenino* "very small," while we see *carei* (from Port. *querer*) appear as part of the phoneticization for 買乜貨 "what do you want to buy?" and other similar questions. *Aomen fanyu*, 7a, 8a.

China-bound ships.) Local place names such as the notorious Lob-Lob Creek (i.e., Love-Love Creek) bore the marks of such liaisons' regularity in the littoral spaces of the delta.

Out of circumstances such as these, pidgin expanded to cover new transactions, and it took on new resonances for the people employing it. To be sure, most of these interactions remained economic in nature, and in that sense one could say pidgin remained a “trade language.” Crucially, however, pidgin moved beyond being just a linguistic compromise settled upon by existing Chinese and foreign merchants to conduct their business; it also became a language of opportunity for people who previously had little to do with the China trade proper, or who were previously locked out from traditional means of upward socioeconomic mobility. Entrepreneurial young men could, if they learned sufficient pidgin, aspire to serve as compradors; fishermen and boatmen familiar with local sandbars and able to communicate those dangers could find seasonal employment as pilots for foreign ships around the Pearl River Delta; barbers could contract themselves out to literal boatloads of customers at a time; and of course existing merchants and shopkeepers could also leverage greater communicative ability as a way to outcompete rivals. Structurally, foreign trade with China was the necessary precondition for these new economic opportunities, but for people on the ground, Sino-European pidgins were the key to accessing them. Equally significant, those locals who could not communicate effectively with foreigners were cut out from the business. This competitive environment contributed to significant upward pressure on the standard of spoken pidgin, as multitudes of local Chinese had an incentive to both learn pidgin and learn it well. In other words, for scholars to dismiss pidgin as “just a trade language” is to miss the point: pidgin was important precisely *because* it was a trade language—or, to put it another way, precisely because “trade” and “business” encompassed such variegated and all-inclusive aspects of Sino-Western interaction.

APPENDIX 1.1

Partial Chinese-Portuguese language glossary from Macao, ca. 1830

Below is a translingual transcription of an excerpt from the surviving portions of the Portuguese *yiyu* glossary *Aomen fanyu zazi quanben* (Libri sin. N.S. 849). A digitized copy is available on the website of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz: <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB000030DE00000000>. Although the glossary contains a number of typographical errors, the transcriptions provide insight into both how such transliteration operated as well as the range of topics covered.⁴⁹⁹

For comparison with an English *yiyu* glossary from the same era, see Appendix 4 in Kingsley Bolton, *Chinese Englishes: A Sociolinguistic History*, which contains a detailed reproduction and transcription of the *Hongmao tongyong fanhua* (BL 15346.b.12).⁵⁰⁰

Section I. Heaven and Earth (天地門)

Chinese term	Meaning	Chinese character(s) used to indicate Portuguese pronunciation	Cantonese pronunciation of Chinese characters	Portuguese equivalent
天	sky	消吾	sīu'nggh	céu
日	sun	梭爐	sōlòuh	sol
月	moon	籠呀	lùhnga	lua
星	star	意事爹利喇	yisihdēleihla	estrela
風	wind	挽度	wáahndouh	vento
雲	cloud	奴皮	nòuhpèih	nubem
雨	rain	租華	jōuwàh	chuva
晴	clear weather	幫顛布	bōngdīnbou	bom tempo

⁴⁹⁹ These errors were likely introduced during the woodcarving process, as it was not uncommon for carvers to possess limited literacy skills or, in any case, to be unfamiliar with the Sino-European pidgins of the texts that they were copying.

⁵⁰⁰ Kingsley Bolton, *Chinese Englishes: A Sociolinguistic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 266-287.

早	morning	賒圖	sētòuh	cedo ⁵⁰¹
午	noon	妙的呀	miuhdīa	meio-dia
夜	night	亞內的	anoihdī	a noite
半夜	midnight	貓亞內的	māauanoihdī	meio a noite
天黑	nightfall	耶西孤路	yèhsāigūlouh	escurecer
冷	cold	非了	fēilíuh	frio
熱	hot	堅的	gīndī	quente
東	East	爹時離	dēsìhlèih	Este
南	South	蘇盧	sōulòuh	Sul
西	West	賀核時	hohwahtsìh	Oeste
北	North	諾的	nohkdī	Norte
發風颶	typhoon	度方	douhfōng	tufão
無風	not windy	噠叮挽度	nùhng dīng wáahndouh	não tem vento
有風	windy	叮挽度	dīng wáahndouh	tem vento
風大	heavy winds	挽度架蘭地	wáahndouh galàahndei	vento grande
細雨	light rain	庇記呢奴租華	beigeinīndòuh jōuwàh	pequenino chuva
大雨	heavy rain	租華架蘭地	jōuwàh galàahndei	chuva grande
正月	January	燕爹爐	yindēlòuh	janeiro
二月	February	非比列爐	fēibéilihtlòuh	fevereiro
三月	March	仔爐嘍	mālòuhsou	março
四月	April	亞比列爐	abéilihtlòuh	abril
五月	May	仔爐	mālòuh	maoi
六月	June	欲欲	yuhkyuhk ⁵⁰²	junho
七月	July	欲爐	yuhklòuh	julho
八月	August	亞歌數	agōsòu	agosto
九月	September	雪添補爐	syuttīmbóulòuh	setembro
十月	October	愛都補爐	oidōubóulòuh	outubro
十一月	November	糯古補爐	nohgúbóulòuh	novembro
十二月	December	利占補爐	leihjīmbóulòuh	dezembro
去年	last year	晏奴罷沙圖	aannòuh bahsātòuh	anno passado
今年	this year	依時晏奴	yīsih aannòuh	este anno
今月	this month	依時羊[咩]士	yīsih mēsìh	este mês

⁵⁰¹ The Chinese character 早 can mean either “morning” (n.) or “early” (adj.). In this context, the intended meaning is likely “morning,” based on the surrounding terms (noon, night, etc.), but the transcriber has gone with the Portuguese word for “early” instead.

⁵⁰² This character repetition is likely a typographical error introduced during the woodcutting process.

今日	today	依時里亞	yīshì léiha	este dia
今時	now	依時可喇	yīshì hóla	este [a]gora
一年	one year	悞晏奴	ngh aannòuh	um anno
一時	one moment	悞可喇	ngh hóla	um [a]gora
一月	one month	悞尾時	ngh méihshìh	um mês
天陰	overcast	以士果力些	yīshìghwólìhksē	escuro
地	earth/region	爭	jāng	zon[a]
沙	sand	亞哩	aléi	arei[a]
山	mountain	孖度	mādouh	monte
海	sea	孖喇	māla	mar
澳	port	可占完度	hójīmyùhdouh	porto? ⁵⁰³
島	island	以里丫	yīhléihā	ilha
石	stone	(unclear)打喇	[béi?]dála	[pe]dra
水	water	了(丫)古	āgú	agua
路	road	監尾蘆	gāamméihlòuh	caminho
牆	wall	霸利地	baleihdeih	parede
井	well	汲[波]酥	[bō]sōu	poço
屋	house/room	家白[自]	gā[jih]	casa
舖	store	布的架	boudīga	botica
街	street	蘆呀	lòuha	rua
樓	building	所已[巴]拉度	sóbālāaidouh	sobrado
庫房	warehouse	哥肥里	gōfèihléih	vault, strongbox
開門	open the door	亞悲哩波打	abēilēi bōdá	abrir [a] porta
門門	close the door	非渣波打	fēijā bōdá	fechar [a] porta
城門	city gate	波打氏打的	bōdá sihdádī	porta [da] cidade
關閘	(place name; border gate between Macao and the Chinese mainland)	波打些蘆古	bōdá sēlòuhgú	Portas [do] Cerco
稅館	“Hoppon” (Hubu)	芋[芋]浦	[wuh]póu	Hoppo
前山賽	(place name; site of a Portuguese fort)	家白[自]罷今古	gā[jih] bahgāmgú	Casa Blanca
青洲	Ilha Verde	伊立灣列地	yīlahp wāanlihtdeih	Ilha Verde
村鄉	village	亞喇的呀	aladīa	aldeia
遠	far	倫干[于]	lèuhn[yū]	longe
近	near	必度	bītdouh	perto

⁵⁰³ Possible typographical error.

高	high	遇度	yuhdouh	alto
低	low	巴樹	bāsyuh	baixo
海邊	shore/coast	罷殫呀	bahlāaia	praia
上山	ascend a mountain	數畢孖度	soubātmādouh	subrir monte
落水	fall into water	歪哪了(丫)古	wāaináh[ā]gú	vai na agua
行路	walk	晏打	aandá	andar
水長	rising tide	孖哩燕占地	mālēih yinjimdeih	maré enchante
水退	ebbing tide	孖哩化贊地	mālēih fajaandeih	maré vazante
波浪	wave	嗎利時	maleihsih	mares
澳門	Macao	馬交	máhgāu	Macau
議事亭	city	事打的	sihdádī	cidade
呂宋	Manila	萬尼立	maahnnèihlahp	Manila
大西洋	Reino [i.e., Portugal]	噠奴	lìhnnòuh	Reino [de Portugal]
小西洋	Goa	我呀	ngóh-a	Goa
噶喇巴	Batavia	[?]打比	[Ba]dábi[a]	Batavia
早	early	些度	sēdouh	cedo
宴	late	妙 立	miuhlahp	meia?
晚	evening	亞打 立	adálahp	a tarde?
黑夜	night	依士孤路	yīsihgūlouh	escuro
好天	good weather	邦顛步	bōngdīnbouh	bom tempo
落雨	rainy	鷄粥了(丫)	gāijūkā	[?] chuva
乾	dry	錫故	sekgu	seco
濕	wet	無喇度	mòuhladouh	molhado

Section II. People and Professions (人物類)

Chinese term	Meaning	Chinese character(s) used to indicate Portuguese pronunciation	Cantonese pronunciation of Chinese characters	Portuguese equivalent
皇帝	emperor	燕罷喇多盧	yinbahladōlouh	imperador
老爺	mandarin	蠻的哩	màahndīlēi	mandarim
大爺	old sir	仙翁	sīnyūng	senhor
大叔	young sir	撻些步	māansēbouh	mancebo
相公	elder/master	雍	yūng	?
兵	soldier	疏打古	sōdágú	soldado
書辦	clerk	意士記利橫	yisihsiégeileihwàahng	escrivão

亞公	paternal grandfather	擺亞波	báai abō	<i>pai-avô</i>
亞婆	paternal grandmother	目茶	muhkchàh	[slang?]
父	father	擺	báai	<i>pai</i>
母	mother	買	máaih	<i>mãe</i>
子	son	非盧	fēilòuh	<i>filho</i>
女	daughter	非喇	fēila	<i>filha</i>
孫	grandson	列度	lihtdough	<i>neto</i>
兄	older brother	意利猛架蘭的	yileihmáahng galàahndī	<i>irmão grande</i>
弟	younger brother	意利猛庇記呢奴	yileihmáahng beigeinīndòuh	<i>irmão pequenino</i>
姊	older sister	萬那	maahnnáh	<i>mana</i>
妹	younger sister	意利孟	yileihmaahng	<i>irmã</i>
一伯	father's older brother	即是桃	jīksihtòuh	<i>tio</i>
嫂	sister-in-law	冠也打	gunyáhdá	<i>cunhada</i>
妻	spouse	共辦惹盧	guhngbaahnyéhlòuh	<i>companheira/o</i>
媳婦	daughter-in-law	懦喇	nohla	<i>nora</i>
外父	father-in-law	疎古盧	sōgúlòuh	<i>sogro</i>
外母	mother-in-law	疎架喇	sōgala	<i>sogra</i>
女婿	son-in-law	燕怒	yinnouh	<i>genro</i>
番王	foreign monarch	哩	léih	<i>rei</i>
富貴大客	wealthy esteemed guest	每渡厘故	múihdough lèihgu	<i>muido rico</i>
舅	brother-in-law	冠也度	gunyáhdough	<i>cunhado</i>
表兄	older cousin	備僉無	beihchīmmòuh	<i>primo?</i>
人	person	因的	yāndī	<i>gente</i>
男人	man	可微	hómèih	<i>homem</i>
女人	woman	務惹盧	mouhyéhlòuh	<i>mulher</i>
兵頭	military commander	個患多盧	gowaahndōlòuh	<i>governador</i>
四頭人	citizen	事達丁	sihdahtdīng	<i>cidadão</i>
管庫	chief	備喇故路多盧	beihlagulouhdōlòuh	<i>procurador</i>
和尚	priest	巴地梨	bādeihlèih	<i>padre</i>
尼姑	nun	非利也立	fēileihyáhlah[p]	<i>freira</i>
通事	linguist	做路巴沙	jouhlouhbāsā	<i>jurubahasa (Malay term for interpreter)</i>
保長	baozhang (headman)	架比沙奴牙	gabéisā nòuhngàh	<i>cabeça rua</i>

唐人	Chinese person	之那	jīnáh	china
挑夫	porter/coolie	姑利	gūleih	cule
火頭	cook	故知也立	gujīyáhlahp	cozinheiro
水手	sailor	罵利也路	mahleihyáhlouh	marinheiro
引水	pilot	英加米失地	yīnggāmáihstdeih	encaminhante
番人	foreigner	記利生	geileihstng	cristão
賊	thief	喇打今[令]	ladō[líng]	ladrão
富貴	wealthy person	利故	leihgu	rico
大班	taipan	媽□束加多嫁欄地	māháuchūkgādō galàahndeih	mercador grande
大客	[eminent person]	好厘嫁多嫁欄地	hólèihgadō galàahndeih	[]-cador grande
經紀	agent	故厘多	gulèihdō	corretor
船主	ship's captain	甲卑丹	gaapbēidāan	capitão
火伴		監巴[巴]□棘[辣]度	gāambaladouh	camarado
你	you	蘇亞	sōua	sua
我	I	美□耶	méihyèh	mea
佢	he or she	吖利	āleih	ele
光棍	bachelor	眉□棘[辣]故	mèihlagu	?
買辦	compradore	工波濶多	gūngbōlāaidō	comprador
貧	indigent	故[波?]比梨	[bō]béilèih	pobre
木匠	carpenter	架變爹盧	gabindēlòuh	carpinteiro
泥水匠	mason	必的哩盧	bītdīlèilòuh	pedreiro
銀匠	silversmith	芋哩比	wuhlēibéi	ourives
鐵匠	blacksmith	非列盧	fēihlītòuh	ferreiro
裁縫	tailor	亞利非呀的	aleihfēiadī	alfaiate
銅匠	coppersmith	個卑哩盧	gobēilèilòuh	cobreiro
錫匠	hatmaker	閩卑哩盧	jaahpbēilèilòuh	chapeleiro
老人	old person	因的威盧	yāndīwāilòuh	gente velho
後生人	young man	萬賒補	maahnsēbóu	mancebo
孩子	child	拉巴氏	lāibāsih	rapaz
奴	slave	麼嚟	mōsou	moço
丫頭	servant girl	麼散	mōsaan	moça
婢	slave girl	麼沙	mōsā	moça
惡人	wicked person	罷喇補	bahlabóu	?
好人	good person	捧因[的]	púng yān[dī]	bom gente

Section III. The Body (身體門)

頭	head	架比沙	gabéisā	cabeça
眼	eye	呵盧	hōlòuh	olho
眉	eyebrow	甚未睇刺	sahmmeihsēlaah[t]	sobrancelha
鼻	nose	那哩時	náhlēisih	nariz
口	mouth	波家	bōgā	boca
牙	teeth	顛的	dīndī	dente
舌	tongue	連古	lìhngú	língua
鬚	hair	巴喇龍[罷]	bālabah	barba
耳	ear	芋非嘍	wuhfēidoh	ouvido
唇	lip	卑嚟	bēisou	beijo
乳	breast	孖麻	māmàh	mama
手	hand	孟	maahng	mão
心	heart	個囉生	golòhsāng	coração
肚	stomach	馬哩家	máhlēigā	barriga
腸	intestines	地利把	dileihbá	tripa
肝	liver	非古嘍	fēigúdoh	figado
肺	lung	波肥	bōfēih	bofe
脚	foot	比	béi	pé
指	finger	爹度	dēdoh	dedo
指甲	fingernail	官呀	gūna	unha
氣	breath	巴符	bāfùh	bafo
脈	pulse	甫盧嚟	pólòuhsou	pulso
筋	nerve	爹刺把	dēlahtbá	nervo
骨	bone	可嚟	hósou	osso
皮	skin	卑梨	bēilēih	pele
頸	neck	未氏哥做	meihsihgōjoh	pescoço
髮	hair	架悲路	gabēiloh	cabelo
喉	throat	牙喇奸大	ngàhlachīndaaih	garganta
腰	waist	割嗟路	gotjēlough	?
口水	saliva	姑薛拜	gūsitbaai	?
拳頭	fist, handful	搬呀度	būnadoh	punhado
膝頭	knee	厘嗟度	lèihjēdoh	?
左	left	丫四割度	āseigotdoh	esquerdo
右	right	爹刻[列]度	dēleidoh	direito
行	go	歪	wāai	vai
膳	meals	惰囉尾	dohlōméih	?
呵屎	defecate	架加	gagā	cocô

呵尿	urinate	𠵼美做	méihjough	mijar
汙	filthy	唆路	sōlough	sujo?
跛	limp	嚟咱	lāihjā	[a]leija
面月朱	face	邏素負西𠵼田	lòhsoufuhsāitì hn	?
走	walk	富詩	fusī	fugir?
企	standing	硯悲	yihnbēi	em pê
冷	cold	飛丁	fēidīng	
熱	hot	堅地	gīndēih	quente
洗面	wash the face	刺哇邏土	laahwā lòhtóu	lavar [?]
洗身	wash the body	刺歪割步	laahwāai gobouh	lavar corpo
剃頭	shave the head	廉巴夾悲撒	lihmbā gaapbēisaa	limpar [a] cabeça
死	die	毛哩	mòuhlēi	morrer
生	be alive	𠵼威符	wāifùh	vivar
去	go	歪	wāai	vai
哭	cry	做刺	jouhlaah	chorar
笑	laugh	哩	lēi	rir
走開	move aside	西的亞里	sāi dī aléih	sai de [?]
來	come/came	要永	yiuh wīhng	ja vem

Section IV. Common Words (言語通用門)

買	buy	公巴刺	gūngbālaah	comprar
賣	sell	彎爹	wāandē	vender
有	have	丁	dīng	tem
無	not have	嚟丁	nūhngdīng	não tem
書信	letter	吉打	gātdá	carta
看	look/see	也可刺	yáh hólaah	ja olha
多	a lot	單度	dāandouh	tanto
少	a little	波故	bōgu	pouco
無看見	don't see	嚟可刺	nūhng hólaah	não olha
回家	return home	歪加乍	wāai gāja	vai [a] casa
請	[polite word]	亞了蘇	alúhsōu	adeus
多謝	thank	了蘇吧忌	lúhsōubahgeih	?
告狀	sue, report	化知別地立	fājī bidihlah	fazê pedir
買易	contract	幹打刺度	gondá laahdouh	contrato
良善	good, gentle	馬素	máhsou	manso
黑	black	必列度	bīlihdouh	preto

白	white	霸郎古	balòhnggú	branco
忠厚	honest	共仙時	guhngsīnsìh	consciência
辛苦	hardworking	逕沙度	gingsādouh	caçado
有力	have strength	丁火沙	dīngfósā	tem força
病	sick	奴噓	nòuhlòuh	nullo?
痛	be in pain	堆	dēui	doer
馬錢	[Spanish dollar]	膩故當	neih gudōng	Rei [?]
要	want	霸些也	basēyáh	Passear?
外	outside	科立	fōlah	fora
內	inside	連度爐	lìhdouhlòuh	dentro
講	say, discuss	法刺	faalaah	falar
討賬	collect payment	立架打里巴打	lahpgadáléihbādá	?
歡喜	pleased	貢顛地	gungdīndi	contente
教	teach	燕線那因地	yinsinnáh yāndi	ensinar [a] gente
學	learn	庇連爹	[a]beilìhndē	aprender
忘記	forget	意氏記西	yisihgeisāi	esquecer
恭喜	congratulations, greetings	沒度掃帳打地	muhtdouh soujeungdádeih	muito saudade
懶	lazy	庇哩機蘇素	beilēigēisōusou	preguiçoso
熟	cooked	故知度	gujīdouh	cozido
就到	just arrived	亞哥立這加	agōlah jéhgā	agora chega
利錢	interest (on a loan)	干欲	gōnyuh	ganho
生	live	偉步	wáihbouh	vivo
死	die	磨利	mòhleih	morrer
醜	ugly, shameful	貓	māau	mal?
如今	now	亞哥立	agōlah	agora
肥	fat	噶度	gādouh	gordo
瘦	thin	孖古度	māgúdouh	magro
新	new	那步	nāhbouh	novo
舊	old	活路	wuhlouh	velho
大	large	每做嫁欄地	múihjough galàahndeih	muito grande
小	small	每做悲記臉怒	múihjough bēigēinàhmnoh	muito pequeno

[The remaining pages are omitted from this transcription excerpt.]

APPENDIX 1.2

Sample Chinese Pidgin Russian dialogues in Kiakhta, ca. 1850

I. In the following conversation, a traveling Chinese merchant flirts with a Russian merchant's wife before transitioning the discussion to business matters.

C: Alexandra, why do you think I've come?

R: To visit, Mr. Dalai.

C: That's not all; I've come to express my admiration for your custom of letting husbands live together with their wives.

R: Why don't your wives come here?

C: It's forbidden, because they will interfere with the trade.

R: How can this be? Why is it that we [Russian wives] don't interfere?

C: Oh, you have a special way of life. You have husbands who live in a rude way. Wives don't sit together [with their husbands]. It's as if they are strangers.

R: Do you always sit together with your wives?

C: Of course, we honor our wives like deities. And when I look at you, I get a sweet feeling. If you don't come to me someday, I'll die.

R: Uh, come on, Mr. Dalai, how can you talk like that!

C: It's true, I'm not a liar. Your Mikita is not a good man; all he does is drink vodka.

R: I will tell Mikita how Dalai is talking.

C: No need to tell him; think about yourself. I will go to Beijing—what kind of Beijing-style silk will you order?

R: I don't have money, Mr. Dalai.

C: It's possible to [buy on credit].

R: But I'll have to pay it back later.

C: You could still do it.

R: I don't want to do that.

C: How, then?

R: I will consult with Mikita.

C: Mikita is one thing; you are another thing.

R: I don't want to do things like that.

C: Well, it's up to you; you're going to be sorry later.

Source: Sergey Cherepanov, "Kyakhtinskoe kitajskoe narecie russkogo yazyka" [The Kyakhta Chinese dialect of the Russian language], *Izvestiya Akademii nauk po otdeleniyu russkogo yazyka i slovesnosti* 2 (1853): 374-375.

II. Dialogue about the Chinese cloth that a Russian merchant sent from Kiakhta for the Russian army during the Napoleonic Wars. Upon learning that Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia ended in failure, the Chinese merchant commented:

“We knew it would be so. Your soldiers were wearing our cloth—how could it be possible to beat you?”

Source: Cherepanov, 376.

APPENDIX 2

Sample rankings of Chinese merchants, by the supercargo of the American ship

Confederacy, 1804

List of Hong Merchants

1st Puankequay: The chief or head of the Hong Merchants. He possesses immense property, great influence....He is solely devoted to the English, who endeavor to engage his whole attention and influence. He will not undertake to secure American ships, either because it might not be agreeable to them, or because their concern is not of consequence enough to invest his attention, and having the choice of the business of Canton, he confines himself to the English and Spaniards, though this year he secured the two Danish ships, they having about 350,000 dollars each.

2nd Gouquoy is next in rank and is supposed to be rich, is high in the estimation and respect by the Chinese merchants and is in excellent credit. He is a timid old man, very cautious and circumspect in his actions. The active part of his business is chiefly kept up by Samquo, who appears to be his partner, or in some measures connected with him, he has a large share of the Bombay business, and has usually the business of the Danes. This year he secured four American ships, the Ontario and Hunter both of New York, the [name unclear] of Philadelphia, the Russell of Newport, and gave entire satisfaction to the supercargoes.

3rd Monquoy, an old man formerly of large business, but now on the decline, and largely indebted to the English and out of credit with the Chinese tea merchants. He secured two

American ships, the Pegou of Philadelphia and the Nancy of New York, but did not give entire satisfaction.

4th Piquoy, a young man and nephew to Youquoy, and brought up with him, he is very capable and correct in his business, of fair character, and in high estimation with the Chinese, as much as with the English. He has a brother with him to assist him. He has been engaged with the English and country ships, but is desirous of American business for which he is the most eligible agent at Canton; he secured the ship Confederacy, and executed my business to perfect satisfaction.

5th Youquoy, on the decline, out of credit, therefore to be avoided.

6th Chonquoy and brother, are two young men from Peking, of Tartar origin, they are of great professions, but of little credit, and not well spoken of by the Chinese.

7th Neuequoy, uncertain. Perhaps better than the two last.

8th Sonquoy, on the point of failure, and entirely out of credit, he secured the ship Lenetia capt Page of Providence, and the brig Sally of Boston from the North West Coast with furs, but gave great dissatisfaction to both

9th Monquoy, out of credit.

The following list includes all the 'Outside Merchants' as they are called, or Chinese unprivileged merchants and traders

1st Samqua silk merchant and man of fortune, considerably connected in business with old Gowquoy the Hong merchant; he is a fair dealer, and in business merits as much confidence as ought to be placed in any man, he is rich, and in the best credit among the Chinese.

He is the most suitable person to consult and employ in the purchase of Nankeens and teas, of the original tea and nankeen traders, from the country, and can now furnish silks of all sorts and better in quality than any of the other traders.

2nd Eshing also a silk merchant and manufacturer, dealing also in Nankeen and teas, is a fair dealer and entitled perhaps to an equal degree of confidence with Samqua, he is extremely well informed, acute and discerning, and is capable for agent for the purchase of Nankeen and teas as Samqua.

3rd Kingben, another silk merchant and manufacturer as well as general agent. Like the two former persons, but the acting man of the house. Possesses [great] candour and honesty, though of a more plausible exterior. He is capable of giving good information on any thing relating to the business of Canton and may be well to know, and to deal with, to a certain extent.

4th Youquoy, a reputable and honest China Street trader—the first of that class. He deals in silks and fancy matters retails by wholesales. He is a decent pleasant man, and well to know.

5th Sengshong: the most respectable China ware or porcelain dealer, he is very correct in business. His work is better than that of any other deal in Canton, and his prices are in proportion. For common work to cheap goods, he is not so suitable as some others.

6th Fouchang, the next best China ware trader, and very honest and fair dealer, and will sell perhaps for less profit than the former,

7th Houquuy, the best lacquer ware seller, and an honest man and a fair dealer.

The best means of selecting the most suitable Hong merchants for your purpose will be to make a list of those who compose the Hong merchants at the time of your arrival, as you may easily learn their names from the pilot, or other persons who will come on board of your ship at or before your arrival at Wampoa. As early as possible consult the opinions of different persons

as to their characters, situation and credit as merchants of each on the list and against such as are doubtful mark a negative, and when your doubtful list is confirmed by various concurrent opinions, strike out this name, and you will soon have your list reduced to 2, 3 or 4 at most that merit consideration, and by putting those that remain in comparison one with another, most persons, Chinamen and others will agree in saying that such a man is richer, is more respected, is in better credit than the others. Your judgment will in this way soon be brought to a point particularly when you learn what ships he has secured and had, and how he is spoken of by different descriptions of Chinamen, who are always ready to bestow praise where if they think it is merited and when addressed in a proper manner, will speak the truth on the other side as frankly as others, particularly in comparing one man with another.

The inquiry will always be necessary owing to the changes which occur, as much by the persons who go out as in circumstances of such as remain.

When in this manner you have decided on the most suitable person to consign yourself to, which you ought to do as soon as possible if as soon as the first day or the next morning after your arrival at Canton, the better, as the sooner you do it, the more greedy will they be after your business. Call on him with such a person as will give the greatest insight to your introductions, who will leave you together (for a China merchant never will speak on business in presence of a third person). Propose to him to secure your ship, and suggest that you are not yet ready to purchase your whole cargo, and are not decided on what goods to take, but that you have a good amount of dollars...

Source: Winterthur Library, "Sea Journal (1804)," Ref: Fol. 153.