

My Life and My Encounters - XIX
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Cadet Officer, Class II, Confirmed
District Officer South - 1950/51

Law Examination for Cadet Officers

The old General Order 128 setting out Government's requirement for Cadet Officers to sit for and pass Law Examination was revised by Secretariat Administrative Circular No.32 of 11 June 1949; the revised requirement was re-set as follows:

" 128. (1) An examination in law for Cadet Officers will be held once in each year.

(2) The Examination will consist of three papers as follows:-

Paper 1.

(a) Questions on the following seven Ordinances, of which every officer is required to have a good knowledge:-

- (i) the Interpretation Ordinance, No.31 of 1911;
- (ii) the Magistrates Ordinance, No.41 of 1932;
- (iii) the New Territories Regulation Ordinance, No.34 of 1910;
- (iv) the Supreme Court Ordinance, No.3 of 1873;
- (v) the Police Force Ordinance, No.41 of 1948 (Part VII and Section 8 only);
- (vi) the Public Servants Liability Ordinance, No.10 of 1947; and
- (vii) Crown Fees Ordinance, No.5 of 1870;

with subsequent amending Ordinances;

Reference to the text will not be allowed.

(b) Questions on the Letters Patent, Royal Instructions and the Standing Orders of Legislative Council, designed to test the candidate's knowledge of the whole machinery of administration.

Reference to the text will be allowed.

Paper 2.

A Paper on the whole of the Ordinances of Hongkong as contained in the Fraser Edition, 1937, and the bound volumes from 1932 onwards. This paper will be so designed that the candidate who has learned how to find his way about the

Ordinances and Regulations will score an advantage over the candidate who has not.

Reference to text will be allowed.

Paper 3.

A general paper on criminal law and procedure in preparation for which candidates will be expected to have read Kenny's "Outline of Criminal Law", Phipson's "Manual of Evidence" and "The Magistrates" by Alison Russell.

(3) Cadet Officers will also be required before taking the Law Examination to attend at the Magistrate's Court for prescribed periods during the hearing of Summary and Committal cases, until the Magistrate is satisfied that they have acquired an adequate knowledge of the procedure in such cases. They may also be required to attend the Attorney General's Chamber for a stated period, which will normally be one month.

(4) Long leave will not normally be granted to any Cadet Officer until he has passed the above examination, and failure to qualify within four years of first appointment may also result in the withholding of increments."

By Command,

J.F. Nicoll,
Colonial Secretary.

My application to sit for the Law Examination was approved. On prior submission to the Attorney General for review of my Law Exam papers at Oxford, Ian Gordon Williams and I were exempted by Command from Paper 3 on the ground that both of us had both passed our Law Exams at Cambridge/Oxford, when the two of us were attending our Course I. By Secretariat letter 4066/46 of 23 Dec 49, I was officially informed that I passed my Law Examination held on 12th and 13th December, 1949.

Confirmation to the Permanent Pensionable Establishment

By mid January, I was asked to appear before the Acting Colonial Secretary, Mr. R.R. Todd, when I was told that my confirmation to the Permanent and Pensionable Establishment had been approved. However, my attention was drawn to my weakness in the use of the English language, and I was asked to find my ways to improve it. Earlier on in June 1949, I was appointed to the Sub-board of Examination in place of Mr. Yu Wan. The sub board was devised to test the working knowledge of Ex patriat Police Officers and Prison Officers in the use of Cantonese dialect, a prerequisite for their confirmation to the P.P.E. Early in February 1950, I

received a notification from the Registrar of the University of Hongkong inviting me to attend a Congregation to be held in March 1950, at which I would be formally conferred the Degree of a Bachelor of Arts, which had previously been awarded to me as a War Time Degree by means of a Temporary Degree Certificate dated 23rd January 1942. On 20th February 1949, I received a letter from the Deputy Colonial Secretary Mr. C.B. Burgess, that I was to be appointed District Officer, South w.e.f. 6 March 1950. On assumption of office, I was additionally appointed as a Special Magistrate in accordance with the provision of Part III of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance which empowered me to hear and determine cases in Small Debts Court as provided in that Ordinance. I was additionally appointed an Official Justice of the Peace w.e.f. 10 March 1950. I was pleasantly surprised that at the relatively young age of thirty three plus, the honour of a Justice of the Peace, over and above the honour of a membership of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire had been conferred upon me. In a way, the double honour was analogous to the highly coveted honour of ancient Chinese tradition of a country boy passing the Imperial High Examination which assured him an appointment to the then Imperial Civil Service.

The Block Crown Lease of 1905

On reporting to duties as District Officer South, I found myself once again serving under Mr. J. Barrow, under whom I learnt a lot, way back in the early days of 1945/46 during the British Military Administration. It was John Barrow, the then D.O., N.T., who insisted that I should be made a Justice Of the Peace, to be fully functional as a District Officer. Wasting no time he sent me out on the first day with a demarcator to attend to a Lands job at New Kowloon. Before going out, he order the relevant copy of the Block Crown Leases of 1905 be brought up on his conference table for his examination. I recall the Block Crown Lease was for Survey District No.3, which covered Tung Tau Tsuen and the Kowloon Walled City. It had the signature of the famous Governor Sir Matthew Nathan. John Barrow stressed that it was very important for a District Officer to know what were actually included in the printed text of the "Block Crown Lease". He took pains to explain to me how he himself had mastered the reading of such a 4-page long single sentence with only one **principal verb** which was qualified by literally dozens and dozens of subordinate Clauses specifying the "Exceptions" and "Reservations" excluded from the demise, by underlining with red ink all the Exceptions and with green ink all the Reservations. I later tried his way and I found it worked. Before long, I too knew my way round the Block Crown Lease quite well. I soon began to enjoy reading the fascinating phrases and clauses included in the Lease, such as "...rights of ingress, egress and regress...", "...with horses or without horse..."; and it really fascinated me to note the reservation as a right of the Crown "...to conduct

water mains, drains, sewers..... cables for telegraph and telephone...across, over or under..."but **not** for "electricity or power supply". It also fascinated me to note that the Crown had reserved unto itself, the property of the "....vines, minerals, rocks, sand, gravels etc....beneath the surface of the ground...", the "....light, air, etc.... over and above the surface of the ground....."; that agents or servants of the Crown may go in and inspect the ground at any reasonable time on any day of the year, excepting ".... on Christmas Day and on Good Friday...." For all these I thank my teacher and superior officer, Mr. John Barrow, God Bless him.

The Demarcation District Sheets.

The D.D. Sheets (proper name: Demarcation District Sheets) in fact were sunprint copies of what was originally the Survey Sheets attached as an Appendix to the bound copy of the relevant Block Crown Leases. The shapes and the approximate boundary of every plot of paddy field within the Survey District were marked by sunprinted lines and serial numbered. Incorporated in the bound volume of each Block Crown Lease was a Schedule. In the Schedule, there were listed the Serial numbers of every Lot, against each of which was noted the name of the owner as at 1905, and also the amount of Crown Rent payable for each such lot. The Lots listed on such Schedules were known and usually referred to as "Old Scheduled Lots". The ownership of the lands were originally claimed before 1905 by owners named in the list on the Schedule. Their lawful titles were verified and confirmed by a Statutory Board upon whose orders the Schedule was attached to the relevant Block Crown Lease, which were validated by an Ordinance way back in 1905. Any land which were not so claimed and listed on one of the (over a hundred) Schedules were then declared property of the Crown, otherwise known generally as Crown Land which the Crown might subsequently grant to some one else.

Agricultural Lands in New Kowloon

Except for registration of instruments related to titles of private land, New Kowloon was explicitly declared as outside the Jurisdiction of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance. Ancient titles of private land held by the original indigenous inhabitants were incorporated in the 4 Block Crown Leases for 4 Survey Districts; namely, S.D.1, S.D.2., S.D.3., and S.D.4. Roughly Survey District No.1 (S.D.1) covered places such as Kau Wah Keng, Cheung Sha Wan and Li Cheng Urk; S.D.2 covered Shamshuipo, Shek Kip Mei, Kowloon Tsai and Kowloon Tong; S.D.3 covered Kowloon City, Sai Tau Tsuen, Tung Tau Tsuen, Ngau Chi Wan and Diamond Hill; and S.D.4 covered Ngau Tau Kok, Kuan Tong, Sau Mau Ping & Lyemun. For the urbanized land holdings such as the tenements in Shamshuipo or the garden house lots in Kowloon Tong, the original titles (if any) would have been surrendered in exchange for newly granted Crown Leases. By so

doing the owners opted their landed interests out of the Jurisdiction of Part II of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance, which in effect also meant that District Officer South, in his capacity as an Assistant Lands Officer, would have no say over them. Their title deeds would be registered with the Registrar General's Office. For those privately held lands (mainly paddy fields) the titles of which had not been so surrendered in exchange, their title deeds and conveyance instrument (if any) would remain registerable at the Lands Office of the District Officer South. Other than that Lands Administration in the New Kowloon came under the direct jurisdiction of the Supt. of Crown Lands and Survey which functioned under the umbrella of the Public Works Department.

Land Resumed for the then extended Kai Tak Airfield

The job I was assigned to tackle was the compensation money payable for the land which were forcibly taken by the Japanese Occupation Forces during the War for the construction of an extended Airfield at Kai Tak. By 1948 Government had decided not only to keep the airfield as extended but to further extend the airfield with a new runways, stretching right into the heart of Diamond Hill. It was also decided that fair compensation in accordance with the provision of the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance, should be paid to all owners affected, including those who had their land taken forcefully by the Japanese during the Occupation. It was for this reason, the Block Crown Leases the Schedules, the D.D. sheets, the Deeds Registers, the Crown Rent Rolls (referred to as "A" Books) together with the Engineers Survey Plans for the proposed extended Airfield had to be looked at, carefully checked by the staff of the New Territories Administration. The Departmental conference held on the first day upon my arrival, was part of the elaborate exercise. Apart from myself, the D.O.'s Interpreter (Mr. Lo Cho Chi), the Lands Clerk (Mr. Ng Yin Lok), two Demarcators, and a representative from the Public Works Department participated, it was chaired by the D.O., N.T., Mr. J. Barrow. The Land Bailiff, Mr. Simpson, who ought to have been there, had yet to return from his long rehabilitation leave overseas, for which reason he was absent. The fair price for compensation at the time (1950) was, if I remember correctly, 30 cents per square foot; but the owners were given the option to apply for the grant land of the same square footage at any other parts of the New Territories. I recall in the case of one of my former teachers he opted to take an exchange in lieu of case for the same number of square feet at Ting Kau, beyond Tsun Wan for his land thus resumed. For his new site at Ting Kau he had to pay a conversion premium at the rate of (? 40 cents per square foot for a Building licence so that he could build a three storey house of his own by the sea side below the level of the main Road leading to Castle Peak.

Assistant Lands Officer

As a District Officer I was automatically an Assistant Lands Officer for the purposes of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance. As an A.L.O. I had several quite separate and distinct functions; namely, (i) as the Registrar of Instruments for Land Conveying including sale, mortgage, succession, redemption, judgment etc etc (ii) as a Judge with powers to adjudicate land disputes and decide the question, if necessary, according to Chinese Customs, (iii) as agent to the Crown which owns all the land other than those lawfully claimed by private owners, and manage them on behalf of the Superintendent of Crown Lands and Surveys, (iv) as the sales agent for the Crown in granting new titles of lands to private persons who would normally be required to bid at public auction to buy Crown Lands for all sorts of purposes, or on rare and special occasions to grant by private treaty usually to communal organizations land for charitable purposes.

Lands Titles

Apart from the Block Crown Leases described earlier on in the above, which spelt out in great details what rights the private owners had for the land they inherited from their ancestors or acquired through conveyance from a previous owner, **New Grant Lots** had their general conditions codified in Gazette Notifications promulgated from time to time, spelling out in just as much details, the rights, exceptions and reservation etc, similar to those incorporated in the Block Crown Leases. Special Conditions applicable to the particular lots would normally be specified in the Gazette Notification inviting the public to attend the public auction on such a date and at such a time in such a place to bid for the purchase of the particular pieces or parcels of land. By Regulations made for the purposes of Part II of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance certain statutory Forms were prescribed for use in all forms of Conveyance. Expressed provision in the Ordinance also spelt out what would be deemed by law to have been implied when any such statutory Forms were used. Thus a working knowledge of the detail provision in Part II of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance was a pre-requisite for all District Officers whose jobs it was to assist in the proper Administration of the New Territories.

Registration of Title Deeds

When lands changed hands the instruments for the conveyance had to be registered. For the New Territories only the prescribed Forms for the various kinds of conveyance may validly be used. Not only that such Forms had to be used, but also such Instruments must be registered with the Lands Office. The New Territories Regulation Ordinance further prescribed that such Instruments must be registered by a Memorial in accordance with the prescribed Form. On registration, the Conveyance Instruments would each be given a serial number with the date as well as the time at which

they were tendered at the Lands Office for Registration truthfully recorded. The District Officer, in his capacity as an Assistant Lands Officer would sign a certificate certifying that the instrument had in fact been registered at such a time on such a date at such a Lands Office. Thus one of my duties was to sign such Certificates which were incorporated not only in the Conveyance Deeds but also in the Memorial used to register the conveyances. 1950 was the commencement of the period when Hongkong was suffering from acute housing shortage. Many quite respectable people experienced great difficulties in buying or renting decent places as their home; so many began to buy pieces or parcels of agricultural land at the fringes of the urban areas like Diamond Hill or the Hillsides near Shamshuipo, on which they would build pretty good temporary structures. Amongst those who bought such lands and came to the office to registered their titles included several of my former classmate in schools, two former teachers of mine, 3 former Generals of the Kuomintang Army who were garrison commanders for the areas where my war time service unit "The British Army Aid Group" operated. As these temporary structures were within the limits of New Kowloon, their construction were outside my jurisdiction. These were the individuals who had actually paid for the agricultural land which they bought from the indigenous local villagers. There were thousands of others who were simply squatters, who built huts all over the places in New Kowloon; on Crown hillsides as well as on uncultivated private agricultural land. They soon became shanty towns culminating to the big fire of Christmas 1953 which brought about the formation of a special department to deal with squatter control on the one hand; and the resettlement by way of rehousing of squatters on the other. (For those who wish to read more about Hongkong's squatters problems and government's effort to control and rehouse them, reference to the famous essay of the then Colonial Secretary, Mr. Claude Burgess, entitled "A Problem of People" - available in a pamphlet form or alternatively in the form of an Introductory Chapter I of Hongkong Government's Annual Report of 1954 - is highly recommended).

Judicial Function

Part II of the New Territories Regulation Ordinance also empowers the Assistant Lands Officer (i.e., the District Officer) to hear and determine questions relating to land in dispute, and for which he was also provided with a power equivalent to that of a Judge of the Supreme Court, and where he find it necessary, he was further empowered to decide the question in accordance with Chinese Customs and Usages. The only restriction was, as an Assistant Lands Officer, the District Officer may not decide such questions, the value of which exceeded the prescribed limit at the time. In this connection, I recall on one occasion, a highly respected and very experienced veteran practicing solicitor, Mr. Frank Looseby, pointed out to me in very sincere and well

intentioned words as follows: "...Mr. Tsui, do you realize the law has given you exceptionally wide power...In deciding the land dispute case as you do, according to what you believed to be in accordance with the Chinese Customs you are in effect laying down the law...It could be far reaching..." While the kindly words of the learned Mr. Frank Looseby still ring in my head right up to this day, I have forgotten what exactly was the point at issue when I made my decision in that early days of 1950. However, I vividly recall on another occasion, in the company of the learned Mr. Brook Bernarchi (who later took silk to become a Q.C.) and the learned Mr. Frank Hammond, who was then Head of of of the largest solicitors firms in Hongkong, when I administered an ancient Chinese Customary Oath Taking Ritual (by way of chopping off the head of a cock in front of the Main Altar at the Kwan Tai Temple in Tai O) in determining the bona fide of a claim of a debt for which a piece of land was orally mortgaged, both parties to the dispute were satisfied with the result and both of the learned Gentlemen were impressed. The decision was subsequently duly registered as a Judgment by the Assistant Land Officer.

As an Agent to the Crown

As the sales agent to the Crown, I conducted quite a number of public auctions at which pieces and parcels of land were sold the highest bidders. A prime site at the junction of Chung On Street and Castle Peak Road, was sold at Auction for the then record price of (?\$4.00 a square foot) to the China Light and Power Co. Ltd, in competition with another bidder representing the Luk Hoi Tung Hotels and Investments Interests. Half an acre of hill slope near the top of the Peak on Lantau Island was sold to Brook Bernarchi for tea planting at the price of (? 5 cents per square foot). However, a "giveaway" type of grant was a private treaty grant of some 75 acres on Lantau Island at the nominal premium of \$1.00 per acre to the Trappist Monastery by the personal direction of the then Governor, Sir Alexander Grantham, who thought it was a wonderful idea to have a group Trappist Monks running a dairy farm on Lantau Island thus serving as an object lesson to many of the Bhuddist Monasteries and Nunneries on Lantau. Another giveaway grant was the grant by private treaty of a whole Island, Ne Ku Chau, afterwards renamed: "Hey Ling Chau" to Dr. Fraser of the Mission to the Lepers for a Leprosarium. The several sizeable Textile Mills bought their lands before my time, thus I have not had the pleasure of entertaining their requirement. If my memory serves me right I recall being instrumental to the granting a piece of land to the University of Hongkong at the top of Lantau Island for a Survey Camp, as the then Professor of Civil Engineering, Prof. Readman was quite optimistic that one day, the Peak on Lantau Island would be as prosperous as the Victoria Peak on Hongkong Island.

Functioning as the Building Authority

In two or three sections of the Buildings Ordinance, it was provided that the District Officers in the New Territories would function as the "Building Authority" in the exercise of certain statutory powers including approval of building plans. The technical details relating to building plans and Engineering work were all "Greek to me"; my task boiled down to no more than just the post-office, passing the files to and from several of the interested government departments. I was to refer the proposals submitted to me first to the Medical Officer of Health for comments on the Hygienic requirement, then to the Fire Brigade for comments on Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting requirement, and in certain cases (e.g., Cinemas) to the Police Department for comments on crowd control and on security requirement, and if the building were a school to the Education Department for comments on educational requirement etc etc. When all such socio-miscellaneous requirements had been specified, the plans together with the co-ordinated specifications would then be returned to the architect under my name; whereupon, the architect would amend his plans accordingly. When duly amended the plans and reinforce concrete calculations would be referred to the Structural Engineers in the Building Ordinance Office of the P.W.D. for technical vetting, and when duly processed, the approval would be sent out again in my name as the Competent Authority, the District Officer South signing on the behalf of the District Officer, New Territories.

Tsun Wan in 1950

By 1950, Tsun Wan was already being developed into a potentially prosperous industrial township. Vegetable gardening which was the prewar feature of Tsun Wan gradually gave way to factories and workshops of all sizes and shapes. The former Hume Ripe Works at north Tsun Wan which was built right on the bank of a stream, was taken over by Cha Chi Ming who converted it into a Dyeing Factory. Closeby to its south was the Mayer Silk Mill, where beautiful embroidered silk piece-goods were being woven by sophisticated automatic looms using punch-holes gadgets for the desired patterns. At least three spinning mills, one at the back of the new Police Station, another further up the Castle Peak Road on the hill ward side with the 3rd by the seaside below the road level were already in operation. A thermoflask factory was also operating at the back of the Police station next to the spinning mill. Another even more enterprising spinner was bold enough to build his mill miles away, as far away as Sham Tseng, right nextdoor to the Brewery. Beneath the Castle Peak Road level near the 10th mile stone at the reclamations near the sea was the newly constructed maturing tanks where urban night soil collected by the Sanitary Department were deposited and allowed to mature so that when matured the Vegetable Marketing Organization could distribute them by its fleet of lorry-tankers to the vegetable farmers all over the

New Territories as much welcomed fertilizer.

Layout Plans

As new factories and workshops were built, new teguments to house the workers were also being built. To serve the needs of the growing communities, shops and restaurants as well as cinemas followed, and with them schools for the kids also. For the potentially prosperous industrial township of Tsun Wan there already existed a fairly sophisticated set of Layout Plans quietly prepared by some planners in the Public Works Department. The technical details in the Layout Plans had to be meticulously taken note of by architects involved and closely followed by the staff in our Lands Office, the Medical Officer of Health as well as by the technical staff in the Building Ordinance Office. These "layout plans" provided, amongst other things, technical details vital to the working of the drainage arrangement, so as to ensure that waste water from the new buildings which might not be built in ten or twenty years time, when built, would flow by gravitation, and not caught in pools of stagnate water in the middle of a township. When I looked at one of these plans, I came across symbols such as CD+16 or CD+20 in small circles which were meaningless to me. On consulting my land clerks I was told that CD stood for "Chart Datum", which for practical purpose meant that the architect would be required to raise the ground level of the ground floor of his new building to the level of 16 ft or 18 ft above certain point related to the sea level. All these were quite boring to me who was totally uninitiated in subjects of engineering technicality. The only impression left in my mind at the time was my seeing the new buildings being built with their ground floor levels raised to a height somewhere about the roofs of the village houses by their side, appearing quite ridiculous if not crazy to me. To think of it now, all these represented foresights on the parts of the planners, who must have a tremendous job to convince the laymen like me that all these were absolutely necessary. Be that as it may, it was not realized then that an Underground railway was to be built some 30 years later, provision had to be made for one of its Terminals to be placed here.

A new Reservoir in the Offing

There was then the proposal of constructing yet another reservoir near Tai Lam Chung, and to ensure sufficient water would flow into the proposed new reservoir, a new catch water had to be built along the 100 metre contours skirting round the foot of Tai Mo Shan. In a 1 to 20,000 scale map graded confidential, the affected parts were coloured red. Mr. Barrow was shocked by the proposal which virtually rendered one quarter of the New Territories, water for paddy cultivation for the whole area on the west side of Tai Mo Shan would be cut off, and paddy cultivation was the basic economy of the rural population in this part of the New Territories. This was so because the catch water for

the Shing Mun Reservoir constructed along the 200 metre contour was bad enough as it was, and the proposal was to add another catch water at a lower level of 100 metre contour, right down to the levels of many old villages. He raised hell, but this time it was to no avail. For the swelling population of the Colony of over two and half million must have water to drink; their needs must take precedence over the needs of a few paddy cultivators, however charming or miserable they may be. While I shared the misgivings as Mr Barrow had, I was soon told to swallow it too! As a token "consolation" the then Acting Director of Public Works (? Mr. Weir) agreed to spend a few days out with me touring over the entire Lantau Island. The tour ended up with the promises of (a) building a small reservoir in a valley near Pui O on Lantau Island to be connected with a submarine pipe across the narrow strait of sea to provide drinking water for the inhabitants on Cheung Chau Island, and (b) building a small dam about two miles up the Keung Shan Valley to be connected with a 6" pipe to conduct water for the inhabitants at Tai O. It did not occur to my mind at the time, the concessions amounted to robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Lantau Island

I love Lantau Island. As a small boy when still in school, I took part in a launch picnic which took us right round the Island. It took the whole day to get round and a part of the voyage sailing to the south of the Island was marked by pretty rough which caused me sea sick. As an undergraduate at the University of Hongkong, Prof Hsu Ti Shan of the School of Chinese Studies used to take us up to Monastery at Ngan Ping for long week-ends to observe how the Buddhist monks lived and prayed. During the British Military Administration the Royal Navy brought me to visit the various parts of the Island, once by Mine Sweeper, several times by Harbour Defence motor Launches and twice by their sea-planes called Sea Otters. The Marine Police brought me there by their largest Police Launches (Ocean Going Tugs). On top of that I took the Ferries, one of the routes took some three hours to Tai O via Ma Wan and Castle Peak, the other took just about an hour to Silver Mine Bay for Mui Wo. When I returned to serve as D.O South I had my own departmental launch, an Australian built light wooden tug; and when I entertained visitors (e.g., Mr Harold Ingram, at one time the Acting Governor for Aden who was commissioned to write a book on Hongkong and its people for the Corona Library) I could use the Governor's Barge or the Marine Department's de luxe Lighthouse Tender. I have also been offered the use private pleasure crafts owned by my friends. In my days, once landed on the Island, I would have no alternative but to walk. By established custom make-shift sedan chair (bamboo chair carried by two bamboo poles) would normally only be used by people who were too sick to walk). By far the most memorable of all the trips I have made to Lantau was one in the company of a Mr. Hum, the Port Works Engineer of the

Public Works Department, whom I took out to take soundings of the sea bed fronting Tung Chung, with a view to ascertaining whether or not it was worth while building a jetty for the convenience of the inhabitants living in Tung Chung Valley. We travelled on board my departmental launch, and the journey from Tsim Sha Tsui took about two hours to reach our destination. On the way, Mr. Hom tried to kill his time by telling me how an engineer would set about tackling a problem we were about to tackle. He explained in great details how soundings could technologically be taken, but emphasized the importance of taking note of the movements of tides as well as water flowing in from the Pearl River, the geological formation of the sea bed, the beach as well as the grounds at the waterfront so as to give due allowance for the expected shifting and changing etc.; then he had to assess the potential usage of the project, noting the number of people as well as the type of crafts likely to use facilities when built. Then he would get down to work out mathematically, how big the pier should be, how big the pillars of support should be, how much steels to reinforce the concrete and what sort of a mix the concrete should be to withstand the rusting or current movement etc. After the pier is built, who would maintain it, and how much it might cost to employ one or more workers to maintain it. The lecture or rather the "tutorial" was so fascinating that it ended up with my saying how clever and marvellous he must have been to have worked his way up to qualify as an engineer. To my surprise he responded by saying: "Mr. Tsui, an engineer only deals with subject matter which are quantifiable, in that you can calculate accurately even the volume of a grain of fine sand. What is much more difficult is the task of an administrator like you, who have to deal with human beings, human nature and social values and social relations, all of which were quite unquantifiable. Your tasks as a politico-administrator are miles ahead more complex and difficult than the tasks of engineers like me."

The different parts of Old Lantau Island

Every part of Lantau is different and had its own characteristics. Mui Wo, at Silver Mine Bay, though having a few villages with pretty good paddy fields surrounding them in the valley, had for years been developed into a retreat for the relative wealthy. The most-respected elder residing in the valley was one by the name Yuen Wah Chiu, who was more popularly known as Kau Yeh. He was reputed to be a retired "buccaneer" of a sort from the County of Tung Kwun but was highly respected, and for years he had been enjoying a tremendous reputation through out the entire Pearl River Delta. Not far from his house was a house of Mr. Yeung Tsun Tat, a returned emigrant from New Zealand who had been the Managing Director of the Hongkong & Yaumati Ferry Co. Ltd and himself the owner and proprietor of the United Delivery, a removal firm which operated the largest fleet of lorries. By its side was a bungalow belonging to another Yeung family who

was a leading importer, wholesaler and retailer of rice in Hongkong. There was also a retired architect living in one of the bungalows at the far end of the Bay. Tucked in at one corner of the Mui Wor Valley was a disused mining cave, at which silver was said to have been mined once upon a time, and from which the name Silver Mine Bay derived its name. Up on top at the eastern peak of Lantau used to be the summer resort for Methodist Missionaries, at which a number of cottages were built to house the missionaries when they came to spend their holidays. Across the ridge to the north west of Mui Wor was the village of Ngau Ku Long, believed to have been used by a band of guerillas during the Japanese Occupation and where the Japanese Army committed a pretty nasty atrocity shortly before the end of World War II. Further beyond was the Tung Chung Valley where you would find in the midst of some 10 villages remnants of an old Fort with disused old fashion cannons mounted on granite battlement. Behind the battlement was a small path leading up to the peak of Ngau Ping where you have the Bhuddist Monastery. Further west from Tung Chung you had a very large village of Sha Lo Wan, before you would come to Tai O, a substantial fishing centre at what may be described as the western tip of the Island, which incidentally marking more or less half way between Hongkong and Macau. A police station built at the tip formed an unmistakable landmark for the passes by. Apart from two rows of shops forming the market township, Tai O had many huts (in fact disused boats turned into static dwellings) built on stilts extensively over the beaches, some parts of which were always under water giving visitors an impression as if it might be described as "Venice of the East". Certain parts of the beach had long been enclosed to form salt pans for evaporating sea water into salt. The plentiful supply of salt helped to make famous, the Salt fish from Tai O a much sought after special product. About two miles to the south of Tai O was the western tip of the Island a place called Fan Lau, where the flows from the Pearl River meet the tides from the Pacific Ocean, marked by the noticeable demarcation line formed by the different colour of the water - yellowish vs greysih blue. Turning eastwards you would soon reach Shek Pik, once an inhabited village with paddy fields surrounding it, badly infested with mosquitoes bringing malaria to its inhabitants. (The village has since the late Fifties been flooded by water of the Shek Pik Reservoir, built after the Tai Lam Chung Reservoir. Further east, you would come to Cheung Sha and Tong Fook, before you reached Pui O. On crossing the ridge from Pui O you would come back to Mui Wor and Silver Mine Bay. To climb to the top at the Western Peak of Ngau Ping where you have the Bhuddist Monastery, I used to take the longer route via Tai O on a three hour walk, passing by Keung Shan and Chui Fung Au. Off the beaten track there were the Chee Ma Wan at the South East, with Tai Pak & Yee Pak at the North East.

Modern Development on Lantau Island

Since my days, much modern development had taken place, particularly on the southern side of the Island. You now have the service of routed buses as well as taxis for hire to take you from one end of the Island to the other. The Shek Pik Reservoir and its extensive system of catch water, now features the country side particularly on the southern slope. A motorable road along the south coast from Silver Mine Bay takes you right across to Tai O, with a side road branching off from Keung Shan at a point just beyond Shek Pik to lead you to the monastery at the peak. A number of the Correctional Service Institutions now dotted along the southern coast of the Island, beginning with Chee Ma Wan at the East, then the Tong Fuk, then the Ma Po Ping, then the Cheung Sha and then the Shek Pik, most of them were developed from the left overs by the engineers who built the Reservoirs and the extensive catchwater. On both sides along southern drive way, you can see rows and rows of beautifully finished bungalows designed for weekend leisure. In recent years, the Bhuddist Monastery at Ngong Ping is apparently bidding to become a cultural centre for Bhuddism, the pride of Bhuddist culture outside China and Thailand. The Trappist Monastery at Tai Shui Hang lying between Silver Mine Bay and Discovery Bay, came into existence in the mid Fifties. The privately sponsored housing schemes at Pui O and at Discovery Bay came into existence in the early Eighties.

Cheung Chau

Off the coast to the south east of Lantau lies the dumbbell shape island of Cheung Chau, a fishing base, always full of life and activities. However, all the business and social activities seemed to concentrate in the narrow isthmus where houses and shops were built very closely to one another with interwoven narrow and irregular lanes serving as access or communication. The township has a land tenure unique of its own, in that all the socially and commercially usable lands were the property of a private family by the name Wong Wai Tsuk Tong, whose claim to have owned from time immemorial the "bones" as against the "skin" of the land, had been positively affirmed by the Privy Council in an appeal from a long drawn litigation between the family and the Hongkong Government. As a result, when one buys a house or a shop from another owner in the small township, he would in effect be buying a sublease previously granted in perpetuity by the Wong Wai Tsuk Tong to the vendor. The purchaser therefore had to entered into two separate agreements, one with the Wong Wai Tsuk Tong for taken over the sublease with the expressed consent of the owner, the other with the vendor who sells his interests on that particular piece of land on which the shop or the house has been built. In consequence, both the "instrument" for the transfer of the sublease, as well as the "instrument" for the sale of the interests on the land, had to be registered with the Lands Office which was the District Office. For reasons unexplained, the Wong Wai Tsuk Tong never claimed similar ownership of the lands on the hills,

which had been declared a "European Reserve" within which only persons with the expressed permission of the Governor (in effect, persons of European descent) would be permitted to own property or to live there. Shortly after World War II, along with the European Reserve at Taipo and up on the Peak on Hongkong Island was de-reserved, people of non European descent were allowed to move in. In my time as D.O. South, there were already several thousands of inhabitants on the Island. The two temples there, particular the Pak Tai Temple was very popular. However, their most popular religious celebrations had always been the annual "Da Chiu", a Requiem for the Departed Souls, (popularly but wrongly referred to as the Bun Festival) when thousands and thousands of pilgrims from far and near would congregate to climb up tall stacks of buns so as to take home a few such buns which would bring special blessings to the family through out the forth coming year. The fishing boats also congregate at Cheung Chau because it was here where they could de-barnacle their boats on the beaches - by fire from flames of burning grass. (Tam shuen), and also replenish their nets and other fishing gears. For the disposal of the dead, Mr. Barrow was very keen that a suitable site should be set aside for a properly managed cemetery. Enlisting the help of an experienced Sanitary Inspector from the Urban Council, Mr. Warburton, the site of Cheung Chau Cemetery No.1 was formed that year, and rules for proper burials were drafted which were promulgated the year after. A proposal for a submarine pipe to conduct water from a reservoir on Lantau Island was also committed in that year.

Lamma Island & Po Toi

Off the coast to the south west of Aberdeen on Hongkong Island was Lamma Island. There the late Fr. Finn, a Jesuit historian, first discovered and dug up some pre-historic relics some years before the World War II. Ever since then, the Island began to attract visitors, not a few of them were Kwai Loh. Because of its geographical proximity to Hongkong Island, it also attracted a lot of picnickers, particularly those on private pleasure crafts.

Topographically Lamma Island could be conveniently divided into two parts, North Lamma and South Lamma. Access to the latter could easily by sampans from Aberdeen; but access to the north would normally preferred by junks from Kennedy Town or West Point. As there were not that much arable land on the Island, the inhabitants have been more urbanized than those on the main land of the New Territories. Socially and economically they were very closely tied to the people at Aberdeen and Apleichau. Off the coast to the south of Stanley lies the Po Toi Island, where a few families occupied the few houses in a small village in a bay on the island. The island was not very accessible, as one would normally have to chartered a sampan or a small junk to take you there from Aberdeen. The livelihood of the villagers had always been closely tied to the sea, fishing and sea weed gathering.

Sai Kung Peninsula

In one of my earlier chapters on my experience during the British Military Administration I have already written at some length to describe the conditions of the Saikung Peninsula. I do not intend to repeat what has already been said except to say on my return to serve as District Officer South in 1950, I did not notice much change had occurred. However, 1950 was the year following closely after the change over to Communist rule on Mainland China. People in High Command might be a bit nervous about the uncertain situation. The garrisons in Hongkong was grossly expanded, and much space had to be found not only to accommodate the Armed Forces personnels but also to store their arms and ammunitions as well as to find suitable training grounds for the troops in garrison. For storage of ammunitions, most shells for artillery, the whole length of the then Clear Water Bay Road from Taiipo Chai right up to the far end of the road, was gazetted as "Protected Areas". Stacks of Shells were placed at short intervals in open air, with only flimsy shades to cover them from the sun and rain. Access to that part of the New Territories, including the local villagers must produced passes, issued by the Military Authority on the recommendation of the District Officer who would vouch for their bona fides. As a D.O. I personally found it quite a frightening experience when being driven through a "gauntlet of stacks of artillery shells", when we could never be sure that some of the shells would not blow up by accident or caused by the intense heat of the summer sun. Overlooking from the Clear Water Bay Road to the East was the Port Shelter where the Royal Navy thought it was a good place for target practice, and chose it to be a gazetted Target Area for Firing Practice; again it was the D.O's duty to see to it that proper warning system, easily understood by unsophisticated villagers, could be devised to minimize the danger.

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 Paul Tsui
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