

## EASTERN PEACE:

### SHA TAU KOK MARKET IN 1925

P H. HASE

#### Introduction

The aim of this article is to describe the old Sha Tau Kok\* Market and its economic life as it was in 1925 before the market moved across the frontier into the New Territories. Before doing so, however, a sketch of the earlier history of the market, and the effects on it of the new frontier are given, with a brief description of the roads and ferries which lay at the heart of the market's prosperity in the early years of this century.

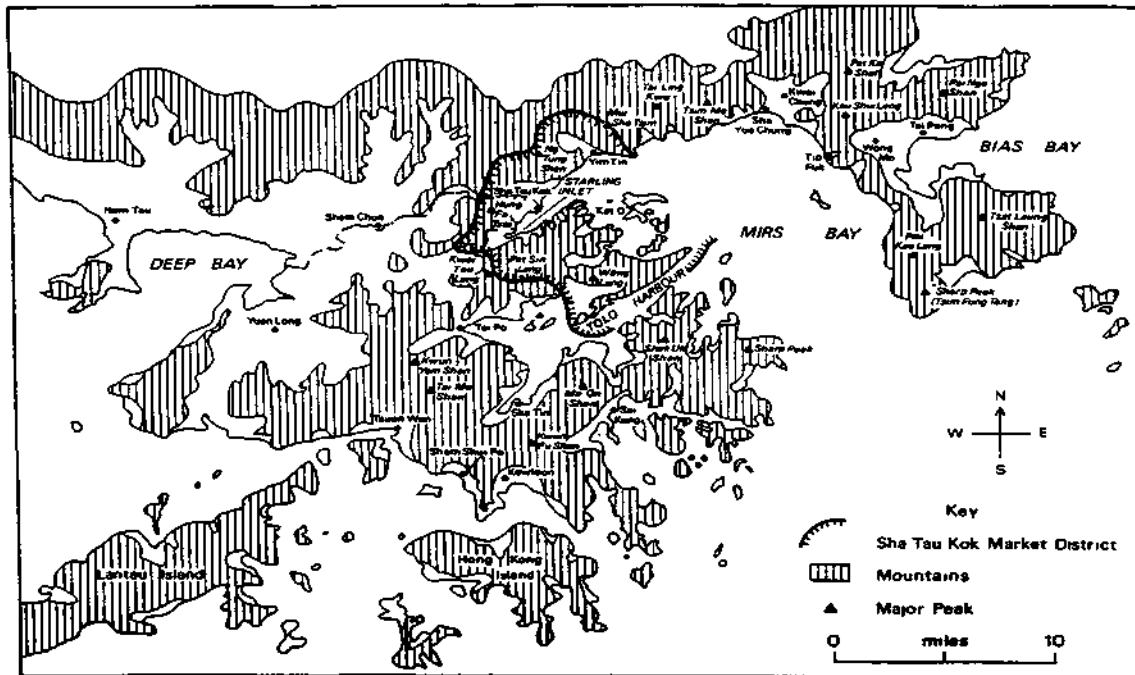
#### Sha Tau Kok before 1898

*Mirs Bay is a forbidding place.\* \* Its coast is almost uniformly mountainous. There is very little flat land: only patches here and there where one of the mountain streams reaches the sea. The mountains behind the coast are steep and high, reaching 3,000 feet in the Ng Tung Shan ( 梧桐山 ) at the north-west corner of the Bay, immediately behind Sha Tau Kok. Many support patches of forest. Tigers, deer, wild boar, and other wild life were common here until recent times.<sup>1</sup> The description of Hsin An County in the 1688 Gazetteer, 'The County is made up of many high mountains and lofty peaks, which rise up immediately from the shores of the deep sea,'<sup>2</sup> is particularly true of the Mirs Bay area*

Despite the forbidding nature of the Bay, however, the area attracted imperial attention from an early period. An imperial salt commission was active here from the tenth, or even the fifth century.<sup>3</sup> The imperial pearl monopoly, too, was active in the bay, probably from the eighth century.<sup>4</sup> During the Ming, however, imperial interest in the area waned. The pearl monopoly ended its local activities in 1374, as a consequence of the exhaustion of the beds, and growing concern in enlightened circles

\* In this article, placenames within Hong Kong are transliterated as in the *Gazetteer of Place Names in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories*, (Hong Kong Government, 1969) placenames in China are transliterated into Cantonese, using the same transliteration standards as in the *Gazetteer*, with the characters for the placename, and a pinyin transliteration, on first occurrence

<sup>1</sup>\* See Map 1



about the beds, and growing concern in enlightened circles about the cruelties implied by the *corvée*. By the end of the Ming, the north and east shores of the Bay were merely home to a few scattered, small, agricultural villages. The waning of imperial interest in the area led to an explosion of piracy.<sup>5</sup> This area had, by the late Ming, become a lightly populated and dangerous part of Hsin An County, insignificant, remote, and probably declining.<sup>6</sup>

The Coastal Evacuation of 1662-1668, the forcible removal of people living near the coast, to deny anti-Ch'ing remnants support, was a traumatic event. Many of the previous inhabitants died - possibly half. It seems likely that, when the remnants of the people returned in 1668-1669, they concentrated themselves in the better lands to the west, around Yuen Long and Sham Chun (Shenzhen, 深圳), and around Tai Po and Sha Tin at the head of Tolo Harbour, abandoning the declining Mui's Bay area. However, land taxes still had to be paid for this area. Lineages looked, therefore, for tenants or purchasers to take over these more marginal areas.<sup>7</sup>

The newcomers they found to repopulate the area were Hakkas from the north-east. All the present inhabitants of the northern and eastern parts of the Mui's Bay area are Hakka, and their clan traditions all speak of settlement in the area after 1668. A few villages claim to have been founded in the late seventeenth century, many in the eighteenth, and some only in the nineteenth, in every case by families who had moved into the area after 1668.

Some of the Hakka newcomers living in the north-west quadrant of Mui's Bay became, at least in village terms, wealthy during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Much of this wealth was poured into large reclamation projects. These aimed at increasing the arable land available in the area by filling in the mouths of the bays in front of the villages. These reclamation projects in turn brought yet more wealth to the area. The social status of the local Hakka rose steadily during this same period. In 1805 the Hakka were granted a quota of their own within the Hsin An County imperial examinations quota. Over a quarter of all the early Hakka examination successes from Hsin An County were from the north-west quadrant of Mui's Bay, and this should be seen as evidence of the wealth and self-confidence of the Hakka of that area in the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

## 150

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the Hakka villages of this area combined into a number of village self-defence and support alliance groups in the eighteenth century, and under the leadership of the wealthier villages, formed a district association in the early nineteenth, the Shap Yeuk (十約) or "Alliance of Ten" (so called from the ten or eleven village alliance groups of which it was formed). The Shap Yeuk's prime aim was local self-government. They sought, therefore, to remove from the area the political dominance of the older Punti clans from the west, which had been a feature of the area in the earlier period: this was successfully achieved in the early nineteenth century. The area had previously marketed at Sham Chun, which was a market dominated by the old Punti clans. The population of the Mirs Bay area, which had been very low in the early eighteenth century, had risen sharply, and, by the early nineteenth century, had reached the point where it could support a market of its own. The Shap Yeuk accordingly founded a market, probably in the period 1825-1835, at Sha Tau Kok, partly on reclaimed land. The successful foundation of this market was a clear public statement of the success of the Shap Yeuk in ridding themselves of the influence of the Punti clans of the Sham Chun area.

In the genealogy of the Chan clan of Nam Chung village it states that Chan Hip-tsun (陳協進) (1792-1864) of that clan was the leader in the market project: 'The foundation of Tung Wo Market was undertaken at his initiative. He got all the people of various Yeuk together, and secured unanimity.'<sup>9</sup>

Immediately west of the new town, various wealthy local villagers also joined forces to reclaim a 21 acre island of salt-pans, connected with the new town by tidal fords passable at low water. This reclamation may have been undertaken a little after the foundation of the market. Salt production remain an important part of the town's economy until the 1920s.<sup>10</sup>

In the early nineteenth century there were three temples in the area near the new town. One was the Tin Hau Temple at Am King (Anjing, 暗徑), which was the community temple of the Luk Heung (Luxiang, 六鄉), the area immediately east of the new town. This temple was of early Ch'ing date the latest.<sup>11</sup> Only half a mile from the new market was the Kwan Tai Temple at Shan Tsui, the community temple of the

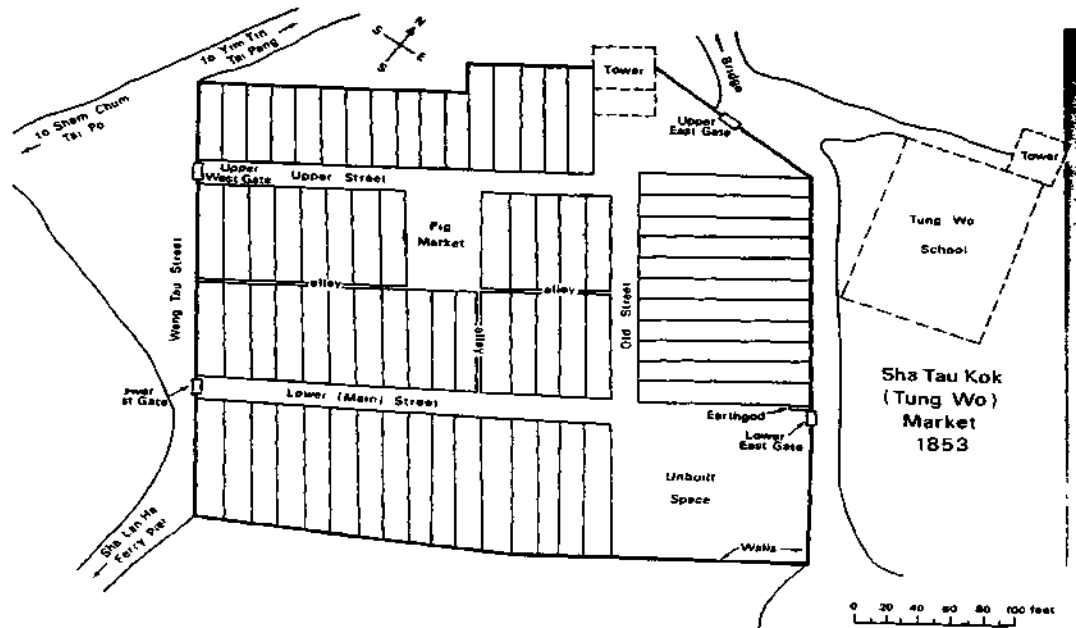
Sam Heung ( 鄉 ), the area immediately west of the new market. While there is no evidence as to the date of this temple, it is likely to be as old as the Am King temple.<sup>12</sup> The third temple was the Tin Hau Temple at Wu Shek Kok some miles west of the new town. Almost certainly, the district ferries left from the deep-water hard immediately in front of the temple, from at least Ming times to the 1830s.<sup>13</sup> This site is remote, with no houses or residences within a half mile, just the hill behind and the sea in front. The temple would, therefore, have provided essential shelter for people waiting for the ferry, as well as casting the protection of the Goddess over those embarking. There is no surviving dating evidence from this temple, but it is probably old.<sup>14</sup>

Founding a new market was a risky and expensive business, and it is not surprising that the villagers felt that the deities should be propitiated before work began. The Sam Heung villagers accordingly founded a large new Tin Hau temple at the seafront near the new market site, probably about 1815-1820. They also started a decennial Ta Tsui ( 打醮 ) at the new temple to placate any spirits who might be offended by the work on the reclamation and the new market.<sup>15</sup>

All markets in the area have temples, but the three older temples were too far away to serve the market. The new temple was probably designed to be the main market temple. As part of the foundation of the new town, the Shap Yeuk moved the ferry pier into it from Wu Shek Kok. It is unclear who owned the ferries before the 1840s, but certainly the Shap Yeuk was fully in control of them from that period at the latest.<sup>16</sup> It was clearly felt that the new ferry pier at the new town should, like the old one, be sanctified by the presence of the Goddess: note surprisingly, therefore, the new ferry pier was built on the foreshore immediately in front of the new temple.

The genealogy of the Wong clan of Shan Tsui village states that Wong Yin-tung ( 黃 賢 鳳 ) (1779-1867) of that clan managed the temple foundation project: "Throughout his life he was upright and firm he took the lead in the first construction of the Tin Hau Temple at Sha Tau Kok."<sup>17</sup> The Sam Heung villagers ran the temple through a trust, the Sam Wo Tong ( 三 和 堂 , "The Hall of Three at Peace")

A further, small Tin Hau Temple was found by the investors into the saltpan reclamation project, to assist in the protection of this area, which



Map 2: Sha Tau Kok (Tung Wo) Market, 1853

was dangerously exposed to storms behind low and flimsy buns. This little temple almost certainly dates from the original reclamation for the salt pans.

The ferry pier and the Tin Hau Temple were built on the foreshore, about 200 yards from the town proper. Chan Hip-tsun and the other elders of the Shap Yeuk had designed the town proper as an approximately square walled enclosure,<sup>18</sup> with two east-west streets, joined by a north-south street somewhat east of the centre of the town.<sup>19</sup> The town had four gates, two each to the east and the west. The most important was the Upper East Gate, which faced the fine three-span granite bridge built by the Shap Yeuk over the often violent waters of the Sha Tau Kok River.

The Shap Yeuk had built the walls and roads of their new market, but the shop units were built by investors from villages of the Shap Yeuk area willing to take them up. These investors then built over their lot, from the road back to the already completed wall.

Once the Shap Yeuk had succeeded in their political aims of freeing their district from the influence of outsiders, and had founded their market and its temple, they thereafter ran the district and market through the Council of the Shap Yeuk (the Tung Wo Kuk, 東和局, "The Council for Peace in the East"<sup>19</sup>). The day-to-day management of the market was handled by a Headman, appointed by the Tung Wo Kuk. He adjudicated minor disputes, and had at his disposal certain trust funds, and the income from the ferry tender, and from rent of the town weigh-beam. He let tenders to sweep the streets (the street-sweeper was expected to reimburse himself from the sale of the wastes as fertiliser), and supervised the Town Watch, recruited from youngsters of the surrounding villages, whose job was to maintain order, especially at night. The Council of the Shap Yeuk, the Headman, and the Town Watch, are all mentioned by the Basel missionaries in the 1850s, and there can be no doubt that the management structure of the town and district was in place from the first foundation of the town.<sup>20</sup>

The market founded by the Shap Yeuk was called by them Tung Wo Market, 東和墟, "Eastern Peace Market", but it was more usually

<sup>18</sup> See Map 2, taken from a map of 1853 prepared by the Basel missionaries.

## 154

called Sha Tau Kok, (沙頭角, "Sand-dune Point") from its location amidst the sand-dunes.<sup>21</sup> The market was quickly successful. In 1849 it was said by a missionary to be 'bustling with business', and by 1853 it had 50 shops operating.<sup>22</sup>

In 1853, perhaps 20 years after the market's foundation, there were still two areas within the walls not yet developed - "pig market" and an area just inside the Lower East Gate - and there had been no development outside the walls. Nonetheless, with 50 established shops, the town was clearly already flourishing. In 1854, however, the development of the town suffered a rude shock, when irregular troops claiming to be Taipings came close enough to the town for cannon-fire to be heard. The town seems to have been temporarily almost deserted in the face of this threat<sup>23</sup>

After 1854, however, the town seems to have entered a period of steadily increasing prosperity. Some when soon after 1854 further defences, in the form of a tall gun-tower, were added to the Upper East Gate, to cover the bridge. Guns were placed there, on the top floor.

Probably at about the same time as the building of the gun-tower, the Shap Yeuk built a large and prestigious school, outside the Upper East Gate. This school consisted of two courtyards, one behind the other, and must always have required several teachers, as was certainly the case in the 1920s. The aim of the Shap Yeuk elders in founding this school was to ensure that the district as a whole had at least one high standard school, where education at a higher level than could be provided in the individual village schools could be had. That the school was a district school was shown by its name: the Tung Wo School. To ensure that boys from throughout the district could study there, it had cocklofts to allow boys to board at need. The foundation of the school also raised the prestige of the Shap Yeuk.<sup>24</sup>

At the back of the school a third courtyard contained a new Man Mo Temple, where the elders of the Shap Yeuk would worship twice a year. The side-hall of this temple to the one side was a "Hero Shrine" where the spirits of certain unclaimed dead, who had been buried by the Shap Yeuk in a communal grave, were worshipped.<sup>25</sup> The side-hall to the other side was the Shap Yeuk Meeting Hall and office. The elders met here to adjudicate disputes, and to hold formal meetings: a meeting of 'several hundred' elders is recorded here in 1899.<sup>26</sup> A second gun-tower was added



to the front of the school building, to double the defences of the bridge, probably some when in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

The building of the gun-towers, the school, the Man Mo Temple and Meeting Hall, and the communal grave, is evidence for the prosperity and vitality of the town, and the village society in which it was set, in the later nineteenth century. By 1904, the market had about doubled in size, and in the number of shops operating, from its situation fifty years earlier. From its foundation in 1830-1835, in fact, the prosperity of the town seems to have increased steadily until 1898, with the only check being the very temporary set-back of the Taping attack

### **The Market and the New Frontier**

The leasing of the New Territories to Great Britain in 1898 was traumatic for the villagers of the Sha Tau Kok area. The line originally proposed for the new frontier would have run along the Sha Tau Kok River from source to sea. This would have put two of the eleven village alliance areas of the Shap Yeuk into China, the market and the other village alliance areas into the New Territories. This was unacceptable to the Chinese authorities, who were unwilling to allow so significant a place as Sha Tau Kok to become part of the area administered by Britain. Eventually it was agreed that the frontier should run along the Sha Tau Kok to become part of the area administered by Britain. Eventually it was agreed that the frontier should run along the Sha Tau Kok River from the source down to the Sha Tau Kok bridge, and then be diverted from the bridge down the centre of the bridge access road to the sluice at Yim Liu Ha, then in a straight line to the sea, and thence east along the high-water mark to the mouth of Mui Bay. \* This line was drawn very close to the northern and western edges of the market. As such it isolated the market from the rest of Chinese territory - its only access was either over the bridge, which was half in Hong Kong, or through Hong Kong territory, or by sea through Hong Kong waters

In the late nineteenth century, China controlled imports and exports through customs regulations, enforced by the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service. By the drawing of the frontier where it eventually was, the normal, day-to-day trade of Sha Tau Kok market suddenly found itself

---

\* See Map 4.

## 156

becoming “import” or “export”, and subject to all these controls.

Villagers from Wo Hang or Nam Chung buying a new plough animal, or seed-pig, were “exporting live animals”; if they bought a new plough, or reaping knife, they were “exporting ironwork”; if they took cloth to market to be made into a pair of trousers, or to be dyed, then they were “importing cloth” - duty in all these cases had to be paid. Traditionally, sugar was grown in this area, carried as cane to Sham Chun, pressed and refined there, and then carried back for sale in the New Territories markets. This now became “importing sugar” in the first instance, and “exporting sugar” in the second.<sup>28</sup> In the 1930s, the Chinese Government imposed a heavy import duty on fish, causing the very important carrying trade in fish from Sha Tau Kok to Sham Chun to face the same problems.<sup>29</sup>

As soon as the new frontier was established, the Kowloon Customs (the local division of the Imperial Maritime Customs) moved to control it. The Kowloon Customs was headquartered in Hong Kong, but established its new operational headquarters at Sham Chun. Below this, work was initially conducted through three Divisions - Duty Collection, Border Patrol, and Sea Patrol. The Border Patrol duties were conducted from Patrol Stations, which were arranged in Districts, with a Patrol District Headquarters in each District. Duty was collected at only a relatively few Duty Stations, which were the only places where dutiable imports and exports could legally be handled. The Kowloon Customs also had half a dozen steam launches as gun-boats: each had a Sea Patrol District to control, centred on a Sea Patrol District Headquarters.

Sha Tau Kok was chosen as the Patrol District Headquarters for the Patrol District running from Lin Ma Hang to Siu Mui Sha (Xiaomeisha, 小梅沙), with sub-stations at Yim Tin (Yantian, 鹽田) and Chan Hang (Chenkeng, 陳坑). It was the Duty Station for the north-west quadrant of Mus Bay. It was also the Sea Patrol District Headquarters for the Mirs Bay Sea Patrol District. It was one of the centres of the Mounted Horse Patrols which, from 1932, patrolled the area behind the zone covered by the foot patrols of the Border Patrol staff. After 1934 it was one of the centres of the new Automobile Patrol, which patrolled the newly completed motor road along the frontier. The Customs Station at Sha Tau Kok was headed by an expatriate Assistant Superintendent of Customs. For most of the time, there were between 70 and 100 customs staff working in Sha Tau Kok.<sup>30</sup>

The villagers in the central part of the northern New Territories, accustomed to marketing at Sham Chun, were able to make do after 1989. They had the old satellite market of Shek Wu Hui (Sheung Shui) within British territory; as soon as the new frontier came into effect, Sheung Shui saw its business boom - it quickly replaced Sham Chun as the primary market for this area. At Sha Tau Kok the population within British territory accustomed to shop at Sha Tau Kok had no alternative but to continue to do so. Problems abounded. Village memories of the Customs are uniformly bad

[The Customs officials] caused the goods of the merchants to be seized unless bribes were paid. They demanded a payment of 18 bushels of rice from each merchant. The villagers from the New Territories would come to the market to have their cloth dyed. Even if the amount of cloth was very small, 25 or 210 would be charged as a licence fee - if it was not paid, the goods would be seized and the villagers beaten. As for the merchants, if they sold a pig, or if a seed-pig was bought for rearing in the villages, when they went to the Customs they would have to pay 240 per *tan* as registration fee for the pig. At festivals, the village ladies would come to the market to buy oil or local sugar in small quantities. They would have to pay 50 or 60, or even 120 or 130 cash [25 - 213] as fee before they could get an export licence. For cattle, for every cow crossing the frontier - in either direction - for farm work, a Certificate had to be issued, at 20 Haikwan, and, if the Certificate was lost, there was heavy punishment, and a replacement had to be taken out, to avoid confiscation of the cow.<sup>31</sup> Further, at the harvest, if the crop was carried across the frontier, you had to pay what was demanded - it is said that a percentage of the crop was taken. The Customs swallowed money whatever purchases were made. These sorts of evil practices caused the villagers to hate the Customs to the very pit of their stomachs.<sup>32</sup>

It is unlikely that the Customs were as corrupt as they are often portrayed by the villagers. The payments complained of were all reasonable, if it was accepted that the transactions were "imports" or "exports". The villagers could never see that their day-to-day marketing should be so regarded - they were only doing what their ancestors had always done.

The elders of the Shap Yeuk petitioned the District Magistrate on 19 April 1899, begging that the lease of the New Territories be not proceeded with. Their concern was, essentially, that if it did proceed, then they would be faced with "excessive taxation", especially Harbour Dues and Marine Fees, given that the waters off Sha Tau Kok would become Hong

Kong waters. This petition was probably written because of fears as to the practical problems they would face if they lived in British territory, and their market was in Chinese territory.<sup>33</sup> In the early years after the lease grievances over the Customs remained at high heat. In the winter of 1906, the villagers from the New Territories went on strike, and refused to go to market. In 1907 there was a full-scale riot, triggered by a Customs official beating a villager for not paying duty. Later that same year, the elders of the Shap Yeuk petitioned to the authorities at Canton, begging that the Customs officials at Sha Tau Kok be restrained.<sup>34</sup> Later, relations with the Customs improved a little, but the duty demanded from villagers remained a major irritant and grievance throughout the period from 1899 to 1951.

Another irritant, and brake on economic development, was the political chaos in the border area of China. As can be seen from the Calendar of Borden Disturbances at Appendix 1, political trouble in this area began even before the Revolution of 1911. An abortive rebellion in the Wai Chau (Huizhou, 惠州) area in 1900 saw the Ch'ing Government lose control of the wild lands east of Yim Tin. A second abortive rebellion was centred in these hills, at Sam Chau Tin (Sanzhoutian, 三州田), in 1904-1905.

A second period of disturbance came after the Revolution, during the years 1911-1928, when the area immediately north of the frontier was the plaything of various competing political groups and would-be warlords, passing from one to the other week by week - 'In those days, when we went to market, the soldiers would be wearing yellow, but the next week, they would be wearing brown'.<sup>35</sup> This period was marked by large-scale banditry, piracy, and general turmoil. With the large garrison of Customs and military personnel at Sha Tau Kok, bandits never threatened the town itself, but the Yim Tin Customs post was sacked by bandits in 1913 and (three times) in 1916, Nam O (Nanao, 南澳) Customs post, at the entrance to Mirs Bay, was sacked in 1913 and 1914, Chan Hang in 1915, and, a little east of Chan Hang, Kai Chung (Xichong, 葵涌) Customs post was sacked in 1916 and 1917. The Customs post at Sha Yue Chung (Shayuchong, 沙魚涌) was sacked in 1919 and 1920, while the Sha Yue Chung Ferry (the lifeline of the market to the east) was captured by pirates in both 1921 and twice in 1922. For nearly one and a half years in 1918-1919, indeed, all the Customs Stations in Mirs Bay east of Yim Tin were forced to close, so lawless had the area become. The irregular soldiers

posted in the market by various warlords and factions had an extremely bad reputation. They were not locals (they were mostly Mandarin speakers), indulged in looting the shops in the market, and were generally believed to be behind some at least of the bandit raids. The District Officer, New Territories, specifically accused Chinese irregular soldiers of mounting eight cross-border armed bandit raids in 1924.<sup>36</sup> The Kuomintang forces eventually secured the area in 1925-1926, but the irregulars were only replaced by regular soldiers in 1928, when the irregulars at Sha Tau Kok were punished for some of their misdeeds.

The period of post-Revolutionary chaos along the border came to a peak in 1925, when the Kuomintang finally secured Sha Tau Kok, but immediately used it as a base for the General Strike boycott against Hong Kong. The 1925 Boycott caused serious problems for the villagers in the Sha Tau Kok area. If they loathed the Customs for insisting that their daily marketing was dutiable, they were even less enamoured of the view that their every-day shopping constituted "trading with the enemy", which should be stopped by whatever terrorising tactics could be brought to bear. The strikers seem to have taken over the Customs Station in Sha Tau Kok,<sup>37</sup> and it is clear that local trade, and with it the villagers of the area, suffered greatly.<sup>38</sup>

A third period of disturbance on the frontier was 1928-1937, in every year of which, except one, smuggling was noted as being a greater problem than in the previous year. During this period, further rebellions (by Communist-inspired guerrillas) in the area east of Yim Tin caused problems, which were then exacerbated with the attacks on the area by the Japanese from 1938.<sup>39</sup> The closure of the Mirs Bay Customs stations in 1938 marks the date when the Kuomintang Government finally lost control of the area - the Customs reopened the Sha Yue Chung station in 1939, but only following an "agreement" with the guerrillas, who were by then the only effective government there.<sup>40</sup> Although the western, Yuen Long, area of the frontier was the worst smuggling centre, major battles with smugglers/privateers took place in waters close to Sha Tau Kok in 1928, 1932, 1935, and 1939, and a major battle with smugglers in the Ta Kwu Ling area in 1932. Kai Chung Customs post was sacked by bandits - presumably a smuggler gang - in 1932 as well. From about 1937 smuggling of strategic goods to Sha Yue Chung, for the guerrilla rebels, and later of goods to be slipped through the Japanese lines, became a major business at Sha Tau Kok - this trade was centre on the Sha Yue

## 160

Chung Ferry. Finally, the Japanese attacked Sha Tau Kok in 1938, 1939, and 1940, before taking it over late in 1940.<sup>41</sup>

These periods of disturbance caused serious problems to the Sha Tau Kok villagers. Their sole desire was to sell their vegetables and firewood, and buy their salt and household goods, but this was, year after year, interfered with by political problems. Sha Tau Kok was rarely - except during the Boycott - the *centre* of the disturbances, but it was almost always "in the front line", full of intrigue, nervous military, and difficulties. A market shop-owner in Sha Tau Kok was executed by the military in about 1935, in an event still a talking point in the villages, probably for being involved with the rebels to the east.<sup>42</sup> An underground Communist cell was established in the 1930s in the market, centred on one of the teachers in the Tung Wo School, with the job of encouraging smuggling of strategic goods to Sha Yue Chung and the guerrillas, and of indoctrinating suitable youngsters, to prepare for an extension of rebel activity to the immediate Sha Tau Kok area.<sup>43</sup>

The elders of the Shap Yeuk continued to function throughout this troubled period as the managers of the market at Sha Tau Kok, but less effectively than before. The strong military presence in the town, the close Government interest in it, and the elders' inability to control the Customs, greatly weakened the Shap Yeuk as the effective local administration. The guns which had been placed by the Shap Yeuk in the gun-towers they had built to guard the bridge were confiscated very soon after the 1911 revolution, and the eastern gun-tower, at the front of the Tung Wo School, was taken over as the military barracks at about the same time. The warlord and Kuomintang administrations were usually unwilling to discuss problems with the local elders - noticeably so compared with the District Officer in the New Territories - and so the elders and their Council declined to having responsibility, effectively, only for those things the officials could not be bothered to interfere with, especially the running of the market night-watch and cleaning services.

By 1910, the elders were already talking of moving the market over the frontier into the New Territories, with its better security, better villager-administration relationships, and absence of Customs problems.<sup>44</sup> Nothing, however, was done until 1925, when the chaos of the Boycott started to push the market across the frontier. Shops began to be built on the New Territories side of the border street in 1925, and this process

continued without break until 1932, when the street was completely lined with shops on the New Territories side. The border street, however, could not provide sufficient space for all the shops of the market. In 1931, a reclamation project began just west of the town, along the frontier, to allow a second border street to be built. This was completed, and the shops on San Lau Street built, in 1933-1934. This project included a new pier and fish market, and allowed the fish wholesalers in the market to cross over into the New Territories as well.<sup>45</sup> By 1935 only a few shops were left operating in the old market in Chinese territory, mostly those (like the pawnshop, the boatyard, and the opium divan) which could not move because of physical or legal restraints. A terrible typhoon and storm-surge on 2nd September 1937 destroyed most of what was left of the old market: it never recovered.<sup>46</sup>

The effect on the market of the new frontier was not, however, entirely negative. In 1899 it is unlikely that the town housed more than about 500 people: the 100 Customs staff, 30 or so soldiers, and 25 or so Hong Kong Police who became stationed there represented a significant increase in the town's population. The local market for fuel, vegetables, and daily necessities grew sharply, bringing benefits to both the market shopkeepers and to the villagers. Uniforms required repair, bringing work to tailors and cobblers. Even blacksmiths and carpenters found increased work opportunities. The Customs steam-launch brought new, engineering skills to the town, and provided a new market in coal. Shortly after the Customs steam-launch was domiciled in the town the Sha Yue Chung Ferry took advantage of the presence of these new skills and converted to a steam vessel - one of the earliest regular steam ferries in the New Territories area.

Other modern developments reached Sha Tau Kok early because of the needs of the frontier. Thus, the telegraph line reached the town in 1899, and the telephone in 1900. Electric light was provided to the town in 1933. While the construction of the railway was predominantly due to economic factors, again the needs of the frontier were among the reasons for this early extension of modern facilities to the town.<sup>47</sup>

As in most garrison towns, however, it was the entertainment industry which most benefitted from the new frontier. Very soon after the new frontier was established, prostitutes from Hong Kong saw the opportunities, and set up house in the market. From the present-day elders' recollections

of what they were told by their fathers, there had been no prostitutes here before 1898. The prostitutes' clients were mostly soldiers and Customs staff - the prostitutes spoke Cantonese, not the Hakka spoken by all the locals. A gambling house (opened in 1904), and an opium divan came at about the same time as the prostitutes - these served people from Hong Kong as well as the garrison. Most New Territories towns had at most one or two winemakers; Sha Tau Kok in the 1920s had four at least, of which one was solely in the wine trade, unlike most local distillers, who combined this business with a general grocery. Similarly, Sha Tau Kok's three restaurants (including a cold drink and coffee shop), two tobacco dealers, and two cakeshops, is more than is found in most of the local towns at this period. The three or four guesthouse in Sha Tau Kok were also more than usually found - when military officers of rank came to Sha Tau Kok on inspection, they did not share the barracks with their men, but stayed in the private rooms in the questhouses, so here, too, the presence of the garrison probably led to an economic expansion. Some of these service industries had been in Sha Tau Kok before 1898. There had certainly been a guesthouse here in the 1850s, and a noodle shop in the 1880s.<sup>48</sup> It is unlikely that there were prostitutes, or a full-time gambling house or opium divan there then, although gambling and opium smoking certainly took place in the town at that date.<sup>49</sup> The early presence of some service industries in the town before 1898 was a consequence of traffic on the Sha Yue Chung Ferry, but it is reasonable to see the establishment of the new frontier as having led to an economic growth in the town in the years following 1898. The smuggling industry also produced considerable profit, especially during the 1930s.

The new frontier, therefore, caused many problems. To the villagers, the need to pay duty on day-to-day purchases far outweighed any advantages gained from having a larger population to sell things to. For the shopkeepers, the economic advantages were similarly more than offset by the prevailing political chaos and uncertainty. It is not surprising that the main effect of the exclusion of Sha Tau Kok Market from the New Territories in 1898 was to force a re-location of the market over the frontier into the New Territories a generation later.

### **Roads and Ferries: Sha Tau Kok and its Hinterland**

Sha Tau Kok stood at a nodal point in the local road system, and it was this factor which brought about the town's prosperity in the century after





its foundation. There important roads used to meet near here. The most important was the main east-west road in the county, which connected the county city, Nam Tau (Nantou, 南頭), with the Deputy Magistrate's city of Tai Pang (Dapeng, 大鵬), via the important market of Sham Chun. \* Because of the greater desirability and comfort of water-borne traffic, the section of this road along the north shore of Mirs Bay was not much used. Instead, much of the traffic went by a ferry that ran parallel with the shore, from Sha Tau Kok to Sha Yue Chung.

At Wo Hang Au, a few miles west of Sha Tau Kok, the road was joined by another important east-west route. This was the road from Yuen Long to Sha Tau Kok via Tai Po.

The third route was the main road from Kowloon to the north-east. This road carried the traffic from Kowloon to Wai Chau. This road crossed Sha Tin Pass to reach the coast of Tolo Harbour at Yuen Chau Tsai. A ferry carried the traffic from Yuen Chau Tsai across Tolo Harbour to Ang Chung (Chung Mei, near Bride's Pool). From Ang Chung, the road climbed steeply past Bride's Pool and Ah Ma Wat, and then down to the shores of Starling Inlet at Kuk Po. Another ferry then took the traffic across Starling Inlet to Sha Tau Kok. There was also a road which ran from Ang Chung through Luk Keng and Nam Chung, to join the Nam Tau and Yuen Long roads at Shek Chung Au, thus avoiding the second ferry. From Sha Tau Kok the Wai Chau road crossed the shoulders of Ng Tung Shan, and so down to Wang Kong (Henggang, 橫岡), and thence to Wai Chau. A branch of this road ran from Sha Tau Kok to Po Kat (Buji, 布吉). This Kowloon to Wai Chau road was more important than might be expected - the long ferry sectors made it more comfortable than the land-based alternatives. The Basel missionaries regularly used it when travelling between Hong Kong and Po Kat, for instance.<sup>50</sup>

This system of roads and ferries was in existence from the Ming at the latest.<sup>51</sup> It will be noticed that the roads do not cross at Sha Tau Kok. Sha Tau Kok stands, however, in the centre of the few miles of road where all the roads run together for a short distance. The site of the market, therefore, was a good one commercially.

---

\* See Map 3.

The road and ferry junction in this area attracted attention from the military authorities from an early date. While the Salt Commission and the Pearl Monopoly were active in Mirs Bay law and order were probably maintained by the special salt and pearl troops. After these were withdrawn, a military post was established at Shek Chung Au, with a watchtower nearby. This was close to the Wu Shek Kok ferry pier, and near to the road junction at Wo Hang Au. Other troops were established at Yim Tin. In various formulations and strengths, this military position remained at Shek Chung Au for several hundred years, until the mid-nineteenth century - eloquent testimony to the continuing importance of this traffic node.<sup>52</sup>

Sha Tau Kok's position in the road system of the area gave it two economic advantages. The first was the Sha Yue Chung Ferry. There was only one a day in the early twentieth century, and this can safely be assumed to have been the case earlier as well. Many travellers, therefore, would be obliged to spend the night in Sha Tau Kok, or at least several hours, waiting for the ferry, and, if the weather was bad, these enforced waits could stretch out to several days. There was, as a result, plenty of opportunity for merchants in the town to profit from servicing travellers held up there. As noted already, in the 1920s Sha Tau Kok had more guesthouses, restaurants, and entertainment facilities than most towns in the area, and although most of those facilities were new, servicing the new frontier garrison and Customs staff, some at least were certainly a feature of the town from an earlier period.

The other great economic advantage was the geographical location of Sha Tau Kok in relation to Sham Chun. Sham Chun was at the head of navigation on the Sham Chun River, and was a busy port for the small junks that came up the river from Deep Bay. Sham Chun was, therefore, well located as far as water-borne traffic from the west went. But Sham Chun had no water route to the east, to Mirs Bay. By sea from Sham Chun to Sha Tau Kok is a good hundred miles: by land, barely seven. There were three important commodities not available in the Deep Bay area which could be had from the Mirs Bay area - rice, some sorts of quality fresh fish, and salt. Sha Tau Kok was, in effect, the port of Sham Chun to the east, where these commodities in particular were landed, and then carried by coolies over the Miu Keng pass to Sham Chun.

Mirs Bay was usually - despite occasional famines - a rice surplus area. The Sham Chun and Deep Bay area was a rice shortage area, even

## 166

in good years, like so much of the more heavily populated parts of Kwangtung. In the nineteenth century the Canton and Pearl River areas made up their shortfalls in rice, to a large extent, by imports from outside Kwangtung, but the Sham Chun area was not well placed, and had no deep-water harbours capable of taking ships larger than small junks, and so was not able to use imported rice to the same degree as those more metropolitan areas. For Sham Chun, rice carried from Sha Tau Kok was a matter of life and death. The anti-Customs extract printed above specifically notes problems when 'at the harvest ... the crop was carried across the frontier': this was a routine local activity. Salt was less critical, but still important. Most of the salt produced at Sha Tau Kok was carried to Sham Chun for sale, and through Sham Chun to the other significant markets between Sham Chun and the East River. Fresh fish were a luxury. There were plenty of fish in the Deep Bay area, but that bay is shallow and muddy - poor for those species which prefer clean, deep water with a rocky bottom, like garoupas and coral fish. Mirs Bay is deep and full of rocks and coral, its waters are clear and fast moving, and full of high quality fish. These fish, landed at Sha Tau Kok at first light, could be at Sham Chun by nine or ten in the morning, still fresh. A similar carrying trade in fresh fish linked Sha Tau Kok with the markets at Po Kat and Wang Kong.

Most of the fishing ports in the Hong Kong area dealt primarily in dried fish, landed and dried at the port, and then carried inland to be sold at those inland markets far from the sea. Sha Tau Kok was unusual in having a fish trade predominantly in fresh fish, although, of course, some fish were dried there as well. This double trade, in fresh and dried fish, was already established by 1853, as the Basel missionaries make clear:

'A number of people make a sparse livelihood from fishing. They either sell the fish immediately, or dry them first in the sun, and then salt them, which is a method of preserving them for a longer time, and then sell them as salt fish.'<sup>53</sup>

This trade in rice, salt, and fish carried by coolies to the bigger market seven miles away was what made Sha Tau Kok prosperous. It was a surprisingly large trade - about 200-250 tons a month, rising to 400 tons in peak periods, were carried from Sha Tau Kok to Sham Chun in the early twentieth century, while total traffic on the Sham Chun road averaged 20,000 travellers and more a month, and double that at peak periods.<sup>54</sup>

There is some evidence of the traffic on the other routes out of Sha Tau Kok to the west in the same period. In 1910 22,000 persons "carrying goods" crossed the Shek Chung Au pass each month, carrying about 880 tons of goods, with probably a further 50,000 - 55,000 crossing the pass without carrying goods. This pass was clearly a major nodal point. With about 250 travellers crossing it every day - one every three minutes, including a laden coolie every ten minutes - it must have been a very busy road indeed, with, at peak periods, an almost non-stop flow of travellers. There were good reasons for the Ming and Ch'ing military post to be placed here.

Of these 75,000 travellers, about a third went on to cross the Miu Keng Pass for Sham Chun, as noted above. A further 40% went to, or came from, destinations along the Yuen Long road - probably mostly to the villages nearest to Sha Tau Kok, who marketed there. A further sixth travelled to and from the villages south-west of Sha Tau Kok, in the Nam Chung-Luk Keng area, including some who continued on to Kowloon. The remainder travelled only as far as the villages between the Shek Chung Au and Wo Hang Au passes.

In 1904 a daily total of 600 travellers crossed the Sha Tin Pass between Sha Tin and Kowloon, of which nearly half were "carrying goods" (mostly fresh fish from Sha Tin to Kowloon). Of this total perhaps 75-100 went on to Sha Tau Kok via Ang Chung and Kuk Po, including perhaps 25 carrying goods - this route may have seen a monthly total of as many as 3,000 travellers carrying up to 35 tons of goods.

While none of these statistics was as well gathered as would be expected today, they can be used to give an impression of the size of local trade in the early twentieth century. The traffic they suggest (75,000 persons, and nearly 900 tons of goods) as entering Sha Tau Kok from the south and west is very substantial. Probably a half again as many travellers entered Sha Tau Kok from the north and east, from where statistics are not available, and probably as much again in goods carried. In total, Sha Tau Kok was probably visited by up to 120,000 travellers a month (most of these travellers, of course, entered Sha Tau Kok, only to leave it again a few hours later) and handled some 1,850 tons of goods<sup>55</sup>

These ancient roads and ferries remained the sole arteries of local trade until 1898. The drawing of the new frontier between Hong Kong and

## 168

China through the centre of the area caused some of the routes to reduce in importance, and made others more important, reflecting the new political realities. From the late 1920s, and especially from the 1930s, the new motor roads and other new routes, which ran on very different lines from the old roads, also caused major changes to traffic flow in the area. After about 1925, the old carrying trade to Sham Chun rapidly declined away to almost nothing, and the market at Sha Tau Kok began to decline in importance as a result. In 1926, a new ferry to Sha Yue Chung, direct from the mainline railway station at Tai Po Kau, was introduced, which immediately took a great deal of the traffic away from the Sha Tau Kok to Sha Yue Chung ferry.<sup>56</sup> After 1949, when the border was effectively closed to local traffic, Sha Tau Kok became far less important as a traffic nodal point. Nonetheless, from the establishment of the market at Sha Tau Kok down to about 1925, the prosperity of the town rose from its location at the junction of the district's land and sea traffic routes.

### Sha Tau Kok Market in 1925

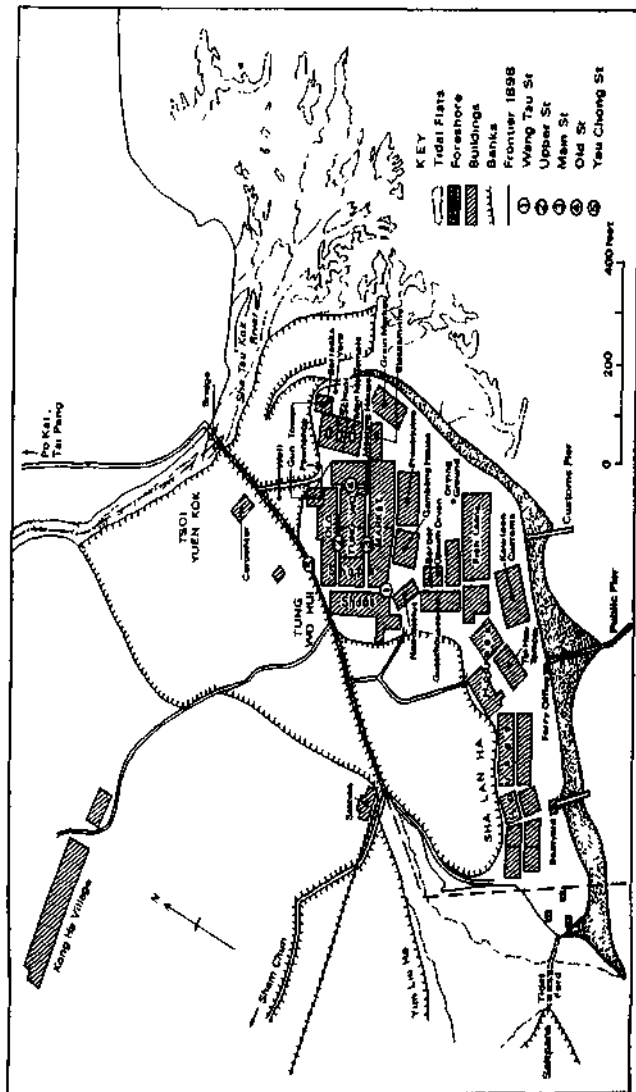
#### *Topography*

The aim of this section is to outline what the market was like in 1925, about a hundred years after it was first founded, on the eve of the move of the market across the frontier. It is drawn principally from the oral testimony of village elders who can remember the old market.<sup>57</sup> This oral testimony is supplemented, in particular, by the 1924 aerial photograph, which forms the basis of Map 4.

In 1925, the market consisted essentially of four streets. These were the three streets of the original market - Upper Street (上街), Lower, or Main Street (下街, 正大街), and Old Street (老街) - together with Wang Tau Street (橫頭街). \* In 1853, this last had been an open track leading past the western edge of the market, and running down to the Ferry Pier. By 1925 it had become lined with shops on both sides, all the way to the seafront. At some stage, the three or four shops at the western ends of Upper and Lower Streets had been demolished and rebuilt facing into Wang Tau Street. This gave them a far shorter depth of building lot - only about 45 feet instead of the 65 or more of most shops in 1853. On these shorter lots, two or three storey shop-houses had been built, with a

---

\* See Map 4



Map 4: Sha Tau Kok 1925

shop on the ground floor, and a residential unit above, often with a cockloft above that, and a tiny yard at the back, backing onto an alley which separated the rebuilt shops from the rest of Upper and Lower Streets, where the shops remained as before, facing onto those streets. The shops on the western side of Wang Tau Street were also built as shop-houses. There were about 40 shop-houses in this upper part of Wang Tau Street in 1925. Most of the other shops in Upper and Lower Streets had also been rebuilt as shop-houses by 1925.

In 1853, the Basel missionaries had found all the shops in the town single-storey structures, usually consisting of two buildings separated by a courtyard, and often with a yard at the back. These premises functioned as shops only, but not as permanent family residences. At that date, while the shop-owner and his staff usually slept in the shop in pallets in the shop cocklofts, their families remained at home in the ancestral village.<sup>58</sup> By 1925, however, only the shops in the less-frequented parts of town remained as single-storey buildings, elsewhere they had been replaced by shop-houses. This move away from single storey units to shop-houses seems to have been a frequent development in the region in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: after 1898, descriptions of New Territories market towns normally refer to shop-houses in the main shopping areas, and single-storey structures elsewhere in the towns.

This redevelopment of the shops at the western ends of Upper and Lower Streets as shop-houses facing into Wang Tau Street led to the removal of the old Upper and Lower Gates. The East Gates, however, especially the Upper East Gate, remained.

It is likely that this move of the economic centre of the market, from Lower (Main) Street to Wang Tau Street had begun before 1898. At least three of the shops recorded on the 1894 tablet recording donations to the rebuilding of the temple at Shan Tsui<sup>59</sup> were, in 1925, in the upper section of Wang Tau Street between Upper and Lower Streets. Almost certainly they did not all move between 1898 and 1925 from sites within the walls to sites outside - the most likely scenario is that they were already on their 1925 sites in 1894, and that, therefore, the move towards Wang Tau Street had begun somewhen between 1853 and 1894, and therefore arose from the steady increase in the town's prosperity in the later nineteenth century, and was thus not a response to the changes in the town's economic fortunes following the marking out of the new frontier in 1898.



However, the move towards Wang Tau Street had only led to building on the area immediately west of the old walled market by 1898. When the gambling house was established in Sha Tau Kok (about 1904), it found the area immediately south of the walls empty and ready for development. This area was quickly built over - a row of houses for prostitutes being built to the east, connected by a new alleyway through the walls with Lower Street, and the gambling house nearby to the west, closer to Wang Tau Street, was a long wooden building, set awkwardly at an angle to the street, which was used as a restaurant serving noodles (especially dog-meat noodles, for which Sha Tau Kok was famous). Between the noodle restaurant and the gambling house Wang Tau Street formed a small irregular triangular open space

None of the elders claims to know anything of what the prostitutes' house were like inside, except to say that it was generally believed that the prostitutes also offered opium to their customers. The prostitutes' houses were small, however, and probably consisted of two main rooms only: a front room where guests could take opium, and a bed-chamber.

More is remembered about the gambling houses. It was approximately square - about 40 feet by 50 - and two-storeyed. The western part of the ground floor was one big square room, of about 40 feet square. This had doors leading directly to the street on the north (leading to the street of the prostitutes' houses), west (leading to Wang Tau Street), and south (leading to the guesthouses and Customs Station). Of these, the west door was the main one. This ground floor square room was the main gambling hall. It contained four tables, where the game offered was Po Tau (寶斗), which consisted of the manipulation of small, nested brass boxes.<sup>60</sup> This game was very popular, and the room was often crowded. The eastern side of the ground floor comprises stores, service rooms, and the staircase up to the second floor. This contained (on the east) the residence of the manager, and, on the west, a second gambling hall, with wide windows overlooking Wang Tau Street. This second gambling hall was half the size of the ground floor one, and had two tables, at which Tsz Fa (字花) was offered. In addition, tables for Pai Kau (牌九) were set up in the street outside the main entrance, under an awning. The gambling house was a very prosperous business, and the little open space in front of its door was one of the central spots of the town - wood and grass for fuel were sold here.

The guesthouses ( 客棧 ), lower down Wang Tau Street from the gambling house, were three-storeyed shop-houses. The ground floor was the residence of the owner - sometimes a small shop was run as well. Above, on the first floor, was a dormitory for villagers and poor travellers staying the night in town. A few large beds stood here - for one or two cents, you could share a bed with whoever else was looking for a place to stay. For the more fastidious and wealthy, small cubicles on the top floor offered privacy and an unshared bed. Military officers visiting the town would stay in these private cubicles. The guesthouses did not serve meals - guests took food at the adjacent noodle restaurant. The 'totally comfortless' guesthouse used by the Basel missionaries in 1859 must have been of this type.

There was only one full-time opium divan in the market, although opium could be taken in the prostitutes' houses as well. Up until 1917, there had also been several low-class opium divans in sheds in British Sha Tau Kok - these were closed in that year, as part of the agreement to end trade in opium between Hong Kong and China which, it was hoped, would allow the Chinese Government to end all opium imports, and to control the sale of opium in China.<sup>61</sup> The chaos in the border area, however, made it impossible for the trade on the Chinese side of the frontier to be effectively controlled, and the Sha Tau Kok opium divan continued to trade unmolested until 1951. Opium could also be bought for home consumption from the two tobacco shops in the market. These shops were also heavily engaged in smuggling opium into Hong Kong.

Next to the opium divan was the market barber. In 1853 there had only been itinerant barbers in the town.<sup>62</sup> This shop should be seen, to a large degree, as one of the service trades attracted by the opportunities brought about by the new frontier and garrison, like the prostitutes and the gambling house.

Beyond the guesthouses, near the sea, Wang Tau Street was occupied by the fish *laans* and the Kowloon Customs Station. The Customs Station was rebuilt several times during this period. The Station building in existence in the 1920s was a solidly built, European style, single-storey structure, with a verandah, built of brick and tile. One end was the residence of the Assistant Superintendent. In the middle were the offices, and the barrack quarters for the junior staff were at the further end. The Customs also rented some nearby houses for stores and quarters. After the Station

was destroyed in the 1937 typhoon, it was rebuilt as an imposing two-storey building. Even in the 1920s, however, it dominated the seafront of the town, facing the sea between the two piers (the public pier to the west, and the Customs pier to the east), separated from the Tin Hau Temple by an irregular strand with two huge banyan trees.

At the foot of the public pier, between the Customs station and the Tin Hau Temple, was a small kiosk where tickets for the Sha Yue Chung ferry were sold. The Shap Yeuk let the operation of the ferry, and the right to collect the fares, every so often. In the 1930s the fare to Sha Yue Chung was high - \$80 per person, plus extra for goods carried. This was because of the difficulties involved in the ferry travelling from Kuomintang to rebel-held territory, and later because the ferry had to travel very close to, or even across, Japanese lines. Much of the freight carried at this date was smuggled kerosene.<sup>63</sup> The other ferries - to Kat O and Kuk Po - collected fares on board the boat.

The fish *laans* were just a paved floor, with a tiled roof supported on brick pillars. There were no walls. Each of the fish *laans* occupied a part of the floor. When the fishing boats arrived in the early morning, the fishermen would carry their catch inland, past the Customs Station, into the *laans*, to sell to the *laan* or *laans* with which they were accustomed to deal. Some of the *laans* only dealt in the wholesale trade, and only had offices and stores apart from their share of the trading floor. Others also had retail shops in the town.

As well as the fish *laans*, there was another wholesale market in the town in the 1920s. This was the grain market. This was, like the fish *laans*, just a paved floor with a tiled roof supported on brick pillars. It stood beside the sea, just behind the Man Mo Temple. Villagers with grain to sell would carry it here on market days (the 1st, 4th, and 7th days). The grain dealers from the market would come here and buy, and carry it to their stores in the town, either to sell there by retail, or else to arrange to have it carried to Sham Chun. The town weigh-beam was kept here, in a shed next to the market - it was normally only used by people buying or selling grain, who paid a few cents for the use of it.

Opposite the grain market was a row of blacksmiths' shops. These were built here, separated by an alley from the other buildings of the town, for fear of fire.

Between the grain market and the fish laans was a broad open space. This was used for drying grain and fish, and other things. This was where the matsheds for the local Ta Tsiu were put up - the gambling house also put on opera here at the New Year, partly as a gesture of thanks to patrons, but also to cope with increased demand at this season (gambling tables were set up in the matshed). This space was where the execution of about 1935 mentioned above took place.

West of the Tin Hau Temple, the village of Sha Lan Ha (Shalandia, 沙欄 [ 蘭 ] 下) stretched along the shore. This was predominantly a residential village, mostly of the Ng (吳) family, genealogically connected with the Ngs of Tam Shui Hang. There were no shops here, just houses, except for the boatyard,<sup>64</sup> and one of the town tobacconists, who found this site, close to the Customs Station, profitable. The boatyard was a large concern, with associated ropeworks and sailyards within the village.

The biggest and most prestigious building in the town was the Tung Wo School and Man Mo Temple at the north-east corner of the town. This was a well-built brick building, with three courtyards, and, as mentioned above, had been built shortly after 1854 by the Shap Yeuk as the district school and also their office and Meeting Hall. The temple was at the seaward end of the complex. It was built several steps higher than the school, and it had a higher roof. The whole building was essentially single-storeyed, but there were cocklofts for resident students. The original main entrance was facing the bridge, but after the soldiers took over the attached gun-tower as their barracks they used the open space in front of the main door as part of the barracks, and the villagers disliked passing that way. New side doors were, therefore, provided on the side facing the sea, both for the school and the temple, and these were the normal entrances in the 1920s. Between the school and the sea a four-foot high wall with a gate delimited the school and temple yard.

Within British Sha Tau Kok there were only a few buildings in 1925. On the salt pans, the workers lived in tiny huts - no more than 10 feet square. These workers were not local. The local villagers did not know how to make salt. The salt pans were owned by local villagers - mostly trusts and individuals from Tam Shui Hang village - but the owners merely rented the salt pans to overseers who brought teams of workers with them. The overseers and workers were Hoklos from Swabue (Shanwei, 汕尾) down the coast. The workers did not have their families with them.

Opposite the saltpans, on the bund, each saltworks had a small hut. These were used to store the salt before it was carried to Sham Chun. They also functioned as retail shops: villagers wanting to buy salt bought it here, not at shops in the town. There were also several lime-burners, making lime from coral dredged from Mirs Bay, operating in the Yim Liu Ha area. <sup>65</sup>

The most important building in British Sha Tau Kok in the 1920s was the Railway Station. This was the terminus of a narrow-gauge (2 foot) railway which linked Sha Tau Kok and the main-line station at Fanling, and which operated from 1912 to 1928. <sup>66</sup> While it was slow, expensive and uncomfortable, it nonetheless linked Sha Tau Kok more effectively with the outside world than had ever been possible before, when every traveller had to make a long and weary journey by sea and mountain pass. The Station was built immediately on the frontier. When traders started to migrate across the frontier, it was the hawkers, with no overheads, who moved first - they moved to the area around the Station and its forecourt. Most hawking in Sha Tau Kok was carried out here from about 1925. When the railway was dismantled in 1928, following completion of the motor road from Fanling in 1927, the hawkers moved to the area at the end of the road - a permanent market hall for them was built nearby as part of the San Lau Street development in 1933 - 1934.

Before 1925, hawking had taken place mostly in Wang Tau Street - vegetable hawkers using the upper part, near Upper Street, and fuel hawkers the lower part, near Lower Street and the gambling house. Itinerant cooked-food sellers (mostly selling noodles), and villagers selling things like brooms, bamboo poles, etc. were also found here. But most of them moved to the Station forecourt in about 1925.

The only sizeable shop in British Sha Tau Kok before 1925 was the main town carpenter's in Tsoi Yuen Kok. This shop had moved there from Upper Street a few years before 1925, mostly because of the need for more space for its timber stores and saw-yeard. The rest of Tsoi Yuen Kok was used for market gardens, where vegetables were grown for sale in the town.

What did the town look like in 1925? Photographs are few and unrevealing. There is, however, one short description of the town at this date:

'From Fanling also, there runs a narrow gauge line down the other coast at Sha Tau Kok. Sha Tau Kok itself is a fishing town, walled, and of a type, with two loopholed buildings [the guntowers] sticking up out of it. These serve as watch-towers and are common to all Chinese towns. Usually they are the pawnshops or safe deposits. Doubtless they were necessary and useful enough in unsettled times, before modern rifles and artillery were added to China's domestic problems. Narrow dirty streets shorten the foreigner's stay in Sha Tau Kok, and he is content to leave the place to its pot-bellied pigs and contented citizens.'<sup>67</sup>

### *Social and Economic Life*

There are three tablets which include lists of shops in Sha Tau Kok: the 1894 tablet recording donations to the rebuilding of the temple at Shan Tsui; the 1906 tablet recording donations to the building of a bridge at Bride's Pool, and the 1920 wooden tablet recording donations to the repairs of the monastery at Cheung Shan Kwu Tsz.<sup>68</sup> Of these, the last is the fullest and most significant, listing 39 shops specifically as being from Sha Tau Kok. These lists have been discussed with elders of surrounding villages, and, as a result, some 84 shops or workshops have been recorded as operating in the market before 1925. Some of these 84 are somewhat doubtful. At the same time, the elders say that there were more shops than they can now remember anything of - numbers of very small shops, selling sweets and such like, existed which the elders cannot now remember in any detail. It seems likely that there were about 90-100 shops in operation in the market during this period. In addition to these 90-100 shops, there were 18 functioning saltworks, between 10 and 12 prostitutes, and a number of full-time hawkers working both in the market, and from the market through the surrounding district. Many of the shops employed one or two people as well as family of the owner. The market may have been responsible for providing work for 400-500 people.

Of the shops remembered by the elders, five were general household stores. \* Two rattan dealers made and dealt in sieves and baskets. A silversmith provided for the finger-rings, ear-rings, and bracelets so important in Hakka culture. Eight were general groceries, some of which were, in addition, grain wholesalers, pig slaughterers, or winemakers. There were nine fishmongers - five were fish wholesalers only, while four had a retail business as well. Other food dealers included three bakers,

---

\* See Appendix 2

a specialist winemaker, and a dogmeat seller. There were several sweet sellers, although details of only one have been remembered. A cattle dealer not only sold and brokered animals, driving them to his clients' homes in the villages on demand, but also slaughtered cattle as needed. Two carpenters and five or six blacksmiths mended the farm implements and made new ones - the carpenters also made furniture and coffins, and sawed planks for various uses. Also working in the timber trade was the boatyard at Sha Lan Ha, as well as building and repairing boats, this establishment made oars and other wooden equipment used on the boats.<sup>69</sup> Three tailors and cloth dealers (plus, probably, a number of seamstresses working in their own homes to sew up clothes for them), and a cobbler, made clothes and shoes for the local residents. A pawnshop supplied credit and storage services: this establishment occupied the lower floors of the western gun-tower and the adjacent premises, since the pawn business required secure and strong buildings to store the deposited goods in. On the outskirts of the town were a couple of lime-kilns. Services were provided by a letter-writer, four paper-offerings sellers, a barber, nine doctors and a dentist. Visitors and entertainment seekers were serviced by two tobacco and opium sellers, an opium divan, three restaurants, a gambling house, four or five guesthouses, and ten or twelve prostitutes. Fuel, vegetables, poultry, and certain sorts of handicraft and cooked food were sold by hawkers in the streets. Salt was sold directly from the saltworks.

This breakdown of trades is not markedly dissimilar to those found elsewhere in the area.<sup>70</sup> Most local markets were dominated by "general stores" of various sorts, and most had a surprisingly high number of doctors. Even in 1853, the Basel missionaries noted that, of the 50 shops then in the town, six were "pharmacies", and that most of the major shops were then general stores or wholesalers, probably, in the latter case, fishmongers.<sup>71</sup> The Basel missionaries also mention or imply carpenters, pig slaughterers, and at least one guesthouse (1859). They also refer to a noodle-seller (1882). They noted that some of the larger general stores dealt with traders in Hong Kong. All in all it would seem that the mix of trades in Sha Tau Kok in the 1850s was similar to that 50 years later. At both dates the town had a generally similar mix to other small towns in the region, apart from its entertainment specialities, and the salt, rice, and fish carrying trades. Sha Tau Kok is, however, the only small town in the area known to have had prostitutes - apart from Sha Tau Kok, prostitutes were only found in Hong Kong, Kowloon, Sham Chun and Cheung Chau.

and, of these, Sham Chun and Cheung Chau were towns ten times larger than Sha Tau Kok.

There were, however, some trades not found at Sha Tau Kok. There was no book-seller, no oil-ress, no quilt-maker, no sauce maker, no beancurd maker or dealer, and no vegetable dealers other than casual hawkers. Books required in any number - such as the school text-books or the annual almanac - were either stocked in the general stores, or else brought into the market by hawkers carrying them from Sahn Chun. For other books, or for quilts, or for bulk purchases of vegetables (for instance, to buy turnips enough to make the New Year's Turnip Pudding), villagers had to go to Sham Chun. For cooking oil, villagers used lard, or else they went to buy it at Sham Chun. The translation of the anti-Customs extract printed above specifically states that one grievance of the villagers was the duty exacted on cloth taken to Sha Tau Kok for dyeing (it would probably have attracted duty on both "import" and "export"), so it would seem likely that there was a cloth dyer in the town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: if so, Customs exaction may have driven it out of business, for there was no such establishment in the town in the 1920s. By 1925, villagers usually took their cloth to Kowloon to be dyed.

One feature of the market which does seem rather special is its indigeneity. Of the 49 shopowners of whose origin something is remembered, 38 at least were from the Shap Yeuk area, and a further eight from "China" - some at least of these last would have been from the China parts of the Shap Yeuk area. Only two Hoklo shops are remembered, and no Punti ones, with the possible exception of one doctor from Sham Chun (the prostitutes, though, were all Punti girls from the City). Furthermore, most of the shops whose owners are now forgotten were the smaller ones - the most likely to have been from the immediate area. The 18 largest shops were all indigenous.<sup>72</sup> This differs from many of the small towns of the area, where non-indigenous groups were very important.<sup>73</sup> The memory of the elders is that Sha Tau Kok was emphatically a Hakka market, and one very deeply rooted in the local village society. Even the coming of the new frontier does not seem to have broken the essentially indigenous nature of the market. The Shap Yeuk was founded so that the villagers of the area could have their own market, and run it themselves, and the wishes of the founding fathers were, clearly, achieved.



It seems that the shops were not very long-lived - most must have existed only for the period of the founder's life. Where shops were succeeded to by a son on his father's death, it seems to have been common for the shop name to be changed. The coming of the new frontier seems to have led to a particularly thorough shake-out of shops. Of the 42 shops mentioned in the 1894 Shan Tsui tablet, only eight appear among the 19 mentioned on the 1906 Bride's Pool tablet, and only seven among the 39 on the 1920 tablet, including five of the eight which are mentioned on the 1906 tablet. Furthermore, the elders do not remember any shops with names corresponding to the majority of the donating shops in 1894 (only about 13 of the 42 shops donating in 1894 were remembered - about 31% - and two or three of these are doubtful); clearly many of these premises had gone out of business before the 1920s. At the same time, 10 of the 19 shops on the 1906 Bride's Pool tablet also appear on the 1920 Cheung Sha Kwu Tze tablet. Five of the 1906 donors appear on neither the 1894 tablet nor the 1920 tablet. This all suggests that more than half of the shops changed name between 1894 and 1906, but less than half between 1906 and 1920. It would seem that, on average, perhaps a quarter or a third of the shops changed names each decade.

All the elders contacted were land-people, and they knew little of the economic and social lifestyles of the boat-people. It seems that, while to the foreign visitor of 1925 mentioned above Sha Tau Kok was "a fishing town", Sha Tau Kok, while it had the essential structure of a wholesale fish market and a boatyard, was less dominated by the need to service the fishing fleet than towns such as Sai Kung, to say nothing of places like Cheung Chau or Tar O. The Sha Tsu Kok area fishermen fished mostly within Mirs Bay - they did not, it would appear, normally join the fleets of better located ports in exploiting the deep sea Wong Fa fisheries. Sha Tau Kok was a fishing port, but it was more of a land market than a sea market.

All the markets in the area required hawkers and coolies as well as shops, and Sha Tau Kok was no exception - indeed, given the importance of its carrying trade with Sham Chun, Sha Tau Kok may well have been more dependent on coolies than elsewhere. The hawkers were of two types: those who traded as a part-time occupation, and those who made their living by it. The villagers of the surrounding villages regularly supplemented their income by casual hawking in the town. Each village seems to have specialised in what it sold. Women from the villages near

## 180

the town would bring baskets of vegetables to sell retail on street in Wang Tau Street. Some sold their vegetables at Yim Liu Ha - even before the hawkers started to migrate across the frontier there was some trading here. The saltworkers had no fields, and had to buy all their food - since there was about 100 of them, this represented quite a market. Usually, those villagers trading vegetables with the saltworkers at Yim Liu Ha would exchange their vegetables for salt, which they then hawked around the villages away from the market. One or two villages specialised in this vegetables and salt trade. Yet others specialised in exchanging vegetables for fish (usually the poorer quality, or broken, fish), which they then hawked around villages away from the market.

The villages further from the market found the vegetable trade difficult, and they usually did not take part in it. Their specialty was fuel. The villages near the market had cut all the trees in the vicinity of the village, except for the untouchable Fung Shui groves, long before, and they were seriously short of fuel as a consequence. The remote mountainside villages of the Shap Yeuk area, however, still had plenty of wood, but were usually short of cultivable land. The economy of these villages depended, essentially, on exchanging firewood for rice. Village women would leave these villages at day-break, carrying loads of about 75 cattier of wood, cut and dried, and prepared to suit the particular needs of the specific market aimed at. The boat-people required wood cut into very small and even billets, to fit the tiny stoves on board their boats. The saltworkers needed wood cut to larger sizes to feed their furnaces and stoves. Individual villager or shopkeeper households needed wood cut to medium sizes. Individual fuel - selling villages tended to specialise in one or other of these markets. The best-placed fuel-selling villages, those whose wood reached the market first<sup>74</sup>, tended to sell their wood in whole loads, 75 cattier at a time. Those who reached the market later tended to have to sell their wood retail, catty by catty, originally in Wang Tau Street, later from the Railway Station forecourt. It was the custom that, if someone bought a whole load of wood, then the seller had to carry it all the way to the buyer's house, no matter how far from the market. Individual seller villages tended to develop a close relationship with individual buyer villages and households - often buyers would look out sellers they knew, and order a load of fuel for the next market day. As with vegetables, so villagers who sold fuel to the saltworkers or fishermen sometimes exchanged their wood for salt or fish, which they then hawked through the villages away from the market.

Villages, especially mountainside villages, often had customary handicrafts which the women hawked in the market. Brooms, made from the twigs of a certain mountain bush, were a hawker monopoly, as were the hand-woven ribbons used to tie up the traditional Hakka headcloth. The special leaves used to tie up steamed rice dumplings were similarly prepared and sold by women from the mountain villages.

Some products could only be got in the mountains - games, some medicinal herbs, tea, and some other special products. Only a few households, mostly mountain ones, kept bees and had honey for sale. Honey was usually sold from the street by retail - few villagers would ever have had more than a small quantity for sale at any time. Honey was mostly used for medicinal purposes. Villagers with tea to sell, or medicinal herbs, would usually sell to shops in the market if they had a large quantity, but otherwise they would sell by retail from the street. Game was usually sold by men. Some villages kept packs of hunting dogs, and caught wild boar, the meat of which was then sold in the market-town streets, while porcupine, civet cats, and wildfowl were trapped live and then sold. Markets like Sha Tau Kok, with substantial areas of mountain in the market district, were famous for the game trade.

These trades were specialties - only those villages able to keep hunting dogs could catch wild boar, and the skills of the finding and preparing medicinal herbs, or trapping wild fowl, were a jealously guarded secret, known only to a few villages, and within those villages, only to a few households. One specialist mountain product was Shue Leung (薯蕷), a tuber which, when sliced up and macerated in water, provided a juice which water-proofed ropes. This tuber was needed by the boat-people, who would treat their tackle and nets with it once or twice a year. When boat-people needed it, they would look out for a mountainside villager known to them, and order a load for the next market day. Mountainside villages were as concerned to preserve their Shue Leung from illicit harvest by outsiders as they were to preserve their stands of fuel trees - outsiders found poaching would be driven off with violence.

Poultry were sold live in the streets by villagers, especially from the lowland villages near the market <sup>75</sup> - buyers took them home and slaughtered them themselves. Poultry was not always available, but the market would be full of sellers just before a festival. Seed-pigs and day-old chicks were usually sold on street by any villager who happened to

have some to sell. Fruit was sold on street, but was not always available.<sup>76</sup> Occasionally, however, a mountainside villager might bring in a load of the little bitter mountain tangerines in the autumn, or rose-myrtle fruit, and the lowland villages sometimes had *Wong Pei* or *Lung Ngan*. Ginger flowers in the summer, from the lowland villages, and New Year Bell-flowers and other New Year plants from the mountainside villages, were also traded.

The full-time, professional, hawkers were of two types; those who normally traded in the town, and those who normally traded from the town through the surrounding villages. Within the town, there were a few permanent cooked-food hawkers who sold fried noodles - often dogmeat noodles - from charcoal stoves carried through the streets. These hawkers sometimes carried their wares through the nearer surrounding villages, as well. There were a few knife-sharpener who worked in the same way. There were also a few sweet sellers who hawked sweets through the town and the nearer villages: these were mostly connected with the sweet-shops in the town.

There was only one good well in the town, outside the Upper East Gate. Within the town there were a number of small backyard wells, but these were polluted and brackish. They were not fit for drinking from, and were used for getting washing water. However, the wine-makers in the town used these backyard wells for the water they made their wine with. The shopowners did not, usually, draw their own drinking water. A number of women from the nearby villages made a living by drawing water and carrying it around the town, selling a load for a few cash. These women were called "Water-women" (擔水婆).

Within the market district there were a number of full-time hawkers who carried wares from the town around the villages. These did not usually carry general goods, nor did they usually fulfill orders from villagers unwilling to go to market. 'Anyone who wanted something had to walk to town to get it: there was no other way, no-one would carry anything for you.'<sup>77</sup> However, there were things which the ordinary village woman could not carry, and these were brought by the hawkers. Thus, every family needed a few large, heavy, earthenware water-pots and rice-jars. These were cumbersome and awkward even to lift, let alone carry over the mountains, where a single slip would cause them to smash. Hawkers brought these, and similar wares, around the villages. Wares unavailable

in the market would sometimes be carried round by hawkers who brought them from the bigger cities further away.<sup>78</sup> Twice a year, in the Spring and the Autumn, these hawkers would carry around the villages the vegetable seeds needed for the forthcoming half year. The villagers did not know how to produce good vegetable seed for themselves. There were some specialist villages in China which produced large quantities of seed. There the hawkers bought their stock. The hawkers kept the locations of these villages a secret - no villager contact seems to know where their seeds came from.<sup>79</sup> Many of these hawkers who carried things around the villages were Hoklo: few local people entered this trade except for the people who hawked salt and fresh fish around the villages near their homes. There were quite a significant number of these itinerant hawkers, who bought in the towns and carried wares around the villages: unfortunately, very little is known about them.

Some local villagers did make a living in the itinerant sweet trade. In Tsat Muk Kiu there was a villager, for instance, who made sweets and hawked them through the Wu Kau Tang and Plover Cove villages. These sweet hawkers often sold their wares, not for cash, but for broken metal which they then sold on to the market town blacksmiths, who were always short of metal.

The coolie trade was not very formally organised. Those stores wanting coolies to carry goods would let it be known, and would hire whom they pleased from those who showed an interest - most shops in the carrying trade developed a relationship with a particular group of women, however, - or the women from a particular village or section of a village - and always called on that group for coolies. After the 1870s, many of the young adult men of the Sha Tau Kok area began to travel abroad for a few years to make their fortunes. It is likely that, before local society began to be marked by this temporary emigration of young adult males, the local coolies had been young men, but, by 1900, the trade was mostly conducted by women. Thus, the Colonial Secretary hired 111 persons in 1899 to carry his baggage from Wo Hang near Sha Tau Kok to Tai Po - a full day's march of 12 miles - and 70 of the 111 were women.<sup>80</sup> In the 1920s, shops in the market at Sha Tau Kok would sometimes send groups of women as far as Tsuen Wan (more than 15 miles away) to bring back goods for sale not available nearer at hand (pineapples especially) - a very long day's work. Many of the carrying coolies came from the lowland villages - the women of the mountainside villages were probably too

## 184

preoccupied with the fuel trade to have any spare time to enter the carrying trade.

Especially in the 1930s, one of the biggest coolie trades was smuggling, although it was of significance earlier as well. Villagers smuggled their own purchases back over the frontier (the bridge carrying the footpath over the border river near the Sha Tsui temple was a commonly used route, as it was not continuously guarded by the Customs), but bulk smuggling (mostly of sugar, kerosene, tobacco, and also opium) was organised by the shops in the market, especially the tobacco dealers. These treated their trade as any other carrying trade, with village women being hired ad hoc to carry loads to customers across the frontier, or across the lines to Sha Yue Chung. Most village women active in the coolie trade took part in this smuggling business.

The society of the market at Sha Tau Kok was entirely dominated by the local Hakka of the surrounding villages. The Tanka - the boat people - were, as always, regarded as somewhat second-class, even though their presence was essential to the economic success of the town. The perceived inferiority of the boat-people may well be the reason that few of them lived in the market at Sha Tau Kok: they preferred to live at Kat O, a few miles off-shore, outside the Shap Yeuk area.

Even more regarded as second-class, however, were the Hoklo saltworkers. These groups of workers, living for the term of their contract away from their families in their miserable huts on the saltpans, had no status at all. Of the total population of the town, perhaps as many as one fifth were saltworkers (assuming five workers per salt-works). The Hakka villagers owned the salt-works, but left them entirely to the contract overseer and his hired staff, so long as the rent was paid. No-one remembers the names of any of these salt-workers, nor can anyone remember any marriages between local Hakka or Tanka girls and these Hoklo labourers. The villagers kept away from them, and their only contact was the exchange of fuel or vegetables for salt at Yim Liu Ha. The salt-workers were important to the economy of the town, but they were treated as being the very bottom of the social scale.

At the other end of the social scale were the teachers at the Tung Wo School. The Shap Yeuk elders had wanted to ensure that the district had at least one first quality school, and had consequently built the school to

high standards, and took care to employ good teachers. The school must always have had several teachers - the building is just too big to have been feasible for just one.

In 1923 there were five teachers. Three were Shap Yeuk area people. One, Chan Kan-cheung, 陳 華 章, from Luk Keng, was a returned student from USA - he taught English and Physical Education. Another teacher from Luk Keng was Chan Ping-long, 陳 平 浪, a graduate from Canton. He taught "the new books". The third teacher from the Shap Yeuk area was Lau Woon-kwong ( 劉 煥 光 ), from Keng Hau (Jinghou, 徑 口) in the Chinese part of the Shap Yeuk area. He taught classical Chinese and Music. The other two teachers were outsiders. Lei Wai-lau, 李 渭 流, was a Sau Tsoi from near Yuen Long, a Punti speaker - he taught classical Chinese. The fifth teacher, Wu Fan-ng, 胡 範 伍, was from Shaoguan in the north of Guangdong. He had lived for many years in Sha Tau Kok, and spoke and taught in Hakka. He, like Chan Ping-long, was a graduate from Canton, and taught "the new books".

Right down to the 1930s, the desire to keep their school one of the best and most advanced in the region was a major aim of the elders of the Shap Yeuk. In the 1920s, the standard of the school was as advanced as the Government schools which the Hong Kong Government had started to open in the major centres of the New Territories. By having this group of well-educated and cultured men living in the market, the elders of the Shap Yeuk demonstrated that their town and district comprised a full and viable community: not only having artisans and labourers and merchants, but scholars and gentry as well.

## APPENDIX 1

## Calendar of Disturbances in the Border Area, 1899-1940

(Orme = *Papers Laid Before the Legislative Council of Hongkong, 1912*, (Sessional Papers 1912, printed by Noronha and Co, Government Printers), No. 11 of 1912, "Report on the New Territories, 1899-1912" (The Orme Report), pp. 43-63, SP = *Papers Laid Before the Legislative Council of Hongkong* (Sessional Papers), STJLS = *Shatoujade Lishe*, op cit, AP = *Administrative Reports*, "Report by the District Officer New Territories", JLHG = *Jiulonghaiguan Banman Dashu* op cit Note JUHG is limited in material for 1921-1927, and AP has little to say on the border 1931-1938, except to comment on the levels of smuggling.)

Year	Event	Source
1900	Abortive Rebellion in Wai Chau Sham Chun valley in turmoil Sam Chau Tin in revolt 5 piracies in Hong Kong waters	SP 1901 STJLS Orme
1901	Chinese military patrol formed on frontier	SP 1902
1905	Most serious crime in New Territories caused by cross-border gangs these impeded by new blockhouses at Ta Kwu Ling Second rebellion at Sam Chau Tin	Orme STJLS
1906	Market strike at Sha Tau Kok	STJLS
1907	Riot against Customs at Sha Tau Kok	STJLS
1911	Law Fong, Choi Uk Wai, sha Tau Customs Stations sacked by bandits Law Fong Customs Station destroyed by bandits	JLHG
1912	Fighting in area near border Increase in banditry and piracy In Hong Kong, military assistance needed by Police Law Fong, Lin Tong, Sha Tau Customs Stations sacked by bandits, at Law Fong claiming to be "new revolutionaries" Situation confused Executions in Sham Chun	SP 1912 AR JLHG
1913	Nam O, Yun Tin Customs Stations sacked by bandits	JLHG
1914	Nam O attacked and sacked by night Tai Chan, Chek Wan Customs Stations sacked by bandits	JLHG
1915	Chan Hang (Siu Mui Sha) Customs Station sacked by bandits	JLHG
1916	Increase in smuggling opium into China Bad outbreak of cross-border crime, due to "lack of any reasonable system of policing" on the Chinese side Yun Tin (3 times), Kai Chung, Lung Tsun Hui Customs Stations sacked by bandits (40 men attack Kai Chung, up to 200 Yin Tin, and 150 at Lung Tsun Hui) All Customs firearms removed to Hong Kong for safe-keeping (until 1932)	AR JLHG
1917	Hakkas fleeing disturbances in Wai Chau arrive in New Territories Outbreak of crime in New Territories by "undesirables" from across border Kai Chung, Lung Tsun Hui, Sha Tau Customs Stations sacked by bandits	AR JLHG
1918	Times "very disturbed" on border Outbreak of cross-border crime "half the offenders come from Chinese territory" Kai Chung, Tip Fuk, Ha Sha Customs Stations forced to close (April) Sha Yue Chung and Kai Mui Customs Stations sacked by bandits and forced to close (August)	AR JLHG



Year	Event	Source
1919	8 serious cross-border armed robberies. The Customs Stations closed in 1918 re-opened (August)	AR JLHG
1920	Refugees flee to New Territories from continual faction-fighting in border area. Armed cross-border crimes increase. Sha Yue Chung Customs Station sacked by bandits	AR JLHG
1921	Increase in smuggling native tobacco from China. 4 pirates (including of the Sha Yue Chung Ferry). Further armed cross-border banditry	AR
1922	2 pirates on the Sha Yue Chung Ferry. Fighting between pirate bands in Mirs Bay	AR
1923	Large increase in smuggling, due to disturbances in the border area. Serious cross-border armed raids, an execution in China as a result	AR
1924	Unsettled conditions, due to continuous fighting between Sun and Chan faction armies for control of district. Upsurge in cross-border crime, including 8 armed raids, some mounted by Chinese irregular soldiers	AR
1925	Boycott causes considerable trouble in Sha Tau Kok. Huge crime wave of cross-border crime. "Quite 90% [of crimes committed in the New Territories] could be traced to persons coming from over the border." Strikers enter and terrorise New Territories villages. British troops sent to Sha Tau Kok to restore order. Ho Lok Fung Soviet rebellion affects Bias Bay area	AR
1926	Conditions better, but disturbed. Conditions across the border lead to boom in New Territories because of the number of refugees seeking houses. Many makeshift erected for refugees. Heavier border policing needed. Mirs Bay fishermen unable to fish except close inshore because of "disturbed conditions"	ASR
1927	Conditions better, but still troubled near border. Attempted piracy of Tolo Harbour ferry junk. Heavier policing of Sha Tau Kok border area reduces cross-border crime. Border patch constructed in New Territories	AR
1928	Increase in smuggling. Violence against recent refugee arrivals in New Territories. Chinese irregulars replaced by regulars and disciplined at Sha Tau Kok. Major piracy in Mirs Bay ("Fean" case). Ho Lok Fung Soviet rebellion affects Bias Bay area	AR JLHG
1929	Customs seek major increase in staff because of increased smuggling (every year until late 1940s). Much better conditions on border because of better policing on Chinese side of border	JLHG
1930	Increase in smuggling. Kat Mui Customs Station sacked by bandits	AR, JLHG
1931	Increase in smuggling, especially sugar. Sha Tau Customs Station sacked by bandits. 2 Battles with smugglers off entrance to Pearl River ("Hosei Maru" case). Inadequate customs staff members leads to problems	AR JLHG
1932	Increase in smuggling, especially sugar and cloth. Smuggling on railway a growing problem. Smuggling through Lok Ma Chau and Sheung Shui a growing problem. Smuggling on Shan Chun River a growing problem. Kat Chung Customs Station sacked by bandits. Gunbattles with smugglers at Law Fong (twice), Chek Mei, Man Kam	AR JLHG

188

Year	Event	Source
	To, Lin Tong Mounted Horse Patrols instituted to cont of smuggling Guerrillas active in Bias Bay area Gunbattle with "uniformed smugglers" off Tai Mui Sha	
1933	Increase in smuggling Gunbattle with smuggles in Hong Kong waters	AJ, JLHG
1934	Slight increase in smuggling Automobile Anti-smuggling Patrols instituted	AR
1935	Continuing influx into the New Territories of poor Hakkas, refugees from neighbouring districts, living in matsheads Chinese erect steel fence from Sham Chun to Sha Tau Guerrillas active in Bias Bay area Gunbattle in Mui Bay with smugglers In gunbattle at Sha Tau, an innocent bystander is killed	AR JLHG
1936	Increase in smuggling after slight drop in 1935 (District Officer) Customs revenues rise as smuggling is "brought under control" (Customs) Increase in immigration into the New Territories of poor Hakkas Guerrillas active in Bias Bay area	AR JLHG
1937	Increase in smuggling Destitute refugees in New Territories cause crime wave there "Abnormal conditions" in China cause more refugees to arrive 2 cross-border thieves set on and beaten to death by New Territories villagers Japanese declare blockade of Chinese waters near frontier and attack Tai Chan Ling Ting, Sam Mun Customs Stations Japanese twice attack Customs vessels in Hong Kong waters	AR JLHG
1938	Refugees from Japanese increase population of New Territories by 1/2 Many squatter matsheads, but no increase in New Territories crime, except that some cross-border gangs cause trouble Kai Whung, Tip Fuk, Customs Stations closed Kai Mui Customs Stations destroyed in Japanese attack Japanese enter Sham Chun and all Customs Stations closed Japanese attack Sha TauKok, Sham Chun, Mui Bay and Deep Bay, damaging all Customs Stations, then retire Customs stations reopen at end of year Fishing, other than inshore, greatly hampered by Japanese attacks Many refugees in the New Territories die of starvation	AR JLHG
1939	Increase in smuggling and piracy, due to confused situation in border area Guerrillas come to agreement with Customs on operation of Sha Yue Chung Customs Station - goods for guerrillas to be duty-free Japanese take Nam Tau, attack Sham Chun, then enter Sham Chun - all Customs Stations except Sha Yue Chung close Japanese retire, and all Customs Stations reopen battle with smugglers off Yim Tin	AR JLHG
1940	Japanese re-enter Sham Chun All Customs Stations close, then the Japanese retire, and Mui Bay Customs Station re-open with assistance of guerrillas All Stations damaged Heavy smuggling of strategic goods to Sha Yue Chung, Mui Sha, Chan hang Japanese again invade Sham Chun, and attack Mui Bay Mui Bay Customs Station able to operate at night only Sha Tau Kok captured by Japanese	JLHG

## APPENDIX 2

## Shops in Sha Lau Kok Market, 1925

(WTS = Wang Lau Street), UP = Upper Street, LS = Lower Street, OS = Old Street, SLH = Sha Lan Ha (= Fish Laams) LYK = Loi Yuen Kok, SH = Sam Heung, LH = Luk Heung, WH = Wo Hang, YT = Yim Tin, YSO = Yung Sue O, FH = Fung Hang, TT = Tong To, ST = Shan Tsui, HL = Hoklo, KLH = Kwun Lo Ha, LK = Luk Keng, IMK = Isat Muk Kiu, TL = Tai Long, AH = Au Ha, SnT = San Tsuen, NC = Nam Chung, SC = Sham Chun, STK = Sha Lau Kok A = in 1894 Shan Tsui Tablet, B = in 1920 Cheung Shan Kwo Tsui Tablet, C = in Oral Evidence, D = in 1906 Bride's Pool Tablet \* = The largest shops)

No.	Name of Shop	Address of Shop	Name of Owner	Village of Owner	Source	Comments
<u>General Stores</u>						
1*	利 益	WTS	利	LH	ABC	Sold saws, bowls, plates, pottery, ropes, nails etc. Donated Bell to Wu Shek Kok Temple, 1922
2	利 益	-	-	-	C	-
3	利 益	-	-	-	C	[?]
4	利 益	-	-	-	C	? Pottery
5*	利 益	WTS	利	YSO	BCD	Basel missionaries, 1853
<u>Pawnshop</u>						
6*	利 益	PS	利	YT	(A)BCD	Occupied lower floors of gun tower. Probably donated to 1898 Tai Po Kwong Fuk Bridge
<u>Grocery</u>						
7	利 益	WTS	利	YSO	BC	-
8*	廣 益	WTS	利	FH	BC	sold grain, pig slaughterer, winemaker etc
9	利 益	WTS	利	China	BCD	sugar dealer, etc
10	利 益	WTS	利	WH	BC	-
11*	利 益	WTS	利	TT(?)	ABCD	-
12	利 益	LS	利	ST	BC	-
13*	利 益	LS	利	WH	AC	pig slaughterer, winemaker etc
14*	利 益	WTS	利	YT	BC	winemaker, grocer, etc. Basel missionaries, 1853
<u>Other Foods</u>						
15	利 益	WTS	利	China	BC	winemaker
16	利 益	LS	利	-	AC	-
17	利 益	-	利	-	C	baker, probably connected with 利
18	利 益	-	利	WH	C	dogmeat
19	利 益	WTS	利	STK	BCD	haker
<u>Fishmongers</u>						
20	利 益	WTS	利	HL	BC	-
21	利 益	WTS	利	-	BC	-
22	利 益	SLH	利	ST	BC	-
23*	利 益	SLH	利	YT	BC	main donor, 1894
24	利 益	WTS	利	China	BC	-
25	利 益	SLH	利	LH	BC	-
26*	利 益	SLH	利	STK	ABCD	-
27	利 益	SLH	利	-	BC	-
28	利 益	LS	利	TT	C	-
<u>Animals</u>						
29	利 益	-	利	WH	C	-

## 190

No.	Name of Shop	Address of Shop	Name of Owner	Village of Owner	Source	Comments
	<u>Tobacco</u>					
30*	德 興	WTS	-	LK	ABCD	dealt in opium as well
31	德 友	SLH	-	LK	C	dealt in opium as well
	<u>Restaurants</u>					
32	商 香 園	WTS	-	HL	C	teashop and noodles
33	-	LS	-	-	C	coffee shop, cold drinks
34	-	WTS	-	-	C	dogmeat and other noodles Basel missionaries, 1882
	<u>Silversmiths</u>					
35*	彩 彩	LS	-	TMK	CD	"C20 a ring"
	<u>Tailor etc</u>					
36*	新 昌	WTS	-	YT	C	fine cloth, jewellery
37*	新 利	LS	-	LH	C	tailor, cloth, largest shop in the market
38	新 盛 隆	US	-	-	C	-
	<u>Cobbler</u>					
39	李 勝	LS	-	TL	C	-
	<u>Rattan</u>					
40	榮 利	-	-	-	C	-
41	明 利	WTS	-	AH	C	baskets and sieves
	<u>Carpenters</u>					
42*	周 在	WTS	-	LH	ABC	-
43*	周 興	US->TYK	-	LH	C	-
	<u>Boatbuilders</u>					
44*	張 四	SLH	-	STK	C	also ropemaker and allied trades Lockhart's report, 899,DO, 1937
	<u>Blacksmiths</u>					
45-50	-	LS	-	China	C	"5 or 6" blacksmiths in a row
	<u>Gambling House</u>					
51*	四 方 亭	WTS	-	WH	BC	2 Storey Gambling house, Po Tau, Tsz Fa and Pai Kau
	<u>Paper Offerings</u>					
52	福 勝	WTS	-	YT	C	Owner executed about 1935
53	川 記	WTS	-	-	C	) Probably one of these ) shops was the one ) operated by the Market ) Headman, , ) of the Luk Heung leader of team of Nam Mo Lo (Taoist Priests)
54	興 記	-	-	-	C	
55	全 來 仔	-	-	SnT	C	
	<u>Letter Writer</u>					
56	李 錦 勝	Man Mo Temple	-	WH	C	-
	<u>Barber</u>					
57	明 尼	WTS	-	-	C	-
	<u>Doctor</u>					
58*	區 生 堂	US	-	YT	ABC	-
59	商 生 堂	WTS	-	YSO	BC	-
60	商 子 壽 堂	WTS	-	-	BC	-
61	廣 同 仁	LS	-	NC	BC	-
62	永 興 堂	WTS	-	SC	BC	-
63	茂 生 堂	-	-	YT	C	-
64	大 生 堂	-	-	-	ACD	-
65	森 生 堂	-	-	-	AC	-
66	聯 生 堂	-	-	YT	C	-
						Basel missionaries, 1853

No.	Name of Shop	Address of Shop	Name of Owner	Village of Owner	Source	Comments
	<u>Tobacco</u>					
67	烟舖	-	-	-	C	-
	<u>Guesthouses</u>					
68-71	-	WIS	-	-	C	"3 or 4" guesthouses See below under "Others" Basel missionaries, 1859
	<u>Opium Dyeing</u>					
72	-	WIS	-	-	C	-
	<u>Lamp-burners</u>					
73-74	-	Yim Lu Ha	-	-	C	1 or 2 Imekins Lockhart's Report, 1899
	<u>Others</u>					
75	舖	-	}	WII	C	sweets and small groceries
76	舖	-	-	-	B	) these may be two of
77	舖	-	-	-	B	) the guesthouses
78	舖	-	-	-	B	)
79	舖	-	-	-	B	)
80	舖	-	-	-	B	) nothing is now
81	舖	-	-	-	B	) remembered about
82	舖	-	-	-	B	) these shops
83	舖	-	-	-	B	)
84	舖	-	-	-	B	)
	<u>Prostitutes</u>					
85-96	-	Row near LS	-	City	C	Punti girls from City Offered opium to clients
	<u>Saltworks</u>					
97-115	-	Yim Lu Ha	-	-	C	HL workers from Swabue, sold salt retail Detail of works in Block Crown Lease
	<u>Hawkers</u>					
-	-	WIS	-	-	C	Fish, meat, vegetables, cooked food (dogmeat noodles) handicrafts fuel Also at Yim Lu Ha

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See G A C Herklots, *The Hong Kong Countryside*, Hong Kong, 1951, pp 86-89 for tigers and leopard on Ng Tung Shan, and the Hsin An County Gazetteer (1819 Gazetteer, ch 3, Chung Lap Pao Edition, 1979, p 45) for tiger, wild boar, and deer in the area

<sup>2</sup> 1688 Hsin An County Gazetteer, ch 3, 4 27

<sup>3</sup> A salt commission was established at Nam Tau (Nantou, 南頭) just outside the present borders of Hong Kong, probably in the Nan Yueh period, in the second century B.C. This was later divided into 4 commissions, probably during the Nan Han period (tenth century A.D.) Of the 4 Nan Han commissions, the Kwun Fu commission certainly covered the Mirs Bay area in the Sung - the headquarters of the commission were moved temporarily from Kowloon City to Tip Fuk (Diefu, 疊福) on the east coast of the Bay in 1163 - and probably did so from the establishment of the commission. The borders of Tung Kuan County and its predecessors bent round to include just the coastal strip of Mirs Bay, to

ensure that the saltfields there were in the same County as the rest of the salt commission Yim Tin (Yantian, 鹽田, "The Salt Fields") almost certainly got its name somewhere in this period. However, areas under the control of a Salt Commissioner were often merely the salt-pans, and the adjacent village of the salt-workers, in pockets scattered along the coast, and the presence of a salt commission could co-exist with a totally undeveloped hinterland. See Luo Hsiang-lin (羅香林), 香港前代史 一八甲二年前之香港及其對外交通, *Xianggang Qiantaishi Yihaiyinian Yiguanzhi Xianggang Ji Qui Duiwai Jiaotong*, Hong Kong, 1959, [translated as *Hong Kong and its External Communications before 1841*], but without the footnotes, Hong Kong, 1963], ch. 1, n. 5, 11, 12, ch. 4, n. 14. See also ch. 1, n. 13. See also S Y Lin, "Salt Manufacture in Hong Kong", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. 7, 1967, pp. 138-151 (reprinted from *The Hong Kong Naturalist*, Vol. X, No. 1, January 1940).

<sup>4</sup> See Luo Hsiang-lin, op cit, ch. 3: S F Ballou, "Hong Kong before the British Being a Local History of the Region of Hong Kong and the New Territories Before the British Occupation", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 10, 1970, pp. 134-179 (reprinted from *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, Shanghai, Vols. 11 and 12, 1940, 1941), K.M.A. Barnett, "Hong Kong Before the Chinese, the Frame, the Puzzle, and the Missing Pieces", *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 4, 1964, pp. 42-67. Sung Hok-p'ang, "Legends and Stories of the New Territories: Tai Po, 大埔", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 28, 1988, pp. 70-76 (reprinted from *The Hong Kong Naturalist*, May, 1935).

<sup>5</sup> The Gazetteer mentions pirates in the Mirs Bay area in 1571, 1590, 1641, 1647, 1648, 1664, and 1672. 1688 Gazetteer, ch. 12, 1819 Gazetteer, ch. 12, Chung Lap Pao edition, 1979, pp. 119-120, and see also 1819 Gazetteer ch. 7, and ch. 19, Chung Lap Pao edition, pp. 80-81, and 154.

<sup>6</sup> The 1688 Gazetteer gives a list of villages in existence in the area in and before 1662 (1688 Gazetteer, ch. 3). See the note at ff. 13-15, which makes it clear that the villages are those of the period before the Coastal Evacuation of 1662-1668, and not those contemporary with the Gazetteer.

<sup>7</sup> The Provincial Governor and Magistrate urged on the returning families the need to get tenants or purchasers to take over land which could no longer be tilled by the descendants of the previous owners (see Luo Hsiang-lin, op cit pp. 145-149, n. 15, 19, 23 relating to dates in the 1710s and 1720s). Within the Mirs Bay area, at least the Lees of Wo Hang settled there in 1692 "on the [official] order to reclaim land", see D. Faure, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong*, Oxford University Press, Hong Kong, 1986, p. 217, n. 22. There is at least one case where a lineage abandoned land east of the mountains, to concentrate themselves in the more sheltered west. The name of the village of Man Uk Pin (萬屋邊, "The Houses of the Man Family") makes it clear that it was once lived in by the Man family. That family, however, is now found only in Ta Kwu Ling, to the west, at Ping Che, Tong Fong, and Heung Yuen villages. When the present inhabitants of Man Uk Pin, the Chung (鍾) lineage settled there in about 1700, it was deserted - clearly in its case a lineage had concentrated on its best lands to the west, and abandoned the marginal Mirs Bay land to newcomers.

<sup>8</sup> Details of the early Hakka examination successes are known from a recently recovered genealogy, of the Chan (陳) lineage of Nam Chung. It is understood that a copy of this genealogy will be deposited with the Hong Kong Museum of History. I am indebted to Mr Chan Wing-hot for drawing my attention to the information in this genealogy.

<sup>9</sup> See n 8.

<sup>10</sup> At the time of the Block Crown Lease (1905), 12.68 acres of saltpans were recorded. However, the serious inadequacies of the first survey here led to another being conducted in 1912, when 17.31 acres were recorded. However, in 1912 two areas were left unclaimed, probably because storms had breached their bunds and ruined them. These two areas totalled about 3.3 acres. In addition, there were about 0.6 acres of houses, huts, and waste within the saltpan reclamation, which, therefore, totalled about 21.2 acres. The saltpans were very valuable property in the nineteenth century – the Basel missionaries (see below, n 17) record the sale of a share by a Tam Shui Hang villager in 1882 for “several hundreds of dollars” (Basel Mission archive, doct. A1-16, Nr. 45). In the 1920s, however, and still more in the 1930s, cheap imported salt caused ever-growing problems, which led to the closure of the saltworks before the War. A bridge was built to the saltpans in 1934 (*Administrative Reports for the Year 1934*, App. J, “Report on the New Territories for 1934”, p. J17). After the War, the abandoned saltworks became the site of a major squatter settlement, recently cleared. Today, the saltpan area has disappeared under new reclamation, and all that remains is a new Tin Hau Temple, replacing the old one previously on the saltpans, built on a new site on the new waterfront.

<sup>11</sup> For details of the history of the temples in the area, on the settlement of the Hakka in the area, the reclamation projects they undertook, the founding and management of the market at Sha Tau Kok, and the functioning of the Shap Yeuk as the district management body, see P. H. Hase, “The Alliance of Ten: Settlement and Politics in the Sha Tau Kok Area”, in D. Faure and H. Siu, eds., *Down to Earth: The Territorial Bond in South China*, Stanford University Press, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> No details on the earlier history of the temple survived the very full restoration of 1894, but Shan Tsui elders believe it to be very old.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1688 Gazetteer (ch. 3) a ferry “along the coast” is mentioned called the “Ma Tseuk Ling Ferry”. There can no doubt that this is the ferry to Sha Yue Chung (Shayuchong, 沙角), 12 miles down the coast. Ma Tseuk Ling, at the head of Starling Inlet, is the nearest old village to the Wu Shek Kok Temple (Wu Shek Kok village is probably a foundation of the early nineteenth century). The coasts of Starling Inlet within two or three miles of Ma Tseuk Ling were blocked with mudflats and mangrove everywhere except at Wu Shek Kok, where alone a hill falls steeply into the sea. Wu Shek Kok is, therefore, the only possible site for a “Ma Tseuk Ling Ferry” landing place. The Ma Tseuk Ling villagers owned the Wu Shek Kok Temple, and the Ma Tseuk Ling military post (1688 Gazetteer, ch. 7), was at Shek Chung Au, just a few hundred yards from Wu Shek Kok. These Ma Tseuk Ling connections with the Wu Shek Kok area strongly suggest that the Wu Shek Kok hill was regarded as forming part of the Ma Tseuk Ling area. Later, Wu Shek Kok formed part of the Ma Tseuk Ling Yeuk of the Shap Yeuk.

## 194

<sup>14</sup> The oldest surviving dated object is the bell, of 1922 (D Faure, A Ng B Luk, 香港碑銘編, *Xianggang Beiming Huibian, Historical Inscriptions of Hong Kong*, Urban Council, Hong Kong, Vol. 3, p. 733). The temple, however, appears in the Block Crown Lease (1905), and the local villagers believe it is old.

<sup>15</sup> The Sam Heung villagers have recently erected a tablet at the resited replacement temple, stating that the temple was first built in the Chia Ch'ing reign (1796-1820), and that the Ta Tsu was instituted as soon as the temple was built. While the grounds for these statements are not given, they are reasonable, and probably correct, although a date late in the reign is likely.

<sup>16</sup> D Faure, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society*, op. cit. p. 107.

<sup>17</sup> A copy of this genealogy is in the collection of New Territories historical documents at United College, Chinese University of Hong Kong. I am indebted to Dr. D Faure for drawing my attention to this reference.

<sup>18</sup> Our information on mid-nineteenth century Sha Tau Kok comes primarily from documents of the Basel Mission, which had a Mission Station in the town 1849-1854, and whose missionaries regularly visited it in the later nineteenth century. The missionaries rented four houses from a local village elder, near the western end of Upper Street, backing onto the wall. The missionaries drew a map of the town in 1853, plans of typical shop units in 1849 and 1853, and wrote a long description of the town and district in 1853. Map 2 is a re-drawing of the missionaries' map of 1853, corrected by measurements taken from the 1924 aerial photograph of the town (13 November 1924; original in the Department of Geography, University of Hong Kong). The written description of 1853 is Basel Mission archive, doct. A1-2, Nr. 44, "Half-Yearly Report of the missionary Rev. P. Winnes, from 1st January to 1st July 1853", printed in translation in P. H. Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 30, 1990, pp. 281-297. See P. H. Hase, "The Alliance of Ten", op. cit. for redrawings of the plans of mid-nineteenth century shop units, and also for a drawing of a cross-section of such a shop unit. I am indebted to Rev. Carl Smith for drawing my attention to the importance of the Basel Mission documents to the history of Sha Tau Kok, and for allowing me to use his transcripts and notes. I would also like to thank Mrs. W. Haas, and the staff of the Basel Mission archive in the preparation of this article.

<sup>19</sup> The Tung Wo Kuk was so named in direct emulation of the older Puntui Council in Sham Chun, which was also known as "The Council for Peace in the East", 東平局, Tung Ping Kuk - the choice of the name Tung Wo Kuk must be seen, in these circumstances, as a marked sign of local pride and self-confidence.

<sup>20</sup> See n. 11.

<sup>21</sup> The villagers believe that the name Sha Tau Kok is taken from a poem by a Ch'ing official who passed by and was so impressed by the beauty of the sun rising above the sand-dunes that he wrote a poem on it: 日出沙頭 月懸海角, "The sun rises from the sand-dunes, the moon hangs where land and ocean meet." I have heard this story from a Sheung Wo Hang elder, and see also 沙頭角區委宣傳部, Shatoujiaode quwei xuanguanbu (Sha



Tau Kok District Committee Propaganda Section), 沙頭角的歷史和現狀 愛國主義教育材料, *Shatoupuode Lishi he xianzhuang aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu jianghua cathio*, (The History and Present Situation of Sha Tau Kok Material for Oral Teaching of Patriotism), Sha Tau Kok, 1986, p 4

<sup>22</sup> *Jahresberichte der Basler Mission*, 1849, pp 141-143, and P H Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op cit Some of the shops in 1853 occupied two shop units

<sup>23</sup> See W Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission, 1815-1915, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der ungedruckten Quellen*, Basel, 1916, Vol 2, p 297 "The (Taiping) rebellion spread its waves throughout the whole Empire, disheartening and weakening the Mandarins, and making thieves and rable impudent The small school at Sha Tau Kok went under, as the children fled the prevailing insecurity, and the teachers left Despite the disturbances, however, the services and worship of God were seldom interrupted, in fact, only when the cannons thundered " The Mission, however, closed down during this period, in part because of the "prevailing insecurity", and in part because of illness among the missionaries the Mission was re-established at Lalong (李朗), 20 miles to the north-west of Sha Tau Kok, near Po Kat (But, 伯士)

<sup>24</sup> The Punti clans around Sham Chun had a similar district school, the Sham Chun Community School, 沙村學校, in the market there, which brought them a great deal of prestige (D Faure, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society*, op cit )

<sup>25</sup> See Faure, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society*, op cit, p 200, n 4 These dead were very possibly the victims of the Taiping fighting in 1854

<sup>26</sup> See Enclosure 22 to Item 204 (pp 272-273) in File No 66, *Correspondence (June 20 1898 to August 20 1900) Respecting the Extension of the Boundaries of the Colony*, printed for the Colonial Office, London, November, 1900 It is worth noting that the Council of the Punti clans in Sham Chun, the Tung Ping Kok, also met in a Meeting Hall attached to the Community School there

<sup>27</sup> No firm evidence survives as to the date of either gun-tower, but the eastern tower was in existence in the present elders' fathers' time, and thus before 1898 The eastern gun-tower "looked less old" than the western one in the 1920s

<sup>28</sup> Sugar was probably the item most heavily smuggled into China in the early 1930s, because of its prohibitively high import duty See 九龍海關白外大事記, 1887-1986, (修政誌), *Jiulonghanguan Bauman Dashiji, 1887-1986, (Xiu Zhengzhi)*, [A record of major Events of the Hundred Years of the Kowloon customs, 1887-1986, (Draft)], Canton, 1987, 1931, and 1932 (estimates of smuggled sugar in 1932 were 640 tons in April, 20,984 piculs in May, and 74,400 piculs in July)

<sup>29</sup> *Administrative Reports*, App J, "Report on the New Territories", for the year 1932, p J3, refers to problems caused by "the heavy customs duty payable on the export of dried fish into China", for the Year 1934, refers to "continuing problems" due to the high import duty on dried fish, which, at \$3 per picul, exceeded the value of the fish for the year 1935, p J3, refers to the high import duties on "New Territories fish", which were causing difficulties

## 196

for fishermen in the north-east New Territories *for the Year 1936*, p. J11, where the District Officer notes that "dealers were further encouraged by a reduction in the duty on dried fish" It seems likely that the trade in both fresh and dried fish was affected

<sup>30</sup> For the history of the Kowloon Customs, see S F Wright, *Hongkong and the Chinese Customs*, Inspectorate Series, No 7 (Confidential), Statistics Dept. of the Inspectorate-General of Customs, Shanghai, 1930, S F Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs*, Belfast, 1950, and *Jiulonghatguan Bauman Dashuchi*, op cit The arrangements of the Patrol Districts and duty Stations were constantly re-ordered the arrangements mentioned in the text are the standard arrangement for most of the 1920s and 1930s As for staff, establishment and strength figures varied widely, depending on funds - levels of manning were particularly low in the early 1920s, when the Customs were starved of funds, but greatly improved in the 1930s

<sup>31</sup> This is a reference to a scheme introduced by the Customs in 1937 (see *Jiulonghatguan Bauman Dashuchi*, op cit., sub anno), by which every cow in the border area was to be registered and branded, and a record kept of every time it crossed the frontier All this was part of an attempt to control "smuggling" of cattle - i.e. the buying of new plough animals in the market, and bringing them back to the New Territories villages without paying export duty on them The animals had been taken across the frontier on the pretext that they were crossing the frontier to work fields on the New Territories side

<sup>32</sup> *Shatoupaode Lishe*, op cit ch 2 I have heard very similar comments from elders in Wo Hang in the New Territories Fees of ¥20 for a seed-pig, and ¥20 for a new wok were quoted to me

<sup>33</sup> Petition translated in Enclosure 22 to Item 204 (pp 272-273) in File No 66 *Extension of the Boundaries of the Colony*, op cit

<sup>34</sup> *Shatoupaode Lishe*, loc cit

<sup>35</sup> Elder at Wo Hang village

<sup>36</sup> Administrative Reports for the Year 1924, Appendix J, "Report on the New Territories for the Year 1924", p. J2

<sup>37</sup> The *Jiulonghatguan Bauman Dashuchi*, op cit has no records of events in the Sha Tau Kok area from 1925-28, suggesting that the Customs records for this period have been lost

<sup>38</sup> The District Officer had this to say "Conditions on the frontier, however, gave rise to considerable trouble and anxiety, the undisciplined and licentious conduct of the armed strikers pickets extending to acts of violence and robbery committed even within our Territories British Sha Tau Kok suffered especially in this respect, so much so that on two occasions at least armed forces had to be summoned to assist, in the first case in August when H.M.S. 'Foxglove' was despatched to recover two junks, laden with merchandise, which had been seized by the "strikers", and later, in November, when troops of the Punjab regiment were stationed at Sha Tau Kok in order to discourage the armed pickets who were terrorizing the inhabitants of British territory The close of the year brought more peaceful

conditions, under which the pickets contented themselves with exacting 'squeeze' from the local trade over the border" *Administrative Reports for the Year 1925*, Appendix J, "Report on the New Territories for the Year 1925", p. J2. In *Administrative Reports for the Year 1926*, App. J, "Report on the New Territories for 1926", p. J3, the District Officer notes that the fishermen in Mui Bay suffered particularly seriously from the boycott, as they were unable to fish except close inshore, because of the "disturbed conditions"

<sup>39</sup> These Communist guerrillas had appeared in various parts of the East River area since at least 1925. They were the direct descendants of the rebels who had operated near Yim Tin in the first decade of the century, and were closely related to the groups who took over the Hoi-Luk Fung area to form the "Hoi-Luk Fung Soviet" on three separate occasions between 1925 and 1928. They were the original nucleus of the "East River Guerrillas" of the war years and just after.

<sup>40</sup> The agreement specified that goods for the guerrillas would be treated as duty-free.

<sup>41</sup> *Jutonghaquan Baiwan Dashuyi*, op cit passim.

<sup>42</sup> The son of the executed man had committed a robbery in the market, and left a "paper" at the scene of the crime which implicated him. He had fled back to his home near Yim Tin, where the soldiers could not get at him. So they took the father and shot him instead, behind the Man To Temple in the market, in the presence of most of the district's young people. The fact that the son fled to the rebel-held area, and the "paper" left at the scene, suggests that the robbery was politically motivated, and the execution, too.

<sup>43</sup> *Shatoupaode Lishe*, op cit.

<sup>44</sup> *Administrative Reports for the Year 1910*, Appendix I, "Report on the New Territories", p. I6. The bulk of the Sha Tau Kok marketing district was in the New Territories, and there was a satellite market at Yim Tin, which could service the part of the marketing district in China if the Sha Tau Kok market did cross the frontier.

<sup>45</sup> *Administrative Reports for the Year 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934*, Appendices J, pp. J8 (and Table IV), J3, J2, and J17 (and Table IX), respectively.

<sup>46</sup> *Administrative Reports for the Year 1937*, Appendix J, pp. J7-10. "The typhoon of September the 2nd will long be remembered in the eastern parts of this District, where it caused much damage and suffering. Unfortunately, the height of the gale coincided with a very high tide, so that the swollen waters of Mui Bay were driven with double force westward up Starling Inlet, whence they had no outlet. The sea rose, about 2-5 m., in places 20 feet and more higher than it had been known to rise for many decades. The resultant damage was astonishing. All round the shores of Starling Inlet roads, bridges, paths, piers, and bunds were breached and broken up, and buildings overthrown. All the big bunds on Starling Inlet were [almost wholly overthrown]. Casualties were heavy, about 100 in [British] Sha Tau Kok. At Sha Tau Kok the Officer in Charge of the Police Station displayed initiative in [getting the dead buried, animal corpses burned, and obstructions cleared] and in arranging for a supply of rice and peanut oil from Kowloon which broke a ring at Sha Tau Kok Market who had greatly raised the prices of these two

## 198

commodities . The boat-building and repair sheds at Sha Tau Kok had entirely disappeared, with great loss of life . Special encouragement [from a relief fund] was given to the boat-builders at Sha Tau Kok to start all over again” The Customs Station at Sha Tau Kok was destroyed in this typhoon - see *Jiulonghaiguan Baiman Dashiji*, op cit, sub anno . In the 1945 aerial photograph it can be seen that far fewer than half of the buildings in the old market were still standing - the site had been, effectively, abandoned even for residential purposes . Since the War, all vestiges of the old market have been removed for development, and nothing whatsoever now survives of it

<sup>47</sup> *Papers Laid Before the Legislative Council of Hongkong*, printed by Noronha & Co., Government Printers (Sessional Papers), 1900, “Report on the First Year of British Administration of the New Territory, Laid Before the Legislative Council by Command of His Excellency the Governor” (No. 15 of 1900), p. 257, 1901, “Report for the New Territory for 1900, Laid before the Legislative Council by Command of His Excellency the Governor” (no. 28 of 1901), p. 6, *Administrative Reports for the Year 1933*, App. J, “Report on the New Territories for 1933”, p. J3 . In 1937 the Coronation was celebrated with electric light displays in Sha Tau Kok . *Administrative Reports for the Year 1937*, App. J, “Report on the New Territories for the Year 1937”, p. J11

<sup>48</sup> A party from the Basel Mission stayed in a “totally comfortless guesthouse” in the town in 1859, *Jahresberichte der Basler Mission*, 1859, and a noodle shop “at the entrance to the market” is mentioned in 1882 (Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-16, Nr. 45)

<sup>49</sup> Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-2, Nr. 46 (1853), Doct. A1-16, Nr. 45 (1882), *Jahresberichte der basler Mission*, 1859, “I do not like taking a horse in a market, for you always find wicked types there - thieves, opium smokers, gamblers - festering together and leading to predictable outcomes” . In 1859, Sha Tau Kok was the only market where the Basel missionaries had attempted to set up a station . Between 1899 and 1902, the District Officer was very concerned about the huge amount of gambling going on at Yim Liu Ha, with over 300 arrests in 1901, but this dropped away to “almost nothing” later, after the gambling house became available in Sha Tau Kok . *Papers Laid Before the Legislative Council of Hongkong*, printed by Noronha & Co., Government Printers, (Sessional Papers), 1901, “Report on the New Territory for 1901, Laid Before the Legislative Council by Command of His Excellency the Governor”, App. 6, p. 20 . 1902, App. 2, p. 342-344, *Ome’s Report*, op cit para 41, p. 49

<sup>50</sup> The route is described in 1848 (*Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, March 1848) . 1853 (Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-2, Nr. 44, see P. H. Hase, “Sha Tau Kok in 1853”, op cit: 1858-1859 (Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-4, Nr. 11, *Jahresberichte der Basler Mission*, 1859, and *Jahresberichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*, 1859) . 1863 (Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-5, Nr. 5) . 1884 (Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-19, Nr. 35), and 1893 (Basel Mission Archive, Doct. A1-27)

<sup>51</sup> 1688 Gazetteer, ch. 3 passim, 1819 Gazetteer, ch. 4, Chung Lap Pao edition, 1879 p. 51 . The 1688 Gazetteer specifically mentions several of the roads over the shoulders of Ng Tung Shan ( 鹽田邊 . 門下邊 ), the road from Sha Tau Kok to Sha Yue Chung (this is probably the implication of the 七都路 mentioned there) - this is the “official road” from which the village of Kwun Lo Ha (Guanlouxia, 官路下, “Below the Official Road”) takes

its name - and the road from Sha Tau Kok to Yuen Long. ( 黎洞壩 ) The 1819 Gazetteer adds specific references to the route from Sha Tau Kok to Kowloon ( 九龍遙, 佛門, 大坪 邊 ) The Sham Chun to Sha Tau Kok road is not specifically mentioned in the Gazetteers, but undoubtedly also existed at this time - the Cheung Sha Kwu Tsz at the summit of the pass on this road was founded in 1789 in part as a place of shelter for travellers on the road - See P.H. Hase, "Cheung Sha Kwu Tsz, an Ancient Buddhist Nunnery in the New Territories, and its Place in Local Society", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 29, 1989, pp. 121-157

<sup>52</sup> See 1688 Gazetteer, ch. 7, and 189 Gazetteer, ch. 11, Chung Lap Pao edition, 1979, p. 112

<sup>53</sup> See P.H. Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op cit. It is possible that the salt fish trade in this part of Mus Bay was centred on Kat O rather than Sha Tau Kok, although the fresh trade was certainly predominantly at Sha Tau Kok. There were "many salt fish dealers" on Kat O in 1891 (Basel Mission Archive, doct. A1-25, Nr. 70)

<sup>54</sup> These figures are calculated from the surveys of traffic on the roads in the area conducted by the Hong Kong Government in advance of the construction of railways in the area. See File C O 882 (P.R.O. London, copy at P.R.O. Hong Kong), despatch no. 59, Sir Matthew Nathan to Mr. Lytleton, received Feb. 13th 1905, and File C O 129/376 (P.R.O. London, copy at P.R.O. Hong Kong), despatch no. 165 (page 582), from Sir Frederick Lugard to Rt. Hon. Lewis Harcourt, 28th April 1911. The surveys were carried out on Dec. 11 and 12, 1904, and Dec. 26 and 29, 1910. The surveys were somewhat summary, but they suggest total traffic of this approximate amount. The Governor, in 1904, calculated that they suggested an annual total of 250,000 persons travelling on the road, with a quarter of them being coolies carrying loads.

<sup>55</sup> These statistics are taken from the 1910 surveys noted in n. 34. The figures in the surveys have been analysed and averaged to give the totals given in the text. The surveys consisted of a head-count of people passing a given spot, mostly the summit of the local passes (Shek Chung Au, Wo Hang Au, Mui Keng Au). The surveys were conducted twice, once on a non-market day, and once on a market day. The averages have taken into account the number of market and non-market days in each month. The Governor noted that the numbers of travellers was much higher at peak seasons, such as when the rice crop was being carried to Sham Chun. Taking all the imperfections of the statistics into account, they can still be used to give an impression of the amount of traffic in the area. The figures seem high, but, to put them into perspective, they are the equivalent of 1 lorry-load of goods entering the town every hour, and three double-decker buses every hour of a twelve hour day.

<sup>56</sup> *Administrative Reports for the Year 1926*, App. J, "Report on the New Territories for 1934", p. J2

<sup>57</sup> I would like to express my very sincere thanks to those elders, especially those in Wo Hang, who have suffered the long hours of questioning that I have subjected them to on this issue, and especially the late Mr. Lee Yau Shi, and Mr. Lee Chung (Lee San-tuen), both born in 1907, and Mr. Yau Chiu, born in 1911. I would also like to thank Mr. M. Y. Lee for his indefatigable help in setting up meetings and translating. Without his help this article could

## 200

nor have been written at all

<sup>58</sup> See the plan and cross-section of a typical 1853 Sha Tau Kok shop unit, taken from the drawings and descriptions of the Basel missionaries, in P H Hase, "The Alliance of Ten", in D Faure and H.Siu, eds, *Down to Earth*, op cit, and see also P.H Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op.cit

<sup>59</sup> D Faure, A Ng, B Luk, eds, *Historical Inscriptions of Hong Kong*, op cit Vol 1, pp 262-280

<sup>60</sup> The Hong Kong Museum of History has a set of Po Tau equipment

<sup>61</sup> *Julonghaiguan Baiban Dashiji*, op cit, sub anno.

<sup>62</sup> P H Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op.cit

<sup>63</sup> The Tai Po to Sha Yue Chung Ferry was also deeply involved in this trade. In 1939, the Customs came to an agreement with Tsang Sang, the leader of the guerrillas controlling the eastern side of Mirs Bay that the Customs would treat as duty-free goods anything imported through Sha Yue Chung for the guerrilla fight against the Japanese, but, while this trade was, therefore, not smuggling, it still faced major problems from Japanese attack

<sup>64</sup> *Papers laid before the Legislative Council of Hongkong, 1899*, printed by Noronha & Co. Government Printers, (Sessional Papers), "Extracts from Papers relating to the Extension of the Colony of Hongkong. Laid before the Legislative Council by Command of His Excellency the Governor: Extracts from a Report by Mr Stewart Lockhart on the Extension of the Colony of Hongkong" (No 9 of 1899), p 190, notes this boatyard as a significant business in 1898

<sup>65</sup> "Report by Mr Stewart Lockhart" (Sessional papers, 1899), op.cit. p.189

<sup>66</sup> For the Sha Tau Kok Branch Railway, see R.J Phillips, *Kowloon-Canton Railway (British Section) A History*, Urban Council, Hong Kong, 1990, pp. 84-93

<sup>67</sup> A. Macmillan, *Seaports of the Far East*, London, 1925 I am indebted to Mr. J Lanham for drawing my attention to this description.

<sup>68</sup> For the first two of these tablets see Faure, Ng and luk, *Historical Inscriptions of Hong Kong*, op.cit., Vol 1, pp 262-280, and Vol. 2, pp 376-379. The third is unpublished, and is now at the Hong Kong Museum of History

<sup>69</sup> A further, small, boatyard was at Kat O in 1912: see *Time Report*, op cit, para 76, p 55

<sup>70</sup> See, for instance, details on shops in Sai Kung in D Faure, "Sai Kung, the Making of the District and its Experience during World War II", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol 22, 1982, pp. 161-216, on Tsuen Wan in D Faure, "Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan", in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol 24, 1984, pp 46-104, and on Cheung Chau in J W Hayes, *The Hong Kong Region*,

1850-1911, op cit

<sup>71</sup> See P H Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op cit

<sup>72</sup> The largest shops were

- 1 Kwan Tai ( 居余 ) the household goods shop (Nai Wai, Niwei, 泥圍, in the Luk Heung)
- 2 Wang Hap ( 姜合 ) the household good shop (Yung Shue Au)
- 3 Kwong Yue ( 廣裕 ) the grocery (Fung Hang)
- 4 Yuen Tai ( 源泰 ) the grocery (Tong To)
- 5 Sam Lei ( 利 ) the grocery (Wo Hang)
- 6 Yan Hing ( 顏興 ) the grocery (Yim Tin)
- 7 Cheung Hing ( 張興 ) the fishmonger (Kwun Lo Ha, Guanlouxia, 官路下, in the Luk Heung)
- 8 Wa Shing ( 華盛 ) the fishmonger ("Sha Tau Kok" probably Sha Lan Ha)
- 9 Tak Hing ( 德興 ) the tobacconist (Luk Keng)
- 10 Tsai Cheung ( 彩彰 ) the silversmith (Tsai Muk Kiu)
- 11 San Cheung ( 善昌 ) the tailor and cloth dealer (Yim Tin)
- 12 San Lei ( 新利 ) the tailor and cloth dealer - the largest shop in the market - (Au Tau, Aotou, 凹頭 in the Luk Heung)
- 13 Tung Yue ( 同裕 ) the carpenter (Siu Hang, Xiaokeng, 小坑, in the Luk Heung)
- 14 Tung Hing ( 同興 ) the carpenter (Sha Tseng Tau, Shajingtou, 沙井, in the Luk Heung)
- 15 Cheung Sze ( 張四 ) the boatbuilder (Sha Tau Kok - Sha Lan Ha)
- 16 Sze Fong Ting ( 四才 ) the gambling house (Wo Hang)
- 17 Nung Sang Tong ( 榮生堂 ) the doctor (Yim Tin)
- 18 Wo Hing Tong ( 和興當 ) the pawnshop (Yim Tin)

Thus, of the largest shops, five were owned by Luk Heung people, four by Yim Tin Yeuk people, two by Wo Hang Yeuk people, two by Sha Tau Kok (Sha Lan Ha) people, two by people from the Tai Tan Yeuk (the area south-west of Sha Tau Kok across the sea, around Luk Keng and Nam Chung), and one each by people from the Hing Chun Yeuk (around Lai Chi Wo), Kuk Po Yeuk, and the Sam Heung. Thus, in 1925, not only were the largest shops all operated by people from the Shap yeuk area, but ownership of these larger shops was spread around most of the Yeuk areas of the Shap Yeuk. The Basel missionaries make it clear that the shops in the market in 1853 were also all owned by people from the surrounding villages - see P H Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op cit

<sup>73</sup> See J W. Hayes, *The Hong Kong Region, 1850-1911*, op cit for the places of origin of shop-keepers at Tai O and Cheung Chau, and J W Hayes, *The Rural Communities of Hong Kong*, op cit for those at Kowloon city. D Faure, loc cit gives details on those at Tsuen Wan and Sai Kung. The fisher ports in the Islands (Tai O Cheung Chau), and, to some degree Sai Kung on the mainland, had the largest percentage of non-indigenous shopowners, but Sha Tau Kok had fewer "outsider" shopowners even than Tsuen Wan

<sup>74</sup> A contact from Tsai Muk Kiu village for instance, said that she would get of the market with her wood, sell it, buy what shee needed inthe market, and return home, passing on her way home the women from Wang Shan Keuk still carrying their wood in Wang Shan Keuk

202

was a full hour's walk further from the market than Tsat Muk Kiu

<sup>75</sup> A contact from a mountainside village explained that they could not keep poultry: "We lived in the mountains, where there were too many snakes, civet cates wild cats, and other animals. Any poultry we kept would be killed. At the best we could keep just one or two for our own consumption."

<sup>76</sup> The Basel missionaries said in 1853: "They do not pay attention to fruit-trees, and fruit-trees do not seem to grow in this region. Thus, fruit like pineapples, oranges and mangoes are not found here" See P H Hase, "Sha Tau Kok in 1853", op cit

<sup>77</sup> Contact from Tsat Muk Kiu village

<sup>78</sup> The late Mr K M A Barnett told of a village house in an exceptionally remote mountainside village which he visited in the late 1930s, and which sported a cast-iron Victorian wash-hand stand and a framed picture of the "Stag at Bay" a hawker had picked these up in Hong Kong in a second-hand sale, and though it worth his while carrying these very cumbersome things around the mountain villages until he got a sale.

<sup>79</sup> This trade in imported vegetable seeds was noted by the District Officer in 1926. *Administrative Reports for the Year 1926*, App. J, "Report on the New Territories for the Year 1926", p J4 "It is noteworthy that nearly all the vegetable seed used comes from Chinese territory."

<sup>80</sup> Eastern no 66, *Extension of the Boundaries of the Colony*, op.cit, Enclosure No 12 in Item No 204, 28 April 1899