

CHEUNG CHAU 1850-1898 INFORMATION FROM COMMEMORATIVE TABLETS

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Cheung Chau 長洲 is a small island situated just over five miles west-south-west of Green Island at the western end of Hong Kong harbour. It is adjacent to the southern side of the much larger island of Lantau from which it is separated by a strait of just under one mile. The island is two and a quarter miles long at its greatest extent, but takes the form of a three ended dumb-bell, each of whose arms radiates for roughly a mile from the low beach area on which the town is built. The three arms reach a height of about three hundred feet, the northern being the highest and rockiest. The other two are flatter and more fertile, especially that to the south-west where most of the agricultural land is situated. The total area is 592 acres (.92 square mile),¹ of which 91.07 acres were registered as cultivated land at the turn of the century.²

There are no large areas of cultivated fields, as most of the fertile land lies in small valleys cutting inwards from the coastal beaches or on low plateaux in the hilly areas of the island. Because of its small size and its low features there is a general lack of perennial streams and this has always posed a problem for farmers and townspeople, though strangely enough it has never stopped them from staying there. The main anchorage is at Chung Wan facing due west, which together with Sai Wan to the south-west has attracted fishermen as a home port for hundreds of years. It is not an entirely safe anchorage as recent typhoons have shown, but, again, this does not seem to have deterred fishermen from operating from the island.

The census of 1911, taken a decade after it had passed under British rule,³ gave a land population of 3,244, mostly Punti, and a floating population of 4,442.⁴

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¹ The notes to this article are printed between pages 100-106.

In the course of a tour of duty in the New Territories I became interested in the island community and, when opportunities offered, made enquiries locally for information which would shed light on its history in the period before 1898, when it was still part of the San On 新安 district. I was particularly interested in local source material which would provide a picture of island life and society in the fifty years (1850-98) before the lease of the New Territories to Britain, and this article is based upon information obtained from three commemorative tablets which date from these years, and on other information available locally relating to several district associations of long standing, besides supplementary material from a variety of different sources.⁵

These tablets consist of slabs of slate-like stone, usually two feet by three feet in size, on which are cut characters a quarter of an inch high set out in two parts: an account of the origin and successful accomplishment of the scheme, followed by the names of all subscribers. Their object was to record the event; and to recognise the efforts of local persons, by recording the names of the donors for posterity. Tablets in this old form were quite common—they are found all over the New Territories—and could record any undertaking, such as the construction of a road or bridge, the repair of a temple, and so on. They were set up, no doubt, with the appropriate commemorative ceremony which is still current practice for such occasions. We have the well-developed Chinese sense of the historical element in everyday life to thank for the existence of such interesting records, which, by their nature, are immune from the ravages of white ants and the damp summer weather. They are not, however, free from the attentions of the man in the street as the present state of these three tablets show: in that the first was hidden by a double bunk, the second is exposed to the elements at a street corner and is often hidden by wood from an adjacent timber yard, and the third was serving as the back of a stove, part of which had to be demolished and the tablet cleared of a heavy deposit of soot.

The first of the Cheung Chau tablets is in the office building of the Tung Kwun 東莞 association and records the repair of the Po On study or school 宝安書室⁶ in the 5th year of T'ung-chih (1866-7); the second, dated 4th and 32nd years of Kuang-hsi

(1878-9 and 1906-7), stands in the street outside the Fong Pin hospital 方便醫院 telling how it came to be established; and the third, in an old house in Tai Shan Street, commemorates the establishment and repair of a defence office 鎮安公局 in the 2nd and 10th years of T'ung-chih (1863-4 and 1871-2).

The three tablets give information about the island population towards the end of the Ch'ing dynasty and, for instance, tell something of the various sections of the community, especially those where local leadership and authority rested; their links with other parts of the San On district and the Kwangtung province; their relations with the district government and other officials, civil and military; and the way in which such local communal needs as a hospital, schools, and a defence corps or local militia were met.

The nucleus of Cheung Chau society seems always to have been the community of fishermen and shopkeepers, the two being interdependent to a great extent though separated by many basic differences. There has, in addition, always been a farming community, but it has ever taken a third place. A hundred years ago it is likely that the majority of the land dwellers were connected with the island's shops, as proprietors or fokis, and in subsidiary trades and occupations associated with the three main sections of the community.⁷ Cheung Chau also served as the market town for over a dozen villages on the central and south-west coast of Lantau, the largest of which was Shek Pik with a population of 363 in 1911, and for the inhabitants of the outer islands. The Fong Pin tablet states that there were two hundred shops in the 1870's, from which it can be deduced that Cheung Chau was a flourishing commercial centre at that time.⁸ This is borne out by the house in which the defence association tablet was found, which is long, narrow and surprisingly large, with a small open courtyard in the middle. It has changed very little in the last hundred years, like many other houses in the town which date from this period and before.

In this urbanized community local power lay with two groups: the members of the WONG Wai Chak Tong 黃維則堂 of Nam Tau and Cheung Chau; and the larger traders and shopkeepers. The two were probably intermingled to some extent, in that some Tong members would be business men, but more investigation

is needed on this point. The Tong's position commands a special mention. It is the family organisation of the WONG clan 黃族 who are now in the 27th adult generation at Nam Tau, their principal seat. By allowing a twenty-five year generation period, this will place their origin in Kwangtung in the early Yüan dynasty (1280—1368). However, the introduction to their genealogical record¹⁰ was written by a descendant of the 10th generation in the eighth year of the Hung-chih reign (1492-3), so that it seems likely that the generation periods are slightly longer and that the family dates from late Sung times. The Tong itself stems from an eighth generation ancestor, WONG Hing-cheong, a scholar of the *chin-shih* 進士 degree who had six sons, giving the Tong six branches 房, of which the first and third only are now represented on Cheung Chau.

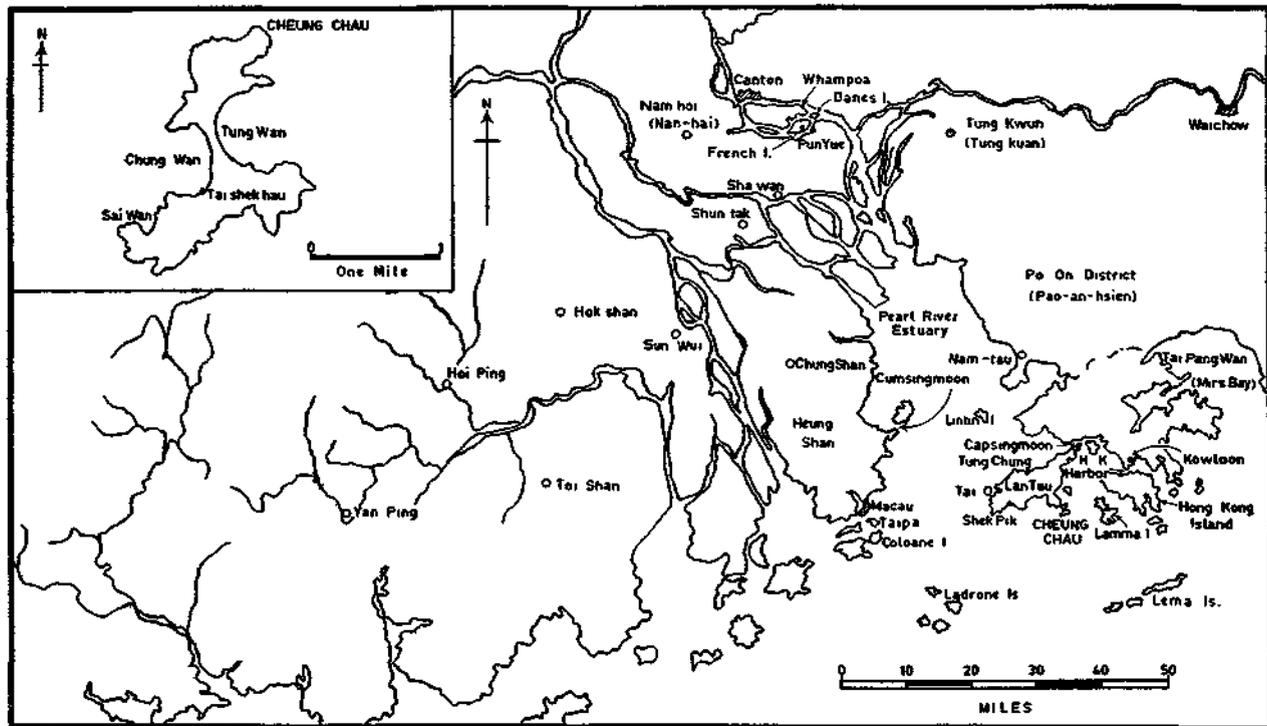
When the Tong acquired the Cheung Chau property is not stated; but since it was the sole ground landlord on the island in 1898 and all the other inhabitants held their leases from it and not direct from the Crown,¹¹ it must have been at an early date, and very likely before the formation of the Tong in the mid-fifteenth century. Whether the whole island was given to the Tong by one grant, or whether, having first acquired a substantial grant of land, it pursued an assiduous policy of aggrandisement which eventually resulted in total ownership, is not certain: but, if a grant, it seems to have been a not uncommon thing in the San On district or the Kwangtung province.¹²

The island community was not as isolated as its geographical position on the fringe of an outlying district might suggest. It was on the main route between Macau, the West River, and Hong Kong which, as the century drew on, was a factor of increasing importance. Cheung Chau began to share in the prosperity of Hong Kong, though it would probably be going too far to say that it owed its rise to the increasing fortunes of its neighbour.¹³ Besides its original families it began to attract settlers in larger numbers, among whom were many persons from adjacent parts of the province, such as CHOI Leung 蔡良, "the kind-hearted man of Tung Kwun", who originated the Fong Pin scheme in 1872. According to the tablet he had already been trading on the island for several decades before he began his

philanthropic work, probably one of many such, since the Po On tablet (1866) also mentions that "our Tung Kwun natives are flowing in for business". The lists of donors on the various tablets in temples and old buildings underline Cheung Chau's business and kinship links with the outside world.¹⁴ The local members of the WONG Wai Chak Tong seem to have maintained close contact with their parent body in Nam Tau; and, in much the same way, persons who had come to Cheung Chau to farm or do business, and had prospered during their stay, kept in touch with their families and friends in San On, Tung Kwun, Wai Chau, or from whichever district of the province they happened to come.

Relations with the minor officials in the immediate area also seem to have been close, as one might expect. The officers of the Tai Pang 大鵬 (Mirs Bay) battalion of the regular land forces, which was scattered in forts and guard posts throughout the eastern half of San On, seem to have contributed quite often to various repair schemes, whilst the salt, stamp, and Customs posts on the island automatically became victims for the collection of funds.¹⁵

Some of these contacts were useful when it came to collecting subscriptions and also when it was necessary to contact or bring pressure upon the district government; in this case the district magistrate of San On, whose yamen was at Nam Tau, the seat of their own WONG Wai Chak Tong. Fortuitously, the tablet in the defence bureau provides an instance of an approach to the district government. Four graduates, three of them almost certainly members of the Tong,¹⁶ and the managers of four large shops, besides other persons, petitioned the district magistrate WU¹⁷ when piracy and lawlessness threatened the lives and property of island people in the Hsien-feng reign (1851-61). It is interesting to note that they did not request the magistrate for direct assistance, but asked only that he issue a public notice urging the people of Cheung Chau to unite and provide "brave and strong village guards" 勇壯團練 for the defence of their island. One of the reasons why the magistrate was approached when this security organisation was being debated was very likely because his permission was required to raise and arm any body of men for defence purposes.¹⁸



Map showing Cheung Chau in relation to other places mentioned in the article.

Otherwise, the local leaders do not seem to have requested the magistrate's permission to carry out their various projects or even to have invoked his assistance. In the case of the repair of the Po On study in 1866 they seem to have acted without consulting the yamen. Again, there is no mention of the district magistrate on the tablet commemorating the establishment of the Fong Pin hospital in the years 1872-78, though this act seems to have owed much to an enlightened and energetic military official LAI Chun-pin 賴鎮邊, who was commander of the Kowloon garrison at the time.¹⁹ According to the tablet LAI stated: "I happened to be stationed in Kowloon in the *ting-ch'ou* year (1877-8) of the Kuang-hsü reign and was so pleased to hear about this man (CHOI Leung) that I paid a visit to him. I found him to be a merchant with an untiring devotion to philanthropic works, so I compiled a subscription book urging contributions by officials, gentry, scholars and merchants to help make this scheme a success . . ." The names of the donors on the commemorative tablet show that LAI had cast his net wide, but he did not secure the district magistrate, even as a subscriber.

Whether the magistrate knew officially of these proceedings is not known, but perhaps the sponsors did not inform him. Had they done so, particularly in respect of schemes for a poor house-cum-hospital and a school, both public amenities for which he had a measure of personal responsibility by virtue of being district magistrate, he would probably have been obliged to show his interest in one form or another.²⁰ Perhaps he chose to ignore them as it was likely that he had lost face by LAI's actions; or he may well not have known what was going on.

A considerable degree of self-help seems therefore to have been both necessary and unavoidable in isolated communities like Cheung Chau. Whilst the district government might take an interest in local schemes, it could not be expected to do much more; partly because of poor or inconvenient communications, but principally because there was very little money available to assist deserving projects.²¹ Local communities were expected to help themselves, and to set aside the means whereby an institution could be perpetuated and the structure kept in good repair. Cheung Chau was no exception to this general requirement, and

the tablets state that upon its establishment the Po On study was endowed with a shop and a house, both with their title deeds; and the Fong Pin hospital with two shops.

This abstention from many of the basic duties of local government on the part of the district authorities could lead to abuses when a powerful group of local leaders became unscrupulous through continued exercise of power, and lack of control and supervision from above. On Cheung Chau, as I have said, this group was represented by the WONG Wai Chak Tong, with whom the larger shopkeepers and important individuals were probably prepared to make common cause. The Tong owned all the land; its parent branch at Nam Tau must undoubtedly have included senior graduates and possibly retired officials; and the tablets show that some members of the Cheung Chau branch were junior graduates by examination or purchase.²² This group must have been able to exert a considerable pressure on the district magistrate and his secretaries regarding Cheung Chau affairs, and during their short three-year tour most magistrates must have felt that the Tong and the Cheung Chau people were capable of looking after themselves on what was, after all, a small and remote island, with a population less than that of many of the larger villages in the district.²³ In short, Cheung Chau interests were well represented if the Tong was honest and well-meaning, but not if its members were corrupt and ill-intentioned.

Turning again to the tablets, that relating to the Po On study is of great interest because of its connection with a prominent feature of Cheung Chau society which has so far only been mentioned in passing: the district association.²⁴

The district association is a social and charitable organisation organised on the basis of mutual assistance from among natives of the same district when living in another place. In a mixed settlement like Cheung Chau, where Hoklo and Tanka rubbed shoulders with Hakka, Chiu Chau, and Punti from various districts of Kwangtung province,²⁵ it was a distinct advantage to be part of a community which had troubled to organise itself for welfare purposes, as had several district groups on this small island a hundred years ago. These traditional media of mutual assistance warrant a closer look, especially as their existence is proof of the diversity of persons settling on Cheung Chau, its

popularity with businessmen and others, and of the degree of wealth and general prosperity there in the middle of the last century: since district associations, like present day Kaifong in the urban area, can only operate effectively (and, indeed, come into existence) inside a community which possesses prosperous elements. The district associations must also have been a useful counterpoise to the political dominance of the WONG Wai Chak Tong.

The association for natives of Tung Kwun is the largest, richest and probably the oldest of the Cheung Chau societies. It seems to have been established in the fifth year of Chia-ch'ing (1800-01) and in 1898 owned five shops, office premises and an ancestral hall which had been in existence for at least forty years, judging by an incense holder dated the ninth year of Hsien-feng (1859-60). Members and destitute persons of Tung Kwun origin could receive relief assistance from its funds and contributions, with which the Po On study, the ancestral temple, and later three large communal urn graves were also managed. Practically all the way from the cradle to the grave the member and his children could benefit from the operation of his association.²⁶

The association laid emphasis on social cohesion and the observance by its members of the customary proprieties. There was the traditional feast for all members every year at the lantern festival on the fifteenth day of the first moon, on which day the managers for the new year were elected, and the yearly worship of Kwan Tai 關帝, the god of war and patron god of the association, on his birthday on the thirteenth day of the fifth moon, when each subscribing member received a share of roast pork. Confucius' birthday and the two grave sweeping festivals were also celebrated by members gathering together.

Other commemorative tablets existed until only a few years ago which would have provided useful information about two other similar associations of long standing; those of people from Wai Chau and Chiu Chau 惠州及潮州 (combined) and from Sei Yap. One in the Wai Chiu clansmen's office was turned out during repairs after Typhoon Mary in 1960 and not replaced;²⁷ and what was probably the foundation stone of the Yik Sin Tong 益善堂, an association for Sei Yap natives, was taken down and

not put back when the house next door, which shared a party wall, was renovated about ten years ago. There is now no trace of these tablets.

However, two inscriptions still remain from these institutions. One, removed to the Wai Chiu section of the Kwok Man School in 1952, is dated the *wu-shen* 戊申 year of Kuang-hsü (1908-9) and is an ornamental granite head-slab with two side pieces, all with carved and painted characters upon them, the gift of wealthy members or else a sign of general prosperity in the Wai Chiu community. The present leaders of the association say that the date refers only to the handsome inscriptions and not to the establishment of their school, which is believed to have been in operation for many years before. This is likely as the office building is an old one and was already registered at the time of the lease of the New Territories as the Wai Chau and Chiu Chau Club, and the association has a reputed existence of over two hundred years.²⁸

Similarly a head stone is still in position inside an old building on the Praya belonging to the Sei Yap Yik Sin Tong, which records its repair in the 23rd year of Kuang-hsü (1897-8), the inscription being the work of WONG Wai Sum 黃槐森, said to be a teacher in the Tong's school. This Tong has an interesting origin, if the tale told by its present managers is reliable, in that it arose from a shipwreck which washed up a body carrying money on one of the Cheung Chau beaches. The ship was supposed to have been carrying emigrants back to China from San Francisco. The body was given decent burial by some Sei Yap persons who hit upon the idea of forming a Tong for the unity and betterment of their fellow countrymen on the island, and with additional subscriptions the initial windfall was used to build or purchase the present building, which was the only property owned by the Tong in 1898. A feature of the building was the establishment of an altar on the ground floor on which were placed the tablets of the original organisers and principal subscribers, but these have now all gone, though a shrine remains.²⁹

The fourth of these district associations of long-standing is the Po On 寶安 which has no connection with the old Po On study run by the Tung Kwun association. Its leadership in 1898

rested with the senior members of the WONG Wai Chak Tong, as it does today. It controls the old defence bureau which is rented out and the proceeds added to the association's funds. Very little information is at present available concerning its history beyond the fact that it existed in the Ch'ing period³⁰ and that it had a close connection with the members of the Tong, who were its principal patrons and sponsors.

Two other instances of communal enterprise remain to be mentioned. There was, before the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, an organisation of local leaders known as the Kaifong 街坊, which is now represented in most things by the Cheung Chau Rural Committee. The Kaifong had an informal constitution and its leaders were generally those persons who were already playing a leading part in the affairs of the four old district associations. The Kaifong had a general concern in Cheung Chau affairs whereas the district associations may be said, in the best sense, to have had a sectional interest.

The history of the Kaifong is less easy to trace than that of the associations, very likely because it was a less tangible body. However, it seems to have existed before 1898 because the land registers list a club house or *kung sor* 公所 which was described as public property. This must have been built and administered by somebody and the Kaifong is the most likely candidate. In the early part of this century the building probably housed a school and is known to have served as a headquarters for the town's watchmen.³¹ These were both likely activities for a Kaifong, and it is probable that it ran these and other central services before the British lease. Presumably, too, it administered CHOI Leung's Fong Pin hospital, which the registers describe as an asylum or 棲留所 and as public property. But whilst I am satisfied that there was a Kaifong on the island before 1898 which organised various functions on behalf of the whole community, there is, as yet, no information as to the date of its origin, though there is one clue which takes its history back another twenty years at least.³²

This was the provision of what are still known, to-day, as kaifong junks or *kai to* 街渡. These are cargo vessels which are managed by prominent persons for a group of financially interested

local parties who support the venture which is designed to assist the public by providing a safe, regular and reliable means of conveying cargo and passengers between the island and, in this case, Hong Kong. An agreed percentage of the profits is supposed to be contributed towards charitable and welfare purposes at need. Four junks appear on the list of donors to the Fong Pin hospital, and one of these, together with a fifth, appears on the list for the repair of the Tin Hau Temple a year later, in 1879. They have business names such as Tung On 同安 "universal peace", Kung Cheong 公昌 "public prosperity", Yee Tai On 義泰安 "righteous peace", Kung Yik 公益 "public welfare" and On Shun 安順 "peaceful tranquility", all propitious names for sea and river travel. It is likely that the two which made donations to the repair of the temple were kaifong junks since their generous contributions placed their names almost at the head of the list.³³

Scrutiny of the tablets and other sources of information mentioned in this brief account of Cheung Chau just before the British lease therefore leaves a vivid impression of a lively, bustling community, largely dependent upon its own leaders and local resources for initiating works of communal benefit, but making use of its links with the outside world, both by business and kinship, to help achieve its ends. So far as I know, there are no studies of the internal structure of a community of similar size and location in the same period available in any western language and it is therefore difficult for me to say whether Cheung Chau is similar or dissimilar to the general pattern of small coastal towns in South China.³⁴ It does, however, present a basic pattern of association and an enforced reliance on self-help which is typically Chinese, in which respects the community has altered little to this day.³⁵

NOTES

The notes are intended to amplify the text. The subjects of the longer notes are chosen rather arbitrarily and represent my particular interests.

J. W. H.

¹ *A Gazetteer of Place Names in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories*. (Hong Kong Government Printer, 1960) p. 88.

² Crown Rent Rolls, District Office Islands, New Territories Administration.

³ Under the Convention of Peking signed on 9th June, 1898.

⁴ *Papers laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong*, hereafter styled *Sessional Papers*. (Hong Kong, Noronha & Co., 1911) p. 103 (22) and (26). This article is mainly concerned with the land population, but for a good short description of the life, work and general background of the boat people, see G. N. Orme "Report on the New Territories 1899-1912" in *Sessional Papers* 1912, pp. 53-55.

⁵ The help of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and members of the Cheung Chau Rural Committee in tracing and gaining access to these tablets is gratefully acknowledged, and the great assistance given with transcription and translation by Messrs. LO Chu-chung, LEUNG Kun-siu and LEW Pang-fei, my former colleagues in the District Office.

⁶ I have translated *shue-shat* 書室 as study, rather than school, since it was intended for the private use of members and their children and not for outsiders. The association became known as the Tung Kwun Wui Sor 東莞會所 on 16th September, 1926 (see Land Registers), previous to which it had been registered as the Po On Shue Shat 寶安書室. I have presumed that with such a name, a school was operated as well as the office and ancestral temple. (See note 26 and text to which it refers.) For the distinction between the names Po On and San On see *Notes and Queries*, p. 146 below. The character 室 inscribed on this tablet is a simplified form of the character 室.

⁷ Local trades included shipbuilding: see Orme's report in *Sessional Papers* 1912, p. 55.

⁸ The number of Cheung Chau shops subscribing to the various schemes recorded on the tablets is as follows:— Po On study (1866) 38; Defence Office (1863-70) 66; Fong Pin hospital (1878) 98, and Tin Hau temple (1879) 125, from the 200 odd mentioned in the Fong Pin preamble.

⁹ Many shops are mentioned on the tablets, but they are all listed by their business names and not by the names of their owners, in which custom the Chinese does not follow the English.

¹⁰ The Tong has a substantial genealogical record, last produced between eighty and a hundred years ago and printed from stone blocks on hand-made bamboo paper. I am indebted to Mr. WONG Shing Yip 黃承業 of Cheung Chau who very kindly let me see his copy.

¹¹ "The whole of the island (Cheung Chau) was adjudged to belong to the WONG family and it is let out to various tenants on leases renewable every five years. All these leases were registered in 1906". *Administrative Report for 1909, District Officer, New Territories*. But see also G. N. Orme's unfavourable opinion of the initial survey and Crown rent roll in *Sessional Papers 1912*, p. 46.

¹² For example, before its tax-lord rights were extinguished (along with others) by the Hong Kong Government after 1898 as "not compatible with the principles of British administration" (Orme, *Sessional Papers 1912*, p. 46), the LI Kau Yuen Tong 李久遠堂 of Sha Wan 沙灣 appears to have owned a considerable proportion of all the cultivated land on Lantau island under an imperial grant made in the Sung dynasty (see LO Hsiang-lin "The Sung Wang T'ai and the location of the Travelling Courts by the sea-shore in the Last Days of the Sung", *Journal of Oriental Studies III* No. 2 (July 1956) p. 217, note 29). Nineteenth Century land deeds from the village of Shek Pik show that much of the village land paid tax to the LI family, a burden which was passed on to the purchaser when a "sale" took place. It is not known whether this Tong owned land elsewhere in the present New Territories but its main estates lay elsewhere. It is curious how the WONG Wai Chak Tong maintained its tax-lord position whilst the LI family's was extinguished.

¹³ It is a pointer to the island's increasing prosperity, as well as to its favoured geographical situation, that when the Chinese Maritime Customs first began to operate in the Hong Kong region in 1887 they set up a post on Cheung Chau. This had previously been operated by the Canton authorities as part of the "blockade" system set up in 1868-71. See Stanley F. Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs* (Belfast, William Mullin & Son, 1950) pp. 385-6, 584-6 and 708, and his earlier *Hong Kong and the Chinese Customs* (Shanghai 1930) which I have not yet seen. See also note 15. Old villagers on the Lantau coast opposite Cheung Chau can remember having to pass through the customs every time they came to the island to buy daily necessaries and sell their produce in the market.

The is not the place to discuss whether Cheung Chau's expansion was due to the rise of Hong Kong, or whether it was already in a flourishing condition by the time Hong Kong's expansion began in the 1840's, but available information points to a community which was already well-established and prosperous by the Hsien-feng period (1851-61), which would be rather early for Cheung Chau to owe its rise mainly to Hong Kong. The preamble to the tablet in the defence bureau mentions that "our forefathers came and lived in Cheung Chau several hundred years ago"; whilst the attention of pirates in the early years of Hsien-feng, also mentioned in the same tablet, seems more conclusive proof of the island's established prosperity than any other. A spate of repairs and expansion seems to have been going on apace in the Tung-chih period (1862-75) when most of the island's temples were repaired, the CHU 朱 family ancestral hall enlarged, many old houses were built or reconstructed, and the public buildings erected which these tablets commemorate.

¹⁴ 36 shops from Hong Kong, 28 from Peng Chau and 15 from Tai O contributed to the Po On study (presumably all or mainly of Tung Kwun origin); a few outside shops sent donations to repair the Tin Hau temple; hardly surprisingly no outside shops contributed to the Defence Bureau; but the subscriptions for the Fong Pin hospital came from a wide area and the list included over 20 shops and 40 individual persons (including 2 *tong* from Tung Kwun and Hok Shan), from Canton, Pun Yue, Tung Kwun, Nam Hoi, Shun Tak, Macau, and other areas of the province.

Most of the temples still contain tablets and other dated items which record their repair from time to time. However, the series is far from complete and many tablets have been lost. A typical instance is the loss of commemorative tablets from the Tin Hau Temple at Tai Shek Hau (the local place name). A prominent citizen remembers seeing a whole row of them fronting an outside wall when he was a young man, about thirty years ago, but they have now all vanished without trace.

¹⁵ For mention of these Cheung Chau posts see the following tablets:—salt (Tin Hau and Fong Pin), stamp (Tin Hau and Fong Pin), customs, e.g. tax on kerosene (Fong Pin). There was also a customs post on Lamma (Fong Pin), and there were various patrol boats (both tablets). The officer in charge of the military post on Cheung Chau is mentioned on the Tin Hau tablet, whilst the Fong Pin tablet lists eight officers of the Tai Pang battalion.

¹⁶ Only the defence bureau tablet gives donors their official ranks, though comparison with others shows that some of the graduates are mentioned there without their titles, i.e. persons mentioned in these tablets may also have been graduates. A comparison of the Tong's genealogical record with the names on the tablets is at first sight disappointing. The genealogical record does not record titles for the later generations, i.e. those of the generation whose names appear on the tablets. An additional confusion is that the clan generation names may not have been used on the tablets where business or personal names may have been recorded instead. However, I think we can be fairly certain that most of the WONGS 黃 on the tablets belonged to the Tong.

¹⁷ I have translated 稟請解明府 as "petitioned the district magistrate WU".

¹⁸ See Kung-Chuan HSIAO *Rural China; Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*, (Seattle, University of Washington Press 1960), pp. 294-306 for defence organisations in this period.

¹⁹ His precise title was described on the Cheung Chau tablet as 協鎮都督 which was probably the equivalent of colonel. A few years later he presented a large painted wooden commemorative tablet to the Hau Wong temple outside Kowloon City, on which his rank is described as *tsung-ping* 總兵 or brigadier-general (see Ralph L. Powell *The Rise of Chinese Military Power 1859-1912* (Princeton University Press, 1955) pp. 15 and 367). "The brigadier-generals were semi-independent, yet their units were scattered and practically sedentary."

²⁰ See T'ung-tsu CH'U *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (Harvard University Press 1962) chapter 9, especially pp. 161-164. I am indebted to Mr. W. Schofield, a former District Officer, and Cadet Officer, Hong Kong Government, for a reference to an inscription, now lost, relating to the foundation of the Lung Chun Yee Hok 龍津義學 in 1847. The school, which is still standing inside the former Kowloon walled city, was opened by the district magistrate WONG Ming Ting 王銘鼎 after the sub-district deputy magistrate HUI Man Sham 許文深 had reported that it was being built.

Orme in his "Report on the New Territories 1899-1912" in *Sessional Papers* 1912, p. 63, Appendix G, gives a school census for April 1912, by which time there had apparently been little change since 1898. There were 10 schools on Cheung Chau, average attendance 20, average monthly fee 38 cents.

²¹ See HSIAO *op. cit.* pp. 235-240 and CH'U, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162. Occasionally government-sponsored schools were granted land for their maintenance. In the 28th year of Kuang-hsü (1902-3) four years after the lease of the New Territories to Great Britain, land inside the boundary, previously used for the purpose of aiding a school still in Chinese territory, was sold by order of the Commissioner of Education for San On district. Part of the proceeds had also been used for offerings at the Confucian temple (in Nam Tau).

²² The group of titles on the defence bureau tablet is another demonstration of the widespread sale of degree titles and positions in the late Ch'ing period already remarked in several places. (see HSIAO *Kung-Chuan Rural China* p. 415 and chapter 10 of CH'U's *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing op. cit.*, pp. 168-173 and notes and, in more detail, Chung-li CHANG, *The Chinese Gentry. Studies on their Role in Nineteenth Century Chinese Society*, (Seattle, University of Washington Press 1955) pp. 102-111. For contemporary notices see Rev. Krone "A Notice of the Sanon District" in *Transactions of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Hong Kong), Part VI (1859) p. 84 and Arthur H. Smith *Village Life in China* (Edinburgh, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier c. 1900 p. 121, amongst others.)

No fewer than twenty-one persons have titles prefixed to their names, many of them minor ones, of which three-quarters were probably purchased.

Of the purchased titles and posts five were *chien-sheng* 監生 the first degree by purchase, which was the prerequisite to purchasing any superior post, such as that of district magistrate or prefect. It was the most commonly purchased degree. Two others were styled *chih-chien* 職監 and *chih-sheng* 職生. There were four *chiün-kung* 軍功 and four *chih-yüan* 職員.

There were also examination titles among the organisers and subscribers to the defence office. There were three scholars, who held higher grades of the *hsiu-t'sai* 秀才 or first degree by examination. One was a *kung-sheng* 貢生, another a *sheng-yüan* 生員, and the third held the grade of *lin-sheng* 廩生, all normally obtained by additional examinations by a literary chancellor appointed from Peking to examine *hsiu-t'sai* in the provinces, though occasionally granted for merit. Another was a *wu-sheng* 武生, a military *hsiu-t'sai*, an officer by examination, not purchase. These four were WONGs, almost certainly members of the Tong. A fifth, named TSUI, was a *tu-szu* 都司 or first captain and was probably a serving military officer in the locality. The final title is *ching sheng* 請生.

Of these various degree and title holders sixteen were named WONG 黃. The coincidence is probably too great to be accidental and the number of purchases testifies to the Tong's wealth, whilst the presence of genuine scholars, probably from the Cheung Chau branch, and the genealogical record, confirm its gentry status in the late Ch'ing period. There is no doubt that the main Tong was well entrenched and able to exert an "interest" with the district ruler and perhaps also with the prefect and viceroy at Canton.

²³ HSHIAO illustrates the slight degree of local control on another island, Ch'a K'eng, off the coast of Sun Wui district, Kwangtung, in *Rural China*, pp. 344-348. For his views on the effectiveness of imperial control see pp. 320-322 and pp. 316-320 for the role of the gentry in local affairs. CH'U, *op. cit.*, chapter 10, also examines the problem in general. Krone's article (see note 22), apparently written from long, first hand knowledge of the western part of San On shows that the district magistrate and his deputy and sub-magistrates had little control over the population (see especially p. 81), and perhaps wanted it less, e.g. "... the Mandarin of Fuk Wing (a sub-magistrate) confided to me, in a conversation that I had with him that he had nothing to do but to eat, to drink and to smoke", though over 200 villages were in his charge.

²⁴ The district association is of considerable antiquity in China. They were known in Sung times: see J. Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion 1250-76* (London, Allen and Unwin 1962) p. 222; see also Y. K. Leong and L. K. Tao *Village and Town Life in China* (London, Allen and Unwin 1915) pp. 78-9 for "the guild of co-provincials" and H. B. Morse, *The Guilds of China* (London, Longmans, Green 1909) pp. 35-48 for the provincial club with a merchantile bias.

²⁵ With consequent language difficulties. See R. A. D. Forrest (a former Hong Kong Cadet Officer) "The Southern Dialects of Chinese", Appendix No. 1 to V. Purcell *The Chinese in South East Asia* (Oxford University Press 1951).

²⁶ The word "member" may have too strong a connection with the modern club where one pays an entrance fee and monthly subscriptions. In fact, one was born into membership of these early district associations and participated in their activities by subscription, as required. Mr. LEUNG Yau (see note 28) confirms this for his own association, the Wai Chiu.

Because of their loose organisation and lack of proper safeguards, these associations often ran into trouble over money. To quote an elder's reminiscences from the manuscript note book of the Tung Kwun association (which the present Chairman has kindly allowed me to see and use), compiled about 1928 but referring to the previous sixty years, "in the past there were upright managers, but there were also embezzlers, who appropriated public funds without authority. When X was in charge of our association's funds he reported that he had lost the account books, so nothing could be audited. It was through my persuasion he produced fifty dollars to end the matter". Similarly, he records how, on the death of a leading member who had been instrumental in purchasing new property for expanding the association, the members asked his family for the accounts and title deeds in his possession. The relatives refused to part with them unless a payment was made first. Members naturally refused, "which is why no title deeds or accounts are available from the early period".

The manuscript also contains interesting material which illustrates difficulties faced by conscientious managers, e.g. "This house was originally the property of X. Unfortunately he was murdered and the body could not be found. His relative Y donated the house to the association. At first no tenant would take it and the fabric deteriorated. In the second year of the Hsian-t'ung reign (1910-11) repairs were suggested, but there were no funds. Loans of five and ten dollars were raised from district members at 1½ per cent interest. I loaned over a hundred dollars interest free, but it was still insufficient, so the association joined a ten dollar (share) money association 銀會 and drew the necessary balance. The repair then started and the front is now let for \$5.50 per month and the rear for \$4 per month."

There was also the lighter side. Speaking of the annual dinner party on the 15th day of the first moon an elder recalled "this year there were 28 tables with over 220 people. The caterer was X and the cost was \$7.20 per table. The food was no good and those present were dissatisfied and there was a lot of grumbling."

²⁷ A search was made for this and the Sei Yap tablet but, though hot on the trail of the first named with what appeared an infallible clue, a digging party regrettably drew a blank.

²⁸ In the Crown Rent Rolls the association is termed *kung sor* 公所 in Chinese and "club" in English. An inscription on one of the stone lions outside the Pak Tai temple, the largest on the island, states that it was donated by the Wai and Chiu Chau community in 1861. Mr. LEUNG Yau 梁有, born on Cheung Chau in 1875, attended the Wai-Chiu school, in the association's premises for two years. (1885-86).

²⁹ There was also a shrine in the Po On study. The tablet states that "a small fixture, known as the Tun Sin temple ('promote charity') has also been placed at one side of the hall, where wooden tablets bearing the names of the organisers are placed therein in commemoration of their devotion to the cause, irrespective of their parentage and place of origin."

³⁰ The Tung Kwun association note book says that there was a Po On Wui Sor 寶安會所 in the Ch'ing dynasty, but since this had always led to confusion their association (the Po On Shue Shat) was renamed the Tung Kwun Wui Sor in the 12th year of the Chinese Republic (1923).

³¹ A tablet (1953) in the Free School 義學 says that this institution dates back to 1921 and local leaders say that the *kung sor* was rebuilt at this time. The old *kung sor* was also known as the *hon kaam lau* 看更樓 or watchmen's building.

³² On the other hand it is unlikely that it predates the defence bureau (1863-70) as this would have been a suitable subject for the Kaifong to organise (there is no mention of it on the tablet).

³³ Mr. LEUNG Yau recalls that there were two Kaifong junks operating a daily service between Cheung Chau and Hong Kong before the lease (1898). One left Hong Kong (Sai Ying Pun) at 11 a.m., whilst the other left Cheung Chau at the same time. Both were sailing junks and took three hours to make the journey under good conditions and the whole day if otherwise. They were subscribed and run by a number of local gentlemen for public use. A steam Kaifong vessel was bought with public subscriptions in 1910. *Administrative Reports, District Officer, New Territories, 1910.*

³⁴ There are now eight district associations on the island for natives of the districts of Po On 寶安; Tung Kwun 東莞; Wai-Chiu combined 惠州及潮州; Sei Yap 四邑 ("The Four Towns") i.e. Toi Shan 台山, Sun Wui 新會, Hoi Ping 開平, Yan Ping 恩平; Ng Yap 五邑 ("The Five Towns") i.e. Hok Shan 鶴山 plus the towns of Sei Yap; Shun Tak 順德; Chung Shan 中山 and Chiu Chau 潮州 (separate), the four last named formed since 1945, all offering a variety of social, educational and charitable services to members.

³⁵ HSIAO, in his interesting and lengthy study of rural China in the 19th Century, does not deal specifically with the internal organisation of the market towns. The market town of Tai O at the south west end of Lantau island (land population 2248 in 1911) would provide an interesting local comparison, though material is not so readily available as for Cheung Chau. I hope to write a similar outline account at a later date.