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Jardine Matheson and Chinese Migration
in the British Empire, 1833-1853

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PhD

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Jardine Matheson and Chinese Migration in the British Empire, 1833-1853

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the British merchant firm Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Jardine Matheson) in promoting and facilitating Chinese migration into and around the British Empire between 1833 and 1853. It argues that existing historiography on Chinese migration has focused too heavily on the late-nineteenth century and has paid insufficient attention to earlier experiments with Chinese labour. The case study of Jardine Matheson also emphasises the varied roles played by commercial organisations in the British Empire. Existing work has focused on the role of the firm's partners either as opium traders or elite businessmen in colonial Hong Kong, with little analysis of their interest and involvement in Chinese migration. By examining Jardine Matheson's archive of letters and accounts, official colonial correspondence, parliamentary papers, newspapers, books, journals and periodicals, the thesis will shed light on both the changing perceptions and uses of Chinese migrant labour in various imperial contexts from the 1830s to the 1850s. Chinese migration to different colonial destinations, including Singapore, Assam, New South Wales and Ceylon, will be examined comparatively.

The colonial case studies examined in the thesis demonstrate how imperial experiments with Chinese labour in the mid nineteenth century were dependent on the resources and networks of Jardine Matheson on the China coast. The firm's publishing network simultaneously circulated ideas about Chinese migrants that were reproduced across the British Empire. Additionally, Anglo-Chinese contact zones that developed over the 1830s and 1840s were crucial to the formation of stereotypes about a specifically Chinese ethnic character and systems of onward migration to global destinations. This thesis demonstrates the importance of Jardine Matheson – as well as connected Western commercial organisations and individuals – in facilitating Chinese migration and creating demand for Chinese labour during a period of rapid change in the British Empire.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Research Ethics Committee on 21/12/2012.

I declare the word count of this thesis is 81,325 words

Name: Stan Neal

Signature: Stan Neal

Date: 30/10/2015

Usage

In all cases this thesis uses the most common contemporary English-language usage. The language used in primary sources has not been modified. This is an important specification, as most of the authors discussed in this text were writing before the Wade-Giles or pinyin systems for the standard Romanisation of Chinese. A similar approach is applied when referencing the work of historians. For example, when describing Chinese associations in Singapore, *kongsi* is preferred over *gōngsī* as that is the most common usage in academic writing. Romanised Chinese terms are italicised throughout.

For consistency, the same approach is applied to proper nouns. Sri Lanka is referred to as Ceylon and Xiamen is referred to as Amoy. Similarly, Karl Gützlaff is referred to by his commonly used anglicised title of Charles Gutzlaff and Anglo-Chinese is preferred to Sino-British. Such nineteenth-century terminology is used to maintain consistency between extracts from primary sources and the voice of the thesis. Abbreviations have been acknowledged at first use throughout.

Abbreviations

CLEC – Colonial Land and Emigration Commission

EIC – East India Company

Jardine Matheson – Jardine, Matheson & Co.

LMS – London Missionary Society

Introduction

In 1834 the Prussian missionary Charles Gutzlaff – who worked as an interpreter aboard privately-owned China coast opium clippers – connected the issue of emigration from China with Western frustration over the isolationism of the Qing Empire: ‘with such an overflowing population, it would be wise policy in the government to allow emigration, and to open a trade with foreign nations, in order to furnish sufficient employment and sustenance for the increasing multitudes of people’.¹ The legalisation of Chinese emigration was identified as part of a wider programme of ‘opening’ promoted by many contemporary Westerners in China.² This thesis will situate Chinese migration and perceptions of Chinese labour in the British Empire in the broader context of Anglo-Chinese exchange and conflict in the 1830s and 1840s. Existing histories of Chinese migration in the British Empire focus on mass-migration and the racialised exclusion of Chinese immigrants in the later nineteenth century. This focus neglects the formation of migration networks and stereotypes attached to migrants by those promoting Chinese migration in the earlier period. Stereotypes about Chinese workers, which were formed in the 1830s and 1840s by those facilitating emigration, were repeated in the anti-immigrant narratives prominent across the globe from the 1850s onwards.

Historians such as Adam McKeown have taken 1842 as a starting point for discussions of Chinese migration, commenting that ‘Hong Kong and the treaty ports became portals through which local merchants could more easily search out and link up with economic opportunities and facilitate access to labourers from South China’.³ In this thesis, the British merchant firm Jardine, Matheson & Co. (hereafter Jardine Matheson) acts as a nexus between British interest in Chinese labour in the early 1830s and Chinese migration after the First Opium War (1839-1842). The firm maintained unparalleled access to China throughout this period, as one of few Western firms able to circumvent the Qing ban on emigration, and left behind a rich base of archival material. Jardine Matheson and connected commercial firms, organisations and individuals, are used to examine early population movements and perceptions of migrants. Using this firm as a point of analysis allows for a study of aspects of Chinese migration in the British Empire previously obscured by existing geographical and chronological approaches.⁴ We will see that the traditional historical

¹ Charles Gutzlaff, *A Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China; in 1831, 1832 & 1833* (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1834), p. 140.

² The term ‘opening’ is borrowed from Gutzlaff’s own writing. See page 80 for more on this.

³ Adam McKeown, ‘Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (1999), p. 313.

⁴ For a discussion of recent studies attempting to transcend geographical or thematic limits see, Kelvin E. Y. Low, ‘Chinese Migration and Entangled Histories: Broadening the Contours of Migratory History’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (March, 2014), pp. 75-102.

narrative, which posits that British views of China and the Chinese had moved from broadly positive to broadly negative by the time of the First Opium War, is too simplistic. The acceptance of this narrative in Anglo-Chinese histories has been limiting as scholars have dwelt on economic and political confrontation. Conflict has been emphasised in place of collaboration, and different forms of Anglo-Chinese exchange, such as migration, have been under-researched.⁵

The examination of Chinese migration into and within the British Empire between 1833 and 1853 is based around three specific claims. First and foremost this thesis demonstrates how private merchant firms, such as Jardine Matheson, were vitally important in establishing new migration systems to British colonies. Not only did these firms tap into existing migration systems, Chinese emigration networks centred on the unregulated Chinese ‘junk’ trade had been operating for centuries, but they also penetrated the China coast to extract skilled labour in the 1830s and unskilled labour in the 1840s. Anglo-Chinese contact zones, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, were also crucial in establishing networks of capital and expertise to facilitate onward migration.⁶ The development of British shipping networks on the China coast in the 1830s – outside of Chinese or British imperial oversight – created conditions that facilitated new forms of emigration, from new departure points and to new destinations. The mass migrations from Southern China to Australia and North America in the 1850s were contingent on firms like Jardine Matheson and the access to the China coast that they secured and maintained over the 1830s and 1840s.

The second key theme of this thesis is that the idea of a distinctly Chinese ethnic character was constructed in Anglo-Chinese contact zones. In the 1830s and 1840s British observers formed and disseminated stereotypes about Chinese migrants in colonial contact zones – such as Singapore, Assam, Hong Kong and New South Wales. Despite their primary roles as missionaries, merchants, diplomats, colonial officials or military officers, many British and Western figures in Asia became recognised as ‘experts’ on China and the Chinese. These actors played a crucial role in defining and describing a specific Chinese character, and in collecting and creating ‘useful knowledge’.⁷ Jardine Matheson, and associated commercial organisations, were an important part of the information networks that disseminated such knowledge. Due to the existing literature’s focus on anti-immigration movements from the

⁵ The limits of this historical narrative are demonstrated in John M. Carroll, ‘The Canton System: Conflict and Accommodation in the Contact Zone’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, Vol. 50 (2010), pp. 51-66.

⁶ There is fuller discussion of the importance of contact zones from page 12 of this introduction.

⁷ Songchuan Chen, ‘An Information War Waged by Merchants and Missionaries at Canton: The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China, 1834–1839’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (2012), pp. 1705-1735; Maxine Berg, ‘Britain, Industry and Perceptions of China: Matthew Boulton, ‘useful knowledge’ and the Macartney Embassy to China’, *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2006), pp. 269-288.

1850s, the nature of these stereotypes of a Chinese character have been generalised as either positive or negative. Given the range of China experts with different experiences, access and interests, ideas about the Chinese were neither uniform nor simple. Yet if there was a common theme in colonial and imperial attitudes towards Chinese immigrants it was that they were ‘useful’.⁸ At one end of colonial stratification Chinese labourers formed a cheap and effective labour force that met the economic needs of the British Empire, whilst at the other end Chinese merchants were valued collaborators in enabling colonial control. The emerging China experts of the 1830s, and the ways in which they used information networks, were essential in confirming certain tropes about Chinese migrants – tropes as varied as being duplicitous, organised, criminal, frugal and entrepreneurial – which would later be appropriated in anti-immigration rhetoric.

The third area this thesis engages with is the role of Jardine Matheson in facilitating economic and political change in the British Empire in Asia. The 1830s is widely acknowledged as a crucial period in the development of British imperialism in Asia.⁹ It was the starting point of a new era of Anglo-Chinese relations, with Britain initiating Western economic incursions that would shape China for the next century.¹⁰ The aspects of Anglo-Chinese exchange that have received the greatest scholarly attention have been the diplomatic, military and trading conflicts.¹¹ Existing histories focus on the Opium War, the deregulation of the China trade and foundation of British rule in Hong Kong.¹² That the history of Chinese migration in the British Empire has been kept separate from these events, and from Anglo-Chinese relations more generally, is surprising considering the effects that Chinese immigration had on the economic, social and legal structure of numerous British colonies and developing nation-states.¹³ In this period Jardine Matheson not only played an active role in change, as opium traders, policy influencers and free trade advocates, but also adapted to shifts in British and Chinese policy to maintain commercial access to the China coast during

⁸ In the same way that certain forms of knowledge were prioritised and described as ‘useful’, often in terms of economic utility, Chinese migrants were often procured in order to fulfil a specific economic role.

⁹ Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China* (London: Picador, 2011), p. 9.

¹⁰ ‘Anglo-Chinese’ in this thesis refers to Britain and China, not specifically England. This requires clarification due to the varying roles of Scottish, Irish, Anglo-Prussian and, at times, American characters in the events detailed. The choice of ‘Anglo-Chinese’ reflects contemporary usage. For example, Robert Morrison’s *Anglo-Chinese College* (1818) or the *Anglo-Chinese War* (1839), in which Anglo was synonymous with British.

¹¹ Priscilla Napier, *Barbarian Eye: Lord Napier in China, 1834 The Prelude to Hong Kong* (London: Brassey’s, 1995); Glenn Melancon, *Britain’s China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840* (London: Ashgate, 2003); Alain Le Pinchon (ed.), *China trade and empire: Jardine, Matheson & Co. and the origins of British rule in Hong Kong, 1827-1843* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹² Le Pinchon, *China Trade and Empire*; Lovell, *The Opium War*; John S. Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹³ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian migration and the globalization of borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

periods of upheaval across the 1830s and 1850s. In particular the way that Jardine Matheson operated in the vacuum created by the scaling back of the East India Company's (hereafter EIC) commercial operations in 1833 reveals the continued importance of private actors in expanding the imperial periphery. Whilst the British state sought to better regulate and control colonial governance in Asia generally, the loss of the EIC monopoly created opportunities for unscrupulous, ambitious entrepreneurs.

There were also changes taking place in the British Empire, which would create demand for Chinese migrant labour. The economies and labour pools of British colonies were in transition from 1833 onwards. Most clearly, the abolition of slavery and the movement away from convict transportation ostensibly signalled the ending of forced labour in British colonies.¹⁴ At the same time, previously un-remunerative colonies came under pressure to increase the production of resources for export.¹⁵ This desire for increased profitability whilst absorbing the costs of non-coercive labour, meant that the 'useful' Chinese character was in demand. The changing need for Chinese labour, and the methods through which labour was extracted from the China coast by Jardine Matheson, points us to the broader shifts that were occurring in the British Empire in Asia. Discussions about Chinese labour fed into debates in Britain, especially those on the EIC charter, which asked what empire was for and how it should be funded and managed? The story of Chinese migration in the British Empire in the 1830s and 1840s is a story of economic and social change, both imperial and global in scope, which laid the groundwork for mass migration from the 1850s onwards.

Specific experiments with Chinese migrant labour in the 1830s and 1840s have been neglected by scholars. Yet this thesis draws on several, connected historiographical streams: perceptions of migrants and immigration restriction movements; general studies of Chinese migrations and Chinese communities overseas; Anglo-Chinese contact zones; imperial information networks; and debates and ideas about race and ethnicity. The history of Asian migration into the British Empire and the West more generally is inseparable from a much broader historical theme: otherness. As a result, the paradigm of host versus migrant, or East versus West, has been dominant in much of the relevant research. Asian migration generally – often incorporating disparate ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Malaysian and others – has also been regularly addressed, rather mistakenly, as a whole. Many histories have over-emphasised the role of the exclusionary response to Chinese migration in the second half of the nineteenth century in forming stereotypes or racial hierarchies. The focus on exclusion

¹⁴ Chinese indentured labour would subsequently be compared to slavery, this is discussed in chapter five.

¹⁵ Zoe Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire: Humanitarians, Reform and the Commission of Eastern Inquiry', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (2012), pp. 749-768.

has meant that histories of Chinese migration have overlooked how migration networks were established and stereotypes were created in colonial contact zones in the 1830s and 1840s.

The Firm: Jardine Matheson

This thesis makes particular use of Jardine Matheson to connect different examples of Chinese migration into the British Empire. Jardine Matheson acts as an extra-national case study that links seemingly separate geographic, economic and conceptual contexts, as well as different forms of migration.¹⁶ Kelvin Low has recently argued for the need to ‘recalibrate the focus and broaden the contours of Chinese migratory history’.¹⁷ Low argues that migration histories must be trans-national and trans-thematic and be unafraid to engage with broader processes and patterns, such as colonialism, that shaped migration. Similarly Adam McKeown has argued that understanding and unpicking themes of ‘Chinese migration’ and ‘ethnic Chinese’ requires historical enquiries that operate outside of perspectives shaped by nation states.¹⁸ Jardine Matheson allow us to connect migration systems that are too often kept separate. Both the firm’s prominence, as the vanguard of Western economic intrusion into China, and its large archival footprint makes it an effective source. This is particularly significant as Chinese emigration was official prohibited by the Qing state until 1860. The nefarious activities of Jardine Matheson not only circumvented this ban, but provide a base of sources for migrations that were essentially ‘illegal’.

James Matheson and William Jardine advertised their new firm (Jardine Matheson) in Canton from 1 July 1832. Both men had been active in the China trade from the 1810s, bringing a variety of experiences and connections, and were the lead partners in Magniac & Co. from 1825.¹⁹ In the early 1830s the new firm began conducting exploratory voyages along the China coast to find new opium markets outside of the Canton system of trade regulation. Capital from opium smuggling operations was re-invested into the legal tea trade. Effectively the firm acted as a go-between for business clients who lacked the ‘knowledge and clout’ to conduct such operations themselves.²⁰ The firm offered sixteen different ‘agency’ services that revolved around broking for buyers and sellers of goods to and from Asia.²¹ The services provided included sales, arranging insurance, chartering ships, obtaining freight and

¹⁶ Extra-national is used here in place of more common terms, such as transnational, multinational or international, as the role of the firm not only transcended national boundaries but, particularly in its China coast smuggling operations, operated beyond or outside of any form of established legal territoriality.

¹⁷ Low, ‘Chinese Migration and Entangled Histories: Broadening the Contours of Migratory History’, p. 76.

¹⁸ McKeown, “Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949”, p. 310.

¹⁹ For an overview of the firm’s beginnings see Maggie Keswick (ed.), *The Thistle and the Jade: A Celebration of Jardine, Matheson & Co.* (London: Octopus, 1982), pp. 12-22.

²⁰ Carol Matheson Connell, *A Business in Risk: Jardine Matheson and the Hong Kong Trading Industry* (London: Praeger, 2004), p. 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*

transshipping goods. These services could be applied to any number of imported or exported products, such as tea or silk, but the firm's most important customer was Parsee merchant Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy. Based in Bombay, Jejeebhoy supplied the firm with Indian-grown opium for sale on the China coast, which accounted for the bulk of their business growth in the 1830s.²² The firm made profit through the commission charged on sales made on behalf of sellers such as Jejeebhoy. Crucially, the firm's opium voyages were not just used for selling opium and extracting capital; they were also channels through which biblical literature was circulated, tea cultivators were recruited, valuable plant samples were sourced, and various forms of 'useful knowledge' were acquired and disseminated.²³ The firm itself can be studied as a contact zone through which Anglo-Chinese encounters and exchanges, as well as varied forms of emigration can be traced.²⁴ The extra-national status of Jardine Matheson allows for perspectives formed in various contexts to be connected and compared.

Jardine Matheson have been extensively studied and discussed in historical writing, but vast areas of the firm's activities and significance remain under-examined or entirely ignored. The firm is primarily studied as an artefact of economic history or cast as a central player in the decline of Anglo-Chinese relations. Studies by Carol Matheson Connell and W. E. Cheong have focused on the firm's early commercial activities, with Jardine Matheson serving as a historical business model.²⁵ Robert Blake's *Jardine Matheson* integrates a systematic economic history of the firm with its role in Anglo-Chinese relations more broadly.²⁶ The firm is ubiquitous in histories of the Canton system, the removal of the EIC monopoly of the China trade, the Opium Wars and Hong Kong.²⁷ The comprehensive archive of commercial, and personal, letters and records at Cambridge University has made Jardine Matheson an attractive topic of study. Yet no study has interrogated the archive for material on migration, instead the focus has been on the conventional narrative of the famous, or infamous, firm. For example, Alain Le Pinchon's *China Trade and Empire* provides a selection of letters from the archive in order to trace the 'main driving forces behind the firm's creation and subsequent business of the period 1827-1843'.²⁸ Similarly, Maggie

²² Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p. 33. Jejeebhoy was also indicative of the different ways business relationships could emerge – he met William Jardine whilst a French prisoner of war in 1805.

²³ The extraction of 'useful knowledge', such as knowledge of tea cultivation, from China has been the subject of recent scholarly inquiry, see Berg, 'Britain, Industry and Perceptions of China', pp. 269-288 and Chen, 'An Information War Waged by Merchants and Missionaries at Canton', pp. 1705-1735.

²⁴ For a good example of using a merchant house to explore broader economic and social processes in this period see Anthony Webster, *The Richest East India Merchant: The Life and Business of John Palmer of Calcutta, 1767-1836* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).

²⁵ Connell, *A Business in Risk*; W. E. Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants: Jardine Matheson & Co., a China agency of the early nineteenth century* (London: Curzon Press, 1979).

²⁶ Robert Blake, *Jardine Matheson: Traders of the Far East* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1999).

²⁷ Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants*; Blake, *Jardine Matheson*.

²⁸ Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p. xviii.

Keswick's *The Thistle and Jade*, more a celebration of the firm than an analytical history, is laden with images and items of material culture.²⁹ The spectre of opium smuggling, inevitably, looms large in all of these texts.

Throughout this literature the firm is either chastised as a drug-dealing agent provocateur or celebrated as an enterprising pioneer of free trade. This has been best summarised by Richard Grace's recent biography of William Jardine and James Matheson *Opium and Empire*, which seeks to look beyond the firm's infamous reputation. Grace describes how Jardine and Matheson have been,

caricatured by writers who mention them briefly, depicting them as one-dimensional villains whose opium commerce was 'ruthless' and whose imperial drive was 'war-mongering'. Such cardboard figures fail to represent with any adequacy the complex, multifaceted personal and business histories of Jardine and Matheson.³⁰

It is this realisation – that this firm, which has left such a visible and searchable wealth of sources, has often been reduced to the role of an evil corporation or swashbuckling enterprise – that underpins the approach taken in this thesis. Jardine Matheson do not just offer an insight into the opium trade or the Opium War, but also into more nuanced forms of Anglo-Chinese exchange. No existing history has addressed Jardine Matheson's involvement in Chinese migration. Grace examines the lives of the firm's founders through the framework of 'gentlemanly capitalism'. Yet his work still wrestles, at length, with the moral quandary of the opium trade.³¹ This thesis will engage with a firm that is simultaneously infamous as a symbol of economic imperialism, and yet in many ways neglected and 'caricatured' by historians of the British Empire in Asia.

As a large, extra-national firm, Jardine Matheson also managed, and were part of, a large information network. Histories of British imperialism in the early 2000s have been particularly interested in how Empire provided points of connection, and created a network that facilitated the exchange of ideas and information beyond national boundaries.³² To avoid over-simplifying the network concept, by suggesting it was entirely inclusive, it is necessary to consider how different discourses were competing to be exchanged. This point is clearly illustrated in Alan Lester's *Imperial Networks*, which focused on nineteenth-century British settlement on the South African Cape, and identified competing colonial discourses of

²⁹ Keswick's book was produced by Jardine Matheson in 1982.

³⁰ Richard J. Grace, *Opium and Empire: The Lives and Careers of William Jardine and James Matheson* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), p. viii.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 341-348.

³² John Gascoigne, 'The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2006), p. 578.

governmentality, humanitarianism and settler capitalism.³³ Though, at times, these discourses collaborated and overlapped they spent much of the time at odds with one another, and were transferred in different ways. Jardine Matheson had an extensive business network – which can be re-traced thanks to Jardine Matheson archive, which contains approximately 175,000 letters – and were heavily involved in publishing in China and Britain. Little has been said of the information networks that were used to promote Chinese emigration. Consequently, Jardine Matheson’s archive provide a crucial insight into how ideas about Chinese migrant labour were disseminated in the 1830s and 1840s.

Chinese Migration in the British Empire

There are several critical issues with the historiography of Chinese and Asian migration into the British Empire and the West. First, it is clear that there are transnational themes in the history of Chinese migration and the subsequent responses to Chinese immigration, whether inter-colonial, imperial, continental, hemispheric or even global. Where these histories have taken a transnational approach the focus has been overwhelmingly on the host nations and little attention has been paid to migrant embarkation. As a result these histories have dwelt on exclusion and exploitation and neglected the stories of those who promoted Chinese emigration and immigration. They have looked to economic pull factors alone to explain emigration. Second, the assumed linear development of movement and resistance is crucial to shaping our current understanding of migration and exclusion. The traditional analysis of exclusionary politics being born from white working class reactions to labour competition in the late nineteenth century is too simplistic. Stereotypes were invoked, not necessarily created, by exclusion movements.³⁴ Third, the tendency to over-simplify distinctions of race is common within these histories. The focus on host communities and notions of ‘yellow’ or ‘Asiatic’ peril, has obscured much of the colonial knowledge production that emphasised difference within Asia. In this literature there has been an obsession with the mass migration of the late nineteenth century as an independent phenomenon that was unconnected to Anglo-Chinese exchanges of the 1830s and 1840s.

In the late 1970s many texts examined migration through the prism of otherness, by focusing on exclusion in the national contexts of white settler dominions: Canada, Australia,

³³ Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 4.

³⁴ Older studies of exclusion movements have particularly neglected the earlier nineteenth century. For example, note the dates in the title of A. T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion 1896-1923* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964).

New Zealand and South Africa.³⁵ Histories of white settler responses to Asian immigration focus mainly on the late nineteenth century, when the political demand for exclusion was most visible, enabling a comparative approach. Various texts in the 1970s focused on locations where there was a parallel development of white working class anti-immigration movements and exclusionary legislation in response to Asian migration.³⁶ At the same time, Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism* raised awareness of ingrained, ubiquitous Western attitudes to the East.³⁷ This was an unequal relationship defined by otherness. However, China sat uneasily within Said's dichotomy of occident and orient. More recent histories have emphasised how China stood apart from other Asian countries in European social and political thought.³⁸ Whilst China's otherness was visible in nineteenth-century Western literature, this was an otherness from both the West and the rest of Asia. As demonstrated by this thesis, the Chinese often occupied a space between notions of British civilization and native barbarism in colonial hierarchies.

Early histories of Asian migration into the British Empire were histories of immigration-restriction. These histories were essentially political narratives, telling the story of transition from colony to nation. Specifically the development of 'white men's countries'.³⁹ The fact that many Chinese migrants were sojourners – often single men who migrated to work for a limited number of years before returning to China – meant they were cast in opposition to white settlers and their families. Thus exclusionary legislation in settler dominions was of particular importance as it played a role in defining who was, or was not, an accepted part of emerging national identities. Such a focus is problematic as it fails to recognise the wider significance of reactions to Asian migrants in the West.

In recent scholarship, issues of race and migration have been addressed as global phenomena, which has tended to a focus on immigration and host nations rather than on the act of emigration itself. The approach of viewing the histories of Asian exclusion in the

³⁵ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976); W.P. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978); Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds.), *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Working Class in Australia* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978).

³⁶ Charles Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888* (Canberra, 1974); Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1979); Robert Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Coloured Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies 1830-1910* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1976). This is also a theme of more recent historical inquiry, see Jeremy Martens, 'A transnational history of immigration restriction: Natal and New South Wales, 1896-97', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, Issue 3 (September 2006), pp. 323 – 344.

³⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

³⁸ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 10; David Martin Jones, *The Image of China in Western Social and Political Thought* (New York, 2001).

³⁹ The term 'white men's countries' is most thoroughly developed and discussed in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White men's countries and the international challenge of racial equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

British Empire, United States and other European nations as interconnected is best demonstrated by *Drawing the Global Colour Line*. Lake and Reynolds engage with a rapid globalization of ideas about race that brought together white settlers from different locales ‘into a sacred union at the mere whisper of Asiatic immigration’.⁴⁰ Similarly, attention is paid to the multiplicity of prejudices, with Chinese immigration part of a shared narrative that encompasses the treatment of black Americans and the prejudice faced by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. These prejudices also changed over time. For example, the idea of ‘yellow peril’ could be applied to the economic threat of Chinese migrants or adapted to describe the spectre of Japanese imperialism.⁴¹ However, the separation of the globe into two categories, white and non-white, fails to capture the nuances of Empire citizenship and the problematic interactions this concept had with ideas about race and ethnicity. These histories have dwelt on exclusion and exploitation and neglected the stories of those who promoted emigration from China and immigration into the British Empire.

Combining issues of migration, otherness and race, Adam McKeown’s *Melancholy Order* charts the development of a ‘civilized’ West, which was defined by attempts to prevent migration from the ‘uncivilized’ East.⁴² Indeed, McKeown emphasises how the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw border control become an integral component of developing notions of sovereignty in the West. McKeown’s analysis of Asian migration as the catalyst for a globalised system of border control, which is ubiquitous today, highlights the chronological and geographical limitations of the scholarly literature on exclusion. The creation of stereotypes and hierarchies is too often identified as a response to Asian migration, which is problematic when we consider that the formation of ethnic hierarchies significantly pre-dates migration and often took place in Asia itself.⁴³ The traditional analysis of exclusionary politics being born from white working class reactions to labour competition in the late nineteenth century is too simplistic. As the examples in this thesis show, stereotypes were invoked, not necessarily created, by exclusion movements.

It has also become increasingly common to examine the movement of Chinese migrants as a specific phenomenon, one which was distinct from broader patterns of Asian migration. Due to the vast scale of Chinese emigration over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese migrants have figured heavily in broad surveys of migration history. Texts from the 1990s emphasised the importance of Chinese emigration, not just as

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 282.

⁴² McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

⁴³ As argued in Said’s *Orientalism* the casting of the ‘East’ as an ‘Other’ dates back to the first descriptions and imaginings of the East by European explorers.

an economic process, but in shaping different multi-ethnic cultures globally.⁴⁴ There have been several texts that have sought to chart Chinese emigration on a global scale. Lynn Pan's *Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas* surveys Chinese communities internationally and – despite the limitations caused by complicated issues of identity and loose definitions of ‘the Chinese’ – gives a good overview of population movement generally.⁴⁵ More recently, edited volumes have addressed Chinese migration through a wide lens.⁴⁶ Of particular interest has been the connection that long-term Chinese settler communities have to their self-identified ‘homeland’ and the connections between different groups of ‘Chinese Overseas’.⁴⁷ The definition of Chinese migrants as distinct from Asian migrants in various global contexts has been a crucial part of the construction of a Chinese identity. The parameters of who ‘the Chinese’ were was often defined outside of China itself.

A major failure of the histories of Chinese migration has been the lack of comparison between different forms of migration. The study of indentured Chinese labour in the West Indies and South America has been seen as separate from ‘free’ migration to Southeast Asia, the British Empire and beyond.⁴⁸ Yet the similarities in migrant push factors, regions of origin and stereotypes applied to Chinese workers, would suggest that they cannot be seen as independent developments. This thesis demonstrates that these different systems of migration were often directly connected.⁴⁹ Some studies have similarly made the connection between Chinese indenture and slavery because both systems provided cheap labourers with no economic agency.⁵⁰ There has been some consideration of the overlaps between indentured and free Chinese migration. L. L. Walton points to indentured labour as part of a wider movement of Chinese migrants out of the Southeast Asian orbit in the 1840s. He also, identifies the unilateral migrant origins as being from Fukien (Fujian) and Kwantung (Guangdong) provinces, and suggests indentured labour was one of various forms of

⁴⁴ Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte (eds.), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration* (London: Routledge, 1991); Jan Lucassen (ed.), *Migration, migration history, history: old paradigms and new perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).

⁴⁵ Lynn Pan (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998).

⁴⁶ Donna Gabaccia and Dirk Hoerder (eds), *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Tan Chee-Beng (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁴⁷ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*.

⁴⁸ The term ‘free’ is used loosely to denote voluntary as opposed to coerced labour. Though migration financing such as the credit-ticket system was not fixed term, and therefore ‘free’, debt bondage was common factor that limited the economic agency of migrants in such arrangements.

⁴⁹ The earliest work on Chinese indentured labour identified the indentured labour system as directly descended from both credit-ticket migration from China to Singapore and the legacy of slavery, Persia Crawford Campbell, *Chinese Coolie Emigration within the British Empire* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1923), p. xvii.

⁵⁰ Arnold Joseph Meagher, ‘The Introduction of Chinese Laborers to Latin America: The ‘Coolie Trade’, 1847-1874’ (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1975), pp. 21-34; Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: the export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

emigration from China.⁵¹ Furthermore, David Northrup points out that many nineteenth century labour movements in the Marxist tradition identified themselves ‘wage slaves’ and drew comparisons between their own conditions and those of indentured Chinese migrants.⁵² Yet, although these texts use comparative methods they still only examine Chinese indentured migration in isolation. This thesis is unique in that it simultaneously examines contrasting experiments with Chinese labour. As such it highlights how the distinctions between free and un-free labour were not entirely clear.

Contact Zones

To understand the formation of broad ideas about Chinese migrants in the West, attention must be turned to Asia. Ulrike Hillemann’s *Asian Empire and British Knowledge* takes up this call, focusing on Anglo-Chinese contact zones between 1763 and 1840.⁵³ Hillemann catalogues how zones of British control in Southeast Asia, were crucial in allowing missionaries, merchants and officials to form ideas about different ethnic groups. This idea of the ‘contact zone’ is taken from Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*.⁵⁴ Contact zones are understood to be places – often trading ports, cities or borders – in which the movement of people, commodities and ideas bring different cultures into ‘contact’ with each other.⁵⁵ As each contact zone was unique it becomes clear that there was no single idea of Orientalism that equated all Asian countries, cultures or ethnicities. In Southeast Asia in particular Chinese emigration significantly predated European colonial control and Chinese migrants were not without power and agency.⁵⁶ Relationships in the contact zone were two-way encounters. In these societies the seemingly contradictory themes of ‘Chinese-ness’ and cultural assimilation varied depending on political, social and economic conditions, with proximity to China itself a key factor. In the nineteenth century, ideas about Chinese migrants were not constructed in the West but were already being formed in multi-ethnic Asian contact zones, where Chinese migrants played various social and economic roles. This thesis examines such interactions in various contact zones.

⁵¹ L. L. Walton, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean sugar: Chinese and Indian migrants in the British West Indies, 1838-1918* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1993), pp. 38-45.

⁵² David Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 7.

⁵³ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*.

⁵⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁵⁵ For a fuller definition see ‘Contact Zone’, *Oxford Reference* (<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095634533>), accessed 27 September 2015.

⁵⁶ Tracy C. Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indi-China* (London: Tauris, 2012); Craig A. Lockard, ‘Chinese Migration and Settlement in Southeast Asia before 1850: Making Fields from the Sea’, *History Compass*, 11, 9 (2013), pp. 765-781.

The Straits Settlements of Penang (ceded to the British in 1786), Singapore (ceded in 1824) and Malacca (ceded in 1824) were the first British colonies to rely on Chinese migrant labour for their economic development.⁵⁷ In particular, the contact zone of Singapore confirmed the idea that Chinese labour was compatible with British colonialism and thus served as an example to colonial and metropolitan observers. Singapore, with its rapid economic growth over the 1820s, was identified as an example of Anglo-Chinese success. In one of the earliest histories of the colony, *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, the Chinese community is ubiquitous.⁵⁸ The Chinese merchant elite, as collaborators with colonial authority, was seen as crucial to both the economic success and social cohesion of the colony. The work of Mark Frost and Carl Trocki has highlighted the role of the Chinese merchant community in mediating between European state authorities and the Chinese labour force, which constituted the largest group numerically.⁵⁹ This population of Chinese labourers who worked on pepper, gambier and opium plantations, as well as in Singapore's tin mines, was crucial to the colony's economic success. Simultaneously the Anglo-Chinese mixture of the colony's merchant elite contributed to the development of what Anthony Webster has called a 'regional economic identity'.⁶⁰ As a result of this economic success Chinese migration to the Straits Settlements became an imperial template for migration to new colonial contexts. Additionally, it also gave Western observers access to existing migration networks and would later serve as a point of onward migration in the British Empire.⁶¹

Juxtaposing the success of Singapore in the nineteenth century was colonial Hong Kong, which has long been a politically contested contact zone. In Chinese history, Hong Kong has acted as an uncomfortable reminder of the encroachment of Western imperialism on Chinese sovereignty and the lives lost in the Opium Wars. This narrative, which can be summarised by You Ding's assertion that Hong Kong was 'built and made prosperous on the blood, sweat and corpses of Chinese coolies', has run contrary to traditional, uncritical themes

⁵⁷ Nordin Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka: Dutch Melaka and English Penang, 1780-1830* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).

⁵⁸ Roland Braddell et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore, 1819-1919, Vol.I* (London: John Murray, 1921).

⁵⁹ Mark Frost, *Singapore: A Biography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), p. 87; Mark Ravinder Frost, 'Emporium in Imperio: Nanyang Networks and the Straits Chinese in Singapore, 1819-1914', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 36, 1 (2005), pp. 29-66; Carl A. Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800-1910* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990); C. Trocki, 'Opium and the Beginnings of Chinese Capitalism in Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 33, 2 (2002), pp. 297-314.

⁶⁰ Anthony Webster, 'The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements 1800 to 1868: The Rise of a Colonial and Regional Economic Identity?', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (July, 2011), pp. 899-929.

⁶¹ Chen-tung Chang, 'Chinese Coolie Trade in the Straits Settlements in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica*, Number 65 (Spring, 1988), pp. 1-29.

in Western scholarship.⁶² Throughout much of the twentieth century historiography Hong Kong was hailed as a success of liberal free trade and Anglo-Chinese business co-operation.⁶³ This celebratory tone is perhaps best typified by Solomon Bard's description of Hong Kong as a 'miracle of human endeavour and enterprise'.⁶⁴ More recently these two narratives have been supplanted by more nuanced studies of the development of Hong Kong. A good example of the new histories of interaction is Christopher Munn's *Anglo-China* which focuses on issues of ethnicity and the application of the law in nineteenth century colonial Hong Kong.⁶⁵ Similarly, studies of class in both Chinese and European communities by Wai Kwan Chan and Cindy Yik-yi Chu present the Chinese population, not as victims or collaborators, but as agents in creating a 'Hong Konger' identity.⁶⁶ Hong Kong, like Singapore, was a migrant destination in which new ethnic identities were created. Crucially, Hong Kong was dominated economically and politically by Jardine Matheson. The firm worked closely with both colonial authorities and Chinese business partners. As Hong Kong developed as a contact zone in which ideas about the Chinese were created and shared, Jardine Matheson gained further influence over perceptions of Chinese migrants.

From 1842 Hong Kong became an entry and departure point into a China that had a changeable relationship with processes of globalization across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Histories of migration through Hong Kong have emphasised the significance of Chinese emigration in forming Hong Kong's colonial and post-colonial identity. Studies have emphasised the role of 'human capital' in Hong Kong and its tendency to remain 'open' – whether to the movement of people, goods or capital.⁶⁷ The work of Elizabeth Sinn in particular has highlighted the multi-faceted role Hong Kong played in facilitating onward migration to the United States in the 1850s.⁶⁸ It is notable that histories of Chinese migration separate new processes of emigration from Hong Kong from existing migration systems which operated in the 1830s, an oversight this thesis will correct. Singapore and Hong Kong,

⁶² You Ding, *Hong Kong's Early History, 1841-1907* (Beijing: Lianhe Chubanshe, 1983) in Munn, *Anglo-China*, p. 8. For an English-language analysis of the Chinese-language historiography see Munn, *Anglo-China*, pp. 1-21.

⁶³ Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: Tauris, 2007), pp. 3-35.

⁶⁴ Solomon Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong: Some Foreign Merchant Houses, 1841-1899* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of History, 1993), p. 109

⁶⁵ Christopher Munn, *Anglo-China: Chinese people and British Rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

⁶⁶ Cindy Yik-yi Chu (ed.), *Foreign Communities in Hong Kong, 1840s-1950s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Wai Kwan Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society: Three Studies of Class Formation in Early Hong Kong* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).

⁶⁷ Ronald Skeldon (ed.), *Emigration from Hong Kong: Tendencies and Impacts* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995); Helen F. Siu and Agnes S. Ku (eds.), *Hong Kong Mobile: Making a Global Population* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008).

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossings: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

as departure points of onward migrations, should be connected to broader migration histories that focus on the destinations and reception of migrants.

Locations like Singapore and Hong Kong were connected – through Anglo-Chinese political and commercial links – to Canton and the China coast. Texts that address long-term developments in Anglo-Chinese relations are necessarily situated on the China coast – often in Canton, Macao and treaty-port cities – and chart the transition from the pre-Opium War Canton system to the post-Opium War treaty port system.⁶⁹ Recent histories have focused on the collaboration of these encounters as opposed to the traditional narrative of conflict. Paul Van Dyke has criticised the historical focus on the breakdown of diplomatic relations and has cited the longevity and growth of trade as evidence of the Canton system’s effectiveness.⁷⁰ Similarly John Carroll has pointed to the close relationships that Chinese compradors, Hong merchants and local imperial officials had with Western Merchants. All of these groups had a mutual interest in continued trade.⁷¹ Carroll suggests that the Opium Wars were not a result of a ‘culture clash’ or a ‘clash of civilizations’ over the issue of free trade, but were a very specific result of the illicit opium trade.⁷² It is important to remember that China itself, and its cities, was a contact zone that was sometimes subject to Western hegemony. In *The Scramble for China* Robert Bickers explores the ‘world the West had created in China’, in which the variety of interactions is encapsulated by the fact that the ‘West’ was represented ‘by mission missionaries, merchants and mercenaries, by Britons, Americans, Russians, Parsees and Malacca born Chinese, by comers from all corners’.⁷³ As highlighted by Bickers, Western commercial enterprises, like Jardine Matheson, were a particularly important point of connection between different individuals, locations and processes.

Conceptualising ‘the Chinese’

Discussions of Chinese migrant labour in the nineteenth century British Empire took place in a changing intellectual environment. Historians have identified the nineteenth century as a key period in terms of the development and institutionalisation of scientific racism.⁷⁴ Ideas such as polygenesis and Social Darwinism changed how race and racial difference were understood

⁶⁹ Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2011); Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*; Harry G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: Britain’s 1840-42 War with China, and its Aftermath* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁷⁰ Paul Van Dyke, *Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 1-4.

⁷¹ Carroll, ‘The Canton System’, pp. 54-61.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 61.

⁷³ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Kay Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism* (New York: UCL Press, 2006); David Hollinsworth, *Race and Racism in Australia* (Katoomba: Social Science Press, 1998);

and articulated, particularly in Britain and the United States.⁷⁵ However, in the correspondence and publications of Jardine Matheson the language of civilization, rather than race, remained the dominant means for articulating differences between Britain and China or the British and the Chinese.⁷⁶ The concept of civilization was particularly useful for implying British superiority and justifying the British legal authority over China and the Chinese.⁷⁷ In certain colonial contexts the emphasis on civilization also allowed for the promotion of the interests of Chinese migrant populations ahead of indigenous communities. Concepts of civilizational status were not static or consistent, Chinese migrants were perceived differently in different colonial contexts, but the language of civilization is common throughout discussions of China and the Chinese in the 1830s and 1840s.

This thesis also refers to the concept of ethnicity in both a modern and historical sense. As defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term ‘ethnicity’ refers to social groups that have ‘a common national or cultural tradition’.⁷⁸ Similarly, sources from the 1830s and 1840s refer to ‘ethnology’, understood as the study of ‘peoples’ with shared, usually cultural, characteristics.⁷⁹ The similarities and differences highlighted between the Chinese and other ethnic groups are particularly pertinent in English language writing in the 1830s. Contemporary observers clearly identified Chinese culture as a distinguishing feature, which set the Chinese apart from other ethnic groups in Asia. However, this terminology is deployed in various ways and with various meanings. In particular, the acknowledgement of cultural difference within China and between Chinese migrants from different regions problematizes the concept of ‘the Chinese’. Distinctions could be drawn between the Chinese and neighbouring ethnic groups, as well as within the broad category of ‘the Chinese’. Whilst there was no uniform definition of Chinese culture it is clear from the sources examined that the Chinese were perceived as a specific ethnic group, often defined and differentiated by their culture, even after centuries of settlement in a particular location.

Another important idea, invoked in texts published by Jardine Matheson and by British observers of Chinese migrants more generally, is that of character. Ethnic groups, such as the Chinese, were commonly attributed a set of unique characteristics or personality traits. The idea that there was a specifically Chinese character was most famously articulated in

⁷⁵ Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁷⁶ For a discussion of ideas such as ‘the ladder of civilisation’ see Peter Mandler, “‘Race’ and ‘Nation’ in mid-Victorian Thought”, in Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, Brian Young (eds.), *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 233.

⁷⁷ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, p. 8; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: the Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁷⁸ ‘Ethnicity’, *Oxford Dictionaries* (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ethnicity>), accessed 27 September 2015.

⁷⁹ For example, see the discussion of ‘ethnology’ in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. I (1847).

Arthur Henderson Smith's *Chinese Characteristics*, which was published over several editions in the 1890s. For Smith the Chinese character was defined by a 'Contempt for Foreigners' and 'The Absence of Public Spirit'.⁸⁰ This interest in an inherent Chinese character was a theme that ran through English-language literature on China from the late eighteenth century onwards.⁸¹ The conceptual development of a national character in Western thought was not solely applied to China or the Chinese. In Britain the language of a shared character was becoming increasingly common in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In his work on the growth of national character as a concept, Peter Mandler identifies the late eighteenth century as a key period of development in discussions of an English national character.⁸² While the English were identified as 'related' to the Germans or French in a racial sense, they were also viewed as having a distinct and unique character.⁸³ This could equally be applied to British views on China. Though the Chinese might be broadly seen as Asian, they were also attributed specific characteristics believed to be unique to their ethnic group.⁸⁴

The identification of a Chinese character, by British observers in particular, also informed the creation of a collective British self-identity. Peter Kitson has discussed how the creation of ideas about China by British observers in the 1830s were 'inflected by their own increasingly national concerns'.⁸⁵ Importantly for this thesis, a sizeable number of the observers were wealthy Scots, from similar backgrounds. James Matheson, William Jardine, and John Crawford, were all educated at Edinburgh University before going to India.⁸⁶ Matheson and Jardine also became Whig MPs on their return to Britain. The Scottish aristocrat James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie was educated in England and held a Highland

⁸⁰ Arthur Henderson Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (Second Edition, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1894).

⁸¹ Chapter 12, 'On the Character of the Chinese', in J. A. G. Roberts, *China through Western Eyes: the nineteenth Century* (Bath: Alan Sutton, 1991), deals specifically with the issue of defining the Chinese character in English language literature.

⁸² Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 3.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 40.

⁸⁴ Who or what constituted the 'Chinese' was itself often contested.

⁸⁵ Peter J. Kitson, *Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange, 1760-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 3. In particular see Kitson's discussion of the work of Eric Hayot, David Porter, Chi-ming Yang.

⁸⁶ Richard J. Grace, 'Matheson, Sir (Nicholas) James Sutherland, first baronet (1796–1878)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2007

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37746>, accessed 27 September 2015];

Richard J. Grace, 'Jardine, William (1784–1843)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37595>, accessed 27 September 2015];

C. M. Turnbull, 'Crawford, John (1783–1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6651>, accessed 27 September 2015].

seat in Parliament as a Whig before embarking on his imperial career.⁸⁷ These men were Scots, but they were also consciously British and agents of the British Empire. Colin Kidd's work notes how Scottish identity in the enlightenment era was tied to a rejection of one form of Scottishness – often represented by cultural symbols like the Gaelic language – in favour of a unionist identity, which balanced autonomy and assimilation, and emphasised shared British history, religion and concepts of freedom.⁸⁸ Richard Grace's biography emphasises the influence of the post-Jacobite conceptualisation of 'North Britain', as well as the Scottish enlightenment more generally, on both William Jardine and James Matheson's early lives and education.⁸⁹ In particular he describes Adam Smith's writings as 'economic gospel' to both men.⁹⁰ At the same time as these intellectual developments Scots were prominent in the expansion of British imperial control. The 'improvement' of Scotland and the Scottish, and the 'improvement' of the British Empire's subjects were connected.⁹¹ Many of those observing China and the Chinese in this thesis had a background in an intellectual climate that emphasised the civilizing virtues of 'British' values and identified the British Empire in Asia in the nineteenth century as a mechanism for 'improvement'.⁹²

Histories of Anglo-Chinese relations have traditionally focused on the positive or negative attributes attached to these concepts of character. The most commonly, uncritically repeated argument has been that British, or Western, perspectives on China deteriorated from a largely positive view of Chinese culture, civilization and technology in the eighteenth century to a negative view of Chinese despotism, vice and heathenism in the nineteenth century.⁹³ Texts such as *China and the West*, *Sinophiles and Sinophobes* and *China through Western Eyes* have emphasised the 'pendulum swing' between positive and negative views of the Chinese character.⁹⁴ Peter Kitson's acceptance of this orthodoxy is demonstrative of how the positive to negative narrative is handled in much scholarship: 'My thesis accepts the conventional view that the representation of the Qing Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suffered a staggering reversal of fortune from admiration to

⁸⁷ David R. Fisher, 'James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie', *The History of Parliament* (<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/stewart-mackenzie-james-1784-1843>), accessed 27 September 2015.

⁸⁸ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity 1689-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3-6.

⁸⁹ Grace, *Opium and Empire*, p. viii.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹¹ Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world, 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 12-14.

⁹² Notions of colonial 'improvement' are fully explored in chapter four.

⁹³ Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, pp. 29-72.

⁹⁴ William Edward Soothill, *China and the West: A Short History of Their Contact From Ancient Times to the Fall of the Manchu Dynasty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925); Colin Mackerras, *Sinophiles and Sinophobes: Western Views of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Roberts, *China through Western Eyes*.

degradation'.⁹⁵ However, this positive to negative narrative is overly simplistic. Kitson's acceptance raises further questions. 'Representation' by whom? How do we define and understand the 'Qing Empire'? Even as scholars like Ulrike Hillemann recognise that 'the West', 'China' and 'the Chinese' could refer to various groups, individuals or institutions, they still operate within the positive to negative paradigm. More nuanced approaches can be found in the PhD level work of Ting Man Tsao and Hao Gao, who both emphasise the contradictions of definitions of Chinese character and the diverse motives and narratives of different Western observers.⁹⁶ Similarly, Laurence Williams has emphasised how cross-cultural forms of civility were promoted by British writers, merchants and diplomats in response to political and economic turmoil.⁹⁷ In the same way that recent histories have emphasised the importance of 'useful' knowledge in Anglo-Chinese exchange, it is more appropriate to describe how the imagined Chinese character was seen as useful, particularly in the context of colonial rule, rather than positive or negative.⁹⁸

As the example of Jardine Matheson leads to a focus on constructions of Chinese character by British observers, there is a conscious omission of the Chinese perspective. That is not to say that Chinese migrants were entirely passive in these constructions. For example, in chapter one the writing of the Chinese merchant Seah Eu Chin is examined, which sought to explain the social and economic hierarchies of the Chinese community in Singapore to an anglophone colonial audience. However, in many of the accounts discussed, Chinese migrants or Chinese subjects were largely passive. Their voices were not accidentally excluded from the historical record, they were explicitly ignored by British authorities or colonial observers. This thesis is focused on the perceptions of, and demands for, migrant labour, as it aims to place Chinese migration in the 1830s and 1840s within a wider framework of empire building.

The ethnic differences within the generalisations about Asian, or even Chinese, migrants need to be drawn out and analysed in order to build a fuller picture of the complexities of competing perceptions of Chinese labour and the Chinese character. What constituted the 'genuine' Chinese character was often contested and confused. As Henrietta Harrison points out, this is hardly surprising if we consider how large and diverse the population that came under the umbrella of 'Chinese' was in terms of language, religion,

⁹⁵ Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, p. 13.

⁹⁶ Ting Man Tsao, 'Representing China to the British Public in the Age of Free Trade, c. 1833-1844' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2000); Hao Gao, 'Sino-British Encounters: perceptions and attitudes from Macartney's mission to the Opium War, 1792-1840' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 2014).

⁹⁷ Laurence Williams, 'Anglo-Chinese Caresses: Civility, Friendship and Trade in English Representations of China, 1760-1800', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 38, Issue 2 (June 2015), p. 277.

⁹⁸ Berg, 'Britain, Industry and Perceptions of China', pp. 269-288.

cultural practices and ethnic identity.⁹⁹ A homogenous China, given the size of the population, would be miraculous.¹⁰⁰ The complexities of both China and who constituted the Chinese cast doubt on the idea that there could be a simple positive to negative model of Western perception. Re-evaluating this is particularly necessary considering its recurrence in the historiography of China's interaction with the West.

Sources and Approaches

It is primarily through an examination of Jardine Matheson, and connected contemporary actors and organisations, that this thesis explores the networks that facilitated Chinese migration in the British Empire in the 1830s and 1840s. It has been increasingly common to use individual life stories to reveal the hidden and complex themes of empire that are obscured by a lack of sources. Such personal approaches, as found in *Colonial Lives across the British Empire* and *Subaltern Lives*, illustrate how the overlaps and connections between individual can be used to reflect the intertwined strands of imperial history.¹⁰¹ As Anderson writes, 'life history is a useful tool for attracting and holding interest in large, complex historical processes.'¹⁰² As individuals formed key nodes within networks of empire they have also been successfully used to connect imperial locales – such as Birmingham, Australia and Jamaica in Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects* – and can act as case studies that are not limited to a fixed time or place, but can physically move and transcend limitations.¹⁰³ Indeed, the British merchants facilitating Chinese emigration were sojourning migrants themselves, who connected various locations in China and Asia with the metropole.

Using Jardine Matheson as an extra-national case study allows us to connect migration systems that are too often kept separate. The firm also provides a link to broader changes in Anglo-Chinese relations in this period, something particularly pertinent considering the scale and significance of the Opium War. Anthony Webster's work on the merchant John Palmer is a good example of how a merchant firm or individual merchants can be used to examine broader changes to economic relationships and commercial communities.¹⁰⁴ The study of famous, powerful organisations like Jardine Matheson has become increasingly unfashionable

⁹⁹ Henrietta Harrison, *China: Inventing the Nation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Most contemporary Western observers estimated that China had a population of 300 to 400 million in the 1830s. Notably, Chinese communities living outside of China were rarely included or considered in population figures.

¹⁰¹ David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁰² Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁴ Webster, *The Richest East India Merchant*.

in histories of empire and migration, which aim to trace actors omitted from the historical record. This thesis does not seek to recapture migrant voices that have been lost from conventional narratives, but to interrogate the vast records on systems of migration and perceptions of migrants that have been neglected by historians of Chinese migration. The firm's archive offers a rich and unique insight into its previously undiscussed involvement in migration.

The approach employed in this thesis is heavily influenced by the source material available. The clandestine nature of Chinese emigration in this period makes the use of comparable, quantified statistical migration records impossible. Emigration was prohibited by the Qing Empire until 1860 and was, in theory if not in practice, punishable by death. Chinese and Western facilitators of emigration often recruited migrants from locations other than Canton, outside of Chinese or British oversight. Additionally, in both credit-ticket (where the cost of passage was repaid by workers) and indentured (where contracts were signed prior to embarkation) migration schemes the level of consent was debateable.¹⁰⁵ Even after 1855, when the Passenger Act connected migrant numbers to ship tonnage, documentation on passenger numbers was routinely forged.¹⁰⁶ It was not until the rise of exclusion and mass migrations of the late nineteenth century that colonial censuses expanded in scope and regularity to allow for the longitudinal tracing of migrant movements. The migration schemes examined in this study were often experimental and limited in scope. Though the number of migrants involved in these projects was small compared to later migrations the documentation, debate and discussion these experiments generated is invaluable to our understanding of the construction of the Chinese migrant in the British consciousness. As is demonstrated in this thesis, Jardine Matheson's involvement directly connects the experiments of the 1830s to the larger migrations from the 1850s onwards.

In order to analyse these migration experiments, and the individuals involved, a variety of sources are examined. These can be divided into four broad groups: official, commercial, private and public. The main official documents that have been used are Parliamentary Papers and Colonial Office Records, which deal with imperial and colonial policy. The Parliamentary Papers comprise select committee and special reports or published correspondence on a range of issues around migration and Anglo-Chinese relations. The Colonial Office Records centre around the work of the Colonial Land and Emigration Officers

¹⁰⁵ The issue of debt slavery complicates the idea of 'free' labour. See Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani, *Bonded Labour and Debt in the Indian Ocean World* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Robert Lee Irick, 'Chi'ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade, 1847-1878' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1971), p. 10; Parliamentary Papers, *Chinese Passenger Ships. A bill intituled an act for the regulation of Chinese passenger ships, 1854-55* (293).

and individual colonies, such as Singapore, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), New South Wales and Hong Kong.¹⁰⁷ Such official sources are often treated with caution by historians of migration. Specifically, because as instruments of state power they often reinforced negative stereotypes towards migrants, they provide no insight into the migrant experience and because they omit unrecorded population movement. However, in the context of this thesis, these sources are of interest precisely because they demonstrate attempts by colonial and imperial authorities to understand, control and manage migration. Most crucially, the information sources that official institutions turned to in these documents indicates the importance of private actors emerging as China experts and conduits of knowledge about the imagined Chinese character.

The commercial sources refer to the business letters of the Jardine Matheson archive and the firm's account books. These also include the records of related firms and organisations, such as Davidson & Co. of Singapore or Tait & Co. of Amoy. As well as illuminating the firm's business operations, these letters also include personal discussions and information. At times overlapping with commercial sources, the private sources category covers the personal letters of relevant individuals, many of which are included in the Jardine Matheson archives, and journals or diaries not intended for publication or concerning commercial transactions.¹⁰⁸ The category of personal correspondence also includes the private papers of James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie accessed at the National Archive in Scotland. The information gleaned from individual letters can be limited (particularly when only one direction of correspondence is available). Yet it is the volume of private sources available that offers a unique insight into the thoughts of members of the firm and their correspondents. Specifically, the opinions expressed on the Chinese and Chinese migration in these sources were not intended for publication and are often less guarded.

The public documents comprise a large amount of the sources analysed and include newspapers, journals, periodicals, reports and books intended for a mass contemporary audience. Many of these have been accessed digitally but archives in London and Hong Kong have been mined for printed material which disseminated news and knowledge on China. These sources are not examined alone as records of events. Instead their main utility is as an insight into the public narratives than specific organisations and actors were hoping to disseminate. That Jardine Matheson published their own newspaper and were enthusiastic patrons of China coast publishing demonstrates the significance of these documents intended for a wider audience. Through these various sources the story of the migration experiments of the 1830s and 1840s, and their broader significance, can be told.

¹⁰⁷ The Colonial Land and Emigration Officers reported annually from 1840.

¹⁰⁸ Jardine Matheson Archive, Cambridge University Library (<http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD/GBR/0012/MS%20JM>), accessed 27 September 2015.

Case Studies

1833 is the starting point of this study as it was a seminal year in Anglo-Chinese relations with the removal of the EIC's monopoly of the China trade.¹⁰⁹ Chapter one will examine this by looking at the both the pre-1833 development of Anglo-Chinese relations and the significance of the EIC Charter Act of 1833. It will also discuss the importance of Singapore as a contact zone. Credit-ticket migration to Southeast Asia had been taking place for centuries, but in Singapore became crucially important to British observers in forming ideas about Chinese migrants and Chinese migration more generally. Chapter two will detail the construction of an imagined Chinese character and the complexities of constructing ethnic identities in the contact zone. How ideas about the Chinese ethnic character were circulated through print, commercial and personal networks, is a primary focus. These chapters will introduce some key actors and themes, which will be developed throughout the thesis. They will address at the opening of the China trade, the growth of publishing on China in the early 1830s and imperial conceptions of labour and ethnicity as well as Chinese migration before 1833.

The following chapters examine different Chinese migration schemes over the 1830s, 1840s and early 1850s. It is notable that many of these migration schemes have been left unexamined because they were never successfully established or they were retrospectively considered failures. However, these schemes had a wider narrative significance in shaping perceptions of Chinese labour in the British Empire. Chapter three will build on chapters one and two by examining some examples of Chinese labour migration outside of the existing patterns of migration to Singapore. First, it will examine Jardine Matheson's involvement in procuring Chinese migrants for the Assam tea growing project on behalf of the Indian Government. The use of the firm's opium distribution network to extract Chinese tea cultivators from the Chinese interior will be detailed. It will also comparatively examine Gordon Forbes Davidson's Chinese migration scheme into New South Wales. In establishing such a scheme, Davidson was attempting to replicate migrant systems he had observed in colonial Singapore. Both of these examples demonstrate how Chinese migrant labour was utilised to fulfil specific colonial needs, which were not just caused by new projects of production but also by negative perceptions of indigenous peoples.

Chapter four will look at a different colonial context by focusing on Chinese migration to Ceylon under the Governorship of James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie, a personal acquaintance of James Matheson, between 1837 and 1841. This chapter will introduce some

¹⁰⁹ It is also poignant that Magniac & Co. was re-branded Jardine, Matheson & Co. by William Jardine and James Matheson in 1832.

of the wider points about changes to economic and employment systems in the British Empire. In contrast to the personal connection between Ceylon and Canton, the establishment of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission shows the growing interest in systematically regulating migration on an imperial scale. Building upon this, chapter five provides the final case study with an examination of Chinese emigration from the China coast in the 1840s. Jardine Matheson's role in establishing new systems of indentured emigration from Amoy is the key focus. Additionally the role of Hong Kong is discussed in this 'new' era of Chinese emigration and continuities from the previous period are emphasised. 1853 marks the end of this study as it saw the beginning of colonial attempts to regulate and control migration from China. Specifically, an inquiry into the Chinese passenger trade was established by Hong Kong Governor John Bowring in December 1852 and state managed recruitment of labour for the West Indies began through James T. White in January 1853. The 1850s also marked a new era of Anglo-Chinese relations with the onset of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and Second Opium War (1856-1860).

In studying these examples this thesis traces early representations of and experiments with Chinese labour in the British Empire from the 1830s to the early 1850s. It centres on Jardine Matheson's commercial network and its role in facilitating Chinese emigration and contributing to the formation of an imagined Chinese ethnic character. In examining the firm's role in developing migration processes the thesis will also engage with broader changes in Anglo-Chinese relations and the British Empire.

Chapter One: Singapore, China Experts and the 1833 Charter Act

Introduction

Histories of Anglo-Chinese relations refer to the William Napier's expedition of 1834 as the 'prelude' to the First Opium War and Treaty of Nanking.¹ The necessity for Napier's ill-fated diplomatic mission arose from the removal of the EIC's monopoly of the China trade in 1833, and his death in 1834 has been identified as a turning point in Anglo-Chinese relations. In order to contextualise the impact of these changes in terms of migration, this chapter will chart the increasing significance of Britain's colonies in Southeast Asia as Anglo-Chinese 'contact zones' in the 1820s and early 1830s.² The 1833 Charter Act was a key moment in Anglo-Chinese commercial exchange. Changes to the regulation of Anglo-Chinese trade in the early 1830s created an environment that was conducive to subsequent experiments, which sought to resolve colonial labour shortages through Chinese migration. Moreover, debates around free trade were grounded in concepts of ethnic hierarchy, which were a result of both commercial encounters and colonial experience in contact zones. The removal of the EIC monopoly in 1833 provided a new, poorly-regulated framework for British trade on the China coast, which facilitated the expansion and dominance of firms like Jardine Matheson. This transition made available the necessary capital, access and knowledge for new emigration systems to be established on the China coast. Here we shall see that the early 1830s was a vital period for the establishment of both physical and conceptual frameworks for Chinese migration in the British Empire.

A crucial point of analysis in this study is the role of Singapore as a contact zone, where ideas about the Chinese character were developed by colonial observers. Most significantly, Southeast Asia was the site of pre-existing systems of Chinese migration in the form of the seasonal junk trade, which carried labourers from southern China on credit-ticket contracts.³ Jardine Matheson's perception of Chinese migrant labour, and its possible use, was shaped by the example of Singapore. Singapore provided contemporary observers with an example of a significant Chinese population living and working under British governance. It was in Singapore that the colonial administrator John Crawfurd attained his status as a 'China expert'.⁴ Crawfurd formed ideas about Chinese labour, the Chinese character and concepts of ethnic hierarchy whilst serving as British Resident of Singapore in the 1820s. Elite Chinese

¹ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*; Lovell, *The Opium War*, p. 9; Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis*; James Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

² For more on 'contact zones' see introduction, page 12.

³ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 30. The 'junk trade' is discussed in more detail on page 30.

⁴ See Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, p. 13 for more on 'China experts' and 'Sinology'.

merchants, who acted in compliance and partnership with colonial authority, were singled out and celebrated as ideal colonists. As a crucial point of contact, Singapore both validated the credentials of Western experts and provided an example how Chinese migrants fulfilled various economic roles. The writing of Chinese businessman Seah Eu Chin reveals the agency of Chinese elites in mediating colonial understandings of Chinese society within Singapore. Residence in Singapore was also a major influence on the British merchant Gordon Forbes Davidson, who went on to establish a Chinese migration scheme to Australia in 1837. It was in Singapore that Davidson saw first-hand the utility of Chinese labour in a British colony and was familiarised with pre-existing systems of Chinese emigration. Singapore was a template. It provided both an example of pre-existing systems of Chinese migration as well as a large Chinese population, which could be 'exported' to other colonies.

The second, connected issue that this chapter addresses is the emergence and importance of the 'China expert' and discussions of 'Chinese character' in the debates over the 1833 Charter Act. Existing histories of Chinese migration into the British Empire largely focus on the late nineteenth century, and this emphasis has meant that these early free trade debates, which were ostensibly about Anglo-Chinese commercial relations, have been overlooked. These debates are critical to understanding the intersection between concepts of free trade, civilization and perceptions of the Chinese. This chapter's analysis of the free trade debates will focus on how John Crawford's experience in Singapore, where he worked with Chinese merchants and community leaders, informed his role as a lobbyist and expert when he returned to Britain. Additionally, Crawford's career bestowed his ethnographic observations with a degree of legitimacy in colonial and metropolitan circles. It is no coincidence that Jardine Matheson was rebranded in 1832, ready to exploit the new, poorly-regulated framework for British trade on the China coast after the EIC charter renewal of 1833. Discussions of Chinese ethnicity in debates over the Charter Act were essential in affirming long standing stereotypes. That these stereotypes were integral to the new framework of Anglo-Chinese relations, an environment in which Jardine Matheson thrived, demonstrates the way that British imperial commercial interests and concepts of ethnicity were interconnected.

The role of figures like John Crawford and Gordon Forbes Davidson both before and after 1833 highlights emerging commercial, personal and information networks that filled the power vacuum left by the absence of the EIC in Anglo-Chinese exchange. It is also important to emphasise the impact of wider imperial changes on the demand for labour and the centrality of debates on emigration. For example, the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 and the more gradual shift away from convict transportation to Australia both

created labour shortages and new conversations about the very nature of labour. Specifically, the ‘desirability’ of certain forms of labour and labourers – and ideas about ethnicity, class and coercion – were at the centre of discussions about colonization. Within this context the changes that occurred in the early 1830s, and the events of 1833 in particular, created both a fertile ground for the development of a discourse about a specific Chinese character and enabled the practical conditions required to facilitate labour migration from China into the British Empire.

Credit-ticket Migration to Singapore and the Straits Settlements in the 1830s

In the early nineteenth century, China, with its vast ‘surplus’ population, was identified by some imperial planners as a solution to imperial labour shortages.⁵ In 1810 a House of Commons Select Committee was appointed ‘to consider the practicability and expediency of supplying our West India colonies with free labourers from the East’. This committee examined the possibility of replacing the recently prohibited African slave trade (1807) with a system of Chinese immigration. In this report the Chinese were praised for having ‘uniformly conducted themselves with the greatest propriety and order’ and being ‘distinguished by their orderly and industrious habits’, though such a scheme was dismissed as impracticable.⁶ Similarly, in colonial settings where there were labour shortages, such as the Australian colonies, colonial employers saw Chinese migrants as a possible solution from the turn of the nineteenth century.⁷ These demands were driven by vast, Empire-wide changes. Colonies became more important as centres of production for the supply of raw materials to the rapidly industrialising British economy. Yet, the first encounter between British colonial authority and sizeable Chinese immigrant populations took place in the Straits Settlements of Penang (ceded to the British in 1786), Singapore (ceded in 1824) and Malacca (ceded in 1824).⁸ The British colonial experience in the Straits Settlements over the 1820s and 1830s demonstrated the economic utility of Chinese migration. It was a consequence of migration to the Straits Settlements that schemes which were deemed impracticable at the start of the nineteenth century were established and operational by the 1850s.

⁵ The excess size of the Chinese population was frequently discussed in Jardine Matheson’s newspaper the *Canton Register*; *Canton Register*, 3 October 1829; *Canton Register*, 17 March 1831; *Canton Register*, 11 July 1837

⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the committee appointed to consider the practicability and expediency of supplying our West India colonies with free labourers from the East; and to report their opinion thereupon, to the House*, 1810-11 (225), p. 1.

⁷ See chapter three for a discussion of Chinese migration to Australia in the correspondence of Governor King; King to Hobart, 14 August 1804, in *Historical Records of Australia: Series I, Volume V* (The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1915), p. 8.

⁸ Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p. 99.

Contact zones such as Singapore were crucial for providing knowledge of the practicalities of Chinese immigration and as locations in which ethnic hierarchies were constructed.⁹ Whilst Southeast Asia had been home to Chinese expatriate communities for centuries, the increasing population movement between 1740 and 1840, which was partly driven by the infusion of European capital into the region, has been described by scholars as the ‘Chinese century’.¹⁰ Singapore was of particular significance in the 1830s because of its rapid development in the 1820s. The colonial administrator Stamford Raffles founded a trading post at Singapore in 1819 (Singapore was officially ceded to the British in 1824) and the population of the colony increased rapidly. Experience of Singapore had a significant impact on colonial observers who were later involved in establishing schemes for Chinese migration and diffusing ideas about a Chinese ethnic character. Life in Singapore shaped John Crawfurd’s perceptions of Chinese migrants. John Crawfurd was a significant figure, serving as British Resident of Singapore from 1823 to 1826. His role in negotiating the 1824 treaty with the Temenggong on the status of Singapore means that he is often cited, alongside Raffles, as the ‘father’ of the colony.¹¹ After travelling to Calcutta to work for the EIC’s Bengal Medical Service in 1803 Crawfurd had a long career in Asia, as an administrator and diplomat, before returning to Britain to be active in the EIC Charter debates in the 1830s. As a consequence of the colonial experience in Singapore the Chinese were characterised as the ‘highest ranking Asians on the scale of civilization’.¹² Ideas about ethnicity and economic utility were mutually constituted in colonial Singapore, which provided a fertile ideological rationale for later colonial experiments with Chinese labour.

In Singapore British colonial authorities and merchant elites exploited pre-existing systems of Chinese migration across the Malay Peninsula and Southeast Asia. Whilst contemporary Western critics chastised the insularity of the Qing Empire, there had long been semi-clandestine Chinese migration networks.¹³ Significant population movement from China to the Philippines, Java, Siam, Borneo and Malaya had been recorded from the 1600s onwards.¹⁴ These migrations were not just driven by economic pull factors but also the growth of Amoy (Xiamen) as a thriving port city on China’s south coast.¹⁵ This long history has led to the designation of Southeast Asia as the ‘*Nanyang*’, described by Craig Lockyard as

⁹ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 1-16.

¹⁰ Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka*, p. xxiv.

¹¹ Turnbull, ‘Crawfurd, John (1783–1868)’. The Temenggong was an ancient Malay title of nobility, and the treaty agreement legally secured British control of Singapore.

¹² Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 149.

¹³ Whilst emigration was technically illegal until 1860, local Qing officials were aware of emigration from southern ports along existing trade routes. The movement of people was tacitly accepted by authorities.

¹⁴ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 30.

¹⁵ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 35.

a 'Chinese Mediterranean'.¹⁶ The port-towns that would be designated the Straits Settlements by the British were already connected, through commerce and population movement, to China. Nordin Hussin's study of Penang and Melaka shows the growth of the Chinese populations across Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century, prior to British colonial control. As an example, the Chinese immigrant community in Melaka grew from three per cent of the total population in 1675 to twenty-two per cent by 1750.¹⁷ These pre-existing Chinese communities were visible to Europeans in Southeast Asia. For example, John Crawfurd suggested that of the total population of the Siamese Empire (which he estimated to be 2.8 million) more than 440,000 were Chinese, and that they made up 'one half of the population of Bangkok'.¹⁸ Chinese migrants were important economic and social power brokers across Southeast Asia, often in areas outside of European colonial control.

Singapore provided an example of a large Chinese population, living under British rule, which could be 'exported' to other parts of the Empire via onward migration.¹⁹ Over the 1820s Singapore became a vital trade point connected to India, Canton and various ports in Southeast Asia.²⁰ Singapore's commercial success, proximity to China and shortage of labour quickly attracted migrant populations from Europe, China and areas within Southeast Asia. By the 1830s the island attracted between 5,000 and 8,000 Chinese labourers annually, mainly for work in tin mines and on rubber plantations. Additionally this population movement both attracted and created a class of wealthy Chinese merchants, who by 1867 made up two-thirds of the colony's merchant community.²¹ Different classes of Chinese – whether labourers, artisans or merchants – were simultaneously connected and played different roles in colonial society. Anthony Webster has uncovered how the Chinese, along with the native Malay population, were regularly subject to racism and ridicule in the English language press.²² By contrast, Webster has also revealed how the prominence of the Chinese in the Straits Settlements created a distinct Southeast Asian identity – amongst the colonial elite – that contributed to growing 'regional, political and commercial consciousness (that) emerged in the 1830s and 1840s'.²³ British narratives of hierarchy in Singapore led to an ethnic

¹⁶ Lockard, 'Chinese Migration and Settlement in Southeast Asia before 1850', p. 766.

¹⁷ Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka*, pp. 164-166.

¹⁸ John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China, Vol. II* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), pp. 221-224.

¹⁹ For a broad history of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia see Craig A. Lockard, *Southeast Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Carl A. Trocki, 'Singapore as a Nineteenth Century Migration Node', in Donna Gabaccia and Dirk Hoerder (eds), *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 198-225.

²⁰ Frost, *Singapore*, p. 85.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 87-91.

²² Webster, 'The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements', p. 911.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 908.

stratification in which the Chinese were placed above other Asian ethnic groups, due to their economic contribution, but below Europeans, due to their perceived cultural and social inferiority.²⁴

Many Chinese migrants to Singapore, and the Malay Peninsula in general, were credit-ticket migrants: manual labourers who signed contracts to get their ‘tickets’ from China to Singapore paid. Numerous scholars have detailed how this system long pre-dated British colonial control.²⁵ The credit-ticket system largely worked to the benefit of employers seeking cheap labour. Workers signed contracts for a set period of time with a broker in China before they were taken to their destination (in this case Singapore) where the Chinese brokers would sell the contract to a Chinese or European employer. The sale of the contract acted as payment to the broker for passage and the labourers repaid their new employers for the purchase of the contract from their wages.²⁶ Alternatively some credit-ticket passengers were brought to Southeast Asia on the account of specific vessels, where on arrival the passengers would be detained until an employer secured their services by paying their expenses and a margin of profit to the ship.²⁷ This ‘junk trade’ was conducted entirely by Chinese brokers and operated in some form across most of Southeast Asia.²⁸ These trading vessels often carried labourers as supplementary cargo, meaning that the movement of people followed existing trade routes. Trocki’s periods of Chinese migration mark the early nineteenth century as an important shifting point, with the growth of the existing Chinese trade being stimulated by increased European capital investment.²⁹ The rapid economic development of Singapore vastly increased the demand for credit-ticket labourers, which, prior to the cession of Hong Kong in 1842, was reliant on pre-existing Chinese trading networks.

Many Chinese men (it was almost universally a system for male labourers) entered credit-ticket contracts willingly, but there were abuses within the system – including coercion, contract manipulation, false promises of pay and conditions, and even forcible abduction.³⁰ Debt was often used by both employers and brokers in order to extend contracts beyond their

²⁴ Syed Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism* (London: Cass and Co., 1977).

²⁵ Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism*, p. 54; Campbell, *Chinese Coolie Emigration within the British Empire*, p. xii; Meagher, *The Introduction of Chinese Laborers to Latin America*, p. 131, has identified references to migrants ‘pawning’ themselves in this fashion as early as 1805.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 189.

²⁷ Chang, ‘Chinese Coolie Trade in the Straits Settlements in the Late Nineteenth Century’, p. 2.

²⁸ Elliot C. Arensmeyer, ‘The Chinese Coolie Labour Trade and the Philippines: An Inquiry’, *Philippine Studies*, 28 (1980), p. 189.

²⁹ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 30.

³⁰ Campbell, *Chinese Coolie Emigration within the British Empire*, p. xii; Trocki, ‘Singapore as a Nineteenth Century Migration Node’, pp. 198-225.

original terms.³¹ Workers from China would enter into contracts in coastal towns, often to repay debts incurred through opium addiction, gambling or financial mismanagement.³² In the early period the credit-ticket system was entirely unregulated by the colonial state and little information about population movement was recorded. Estimates from 1876 suggest that two-thirds of arriving Chinese labourers were credit-ticket as opposed to ‘free’.³³ As new systems of migration to distant European colonies developed in the mid-nineteenth century, Singapore became a favoured destination of emigrants from southern China. A particular attraction of Southeast Asia for potential migrants was the ease of return migration. Many of the brokers involved in the Southeast Asian credit-ticket system were return migrants themselves.³⁴ For those planning to sojourn for purely economic reasons, the high level of return migration, as compared with later destinations such as the West Indies, was particularly reassuring and made colonies like Singapore favoured migrant destinations.

For the early period it is difficult to estimate the exact size of the Chinese population in Singapore, and the extent to which this population laboured under credit-ticket contracts. In particular the sojourning nature of the credit-ticket system meant the population was largely transient. As early as 1827 the colonial state was attempting to quantify the population’s demographic composition. The Singapore census information shown in Table 1.1 was published in the *Singapore Chronicle* and *Canton Register* in 1828:

Table 1.1. Singapore Census, 1827

| | Males | Females |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Europeans | 85 | 23 |
| Native Christians | 119 | 74 |
| Malays | 2,850 | 2,486 |
| Armenians | 17 | 8 |
| Chinese | 5,847 | 363 |
| Coromandel Coast | 1,072 | 23 |
| Bengal | 237 | 57 |
| Arabs | 17 | 0 |
| Bugese | 877 | 375 |
| Javanese | 247 | 108 |
| Total | 11,368 | 3,517 |

Source: *Canton Register*, 31 May 1828.

³¹ Eli Murakami, ‘Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Southern China: The Coolie Trade and Emigration to Southeast Asia’, in Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani, *Bonded Labour and Debt in the Indian Ocean World* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. 153-165.

³² Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, p. 84.

³³ Chang, ‘Chinese Coolie Trade in the Straits Settlements in the Late Nineteenth Century’, p. 3. The term ‘free’ here refers to labourers who were not bound by contract or debt upon arrival, yet it is used cautiously as the degree to which a choice of employer or employment was available was often questionable.

³⁴ Murakami, ‘Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Southern China’, p. 162.

Historians have been reluctant to cite Singapore's census results prior to the 1870s due to the irregularity of their timing and methodology. However the 1827 figures do, at the very least, give an indication of how the population of the colony was perceived and understood by colonial administrators. Notably the total population of 14,885 was significantly higher than the estimated 150 inhabitants in 1819, when Stamford Raffles first established a trading post on the island.³⁵ The Chinese already constituted forty-two per cent of the total population by 1827. Strikingly, the Chinese population was deemed to be larger than the Malay population by this point, and dwarfed the European merchant population. Most interestingly, the different ethnic groups are listed in the census in the form of a hierarchy. For example, 'Europeans' and 'Native Christians' are presented at the top of the census, despite their relative statistical insignificance.

The gender imbalance within the Chinese population was also well above average. The Chinese population of Singapore was only six per cent female, compared to the figure of thirty-one per cent female for the colony as a whole. The same trend of majority male Chinese migration continued later in the century and can be attributed to three main factors: the illegality of emigration until 1860; the exclusively male mining and plantation work available; and the temporary, sojourning nature of contract migration. Generally speaking, amongst credit-ticket migrant labourers, male 'breadwinners' from southern China left dependent wives and families in China and remitted surplus earnings.³⁶ The small amount of female emigration reflects the fact that the majority of Chinese migrants were single men working in mines and on plantations for temporary periods. By the late 1820s Singapore had a sizeable Chinese population but it continued to grow even further in the 1830s. The growth of productive export industries in Singapore led to a consistently increasing annual influx of Chinese workers.

In 1837 the *Canton Press* reported the total number of annual Chinese arrivals at 2,069, noting that 'from ports in the province Fuk-heen, or Hokien, there are numerous emigrants.'³⁷ Though 'Hokkien' is more appropriately described as a language dialect related to certain ethnic groups as opposed to a geographical space, it is mainly spoken in Fujian Province and indicates the regional focus of migrant origins.³⁸ The bulk of migrants came from southern China. Fukien (Fujian) and Kwantung (Guandong) provinces were the

³⁵ Saw Swee-Hock, 'Population Trends in Singapore, 1819-1967', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 10, Issue. 1 (January 1969), pp. 36-37.

³⁶ George Pepper, *If they don't bring their women here: Chinese female immigration before exclusion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 5.

³⁷ *Canton Press*, 28 March 1838.

³⁸ For the relationship between Chinese dialects and geographical regions see Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, pp. 23-60.

principle centres of emigration.³⁹ These geographical differences would prove crucial in the construction of the Western narrative of southern Han Chinese escaping the despotic northern Chinese to live under Western dominion.⁴⁰ Emigration from these regions continued to grow to such an extent that by 1840 there were over 5,000 new arrivals each year, with nearly one third of Chinese migrants working in gambier cultivation.⁴¹

The credit-ticket labourers and miners were a prominent occupational majority, but as Singapore grew so did the importance of the wealthy Chinese merchant community (the *Towkays*) and Chinese artisans in various skilled industries.⁴² Colonial Singapore was, as evidenced by the census data, a multi-ethnic society, but John Crawfurd specifically praised the ‘two most industrious, intelligent, and wealthy classes, the Europeans and the Chinese’.⁴³ After his experiences in India, Burma, Siam and Java, Crawfurd published accounts of his travels.⁴⁴ His experience of different social contexts across Southeast Asia fed into his praise of Chinese merchants in Singapore. For Crawfurd, the Chinese merchant elite were vitally important to economic development across Southeast Asia.

There were important regional and class differences within the Chinese community in Singapore. A unique insight into these distinctions was offered by Seah Eu Chin (also styled Siah U’Chin). Seah was born and educated in Guangdong province and first arrived in Singapore in 1823 as a clerk on a trading junk.⁴⁵ After acquiring the necessary capital whilst working on trading vessels, he was able to invest in property in the 1830s and married into the elite of the Straits Chinese by marrying the daughter of the Chinese Kapitan of Perak.⁴⁶ Investment in pepper and gambier plantations secured Seah’s fortune. He became the colony’s first Chinese ‘man of letters’, writing in English, and maintained connections with prominent European merchants.⁴⁷ Seah was an example of a wealthy Chinese businessman who collaborated with British colonial authority. He joined the Singapore Chamber of Commerce in 1840 and employed credit-ticket Chinese labourers on his plantations.⁴⁸ Though Seah

³⁹ Meagher, *The Introduction of Chinese Laborers to Latin America*, p. 66.

⁴⁰ See more on this separation of the Qing Empire and Chinese population see the sub-section ‘The Chinese Character and the Opium War’ in chapter two.

⁴¹ Campbell, *Chinese Coolie Emigration within the British Empire*, p. 8; Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 68.

⁴² Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 912.

⁴³ Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochinchina*, Vol. II, p. 390.

⁴⁴ See Turnbull, ‘Crawfurd, John (1783–1868)’, for an overview of Crawfurd’s travel writing.

⁴⁵ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 202; Frost, ‘Emporium in Imperio’, p. 36.

⁴⁶ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 202. A ‘Kapitan’ was a leader who acted as the head of the local Chinese community, in Singapore the British sought to recognise less overtly political forms of community leadership in the 1830s; Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 58.

⁴⁷ Frost, ‘Emporium in Imperio’, p. 36.

⁴⁸ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 202.

became part of the Chinese elite in Singapore, the overview he gave of the Chinese population was more nuanced than the observations of his British contemporaries.

Seah Eu Chin's account of Singapore's Chinese in the 1840s identified six different classes (mainly based on dialect groupings) amongst the then 40,000 strong community: Chinese from Hokien; Malacca born Chinese; Chinese from Tio Chiu; Chinese from Canton; the Khe Chinese; and Chinese from Hai-nam.⁴⁹ From these different groups, which Seah called 'tribes', came a vast range of professions for Chinese migrants:

The different trades and professions of the Chinese in Singapore, are School-masters, Writers, Cashiers, Shop-keepers, Apothecaries, Coffin-makers, Grocers, Gold-smiths, Silver-smiths, Tin-smiths, Blacksmiths, Dyers, Tailors, Barbers, Shoemakers, Basket-makers, Fishermen, Sawyers, Boat-builders, Cabinet-makers, Architects, Masons, Manufacturers of lime and bricks. Sailors, Ferrymen, Sago manufacturers, Distillers of Spirits, Cultivators of plantations of Gambier, Sugar, Siri, Pepper, and Nutmegs, Play actors, Sellers of cake and fruit, Carriers of burdens, Fortune tellers, idle vagabonds who have no work and of whom there are not a few, beggars, and, nightly, there are those villains the thieves.⁵⁰

Within the Chinese community these different ethnic 'tribes' were believed to be predisposed to specific professions. As an example the Hokkien dialect group was overrepresented in trading and finance in both Malacca and Singapore.⁵¹ Seah's references to 'idle vagabonds' and 'those villains the thieves', demonstrates a class hierarchy within the Chinese community. Certain strata of colonial society were identified as undesirable by their wealthy contemporaries. Over time, the increasing group of Straits-born Chinese came to dominate Singapore socially and economically as they were able to draw upon multiple connections and networks.⁵² The Chinese community and narratives about the Chinese as an ethnic component of Singaporean society were complex and diverse. Importantly, Chinese migration to Singapore influenced British perceptions of the Chinese, and consequently China, more generally.

The Chinese in Singapore: Uncivilized or Industrious Colonists?

The various classes of Chinese migrants were perceived differently by both the colonial state and Western residents. Whilst certain Chinese migrants were criticised and others were celebrated, the community at large was recognised as essential to the colony's economic

⁴⁹ Siah U'Chin, 'The Chinese in Singapore', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. II (1848), p. 284. Note the increase in population from the 1827 census.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 284.

⁵¹ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 58; Trocki, 'Singapore as a Nineteenth Century Migration Node', pp. 198-225.

⁵² Frost, 'Emporium in Imperio', p. 40.

development. Under the Governorship of Robert Fullerton, comparative census information was analysed with the aim of ‘ridding the settlement of vagabond Chinese’.⁵³ In the same analysis Fullerton discussed the possibility of allowing Chinese migrants free land rent, in order to ‘afford encouragement to the settlement of industrious labourers in the cultivation of the land’.⁵⁴ Chinese migrants in Singapore were seen as both essential and problematic. Stereotypes about Chinese workers were intimately connected to notions of labour and class.

The main work for manual labourers emigrating from China was to be found in tin mines or in pepper, opium or gambier production. Increasing numbers of Chinese manual labourers supplemented the growing influence of ethnic clans known as *Kongsis* – ethnic associations, which acted in lieu of domestic familial networks.⁵⁵ The *Kongsi* associations allowed for disenfranchised Chinese workers to act collectively and pool capital and resources.⁵⁶ The social and economic structures of these Chinese communities were important for the creation of the industrious stereotype that was applied to the Chinese in contrast to the colonial view of the ‘lazy native’.⁵⁷ The supposed industriousness of the labouring Chinese in colonial Singapore was driven by economic necessity – namely debt. The nature of the credit-ticket system allowed for manipulation of workers, as payments for passage, food, shelter, clothing and debts (incurred due to opium addiction, gambling or financial mismanagement) could be deducted from wages and allow contracts to be extended until debts were repaid. This led to employment well beyond the initial contract’s original terms.⁵⁸

A major cause of migrant debt was opium addiction. Opium was used to control the workforce, with supply established through the *Kongsis*. Expenditure on opium in excess of income meant contract extensions were necessary in order to repay the initial debts incurred as part of the credit-ticket system.⁵⁹ Trocki’s view of this relationship between addiction and the labour supply is substantiated by the account of Seah Eu Chin who, as an owner of gambier and pepper plantations, was well aware of addiction amongst his employees.⁶⁰ He explained in an article for the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago* why workers would regularly extend their contracts in Singapore:

⁵³ Population of Singapore: Expediency of ridding the settlement of vagabond Chinese (20 May 1829), in Board’s Collections Vol 1271, IOR/F/4/1271, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 912; Trocki, *Opium and Empire*; Wang Tai Peng, *The Origins of Chinese Kongsis* (Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, 1994).

⁵⁶ Trocki, ‘Opium and the Beginnings of Chinese Capitalism in Southeast Asia’, p. 301

⁵⁷ For more on the notion of the ‘lazy native’ see Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*.

⁵⁸ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 127.

⁵⁹ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Claude Markovits, ‘The Political Economy of Opium Smuggling in Early Nineteenth Century India: Leakage or Resistance?’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2009), p. 89; Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 202.

Those who originally intended to return to their native country after 3 years, and yet after the lapse of more than 10 years have not been able to fulfil their wish; but what is the reason of it? It is because they become addicted to the prevailing vice of Opium smoking.⁶¹

Where colonial observers attributed the long contracts of Chinese labourers to an innate industriousness of the Chinese character, *Towkays* such as Seah were aware of the financial necessity for extended employment. Opium addiction was extremely profitable for multiple groups. Opium revenue farming provided a lucrative income for the *Kongsis*.⁶² The ethnic associations connected the different Chinese classes: ‘there existed a bourgeoisie and a working class, which were linked together by systems of commodity production and consumption’.⁶³ As the different Chinese classes were symbiotic, the ‘industrious’ Chinese could not be neatly separated from the ‘vagabond’ Chinese as hoped by Fullerton. Not only did opium addiction provide the *Towkays* with a cheap labour force, it also provided a profit for British merchants and colonial revenues. Opium exports from Singapore increased from 1,285 chests in 1835 to 7,550 by 1841.⁶⁴ Whilst opium addiction was seen as a problem, and one that was used to criticise Chinese ‘vagabonds’, it was also a profitable export for the colonial state.

Many of the criticisms of Chinese labourers in Singapore were linked to addiction. As Chinese-owned opium farms provided the colonial government with revenue and respected European and Chinese merchants profited from the system, addiction and its negative effects were attributed to the lack of self-control of the consumers: ‘the victim had come to stand for the crime’.⁶⁵ Again, in spite of his personal economic interest in the use of debt from addiction to entrap workers, Seah Eu Chin reflected on the negative social consequences of addiction:

They become addicted to the prevailing vice of Opium smoking. After a continued residence here they learn the habit, which afterwards becomes fixed. Many of the Chinese labourers after having earned a little money, waste it upon opium or expend it in gambling ... when these opium smokers are reduced to straits from want of money they resort to schemes of plunder and robbery.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Siah U’Chin, ‘The Chinese in Singapore’, *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. II (1848), p. 285. The publication was published and edited by J. R. Logan at Singapore’s Mission Press.

⁶² Trocki, ‘Opium and the Beginnings of Chinese Capitalism in Southeast Asia’, p. 301.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 300.

⁶⁴ Hans Derks, *The History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, c. 1600-1950* (Boston: Brill, 2012), p. 746.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2; Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 942. Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Siah, ‘The Chinese in Singapore’, p. 285.

In addition to opium smoking, gambling was seen as a distinctly Chinese vice. John Crawford described the Chinese of Singapore as ‘the most debauched of gamblers’ and in criticising the possible relaxing of gambling restrictions the *Singapore Chronicle* warned that ‘every Chinaman’s shop would become a receptacle of villainous sharpers.’⁶⁷ As a result the colonial state was concerned with introducing restrictive laws that brought ‘a beneficial public moral effect’.⁶⁸ Despite their important economic role the Chinese labouring classes were perceived to be fundamentally immoral and a troublesome social presence. The gender imbalance of the Chinese population was also believed to exacerbate immorality. By the 1830s the preference of many British observers was for the immigration of families. The *Chronicle* hoped that ‘the tide of emigration should return in our favour, with married emigrants.’⁶⁹ The idea that innate Chinese immorality could be subdued through abstinence and marriage held a particular irony as it was the expense of opium consumption and the system of familial remittance that made the Chinese plantation workers such a cost-effective workforce in the first place.

The majority Chinese population was also perceived as fundamentally untrustworthy by colonial authorities. The European community of Singapore was outnumbered by most Asian ethnic groups in the colony, but it was an organised Chinese labour force that presented the clearest political threat. As Anthony Webster has suggested, the Chinese were perceived as an intimidating presence, especially during outbreaks of violence in the 1840s.⁷⁰ The associations formed by the Chinese were a particular source of concern. The social institution of the *Kongsis* often came into conflict with the free market ideology of European merchants and colonial authorities.⁷¹ In particular, the *Kongsis* organisations aroused European suspicions because of a fear of the Chinese criminal organisation: the triad society. The main source of English language information on the triad society was an article by the missionary William Milne written in 1826. Milne conceded that many of his assertions were speculative as the society was secret and it was virtually impossible to distinguish between members and non-members.⁷² This mystique added to the threat of the society, which was notable for organised criminal activity. According to Milne, the society’s activities involved ‘theft, robbery, overthrow of government, and aiming for political power’.⁷³ The triad society was supposedly present in colonial Singapore. Milne suggested that ‘the idle, gambling, opium-

⁶⁷ John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. I* (Edinburgh: Archibald, Constable & Co., 1820), p. 112; *Singapore Chronicle*, 27 February 1836.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Singapore Chronicle*, 15 October 1836.

⁷⁰ Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 911.

⁷¹ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 4.

⁷² William Milne, ‘Account of a Secret Association in China, Entitled the Triad Society’, *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.1, No.2 (1826), pp. 244-245.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

smoking Chinese (particularly of the lower classes), frequently belong to this fraternity'.⁷⁴ The clandestine nature of such societies prevented the collation of membership information. However, by the 1880s the colonial authorities estimated that the largest secret societies – the Ghee Hin, Ghee Hok and Hai Sin – had a membership of over 33,000.⁷⁵ The accusation of secret society membership was a useful tool to collectively denote the Chinese as deceitful and threatening. The triad society became a catch-all slur for Chinese organisations and associations that were not recognised as legitimate by the colonial state.

In a reflection of the multi-ethnic hierarchies of colonial Singapore, Chinese immigrants were also presented as a threat to the Malay population. Sandra Manickam has written about the use of 'race as a strategy of colonial rule' in Singapore and particularly the emphasis on comparisons between Malay and Chinese colonists as a justification of British governance.⁷⁶ Sir John Bowring, Governor of Hong Kong during the Second Opium War, saw the movement of Chinese migrants into Southeast Asia as an ultimately destructive force:

Immigration of the black-haired races is changing the whole character of society, the Indian Archipelago being the field where the battle of the nationalities is constantly fought, and where the expulsion of the less civilised by the more civilised may be studied.⁷⁷

Notably, though Bowring recognised the economic utility of Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia, he saw the Chinese population as a replacement for indigenous peoples. The use of the term 'battle' in this context is especially revealing. Evidently the civilizational disparity between Chinese and other Asian colonists made the ascendancy of Straits Chinese inevitable.

Similarly, it was the view of John Crawfurd that the British acted as stewards of the Malay population, which would be swamped by the powerful Chinese majority in the absence of colonial rule. Such views were grounded in Crawfurd's long experience of observing Chinese migration in Southeast Asia. Crawfurd warned that the wily Chinese, if left to their own devices, would deceive 'the simple natives'.⁷⁸ Crawfurd illustrated his warning with a tale of woe from his time in Java:

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 241.

⁷⁵ James Francis Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore, 1880-1940* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), p. 17.

⁷⁶ Sandra Khor Manickam, 'Common Ground: Race and the Colonial Universe in British Malaya', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (October, 2009), p. 595.

⁷⁷ John Bowring, *Autobiographical Recollections of Sir John Bowring* (London: Henry S. King, 1877), p. 213.

⁷⁸ Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. I*, p. 466.

A Javanese boatman ... was accosted by a Chinese from the bank requesting a passage ... when the victim of this piece of roguery awoke, he found himself lying stark naked in a forest fifteen miles distant from the place where he had taken in the Chinese – robbed of his canoe, and all his property.⁷⁹

Whilst the Chinese migrant population was essential to Singapore's prosperity, such cautionary tales perpetuated stereotypes about the Chinese as innately treacherous and untrustworthy. Moreover these concerns legitimised the control of a small governing class of Europeans over a Chinese majority population, which would ultimately mistreat other ethnic groups if allowed the opportunity.

Despite colonial criticism and a fear of the Chinese population, the perceived Chinese propensity for hard work and entrepreneurship led Stamford Raffles to praise 'the splendid foundation they form for the business prosperity of Singapore'.⁸⁰ John Crawford, in spite of his criticisms of Chinese duplicity, recognised the economic benefits of Chinese migrant labour across Southeast Asia. Crawford's account of Java was also littered with praise for the Chinese contribution to the local economy. He asserted that 'the natives are indebted to the ingenuity of the Chinese, who are always the workmen' and that silk production in the region 'under the direction of the indefatigable and enterprising Chinese can hardly fail'.⁸¹ In Siam Crawford observed that the Chinese took up skilled occupations and formed an artisan class. He noted the 'superiority of the Chinese in industry, intelligence and enterprise'.⁸² This 'superiority' was replicated across Southeast Asia. In Singapore it was believed that the presence of Chinese labourers was such a factor in the colony's economic success that he attempted to quantify their impact. According to Crawford's calculations in 1830, 'the Chinese amount to 8,595. About five-sixths of the whole number are unmarried men, in the prime of life: so that, in fact, the Chinese population, in point of effective labour, may be estimated as equivalent to an ordinary population of above 37,000'.⁸³ As a result of this increased output, Chinese migrants were paid more than other workers. As 'the average value of the labour, skill, and intelligence of a Chinese to be in the proportion of three to one to those of a native of the continent of India', it followed that 'the wages of other classes of inhabitants are much lower than the Chinese'.⁸⁴ Crucially, the perceived superiority of Chinese labourers over indigenous or other alternative sources mitigated the perceived deficiencies of their moral conduct.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 466.

⁸⁰ Braddell et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, p. 376.

⁸¹ Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. I*, pp. 181-193.

⁸² Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China, Vol. I*, p. 77.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 384-385.

The Chinese merchant community in Singapore was particularly eulogised by Western observers, from colonial administrators to Western merchants and transient visitors. In contrast to the threat posed by the large Chinese labouring population, and their mysterious secret societies, Chinese merchants were crucial to British authority as a ‘go-between’ with the wider Chinese community.⁸⁵ For example, as a member of the Chinese elite Seah Eu Chin fulfilled important social roles in Singapore. He helped to fund the Tan Tock Seng Hospital, mediated the Hokkien-Teochiu riots of 1854 and became a Justice of the Peace in 1872.⁸⁶ Wealthy Chinese merchants and businessmen acted as community leaders through different social roles. The ‘Kapitan’ system of community leadership had been abandoned by the British in 1831, due to its overt centralisation of political power, and was replaced by economic leadership through the funding of temples and hospitals.⁸⁷ Over time the Straits Chinese became dominant. An early example of this was Tan Tock Seng, a Hokkien merchant born in Malacca and founder of the hospital named in his honour, who was the first non-European appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1846.⁸⁸ Of course, Straits Chinese also enjoyed the advantage of British subjecthood. As described by Mark Frost, the Straits Chinese formed a ‘settled, gentry-official class, co-opted by the colonial state as intermediaries’.⁸⁹ Even as European involvement in trade between the Straits Settlements and China increased the trade remained reliant on the knowledge, skills and connections of Chinese intermediaries.⁹⁰

It was the commercial success of the Chinese merchant elite that specifically distinguished them in the minds of colonial observers. As emphasised by Syed Alatas, notions of ethnicity, class and economic productivity were intertwined in colonial Singapore.⁹¹ The embrace of Western economic relationships and the value placed on individual property rights marked the Chinese merchant elite, to British observers, as particularly civilized. For example, the Chinese merchant community played a vital role in lobbying and raising money to fund the British Navy’s suppression of piracy in Southeast Asia:

For the information of the Authorities, we can state that several of the most influential Chinese Merchants in the settlement contemplate sending a petition to the higher authorities on the subject of Piracy, in which they will set forth the heavy losses which they and other native merchants have sustained within the last year only.⁹²

⁸⁵ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 222.

⁸⁶ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 202.

⁸⁷ Frost, “Emporium in Imperio”, p. 44.

⁸⁸ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 202.

⁸⁹ Frost, “Emporium in Imperio”, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 63.

⁹¹ Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, p. 19.

⁹² *Singapore Chronicle*, 21 March 1833.

The Chinese merchant elite were aligned with the wider merchant community and British colonial authorities. British praise of Chinese merchant elites was connected to this alignment of economic interests. Colonial observers of Chinese merchants noted how ‘the indolent air of the Asiatic was thrown aside’, with the implication that by assimilating with British commercial practices Chinese merchants were perceived as having overcome the natural disadvantages of their ethnic heritage.⁹³ The *Singapore Chronicle* reprinted, and concurred, with John Dean’s suggestion that the Chinese ‘are keen, enterprising traders, extremely expert in their dealings ... I do not think they are exceeded by the natives of any country as a commercial people’.⁹⁴ Over time these multi-ethnic commercial alliances would be manifest in the make-up of the Chambers of Commerce and, as noted by Webster, the formation of ‘a discrete economic and political identity’.⁹⁵ For all the criticisms of Chinese migrant labourers, colonial observers recognised that the success of British colonial rule in Singapore was contingent on the active role of a large, economically diverse, Chinese population.

In colonial discourse Singapore’s success was overtly attributed to the combination of Chinese industriousness and British governance. Straits-born Chinese were particularly successful as they were connected to several communities simultaneously, and as Webster has suggested, Chinese merchants had to ‘switch identity’ in order to prosper in the multi-ethnic Singaporean business environment.⁹⁶ Indeed the Chinese elite certainly appear to have utilised the connections made possible through both British subjecthood and their existing ties to southern China, combining European capital investment and the cheap labour procured by the credit-ticket system. John Crawford, though he praised Chinese enterprise, emphasised the importance of liberal British governance in Singapore’s development. He attributed economic prosperity to ‘British leadership combined with the energy of Chinese settlers’.⁹⁷ The Anglo-Chinese ‘combination’ was deemed particularly effective in managing the production of plantation crops. Crawford specifically praised the ‘free enterprise of Europeans, and the skill and economy of the Chinese cultivator’ in developing Singapore’s pepper industry.⁹⁸ The idea that British rule enabled the potential of the Chinese, as merchants and labourers, was an important part of qualifying the praise for the Chinese community whilst maintaining British supremacy. Such ethnic hierarchies were created and used as a justification of colonial rule.

⁹³ Robert Gouger (ed.), *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australasia* (London: Joseph Cross, 1829), p. 213.

⁹⁴ *Singapore Chronicle*, 24 February 1831.

⁹⁵ Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 901.

⁹⁶ Frost, *Singapore*, pp. 94-96; Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 912.

⁹⁷ C. M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819-1988* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 109.

⁹⁸ Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. I*, p. 485.

Gordon Forbes Davidson and Singapore as an Imperial Template

Could the combination of British governance and Chinese economic activity in Singapore, which was considered such a success by British contemporaries, have been as effective in a different colonial context? The British merchant Gordon Forbes Davidson clearly thought it could have been. Davidson saw Singapore as a model that could be replicated elsewhere. Importantly, after spending more than a decade in colonial Southeast Asia, Davidson actually attempted to establish a system of Chinese migration to New South Wales, which was explicitly based on the example of Singapore.

Unlike John Crawford, little is known about Gordon Forbes Davidson and he is rarely mentioned in historical literature. Tony Ohlsson has made brief reference to Davidson's New South Wales Chinese migration scheme, and Siping He has mentioned Davidson as an associate of the American firm Russell & Co., but this is where the historiographical coverage ends.⁹⁹ Davidson was not connected to the power structures of the EIC. He mainly dealt with private traders like Jardine Matheson through his Singapore firm Clark, Davidson & Co.¹⁰⁰ The frequency with which his letters appear in the Jardine Matheson archive reveals a close commercial relationship with the firm, particularly in the early 1830s, and strong connection with James Matheson himself as letters frequently passed between the two. Davidson traded mainly spices (specifically cinnamon) but also opium, silk and rice through Jardine Matheson.¹⁰¹ The main source of information about Davidson's time in Asia is his 1846 book *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, but an extensive search also yields letters in various archives, information on ancestry websites linked to his later life in Australia, and multiple articles relating to him in newspapers from Singapore, Australia and Britain.¹⁰² From this trail it can be deduced he lived in Hull when in Britain, with a variety of business interests, including a steam mail company, a telegraph company, a cotton mill company and later a Chinese labour migration scheme to Australia.¹⁰³ Using these sources, we can build a chronology of Davidson's movements. He lived in Java (1823 to 1826), Singapore (1826 to 1835), Sydney (1836 to 1839), Macao (1839 to 1842) and Hong Kong (1842 to 1844).

⁹⁹ Tony Ohlsson, 'The Origins of a White Australia: the Coolie Question, 1837-43', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 97, Issue 2, (2011), p. 204; Siping He, *Russell and Company in Shanghai, 1843-1891: U.S. Trade and Diplomacy in Treaty Port China*, Paper presented to "A Tale of Ten Cities: Sino-American Exchange in the Treaty Port Era, 1840-1950", Hong Kong University (23-24 May 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Davidson was the lead partner in the firm; G. F. Davidson (Singapore) to Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Canton), 1 May 1833, in MS JM/B6/6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁰¹ Numerous letters between 5 July 1829 and 21 November 1844, in MS JM/B6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University). For a full list of archival resources used see bibliography.

¹⁰² G. F. Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East; or recollections of twenty-one years passed in Java, Singapore, Australia, and China* (London: Madden and Malcolm, 1846).

¹⁰³ Davidson's various projects and activities in Hull have been deduced from numerous newspaper articles: *Leeds Times*, 2 August 1845; *Hull Packet*, 3 July 1846; *Hull Packet*, 16 July 1846.

Davidson operated outside of official imperial structures and was the symbolic of the new breed of private trader operating within the China trade after 1833.¹⁰⁴

Gordon Forbes Davidson's ideas about colonization were informed by his experience in Asia. In his writing in *Trade and Travel in the Far East* he continuously, in line with contemporary colonial ideas of ethnic hierarchy, linked ideas about labour and economic utility to ethnicity.¹⁰⁵ Davidson regularly equated industriousness and mercantilism with notions of civilization.¹⁰⁶ These ideas about the relationship between labour and ethnicity were formulated during his time in Java and Singapore in the 1820s and fitted within the colonial notions of 'native' laziness. Contemporary European observers within Southeast Asia identified clear ethnic divisions between Chinese and Malay residents, founded on their proficiency as a labour-force. Davidson's view of ethnicity, as connected to economic activity, was shaped by this context. It was Davidson's experience in multiple colonies in Southeast Asia that shaped his view of Chinese labourers and informed his later attempts to establish a scheme of Chinese migration to New South Wales.¹⁰⁷

In his book, Davidson's narrative began with his experiences from his arrival in Java in 1823. Whilst Davidson described Java as a 'lovely and magnificent island', he was struck by what he perceived as the laziness of the indigenous population.¹⁰⁸ Residing in Batavia from 1823 to 1826, Davidson's account of his time there was littered with such comments as 'the inhabitants of Java are ... rather lazy withal' and 'the lazy Javanese labourer'.¹⁰⁹ The label of lazy fitted well within existing contemporary attitudes to the indigenous inhabitants of Southeast Asia. In *The Myth of the Lazy Native* Alatas discusses how the idea of natives being lazy was developed by European observers in the early nineteenth century across Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia.¹¹⁰ These ideas evolved from a reluctance of indigenous peoples to form a labour force in plantation systems of high intensity production. For example, the inhabitants of Java, who were expected to act as a colonial labour force, were unlikely to enter into contract work on tobacco, rubber or coffee plantations as they were already agricultural small-holders in a pre-existing subsistence economy.¹¹¹ To British capitalists like Davidson, native resistance to labour on European-owned plantations was construed as laziness. In fact, Davidson went as far to assert that forced labour in the Java was

¹⁰⁴ The influx of such traders has been described by Cheong as bringing 'chaos' to the Canton system; Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants*, p. 265.

¹⁰⁵ Davidson's book was published to generally positive reviews in London in 1846. In particular in the *London Morning Post*, 23 January 1846.

¹⁰⁶ Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁷ Davidson's 1837 migration scheme to New South Wales is discussed fully in chapter three.

¹⁰⁸ Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8; *Ibid*, p. 34.

¹¹⁰ Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 1-31.

justifiable: 'I object in toto to slavery in any form; but I confess I do not think the slaves of Java would be benefitted, were their liberty given them tomorrow.'¹¹² For Davidson, an unwillingness to labour was directly linked to inferiority and even justified slavery. By contrast a willingness to labour could be seen to reflect positive stereotypes, or a higher position in Western concepts of civilizational hierarchy.

From 1826, Davidson lived in Singapore, where he observed the interactions between British colonial authorities, Chinese labourers, Chinese merchant elites and Malay inhabitants. Chinese labourers impressed Davidson with their work ethic: 'a tight curb on a China-man will make him do a great deal of work; at the same time, he has spirit enough to resist real ill treatment'.¹¹³ Importantly this extract reflects the intermediate role of the Chinese labourers. Davidson saw the Chinese as both compliant and resistant to exploitation. In contrast to other Asian ethnic groups, the Chinese were able to avoid becoming slaves. In contrast, Davidson was unimpressed by the indigenous population: 'the original Malay inhabitants of this Island are now the most insignificant, both as to numbers and as to general utility'.¹¹⁴ Similarly, mixed-race Eurasian migrants to Singapore from Malacca were also dismissed by Davidson as 'a bad breed certainly, and the men I speak of seem to possess all the *devilry* of both races ... their employments ... are not quite so creditable to their characters.'¹¹⁵ Davidson's continual use of words like 'employment', 'utility' and 'work' when constructing ethnic stratifications shows how his time in Singapore caused him to identify ethnicity and labour as mutually constitutive. This was consistent with a British imperial world view that emphasised 'hard work' as a mark of civilization and godliness.¹¹⁶ Davidson's observations of Singaporean society engaged with contemporary colonial discourse. For example, John Crawford wrote of the 'Indian islanders' that they were 'of slow comprehension and narrow judgement' and added that 'all their intellectual faculties are in general feeble.'¹¹⁷ Like his contemporaries, Davidson saw the presence of the British Empire in Southeast Asia as a simultaneously profitable and necessary, especially given the ineffectiveness of the indigenous population.

When Davidson visited Australia in the early 1830s he applied ideas about labour and ethnicity that he had developed in Java and Singapore. Of Aboriginal Australians Davidson

¹¹² Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, p. 36.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 47.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 48.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹¹⁶ Specifically linked to the idea of a 'Protestant work ethic', see Peter Harrison, "'Fill the earth and subdue it": Biblical Warrants for Colonization in Seventeenth Century England', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2005), pp. 3-24.

¹¹⁷ Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. I*, p. 37; Crawford's accounts have been an essential part of tracing and charting the early history of colonial Singapore.

remarked that ‘they are, without exception, the most complete savages I have ever come across. They resist almost every attempt to induce them to labour’.¹¹⁸ Here again, the resistance to capitalist forms of production and contract-based labour relationships was directly equated with inferiority. Davidson’s views of Aboriginal Australians were in line with the dominant frontier narrative. Aboriginal resistance to colonization and employment was interpreted as resistance to or ignorance of civilization and progress. Existing systems of subsistence agriculture, which had been developed over centuries, meant that Australian Aborigines were reluctant to labour for capital.¹¹⁹ For observers like Davidson this resistance to labour was an indication of Aboriginal mental and moral inferiority.¹²⁰ It was apparent to Davidson that the answer to Australia’s labour shortage was to be found in China. Chapter three examines Davidson’s scheme for Chinese migration to New South Wales, which was funded through his association with Jardine Matheson. Davidson’s experiences across Asia had simultaneously convinced him of the benefits of Chinese labour, and of the inability of certain indigenous peoples to fulfil labour shortages due to their ‘savagery’.

Davidson’s time in Singapore had provided him with a template for supplying colonial labour that he believed could be replicated elsewhere. He saw the low cost, civilizational standing, tendency for hard work and large population as appealing aspects of the Chinese labour pool. By contrast, the decline of indigenous populations was both inevitable and, bearing in mind Davidson’s economic interests, desirable. Additionally, the removal of the EIC charter, which allowed an increased and unregulated exchange of capital, information and people between the British Empire in Asia and China created a fertile ground for Chinese labour migration experiments in the 1830s and 1840s. This was exacerbated by Empire-wide factors that increased the demand for cheap, yet voluntary, labour.¹²¹

Despite the official prohibition of emigration from China, Singapore proved that emigration from China was taking place. The *Canton Register* noted with interest that:

Emigration although strictly forbidden by the law of China, is still practiced to a very considerable extent; and we observe in the *Singapore Chronicle* that the arrival lately of four junks, brought upwards of 1600 passengers, the greater proportion of whom we conclude to remain on the Island.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, p. 145; In accordance with the most appropriate terminology the term ‘Aboriginal Australians’ will be used in place of ‘Aborigines’ or ‘Indigenous Australians’. See ‘New guide on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terminology’, *University of Sydney* (http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/style/2012/08/new_guide_on_aboriginal_and_to.html), accessed 27 September 2015.

¹¹⁹ Henry Reynolds, *The other side of the frontier: Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia* (Victoria: Penguin, 1981), p. 5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹²¹ See chapter four for a discussion of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission and the trans-imperial concern over labour shortages.

¹²² *Canton Register*, 24 May 1828.

The rapid development of Singapore, based on the integration of existing migration systems and European capital, demonstrated that Chinese migrant labour was a viable solution to colonial labour shortages. By the mid-1830s Crawford observed that the '[Chinese] government, in favour at least of male inhabitants, had relaxed the rigour of its prohibitory law against natives leaving the country.'¹²³ As described by Hillemann, contact zones like Singapore were essential in the formulation of perceptions of China and the Chinese.¹²⁴ Importantly, in developing colonies like Singapore, the use of Chinese migrants as replacement labour served as a process of 'internal colonialism' that was used to pacify resistant or autonomous indigenous subjects.¹²⁵ The opportunity provided by the vast pool of cheap and reliable labour in China was not lost on British merchants, colonialists and imperial planners. The development of Singapore in the 1820s showed that an Anglo-Chinese society could be successful. In this context success was defined in terms of generating profit for British and Chinese merchant elites, whilst remaining politically stable. This was a notion of success in which the financial, political and social status of Chinese labourers themselves was largely irrelevant. By the 1830s various British actors attempted to repeat this success and experiment with Chinese labour under British rule in different colonies.

The China Expert and the 'Opening' of the China Trade

Whilst Singapore flourished economically, the EIC Charter Act of 1833 was the final nail in the EIC's commercial coffin.¹²⁶ The Act removed the EIC monopoly of the China trade, which effectively de-regulated the 'country traders' and created the space for a new commercial networks on the China coast.¹²⁷ Anglo-Chinese trade was profitable for both the British state and the EIC. The tea trade accounted for sixteen percent of Britain's total customs revenue by the 1830s and was worth £4 million per annum to the EIC.¹²⁸ Additionally, the sale of Indian opium in China, which had reversed the trade deficit of the China trade by creating a new import market, gave the EIC a profit of £2.7 million in 1832.¹²⁹

¹²³ Hugh Murray and John Crawford et al., *An Historical and Descriptive Account of China, Vol. II* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1836), p. 369.

¹²⁴ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 1-16.

¹²⁵ James C. Scott, *The Art of not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 40.

¹²⁶ For more on the new role of the EIC post-1833 see Anthony Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics, 1790-1860* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009).

¹²⁷ Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p. 5; The 'country traders' were private merchants who conducted trade at Canton under licence from the EIC, Jardine Matheson were 'country traders'.

¹²⁸ Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p. 5; Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 157.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19; Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis*, pp. 1-6.

Yet these profits were contingent on the ‘Canton System’ of trade regulation that had been in operation since 1757.¹³⁰ Not only was British trade regulated but British attempts to establish European-style diplomatic relations with China before 1833 had ended in failure. Debate over how Anglo-Chinese trade and diplomacy should be reformed was contingent on the evidence of select China experts. Not only did the changes of 1833 open up space for private commercial expansion, but they were also the product of debates that became infused with ideas about the Chinese character.¹³¹

The importance of individuals recognised as ‘China experts’ in the changes of 1833 cannot be overstated. The pivotal role of John Crawfurd in the debates over the EIC monopoly underlines the implications of the Anglo-Chinese experience in Singapore. The use of Crawfurd’s individual story provides an entry point into complicated strands of imperial history, which have been the focus of entire texts in their own right. Here, Crawfurd offers an insight into vast debates about monopoly and free trade in Britain and Asia. Individuals formed key nodes within networks of empire, often moving from place to place. Specific actors have been successfully used to connect imperial locales and can act as case studies that are not limited to a fixed time or place, but can physically move like the organisations or processes to which they were connected.¹³² Crawfurd’s long career in Asia validated his expertise. After being posted to Penang by the EIC in 1808 he served the Company during the British occupation of Java from 1811 to 1816, before returning to India. Crawfurd’s experience of Penang and Java ultimately qualified him for his role in Singapore, but also meant he was selected for diplomatic missions on behalf of the Governor-General of India to Burma and Siam. By the time of Crawfurd’s return to Britain his wealth of experience meant that he was in demand by lobbying groups, such as the provincial East India Associations.¹³³

Crawfurd – much like his predecessor in Singapore, Stamford Raffles – became a student of the nations and cultures he experienced. His impressive list of multi-volume publications reinforced his credentials as an expert on Asian cultures and societies, which would be utilised in the debates over the EIC monopoly.¹³⁴ Specifically Crawfurd’s first-hand experience in the contact zone of Singapore gave him a status of expertise that could be

¹³⁰ Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p. 10; Lovell, *The Opium War*, p. 2. The regulations included various restrictions on the movements and personal lives of European merchants, but most importantly the restriction of trade to the state-sanctioned Hong merchants at Canton, which was believed to limit the profit of import trade.

¹³¹ The notion of a specifically Chinese character is the main focus of chapter two.

¹³² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*.

¹³³ See Yukihisa Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly: Provincial Merchants and Manufacturers’ Campaigns or Access to the Asian Market, 1790-1833* (Boston: Brill, 2013) for more on Crawfurd’s connection to the East India Associations in their campaign against monopoly.

¹³⁴ The following works were also purchased by the EIC and used for educational purposes: John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vols. I-III* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1820); John Crawfurd, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language* (London: Smith, Elder, 1852).

deployed against his metropolitan rivals.¹³⁵ In the first instance, his contributions to parliamentary select committees over a prolonged period legitimised his opinions, which were based on direct personal experience in Asia. After giving evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee into the EIC in 1830, Crawford sat on the 1840 Select Committee on the trade with China. The witness had become a committee member. A variety of non-governmental groups made use of and helped to build his status and reputation as an expert in Britain. For instance, in 1828 Crawford became a lobbyist on behalf of the merchants of Calcutta and Singapore; his *View of the Present state and Future Prospects of the Free Trade and Colonisation of India* was published by the Central Committee on the East India and Chinese Trade in 1829; and 600 copies of his *Notes on the Settlement or Colonization of British Subjects in India* were ordered by the Glasgow East India Association.¹³⁶ He went on to write his most significant pro-free trade tract, *Chinese Monopoly Examined*, in 1830. On his return to Britain, Crawford became part of a network of merchants, lobbyists and regional East India and China Associations that aimed to remove the EIC monopoly of the China trade.

Crawford's career overlapped with the 'information revolution' that Zoë Laidlaw and Christopher Bayly have highlighted as a key feature of both imperial and colonial governance in the 1830s and 1840s.¹³⁷ Whilst metropolitan figures such as Robert Montgomery Martin collated colonial statistics to interpret and disseminate knowledge about the Empire, such information was supplemented by the direct colonial experience of those who had imperial careers.¹³⁸ In this environment the role of the expert and their specialised knowledge was recognised by both lobbyists and policy makers. Histories of Crawford's role in Britain have detailed his collaboration with provincial merchants and his later role as the first president of the Straits Settlement Association in 1868.¹³⁹ He was widely recognised by his contemporaries as an authority on the 'Indian Archipelago', and the fields of ethnography, commerce and colonial politics in particular.¹⁴⁰ Crawford's importance in Britain was influenced by the success of Singapore, where his role in the colony's early history was significant. In the 1921 multi-volume history *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, as in this chapter, Crawford's importance was demonstrated as a primary source on issues in colonial

¹³⁵ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 106-149.

¹³⁶ Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly*, pp. 95-96.

¹³⁷ Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 169-200; C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹³⁸ Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, pp. 185-189.

¹³⁹ Yukihiisa Kumagai, 'The Lobbying Activities of Provincial Mercantile and Manufacturing Interests against the Renewal of the East India Company's Charter, 1812-1813 and 1829-1833' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), p. 105; Anthony Webster, 'The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements', p. 914.

¹⁴⁰ Turnbull, 'Crawford, John (1783-1868)'.

Singapore, ranging from law and crime to education and land reform.¹⁴¹ Crawford's writing provided the historical record of much of colonial Singapore's early administration. The 1833 Charter Act connected Crawford's colonial and metropolitan lives. Crawford's experiences in Asia meant that his ideas about ethnicity influenced his advocacy of free trade and simultaneously provided legitimacy for his criticism of the EIC. In addition, the changes of 1833 facilitated the growth of firms like Jardine Matheson and allowed them to create new, unregulated commercial networks. The environment created by the Charter Act was ultimately conducive to new systems of emigration from the China coast in the 1830s.

John Crawford: Free Trade Ethnographer?

The 1833 Charter Act was ostensibly about trade, but the debates that circulated around it were imbued with ideas about ethnicity, character and civilizational hierarchy. John Crawford's role particularly highlights the cross-over between notions of free trade and emerging hierarchies, which emphasised notions of Chinese civilizational superiority over other ethnic groups in Asia. Tomotaka Kawamura's work demonstrates how the two main groups that benefitted from the decline of the EIC, Anglo-Indian agency houses and British provincial industrialists, were both connected to Crawford.¹⁴² Due to these connections Crawford argued vehemently against the EIC monopoly of the China trade. The extent to which Crawford's criticisms of the EIC's management of the trade drew on his experiences in Asia and his ethnographic observations, underlined the importance of debates about the China trade in shaping perceptions of the Chinese as an ethnic group in this period.

From his work with the Glasgow East India Association from 1828, to his role as the first president of the Straits Settlement Association in 1868, Crawford's return to Britain was dedicated to advocating reforms that would benefit the Anglo-Indian agency houses. Specifically, these were reforms for the liberalisation of trade with China.¹⁴³ His record in Singapore suggests that he was already a convert to free trade liberalism, but as an additional incentive, Robert Bickers has noted that Crawford was on a 'handsome Bombay retainer' for his advocacy.¹⁴⁴ It is worth noting that notions of free trade, particularly in Asia, were essential to the ideological underpinnings of the Empire. Commercial freedom was one of the

¹⁴¹ Braddell et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore*.

¹⁴² Tomotaka Kawamura, 'The British Empire and Asia in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Global History and Maritime Asia*, Working Paper No. 17 (July 2010), p. 15.

¹⁴³ Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly*, p. 107; Kumagai, *The Lobbying Activities of Provincial Mercantile and Manufacturing Interests against the Renewal of the East India Company's Charter*, p. 105; Webster, 'The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements', p. 914.

¹⁴⁴ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p. 76.

markers of civilizational superiority that legitimised imperial expansion.¹⁴⁵ In ‘orientalist’ fashion, the representation of the British Empire as an empire of freedom set it in contrast to Asian despotism and tyranny. The liberal embrace of empire saw issues such as humanitarianism and commercial freedom connected under the auspices of colonial improvement and the broader narrative of a ‘civilizing mission’.¹⁴⁶ Crawford’s earlier role as a colonial administrator and his later role as a free trade advocate were both compatible and connected.

The arguments Crawford deployed in his critique of the EIC monopoly sat within the standard rhetorical narratives of contemporary free trade advocates. The influence, or even dominance, of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* in early nineteenth century notions of political economy and, crucially, debates over the economic management of empire has been well acknowledged in the historiography.¹⁴⁷ Crawford and his allies – influenced by Smith – argued that the monopoly, whilst previously necessary, had run its natural course and reached its maximum profitability.¹⁴⁸ So dominant was this strain of economic thought that Phillip Lawson suggests the decision to end the monopoly was tacitly agreed as early as 1825, and was merely confirmed by the committees and debates of the early 1830s.¹⁴⁹ Crawford’s EIC background was common amongst free traders campaigners, and he received support from prominent figures such as Joseph Hume and James Silk Buckingham, both of whom had their own histories, and grievances, with the EIC.¹⁵⁰ In *Chinese Monopoly Examined* Crawford criticised the EIC for limiting the Chinese tea trade as the only access point for Chinese teas into the British market.¹⁵¹ Direct and quantifiable financial gain formed the basis of Crawford’s case as he asserted that the ‘advantages of a free intercourse with China’ would be an additional ‘*one million sterling per annum*’ in profit from the China trade.¹⁵² However, Crawford’s case was not purely economic. What distinguished Crawford from contemporary

¹⁴⁵ This fits very much with Gallagher and Robinson’s ‘imperialism of free trade’, John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1953), pp. 1-15. For more on how this worked in terms of Anglo-Chinese exchange see Brian Stanley, ‘“Commerce and Christianity”’: Providence Theory, The Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1983), pp. 71-94.

¹⁴⁶ Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, pp. 4-15.

¹⁴⁷ Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 7; Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 21; Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: W. Strahan, 1776).

¹⁴⁸ Lawson, *The East India Company*, p. 157.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 158.

¹⁵⁰ Miles Taylor, ‘Joseph Hume and the Reformation of India, 1819-1833’, in, Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (eds.), *English Radicalism, 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 285-309. In contrast to Crawford, Buckingham was not favourably regarded by the anti-monopoly movement, mainly due to his desire to remove the entirety of the EIC’s administration, for more on the contrast between Crawford and Buckingham see Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly*, pp. 97-99.

¹⁵¹ John Crawford, *Chinese Monopoly Examined* (London: James Ridgeway, 1830), p. 75.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 89. Italicisation in original text.

critics of the EIC was the significance of his experiences in Asia, and his emphasis on ethnography as well as economic theory.

During the free trade debates, Crawford used his experience in Asia to present himself as an expert. In his tenure as Resident of Singapore, Crawford was notable for legislative measures that stimulated commercial growth.¹⁵³ He legalised gambling, reduced duties on various products, kept Singapore a free port and enforced strict punishments for piracy.¹⁵⁴ It was Crawford's experience and success in Singapore that qualified him to give evidence to the 1830 Select Committee. When providing evidence Crawford highlighted his expertise. For example, he emphasised his knowledge of cotton cultivation across 'the Island of Java, and to considerable parts of Cochin China, and some parts of Siam and Ava; I refer also to some of the provinces of Bengal'.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, in Crawford's writing on the monopoly debate he continually referred to his own expertise in contrast to his metropolitan adversaries' lack of knowledge. It is important to note that not only did others recognise Crawford as an expert but he cultivated a self-image of supreme wisdom on issues relating to the British Empire in Southeast Asia. A lack of experience or knowledge was used to undermine opponents. Crawford aggressively argued that a pro-monopoly article in *Quarterly Review* made 'vulgar pretensions to knowledge', had 'neither the capacity nor the inclination to supply' information about Chinese commerce and must have been using a map 'constructed before the age of Marco Polo'.¹⁵⁶ Crawford was fully aware of the value of his experience and his residence in Asia. To legitimise his arguments against the EIC monopoly he invoked experiences that his critics did not share.

Crawford's commercial policy in Singapore had been heavily influenced by his ideas about resident ethnic groups. The impact this had on his anti-monopoly writing signalled a significant departure from any economic arguments that he shared with Hume and Buckingham.¹⁵⁷ As a colonial administrator Crawford felt strongly that the imposition of British, or Western, concepts, on indigenous populations was vital to their civilizational development. In his *History of the Indian Archipelago* he wrote that 'the nations of the East, in point of civilization, continue unchanged – they seem rapidly to advance to a certain state of improvement, and then to continue in all ages as the same unchangeable semi-

¹⁵³ Webster, 'The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements', p. 901.

¹⁵⁴ Braddell et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, pp. 80-292.

¹⁵⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the present state of the affairs of the East India Company, and into the trade between Great Britain, the East Indies and China; with the minutes of evidence taken before the committee*, 1830 (646), p. 345.

¹⁵⁶ Crawford, *Chinese Monopoly Examined*, p. 8; *Ibid*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁷ Taylor, 'Joseph Hume and the Reformation of India, 1819-1833', pp. 285-309.

barbarians'.¹⁵⁸ An example of the interplay between liberal colonial economic policy and different ethnic groups was Crawford's decision not to extend the colonial licensing system to gambling as it was an amusement which 'the most industrious of them (the Chinese) are accustomed to resort to'.¹⁵⁹ Crawford's commercial policies in Singapore had been influenced as much by his assumptions about different ethnic groups, and their needs, as by economic ideology.

The importance of notions of civilization, development, skill and hierarchy in Crawford's free trade writing is most evident in his *View of the Present state and Future Prospects of the Free Trade and Colonisation of India*, published in 1829. In this text Crawford drew a comparison between the 'superior skill of the Chinese' and the 'unskillfulness of the Indians'.¹⁶⁰ Crawford's writing was infused with specific criticisms of 'the Indians' as a 'timid, often effeminate, and, as a nation, a feeble race of semi-barbarians' who were 'inferior to Europeans and to Chinese in real skill and intelligence'.¹⁶¹ The repeated reference to Indian barbarism was set in contrast to British and Chinese civilization, reflecting similar hierarchies to those seen in Singapore. Crucially the critique of the EIC was not a critique of British imperialism in India, which, in Crawford's view, was entirely necessary. Crawford's experience in Southeast Asia clearly informed his equation of Chinese and Europeans as superior ethnic groups. Lamenting the Qing Empire's controls on emigration Crawford appeared to compare the effect of British imperialism with Chinese immigration as a bearer of progress. He remarked that 'to it [Chinese migration] we owe more than half the prosperity of all the countries in which it has occurred; such is the efficacy of a little infusion of civilization into semi-barbarous communities'.¹⁶² That a text ostensibly about the reform of the EIC contained so many allusions to the civilizational superiority of Chinese migrants over host communities was indicative of the pervasive influence of Crawford's time in Southeast Asia. This conceptual dichotomy, between civilized Chinese migrants and uncivilized Indian locals, would be particularly pertinent in Jardine Matheson's recruitment of Chinese tea cultivators for Assam in the late 1830s.

Praise of Chinese civilization was intimately tied to the role played by Chinese communities in commercial networks. For Crawford an aptitude for trade was a sign of ethnic superiority. In his *History of the Indian Archipelago* Crawford identified Chinese

¹⁵⁸ John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. II* (Edinburgh: Archibald, Constable & Co., 1820), p. 39.

¹⁵⁹ Braddell et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, p. 56.

¹⁶⁰ John Crawford, *View of the Present state and Future Prospects of the Free Trade and Colonisation of India* (London: James Ridgway, 1829), p. 19.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 68.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 70.

mercantilism as something comparable to earlier stages of European commercial development: ‘the Chinese, indeed, carry the principle of the mercantile system to an extreme, which would have excited the admiration or envy of the European politicians of the early part of the last century’.¹⁶³ Crawford routinely used terms such as ‘industry’ and ‘ingenuity’ in his praise of Chinese settlers who, along with Europeans, he classed as ‘improvers’.¹⁶⁴ Of course, not only could an aptitude for trade be used to form civilizational hierarchies, but the idea that the Chinese were pre-disposed to trade also assuaged fears that the removal of the EIC monopoly would jeopardize Anglo-Chinese trade. Importantly, Crawford was not asserting Chinese equality with the British, but their superiority over other Asian ethnicities, as suggested in his select committee evidence: ‘Chinese skill and capital resemble very much European skill and capital; I take European skill and capital however, to be as much superior to Chinese skill and capital, as Chinese skill and capital are superior to Hindoo skill and capital’.¹⁶⁵ For Crawford, ethnic hierarchies reflected and dictated commercial realities. Concepts of ethnic hierarchy Crawford had developed in Singapore and Southeast Asia heavily informed his understanding of trade and commerce and were present throughout his anti-monopoly writing. This had the added effect of further disseminating stereotypes and perceptions of a Chinese character, which was superior to comparable Indian ethnic traits and suited to British colonial rule.¹⁶⁶

Crawford was part of a growing group of imperial careerists who were identified as China experts by metropolitan bodies, such as parliamentary select committees, and promoted as experts by lobbying organisations. As outlined by P. J. Marshall, British India provided an opportunity for figures ‘to win reputations for themselves as transmitters of knowledge to a curious and expectant Europe’.¹⁶⁷ The EIC charter renewal acted as a particular stimulus to metropolitan interest in the experience of imperial careerists like Crawford. It was the philosophy of liberal thinkers, like John Stuart Mill, that Indian policy should be constructed from the advice of experts in India, rather than emerging from metropolitan political processes.¹⁶⁸ Within this framework of Indian governance, Crawford’s experience amongst the Chinese migrants in Singapore was seen as particularly significant during debates over the future management of the China trade.

¹⁶³ John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vol. III* (Edinburgh: Archibald, Constable & Co., 1820), p. 171.

¹⁶⁴ Crawford, *Chinese Monopoly Examined*, p. 27; Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China, Vol. I*, p. 26.

¹⁶⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the present state of the affairs of the East India Company*, p. 349.

¹⁶⁶ See chapter two for the full discussion of this phenomenon.

¹⁶⁷ P. J. Marshall, ‘British-Indian connections c.1780 to c.1830: the empire of the officials’, in Michael J. Franklin (ed.), *Romantic Representations of British India* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 47.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 48. Mill was writing on Indian policy during his career with the EIC, from 1823 to 1858.

Other select committee witnesses also drew on experience of Chinese migration in Asia. Sir Ralph Rice, who had spent seven years as a court recorder on Prince of Wales Island, similarly emphasised the contrast between the indigenous population and Chinese immigrants.¹⁶⁹ In giving evidence to the 1830 Select Committee, Rice identified a comparable hierarchy in which the Malay population was the most ‘uncivilized’ and prone to violent criminality, whilst the Chinese population had a tendency to steal but were simultaneously ‘admirable merchants, most excellent in every respect’.¹⁷⁰ Various witnesses made reference to the perceived character traits of the Chinese, such as American merchant Joshua Bates who referred to Chinese commercial success in Singapore or Judge William Malcolm Fleming who bemoaned Chinese opium addiction.¹⁷¹ Hollingworth Magniac, who had been head of Magniac & Co. until 1827 (the firm that was renamed Jardine Matheson in 1832), also gave evidence. Primarily this was focused on his firm’s trading activities, but in addition he also discussed the cheap cost of labour in China, which was believed to be an obstacle to the competitive pricing of British exports. Excluding Crawford and Magniac, sixteen of the remaining fifty witnesses called by the select committee featured in the correspondences or accounts of Jardine Matheson.¹⁷² This was the mobilisation of opposition to EIC monopoly engineered by private interest groups in Asia and Britain, as outlined by Kumagai.¹⁷³

As Anglo-Chinese trade had grown and become more profitable so too had the number of imperial actors invested in the trade. Simultaneously, the expansion of direct British imperial control of Southeast Asia had provided a number of experts, such as Crawford, who could cite years of experience of working with, and governing, Chinese populations. Crawford’s experiences in Southeast Asia not only allowed him to assert himself as more qualified than his metropolitan, monopolist opponents, but informed and connected his ideas about free trade and the Chinese as an ethnic group. Crucially, Crawford’s experience of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia was deemed relevant to the legislative management of trade between Britain and China. British imperial and economic growth in Southeast Asia meant that Chinese migration and Anglo-Chinese trade could be understood as connected issues. Observation of Chinese migration to Singapore, and the meanings attached to migrants, informed perceptions of the Qing Empire and Britain’s China policy.

¹⁶⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the present state of the affairs of the East India Company*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 87.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 375; *Ibid*, p. 66.

¹⁷² Jardine Matheson Archive, Cambridge University Library (<http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD/GBR/0012/MS%20JM>), accessed 27 September 2015.

¹⁷³ Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly*.

The 1833 Charter and the Rise of Jardine Matheson

The removal of the EIC monopoly opened up new diplomatic and commercial opportunities for private merchants and agents of the British state on the China coast. Histories of Anglo-Chinese relations have dwelt on the political ramifications of the 1833 Charter Act.¹⁷⁴ British attempts to establish European-style diplomatic relations with China before 1833 – specifically the Macartney embassy of 1792 and the Amherst ambassadorship in 1813 – had ended in failure, leaving mediation through the Hong merchants of Canton the only diplomatic contact between the British and Chinese governments.¹⁷⁵ Under the stewardship of the EIC the perceived insult of the Chinese failing to accord the British their ‘deserved’ diplomatic status was absorbed in the interests of profit, and recent, revisionist, studies have emphasised the collaboration and compromise inherent in the Canton system prior to the 1830s.¹⁷⁶ Yet the removal of EIC monopoly would lead to attempts to establish a ‘proper’ diplomatic relationship, resulting in the appointment of William Napier as Superintendent of the China trade in 1834.¹⁷⁷ The contrasting Anglo-Chinese perspectives on diplomacy indicated a reciprocal cultural ignorance that would contribute to a precarious diplomatic situation exacerbated by the removal of the EIC after 1833.¹⁷⁸

The free trade movement essentially called for two separate changes to the China trade. First, on the British side, free trade advocates wanted the removal of the EIC monopoly of the China trade.¹⁷⁹ This move allowed for the deregulation of the private merchants at Canton, which in turn allowed for the deregulation of British imports and exports from and to China. Second, on the Chinese side, free trade advocates wanted a liberalisation of Chinese trade controls and European-style diplomatic relations to be established. The 1833 Charter Act had initiated the first of these changes and had provisioned for re-negotiation through the creation of the role of superintendent, but an overall strategy for engendering a liberal reform of Chinese policy was unclear. The assumption of Western merchants, that Chinese trade liberalisation would be an inevitable consequence of progress, proved unfounded. The fact that China imported few British goods, and that the Qing state resisted the entry of British

¹⁷⁴ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*; Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis*.

¹⁷⁵ Hao Gao, ‘The Amherst Embassy and British Discoveries in China’, *History*, 99, 337 (2014), pp. 568-587; Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 34.

¹⁷⁶ Carroll, ‘The Canton System’, p. 51.

¹⁷⁷ Keswick, *The Thistle and the Jade*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁸ For Chinese philosophy and policy on Chinese expatriate groups see Yen Ching-Hwang, ‘Ch'ing Changing Images of the Overseas Chinese (1644–1912)’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 15 (1981), pp. 261-285.

¹⁷⁹ Of course the free trade advocates were factionalised, which is somewhat masked by the role of Crawford. For more on the ‘Gentlemanly Capitalists’ and the provincial industrialists during this period see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-2000* (London: Longman, 1993); Anthony Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

subjects and British cultural practices remained completely unchanged.¹⁸⁰ In the immediate aftermath of the Charter Act, attention would be turned to reforming the Canton system. Crucially, these new diplomatic efforts and commercial challenges by private merchants to the existing system were ultimately connected.

The 1833 bill on the China trade confirmed the free traders' victory over the company and its monopoly: 'the exclusive right of trading with the Dominions of the Emperor of China ... will cease from and after the Twelfth Day of April One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-Four'.¹⁸¹ The bill allowed merchants to invest private capital in the China trade without the permission of the EIC, as had been required previously. The role of Superintendent of the China trade was created to protect and regulate the commercial activities of the 'subjects' who were now free to trade in China.¹⁸² The Chief Superintendent would fulfil multiple roles by acting as Britain's diplomatic representative to China as well as having 'powers and authorities over and in respect of the Trade and Commerce of His Majesty's Subjects within any part of the said Dominions'.¹⁸³ At the stroke of a pen the British Crown bestowed upon the Superintendents a level of judicial authority that had not been agreed with the Qing government:

To create a Court of justice with Criminal and Admiralty Jurisdiction for the trial of Offences committed by His Majesty's Subjects within the Dominions of the Emperor of China... and on the High Seas within one hundred miles of the Coast of China, and to appoint one of the Superintendents in the said Act mentioned to be the Officer to hold such Court.¹⁸⁴

The move to free trade, and the resulting necessity for British legal authority to replace the EIC, had created a situation in which the British state had assumed legal extraterritoriality for British merchants. This extraterritoriality would later be legally recognised in the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, but the assumption that British law extended around the globe with the spread of British subjects, which was vital component of imperialism, was extremely problematic in the context of the Canton system.¹⁸⁵

The 'Napier Fizzle' was a famous disaster. William Napier – who knew nothing of China, little of diplomacy and even less about trade – lacked experience and was appointed

¹⁸⁰ Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p. 5.

¹⁸¹ Parliamentary Papers, *A bill to Regulate the Trade to China and India*, 1833 (528), p. 1.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *China and India Trade. Copies of orders in council issued under the act to regulate the trade to China and India*, 1834 (127), p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ Larissa Behrendt, Robert Miller, and Tracey Lindberg, *Discovering indigenous lands: the doctrine of discovery in the English colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

due to his connection to the King.¹⁸⁶ Napier failed to aggressively enter the city of Canton and negotiate directly with the Chinese authorities, which would have circumvented the Canton system and the Hong merchants. He died of a fever in Macao in October 1834.¹⁸⁷ There has been historiographical debate around whether or not the embarrassment of the Napier expedition placed Britain on a course for conflict with China from as early as 1834, and to what extent Napier was acting autonomously or implementing Colonial Office policy.¹⁸⁸ Some historians have gone so far as to suggest that Napier was faced with an ‘impossible mission’.¹⁸⁹ The problems faced by Napier had been foreshadowed in the free trade debates and the role of Superintendent was an integral part of the deregulation of the private merchants. Charles Grant, president of the EIC Board of Control, noted that ‘the jealousy of the Chinese might be even more sensitive under the new system than under the old’ and that it was crucial that the Crown appoint an authority with ‘adequate powers of supervision over all British subjects resorting to China’.¹⁹⁰ Such measures were, according to Grant, necessary when dealing with ‘a people so peculiar as the Chinese’.¹⁹¹ Grant recognised in 1833 that the coming impasse between Chinese officials and the private merchants at Canton would result in British trade with China becoming ‘a smuggled one’.¹⁹² As a result, private firms that could establish illicit trade networks were able to capitalise on the freedom from regulation granted by the end of the EIC monopoly.

The removal of the EIC monopoly had significant ramifications for the newly rebranded Jardine Matheson. First, the removal of the oversight of the EIC allowed the firm to flagrantly flout Chinese trade restrictions and explore the China coast for new markets without the threat of licence removal from the EIC. This facilitated the rapid growth of the firm’s illicit opium distribution network over the 1830s. Second, the introduction of new power structures, such as the office of Superintendent, allowed the firm to make new connections. For example, the *Register* repeatedly publicly defended William Napier and upon his death James Matheson returned to Britain with his widow in order to petition Palmerston for aggressive action against the Chinese authorities. Third, the withdrawal of the

¹⁸⁶ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*, pp. 9-11.

¹⁸⁷ *Canton Register*, 4 October 1834.

¹⁸⁸ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*; Hao Gao, ‘Prelude to the Opium War? British reactions to the ‘Napier Fizzle’ and attitudes towards China in the mid eighteen-thirties’, *Historical Research*, Vol. 87, No. 237 (2014), pp. 491-509; Glenn Melancon, ‘Peaceful Intentions: the First British Trade Commission in China, 1833-5’, *Historical Research*, 73 (2000), pp. 33-47.

¹⁸⁹ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*, p. ix.

¹⁹⁰ Letter from Charles Grant, 12 Feb 1833, in Parliamentary Papers, *East India Charter. Papers Respecting the East India Company’s Charter*, 1833 (126) (370) (378) (549), p. 15.

¹⁹¹ Letter from Charles Grant, 27 Feb 1833, *Ibid*, p. 42.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 44.

EIC allowed for the creation of entirely new private structures and organisations, free from state control, which could co-ordinate to apply political pressure.¹⁹³

With the scaling back of EIC oversight in the early 1830s Jardine Matheson began conducting exploratory voyages along the China coast to find new opium markets outside of the Canton system of trade regulation. Capital from opium smuggling operations was re-invested by the firm into the legal tea trade. As discussed in the introduction, the removal of EIC control allowed the firm to position itself as a go-between for new, private clients who lacked the ‘knowledge and clout’ to conduct such operations themselves.¹⁹⁴ As discussed by Carol Matheson Connell, the firm offered sixteen different ‘agency’ services that revolved around broking for buyers and sellers of goods to and from China.¹⁹⁵ Now acting autonomously, the firm was free to represent any client and ship any product without interference, or even the threat of interference, from British authorities. The firm’s opium voyages were not just used for selling opium and extracting capital; they were also channels for the movement of people, goods and information.¹⁹⁶ Such voyages contravened multiple Qing laws.

The legislation of 1833 fundamentally changed very little diplomatically, but it had unleashed ‘Her Majesty’s Subjects’ into a variety of new, un-regulated economic and political relationships with China. The most aggressive of these subjects were William Jardine and James Matheson, whose firm was able to circumvent Qing restrictions on trade and population movement. Crucially, the changes made to the China trade were influenced by evidence from the contact zone of Singapore. The views China experts such as John Crawford were underpinned by assumptions of ethnic hierarchy and developing notions of a Chinese character, informed by experience of Chinese migrant communities. Consequently, colonial sites of Anglo-Chinese exchange, such as Singapore, had implications for Anglo-Chinese relations on an imperial scale and created a demand for Chinese migrant labour. A demand that could be met by Jardine Matheson.

Conclusion

The impact of the colonial experience in Singapore – as seen by the examples of Gordon Forbes Davidson, Seah Eu Chin and John Crawford – demonstrates how pre-existing systems

¹⁹³ The importance of the new chambers of commerce that were established across the Empire in Asia after 1834 will be discussed in chapter two.

¹⁹⁴ Connell, *A Business in Risk*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ The extraction of ‘useful knowledge’, such as knowledge of tea cultivation, from China has been the subject of recent scholarly inquiry, see Berg, ‘Britain, Industry and Perceptions of China’, pp. 269-288 and Chen, ‘An Information War Waged by Merchants and Missionaries at Canton’, pp. 1705-1735. See chapter three for a full discussion of the opium voyages of Charles Gutzlaff.

of Chinese migration were understood and interpreted in the context of changes to Anglo-Chinese trade in 1833. They also demonstrate the importance of personal expertise on China in the dissemination of knowledge and the continuing presence of ethnic stratifications in discussions of China and the Chinese. In Crawford's contribution to the free trade debates he emphasised his expertise and experience in Asia when critiquing his opponents and admonishing their pretensions to knowledge. Crawford's ideas about free trade and the role of the EIC were connected to the ideas about the Chinese character that he had formed whilst a colonial administrator in Singapore. Similarly, in Davidson's writing the perceptions of different Asian ethnicities were founded on his experiences in Asia over a lengthy trading career. The expertise these figures were attributed by metropolitan power structures ensured the replication of the notions of ethnic hierarchy that were being formed in the contact zone of Singapore.

It is important to note that though the focus of this chapter has been the commercial changes of 1833, the implications of the changing Anglo-Chinese relationships were by no means limited to commerce. The 'opening' of China in 1842 has also been highlighted as a key turning point in the development of Christian missions to China. Brian Stanley's work has emphasised the shared aims of 'Commerce and Christianity' in establishing access to China.¹⁹⁷ The missionary and *Canton Register* editor Rev. Robert Morrison shared many of the frustrations of his mercantile associates with the 'despotic' Chinese government.¹⁹⁸ The 1830s brought a new missionary phase that was more aggressive than Morrison's assimilatory mission, with American missionaries, such as Elijah Bridgman, and the Prussian Charles Gutzlaff challenging the Chinese authorities more overtly.¹⁹⁹ The deregulation of private British merchants from 1833 allowed the establishment of new trading networks that could be used to facilitate transfer of information and literature, as well as allowing for new systems of emigration. The changes of 1833 altered China's relationship with Britain in numerous, multi-faceted ways, which is why it makes an effective starting point for the examination of British attitudes to Chinese migrant labour.

In subsequent chapters many of the issues surrounding 1833 will re-emerge. Commercial networks, publishing, expertise and labour migration will be continually examined as subject to intertwined processes of change. In particular the idea of a distinctly Chinese character evolved over the 1830s and 1840s. The changes occurring in the early 1830s, detailed in this chapter, created a fertile ground for the development of an ethnic

¹⁹⁷ Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity', pp. 71-94.

¹⁹⁸ Fuk-Tsang Ying, 'Evangelist at the Gate: Robert Morrison's Views on Mission', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 2012), p. 323.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 326.

discourse surrounding Chinese labour and the practical conditions to facilitate new systems of migration. Singapore demonstrated how Chinese labour migration took place and confirmed that such migration was desirable. The new framework of Anglo-Chinese relations served to energise the development of British colonial control in Asia and provide a space for experimentation with migration. For British observers in Asia the effectiveness of Chinese labour was undoubted and was to be tested in new, diverse, colonial contexts. Crucially, assumptions about issues like trade and migration were underpinned by the notion of a Chinese ethnic character.

Chapter Two: The Creation of the Chinese Character: the Publication Boom of the 1830s

Introduction

‘The Civilized World Versus China’ was how the *Canton Register* described growing animosity between the Western merchant community and the Canton authorities in 1835.¹ The editorial of this newspaper, which was owned by Jardine Matheson, seems to reflect the widely accepted decline of Western perceptions of China.² The dominant historical narrative has been that a positive view of China, and by extension the Chinese, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had transformed to a negative and critical attitude by the early nineteenth century.³ In particular the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have been identified as the height of Western fascination with Chinese institutions, society and culture. The praises of influential thinkers such as Gottfried Leibniz and Voltaire, as well as the fetish for Chinese architecture (William Chambers’ Pagoda at Kew Gardens, built in 1762, being an example) and Chinese consumer products, have been cited as evidence of European reverence towards the civilized Celestial Empire.⁴ In the late eighteenth century a combination of commercial and diplomatic frustration led to a transformation of how China was perceived in Britain and Europe more broadly. The failure of the Macartney Embassy (1792-94) has been described as a key moment at which British reverence began to morph into disdain.⁵ The formation and circulation of a Western perception of an archetypal Chinese ethnic character over the 1830s, which is charted in this chapter, provides a new perspective and complicates this narrative. As we saw in Singapore, Chinese migrants were perceived as economically valuable, rather than simply positively or negatively, by British colonial observers.

Histories of Anglo-Chinese relations in the 1830s concentrate on diplomatic and military hostilities, and have therefore emphasised negative attitudes towards the Chinese. This, in turn, has largely hidden from view other forms of exchange, such as the collaboration that took place in contact zones.⁶ This chapter will chart the spread and prominence of the idea of what was coming to be known as a distinctly ‘Chinese character’ through the 1830s and early 1840s. The particular focus will be on the role of Jardine Matheson in the dissemination of information and knowledge that contributed to perceptions of the Chinese as

¹ *Canton Register*, 27 January 1835.

² It has been a tendency of recent scholarship to affirm rather than challenge this narrative. See the introduction for an overview of histories of western perceptions of China.

³ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 7; Hillemann identifies this shift in British perceptions of China as occurring between 1763 and 1840; Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, pp. 1-3.

⁴ Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, pp. 45-48; Roberts, *China through Western Eyes*, p. 1.

⁵ For an overview of the Embassy’s significance see Williams, ‘Anglo-Chinese Caresses’.

⁶ Carroll, ‘The Canton System’, p. 51.

an ethnic group. This marks a shift from examining the individual agents in the contact zone of Singapore – such as Gordon Forbes Davidson, Seah Eu Chin and John Crawfurd – to a focus on the importance of the merchant house as a multi-national organisation that facilitated information exchange. Additionally the firm was part of wider commercial, political and social groups. Importantly they were often able to exert and exercise greater agency than individual actors due to their increased connections and resources. In doing this, the firm controlled systems of expert knowledge and helped formulate images of a simultaneously industrious and duplicitous Chinese character that would prosper under British authority and instruction.

Jardine Matheson's role in the creation of ethnic stereotypes moved well beyond the firm's conventional economic and diplomatic roles in Anglo-Chinese relations, but importantly coalesced with the firm's economic aims and interests. This chapter explores how British perceptions of a useful Chinese character and Chinese despotism could co-exist once the Chinese population was separated and distinguished from the Qing Empire.⁷ The rhetoric of a Chinese people living under a Manchu yoke was popularised in the 1830s as Western firms – particularly Jardine Matheson – justified their violation of Chinese laws and advocated military action against the Chinese authorities to protect business networks and open up new markets. This distinction between the Chinese people and the Qing dynasty was also useful in advocating labour migration to the British Empire as a form of liberation. Consequently, ideas about a Chinese ethnic character were riven with contradictions. China experts were able to articulate stereotypes about Chinese colonists who were industrious and obedient under European instruction, but innately deceitful and sinful when granted political power.⁸ Jardine Matheson provide a good example of the importance of the influence of economic relationships on perceptions of the Chinese character.

First, the historical development of notions of a Chinese character is explored. This will involve the examination the common tropes attributed to China and the Chinese, which had developed over centuries of contact.⁹ These ideas were mobilised in the changing context of the 1830s and especially before and during the First Opium War. Though the military and diplomatic events of the First Opium War will not be covered in depth, the impact of ideas about the Chinese character popularized during the war are considered. Second, the contribution that Jardine Matheson made in establishing the idea of a Chinese character is investigated. In particular, the firm's role in publishing on China and the Chinese is assessed

⁷ This process has been identified in texts such as Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, pp. 72-126 and Gabaccia and Hoerder, *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims*, p. 198.

⁸ Specifically opium and gambling addiction were commonly identified as innately Asian traits.

⁹ See Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, for more on eighteenth century 'Chinoiserie' and 'Sinology'.

through an analysis of the *Canton Register* and a network of book and periodical publications, which were funded by and published through the firm and its connections. In conjunction with the firm's own publications, the connections the firm had with China experts, British officials and other commercial organisations will also be discussed. This approach will give us a richer understanding of the varied roles that commercial organisations played in empire. Private firms engaged in projects of knowledge collection and maintained information networks comparable to those utilised by the EIC as a strategy of colonial governance.¹⁰ Both the creation of an archetypal Chinese character, and Jardine Matheson's role within that process, provided a rationale for the use of Chinese migrant labour in the British Empire.

Making Sense of China

In 1836 James Matheson wrote that the Chinese were 'to be spoken of much in the same spirit as one would speculate concerning the suppositious tenants of the moon'.¹¹ This sense of mystery could be applied to centuries of Western efforts to define, explain and understand China and the Chinese. Aside from a cursory acknowledgement of Marco Polo's 'discovery' of China, it is common in histories of Sino-Western relations to identify the sixteenth century as a starting point of significant interaction and exchange.¹² In particular the inroads made by Portugal, with the acquisition of a permanent base on the China coast at Macao in 1557, opened up opportunities for missionary endeavour. The activities of Jesuit missionaries involved both the attempted conversion of the Chinese populace to Christianity and the transmission of knowledge of China to a Western audience. Early publishing on China was consequently dominated by biblical scholarship. In the century or so after the establishment of the Catholic mission in China in 1583 European missionaries are estimated to have composed and published 450 works in Chinese, 330 of which were religious texts.¹³ This early missionary impact was minimal in terms of Chinese conversion, but it was significant in igniting a Western fascination with understanding and extracting knowledge from China. By the 1760s Christianity had been outlawed in China – the Qianglong Emperor was wary of the alternative moral authority offered by the Pope – and Chinese interactions with the West were

¹⁰ Norbert Peabody, 'Knowledge Formation in Colonial India', in Douglas M. Peers and Nandini Gooptu (eds.), *India and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 75-97.

¹¹ James Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1836), p. 3.

¹² Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, p. 5; For an overview of British knowledge of China over this period see Rosalind Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹³ Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 39.

regulated through the Canton system.¹⁴ Aside from relations with Russia, all official economic and political exchange between China and the West was channelled and mediated through the thirteen Hong Merchants, who were chosen by and ultimately answerable to the Qing authorities.¹⁵ The system also limited Western residence in China to Canton and Macao.¹⁶ As a result Canton, much like Singapore, became a contact zone in the late eighteenth century and would remain a key site of exchange throughout the 1830s.

Much recent scholarship has been concerned with British ‘perceptions’, ‘views’ and ‘representations’ of China and the Chinese from the late eighteenth century onwards.¹⁷ In particular the work of Hao Gao on Britain’s diplomatic overtures has emphasised how these events led to a greater interest in Sinology and the conceptualisation of ‘the Chinese’.¹⁸ Yet histories of Anglo-Chinese relations have rested on the oversimplifications and assumptions of the decline theory. An examination of the publications of Jardine Matheson demonstrates that distinctions – whether of class, ethnicity, language or regional origin – were essential to the conceptual formation of a Chinese character. The industrious Chinese populace and despotic Qing Empire were separated, allowing for the framing of British aggression as ultimately benevolent and morally imperative. Though many of the characteristics attributed to the Chinese were contradictory – for example, some authors simultaneously praised honesty in business transactions whilst critiquing innate deceitfulness – the central point of emphasis was that perceptions of the Chinese character not only validated British military and economic aggression, they also provided a case for the use of Chinese migrants as colonial labourers.

In Britain the language of an archetypal national character was becoming increasingly common in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Similar concepts of ethnic exceptionalism were applied to China, as the Chinese were often grouped with ‘Asiatic’ races but also attributed specific ethnic characteristics. The writings of John Crawford, discussed in the previous chapter, show that attempts to essentialize the Chinese as an ethnic group predated the 1830s.¹⁹ However, the 1830s was of particular significance due to a significant increase in publishing on China. Print literature was essential to the definition of racial, ethnic

¹⁴ Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, p. 34.

¹⁵ For an overview of the Co-hong system see Van Dyke, *Life and Enterprise on the China Coast*.

¹⁶ Westerners could reside permanently in Macao and could only stay in Canton temporarily during trading season. Western women were not allowed to stay at Canton at all as Qing officials sought to discourage permanent foreign residence.

¹⁷ Jeng-Guo Chen, ‘The British View of Chinese Civilization and Emergence of Class Consciousness’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 45 (2004), pp. 193-205; Berg, ‘Britain, Industry and Perceptions of China’, pp. 269-288; Tsao, *Representing China to the British Public in the Age of Free Trade*.

¹⁸ Gao, ‘Prelude to the Opium War?’, pp. 491-509; Gao, ‘The Amherst Embassy and British Discoveries in China’, pp. 568-587.

¹⁹ See chapter one for Crawford’s background.

or national groups beyond ‘local’ geographical spaces.²⁰ Within these publications the fact that ethnic groups were evaluated by their level of culture or civilization was an important condition for the formulation of a Chinese ethnic character and its potential value to the British Empire. Specifically, the civilizational, and connected commercial, potential of Chinese migrants was emphasised by those arguing for the colonial use of Chinese labour.²¹ Moreover, the role of British self-identity, cast as the most civilized nation, in perceptions of China highlights the importance of British imperialism as a context for the formation of the Chinese character.

As the British Empire’s territorial possessions in Asia increased in the late eighteenth century it came into contact with a variety of ethnic groups in a variety of contexts. Defining and categorising these different Asian groups was a particular obsession of British ethnographers in the early nineteenth century. The specialist journals of the period carried articles on the history and nature of Asian ethnicities – such as the *Oriental Herald* (established in the 1820s), the *Chinese Repository* (established in the 1830s) and the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (with its first volume in 1834). Figures who sought to define the Chinese character were carriers and disseminators of knowledge about a range of Asian ethnic groups. For example, John Crawfurd’s *History of the Indian Archipelago* included sections on the ‘Language and Literature of the Malays’, ‘Language and Literature of the Celebes’ and the ‘Ancient History of Java’.²² Texts such as Crawfurd’s *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* and the missionary Charles Gutzlaff’s *Journal of a Residence in Siam* defined, in the Western imagination, Asian kingdoms and ethnic groups into similar categories as European Empires and nations.²³ Alongside these ethnographic texts the imperial information revolution saw various metropolitan actors taking an interest in Britain’s Asian colonies.²⁴ The definition of a Chinese character was part of a wider British interest in the categorisation various Asian ethnicities.

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 1-7.

²¹ This will be seen explicitly in examples discussed in chapter three.

²² Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vols. I-III*.

²³ Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*; Charles Gutzlaff, *Journal of a Residence in Siam: and of a Voyage Along the Coast of China to Mantchou Tartary* (Canton: Chinese Repository, 1832).

²⁴ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 8. As mentioned previously, the works of Robert Montgomery Martin sought to categorize and provide a statistical analysis of Britain’s imperial possessions; Robert Montgomery Martin, *A History of British Possessions in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1837); Robert Montgomery Martin, *Statistics of the Colonies of the British Empire: From the Official Records of the Colonial Office* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1839). For a full account of Martin’s work see Frank H. H. King, *Survey Our Empire! Robert Montgomery Martin (1801-1868): A Bio-Bibliography* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1979).

Perceptions of Chinese character were also formed in a wider context of declining Anglo-Chinese diplomatic and commercial relations. The frustration of the Macartney Embassy is a good example of how wider diplomatic events shaped British attempts to understand China. The most famous texts to emerge directly from the Embassy were Aeneas Anderson's *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (1795) and Sir George Staunton's *An Authentic account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain* (1797). Staunton – whose son Thomas was an interpreter for the Embassy and would later advocate military action against China as an MP – showed a particular interest in understanding the Chinese character.²⁵ His account of the Embassy includes various attempts to describe unique Chinese characteristics, such as extracts on the 'character of civil and military officers', 'thoughts of a person long resident in China, as to the character of the people and government in that country', 'trait in character of Chinese', and the 'character of Chinese men'.²⁶ Scholars have emphasised how Macartney and other members of the mission observed a China in decline. Macartney referred to China as 'an old, crazy, first rate man-of-war'.²⁷ Such observations have been identified as the starting point of a re-evaluation of China's position in the world.²⁸ The Embassy also confirmed the superiority of British technology and, consequently, British civilization.²⁹ The failure of the Macartney Embassy was followed by similar diplomatic failures by Lord Amherst (1816) and William Napier (1834), which again provided more accounts of a tyrannical Qing Empire in decline.³⁰ As Anglo-Chinese trade grew, and the British state became increasingly concerned by the lack of diplomatic progress, questions about who the Chinese were and what delineated their character became increasingly interesting to metropolitan and imperial audiences.

Histories of Western perceptions of China have repeatedly pointed to a growth in publishing on China in the 1830s. Figure 2.1 shows the growth of titles as demonstrated by John Lust's *Western Books on China Published up to 1850*, which is a descriptive catalogue of the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Though the SOAS collection makes no claim to be comprehensive, the collection of 654 texts – predominantly in

²⁵ Julia Lovell, *The Great Wall: China Against the World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), pp. 4-9.

²⁶ Sir George Staunton, *An authentic account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain* (London: G. Nicol, 1797), pp. x-xvii. Similar efforts to use diplomatic missions to evaluate the civilizational status and nature of a 'closed' nation can be seen in US exchange with Japan in the 1850s, see Jeffrey A. Keith, 'Civilization, Race, and the Japan Expedition's Cultural Diplomacy, 1853-1854', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (April 2011), p. 193.

²⁷ Helen H. Robbins, *Our first ambassador to China : an account of the life of George, Earl of Macartney, with extracts from his letters, and the narrative of his experiences in China, as told by himself, 1737-1806, from hitherto unpublished correspondence and documents* (London: John Murray, 1908), p. 386.

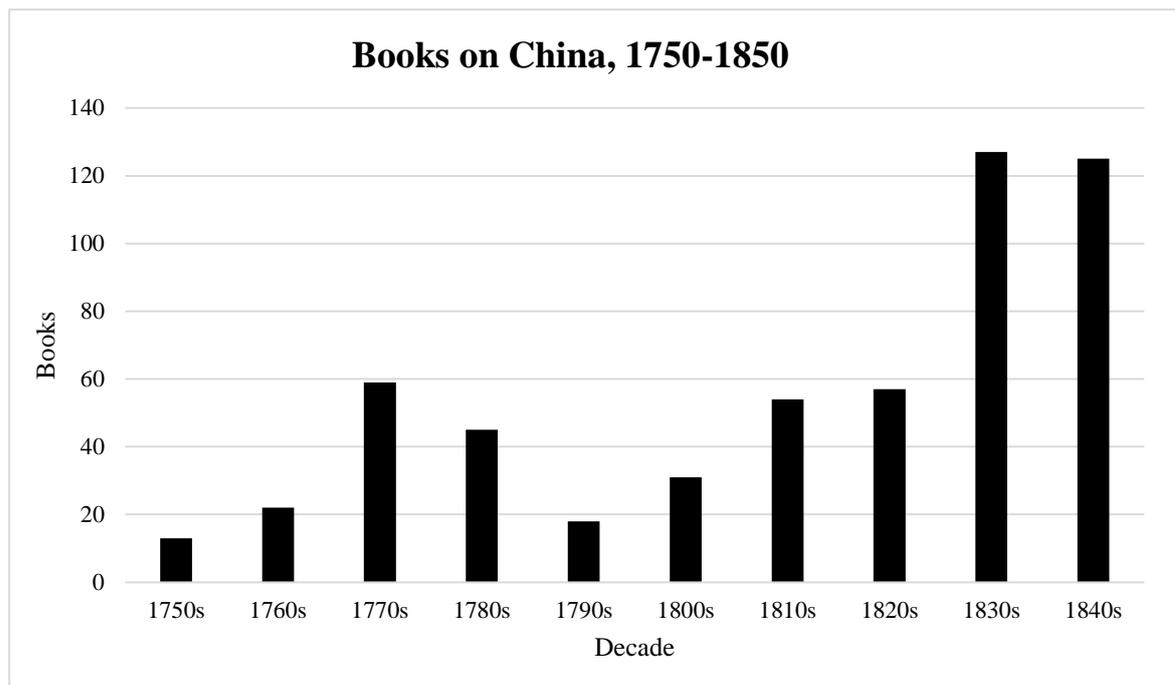
²⁸ Chen, 'The British View of Chinese Civilization and Emergence of Class Consciousness', pp. 193-205.

²⁹ Berg, 'Britain, Industry and Perceptions of China', p. 270.

³⁰ Gao, 'The Amherst Embassy and British Discoveries in China'; Gao, 'Prelude to the Opium War?', Melancon, 'Peaceful Intentions'.

English, French, Spanish or German – illustrates general, long-term trends in Western publishing on China. The volume of book publications on China increased decade by decade in the early nineteenth century. Figure 2.1 shows the general upward trend in publications that peaked in the 1830s and 1840s – with the 1770s and 1780s also particularly high due to the prolific publication record of French Jesuit missionaries Pierre-Martial Cibot, Antoine Gaubil and J. J. P. Amiot:

Figure 2.1. Western books on China published up to 1850.



Source: John Lust, *Western books on China published up to 1850* (Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London).

The 1830s was clearly a peak decade for Western publishing on China. The slight decline in publications in the 1840s indicates that this was not part of a perpetual increase but that the peak of interest in the 1830s was specific. As Robert Bickers has commented, ‘publication numbers on China have shown a close relationship to the newsworthiness of the country as it affected foreign interests’.³¹ Peaks in publication figures were also influenced by the means of the publishers. As seen in this chapter, foreign merchant firms consciously attempted to guide public discourse on China.³²

Among the increased number of nineteenth century texts there was also a greater spread of topics – this contrasts with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when missionary

³¹ Robert Bickers, ‘British Travel Writing from China in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 54 (2011), p. 781; Review of Elizabeth H. Chang (ed.), *British Travel Writing From China, 1798-1901. 5 vols.* (Routledge, 2009).

³² A similar desire to articulate the narrative and interests of a specific merchant community was expressed in Shanghai. Specifically, see the work of Robert Bickers.

works focusing on theological matters, such as Ricci's *De Christiana Expeditione Apud Sinas* (1615) or Gaubil's *Memoire Sur Les Juifs Establish en Chine* (1780-1783), had dominated.³³ That is not to say that nineteenth-century missionaries were not concerned with Chinese religion, but that a greater diversity of topics, such as Chinese society, Chinese politics and international relations, became the focus of nineteenth-century Sinology. As suggested by Ting Tsao, the removal of the EIC monopoly allowed for a more political and visceral public debate of the 'China question'. The commercial and political space left by the removal of the EIC was exploited by Jardine Matheson. The consequent, un-regulated exploration of the China coast allowed for the development of different genres such as the exploratory narrative, the political pamphlet and the military account.³⁴ These new genres fitted within broader literary developments. As Mary Louise Pratt has outlined, the development of new forms of travel and exploration writing were connected to 'European economic and political expansion'.³⁵ As greater numbers of foreigners gained access to China, for diverse primary purposes, different forms of travel writing became increasingly common.

Early nineteenth century missionary texts on China are notably diverse. Charles Gutzlaff who features heavily throughout this thesis, due to his close working relationship with Jardine Matheson, is a good example of a missionary who disseminated knowledge about China to a wider audience.³⁶ Similarly to Gutzlaff, the missionary Robert Morrison (who worked as a translator for the EIC and edited the Jardine Matheson-owned newspaper the *Canton Register*) also wrote widely. In doing so he went well beyond the brief of his missionary role. An accomplished linguist, Morrison became best known for his *Grammar of the Chinese Language*, which was published by the EIC, and as a pioneer of Chinese language teaching in Britain.³⁷ Morrison's interest in learning the Chinese language came from a broader philosophy of immersive mission promoted by the London Missionary Society (hereafter LMS). It was commonly accepted that in order to improve the chances of conversion, Western missionaries required as much knowledge about China and the Chinese as possible.³⁸

³³ Burke and Po-Chia Hsia, *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, p. 39.

³⁴ Tsao, *Representing China to the British Public in the Age of Free Trade*, p. iv.

³⁵ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 3.

³⁶ Details of Gutzlaff's publications will be discussed in this chapter and his role with Jardine Matheson will be detailed in chapter three.

³⁷ R. K. Douglas, 'Morrison, Robert (1782–1834)', rev. Robert Bickers, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2007

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19330>, accessed 27 September 2015].

³⁸ Edwin J. Van Kley, 'Europe's "Discovery" of China and the Writing of World History', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp. 358-85; This was standard practise for the LMS, see Christopher Allen Daily, 'From Gosport to Canton: A new approach to Robert Morrison and the beginnings of protestant missions in China' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, SOAS, 2009) for more on the methods used by LMS missionaries.

Missionaries disseminated the information and knowledge they collected and as a result played a vital role in discussions of the Chinese character. For example, William Milne's 'Account of a Secret Association in China, Entitled the Triad Society' articulated many of the tropes commonly deployed to denigrate Chinese labourers in Singapore as subversive gambling and opium addicts.³⁹ Often critiques of the Chinese in missionary literature were set alongside critiques of contemporary merchants. The LMS missionary Walter Henry Medhurst admonished the 'sinful condition' of the Chinese in the same chapter that he 'appealed' to the 'opium merchant'.⁴⁰ One of the most important missionary authors was Elijah Bridgman, the first American missionary to China, who edited the regular title the *Chinese Repository* and collaborated with missionary colleagues from varied backgrounds.⁴¹ Missionaries – though often semi-autonomous and morally conflicted, as they balanced access to unsaved souls against the evils of opium addiction – were at the forefront of defining the attributes of the Chinese character over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Whilst missionaries were critical in shaping perceptions of the Chinese, growing political and commercial interest in China in the 1830s meant that the Chinese character was increasingly open to definition by different Western actors. British territorial expansion in Asia opened up avenues for colonial officials to be established as experts, as seen by the example of John Crawfurd in Singapore.⁴² Crawfurd's experience in Asia and his connections to both metropolitan and colonial power brokers meant that his opinions on the Chinese – whether given through publications, personal letters or evidence to parliamentary select committees – were influential.⁴³ Experts from contact zones in Asia were increasingly appropriated by metropolitan authors. Robert Montgomery Martin's *British Relations with the Chinese Empire* (1832) was a prime example, as Martin dedicated an entire chapter to John Crawfurd's 'opinions of the Chinese', which reflected the perceived significance of Crawfurd's first-hand experience in Asia.⁴⁴ Crawfurd and Martin were not impartial observers, but heavily committed to the expansion of British imperial control and trade across Asia. Authors like Crawfurd were more directly connected to imperial power structures and

³⁹ Milne, 'Account of a Secret Association in China, Entitled the Triad Society', p. 241. For the importance of these stereotypes and their connection to opium consumption see Lovell, *The Opium War*.

⁴⁰ Walter Henry Medhurst, *China: its State and Prospects* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1838), p. 67.

⁴¹ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p. 36; Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F. A. Gutzlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p. 151.

⁴² Crawfurd's background was discussed at length in chapter one; Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Vols. I-III*; Hugh Murray and John Crawfurd et al., *An Historical and Descriptive Account of China, Vol. I* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1836).

⁴³ Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly*, pp. 93-113; Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*.

⁴⁴ Robert Montgomery Martin, *British Relations with the Chinese Empire in 1832* (London: Parbury, Allen & Co., 1832).

systems of colonial rule than their missionary contemporaries.⁴⁵ Wider debates about national character, the increased economic significance of Anglo-Chinese relations and the growing number of China experts in Asian contact zones all contributed to developing notions of Chinese character over the 1830s.

Authors with different background and interests understood China through different analytical frameworks. However, the 1830s and 1840s also saw a degree of standardization with an increase in the number of texts that utilised the specific vocabulary of ‘character’. In this period the *Chinese Repository* repeatedly ran sections on the ‘Chinese national character’ and the indexes contained similar terminology, including references to the ‘Chinese, their national character’ and ‘the character of Chinamen’.⁴⁶ One of the first texts with a titular reference to character was the British missionary and diplomat George Tradescant Lay’s *The Chinese as They Are: Their Moral, Social and Literary Character*, which was published at the height of the Opium War in 1841.⁴⁷ That Lay sought to engage with numerous aspects of ‘character’ reflects the various uses and adaptations of ethnic character as a concept. For Charles Gutzlaff character was suffixed with ‘religion’, whilst for the later Governor of Hong Kong John Francis Davis character was defined by ‘manners’.⁴⁸ Character meant different things to different observers, yet it was a useful shorthand to generalise personality traits and attach them to specific ethnic groups.

The language of character was so pervasive that in 1831 outgoing EIC Select Committee President Charles Marjoribanks wrote a *Brief Account of the English Character*, which was translated into Chinese by Robert Morrison and was distributed on voyages along the China coast by Charles Gutzlaff and Hugh Hamilton Lindsay.⁴⁹ The distribution of the tract on these voyages indicates the role of newly empowered private interests in aggressively challenging both Chinese and British authorities. William Jardine endorsed Gutzlaff’s involvement in exploration aboard the *Lord Amherst*.⁵⁰ Additionally, Lindsay distributed Marjoribanks’ pamphlet in contravention of the instructions of his successor, John Davis.⁵¹ The tract highlighted English desire for trade, which was evidenced by the distance that ships travelled to China; emphasised that there was no desire for conquest, given that Britain

⁴⁵ See chapter one for an overview of Crawford’s writing on the Chinese in Asia and his background.

⁴⁶ *Chinese Repository*, Vol. I (1833); *Chinese Repository*, Vol. X (1841); *Chinese Repository*, Vol. XI (1842).

⁴⁷ George Tradescant Lay, *The Chinese as They Are: Their Moral, Social and Literary Character* (London: William Ball & Co., 1841).

⁴⁸ Charles Gutzlaff, *A Sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern, Vol. I* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1834), pp. 43-54; John Francis Davis, *The Chinese: a general description of the empire of China and its inhabitants* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), p. 240.

⁴⁹ Robert Bickers, ‘The Challenger: Hugh Hamilton Lindsay and the rise of British Asia, 1832-1865’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 22 (2012), pp. 147-150

⁵⁰ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p. 27.

⁵¹ For more on the conduct of Lindsay during this voyage see Bickers, ‘The Challenger’.

already had a large empire; and cited assistance to shipwrecked Chinese sailors and Chinese merchants as evidence of English kindness.⁵² In detailing the English character Marjoribanks also praised the commercial character of the Chinese: ‘the people of China are highly intelligent, industrious, and prosperous’.⁵³ By the 1830s the need to understand and essentialize the Chinese character was acknowledged by various Western observers, and especially by British imperial actors and stakeholders. Moreover, the notion of character was not merely a useful interpretative concept, but it was used actively in Anglo-Chinese interactions as a tool to try and engender changes in policy in both Britain and China.

The 1830s and the Chinese Character

The construction of an archetypal Chinese character became increasingly common in English language publishing over the 1830s, but what characteristics were believed to be Chinese? As Ulrike Hillemann has commented, there was never ‘one single idea of China’ that was universally accepted, but some common themes did emerge in English language publishing over the 1830s.⁵⁴ This section explores some of the traits that were believed to make up the Chinese character and their significance. Many of the sources examined were publications funded and published under the auspices of Jardine Matheson (such as the newspaper the *Canton Register*, which acted as the public mouthpiece of the firm) as the firm developed a sizeable publication network.⁵⁵ Yet even within this network many of the character traits discussed in contemporary publications were seemingly contradictory. Jardine Matheson’s publications described the Chinese as both hard working labourers and lazy opium addicts; or commercially astute and trustworthy, yet fundamentally deceitful. Despite these inconsistencies, the characteristics ascribed to the Chinese had significant consequences. Ideas about character were important in creating a distinction between the Chinese people and the Qing Empire. This divide was used to promote both the economic intrusion of Britain’s informal empire into China and to advocate the use of Chinese migrant labour in the British Empire.

Chapter one demonstrated how the relative industriousness of the Chinese, in comparison to other Asian ethnic groups, was lauded by British colonial observers. For those interested in sourcing cheap and effective migrant labour the fact that Chinese migrants embraced a contractual employer-employee relationship, unlike many indigenous ethnic

⁵² Ting Man Tsao, ‘Representing “Great England” to Qing China in the Age of Free Trade Imperialism: The Circulation of a Tract by Charles Marjoribanks on the China Coast’, *Victorians Institute Journal*, p.6, (http://www.nines.org/exhibits/Representing_Great_England?page=2), accessed 27 September 2015.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 1.

⁵⁵ This publication network will be detailed later in this chapter.

groups, was an overwhelmingly positive trait. Eulogies of Chinese labour were commonplace in English language publications. For example, articles in the *Canton Register* praised Chinese ingenuity in ‘agricultural labour’ and ‘irrigation’ in order to feed such a large population.⁵⁶ Chinese ethnic traits were identified as useful to British modes of production in Asian colonies. The *Chinese Repository* (published by the American missionary Elijah Bridgman) detailed how China’s ‘increasing numbers taught them the necessity of labour’ but simultaneously lamented that ‘in olden times they were far more sincere, honest, and less corrupted than at present’.⁵⁷ Much praise of the Chinese was tempered in that it suggested they were less savage than other ethnic groups, rather than virtuous in their own right: ‘piracies were committed on the coast of China more frequently than even in the waters of the Indian Archipelago. But the desperadoes of this country are not as bloodthirsty as the Malays, and therefore fewer people were killed and less ravages committed’.⁵⁸ Moreover, the common trope of an innate predilection to addiction – which, according to Jardine Matheson, was the cause of the opium crisis – was extended to include gambling as an ethnic trait: ‘all classes of persons, coolies, servants, shopmen, gentlemen of town and country, officers civil and military, old men and boys, engage in gambling’.⁵⁹ In the 1830s many of these negative stereotypes became connected to an idea of an archetypal Chinese character. Crucially, the vices of the Chinese were redeemable because of their embrace of Western-style economic and labour relationships.

Jardine Matheson provide a good example of the importance of the influence of economic relationships on perceptions of the Chinese character. The firm simultaneously maintained a friendly relationship with Hong merchants and Chinese employees, known as compradors, whilst holding Qing officials in contempt. This distinction was regularly articulated in the *Canton Register*, which often critiqued Chinese officials and defended Chinese merchants.⁶⁰ However, members of the firm did not make such distinctions clear when addressing a British audience. Matheson began his 1836 book *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China* by describing ‘the Chinese – a people characterised by a marvellous degree of imbecility, avarice, conceit, and obstinacy’.⁶¹ Throughout the book, which emphasised the perceived oppression of Western merchants by Chinese officials, Matheson made repeated reference to the Chinese character. For example, he explained that

⁵⁶ *Canton Register*, 14 July 1835.

⁵⁷ *Chinese Repository*, Vol. I (1833), p. 262. The *Repository* was a missionary journal published in Canton by American protestant missionary and Elijah Coleman Bridgman and was regularly co-edited by Charles Gutzlaff.

⁵⁸ *Canton Press*, 20 January 1838.

⁵⁹ *Canton Register*, 13 October 1835.

⁶⁰ A full overview of the *Canton Register* is given from page 83 onwards.

⁶¹ Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*, p. 1.

the poor policy of the EIC was based on ‘an utter ignorance of the real character of the Chinese’ which was ‘mercenary and rapacious’.⁶² Matheson also attributed Chinese imperial policy to the ‘far-sighted cunning and inflexible pertinacity of the Chinese character’.⁶³ Resistance to the opium trade, and reluctance to liberalise trade with the West in general, motivated Matheson’s critique. He chastised the ‘policy of this extraordinary people, to shroud themselves’ and complained at how the Chinese ‘consider all other inhabitants of the earth ... as barbarians’.⁶⁴ In writing for a metropolitan audience Matheson made little effort to differentiate between the Chinese people and the Qing Empire as his China coast newspaper did.

The distinction between the government and population was crucial on the China coast. A positive review of James Matheson’s book from the rival Canton newspaper the *Canton Press* explained that the difficulties faced by the merchants were the fault of the government and not the population: ‘the Chinese Empire has, ever since the first European adventurers made their appearance on the coasts of China, restricted the intercourse between them and its own subjects’.⁶⁵ The merchants at Canton continually emphasised the desire of China’s ‘subjects’ to trade. Of particular use to Western authors were the northern, Manchu origins of the ruling Qing dynasty, which allowed the imperial elite to be portrayed as a foreign ruling power with the true (Han) Chinese living under their ‘yoke’.⁶⁶ The use of the term ‘yoke’ invoked a developing mythology of Britain’s own historical development. The growth of democracy in the nineteenth century British Empire was framed as a reclamation of Anglo-Saxon freedoms from Norman tyranny.⁶⁷ Articles on Chinese history appeared frequently in journals like the *Chinese Repository* and provided a historical context for the perceived despotism of the Qing Empire: ‘it is now about one hundred and eighty years since the Tartars obtained the government of the whole Chinese dominions ... they imposed certain regulations which were viewed by the conquered either as highly disgraceful or oppressive’.⁶⁸ Western awareness of the diversity of ethnicity, language and culture in nineteenth century China was most commonly expressed in critiques of the Qing. A virtuous Chinese population victimised by cruel foreign rulers legitimised the Western merchant’s contravention of Chinese laws and formed part of the justification of the Opium War as a war of liberation.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ *Canton Press*, 13 August 1836.

⁶⁶ Harrison, *China*, pp. 33-51; Most famously John Scarth referred to the ‘Tartar yoke’ in John Scarth, *British Policy in China: is our war with the Tartars or the Chinese* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1860), p. 9.

⁶⁷ Reginald Horsman, ‘Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1976), p. 388.

⁶⁸ *Chinese Repository*, Vol. I (1833), p. 328. Such criticism of the ‘Tartars’ could also be found in the writing of Lord Macartney, which was not published at the time of the embassy.

The salvation of the Chinese population from the despotism of the Qing Empire was deemed particularly important because the Chinese people were already civilized. A letter to the editor of the *Canton Register* articulated this: ‘now if you disapprove of the state of mean submission and ignorance in which the Chinese are placed ... you have no alternative ... but to reclaim them from the alarming degree of civilization in which they already stand’.⁶⁹ The idea that China’s historical civilization was in jeopardy was a common theme of Western writing.⁷⁰ For Walter Henry Medhurst, China exhibited ‘many traces of civilization’ but at the present time ‘possesses as much civilization as Turkey now, or England a few centuries ago’.⁷¹ For missionaries, like Medhurst, China’s once great civilization was now in decline. Qing China, in spite of the civilizational potential of its population, was moving backwards. The ‘reclamation’ of Chinese civilization could be interpreted as the opening of China to Western trade or religion; as a justification for war; or to promote emigration into the British Empire. These different openings demonstrated the various routes to civilizational salvation.

The conclusion of many British observers was that if the Chinese were more civilized than other Asian ethnic groups, but inhibited by a despotic government and some innate character flaws, they would be able to prosper under British rule. Chinese despotism should not just be removed, it should also make way for British civilization.⁷² The *Canton Register* invoked the most British of symbols, John Bull, to criticise the authoritarian Qing Empire in an article titled ‘Happiness of the Chinese’. The *Register* asked ‘what would John Bull think of being sentenced to be pilloried for two or three months; beaten with a hundred cudgel blows, and transported three years, for killing an ox in order to eat it?’⁷³ In an article titled ‘Barbarism - Civilisation’ the *Register* invoked the global progress of the Anglo-world as evidence that the Chinese must convert to British notions of governance and international relations:⁷⁴

By what right are the aborigines of North America and New Holland driven from their indisputable homes by the governments of the United States and Great Britain? By no other than that barbarism must vanish before civilisation, ignorance succumb to knowledge: such appears to be a law of nature, or rather, the will of God!⁷⁵

⁶⁹ *Canton Register*, 15 December 1835.

⁷⁰ Specifically the belief that ‘knowledge’ and ‘civilisation’ in China were decreasing under the Qing was articulated in letters to the *Canton Register*, 8 March 1832.

⁷¹ Medhurst, *China*, p. 87.

⁷² Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 106-149.

⁷³ *Canton Register*, 25 March 1834.

⁷⁴ For more on the concept of an ‘Anglo-world’ see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷⁵ *Canton Register*, 30 December 1834. This extract also points to the influence of notions of civilization and improvement in post-enlightenment Scotland as discussed in Grace, *Opium and Empire*.

The comparison of the Chinese with the ‘the aborigines of North America and New Holland’ shows the importance of notions of civilization as a justification for British, and more broadly Western, imperialism. These notions underwrote Jardine Matheson’s challenge of Qing authority. Such a comparison simultaneously emphasised the perceived contrast in terms of civilization between the Chinese and indigenous colonial populations. The specific problem in the case of China was the Qing dynasty’s despotic rule: ‘the intrigue and deceit of the Chinese, and the rude courage of the Tartar, seem to unite in what may be considered the present national character of China’.⁷⁶ The prevailing argument of the 1830s was that to liberate the southern Han Chinese from their current rulers and place them under British rule would be mutually beneficial. Perspectives on China and the Chinese were informed and constructed in the context of the British Empire. These concepts of Chinese character as compatible with British authority were not just being discussed in newspapers and travel literature but were already tested in the contact zone of Singapore in the 1820s and 1830s.

Concepts of a homogenous Chinese national character, or even a binary divide between Chinese people and state, were complicated by variations of language, ethnicity, class and geography. For the Western mercantile community, the Chinese merchant elites and Chinese compradors were particularly important groups in facilitating the China trade. They therefore attracted special praise in contrast to the Chinese populace as a whole. This praise was motivated partly by economic necessity, but also class distinctions and a mutual understanding of commercial respectability. Hugh Hamilton Lindsay – the aggressive free trade advocate, EIC official, pamphleteer, and later MP – wrote of the Chinese merchant elite’s ‘high character’ and suggested that ‘it would be difficult to find, in any community of merchants, men more alive to the feelings of humanity’.⁷⁷ The close business relationship between merchants and ‘respectable’ Chinese was perhaps no better demonstrated than by the role of the Chinese buys for Western firms, later known as compradors.⁷⁸ Chinese compradors were employed by Western merchant houses to conduct sales and purchases from Chinese merchants. The responsibility of compradors implied a high level of trust as Western merchants often lacked the necessary linguistic abilities to properly monitor transactions or negotiate with Chinese business partners.⁷⁹ Jardine Matheson were particularly reliant on Chinese staff as they employed a house steward (or lead comprador), a provisions comprador,

⁷⁶ *Chinese Repository*, Vol. I (1833), p. 328.

⁷⁷ Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, *The Rupture with China and Its Causes; Including the Opium Question, and Other Important Details: In a Letter to Lord Viscount Palmerston, Secretary for Foreign Affairs* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1840), p. 4; See Bickers, ‘The Challenger’, for an overview of Lindsay’s activities.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of the term ‘comprador’ see Kaori Abe, ‘The City of Intermediaries: Compradors in Hong Kong, 1830s to 1880s’ (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 2014).

⁷⁹ Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong*, p. 46.

a cash comprador and an operational comprador, who as a group acted as a ‘Chinese firm within a foreign firm’.⁸⁰ A good example of the closeness of these business relationships was the Western defence of comprador turned Hong merchant Aming in 1836. Having been tried and prosecuted for his involvement in smuggling, the Western merchant community petitioned Chinese officials for his release, publicised his plight, and many prominent merchants visited him during his incarceration.⁸¹ The close mutual interests of Western merchants and their Chinese employees and business partners meant that these groups were often insulated from criticisms and negative tropes attached to the Chinese character or Qing officials.

Of course the defence of Aming also provided Western merchants with an opportunity to advocate their own economic interests. In critiques of the Qing Empire, a general sense of Chinese institutional corruption was paramount.⁸² The *Canton Register* ran numerous stories presenting Anglo-Chinese conflicts as tensions between civilization and barbarism. One of the most commonly invoked differentiators was the distinction between British and Chinese legal systems, an unsurprising choice given that Jardine Matheson were violating Chinese laws but not British ones.⁸³ Amongst the merchants’ complaints were the absence of a jury system, the lack of respect for private property and, as can be seen in this extract from the *Register*, the use of torture by the authorities: ‘the unfortunate and tortured Aming was brought out of the city under a guard, wearing a heavy wooden collar ... his confession of his guilt has been wrung from him by torture: an Englishman, therefore, considers him innocent.’⁸⁴ The case of Aming demonstrates the close personal relationships between the European and Chinese merchant communities, but it also served as a useful example of Qing injustice.

More important than class difference or economic co-operation, particularly with regards to emigration, was the importance of Chinese regional and linguistic variations – though such distinctions were not always identified by contemporary Western observers. Whilst recognised as a China expert, Charles Gutzlaff described China as the ‘largest and most homogenous nation’ in the world.⁸⁵ Yet many of Gutzlaff’s contemporaries, and subsequent historians, have emphasised the significance of regional variations. As Fairbank and Gregory have highlighted, China’s regions can be historically compared to European nation-states in terms of geographical size, population, linguistic divergence and cultural

⁸⁰ Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society*, pp. 55-57.

⁸¹ C. Toogood Downing, *The Stranger in China* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1838), pp. 127-131.

⁸² Frank H. H. King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers, 1822-1911* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 7.

⁸³ John Carroll has suggested that these legal systems were not as dissimilar as Western merchants claimed, see Carroll, ‘The Canton System’, p. 58.

⁸⁴ *Canton Register*, 3 January 1837.

⁸⁵ Charles Gutzlaff, *China Opened, Vol. I* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1838), p. 286.

identity, if not political autonomy.⁸⁶ The idea of China as a nation of nations is certainly tangible if we accept the primacy of language as a marker of national identity. As was demonstrated by the writing of Seah Eu Chin, the Chinese community of Singapore was a good example of this divergence as the Chinese in the colony were separated into six ‘tribes’ based on dialect groupings.⁸⁷ It is also important to stress that the identification of Chinese regional distinctions often took place in contact zones that were external to China.

Existing literature has underplayed the extent to which migration was essential to Western knowledge of regional difference. Chinese emigrants would form ethnic associations based on points of geographical origin in their adopted homelands.⁸⁸ Migrants of a shared dialect group would often relocate to the same destinations due to local and familial networks. Linguistically or regionally connected migrants would form a *qiaoxiang*, or ‘emigrant community’, which reflected the social structures of mainland China.⁸⁹ As the vast majority of emigrants were from southern China it was common for Western colonial observers to emphasise regional distinctions with the north.⁹⁰ One of the main regions of emigration, Fukien (Fujian province), was particularly singled out for praise by Western authors, in contrast to northern China. For example, Robert Mudie wrote of Fukien, ‘the inhabitants of this province are remarkably industrious’.⁹¹ Socio-economic practices, such as footbinding, were particularly useful as identifiers of regional difference and allowed for Western promotion of the perceived ethnic traits of southern over northern Chinese.⁹² The acknowledgement of Chinese regional difference, based around concepts like ‘industriousness’, served the broader narrative of a Chinese population that could be separated conceptually from the Qing Empire. Ironically, the fact that China was an Empire – with Taiwan, Mongolia and Tibet to ‘China proper’ over the 1600s – opened the Qing to criticism from agents of British imperialism.⁹³ The north-south distinction heavily fed into the idea that the Han Chinese of the southern regions required liberation from their despotic rulers.

⁸⁶ John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 9; Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Siah, ‘The Chinese in Singapore’, p. 284.

⁸⁸ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 42.

⁸⁹ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 27. The term *qiaoxiang* refers to both ‘overseas Chinese townships’ as well as areas in China that were affected by high levels of emigration and were therefore received preferential treatment from the Chinese state, see Mette Thuno, *Beyond Chinatown: New Chinese Migration and the Global Expansion of China* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2006), p. 13.

⁹⁰ These distinctions also fed into the undermining of the Manchu Qing Dynasty as ruling an illegitimate despotism over the Southern Han Chinese.

⁹¹ Robert Mudie, *China and its Resources, A Notice of Assam* (London: Grattan and Gilbert, 1840), p. 86.

⁹² Harrison, *China*, p. 23.

⁹³ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 227.

The Chinese Character and the Opium War

There is a vast body of English and Chinese-language literature on the significance, events and narratives of the First Opium War.⁹⁴ As the focus of this thesis is on Chinese migration over a period that includes the war, it is essential to consider the impact of the War on the idea of the Chinese character and its implications for Chinese migration in the British Empire. Moreover, Jardine Matheson had a key role in the events that led to the war and in supporting British intervention in defence of their economic interests. Through the post-war era and up to the 1970s historians had generally accepted the Victorian discourse of the Opium War as a ‘clash of civilizations’ – in the British mind between liberal Britain and authoritarian China; in the Chinese mind between imperialist Britain and a vulnerable, weak and declining Chinese state.⁹⁵ More recently, as a number of key works have added nuance to our understanding of Chinese opium culture, the broader historical narrative of the war has become more complex.⁹⁶ A key factor in this development has been increased access to Chinese archives.⁹⁷ This section will draw on two key points raised from recent literature on the Opium War. First, Lovell suggests that the idea of a clash of civilizations is too simplistic and does not account for the variety of motivations and responses to war on both sides.⁹⁸ The diversity of the authors discussed in this chapter – whether missionaries, merchants, military or colonial officials – means that there was no single perspective or interpretation of the war. For example, whilst merchants were primarily motivated by economic interests, more abstract notions, such as honour, were also significant.⁹⁹ Second, an important point for migration history raised by several of Christopher Munn’s publications, is that the outcome of the Opium War (particularly the Treaty of Nanking and the cession of Hong Kong) meant the

⁹⁴ For a good overview of events or the background context see Lovell, *The Opium War* or Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*.

⁹⁵ For the clash of Civilizations literature see: Hsin-pao Chan, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Gerald Graham, *The China Station: War and Diplomacy, 1830-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Tan Chung, *China and the Brave New World: A study of the Origins of the Opium War* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1978); J. Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (New York: Harcourt, 1975).

⁹⁶ Specifically see the work of Frank Dikotter, Lars Laaman, Zhou Xun and Yangwen Zheng. M. Booth, *Opium: A History* (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1996); Chris Feige and Jeffrey A. Miron, ‘The Opium Wars, Opium Legalization and Opium Consumption in China’, *Applied Economics Letters*, 15 (2008) pp. 911-913.

⁹⁷ Specifically Lovell, *The Opium War*, has drawn on the work of Mao Haijian; Polachek, *The Inner Opium War*; A. Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Zhu Xiehan, *Yapian zhanzheng shihua [A Narrative of the Opium War]* (Beijing: Social Research Press, 2000).

⁹⁸ Lovell, *The Opium War*, pp. 333-336.

⁹⁹ This point on differing motivations has been discussed in Melancon, *Britain’s China Policy and the Opium Crisis*, p. 1; Melancon’s work emphasises the importance of honour and contests the more economically determined view of British Opium War policy put forward by David Owen, *British Opium Policy in China and India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

British faced the challenge of colony building on the China coast itself.¹⁰⁰ This colony would, in turn, attract vast numbers of migrants from mainland China and act as a point of onward migration. Hong Kong would also become a new Anglo-Chinese contact zone. As colonial discourse in early Hong Kong was grounded in the context of the war, Opium War-era discussions of Chinese character had a significant impact on perceptions of Chinese migrants in the 1840s. Importantly, the way that the ‘opening’ or ‘modernization’ of China was presented as a necessary act of liberation, justified both the aggression of the Opium War and the increased circumvention of the Qing prohibition of emigration.

The First Opium War generated a great deal of debate and analysis of China in Britain. The *Canton Register* figured heavily as a source of information during the war years.¹⁰¹ Between 1839 and 1843 a total of 261 *Canton Register* articles were quoted at length or reprinted in British newspapers, compared with lower figures over the 1830s as a whole.¹⁰² Over the same period 165 articles were quoted or reprinted in Australian titles.¹⁰³ These articles were generally concerned with updates on the progress of the war, for which ‘Latest News from China’ or ‘Military News’ were popular titles.¹⁰⁴ These stories were focused on the success or failure of military operations as opposed to the wider rhetoric of the war or debates about the Chinese character. References to ‘Jardine Matheson’ over the same period were largely concerned with trade news and shipping information, showing the resilience of the firm’s clandestine networks during the suspension of trade.¹⁰⁵ The opium trade itself was a hotly contested subject, with critics in the religious and industrial communities suggesting that the drug was immoral or preventing Chinese capital from being used to purchase British manufactures.¹⁰⁶ These attacks were mitigated by the fact that by the end of the war even Alexander Matheson – then acting as head of Jardine Matheson in Hong Kong – did not support opium legalization as he feared taxation and increased competition from smaller firms.¹⁰⁷ Metropolitan commentators often combined criticism of the opium trade with criticism of Qing officials. In an article titled ‘The Opium Trade and its Defenders’ the *Leeds*

¹⁰⁰ Munn, *Anglo-China*; Christopher Munn, ‘The Chusan episode: Britain’s Occupation of a Chinese Island, 1840-46’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (January, 1997), pp. 82-112.

¹⁰¹ Though, strictly speaking, the period of the First Opium War ran from the seizure of opium in March 1839 until August 1842 the entire period from 1839 to 1843 has been examined.

¹⁰² See page 93 for a comparison with reprints in the 1830s. Data collecting using a digital search for “Canton Register” in the British Newspaper Archive between 1 January 1839 and 31 December 1843 with results controlled for duplicate results (<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>), accessed 27 September 2015.

¹⁰³ Data collecting using a digital search for “Canton Register” in the National Library of Australia Newspaper Archive between 1 January 1839 and 31 December with results controlled for duplicate results (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>), accessed 27 September 2015.

¹⁰⁴ *The Era*, 15 November 1840.

¹⁰⁵ Le Pinchon, *China Trade and Empire*, pp. 46-48.

¹⁰⁶ Edward LeFevour, *Western Enterprise in Late Ch’ing China: A Selective Survey of Jardine, Matheson & Company’s Operations, 1842-1895* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 13.

Mercury concluded that though the trade was ultimately undesirable, ‘our conduct should be regulated not by considerations of right and wrong, but by our own estimate, whether true or false, of the honesty and fair dealing of the other party’.¹⁰⁸ In essence, the Chinese authorities were presented as so corrupt that the actions of British merchants were negligible by comparison.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1839 there was a growing sense that an aggressive opening of China would benefit a range of connected British interests. Considering James Matheson’s economic interests in such an opening it is unsurprising that his 1836 *Present Position and Prospects* repeatedly made the case for a more aggressive diplomatic policy towards China and ultimately military intervention. As well as critiquing the ‘submissive’ policy of the EIC, Matheson described William Napier’s death in 1834 as ‘Yet Unavenged!’ and asked ‘are the Chinese so formidable in a warlike point of view?’¹⁰⁹ Alongside Matheson’s aggressive rhetoric, religious motivations coalesced with economic interests in advocating for a China that was more open to outside influence.¹¹⁰ Gutzlaff’s aptly named 1838 work *China Opened* began by bemoaning that ‘whilst civilization has advanced with rapid strides ... it was not able to overstep the barrier which an anti-national Chinese policy created around the Celestial Empire’.¹¹¹ Despite Gutzlaff’s opposition to opium consumption, his missionary practice in China was reliant on the opium trading system of Jardine Matheson and he relished the prospect of a more open relationship with China, which ultimately depended on British aggression.¹¹² Shared self-interest effectively unified different actors and institutions, with different motives and priorities, in broad support of Britain’s China policy. The various ways in which China could be opened – to British commerce, to Christianity, to emigration – were all contingent on the success of Palmerston’s attack on China in bringing significant change.

The belief that the Chinese were predisposed to submit to despotism was a key component of the construction of the Chinese character. This was further cemented by accounts of the war. At the beginning of his *Narrative of the Late Proceedings and Events in China* John Slade asked ‘what is the ruling passion of the Chinese nation? A love of peace and submission to rulers?’¹¹³ An example that was commonly deployed to highlight Chinese

¹⁰⁸ *The Leeds Mercury*, 7 January 1840. Some groups in Britain were critical of the opium trade, most notably industrialists who felt that the trade absorbed Chinese capital that would otherwise be spent on British exports.

¹⁰⁹ Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*, pp. 12-59.

¹¹⁰ Stanley, ‘Commerce and Christianity’, pp. 71-94.

¹¹¹ Gutzlaff, *China Opened*, p. 2.

¹¹² See the Assam experiment in chapter three for more detail on how the opium smuggling system facilitated Gutzlaff’s missionary activity.

¹¹³ John Slade, *Narrative of the Late Proceedings and Events in China in 1839* (Canton: Canton Register Press, 1839), p. 1; Slade was editor of the *Canton Register* when his *Narrative* was published.

despotism was the treatment of women, specifically footbinding. Discussions of the treatment of women was a common theme in British imperial discourse more broadly as liberal thinkers utilised developing notions of humanitarianism to denigrate subject cultures.¹¹⁴ Captain Arthur Cunynghame's account of *Service in China* and Robert Mudie's *China and its Resources* both highlighted footbinding as an example of Chinese despotism and barbarism.¹¹⁵ Mudie was particularly critical of the gender-power relationship incarnate in the footbinding process and how it made Chinese women 'helpless dependents upon the other sex'.¹¹⁶ Mudie did qualify his concern for the rights of Chinese women by explaining that contemporary European women 'often exercise too much authority'.¹¹⁷ In broad constructs of otherness, for example in twenty-first century debates about Islam and the West, denunciations of culture are often couched in terms of gender.¹¹⁸

The critique of Chinese gender roles also served as a critique of Chinese masculinity. In contrast to comparable notions of the 'effeminate Bengali', footbinding implied a viciousness and cruelty.¹¹⁹ Whilst Indian men were characterised as effeminate and Chinese men were characterised as cruel, British men were neither. Such concepts served to justify British colonial rule as the associated traits of British masculinity were suited to benevolent leadership. An example of the intersection between gender politics and imperial rule is the Indian funeral practice of Sati which, partly thanks to metropolitan pressure, was abolished in Bengal in 1829.¹²⁰ Similar humanitarian pressure groups emerged in opposition to footbinding in China in the late nineteenth century.¹²¹ Footbinding – which was a particularly effective emotional device, due to its shock value to Western observers – supplemented the wider articulation of macro-despotism of the Chinese nation with an example of micro-despotism from the Chinese domestic sphere.

The opium question was dominated by the assumption that addiction was an inherently Chinese trait. Commentators from both ends of the spectrum – that is, both critics and defenders of the opium trade – agreed that Chinese consumers would abuse opium

¹¹⁴ Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Captain Arthur Cunynghame, *The Opium War: Being Recollections of Service in China* (Philadelphia: G. B. Ziever & Co., 1845), p. 92; Mudie, *China and its Resources*, p. 9.

¹¹⁶ Mudie, *China and its Resources*, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Gender can often be examined as part of academic debate – Haideh Moghissi, and Halleh Ghorashi, (eds.), *Muslim Diaspora in the West: Negotiating Gender, Home and Belonging* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010) – but it is often also part of reactionary rhetoric against the 'other' – Bruce Bawer, *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006).

¹¹⁹ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

¹²⁰ Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 183-185.

¹²¹ Bickers, *Scramble for China*, p. 322.

regardless of European supply.¹²² Hugh Hamilton Lindsay's *The Rupture with China and its Causes* included an ardent defence of the trade by pointing to what he saw as the hypocrisy of opponents who 'do not, and dare not, interfere with the gin drinkers at home', and argued that 'opium was smoked in China long before it was introduced by Europeans'.¹²³ George Tradescant Lay, like many missionaries, objected to the opium trade and consumption on moral grounds. Lay suggested that, as a result of the trade, 'thieves of a most dexterous kind, and rogues of every description, are plentiful in China'.¹²⁴ Lay's thoughts on the Chinese demonstrate the complexities of defining the Chinese character during the war. Despite berating the 'thieves' and 'rogues', Lay also praised Chinese entrepreneurship: 'a Chinaman is a man of business, and therefore understands the value of truth.'¹²⁵ Again, Lay's discussion of the Chinese character highlights implied distinctions of class and region. The overriding theme of Opium War literature was that whilst the Chinese character did possess positive or useful traits it ultimately required liberation from its current circumstances, which encouraged despotism, cruelty, avarice and deceit.

As liberation was the prescribed route to salvation for the positive aspects of the Chinese character it followed that Chinese emigration was largely seen as positive in Opium War discourse. Mudie, as one of the most vociferous critics of the Chinese authorities, praised existing migration to the 'Oriental archipelago' where the Chinese were a 'steady and industrious people'.¹²⁶ British victory in the war was seen by many as an exciting prospect in opening opportunities for Chinese migration in the British Empire, especially with the controversial establishment of Hong Kong as a British colony.¹²⁷ A newspaper editorial in the *Essex Standard* exemplified this hope:

The Chinese Government has hitherto prevented as much as possible the emigration of the people ... The delusion is over, the veil is removed, and a current of feeling has set in which will be too strong to be restrained among so money-loving a people as the Chinese. The despotism which has hitherto directed the destinies of China has received a fatal blow.¹²⁸

¹²² Opium had been used in China for recreational purposes for centuries, see Yangwen Zheng, 'The Social Life of Opium in China, 1483–1999', *Modern Asian Studies*, 37, 1 (2003) pp. 1-39.

¹²³ Lindsay, *The Rupture with China and Its Causes*, pp. 7-22.

¹²⁴ Lay, *The Chinese as They Are*, p. 24.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 24.

¹²⁶ Mudie, *China and its Resources*, p. 138; Oriental Archipelago in this context is a reference to Southeast Asia as we conceptualise the region today.

¹²⁷ G. B. Endacott, *A Biographical Sketch-Book of Early Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), highlights some of the divergent opinions on the utility of Hong Kong as a colony.

¹²⁸ *Essex Standard*, 2 December 1842.

The ‘opening’ of China was a cause for optimism for all those interested in utilising Chinese migrant labour. The need for liberation lent a moral imperative to both the military action of the Opium War and the forcible opening of China to increased emigration.

Perceptions of the Chinese character were dictated by concepts of utility and the needs and expectations of British imperialism. As such a binary of positive and negative is of little use when examining the construction of an archetypal Chinese character. Walter Henry Medhurst connected the Chinese character to colonial labour shortages when he suggested that the Chinese should migrate to ‘New Holland’ where ‘millions of acres await their assiduous and energetic cultivation’.¹²⁹ Not only did an awareness of imperial needs feed into discussions of China and the Chinese, but those looking to solve imperial labour shortages also looked to China. In a similar way to Medhurst’s connection of China with Australia, key figures in Australian colonization, such as John Dunmore Lang, Robert Gouger and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, had similarly identified China as a possible solution to Australia’s labour shortages (Lang would later emerge as one of the first European Australians to defend the civil rights of Chinese immigrants).¹³⁰ The developing perceptions of a Chinese character over the 1830s and through the Opium War, whether concerned with issues like opium consumption or footbinding, ultimately informed and intensified the demand for Chinese labour in British colonies.

The Mechanics of Dissemination: Newspapers, Print Culture and China

As new concepts of a shared Chinese character developed over the 1830s, new networks for the dissemination of these concepts also emerged. Various mechanisms were used to share knowledge about China and the Chinese. Crucially, firms like Jardine Matheson became key facilitators of information exchange. The China coast newspaper, the *Canton Register*, was an important part of the firm’s commercial information network, and its content became increasingly broad in scope. Additionally the firm was connected to various China experts and was involved directly in the publication of numerous texts written on the China coast. Beyond publishing, the firm had connections with different metropolitan associations, politicians and networks, which it could manipulate to set the agenda for discussion of China and the Chinese. Perceptions of the Chinese character on the China coast and in Asian contact zones were not peripheral but were widely disseminated across the British Empire. Simon Potter’s

¹²⁹ Medhurst, *China*, p. 74.

¹³⁰ John Dunmore Lang, *Emigration: Considered Chiefly in Reference to the Practicability and Expediency of Importing and of Settling Throughout the Territory of New South Wales, a Numerous, Industrious and Virtuous Agricultural Population* (Sydney: E.S. Hall, 1833); Robert Gouger (ed.), *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australasia*; together with Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *Outline of a System of Colonization* (London: Joseph Cross, 1829); Chinese migration to Australia is discussed in both chapters three and five.

work on ‘press systems’, where newspaper content was of secondary importance to the methods by which information was circulated, illustrates the importance of methods of dissemination.¹³¹ The emphasis here is placed on systems of knowledge and mechanisms for transferring information to, and influencing debate in, the metropole. The collection and dissemination of information about China was not a process distinct from the Jardine Matheson’s commercial operations. Information networks developed over the 1830s were ancillary to the firm’s success.

The *Canton Register* was the brainchild of American merchant William W. Wood, who started the publication using a hand-press borrowed from Alexander Matheson (James Matheson’s nephew).¹³² The production of the newspaper was personally overseen by James Matheson during his time in China, and at the time of the first publication (8 November 1827) both of the Mathesons were partners in the firm Magniac & Co. The missionary and linguist Robert Morrison was also involved in creating content for the *Register* from an early period, providing both translations and original articles. The editorship switched frequently: from Wood to Morrison in 1828; Morrison to Arthur Sanders Keating – an Irish merchant who later challenged William Wood to a duel as a result of his personal attacks – in 1830; and Keating to the English Merchant John Slade in 1833.¹³³ Throughout these changes Matheson was a continual presence as proprietor and exerted clear editorial influence.¹³⁴ The paper’s *Price Current*, which listed import and export prices, has been identified as vital to its success amongst the merchant community at Canton.¹³⁵ However, as this letter (sent from Alexander to James Matheson the day after the first issue) demonstrates it was intended to do more than appeal to the local community or carry apolitical commercial copy:

Our newspaper is likely to take much better than we expected ... Mr Jardine has kindly subscribed for 6 copies, and is to forward 50 to his Bombay friends. He also proposes to curtail the price current, and to omit stores entirely. Dr Morrison is quite disappointed that there is little room for original matter but will, I hope, now be satisfied, as we mean, if you approve, to limit the price current in future to two pages ... There is no doubt now of the paper succeeding.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Simon Potter, *News and the British World: the emergence of an imperial press system, 1876-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹³² King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, p. 41.

¹³³ *Ibid*, pp. 131-154.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 41-44.

¹³⁵ Connell, *A Business in Risk*, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Alexander Matheson (Canton) to James Matheson (Macao), 9 November 1827, in Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p. 66.

The ‘original matter’ proposed by Morrison took the form of ethnographic articles and essays on Chinese culture, society and politics. He was clearly supported by Matheson’s suggestion that the *Price Current* be restricted in size. Correspondence between key figures in the firm reveals both an optimism for the paper’s future success and a desire to widen the scope of the ‘original matter’ to encompass more general commentary on China as well as necessary trading information.

The newspaper was started as a ‘recorder of facts’ and not a ‘vehicle for controversy’, according to James Matheson.¹³⁷ It was this aversion to controversy that led Matheson to remove the American editor Wood in February 1828 and replace him with Robert Morrison. Wood’s public criticism of the EIC monopoly was condemned by Matheson who kept the *Register’s* editorial position on the monopoly debate neutral until 1834, when the paper became openly anti-regulation and pro-free trade. The need to avoid controversy, despite its potential benefits in terms of an increased audience, was clearly demonstrated in another letter from Alexander to James Matheson: ‘I mean to disavow any connection with the paper ... The offensive paragraph will, I have not the smallest doubt, give notoriety to the paper, and gain it many subscribers in India’.¹³⁸ In spite of the acrimony with Wood, the paper’s future was viewed with optimism. Such hopes were explicitly linked to the specialist knowledge of China it could offer its audience: ‘the field for a newspaper is certainly extensive, and if the *Register* is properly conducted it may be made the most popular journal in the East’.¹³⁹ A gap in the provision of news and information about China had been identified. By making use of his connections to contemporary China experts Matheson used the *Register* to reach an audience beyond the Western Canton community. Matheson’s success was reflected by the fact that in 1850 Shanghai merchants published the *North China Herald* so that they could similarly advocate their interests.¹⁴⁰ Given the controversial and illicit activities of the firm the paper also served a more basic political purpose as it was used to advocate the firm’s economic interests over the 1830s.¹⁴¹

The different editors used distinct editorial styles: after Wood’s advocacy of free trade Morrison focused more editorial space to ethnographic information about China; Keating turned attention to the social events of the European community and utilised advertising as a form of revenue; and Slade, in the post-monopoly era, was much more factional and critical of Jardine Matheson’s rivals. All of the editors devoted space to trade issues, Chinese news and

¹³⁷ King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, p. 41.

¹³⁸ Alexander Matheson (Canton) to James Matheson (Macao), 16 November 1827, in Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p. 68.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Bickers, *Scramble for China*, p. 108.

¹⁴¹ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 55.

reprints from English-language Singaporean, Indian, European and American papers. The paper evolved as an independent journalistic enterprise to such an extent that by Slade's editorship James Matheson himself would write letters to the editor to complain.¹⁴² The development of the *Register* fitted with colonial examples of the early nineteenth century, such as India or Australia, where a 'free press' was celebrated as a symbol of British civilization.¹⁴³ This establishment of Western-style journalism reflected the burgeoning British community developing in the period before the military conflict with China. However, the newspaper's primary function was as a public relations device. With increasing professionalization the *Register* gained legitimacy, particularly in Britain, as a source of information about China.

The newspaper was affected by practical and pragmatic as well as ideological changes. The *Register's* structure and usage exhibited its evolution from a hand-pressed minor publication to a more standardised and professional commercial newspaper. The changes to issue covers between 1828, 1834 and 1841 demonstrate the evolution of the *Register* and the way in which it evolved from a disgruntled merchant's pamphlet to a serious journalistic enterprise.¹⁴⁴ There are some noticeable differences between the issues: the use of a smaller type; a new larger header and insertion of a sub-header quote; the movement of notices and adverts to the front page; the increased presence of shipping adverts; and the increased use of clear article headers. Many of the changes to the newspaper were gradual and reflected broader changes that affected the foreign merchant community at Canton. From June 1829 the *Register* was used regularly by the Chinese and British authorities to publicise official edicts and notices. From March 1830 the adverts and notices had moved from the back page to the front, from June 1830 the *Price Current* was sold separately to the *Register*. From January 1834 the larger-type header, with quote, was introduced and the paper became a weekly publication. By 1841, the sub-header was replaced by subscription information for the *Register*. The number of advertisements increased gradually, with a maximum of five per issue in 1830 increasing to nine per issue in 1832. By 1834 the structure had become more uniform and sections appeared in fixed patterns: advertisements and notices first, then news articles, then commercial remarks, then shipping news and occasionally supplementary pages. The firm and its editors consciously attempted to professionalize the *Register*. From the 1828

¹⁴² King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, p. 44.

¹⁴³ P. J. Marshall, 'The Whites of British India, 1780-1830: A Failed Colonial Society', *The International History Review*, No. 1 (February 1990), p. 32; Rebecca Wood, 'Frontier Violence and the Bush Legend: the Sydney Herald's Response to the Myall Creek Massacre Trials and the Creation of Colonial Identity', *History Australia*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2009), pp. 1-19.

¹⁴⁴ Images of these issue covers are available in Appendix A, p. 220.

issue, the design of which reflected it as a single-man, experimental publication, it evolved to a title that resembled and was at home alongside established colonial presses by the 1840s.

The *Register* successfully grew in circulation and prestige under the stewardship of James Matheson in the 1830s. The newspaper, and by extension its publishers, had indeed become ‘famous’ as evidenced by the quote proudly displayed under the header. Charles Grant – the president of the EIC Board of Control in 1833, who would be restyled Baron Glenelg in 1835 – remarked that ‘the free traders appear to cherish high notions of their claims and privileges. Under their auspices a free press is already maintained at Canton; and should their commerce continue to increase their importance will rise’.¹⁴⁵ Such recognition of the *Register* and the firm from an esteemed metropolitan statesman was a significant publicity coup. The newspaper also fulfilled a practical role as it was used by Matheson in personal correspondence to communicate information. In a letter to James Scott, Matheson wrote, ‘I have no time to advert to public affairs but, for your complete information on the subject is a series of Canton Register since the first of August’.¹⁴⁶ By 1834 the *Register* had grown to fulfil its proprietor’s hopes as a successful source of information about China for a growing audience. The debate around the 1833 Charter Act, and the resulting deregulation of the China trade, had opened up a new, larger, more informed audience for the *Register*.

The analysis of Chinese culture, society and politics was an important element of the newspaper’s editorial content from an early stage. The first issue of the *Register* suggested that the ‘want of a printed register of the commercial and other information of China, has long been felt’, and promised that ‘accounts relative to the trade, customs, and peculiarities of the Chinese, will occupy a portion of our pages’.¹⁴⁷ Considering the controversy caused by Wood’s criticism of the EIC, the focus on China and the Chinese kept the paper out of political trouble: ‘a Register of facts and occurrences is all we can pretend to. By these we hope to shew what China is, in the nineteenth century’.¹⁴⁸ Most striking was the *Register*’s coverage of a range of topics, the scope of which was well beyond that of a trade publication. The *Register* was intended to disseminate various forms of knowledge to Europe, around the Empire and the wider Anglosphere.¹⁴⁹ This ‘transculturation’, or removal of knowledge from

¹⁴⁵ *Canton Register*, 26 December 1833.

¹⁴⁶ James Matheson (Canton) to James Scott (Madras), 10 October 1834, in Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p.230.

¹⁴⁷ *Canton Register*, 8 November 1827.

¹⁴⁸ *Canton Register*, 11 February 1828.

¹⁴⁹ In this context the Anglosphere is used to unite the United States with Britain and its white-settler colonies, such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, locations with large numbers of English speakers who would have had access to the *Register* and were its potential audience. Such an approach has become increasingly common in studies of empire, see Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*; Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of people, goods and capital in the British World, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

China, reflected the growing asymmetry of power on the China coast.¹⁵⁰ As in colonial India, the mantra that ‘knowledge is power’ was increasingly applicable to Jardine Matheson as agents of informal empire.¹⁵¹

The *Register’s* editorial angle towards China was conditioned by a need to delegitimise the Qing Empire in order to justify the opium trade.¹⁵² Much of the *Register’s* content was concerned with the implications of Chinese law for the foreign community and the prejudice that Western merchants faced. In an 1828 article these issues were compounded by the linguistic debate over Chinese words for foreign residents and whether they were offensive: ‘everyone knows that in ordinary speech they use to each other ... the most contemptuous language: such as foreign devil; red bristled devil; black devil; a devil; flower flagged devil ... (to refer to) not only the poor ignorant people, but the Gentleman merchants’.¹⁵³ The idea that the Chinese did not treat foreign, and most importantly British, merchants with adequate respect was a common accusation – the inference being that Chinese restriction of trade was connected to an anti-British prejudice. This introduction to a Chinese imperial edict on the employment of Chinese linguists was typical of the *Register’s* hyperbolic tone: ‘we have to add a fourth proclamation, the terms of which are so offensive as to be too gross for literal translation in a Christian Journal’.¹⁵⁴ The dismissive attitude of Chinese officials to the wants and desires of the firm was especially hard to accept given the contemporary attitudes of civilizational superiority and hierarchy: ‘the superiority of Europeans in some of the mechanical arts, and physical sciences, does not elevate them as rational beings in the estimation of the Chinese’.¹⁵⁵

In contrast an empathetic view of the Chinese populace was articulated in the editorial copy of the 1830s. As much of the Chinese news printed in the *Register* from the *Peking Gazette* (the official bulletin of the Qing state) was concerned with stories of murder, uprisings and violence, the *Register* addressed the need to reset the balance in an article titled ‘A Moral Story’ which began, ‘we are induced to give place to the following production of a juvenile pen, which is a pleasing relief to the darker view of the Chinese character with which our pages have hitherto perhaps too much abounded’.¹⁵⁶ Such praise of the Chinese people was a feature of the *Register’s* editorial that has been overlooked by a historical focus on Anglo-Chinese conflict. Ulrike Hillemann has described how the *Register* was used ‘to justify

¹⁵⁰ Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, p. 21.

¹⁵¹ Peers and Gooptu, *India and the British Empire*, p. 5.

¹⁵² Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 83-85.

¹⁵³ *Canton Register*, 24 May 1828.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 3 October 1830.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 17 July 1830.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 20 September 1828.

their [Jardine Matheson's] breaking of Chinese law by depicting the Chinese as an immoral and cruel people'.¹⁵⁷ However, as acknowledged by the above editorial, criticisms of the Qing officials and discussion of the 'darker' proclivities of the Chinese people were consciously balanced with positive stories. Articles on 'public morals', the 'industrious habits' of the Chinese people, and the 'happiness of the Chinese', featured alongside criticisms of Chinese barbarism and the isolationist policies of the Qing.¹⁵⁸

The *Register's* first major competitor, the American owned *Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette*, was aggressively critical of both Chinese and British trade regulations.¹⁵⁹ William Wood, who Matheson had removed as editor of the *Register* in 1828, set up the *Courier* in 1831.¹⁶⁰ The paper was funded by American firm Russell & Co. and was primarily used to criticise the EIC monopoly, which was why the paper ceased publication in 1833 with passing of the Charter Act.¹⁶¹ In its short print run the *Courier* was critical of the *Register*, describing its purpose as being 'for the dissemination of those opinions which it is the policy of our contemporary to avoid'.¹⁶² For Wood there was a clear hypocrisy in the *Register's* silence on the EIC and attacks on Qing trade restrictions.

The *Courier* criticised all limits to trade, whether British or Chinese, and in the case of the China linked restrictions to trade to notions of Chinese character. It was claimed by Wood that 'no one who has any personal experience of the Chinese will deny their very powerful prejudices'.¹⁶³ These 'prejudices' thusly explained the Qing Empire's trade restrictions. Similarly, in articles titled 'Chinese Hospitality and the 'Chinese poor', criticisms of the Chinese character were commonplace.¹⁶⁴ The *Register*, with respect to both the EIC and the Chinese, was noticeably more guarded in its criticism. This changed significantly after 1833 with the closure of the *Courier*, the removal of the EIC monopoly and the introduction of John Slade as editor. Additionally, the growing economic and political clout of Jardine Matheson was reflected in the *Register's* increasingly aggressive criticism of Chinese officials and the temerity of British foreign policy over the 1830s.

Both Canton newspapers enthusiastically advocated Chinese emigration. In particular, emigration was described as a necessary solution to China's impending Malthusian crisis. An 1832 *Courier* article on the 'Chinese Poor' criticised the 'low price of wages and the overplus

¹⁵⁷ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 83. Numerous articles from the *Canton Register* are referenced Hillemann's argument, yet it is clear that the distinction between 'people' and 'state' is important.

¹⁵⁸ *Canton Register*, 19 January 1830; *Ibid*, 16 June 1829; *Ibid*, 25 March 1834.

¹⁵⁹ From April 1832 the title was simply styled the *Chinese Courier*.

¹⁶⁰ King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 46.

¹⁶² *Chinese Courier*, 28 July 1831.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 28 April 1832; *Ibid*, 23 June 1832.

of working people, famine and inundation too often contribute to overwhelm the inhabitants of whole districts of the country'.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, in 1834 the *Register* published an editorial concerned with the surplus population of China. This article criticised the Qing Empire 'which caused them [the Chinese people] to abhor foreigners and to crowd under the protection of their native leaders'.¹⁶⁶ This criticism fitted with the firm's broad critique of the tyranny of the Chinese Emperor, but was also connected to the issue of emigration. The *Register's* owners and editors hoped that 'excess finds an outlet in emigration, we fondly hope the threatening evil may be averted from this empire'.¹⁶⁷ The firm's desire for China to open its borders advocated such an opening in both directions. In the pre-Opium War context of the 1830s a warning was offered for the cost of Chinese isolationism: 'if they do not advance with the world they will sooner or later fall a sacrifice to their stubbornness'.¹⁶⁸ Invoking Western notions of political economy, such as the theories of Malthus, allowed restrictions on emigration to be seamlessly critiqued as part of a broader ideological attack on the isolationism of the Qing Empire.

The promotion of Chinese emigration also drew on knowledge of existing Chinese expatriate communities. Citing the *Singapore Chronicle*, which was a common source, the *Register* referred positively to Chinese emigration as early as 1828:¹⁶⁹

Although strictly forbidden by the law of China, is still practised to a very considerable extent; and we observe in the *Singapore Chronicle* that the arrival lately of four junks, brought upwards of 1600 passengers ... over-population, which we imagine to be the case in many parts of China, this voluntary retirement must be very beneficial ... a large majority of these people are of the class of mechanics, carpenters, blacksmiths, and various other handicrafts, they have been found of the highest use.¹⁷⁰

Again the despotism of the Chinese government was highlighted, but the migration of Chinese workers to replace Malay labour was viewed as positively on the China coast as it was in Singapore. The *Courier* concurred with the *Register*. In a multiple issue report on 'Chinese Emigrants' from 1832 the *Courier* identified Chinese overpopulation as necessitating emigration and suggested – in line with the Opium War narrative of liberation – that migration benefitted the Chinese people: 'where these emigrants are permitted to enjoy

¹⁶⁵ *Chinese Courier*, 23 June 1832.

¹⁶⁶ *Canton Register*, 7 October 1834.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ The *Singapore Chronicle* was the first English-language newspaper in Singapore (1824) and benefitted from the reciprocal re-printing of stories from the *Register*. John Crawford edited the *Chronicle* in the 1820s. For more on Singapore newspapers see C. M. Turnbull, 'The European Mercantile Community in Singapore, 1819-1867', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 10, (1969), p. 14.

¹⁷⁰ *Canton Register*, 9 August 1828.

their rights of property and personal liberty, no fault it to be found with them, they are obedient, frugal, temperate, and industrious'.¹⁷¹ This view of emigration further reflects the separation of the Qing Empire from the Chinese people, and underlines connection of this separation to the view of an industrious and economically productive Chinese character. As conflict with Chinese authorities intensified during the Opium War, the British Empire loomed increasingly large as a space in which the 'rights' and 'liberty' of the 'industrious' Chinese could be properly protected.

The evolution of the *Canton Register* between 1827 and 1833 reflected the growth of China coast publishing generally. 1833 signalled change for the *Register* in two ways. First, John Slade was installed as editor. Slade was much more independent and controversial than his predecessors. Second, the removal of the EIC monopoly had eliminated the first rival publication the *Chinese Courier*. Both the independence of Slade and removal of the EIC created opportunity for more adversarial journalism. For example, in 1834 an advert was taken out by James Innes in order to 'refute slanders' made against him in the *Register*.¹⁷² The installation of William Napier as the Superintendent of the China Trade provided most of the copy for the 1834 issues, which centred on Napier's appointment and subsequent diplomatic expedition. By 1834, the *Register* had risen to prominence as a respected English language source of information about China.

Though the *Courier* ceased publication in 1833, another newspaper rival emerged in 1835: the *Canton Press*.¹⁷³ The *Press* was funded by Jardine Matheson's main rivals – the British merchant house of Dent & Co.¹⁷⁴ The fact that the *Courier*, *Register* and the *Press* were so closely tied to the large merchant houses operating in Canton meant that editorial on China was heavily reflective of the interests of the foreign trading community. Indeed, Lucy Brown's work on Victorian news suggests that early titles were not necessarily seen as conduits for news but were more concerned with participation in public debate.¹⁷⁵ In the case of the *Register* and the *Press*, commercial competition between the firms was reflected in acrimonious and divisive editorial content. Similarly, Simon Potter has outlined how early colonial newspapers were markedly more concerned with the owner's political interests than later, revenue driven titles.¹⁷⁶ These titles aimed to bring European and world news to the attention of the China coast's international merchant community, but given that the Canton

¹⁷¹ *Chinese Courier*, 29 September 1832 and 6 October 1832.

¹⁷² *Canton Register*, 25 February 1834.

¹⁷³ This was because the removal of the EIC monopoly in 1833 rendered the title redundant. Also, the editor, Wood, had fled Canton to pursue a relationship with the niece of a prominent American merchant.

¹⁷⁴ King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁵ Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 276.

¹⁷⁶ Potter, 'Webs, Networks and Systems', p. 630.

trading community was so small (with only thirteen foreign factories, employing a handful of ‘foreigners’), the intended audience for these newspapers lay elsewhere.¹⁷⁷

Given Matheson’s hopes that the *Register* would become ‘the most popular journal in the east’ the newspaper’s imperial impact was the main measure of its success. With British merchants in the Straits Settlements, India, Britain, and across the Empire financially invested in the China trade the interest in China coast titles was widespread.¹⁷⁸ That the tiny foreign population of Canton supported two English language titles simultaneously for all but two years of the ‘first period’ of China coast publishing suggests a considerable overseas audience.¹⁷⁹ The importance of the China trade to commercial interests in the metropole was undeniable, with the customs revenue of China produce being sixteen percent of Britain’s total in 1830. Subsequently British newspapers reprinted articles from the China newspapers as they did from Indian titles or respected journals like the *Repository*.¹⁸⁰ Figures 2.2 and 2.3, which are based on an analysis of digital newspaper databases, show the number of articles reprinted annually from the *Canton Register* and *Canton Press* by British and Singaporean newspapers.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Blake, *Jardine Matheson*, p. 21.

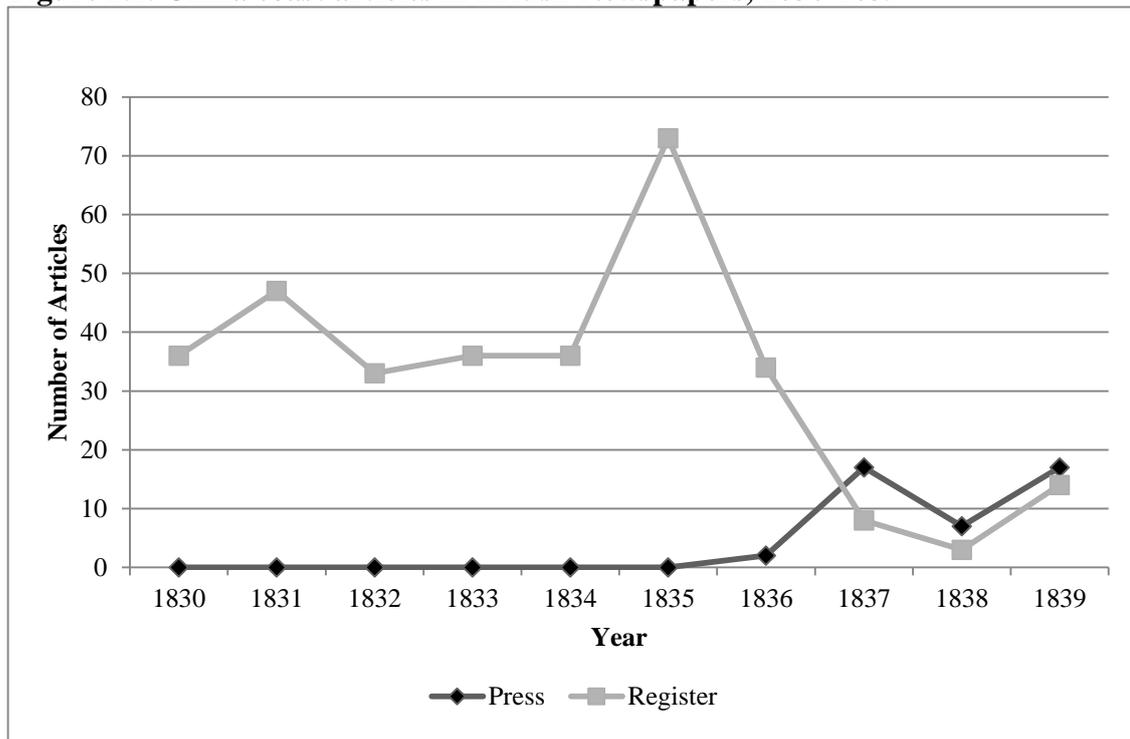
¹⁷⁸ Alexander Matheson (Canton) to James Matheson (Macao), 16 November 1827.

¹⁷⁹ The ‘first period’ is defined as 1827-1844 by King.

¹⁸⁰ Lawson, *The East India Company*, p. 157.

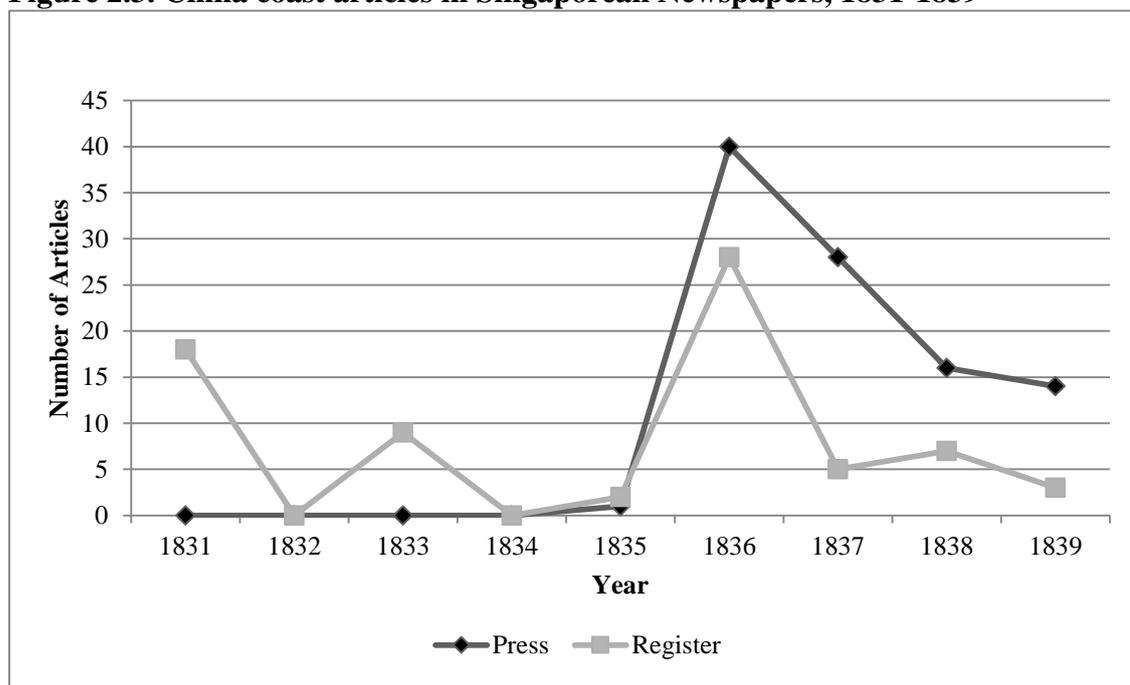
¹⁸¹ Data collecting using a digital search for “Canton Register” and “Canton Press” in the British Newspaper Archive (<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>) between 1 January 1830 and 31 December 1839, and the National Library of Singapore Newspaper Archive (<http://newspapers.nl.sg/>) between 1 January 1831 and 31 December 1839, with results controlled for duplicate results, accessed 27 September 2015.

Figure 2.2. China coast articles in British Newspapers, 1830-1839



Source: British Newspaper Archive (<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>).

Figure 2.3. China coast articles in Singaporean Newspapers, 1831-1839



Source: National Library of Singapore Newspaper Archive (<http://newspapers.nl.sg/>).

The fluctuation within Figures 2.2 and 2.3 can be attributed to several factors. The China trade was relatively stable, and consequently less newsworthy in Britain, between 1835 and 1839. Furthermore, articles that were second reprints in provincial titles, largely from Indian

or London newspapers, cannot be detected.¹⁸² Whilst these are crucial qualifiers about what the data can demonstrate, the graphs are important as they show an impressive reprinting and consumption of China coast copy in both a colonial and metropolitan context. For two titles, one of which was only published for half the period, to amass 171 reprints in Singapore and 363 reprints in Britain over the 1830s is significant and reflects a reach beyond the China coast. This type of reprinting was not unique to the China coast. Similar trends are also visible in Beals' work on the reprinting of Australian titles in the Scottish press.¹⁸³ By comparison articles from the *Sydney Gazette*, a premier carrier of colonial news from New South Wales, were reprinted 600 times in Scottish newspapers between 1803 and 1842. Alan Lester and Christopher Holdridge have identified these 'inter-colonial' dialogues as vital to the transmission of narratives for specific interest groups.¹⁸⁴ The reprinting of the *Canton Register*, which served as a vehicle for the promotion of Jardine Matheson's business interests, can be compared to the reprinting of South African newspaper titles as a means of disseminating and articulating the South African settler narrative in Britain and the Empire.

The *Press* and *Register* were rival publications – Dent & Co. made particular use of the *Press* to criticise James Matheson personally – yet they agreed on the broad angle of Britain's China policy and in their views of China and the Chinese.¹⁸⁵ The *Press* was vehemently pro-free trade from its establishment in 1835, much like the *Register* was after the fall of the EIC monopoly in 1834, and similarly advocated progress towards trade liberalisation and the Westernisation of Chinese society.¹⁸⁶ These rival titles disagreed on some issues, such as what form British regulation of the trade should take, but shared a common view of Qing despotism and backwardness, which was reflective of the broader mercantile frustration with the Chinese authorities. As both firms' economic interests became increasingly threatened by Chinese regulations in the 1830s their criticism of Chinese despotism became more vociferous. The rhetoric of liberation, which was integral to the construction of a Chinese ethnic character and useful to advocates of Chinese emigration, was consequently emphasised.

¹⁸² The graphs also do not account for hard copies of newspapers sent to either country.

¹⁸³ M. H. Beals, 'The Role of the Sydney Gazette in the creation of Australia in the Scottish Public Sphere', in John Hinks and Catherine Feeley (eds.), *Historical Networks in the Book Trade* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015), p.2.

¹⁸⁴ Alan Lester, 'British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 54 (2002), pp. 24-48; Christopher Holdridge, 'Circulating the African Journal: The Colonial Press and Trans-Imperial Britishness in the Mid Nineteenth Century Cape', *South African Historical Journal*, No. 62 (2010), pp. 487-513.

¹⁸⁵ King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 46.

Jardine Matheson and the Control of Information

In addition to the *Canton Register*, Jardine Matheson was also integrated into broader information networks. The firm was central to multiple publications that popularised stereotypes about the Chinese as an ethnic group and set out to define an archetypal Chinese character. As has already been discussed in this chapter, the missionaries Robert Morrison and Charles Gutzlaff, who were some of the most prolific China experts of the 1830s, were intimately connected to Jardine Matheson as employees. Morrison edited the *Register* after the departure of William Wood, and Gutzlaff was employed as a linguist on the firm's opium vessels.¹⁸⁷ Many of Jardine Matheson's business connections also published newspapers, journals or periodicals that carried information on China. Figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 show the links between the firm and China publishing in the 1830s:

¹⁸⁷ R. G. Tiedemann, 'Gutzlaff, Karl Friedrich August (1803–1851)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54362>, accessed 27 September 2015]; R.K. Douglas, 'Morrison, Robert (1782–1834)'.

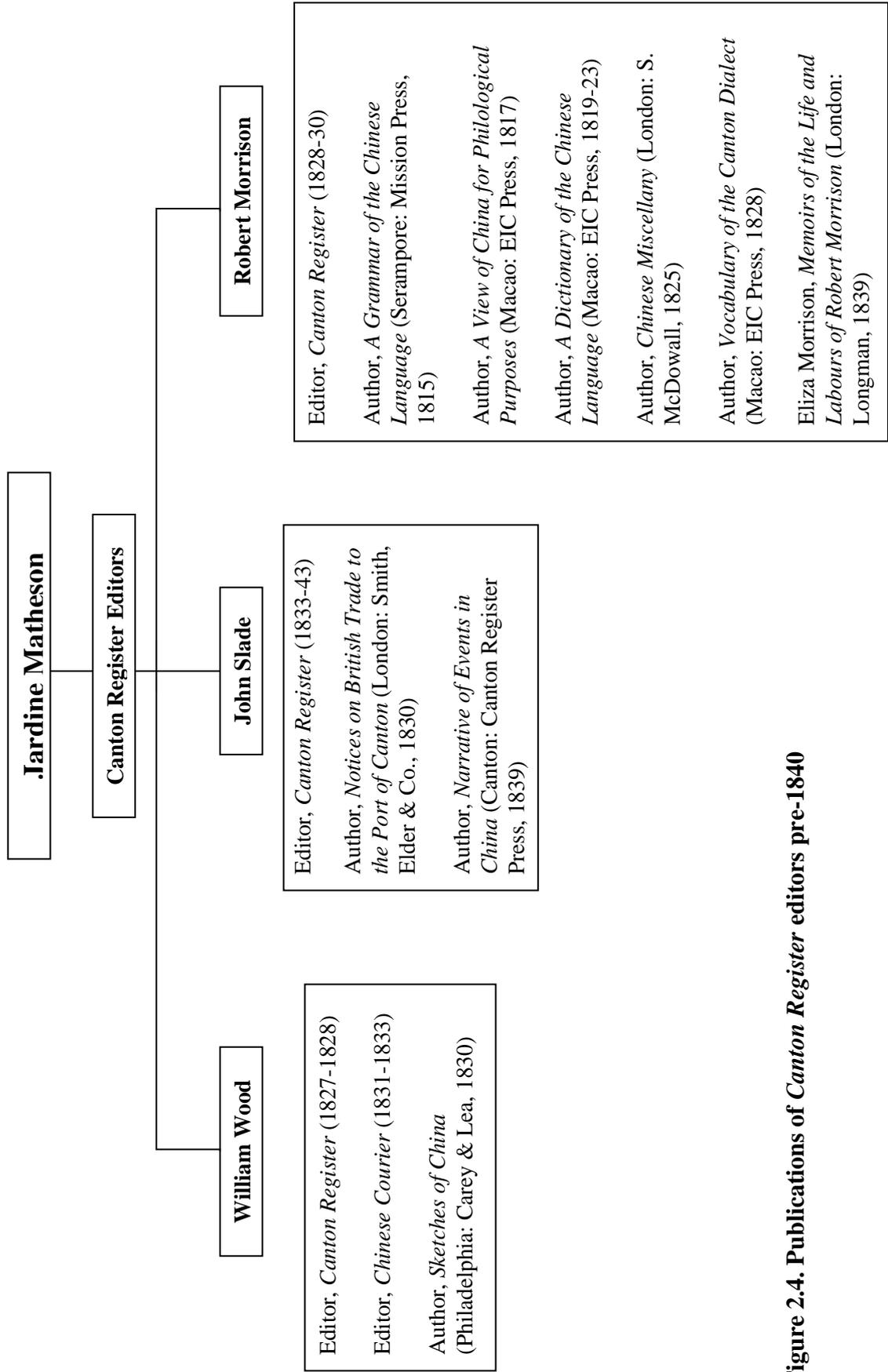


Figure 2.4. Publications of *Canton Register* editors pre-1840

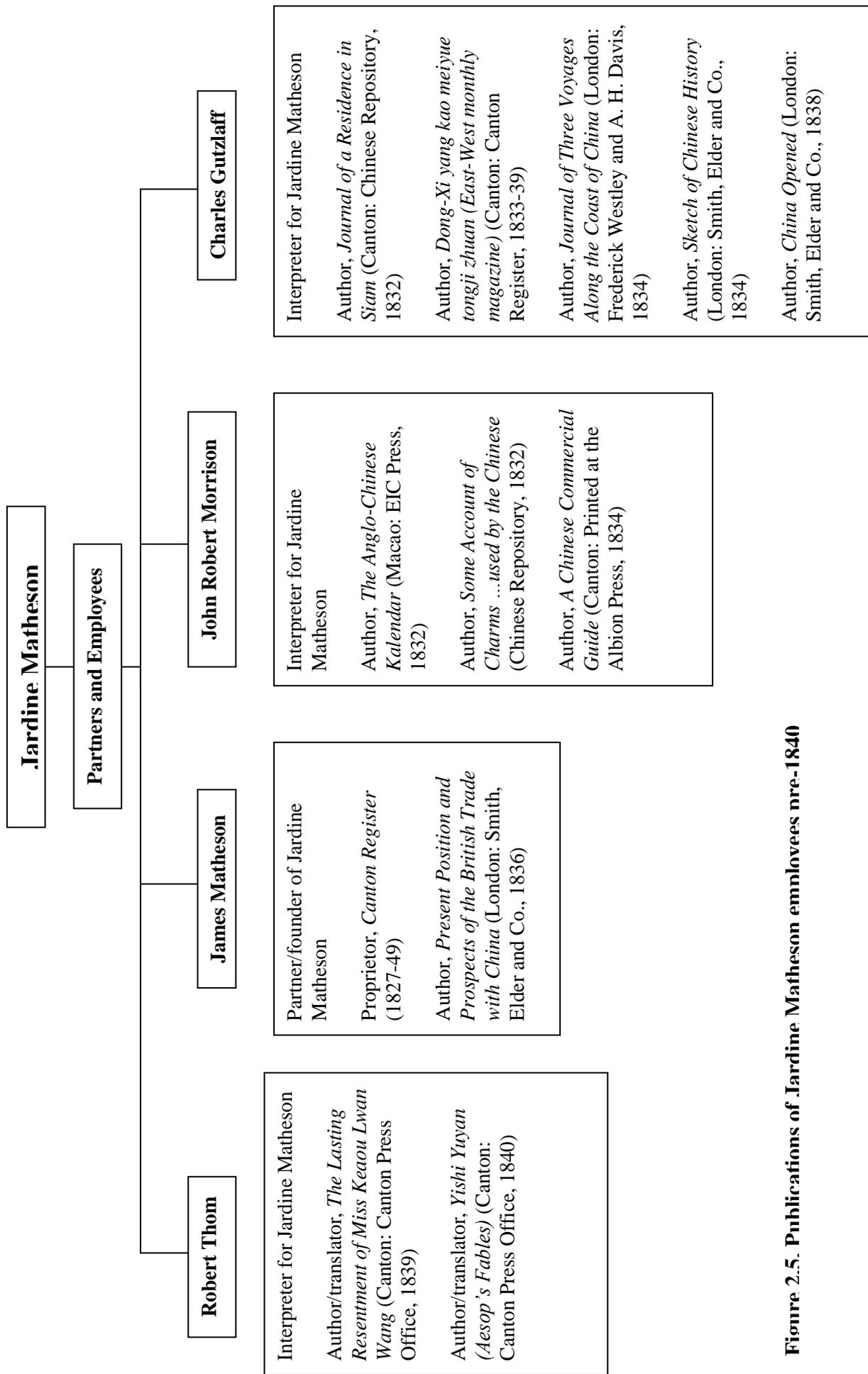


Figure 2.5. Publications of Jardine Matheson employees pre-1840

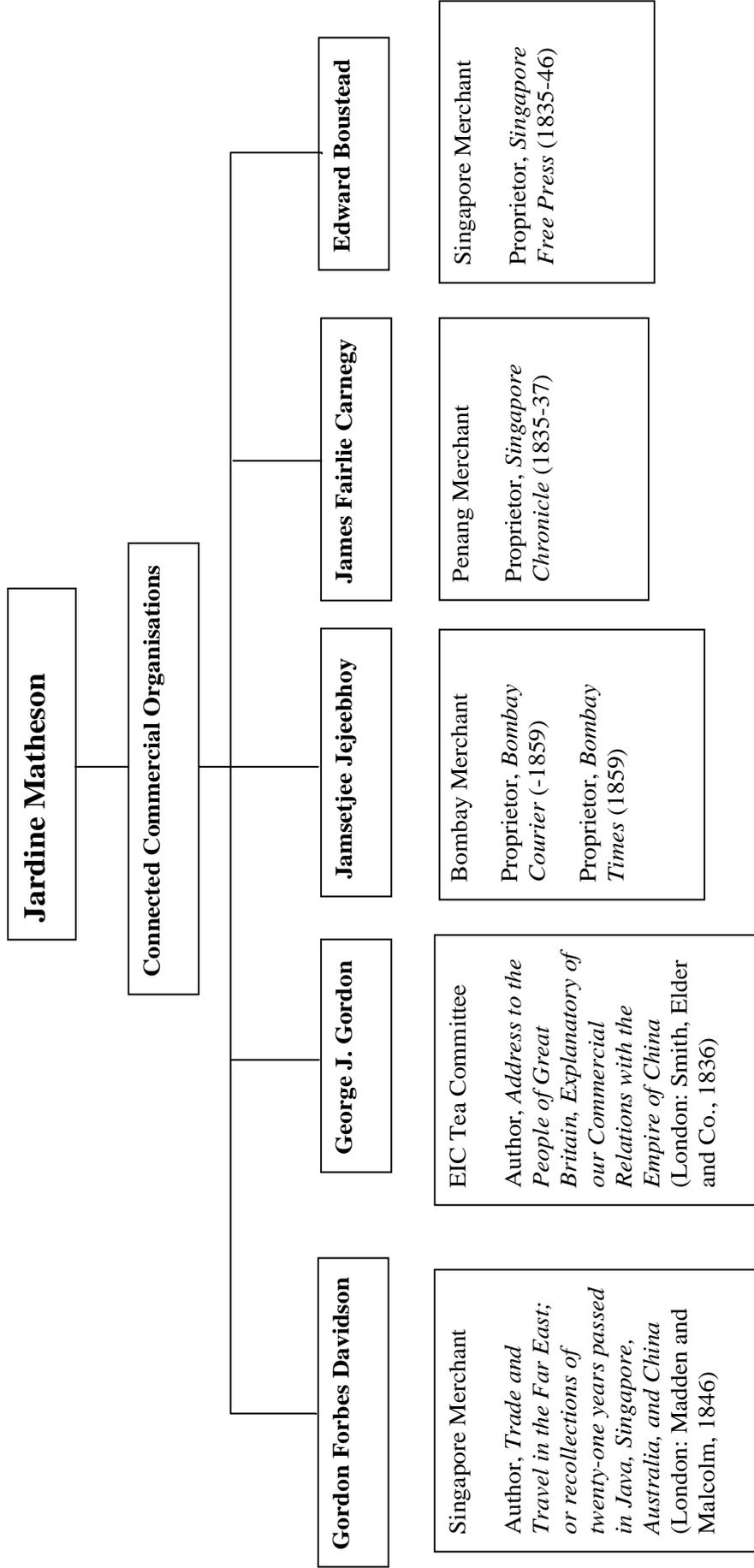


Figure 2.6. Publications of merchants connected to Jardine Matheson pre-1840

Through these networks Jardine Matheson were connected to some of the most prominent Western authorities on China.¹⁸⁸ The term ‘network’ is deployed here, as opposed to ‘system’, to reflect that the connection that the firm had with these individuals were often multi-faceted and bi-lateral. The firm had a different power relationship with an independent trader like Gordon Forbes Davidson than it had with a wealthy business partner like Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, yet its economic interests were defended in both *Trade and Travel in the Far East* and in the *Bombay Courier*. It must be stressed that the networks presented are not exhaustive or definitive. They neglect the numerous articles by heads of the firm, such as William Jardine and Alexander Matheson who both had publishing credentials. They also neglect the personal relationships and aligned interests they had with China publishing rivals, such as Lancelot Dent. Furthermore, it was common for prominent China coast authors to be connected. For example, the American missionary Elijah Bridgman collaborated regularly with Gutzlaff as editor of the *Chinese Repository*. Though many of these authors wrote widely and independently of the firm, these networks demonstrate the volume of titles that were either directly controlled by the firm or were published by individuals or organisations with aligned interests. Figures connected to the firm through these networks were largely critical of the Qing Empire and advocated, like Charles Gutzlaff, the ‘opening’ of China.

In some cases the firm had direct control over the activities of China experts and facilitated or funded their research and writing. A letter from Gutzlaff to James Matheson in 1834, demonstrated the role Matheson played in the book publishing process. Gutzlaff, working on an opium clipper on the China coast for the firm, gave Matheson specific instructions to publish his *General Description of China* through the firm’s London agent Thomas Weeding at the earliest possible time.¹⁸⁹ The firm also had an important involvement in Chinese language publishing. William Jardine paid for the publication of Gutzlaff’s *Dong-Xi* as part payment for his interpreting work on the firm’s opium vessels.¹⁹⁰ Gutzlaff also distributed this Chinese language magazine – which brought news of Western science, geography, government, and history for a Chinese audience – during his voyages along the China coast. Perhaps most significantly, given Jardine Matheson’s economic interests, Gutzlaff published texts titled *Outlines of Political Economy* and *Treatise on Commerce* in

¹⁸⁸ In figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 individuals have only been connected to publications they owned, edited or authored – contributions to other titles, such as John Robert Morrison’s contributions to the *Chinese Repository* or *Canton Register* are not included. The listed occupations relate to their relationship with Jardine Matheson specifically, for example Gutzlaff could alternatively be described as a missionary, an author or a British official, but his employment with Jardine Matheson was primarily as a translator.

¹⁸⁹ Charles Gutzlaff (Lintin) to William Jardine (Canton), 2 July 1834, in Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p.218. Thomas Weeding had acted as agent for William Jardine’s private trade as early as 1802.

¹⁹⁰ Chen, ‘An Information War Waged by Merchants and Missionaries at Canton’, p. 1711.

Chinese in 1840, both of which advocated free and open markets.¹⁹¹ Similarly, during Robert Morrison's editorship of the *Canton Register* he saw the dissemination of information into China as important as the acquisition of knowledge: 'were instructive papers and books, printed in Chinese, they would no doubt gradually find their way to every part of the Empire ... and convey new ideas, calculated to benefit every country of Eastern Asia'.¹⁹² Such English to Chinese publications formed part of what Songchuan Chen, in his work on the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (which was active in Chinese language knowledge dissemination from 1834 onwards in China), has called an 'information war'.¹⁹³ Jardine Matheson were heavily involved in this 'war' over following decades. For example, Scottish missionary James Legge's translations of the Chinese Classics, which were published through the 1860s, were also subsidised by the firm.¹⁹⁴ The firm's involvement in publishing on China in the 1830s was widespread, combining direct ownership of the *Register* and specific firm-funded publications, as well as more surreptitious associations. Jardine Matheson were not only connected to several contemporary China experts, but their assistance enabled certain China experts. As a result of these associations, the firm's interests were heavily reflected in contemporary discourse on China.

Defence of the firm's economic interests in the 1830s provided the rationale, particularly for James Matheson, for such an involvement in publishing. After the removal of the EIC monopoly the firm advocated a European-style diplomatic relationship with the Chinese government, a relaxing of Chinese trading regulations and, ostensibly, the liberalisation of the despotism that oppressed the Chinese populace.¹⁹⁵ Jardine Matheson, as opium merchants, were regularly targeted by Chinese government edicts prohibiting their trade, and this fed into a sense of victimhood at the hands of Chinese authorities. In a *Register* article titled 'Seizure of a European', the editorial concluded that 'we trust by the conviction on the part of the Chinese government that British subjects are no longer to be insulted and treated like children with impunity'.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, on his return to Britain, Matheson lamented how foreigners had to deal with 'ignominious surveillance and restrictions'.¹⁹⁷ As the Chinese officials aimed to curtail the opium trade – which was Jardine Matheson's main income – it was in the firm's economic interests to present Chinese trade restrictions alongside broader critiques of the Qing tyranny. Attempts to control the opium trade were equated with

¹⁹¹ Paul B. Trescott, *Jingji Xue: the History of the Introduction of Western Economic Ideas into China, 1850-1950* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), p. 23.

¹⁹² *Canton Register*, 16 August 1828.

¹⁹³ Chen, 'An Information War Waged by Merchants and Missionaries at Canton', p. 1706.

¹⁹⁴ Lutz, *Opening China*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁵ Keswick, *The Thistle and the Jade*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ *Canton Register*, 27 May 1834.

¹⁹⁷ Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*, p. 3.

resistance to Christianity, freedom of movement, the rights of women and the expansion of legal trade. This was particularly important for the firm as it meant that the blame for poor British export sales could be attributed to the regressive Chinese authorities. Opium merchants faced increasing opposition from British industrialists, who saw the opium trade as absorbing Chinese purchasing power and capital to the detriment of British manufacturing exports.¹⁹⁸ It was in the firm's economic interest to portray the Qing Emperor's legal edicts as despotic and against the natural laws of humanity. The firm's connection to the publishing network of China experts was not coincidental. Jardine Matheson both offered unparalleled access to China and had a vested interest in supplementing the criticism of the Qing Empire that became a significant narrative of writing on China in the 1830s and 1840s.

Jardine Matheson's Political and Commercial Connections

In addition to Jardine Matheson's publishing connections, their commercial and political links ensured that their narrative of Western and Chinese victimhood at the hands of the despotic Qing Empire was also visible in British political discourse in the 1830s. Due to their perceived expertise on China and the China trade, the opinion of members of the firm was sought in the metropole. William Jardine and Alexander Matheson, as well as other notable Canton merchants, were called to give evidence to the 1840 *Select Committee on the Trade with China*, which had been appointed in a direct response to Commissioner Lin Zexu's seizure of British-owned opium.¹⁹⁹ Through the 1830s the firm had been represented in London by their London sister firm Magniac, Smith & Co., as well as the veteran Whig MP John Abel Smith.²⁰⁰ An even more direct connection to parliament came from the positions taken by prominent members of the firm after their time on the China coast. After returning to Britain, William Jardine was elected as Whig MP for Ashburton in 1841.²⁰¹ Upon Jardine's death in 1843, James Matheson ran for, and won, Jardine's seat and subsequently sat on the 1847 *Select Committee on Commercial Relations with China*.²⁰² Throughout the 1830s and 1840s the firm was well connected with the political elite in London, and no relationship

¹⁹⁸ LeFevour, *Western Enterprise in Late Ch'ing China*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on the Trade with China*, 1840 (359). This Select Committee was specifically a response to the 'Petition of Merchants interested in the Trade with China', who were able to leverage their grievance against 'Her Majesty', and therefore bring the British state into the dispute, as the opium had been surrendered to the Superintendent Charles Elliot.

²⁰⁰ Jacob M. Price, 'Smith, John Abel (1802–1871)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25854>, accessed 27 September 2015].

²⁰¹ Keswick, *The Thistle and the Jade*, p. 24.

²⁰² Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on Commercial Relations with China; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index*, 1847 (654).

exemplified this more than the connection they established with the statesman Viscount Palmerston.

As Foreign Secretary for most of the 1830s, Palmerston was instrumental in determining British policy towards China. The first meeting between the firm's partners and Palmerston, engineered by John Abel Smith, took place in 1835 when James Matheson returned to Britain with the widowed Lady Napier.²⁰³ In light of the diplomatic failure and death of the first Superintendent William Napier in 1834, Matheson urged an aggressive stance towards the Qing Empire. At this meeting Matheson was unsuccessful in convincing Palmerston to take military action in defence of the interests of British subjects at Canton.²⁰⁴ William Jardine, who was travelling to London as British opium was seized by Commissioner Lin in March 1839, had a private meeting with Palmerston to advise on the best course of a British attack.²⁰⁵ Histories of the firm have suggested that Jardine 'persuaded' or 'instructed' Palmerston to attack China.²⁰⁶ Conversely, texts looking more generally at Anglo-Chinese relations have suggested Jardine's role has been overstated and that Palmerston had developed a plan of attack weeks before the meeting.²⁰⁷ As acknowledged by Palmerston himself, the advice of Jardine was crucial to Palmerston's military planning. Jardine advised Palmerston on the necessary size of naval force and the strategic advantages of seizing Hong Kong – information which would later be acknowledged as essential by Palmerston.²⁰⁸ Jardine would also prove useful to Palmerston in his evidence to the Select Committee on Trade with China, on which Palmerston sat.²⁰⁹ The firm, as demonstrated by the Palmerston meeting, was seen as a vital point of information on China by both British legislators and senior statesmen.

Beyond the firm's direct political links Jardine Matheson were also integral to new commercial networks and organisations developing in the 1830s, which were designed to articulate the interests of China trade merchants as a collective. Over the 1830s Chambers of Commerce were set up by merchants across Asia: in Canton (25 August 1834), Bombay (22 September 1836), Madras (29 September 1836), Singapore (8 February 1837) and Ceylon (25 March 1839).²¹⁰ Given the prominence of Jardine Matheson in Canton's foreign merchant

²⁰³ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence Relating to China*, 1840 (223).

²⁰⁴ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*, p. 214.

²⁰⁵ Keswick, *The Thistle and the Jade*, p. 24.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 24; Connell, *A Business in Risk*, p.32.

²⁰⁷ Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis*, p. 103; Frederic Wakeman Jr., 'The Canton trade and the Opium War', in Dennis Twitchett and John Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, Vol.10: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part 1* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 194.

²⁰⁸ Le Pinchon, *China Trade and Empire*, p. 43; Endacott, *A Biographical Sketch-Book of Early Hong Kong*, p. 158. This intelligence inadvertently made Jardine an unofficial founder of colonial Hong Kong, though Palmerston would later describe the colony as a 'barren rock'.

²⁰⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on the Trade with China*.

²¹⁰ Anthony Webster, 'The strategies and limits of gentlemanly capitalism: the London East India agency houses, provincial commercial interests, and the evolution of British economic policy in South and South East Asia

community it is of little surprise that the firm was instrumental in the formation and coordination of these organisations. James Matheson was elected as the first president of the Canton Chamber of Commerce in 1834, a role to be taken on by several heads of the firm over subsequent decades.²¹¹ The purpose of the Chamber evolved over time as it was formed initially as a ‘medium of communication between the British merchants and their superintendent’ but was reformed in 1836 as a General Chamber of Commerce ‘to protect the general interests of the foreign trade with China’.²¹² Merchant houses also looked to exert political pressure at the centre of policy formation in London, which the Chamber of Commerce attempted through correspondence and collaboration with metropolitan East India and China Associations.²¹³

In connection with increased mercantile collaboration, the 1830s also saw new developments in the various East India and China Associations across Britain. Such Associations had long existed – importantly lobbying against the EIC monopoly at the renewal of the Company’s charter in 1813 – but the start of the 1830s, and the upcoming Charter Act, saw increased activity from these groups.²¹⁴ Yukihiisa Kumagai’s work on the anti-monopoly campaign has highlighted how John Crawford, with his experience in Asia and political and commercial connections, was influential in both the policies supported and lobbying methods used by these Associations.²¹⁵ But the China trade merchants were not solely reliant on returned representatives such as Crawford. Prominent China merchants could also contact these groups directly. In 1834, following the death of William Napier, James Matheson wrote to the Glasgow East India Association advocating a show of British strength against the Chinese.²¹⁶ The London East India and China Association, formed in 1836, served as an example of the firm’s connections to these lobbying groups.²¹⁷ The London Association, which was established for the ‘protection of the general interests of the trade with the East

1800-50’, *Economic History Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (2006), p. 757; Ian Nish, ‘British Mercantile Cooperation in the India-China Trade From the End of the East India Company’s Trading Monopoly’, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (September 1962), p. 75.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

²¹² *Chinese Repository*, Vol. VI (1838), p. 44.

²¹³ Nish, ‘British Mercantile Cooperation in the India-China Trade’, p. 80.

²¹⁴ Webster, ‘The strategies and limits of gentlemanly capitalism’, p. 749; Kumagai, *The Lobbying Activities of Provincial Mercantile and Manufacturing Interests*.

²¹⁵ Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly*, pp. 93-113; See chapter one for more on Crawford.

²¹⁶ James Matheson (Canton) to Glasgow East India Association, 11 December 1834, in Minutes of the Glasgow East India Association, Incoming Correspondence (1835-6), MS 891001/7 (Glasgow City Archives).

²¹⁷ Nish, ‘British Mercantile Cooperation in the India-China Trade from the End of the East India Company’s Trading Monopoly’, p.84.

Indies and China'. Many of the members of the first provisional committee also featured in the correspondence and accounts of the firm (Table 2.1):²¹⁸

Table 2.1. Committee members of the LEICA featured in Jardine Matheson Archive.

| Featured in Correspondence and Accounts | Featured in Correspondence | Not Featured |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Archibald Hastie | Sir George Larpent | John Horsley Palmer |
| William Scott | Samuel Gregson | Robert Small |
| William Lyall | James Malcolmson | Charles D. Bruce |
| James Walkinshaw | John Cryder | William Edmund Ferrers |
| Thomas Weeding | William Crawford | J. H. Gledstanes |
| | John Scott | John Fraser |

Source: Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University Library).

Beyond the eleven committee members who were connected personally or commercially with the firm, Thomas Weeding and William Lyall were of particular importance. Weeding had been a business partner of William Jardine since 1817 and Lyall was connected to James Matheson as a member of Lyall, Matheson & Co.²¹⁹ Furthermore, the London Association, like the firm, also relied on John Abel Smith as a connection to Palmerston and imperial policy making.²²⁰ The close connections the firm had with the London Association reflect how the interests of the two were largely aligned. As Webster has discussed, such associations pressured the British state to obtain open access to the China market as relations deteriorated over the 1830s.²²¹

Importantly, such connections also existed between the firm and the provincial pressure groups. Table 2.2 shows the committee members of the Glasgow and Liverpool East India Associations (1829) who feature in the Jardine Matheson correspondence and accounts:

²¹⁸ *London East India and China Association* (London: Dinmore, 1836); Correspondence and accounts from Jardine Matheson Archive, Cambridge University Library (<http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD/GBR/0012/MS%20JM>), accessed 27 September 2015.

²¹⁹ Le Pinchon, *China Trade and Empire*.

²²⁰ Nish, 'British Mercantile Cooperation in the India-China Trade from the End of the East India Company's Trading Monopoly', p. 85.

²²¹ Webster, 'The strategies and limits of gentlemanly capitalism', p. 756.

Table 2.2. Committee members of GEIA and LEIA in Jardine Matheson Archive

| Glasgow East India Association | Liverpool East India Association |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Kirkman Finlay | Thomas Barclay |
| James A. Anderson | Robert Benson |
| William P. Paton | William Earle |
| John Wright | John Garnett |
| Alexander Graham | George Grant |
| John Fleming | A. Melly |
| William Graham | William Potter |
| John May | William Ward |
| James Oswald | John Yates |

Source: Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University Library).²²²

Jardine Matheson were directly connected to members of each of these provincial trade organisations. These political and commercial connections underline the variety avenues that the firm could manipulate to exert a metropolitan influence.

For the British merchant firm on the China coast the newspaper was just one part of the ‘information war’. There were various methods for contributing to imperial discourse, which ranged from direct publication; to the funding of publications; to building relationships with China experts; liaising with politicians; and through advocacy in Chambers of Commerce and East India and China Associations. Many of these connections were contingent on personal networks. As Tamson Pietsch’s work on the British academic world has shown, personal friendships and acquaintances between specialist imperial actors facilitated trans-imperial and trans-national information networks.²²³ Members of the firm were also tied to close familial networks with prominent Scottish landowners, who not only supplemented the firm with educated young recruits but were also able to exert metropolitan political influence.²²⁴ By definition, the fact that Jardine Matheson were connected to multiple, intertwined networks meant that they had impact and input into discussions of the Chinese character. The firm both supported the work of China experts and the senior partners of the firm came to be recognised and identified as experts themselves.

²²² Of 18 (Glasgow East India Association) and 43 (Liverpool East India Association) total committee members in 1829.

²²³ Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, networks and the British academic world, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 6.

²²⁴ See Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world*, for more on the importance of specifically Scottish networks in the British Empire.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Jardine Matheson were vitally important in terms of generating and disseminating ideas about the Chinese character in the 1830s, both on the China coast and in Britain. These ideas and perceptions fed into a wider promotion of Chinese migrant labour. This is not to say that the traits ascribed to the Chinese were uniformly accepted – as the multiplicity of ideas and their inherent contradictions illustrate – but that the general concept that Chinese people would thrive if freed from despotism lent itself to the promotion of Chinese emigration into the British Empire. It was in the interests of missionaries and merchants alike to present the Qing Empire as a despotic entity from which liberation – either spiritual or economic – was necessary. The consequence of this rhetoric of liberation was the inevitable emigration of such a ‘money-loving a people as the Chinese’ to British colonies.²²⁵

What was particularly significant about these ideas is how, through Jardine Matheson, they came to be popularised in English language publishing on China and influenced Britain’s China policy. As we saw in chapter one, the importance of ‘expert’ status on Chinese issues acted as vehicle for particular ideas about the Chinese as an ethnic group. It would be an exaggeration to state that Jardine Matheson were committed to articulating ideas about Chinese migrants specifically. However, the firm’s anti-Qing narrative did confirm certain perceptions of Chinese character, which in turn were invoked by those who promoted Chinese migration as a solution to labour shortages in the British Empire. Even when emigration was not explicitly invoked, it was still assumed to be part of the broader opening that needed to take place. For example, the innate, entrepreneurial tendencies of the Chinese people were inhibited by both trading restrictions on foreign merchants and controls on migration. Similarly, China’s large population was used to both criticise the Qing as ineffective and to advocate emigration as a pre-emptive solution to the predicted humanitarian crisis. Whilst Jardine Matheson primarily invested in the dissemination of information to further their own economic interests, discourse on the necessity and desirability of Chinese emigration and Chinese labour was affected by discussions of China over the 1830s.

What were the practical ramifications of these ideas about the Chinese character? The next chapter will outline the movements of Chinese emigrants to new imperial destinations in the 1830s. Not only did Jardine Matheson speak the rhetoric of Chinese liberation from despotic Qing governance, they also facilitated the movement of Chinese labourers and artisans from southern China to British colonial possessions. The firm were opening China even before they enlisted the military assistance of the British state. Over the 1830s their

²²⁵ *Essex Standard*, 2 December 1842.

opium distribution network offered unparalleled access to areas of southern China that had previously been controlled by the Chinese junk trade. Jardine Matheson were instrumental in creating new migration systems to new destinations. The demand for migrant labour was driven by the economic needs of individual colonies and the existence of Chinese migration systems that already existed across Southeast Asia. Moreover, such schemes were emboldened by the belief that Chinese migrants possessed an innate ethnic character that was predisposed to thrive under British governance.

Chapter Three: Assam and Sydney: Experiments with Chinese Labour, 1833-1839

Introduction

Perceptions of a Chinese character, one that was suited to provide a colonial labour force under British governance, had been constructed in the pre-existing contact zones of Canton and Singapore. But what were the applications of the Chinese migrant labour beyond the limits of contact zones on the China coast or in Southeast Asia? Whilst many historians have grappled with the commercial and political aspects of Anglo-Chinese relations in the 1830s, far less has been written on migration as form of exchange in this period. In particular, in spite of the wealth of historical literature written on the firm, no study has examined in detail the role that Jardine Matheson played as a facilitator of Chinese migration in the British Empire.¹ This chapter will focus on Chinese migrations into the British Empire during the period of increased Anglo-Chinese diplomatic tension in the 1830s.

Examining new experiments with Chinese labour migration reveals the continuing construction of the Chinese character as a useful tool for colonial production. Chinese migrants were identified as particularly desirable in different colonies that required skilled and unskilled, cheap and free labour. The focus here is on the role that Jardine Matheson played in expanding Chinese migration beyond existing systems in Southeast Asia to new destinations. Chapter two revealed how the firm drew on systems of expert knowledge and helped to formulate images of a simultaneously virtuous and duplicitous Chinese population force that, under British instruction, could act as a colonial labour force in lieu of European settlers. This chapter will trace attempts to replicate the Anglo-Chinese success story of Southeast Asia through experiments with Chinese migration into India and Australia.

Whilst Assam and New South Wales were very different contexts, they were both extensions of existing systems of Chinese migration. Histories of the mass-migration era, from the 1850s onwards, have been identified as distinct from Chinese migration into British colonies in Southeast Asia.² Migration to locations outside of British colonial control, like Java and Siam, and under British control, like Singapore or Penang, has been treated as unique and fundamentally separate process from migrations into 'white men's countries'.³ This chapter will treat Chinese migration into the wider British Empire as an evolutionary process. Migration to Assam and New South Wales expanded and built upon existing

¹ Elizabeth Sinn has discussed the role of the firm in trading goods that were consumed by expatriate Chinese communities. This is examined in chapter five.

² For a thorough overview of the historiography of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia see Lockard, 'Chinese Migration and Settlement in Southeast Asia Before 1850', pp. 765-781.

³ Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia*.

movements of Chinese labour. Given that new systems of migration either relied directly on existing systems for supply or attempted to replicate existing systems, Chinese migration to new imperial destinations cannot be studied in isolation. Jardine Matheson, a transnational merchant firm, connects such disparate locations as the China coast, Singapore, Assam and New South Wales – all previously examined separately. The commonality between Chinese immigration to these locations, which has been obscured by their divergent geo-political contexts, has been neglected.

Both case studies examine the movement of Chinese migrants outside established Southeast Asian parameters. The first case study is an analysis of tea planting experiments in Assam, Northeast India, in the 1830s. In particular, the role of Jardine Matheson in procuring labour is examined. The importance of the firm's existing opium distribution networks as a system of recruitment will be demonstrated. Second, Gordon Forbes Davidson's migration scheme to New South Wales in the late 1830s is examined. Whilst Davidson's scheme failed, the discussion and debate it stimulated provides an insight into perceptions of Chinese migrants and the impact of Davidson's formative experiences. This will demonstrate the connection between intra-Asian migration and migration into the white settler dominions of the British Empire. Without the existence of historic migration systems to Singapore it is unlikely that these subsequent colonial experiments with Chinese labour would have taken place. Davidson's failure also emphasises the importance of Jardine Matheson's commercial connections in successfully procuring labour for Assam. Examining these experiments will underline the desirability of a Chinese ethnic character and the expansion of Chinese migration to new areas of the British Empire to meet changing labour demands. Colonial authorities identified both indigenous Assamese and Australian populations as candidates for replacement by industrious Chinese migrants. However, Chinese migrant communities also began to be critiqued and stratified in new colonial contexts. Not only did this lead to a confirmation of certain ideas about the Chinese ethnic character, it also influenced the formation of new ethnic hierarchies as Chinese migrants were compared with different indigenous communities. Ultimately these case studies demonstrate how ideas about Chinese labour and ethnicity developed in different colonial settings in the 1830s. Jardine Matheson's networks and expertise were essential to these experiments with Chinese labour.

Jardine Matheson and the Assam Experiment

The 1830s were marked by British fears about the future supply of tea from China.⁴ Politicians and tea merchants worried that an over-reliance on a single producer that lay outside direct colonial authority would leave Britain's tea supply, and therefore Britain's economy and the EIC's profitability, at risk.⁵ Consequently, the discovery of wild tea plants in the Northeast Indian region of Assam provided scope for British-owned tea production and an opportunity to move away from commercial reliance on China. The drawback, as has been pointed out by Jayeta Sharma, was that China and tea were 'synonymous' and metropolitan consumers would be suspicious of Indian tea.⁶ This section will deal with one of the solutions that was offered to this conundrum: the recruitment of Chinese tea cultivators to work on tea plantations in Assam.⁷ Sharma's work *Empire's Garden*, as well as Antrobus' much earlier narrative history, have been the main scholarly texts to document this experiment with Chinese labour in India.⁸ These texts offer a detailed insight into the transformation of Assam under British rule, but the focus on the development of the Assam region itself has shed little light on how Chinese labourers were recruited. Scrutiny of the process by which these specialist cultivators were procured will provide a deeper understanding of developing commercial networks and racial hierarchies in the British Empire in Asia in the 1830s. The resources of Jardine Matheson were crucial to the recruitment and transport of Chinese tea cultivators for the Assam experiment.

In histories of Anglo-Chinese relations and the Opium Wars Jardine Matheson have been commonly depicted in the guise of drug dealer, war monger or free trade advocate.⁹ The firm's position as a facilitator of emigration has been overlooked. In particular, studies that have examined the firm's multiple roles in the transfer of goods, capital and information have omitted the movement of Chinese labour through the firm's shipping arrangements. The essential role that Jardine Matheson's opium distribution network played in the recruitment of skilled labour indicates the transformation of the mechanisms of Anglo-Chinese commercial relations that had taken place with the rise of the country traders. This points to the wider significance of the EIC Charter renewal of 1833 and the consequent proliferation of

⁴ British concern over maintaining access to Chinese markets in the 1830s has been discussed in depth in Carroll, 'The Canton System'; Gao, 'Prelude to the Opium War?'; Melancon, 'Peaceful Intentions'.

⁵ Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 143.

⁶ Jayeeta Sharma, 'Lazy Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (November, 2009), p. 1289.

⁷ This was only one possible solution, other sources of labour from different regions of India were later used.

⁸ Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (London: Duke University Press, 2011); H. A. Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company, 1839-1953* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable Ltd., 1957).

⁹ A good overview of the range of Jardine Matheson's commercial activities is Connell's *A Business in Risk*.

unregulated private British commercial expansion on the China coast.¹⁰ The ‘opening’ of China to new private firms was broadly supported by the British state, though it was not uncontested by imperial and metropolitan contemporaries.¹¹ The historical significance of the Opium War has led to the oversimplification of the role of firms like Jardine Matheson in the expansion of British imperial and commercial interests in Asia. The recruitment of tea cultivators for Assam demonstrates the different aspects of Jardine Matheson’s operations on the China coast, which have been neglected in existing scholarly work.¹²

Jardine Matheson were heavily involved in two stages of recruitment for the Assam plantations. First, the opium voyages that Charles Gutzlaff and George Gordon undertook along the China coast in 1834 were used to extract tea cultivators and seeds. This was followed by the recruitment of tea cultivators by James Matheson personally in 1839 and the subsequent recruitment under the Assam Company. The recruitment of Chinese tea cultivators in the 1830s highlights the importance of Jardine Matheson’s commercial network and expertise in the development of new resource pools, which would be significant in ensuring the future profitability of the Indian government.¹³ The firm’s primary concern was extracting Chinese capital for its own benefit through the opium trade, but its operations also allowed for the extraction of skilled labour, plant resources and specialist knowledge from areas of China that lay beyond the reach of Britain’s official imperial structures. The Assam tea plantations also acted as a new contact zone in which racial hierarchies were constructed and tested. As has been discussed by Jayeeta Sharma, the ‘civilized’ Chinese tea cultivators juxtaposed the ‘savage’ Assamese natives in the colonial mind-set.¹⁴ This was no means a simple binary as the attitudes towards Chinese cultivators were informed by a sense of mistrust and a fear of deception. These narratives of ethnic hierarchy were not unconnected from the recruitment of labour but were contingent on the supply of ‘genuine’ Chinese tea cultivators from Jardine Matheson. The recruitment of Chinese tea cultivators from the China coast in the 1830s fed into both the economic development of British imperialism in Asia and the ideologies of racial hierarchy that were used to justify colonial control.

As early as 1788 Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, wrote to the EIC regarding the introduction of tea cultivation to India. Banks also gave Lord Macartney a list of

¹⁰ See Yukihiisa Kumagai, *Breaking into the Monopoly* for an overview of the campaigns to remove the EIC monopoly of the China trade.

¹¹ *Ibid*; This is particularly evident in the failed Napier expedition of 1834.

¹² Though many texts have discussed the firm in depth none have addressed Jardine Matheson’s role in facilitating Chinese emigration, see Connell, *A Business in Risk*; Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants*; Blake, *Jardine Matheson*; Keswick, *The Thistle and the Jade*..

¹³ Following the 1833 Charter Act the EIC was no longer a commercial organisation, yet it retained its position as a governmental institution.

¹⁴ Sharma, *Empire’s Garden*.

Chinese plant seeds to collect on his ill-fated embassy and was instrumental in establishing British interest in botanical knowledge transfer from China.¹⁵ Attempts to begin the experimental cultivation of tea in Assam did not begin until the Tea Committee was established by the EIC in January 1834 under the direction of William Bentinck, Governor-General of India.¹⁶ The ‘discovery’ of the tea plant’s wild growth in Assam was made by the Scottish explorer Robert Bruce in 1823, but samples of the plant were not remitted to the Indian authorities until 1831 by his brother Charles Bruce, who was an East India Company gun-boat commander in the region.¹⁷ The discovery was not widely reported in Britain until the mid-1830s, after further samples had been forwarded by Charles Bruce’s military superiors. Reports in Britain completely overlooked the role of Bruce brothers: ‘Tea plant discovered in Assam by Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Charlton, who had forwarded samples’.¹⁸ The time it took for Robert Bruce’s 1823 discovery to be confirmed and the contemporary confusion over the specific details highlights the remoteness of the Assam region, from which information, people and resources were slow to travel. The distance from Calcutta to the main station at Nazira was roughly 1000 kilometres and it took roughly two months to make the journey in one direction. The discovery of the wild tea plant was reported on the China coast in the *Canton Register* in 1835, though James Matheson was aware of the discovery from 1834 when he was first contacted by the Tea Committee.¹⁹ From Banks’ initial interest in Indian tea-growth in the 1780s it had taken fifty years for a large-scale plantation project to be undertaken, due to both the discovery of the wild plant and the precarious nature of Anglo-Chinese trading relations following the removal of the EIC monopoly in 1833.

The Tea Committee relied on the expertise of several key individuals. From 1834, Charles Bruce, in addition to his military responsibilities, took charge of the experimental plantations in Assam due to his knowledge of the region’s geography and local tribal groups. By 1836 he would have to take up the role full time at a salary of 400 rupees.²⁰ George J. Gordon was initially appointed secretary of the Tea Committee, which would oversee the operation from Calcutta. Gordon had been a long-time employee of the bankrupt Indian merchant firm Mackintosh & Co., leading Bentinck to comment that he knew ‘no one better

¹⁵ Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, pp. 126-139.

¹⁶ Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company*, p. 5; Anonymous, *Assam: a sketch of its history, soil, and productions* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1839), p. 24.

¹⁷ Of course, the idea of ‘discovery’ is a Western misnomer, local tribes had long made use of the tea plant; S. K. Sharma and Usha Sharma (eds.), *North-East India: Volume 5 Assam – Economy, Society and Culture* (New Delhi: Mittal, 2005), p. 40. Markman Ellis, Richard Coulton and Matthew Mauger (eds.), *Empire of Tea: The Asian Leaf that Conquered the World* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), p. 210.

¹⁸ *Reading Mercury*, 4 May 1835.

¹⁹ *Canton Register*, 6 October 1835.

²⁰ Captain F. Jenkins to N. Wallich (5 May 1836), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 70.

qualified'.²¹ James Matheson had worked for his uncle, who was a managing partner in Mackintosh & Co., in 1815.²² This connection was maintained in Matheson's later career as the firm feature heavily in the Jardine Matheson archive's accounts, invoices, business and private letters over the 1820s.²³ Staff members and partners also transferred between Mackintosh & Co. and Jardine Matheson's Calcutta partners Lyall, Matheson & Co., who maintained close personal and commercial links with the Canton community. Through his experience with Mackintosh & Co. Gordon was already intimately familiar with Jardine Matheson. When Gordon was despatched to source tea seeds and tea cultivators from the China coast in 1834 he was replaced by Dr Nathaniel Wallich as Secretary. Wallich was the director of the EIC's botanic garden at Calcutta and was highly regarded for his knowledge of different tea seeds and plants. Chinese tea plants had been grown in the Calcutta Botanic Garden since its formation by Robert Kyd in 1786.²⁴ Bentinck wrote to the Tea Committee in January 1834 that 'the best evidence obtainable perhaps, not only in India, but elsewhere, is that of Dr. Wallich'.²⁵ The premium placed on knowledge and expertise, whether local, commercial or scientific, was evident in the establishment of the Tea Committee and the experimental plantation. As noted by Nicholas Dirks, 'colonial knowledge both enabled colonial conquest and was produced by it'.²⁶

As employees of the EIC the Tea Committee members were well aware of the commercial benefits that would come to Indian, British and private revenues once Britain secured an imperial tea supply. The state of commercial relations with China had been a primary concern of the 1833 EIC Charter Act, which removed the Company's monopoly and oversight over the British private merchants at Canton.²⁷ The first line of the Tea Committee's 'proposition' neatly surmised their view that 'the commercial relations of this country with China have lately assumed a character of uncertainty'.²⁸ The tea trade's profitability meant its continuation was a priority for both Indian and British authorities – by the 1830s it brought £4 million per annum to the EIC and provided seven percent of Britain's public revenue in excise

²¹ W. C. Bentinck, Calcutta, (24 January 1834), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 6. Mackintosh & Co. failed in 1833, after the failure Palmer & Co through indigo speculation; Le Pinchon, *China Trade and Empire*, p. 176.

²² Le Pinchon, *China Trade and Empire*, p. 24.

²³ Jardine Matheson Archive, Cambridge University Library (<http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD/GBR/0012/MS%20JM>), accessed 27 September 2015

²⁴ Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, p. 136

²⁵ Minute by the Governor General (24 January 1834), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 5.

²⁶ Peers and Gooptu, *India and the British Empire*, p. 5.

²⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *A bill to Regulate the Trade to China and India*.

²⁸ Proposition to the Honourable Directors of the East India Company to Cultivate Tea upon the Nepaul Hills, and such other parts of the Territories of the East India Company as may be suitable to its growth. By Mr. Walker, Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 6.

duties.²⁹ The main problem with the tea trade was that its profitability was contingent on the illegal importation of opium to China by private merchant firms such as Jardine Matheson. This illicit trade was, simultaneously, the catalyst for the decline in Anglo-Chinese relations, which, in turn, threatened the continuation of the tea supply as Chinese authorities threatened to suspend trade as a response to British opium smuggling. An Indian supply of tea would circumvent China, meaning any diplomatic breakdown over opium smuggling would not threaten the lucrative tea trade.

In addition to the economic benefits of Indian tea production, the language used by Tea Committee members demonstrated an attitude of civilizational superiority that was ubiquitous in British imperial planning.³⁰ The Secretary, Wallich made the case that it was imperative to not be ‘dependent on the will and caprice of a despotic nation for the supply of one of the greatest comforts and luxuries of civilized life’.³¹ Here Wallich implied not only that the cultivation and consumption of tea was a mark of civilization, but that the Chinese authorities, as overly despotic, were especially untrustworthy. For Wallich, the future of Britain’s tea supply could not be left to the Qing Empire or Assamese tribes, but required the guidance and management of the civilized British.

The scheme for British-owned tea production in Assam faced a major hurdle: for all of the Tea Committee’s expertise they lacked experience and knowledge of large-scale tea cultivation. The Chinese monopoly of mass tea production was based on a monopoly of knowledge, which, in the words of Antrobus, was ‘guarded jealously’.³² Bringing Chinese tea cultivators to Assam to transfer such knowledge would be critical in order to bypass the restrictions of the isolationist Qing Empire. Much of Charles Bruce’s writing on the operations in Assam was concerned with learning processes from Chinese cultivators and demonopolising this specialist knowledge. His *Account of the Manufacture of the Black Tea* included lengthy dialogue and centred on practical questions such as ‘Does the Tea plant grow mostly on the mountains of China or in the valleys?’, ‘Does the Tea plant grow amongst the snow?’ and ‘How do you plant the Tea seeds?’³³ Without Chinese expertise Bruce was unable to replicate the production of tea as undertaken in China, which was crucial to the tea’s commercial success in Britain. The British public was used to consuming Chinese tea and the

²⁹ Lawson, *The East India Company*, p. 157.

³⁰ See Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, on the centrality of civilizational superiority as the guiding philosophy of imperial expansion.

³¹ Observations on the Cultivation of the Tea plant, for Commercial purposes, in the mountainous parts of Hindostan; drawn up at the desire of the Right honourable C. Grant, President of the Board of Control for Indian Affairs, by N. Wallich, Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 15.

³² Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company*, p. 30.

³³ C. A. Bruce, *An Account of the Manufacture of the Black Tea, As now practised at Suddeya in Upper Assam* (Calcutta: Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1838), pp. 6-7.

Tea Committee believed that Chinese involvement would provide the final product with a level of authenticity.³⁴ From the outset it was clear that Chinese tea cultivators could be replaced once the British public grew accustomed to the Assam brand and the cultivator's knowledge had been transferred to British managers and Indian artisans. Samuel Ball's writing, based on observation of India and China from 1804 to 1826, suggested that 'tea can be produced in India at no greater cost than China.'³⁵ Ball compared the living expenses of Indian and Chinese labourers and concluded that 'so far as the wants of the two people, and wages of labour are concerned, India possesses no small advantage over China for the successful cultivation of tea.'³⁶ Once Bruce was able to successfully manage a large-scale tea plantation, with enough workers skilled in the art of Chinese-style tea cultivation, the future of the tea production in Assam would be Indian labourers under British instruction. Ultimately the need for Chinese tea cultivators in Assam was driven by the short term needs of the Tea Committee and of Bruce, on the ground, in Assam.

The desire for Chinese labour was also under-written by colonial concepts of ethnic hierarchy. For John Crawford, the very existence of a Chinese tea industry and absence of an Indian tea industry was indicative of Chinese superiority. Writing in 1829, Crawford determined that the Chinese 'character' was 'peculiarly adapted to the tedious manipulation indispensable to the preparation of tea'.³⁷ By contrast Crawford lamented that 'not one pound of tea has ever been grown in our Indian possessions' in spite of the similar climatic conditions and the wild growth of the tea plant.³⁸ This failure was ascribed to the 'unskillfulness of the Indians in almost everything approaching to manufacturing' in contrast to the 'superior skill of the Chinese'.³⁹ The cultivation of tea not only required specialist knowledge, but it implied skill and consequently a degree of civilization. The lack of a pre-existing Indian tea industry was interpreted by colonial observers as an indictment of Indian civilization more generally. Importantly Crawford's opinion was that of a well-respected and experienced expert, whose opinion had currency in both India and Britain.

Whilst Crawford criticised 'Indians' generally, the population of Assam were specifically criticised by British observers. Jayeeta Sharma's work has discussed how certain Assamese tribes were perceived, by colonial authorities, to be lazy and opium addicted.⁴⁰ Opium, like tea, grew naturally in the region and addiction in Assam was seen to be such a

³⁴ Sharma, 'Lazy Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry', p. 1291.

³⁵ Samuel Ball, *An Account of the Cultivation and Manufacture of Tea in China* (London: Longman, 1848), p. 335.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 342.

³⁷ Crawford, *View of the Present state and Future Prospects of the Free Trade and Colonisation of India*, p. 18.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Sharma, *Empire's Garden*, p. 5.

problem that private opium cultivation was banned and the Indian Government was given a monopoly of opium production in 1861.⁴¹ Charles Bruce lamented how opium ‘has degenerated the Assamese from a fine race of people to the most abject, servile, crafty and demoralized race in India’.⁴² Of course, there was an element of irony here as the Chinese, who were touted as replacement labour, were routinely stereotyped as opium addicts. As described by Trocki, ‘one of the most enduring European images of the Chinese was that of the opium wreck’, yet in discussions of Assamese addiction, this comparison was overlooked.⁴³ Not only was Assamese savagery emphasised by those on the ground, such as Bruce, but it was directly contrasted with Chinese civilization in contemporary scientific discourse. Dr John Mccosh of the Bengal Medical Service wrote accounts of the region’s typography that were reprinted in both British and colonial newspapers and journals. Writing in the *Singapore Chronicle* he emphasised how Assam was ‘thinly populated by strangling hordes of slowly procreating barbarians, and allowed to lie profitless in a primeval jungle’, but not completely cut off from enterprising ‘Chinese merchants, [who] by a short land journey across these mountains convey [sic] their merchandise on mules’.⁴⁴ The mountainous border between Assam in Northeast India and Yunnan in Southwest China was constructed as a line between savagery and civilization. This division fits within the broad tradition of state formation in Southeast Asia discussed by James C. Scott. The Assamese ‘hill tribes’ were viewed as a ‘barbarian periphery’ that would either have to be changed or removed in order for the British to achieve their aim of commercial tea production.⁴⁵ In the 1830s context the Chinese were not only necessary as tea cultivators with specific expertise, but were expected to provide an industrious, skilled and compliant labour force in contrast to supposed native laziness and resistance.⁴⁶

It was decided by the Tea Committee that the initial experiment in tea production would require a limited number of Chinese experts ‘employed to instruct the natives’ under the direction of Charles Bruce in Assam.⁴⁷ Governor-General Bentinck had travelled to Malacca and Singapore in 1829 to ‘observe the Chinese character’ and had been impressed.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Sharma, ‘Lazy Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry’, p. 1297. The peculiar irony being that Chinese opium addiction had maintained the economic viability of the tea trade.

⁴² George Thompson, *Report of a Public Meeting and Lecture at Darlington ... on China and the Opium Question* (Durham: J. H. Veitch, 1840), p. 13.

⁴³ Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Singapore Chronicle*, 6 August 1836; *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 26 (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1838).

⁴⁵ Scott, *The Art of not Being Governed*, pp. 1-40.

⁴⁶ Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, p. 128.

⁴⁷ W. H. Macnaughten, Esq., Secretary to the Government of India, to the Tea Committee (18 April 1836), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 63.

⁴⁸ Douglas M. Peers, ‘Bentinck, Lord William Henry Cavendish- (1774–1839)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2161, accessed 27 September 2015]; Sharma, *Empire’s Garden*, p. 35.

Again, this elevation of ‘character’ underlines the concepts of hierarchy that factored into the Tea Committee’s decision making. Bentinck later outlined his plan that an agent should be appointed to obtain Chinese tea cultivators and samples of Chinese tea plants.⁴⁹ As a result of Bentinck’s instructions, Tea Committee Secretary George J. Gordon proceeded to the China coast in June 1834 to procure Chinese tea seeds and tea cultivators.⁵⁰ With Gordon on an exploratory mission, Bruce preparing a tea plantation in Assam, and Wallich overseeing the whole operation from Calcutta, the Assam tea experiment began.⁵¹

George Gordon and Charles Gutzlaff on the China Coast

Despite the experiment being overseen by the EIC, the early stages of Chinese recruitment were entirely reliant upon the expertise and resources of Jardine Matheson. Charles Gutzlaff – the Prussian missionary, linguist and ethnographer, who had been employed by William Jardine as an interpreter since 1829 – was appointed as George Gordon’s guide.⁵² Gordon headed, via the *Water Witch*, to Canton in 1834 with instructions to find out information about Chinese tea manufacturing as well as to acquire seeds, plants and tea makers.⁵³ Gordon was sent to Canton with ‘a recommendation from this Government to the British authorities at Canton ... to procure for Mr Gordon any facilities or protection that may be found necessary’, and to fund his endeavours an account for ‘20,000 to 25,000 dollars placed at his command’.⁵⁴ That quality, rather than quantity, was required was also emphasised in Gordon’s instructions: ‘it will be Mr Gordon’s principal duty to bring round a select, rather than numerous, body of planters; men qualified to conduct every operation connected with the production of good tea’.⁵⁵ It was suggested to Gutzlaff that the project need not exceed fifty recruits.⁵⁶ The emphasis on Chinese seeds and plants reflected Wallich’s belief, which turned out to be unfounded, that the key to success was the use of the best quality Chinese seeds.⁵⁷ This was contrary to the priorities of Bruce in Assam. He required the recruitment of trained cultivators urgently as he had a limited knowledge of how to proceed.⁵⁸ With mixed priorities and instructions Gordon was especially reliant on the expertise of Gutzlaff on the China coast.

⁴⁹ *Assam*, p. 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 24-26.

⁵² Tiedemann, ‘Gutzlaff, Karl Friedrich August (1803–1851)’; Charles Gutzlaff has been used in this thesis as opposed to his other titles: Karl Gutzlaff, Philothesinosis, Gaihan.

⁵³ Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ The Tea Committee to C. Macsween, Esq., Secretary to Government, Revenue Department (15 March 1834), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Harold H. Mann, *The Early History of the Tea Industry in North-East India* (Reprinted from the Bengal Economic Journal, 1918), p. 12.

⁵⁸ Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company*, p. 249.

Upon arrival in Canton, Gordon travelled aboard the firm's ship *Fairy* to join Gutzlaff and the opium trading vessel the *Colonel Young*.⁵⁹ The *Fairy*, which was the first ship built to the order of Jardine Matheson, was a 'package vessel' that ran between Canton, Lintin and vessels along the coast carrying intelligence, opium and capital.⁶⁰ Gordon and Gutzlaff used the firm's evolving system of opium distribution to recruit the Chinese tea cultivators and source the seed samples that Gordon required. Gordon explained in a letter to the Tea Committee how on his voyage along the coast aboard the *Fairy* he would, with Gutzlaff's assistance, 'make such arrangements for people, plants and seed, as, after personal examination of the quality of the tea produced'.⁶¹ William Jardine, whilst doing his utmost to assist Gordon's mission, expressed some concern that Gordon and Gutzlaff's venturing inland to recruit cultivators and source plants might impact upon the firm's opium operations. In a letter to Captain Rees in 1835 he suggested that extensive exploration 'may bring down the displeasure of the government Authorities on the Dealers and Boat'.⁶² Jardine Matheson's existing system of opium distribution on the China coast was essential in enabling Gordon to fulfil his instructions from the Tea Committee. The Indian authorities were outsourcing recruitment because of the firm's recognised expertise in accessing areas of the China coast ostensibly closed to the West due to the Canton system but also, crucially, the ending of its commercial activities on the China coast in the 1833 Charter Act meant that the EIC lacked the means to recruit itself.⁶³

These voyages not only allowed for the selling of opium and the extraction of labour, they also facilitated Charles Gutzlaff's prolific publishing record. As seen in chapter two, Gutzlaff became a pioneer of English language publishing on China with a range of titles describing different aspects of Chinese society and culture. He even claimed to be a naturalized Chinese subject following his adoption into the clan family of Kwo in Siam.⁶⁴ The necessities of conversion meant Gutzlaff quickly became proficient in Chinese. This led to his hiring by Jardine Matheson as an interpreter and physician on the firm's opium clippers, in exchange for which the opium fleets would offer the opportunity to preach the gospel to potential Chinese converts beyond the confines of Canton and Macao. Jardine Matheson also

⁵⁹ Mr. Gordon to Dr. Wallich (Macao), 24 July 1834, Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 30.

⁶⁰ A. R. Williamson, *Eastern Traders: Some Men and Ships of Jardine, Matheson & Company* (Hong Kong: Jardine, Matheson & Co., 1975), p. 152.

⁶¹ Mr. Gordon to Dr. Wallich (Acting Secretary to the Tea Committee), 24 July 1834, Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 30.

⁶² William Jardine, Canton, to Captain Rees, on the *Colonel Young*, (9 March 1835), in Le Pinchon, *China trade and empire*, p.244.

⁶³ Parliamentary Papers, *A bill to Regulate the Trade to China and India*; The voyages conducted by Gutzlaff and Lindsay in 1833 were the last along the China coast to be undertaken under the EIC's management of the China trade.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*; Endacott, *A Biographical Sketch-Book of Early Hong Kong*, p. 105.

funded Gutzlaff's publishing in both Chinese and English. In exchange for his work on the opium clippers the firm funded his Chinese language title *Dong-Xi yangkao meiyue tongjizhuan* (*East-West monthly magazine*).⁶⁵ Letters between Gutzlaff and James Matheson also demonstrate the arrangements made by Matheson to publish his English language books on his behalf.⁶⁶ Despite his personal opposition to opium smoking, access to the firm's smuggling network was invaluable for Gutzlaff's work in terms of both disseminating and collecting 'useful' knowledge.⁶⁷ Importantly, these different aims of the opium voyages were complementary and related. As described by Gutzlaff, the 'opening' of China by the West incorporated the diffusion of ideas about free trade and Christian theology into China as well the extraction of information and resources from China.⁶⁸ Emigration was not excluded from this as Gutzlaff also wrote about existing systems of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia as evidence of entrepreneurial Chinese subjects circumventing the Qing Empire's despotic isolationism.⁶⁹ The recruitment of Chinese tea cultivators and the acquisition of guarded knowledge was part of a broader process of opening, which would ultimately, from the perspective of missionaries like Gutzlaff, lead to the spread of Christianity in China. Gutzlaff's knowledge of the China coast, the Chinese language and existing forms of emigration made him the ideal expert to assist Gordon.

Gutzlaff and Gordon were particularly successful at obtaining tea seeds and plants from inland China. Prior to his voyages with Gordon (1834-35), Gutzlaff had been collecting information about tea production. Gutzlaff's expertise had been previously utilised on an exploratory voyage along the China coast for the EIC with the aggressive former EIC supercargo Hugh Hamilton Lindsay aboard the *Lord Amherst*.⁷⁰ Gutzlaff and Lindsay's reconnaissance on the commercial potential of China's northern ports had been endorsed by William Jardine, who recognised the 'useful information' that could be collected on such a voyage.⁷¹ In his journals of such voyages Gutzlaff gave detailed accounts of tea growth in 'Formosa', 'Fuh-chow' and 'Ke-tow'.⁷² Even before the Tea Committee's establishment knowledge of tea cultivation had been of interest. Gutzlaff's account of an exploratory voyage

⁶⁵ Lutz, *Opening China*, pp. 76-85.

⁶⁶ For example Gutzlaff's *General Description of China* was published through Jardine, Matheson & Co.'s agent Thomas Weeding, Charles Gutzlaff (Lintin) to James Matheson (Canton), 2 July 1834. For more on the firm's role in Gutzlaff's publishing refer to discussion of the firm's information network in chapter two.

⁶⁷ See Fa-Ti Fan, 'Victorian naturalists in China: science and informal empire', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 36, No.1 (March, 2003), pp 1 – 26, for more on notions of 'useful knowledge' in a botanical context.

⁶⁸ Gutzlaff, *China Opened*.

⁶⁹ Gutzlaff, *A Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China*, p. 167.

⁷⁰ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp. 48-50; Bickers, 'The Challenger', p. 141.

⁷¹ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p. 27.

⁷² Gutzlaff, *A Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China*.

in 1832 included conversations with ‘the people from the tea plantations’ which left him ‘pleased with the propriety and correctness of their answers’.⁷³

To acquire plants, seeds and cultivators Gutzlaff and Gordon made their way to the tea-producing hills of Fujian.⁷⁴ In May 1835 they led a small party up the Min River to access tea hills northwest of Fuzhou, where they were fired upon by Chinese soldiers.⁷⁵ The Tea Committee were aware of such risks when they had referred to difficulty of procuring information regarding China and tea production.⁷⁶ In extracting skilled labourers and information from outside of the limits of the Canton system Gutzlaff and Gordon were breaking multiple Chinese laws. ‘Foreigners’ were not allowed to visit the Chinese interior and required a permit to travel between Macao and Canton.⁷⁷ Similarly, the preaching and practising of Christianity and the consumption of opium were also banned.⁷⁸ For the Chinese who collaborated with Gordon and Gutzlaff on their mission the risks were even greater. Assisting foreigners in this manner, and theoretically emigration itself, carried the penalty of death. Gordon’s later writing on Anglo-Chinese relations revealed an awareness of these risks as he referred to Robert Morrison’s translation of the ‘Penal Laws of China’.⁷⁹ Gordon noted how ‘if any (Chinese subjects) are at all suspected of giving information, legal advice, or similar aid, to a foreigner, the local government immediately raises the cry of traitor!’⁸⁰ The ‘judicial murder’ of Briton Thomas Scott in 1773 was frequently referred to by Gordon as evidence of the danger that the despotic Qing Empire posed to enterprising Westerners.⁸¹ Gordon was conscious that he was largely dependent on the abilities of Gutzlaff, without whom it would ‘be quite in vain to attempt a journey of such length into the interior’.⁸² Despite Gordon’s official role as a representative of the Tea Committee he found himself dependent on the effectiveness of Jardine Matheson’s illicit operation.

Gordon wrote freely about the tea samples he gathered during his expedition with Gutzlaff, but the details of the recruitment and shipping of tea cultivators not recorded, presumably to provide anonymity. Gordon opted to recruit tea cultivators from the Bohea Hills (Wuyi Shan), a district notable for black tea production some 300 kilometres inland, after visiting several different tea districts. Gordon’s notes on the subject reveal a hierarchy of

⁷³ Gutzlaff, *Journal of a Residence in Siam*, p. 48.

⁷⁴ Lutz, *Opening China*, p. 83.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 84; Fuzhou was routinely Romanised as ‘Foochow’ or ‘Fuh-chow’ as seen in Gutzlaff’s journal.

⁷⁶ The Tea Committee to C. Macsween, Esq., Secretary to Government, Revenue Department (15 March 1834), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ Napier, *Barbarian Eye*.

⁷⁸ Chen, ‘An Information War Waged by Merchants and Missionaries at Canton’, p. 1715.

⁷⁹ G.J. Gordon, *Address to the People of Great Britain; Explanatory of our Commercial Relations with the Empire of China* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1836), p. 78.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁸² Mr Gordon to Dr Wallich (23 November 1834), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 41.

Chinese tea cultivators as he explained that ‘the inferiority of Anko tea arises from unskilful culture and preparation of the leaf ... I made, therefore, no offer to the peasantry at Twa-Be, to accompany me to Bengal as planters’.⁸³ Gordon recruited the Bohea planters through a ‘native agent’, who remained un-named, and expected the arrival of his recruits at Canton in January 1835.⁸⁴ In later letters there were references to ‘two emissaries’ hired by Gordon for the task of ‘engaging competent superintendents’ from the Bohea Hills once he had returned to Calcutta, whilst his ‘private friends residing at Canton and Macao’ finalised the arrangements.⁸⁵ The native agents and tea cultivator’s identities were omitted deliberately given Gordon’s knowledge of the risks they faced under Chinese law. This awareness is reflected by the fact that the Tea Committee offered salaries ranging between 300 and 600 rupees per month ‘according to the degree of danger they would be exposed to in entering on a contract with foreigners’.⁸⁶ Considering Bruce’s salary as head of the operation was 400 rupees per month these payments reflected the perceived value of skilled cultivators to the success of the Assam operation. By March 1835 it had been realised that the tea plant in Assam was viable and Gordon was recalled from the China coast.⁸⁷ Though an exact number is not given, Bruce’s reference to Chinese assistance within 1835 suggests the arrival of Gordon’s Bohea recruits. Gordon’s time on the China coast with Gutzlaff had been successful in furnishing him with tea plants and recruits, as well as knowledge of Chinese tea production for the benefit of the project.⁸⁸

This first round of recruitment for the Assam project (1834-1835) was not only challenging in execution but also insufficient. Many of the issues were caused by the Tea Committee’s stipulation that the project was experimental and required as few cultivators as possible, who would undertake multiple job roles. First, linguistic difference was an issue. The recruitment of cultivators from China had not accounted for translators for different regional dialects. As a result it was hard to locate translators with the necessary skills without incurring extra cost.⁸⁹ As the Tea Committee noted in 1836, ‘the dialect spoken in that part of the province of Fahkeen bordering on Kyangse, of which those people are natives, differs very materially from that spoken on the coast of the same province’.⁹⁰ The EIC was poorly resourced for such eventualities. An employee of the licence department of the police, Laon

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 42. In a bizarre aside Gordon also gave tea seeds to the widow of William Napier to plant in Scotland.

⁸⁵ Tea Committee to W. H. Macnaughton (18 September 1835), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 46.

⁸⁶ Tea Committee to W. H. Macnaughton (6 August 1836), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 79.

⁸⁷ Tea Committee (12 March 1835), Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 39.

⁸⁸ An advertisement for his 1836 book made reference to his ‘personal observation’ of China.

⁸⁹ W. H. Macnaughton, Esq. (Secretary to the Government of India) to the Tea Committee, 11 April 1836, Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 62.

⁹⁰ Tea Committee, to W. H. Macnaughton (14 April 1836), in Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 62.

Chung, was hired for the task despite being ‘inferior in point of intelligence’ to the first choice Dr Lumqua, a Chinese doctor in Calcutta whose proposed salary was deemed too expensive. Second, the cultivators hired by Gordon from the Bohea hills were black tea cultivators and not ‘practically acquainted with the peculiar process by which the green tea-leaf is prepared for the foreign market’.⁹¹ In August 1836 Bruce had discovered the wild growth of a species of green tea.⁹² A personal examination of the Assam plantations by Dr Wallich in 1836 led to the recommendation of ‘an additional number of [Chinese] planters’ and plans were made for further recruitment.⁹³ However, no further recruitment from China took place until 1839 as Bruce proceed to cultivate and manufacture tea with the aid of the Chinese cultivators who had already arrived in Assam.

James Matheson and the Recruitment of Chinese Tea Cultivators in 1839

Gordon’s recruitment missions in the mid-1830s meant that the Assam tea experiment was successful in producing a marketable Indian tea. The first batch of Assam tea arrived in London in November 1838, where it was inspected by metropolitan experts and adjudged to be of satisfactory quality. It was first auctioned (at an inflated price due to the high level of public interest) in January 1839.⁹⁴ The landing of the tea in Britain and the developing animosities with China meant that Assam tea and the Assam region was a popular topic of discussion in the British press in early 1839. In January various metropolitan and provincial titles remarked on the ‘curiosity among commercial men to the first sale of the specimens’.⁹⁵ Additionally, on 15 February, the House of Commons ordered a ‘Copy of papers received from India relating to the measures adopted for introducing the Cultivation of the Tea Plant within the British Possessions in India’ from the EIC.⁹⁶ The resulting Parliamentary Paper, which mainly comprised the correspondence to and from the Tea Committee, was published two weeks later by East India House, having been approved by Robert Gordon, the Commissioner of the Board of Control. Most significantly the Assam Company was formed at a meeting of London merchants on the 14 February 1839 with an available capital of £500,000 in 10,000 shares of £50 each and with outspoken merchant and aristocrat G. G. Larpent as its

⁹¹ Tea Committee, to W. H. Macnaughten (6 August 1836), in Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p.78.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Tea Committee (28 March 1836), in Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 58.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁹⁵ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 19 January 1839; *The Era*, 13 January 1839.

⁹⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *Tea cultivation (India). Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 15 February 1839;--for, copy of papers received from India relating to the measures adopted for introducing the cultivation of the tea plant within the British possessions in India, 1839* (63).

Chairman.⁹⁷ The privatisation of the Assam tea plantations had been planned from the outset, though the Assam Company did not take direct control of the tea plantations until early in 1840.⁹⁸

Despite the success of the Assam tea in Britain, on the ground Charles Bruce had been unhappy with the Chinese cultivators. Many of Gordon's secondary recruits had arrived in Assam dishevelled with no money – as they thought their expenses would be covered separately from their wages – and had to be compensated. Furthermore some of those recruited by Gordon from Singapore had lied about their tea-making credentials and were described by Bruce as 'headstrong and passionate'.⁹⁹ Unfortunately for Bruce, high demand and interest meant that more tea was required urgently. Consequently there was also an urgent demand for more Chinese cultivators. George Gordon had tendered his resignation to the Tea Committee in May 1836 due to 'considerations, partly public and partly private'.¹⁰⁰ The public reason given was that his task was largely completed and it was believed that Wallich could fulfil his role, which he did following his return to Calcutta from Assam late in 1836. The extra labour Bruce required following the success of the Assam tea in early 1839 led to direct communication between the Tea Committee and Jardine Matheson regarding the supply of additional Chinese cultivators.

For the 1839 recruitment Wallich approached Jardine Matheson in a lengthy, six-page letter to the firm:

The committee having already benefitted in several cases by your valuable and courteous assistance in procuring, at the insistence of their late secretary Mr G. J. Gordon, manufacturing men from China, they entertain a confident hope, that you will likewise grant cordial cooperation on the present occasion, especially as it is one of great national interest and importance.¹⁰¹

Wallich's reference to the experiment as being of 'great national interest and importance' belies the shared aims of the Tea Committee and the firm. Wallich's concerns about the Qing Empire's control of the supply of tea coalesced with Jardine Matheson's representation of the Chinese authorities as despotic in order to justify their opium trading activities. Similarly James Matheson's meetings with Palmerston, then foreign secretary, in 1835, and his 1836

⁹⁷ Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company* p.37; In this meeting of the Assam Company it was discussed that the East India Company had agreed to 'speedily make available' information on Assam, which presumably led to the publication of the Parliamentary Papers; Minute book of the Assam Company, 12 February 1839 – 17 December 1845, in MS 9924/1, London Metropolitan Archives (London).

⁹⁸ Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Company*, p. 269.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 271.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon to the Tea Committee (16 May 1836), in Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 63.

¹⁰¹ Nathaniel Wallich (Calcutta) to Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Canton), 15 February 1839, in MS JM/C10, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

book *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*, were attempts by the firm to convince metropolitan policy makers that the subversion of the authority of the Qing Empire was of national ‘interest and importance’.¹⁰²

Wallich left the fine details of recruitment to the firm’s ‘good judgement and execution’ but gave a budget to cover ‘the expenses of 60 Chinese artisans’.¹⁰³ Some of the job roles that needed to be filled were listed. Specifically, ‘12 Tea-cultivators’, ‘8 Box Makers and Lackerers’, ‘8 paper manufacturers’ and an interpreter of ‘respectability and influence’ were required urgently.¹⁰⁴ Wallich stipulated that Matheson make the contracts explicit, explaining that expenses would not be paid in addition to the advance wages (this oversight in the previous contracts had cost the Tea Committee who had to cover expenses).¹⁰⁵ Given the ‘national importance’ of the recruitment mission James Matheson took personal responsibility for arranging the contracts.

Jardine Matheson kept copies of contracts with 12 Chinese tea cultivators, all of which named James Matheson personally.¹⁰⁶ All of the contracts were dated 15 August 1839 and were identical in structure.¹⁰⁷ It is also worth noting that the terms ‘tea manufacturer’ and ‘tea cultivator’ were used interchangeably, even within the same contract. Low-a-Sam, Ko-Lu-Leng, Low-Su-Fok, Low-Yum-Chin, Tang-Shim Kwai, Tang-Hoau-Se, Ling-Cam-Seng, Ting Ateem, Low A. Jin, Low Mok Yes and Ting Jin Leng were hired as ‘Tea Cultivators’, and A. Sing was hired as a ‘Tea Packer’.¹⁰⁸ The surviving contracts reflect some of the concerns of the Assam project’s managers, as this extract from a contract signed by ‘Low-a-Sam’ demonstrates:

Low-a-Sam, Tea Manufacturer who thoroughly understands the business of manufacturing tea hereby engages himself to Mr. James Matheson that he will retain to Assam for the space of five years to exercise his craft, after the expiration of which he will be permitted to return. His monthly wages are to be fifteen (15) dollars including his board. Mr Matheson will pay every month to Lim-Fok the relation of Low-a-Sam three (3) dollars and he himself will receive the remaining Twelve (12) dollars. He will reserve in advance three months wages forty five (45) dollars as bargain money.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*.

¹⁰³ Nathaniel Wallich (Calcutta) to Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Canton), 15 February 1839, in MS JM/C10, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*; The term ‘lackerer’ refers to ‘lacquer’ and the application of this protective coating as part of the transportation process.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ These contracts are still located in the Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University Library).

¹⁰⁷ Tea Contracts, in MS JM/F11, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University Library).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁹ Agreement with Low-a-sam, Tea Cultivator, 15th August 1839, in MS JM/F11/3, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University Library).

Not only was the three month advance of wages explained, as desired by Wallich, but the contract emphasised that the need for the employee to ‘understand’ tea manufacture. This emphasis came from a fundamental mistrust of the Chinese cultivators, both among the Tea Committee members and Jardine Matheson. Whilst Bruce complained in Assam that some recruits were believed to have exaggerated their knowledge of tea cultivation so that they would receive the lucrative wages offered. Indeed, James Matheson had previously written that the Chinese were characterised by ‘imbecility, avarice, conceit, and obstinacy’.¹¹⁰ Given these attitudes the accuracy of the contracts was paramount. The contract was a short document, written in both English and Chinese, and contained details such as fines for Low-a-Sam’s failure to see through the contract and explicitly confirming that he would be free to return to China at the completion of the five years of service. Ensuring that Chinese cultivators understood, or at least could not claim to have misunderstood, the terms of the contract was important to the Tea Committee. The EIC had struggled to acquire adequate translators to assist Bruce on the tea plantations in Assam. By contrast the needs of Jardine Matheson meant they employed a vast staff of interpreters and compradors who operated their clandestine opium distribution network.¹¹¹ The Tea Committee was reliant on the resources and expertise of the firm in order to provide accurate translation.

Following the recruitment of the twelve tea cultivators in August 1839 Matheson explained to Wallich the difficulties caused by the start of the First Opium War. Matheson wrote that ‘in these troublesome times ... the attention of the Chinese Govt. has lately been drawn to the subject, and they have issued many severe proclamations against those who may aid or abet the emigration of their subjects’.¹¹² In the last round of Chinese recruitment to be conducted by the firm for the Assam experiment, Matheson was able to recruit fourteen tea cultivators as well as eight lackerers and box makers, meeting the requirements that had been outlined by Wallich.¹¹³ Unfortunately for the Tea Committee, the beginnings of Opium War destabilised the firm’s access to the areas of the China coast from which they had recruited tea cultivators.

Language was still a problem in Assam, where Wallich wished to find one Chinese representative to act as a headman and interpreter. Matheson explained to Wallich that ‘Canton men do not use the same spoken language nor do they have the requisite authority over their countrymen of a different province’.¹¹⁴ Note here Matheson’s awareness of

¹¹⁰ Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ LeFevour, *Western Enterprise in Late Ch’ing China*, p. 22.

¹¹² James Matheson (Hong Kong) to Dr. N. Wallich (Calcutta), 25 September 1839, in MS JM/C10, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

linguistic difference. Though Matheson's writing was largely unconcerned with Chinese culture and history, his experience on the China coast and his knowledge of Chinese society was evidence in his correspondence with the Calcutta-based Tea Committee members. Matheson's allusion to authority also reflects concerns on the ground in Assam that the under-resourced Bruce required intermediaries. The fact that Matheson was able to recruit in the context of rapidly worsening Anglo-Chinese relations (caused in no small part by his own firm's activities) was testament to the firm's networks that transcended both Chinese and British imperial control.

From the very conception of the Assam experiment the EIC had planned to transfer the tea plantations to private ownership.¹¹⁵ Following the success of the first Assam teas the Assam Company was incorporated in 1839, with the new Company in control of production in Assam by the first tea season of 1840.¹¹⁶ The Assam Company, with its high levels of available capital hired Dr Lumqua, who had been too expensive for the Tea Committee, to manage the Chinese workers in Assam and arrange further Chinese recruitment.¹¹⁷ On the advice of Lumqua a Chinese agent (referred to as Eekan or E-kan) was appointed to hire Chinese labourers from Penang and Singapore.¹¹⁸ The agent was able to recruit 216 labourers from Penang and 245 from Singapore but, in these easily accessible contact zones outside of China, he was 'not successful in finding any experienced artisans'.¹¹⁹ Instead these recruits were intended to become apprentices under tea makers already in Assam who would develop into skilled tea artisans. Additionally, Lumqua procured a messenger to travel across Burma and attempt to establish a supply of skilled Chinese labour from the Chinese province of Yunnan.¹²⁰ In spite of the large numbers of labourers acquired from Penang and Singapore, Lumqua's attempt to source skilled labour from Yunnan demonstrates the premium placed on skilled artisans from China itself. A colonial hierarchy that placed Chinese migrants from China above Chinese migrants from the Straits Settlements was emerging, and was informed by the premium placed on specialist skill and useful knowledge.

The Chinese recruitment undertaken by Assam Company's was vastly more problematic than the recruitment of Jardine Matheson. In February 1840 nine Chinese labourers, out of a group of 105 intended for Assam, were arrested and put on trial for assault

¹¹⁵ Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company*, p. 119.

¹¹⁶ Wilson Gow and Stanton Gow (eds.), *Tea Producing companies of India and Ceylon: showing the History and Results of those Capitalised in Sterling* (London: A. Southey & Co., 1897), p. 3.

¹¹⁷ The value of Lumqua is evident from his salary of 1,110 Rs., which can be compared to the total labourers advance of 20,586 Rs. prior to 31 December 1839, from *Report of the Bengal Branch of the Assam Company* (Calcutta: Samuel Smith & Co., No. 1, Hare Street, 1840), p. 17, London Metropolitan Archives (London).

¹¹⁸ *Report of the Bengal Branch of the Assam Company*, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

at Bogra. Bruce warned that too many Chinese workers were arriving as he was still in the government's military service and could not devote the time to manage the plantation.¹²¹ Eekan's shipment of Chinese labourers from Singapore arrived the next month. After fifty-seven labourers from this shipment were arrested over an affray in which a local villager was killed at Pabna, the remainder of the 'gang' refused to move to Assam without a 'further advance of pay, and supplies of opium and provisions'.¹²² After three months the group was completely abandoned, though the Assam Company regretted 'that so many lawless characters should be let loose upon society'.¹²³ The failure was specifically attributed to poor selection by Eekan and the poor 'character' of the Chinese from Penang and Singapore. Additionally, those who did reach the stations in Assam fell victim to fever – a common occurrence in the Assamese jungle. Similarly, Lumqua's alternative mission to Yunnan was thwarted by 'the cowardice and roguery of the Chinese' who had been hired to undertake the journey but disappeared without a trace shortly after departing.¹²⁴ The failure of these schemes, both to source unskilled labour from Singapore and skilled artisans from Yunnan, cost the Assam Company vast amounts of money.¹²⁵ Such recruitment projects were also doomed by the death of Lumqua in August 1840 who, according to the 1841 Report of the Local Directors, had been 'appoint a kind of Captain, with Magisterial powers, among his countrymen'.¹²⁶ As a result the Assam Company began to seek alternative forms of labour.

From early in the Assam Company's ownership and management of the Assam plantations emphasis was placed on the diffusion of the specialist knowledge of the Chinese artisans. For example, the first annual report of the Assam Company remarked how one particular establishment had produced tea, despite consisting of 'only two Chinese black tea makers, with twelve native assistants'.¹²⁷ There was a growing realisation on the ground in Assam that the Chinese were becoming superfluous to tea production and their numbers gradually decreased. J. P. Parker, Superintendent of the East Division, discussed how when seven Chinese tea makers were 'discharged' after refusing to relocation to a different division, leaving only two, the establishment was able to continue tea cultivation without them.¹²⁸ A

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 378; Note the implication that the Chinese cultivators required British supervision.

¹²² Assam Company: Report of the Local Directors made to the Shareholders at a General Meeting, held at Calcutta, 11 August 1841 (Calcutta: Bishop's College Press, 1841), p. 5.

¹²³ *Ibid*.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹²⁵ Assam Company: Report of the Local Directors made to the Shareholders at a General Meeting (1841), p. 6.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.7; Mann, *The Early History of the Tea Industry in North-East India*, p. 24.

¹²⁷ Assam Company: Report of the provisional committee made to the shareholders and a general meeting, held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate Street, 31st January 1840 (London: Smith, Elder and Co. 65, Cornhill, 1840), p. 6.

¹²⁸ Assam Company: Report of the Local Directors made to the Shareholders, at a General Meeting, Held at Calcutta, 6th October, 1842 (Calcutta: Printed by William Rushton and Co., 1842); J.P. Parker, Superintendent, East Division to R. H. Buckland, Secretary, Assam Company, Calcutta, Jaipore, Upper Assam, 9 August 1842.

contributing factor to the move away from Chinese recruitment was the employment of indigenous labour. In 1841 Charles Bruce noted how the ‘wild people’ of the ‘Naga tribes’ were first induced to help in the labour of clearing the jungle.¹²⁹ The heavy financial cost of the failed Singapore and Yunnan recruitments especially turned the Company’s attention to a local labour supply. The 1841 Assam Company Report noted that the ‘Assamese are beginning to work, and for the important art of Tea manufacture, they seem peculiarly adapted, and likely to supply eventually all the labour that will be required’.¹³⁰

Since the mid-1830s knowledge of tea production had been acquired from Chinese tea cultivators by British managers and Indian artisans. As a result the difficult recruitment of Chinese specialists became increasingly unnecessary. A letter from a Mr Masters accompanying a tea invoice in late 1841 stated that ‘the whole of it has been made without the aid of the Chinamen, and that only one person on the establishment had ever seen a Chinaman engaged in the manufacture’.¹³¹ By 1842 there was no longer a necessity for the recruitment of skilled Chinese artisans as their expertise was no longer required and Chinese labourers had been replaced by cheaper, locally-sourced labour. Ultimately, the Assam Company lacked the networks or resources to effectively manage large numbers of Chinese labourers, many of whom had been hired for job roles that they could not fulfil. Luckily for the Assam Company, thanks to the diffusion of specialist knowledge in the 1830s, such recruitments were no longer required. By the 1860s there were no Chinese tea cultivators or labourers left in Assam.¹³² Instead the importation of labour from elsewhere in India was used to fill colonial needs over the rest of the nineteenth century. These migrations led to new debates around issues of labour, with the Indian Tea Association formed in 1881 to advocate for European plantation owners against workers’ rights and ‘labour militancy’.¹³³

Much of the discussion around the use of Chinese and Assamese labour on the tea plantations fed into and contributed to notions of hierarchy. Despite the catastrophe of the Assam Company era recruitment, the perception of the Chinese as an especially industrious ethnic group was left relatively unharmed. The failure of Chinese labour at Assam was most commonly attributed to poor recruitment, particularly after Jardine Matheson’s involvement had ceased. Notably, the later recruitment had not been from the tea producing regions of

¹²⁹ Assam Company: Report of the Local Directors made to the Shareholders at a General Meeting (1841), p. 12, London Metropolitan Archives (London).

¹³⁰ Assam Company: Report of the directors and auditors made to the shareholders and a general meeting (1841), p. 18, London Metropolitan Archives (London).

¹³¹ Assam Company: Report of the directors and auditors made to the shareholders and a general meeting (1842), London Metropolitan Archives (London).

¹³² Sharma, ‘Lazy Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry’, p. 1324.

¹³³ Rana P. Behal, ‘Power Structure, Discipline, and Labour in Assam Tea Plantations under Colonial Rule’, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 51, No. 14, (December 2006), pp. 147-148.

Southern China, but from the Straits Settlements of Singapore and Penang. The Assam Company complained that those recruited at Singapore by Eekan had been ‘selected without discretion’ and that they were ‘turbulent, obstinate, and rapacious’.¹³⁴ Similarly, the newspaper editor and author Robert Mudie criticised the Assam Company recruits for a ‘want of mental dignity’.¹³⁵ As Jayeeta Sharma has pointed out, when discussing botanist William Griffith, discussions of Chinese emigrants in Assam were increasingly imbued with ideas about purity and hierarchy.¹³⁶ Griffith was sceptical of Chinese who had spent too long outside of China: ‘I found that among all the so-called Chinese, who are to be met with at Mogoung, Bamo, and Ava, as well as among those who form the large annual caravans that trade with Burma, there is not a single genuine Chinaman.’¹³⁷ The use of ‘genuine’ here implies an ethnic hierarchy emerging within the construct of ‘the Chinese’. In particular it acted as an appraisal of the China coast recruitment undertaken by Jardine Matheson, which the Assam Company tried to replicate overland from Yunnan, rather than the subsequent recruitment from Southeast Asia. The failure of the Assam Company’s recruitment highlights the importance of Jardine Matheson’s opium distribution networks for extracting skilled labour from China. That the Assam Company abandoned the recruitment of Chinese labour within a year of taking control demonstrates both the successful diffusion of specialist knowledge and the limited resource networks of the new organisation.

The role of Jardine Matheson in procuring Chinese tea cultivators for the Assam experiment illustrates the growth of private commercial and information networks on the China coast in the 1830s. That James Matheson became personally involved indicated the multiple roles that partners and employees of the firm undertook. For example, Charles Gutzlaff – though acting primarily as a missionary, an interpreter and an author – utilised his skills and expertise to procure tea cultivators. Additionally, the opium voyages along the coast indicated the multiple ways in which the firm was ‘opening’ China in the 1830s.¹³⁸ Not only was opium being sold and religious literature being disseminated but labour, physical resources and knowledge were being extracted. Somewhat ironically the very firm that was at the forefront of jeopardizing Anglo-Chinese relations, and therefore Britain’s tea supply, also played a crucial role in establishing the rival Indian tea plantations. Jardine Matheson’s role in the tea experiment not only shows a side to the firm’s activities that has been under-explored,

¹³⁴ Mann, *The Early History of the Tea Industry in North-East India*, p. 23.

¹³⁵ Mudie, *China and its Resources*, p. 138.

¹³⁶ Sharma, *Empire’s Garden*, p. 37.

¹³⁷ Report on the Tea plant of Upper Assam, by Assistant-surgeon William Griffith, Madras Establishment, late member of Assam Deputation, in Parliamentary Papers, *Tea Cultivation*, p. 104.

¹³⁸ This notion of ‘opening’ was an entirely subjective Western view. The title of Gutzlaff’s *China Opened* has been frequently noted by historians, for example Lutz, *Opening China*.

namely their role in Chinese emigration, but also the emerging autonomy of private British merchant firms on the China coast whose interests and actions would shape Anglo-Chinese relations over the following decades.

The recruitment and use of Chinese tea cultivators in Assam also complicated developing ethnic hierarchies. Contrasts were formed between the Assamese and the British; the Chinese and the British; the Chinese and the Assamese; and, increasingly, between specific Assamese tribal or Chinese regional groups. It is of note that after increased experience of recruiting and employing Chinese labour perceived hierarchies of different Chinese groups emerged. The discussion over what was a 'genuine' Chinese tea cultivator raised questions about who was or was not Chinese. As with the Assamese, the appraisal of different groups was contingent on their economic utility. Chinese migrants to Singapore had previously been celebrated as industrious drivers of economic activity, yet in the context of tea cultivators for Assam the Straits Chinese were unsuitable. In some ways the failure of Assam Company recruitment confirmed Singapore's colonial authorities' suspicion of the Chinese labour force. Importantly, stereotypes, whether they focused on Assamese 'savagery' or Chinese 'treachery', were conducive to the broader economic aims of the EIC and British merchant firms on the China coast. Such hierarchies were not static, but shifted over time and across different geographical spaces. As a developing colonial space, Assam was an early testing ground for ideas about Chinese labour. Criticisms of Chinese labourers in Assam were mitigated by questions about the authenticity of Chinese communities outside of China. Whilst the Straits Chinese recruited by the Assam Company were criticised, 'genuine' Chinese tea cultivators were still held in high esteem.

Gordon Forbes Davidson in New South Wales

As the EIC sought skilled Chinese artisans to undertake tea cultivation in Assam the merchant Gordon Forbes Davidson hatched a plan for the assisted migration of Chinese labourers to New South Wales. Davidson was struck by the scarcity of cheap, available labour in the Australian colonies after his arrival in 1836. As a result he attempted to establish a Chinese migration scheme to New South Wales in the late 1830s. There were significant similarities and differences between the New South Wales and Assam projects. As in Assam, the New South Wales scheme sought to extend Chinese migration systems beyond existing boundaries of Southeast Asia. Similarly, Davidson specifically drew inspiration from the Anglo-Chinese success story of Singapore. As discussed in chapter one, Davidson's ideas about ethnicity and labour were immediately shaped by his experiences in Southeast Asia, which had convinced

him of the clear imbalance between the ‘lazy’ natives and the ‘industrious’ Chinese.¹³⁹ There were also key differences. In New South Wales Chinese labourers were required for general employment, rather than for a specific skill set or knowledge base, such as tea cultivation. An important difference in terms of ethnic hierarchy was that the movement of Chinese labourers to New South Wales would bring them into direct economic competition with European settlers. Given the prominence of themes around ethnicity and labour in Australian historiography, it is notable that Gordon Forbes Davidson’s scheme has been almost completely neglected by historians with only a brief mention of the advertisements in an article by Tony Ohlsson.

From the start of Britain’s colonial project in New South Wales there was an awareness that a viable source of imported labour would be required in order to facilitate the colony’s economic development. Long before Davidson’s scheme, in 1804, the possibility of Chinese migration to Australia was discussed in official communication between Governor King and the Colonial Secretary, Lord Hobart:

It would be attended with the most desirable consequences in introducing Chinese into these settlements, which from your knowledge your Lordship has had of the industrious character of that people, and how much the Dutch settlements in India have profited by their residence among them, I presume might be attended with great advantage to this country.¹⁴⁰

Not only was labour required, but the ‘industrious character’ of the Chinese made them particularly desirable labourers. King’s scheme was never put into practice, and the severity of the shortage had intensified by the 1830s. Few British territories caused more demands and challenges in labour supply than the growing Australian colonies in the 1830s.

Movements away from transportation, and consequently away from convict labour, threatened Australia’s pastoral economy. The 1837 select committee on transportation, presided over by the radical MP William Molesworth, recommended that the convict transportation system be abolished.¹⁴¹ The system was believed to be both ineffective in reforming convicts and a contributing factor to the social ills of the colony. Along with this metropolitan condemnation of convict transportation, colonial opinion was similarly galvanised in opposition to the system.¹⁴² By 1840 convict transportation to New South Wales

¹³⁹ Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*.

¹⁴⁰ King to Hobart (1804), in Australian Parliament: Joint Library Committee, *Governors’ Despatches to and From England, Volume V, July 1804-August 1806* (The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1915).

¹⁴¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Select Committee on Transportation, Report, 1837-38*, 669 (1838).

¹⁴² John Ritchie, ‘Towards Ending an Unclean Thing: The Molesworth Committee and the Abolition of Transportation to New South Wales, 1837-40’, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 67 (1976), pp. 144-164.

had been ended, though a reduced system continued to Western Australia until the 1860s.¹⁴³ In addition to the ending of convict transportation, the increased demand for cheap manual labourers in 1830s Australia was caused by the rapid growth of land ownership in the colony as freed convicts took up smallholdings on the edge of existing settlements.¹⁴⁴ As the labour force of the colony gradually became employers they exacerbated New South Wales' existing shortages by creating excess demand for labour.¹⁴⁵ An indication of the necessity to prevent the proliferation of land ownership was the replacement of government land grants with land sales in 1831. In spite of the establishment of a 'bounty system', which was funded using revenue from land sales, to induce 'free' migrants from Britain as an alternative source of imported labour was required.¹⁴⁶

A particular frustration for colonial employers was the reluctance of Aboriginal Australians to undertake agricultural labour under the management of British settlers. Colonial perceptions of Aboriginal Australians in the 1830s were extremely critical. These perceptions were often a more extreme version of the 'lazy native' narrative prominent in Southeast Asia. Watkin Tench, a British marine officer and author who was amongst the first British settlers to arrive in Australia in 1788, wrote of the indigenous population that 'they certainly rank very low, even in the scale of savages'.¹⁴⁷ Here Tench was not only asserting British or European superiority, but also forming a comparative ethnic hierarchy within which the Aboriginal Australians were placed at the very bottom. The demarcation of Aboriginal Australians as 'savages' was also connected to British ideas about industry and appropriate forms of labour. The concept of *terra nullius*, which dictated that Aboriginal Australian peoples did not own land and that Australia was uninhabited because it was not cultivated, was central to the British assumption of territorial control.¹⁴⁸ Production in excess of need, a key component of capitalist agricultural practice, was seen by the British as innately connected to civilization. British colonial control in Australia, as in South Africa, caused a production-led redefinition of local economies.¹⁴⁹

The redefinition of land ownership also had biblical origins, with the instruction that man should 'subdue' the earth feeding into the suggestion of Richard Windeyer, the

¹⁴³ Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Wood, 'Frontier Violence and the Bush Legend', pp. 1-19.

¹⁴⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Select Committee on Transportation*.

¹⁴⁶ These reforms to land distribution were heavily influenced by the ideas of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, see Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, pp. 37-42.

¹⁴⁷ L. F. Fitzhardinge (ed.), W. Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1961), p. 281.

¹⁴⁸ Behrendt, Miller, and Lindberg, *Discovering indigenous lands*.

¹⁴⁹ S. Terreblanche., *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652-2002* (Pietmaritzburg: University of Natal Press), p. 179.

prominent barrister and politician, that ‘land belongs to he who first cultivates it’.¹⁵⁰ The non-production based economic and social structures of Aboriginal Australian tribes stood in complete contrast to European ideas about ownership and labour. The land appeared to settlers to be un-cultivated and was therefore un-occupied. As Angela Woollacott has emphasised, the brutal frontier violence perpetrated by settlers against Aboriginal Australians was ‘interwoven with the topics of land and labour’.¹⁵¹ Additionally, when Aboriginal Australians did take up employment they were prone to exploitation and violence at the hands of settler ‘land owners’. Given existing alternative structures it was unsurprising that Aboriginal Australians were reluctant to form a labour force under British control.¹⁵² As highlighted by Kay Anderson, the vastly contrasting social and economic structures meant that for many British settlers Aboriginal Australians existed at the very limits of humanity.¹⁵³ For many colonial observers, the growing Australian colonies best demonstrated the extremes of civilization hierarchy. The British Empire was seen as a symbol of progress and the Aboriginal population was a representation of savagery and barbarism. This contrast was regularly underlined by episodes of frontier violence, in which the allocation of land and labour were the stakes.

Early in 1836 Gordon Forbes Davidson moved to New South Wales and his account of his first three years’ residence demonstrated an acceptance of many of the contemporary prejudices and concerns in the colony.¹⁵⁴ On arrival Davidson was impressed: ‘landing in Sydney, the traveller from India is ready to exclaim, surely this is not a town some seventeen thousand miles from England! Everything reminds him of home’.¹⁵⁵ Glad to be in an ‘English’ town, Davidson was struck by the shortage of suitable workers as he remarked that, ‘labour is so much cheaper in Britain than it is in Australia’ and was unimpressed by British and Irish migrants who ‘generally are very difficult to satisfy in the matter of rations’.¹⁵⁶ The solution to this shortage was not to be had through further convict transportation. As Davidson’s initial excitement subsided, he concurred with contemporaries that convicts were undesirable as they made a negative contribution to the colony’s moral character. In a tirade against drunkenness Davidson asked, ‘what better conduct, however, can be expected from men, nine-tenths of

¹⁵⁰ Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession: black Australians and white invaders* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen and Unwin, 1989), pp. 5-6.

¹⁵¹ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 3.

¹⁵² Reynolds, *The other side of the frontier*, p. 5.

¹⁵³ Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism*, p. 192

¹⁵⁴ For an overview of the tensions in the settler community, particularly around the issues raised by frontier violence against Aboriginal Australians see Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: aborigines, settlers and land* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen and Unwin, 1988).

¹⁵⁵ Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, p. 120.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 187-202.

whom either are or have been convicts?’¹⁵⁷ Davidson’s criticism of the role of convicts, or freed convicts, reflected the contemporary shift in attitudes against convict transportation, and consequently, ‘unfree’ labour.

Davidson was also dismissive of the prospects of an Aboriginal workforce. Davidson warned that the payment of indigenous labourers ‘must not be given them, however, till their work is done: give it beforehand, and not a hand’s turn will they do, but decamp at once to enjoy their dinner’.¹⁵⁸ Much of Davidson’s writing on New South Wales was concerned with descriptions of Aboriginal Australian culture and customs. Particularly struck by the nakedness of Aboriginal Australians, Davidson suggested that if a European ‘Samaritan’ did distribute clothes they would ‘in all probability, appear naked at his door tomorrow, having given away their clothes to some convict, in exchange for a pound of flour or an ounce of tobacco’.¹⁵⁹ As in Singapore, Davidson immediately accepted and reiterated the colonial trope of the ‘lazy native’. For Davidson, New South Wales was similar to Singapore in that imported, non-European labour was required. Consequently, Davidson would draw on his experience of Southeast Asia when proposing a solution to the labour crisis.

Davidson’s experiences were set in a wider context of concern over the shortage of labour in Australia. Metropolitan imperial planners were concerned with providing Australian colonies with a supply of ‘free’ labour. Notably, those ‘colonial reformers’ interested in colonization in Australia would later form the basis of metropolitan migration bureaucracy on an imperial scale.¹⁶⁰ In 1830 Edward Gibbon Wakefield, an advocate of ‘free’ migration to Australia, established the National Colonization Society.¹⁶¹ Notable early members included Robert Gouger (a future colonial secretary in South Australia), Sir William Molesworth (whose 1838 select committee denounced convict labour), Robert Torrens (who was made a Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioner in 1840) and the influential liberal-thinker John Stuart Mill.¹⁶² Thomas Frederick Elliot, one of the original three Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, worked with the London Emigration Committee from 1831 and was Agent-General for Emigration from 1837. Elliot’s management of emigration, originally focused on Australia, became increasingly broad.¹⁶³ The growing involvement of the Colonial Office in migration led to the creation of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission by

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 122.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 147.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 145.

¹⁶⁰ Fred H. Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 1840-78* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press, 1931), p. xiv.

¹⁶¹ Wakefield was opposed to the ‘unfree’ labour of convicts or slaves and promoted the assisted migration of British families funded by land sales. He also advocated the use of Asian indentured labour.

¹⁶² W. P. Morrell, *British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), p. 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 10.

the Colonial Secretary Lord Russell in January 1840.¹⁶⁴ Notably, the entire framework of the metropolitan management of imperial emigration and colonization evolved from shortages of labour in the Australian colonies. Within a wider metropolitan interest in systems of imperial migration and colonial development, the Australian colonies were paramount.¹⁶⁵

The advocacy of the ‘colonial reformers’ demonstrates that Davidson was not alone in recommending imported Asian labour. A rival solution of the 1830s was the recommended the importation of Indian coolies. In 1836 John Mackay arrived from Bengal with Bengali servants and sent a memorandum on ‘Indian Coolies’ to Governor Bourke. A year later J. R. Mayo sent a similar memorandum regarding the success of Indian labour in Mauritius.¹⁶⁶ The supply of labour in Australia, and possible Asian solutions, was a concern of both colonial and imperial governments. Reports, with evidence given from colonists who required labourers, were compiled by ‘Governors of the Australian Colonies’ and dispatched to the Secretary of State or the Colonies.¹⁶⁷ Thomas Walker, who was a Sydney merchant and cattle owner, revealed that individual proprietors had already made arrangements for the recruitment of Indian and Chinese labour:

So urgent is the demand for labour, that many settlers have been obliged, in opposition to their own inclination, to send India for Chinese and Coolies, to be hired and introduced at their individual expense. It comes within my own knowledge, that 1,203 such labourers have actually been sent for by 111 settlers, each of whom has paid an advance at the rate of £5 for each labourer, and entered into an engagement to pay the balance of the expense of their introduction on arrival of the parties here.¹⁶⁸

Given the details discussed here, it would appear that Walker was referring, in part, to Davidson’s Chinese migration scheme. Crucially, from Walker’s perspective, ‘Chinese and coolies’ were grouped together for the purposes of filling colonial labour shortages.

As early as 1829 texts written by leading colonization advocates, Robert Gouger and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, recommended Chinese labour as a solution to the Australian

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁵ As evidenced by the range of parliamentary papers published on emigration to New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

¹⁶⁶ Ohlsson, ‘The Origins of a White Australia’, p. 204.

¹⁶⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration. Copies of any general report, since the last laid before this House, from the Agent General for Emigration: of any report from the Agent for Emigration in Canada: copies or extracts of any correspondence between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the governors of the Australian colonies, respecting emigration, since the papers presented to the House on the 14th day of May 1838, 1839* (536-I) (536-II).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 44.

problem.¹⁶⁹ The main argument was that free migrants, not slaves or convicts, should be procured for the Australian colonies by the imperial government in London.¹⁷⁰ However Gouger also looked to China as a possible solution. He noted that: ‘the Chinese, especially, who, with a population of 300,000,000, feel the pressure of people upon territory more than any other nation whatsoever, - who are greatly disposed to emigrate, - and are, by far, the most industrious and skilful of Asiatics’.¹⁷¹ Wakefield expanded upon this, suggesting that it was ‘surprising that the Chinese haven’t already moved to Australia. And it is not still more surprising that these British settlers, who would gladly purchase slaves at one hundred pounds per head should not have procured labourers from Canton?’¹⁷² As emphasised by Woollacott, though thinkers such as Wakefield advocated specific types of labour migration – namely promoting the emigration of British working class families – Indian, Chinese and Pacific Islander migrant labour was preferred to coerced or Aboriginal labour.¹⁷³ As in Singapore, the use of Chinese labour in Australia was intimately tied to notions of ethnic hierarchy and desirability.

A colonial trailblazer in the employment of Chinese migrants was the Scottish clergyman and politician John Dunmore Lang. After arriving in Sydney in 1823, Lang is reported to have employed two Chinese migrants (named Queng and Tchiou) in 1827.¹⁷⁴ Lang, like Wakefield, was an outspoken advocate of assisted migration from Britain to Australia. After a visit to England in 1830 Lang used a Colonial Office loan to assist 140 Scottish tradesmen and their families to emigrate.¹⁷⁵ Yet his advocacy of Chinese immigration into Australia demonstrated the different purposes attributed to different types of migrants. In 1837 Lang mooted the possibility of Australian tea cultivation, which would require a ‘numerous’ Chinese population.¹⁷⁶ Evidently, Lang was aware of the on-going Assam experiment. He also demonstrated knowledge of existing systems of Chinese migration and

¹⁶⁹ Gouger, *A Letter from Sydney*; Wakefield, *Outline of a System of Colonization*; David J. Moss, ‘Wakefield, Edward Gibbon (1796–1862)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28415, accessed 27 September 2015].

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Gouger, *A Letter from Sydney*, p.202; Additionally Wakefield was also connected to Jardine Matheson through his close friend and patron John Abel Smith who represented the firm in London.

¹⁷² Wakefield, *Outline of a System of Colonization*, p. 219.

¹⁷³ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 40. Wakefield specifically saw female immigration as crucial to ensuring that colonies were ‘virtuous and polite’, see Robert Grant, “‘The Fit and Unfit’: Suitable Settlers for Britain’s Mid-Nineteenth-Century Colonial Possessions”, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, No. 33 (2005), p. 174.

¹⁷⁴ D. W. A. Baker, ‘Lang, John Dunmore (1799–1878)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16005, accessed 27 September 2015]; James Jupp, *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 198.

¹⁷⁵ Baker, ‘John Dunmore Lang’.

¹⁷⁶ John Dunmore Lang, *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, Both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony* (London: A. J. Valpy, 1837), p. 435.

was confident that the success of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia could be repeated in New South Wales:

The Chinese ... are an emigrating nation; and as they are easily induced, by the prospect of bettering their fortunes to emigrate to Singapore, Batavia, and Calcutta, there is no reason to doubt that a similar prospect would induce them to emigrate to New South Wales.¹⁷⁷

When there was opposition to large scale Chinese migration to Australia in the 1850s and 1860s, Lang took the lead in seeking the repeal of anti-immigration legislation.¹⁷⁸ There was demand for Chinese labour in New South Wales. In 1837 Davidson attempted to provide a supply for employers like Lang and establish a regular system of Chinese migration to Australia.

Gordon Forbes Davidson's Chinese Migration Scheme

Importantly Davidson was connected to Jardine Matheson as opposed to any official or governmental structures. Loans from the firm funded his activities. Of the many letters between Davidson and the firm the first came in 1828, and it reveals Davidson's involvement in the opium trade. William Jardine was personally involved in selling 'Turkey opium' on Davidson's behalf.¹⁷⁹ The correspondence between the two over the 1830s shows the firm acting as a broker between Davidson and Chinese opium purchasers. In an 1832 letter Davidson wrote 'your invoice and bill of landing of the chests of Patna opium shipped by me on the *Water Witch* to your kind care, be good enough to dispose of this small cost at your earliest convenience', again this highlights the versatility of Jardine Matheson's shipping operations, as the *Water Witch* was the same ship used by Gordon to reach the coast to recruit tea cultivators for Assam.¹⁸⁰ Davidson also exchanged market information and news with the firm, something which was a common feature of merchant letters and communications. The end of an 1832 letter to the firm read, 'we have a report that the government in Java are thinking seriously of stopping the exportation of rice for some months ... everything quiet in England and affairs on the continent.'¹⁸¹ Not only was Davidson commercially connected to

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 435.

¹⁷⁸ Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 366. Lang's funeral procession was led by 500 Chinese mourners in recognition of his advocacy, Charles E. Farhadian (ed.), *Introducing World Christianity* (Sussex: Blackwell, 2012), p. 208.

¹⁷⁹ Magniac & Co. (Canton) to G. F. Davidson (Batavia), 4 April 1828, in MS JM/C10, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁸⁰ G. F. Davidson (Singapore) to Magniac & Co. (Canton), 9 February 1832, in MS JM/B6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁸¹ G. F. Davidson (Singapore) to Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Canton), 30 November 1832, in MS JM/B6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

Jardine Matheson but the content of his letters reveals his role as part of the firm's information network.

Davidson readily accepted contemporary narratives of 'native' laziness in both Southeast Asia and Australia. His view of Chinese labour drew heavily on his own experiences and observations in Singapore, and fitted with ideas of Chinese industriousness and enterprise. Davidson's praise of the Chinese character coalesced with the anti-Qing narrative propagated by firms like Jardine Matheson and he was supportive of the 'opening' of China enabled by the Opium War. Writing shortly after the seizure of Hong Kong, Davidson remarked that 'now that we have a footing in China, I would draw the attention of the inhabitants of New South Wales to Hong Kong for an unlimited supply of cheap labour'.¹⁸² In Davidson's promotion of Chinese labour he equated it with European labour and was keen to emphasise his own expertise from his time in Singapore: 'for field-work, the China-man is fully equal to the European labourer. I speak advisedly, having tried them together, side by side, for months at a time'.¹⁸³ Yet, Davidson was well aware that the main rival source of labour being proposed for New South Wales was from India. Again, Davidson made use of his first-hand experience that gave him authority on issues of labour and ethnicity:

Many gentlemen have turned their attention to Bengal for a supply of labour. The men procurable from that country, are not equal in physical strength to the Chinamen, nor are they to be had for lower pay. I had six Bengal Coolies in my employ in the Bush, and have no hesitation in saying, that three China-men would have done their work.¹⁸⁴

In his promotion of Chinese labour as a viable solution to labour shortages in Australia, Davidson continually emphasised his experience in Singapore. Like Bentinck in Assam, Davidson had witnessed the contribution of Chinese colonists in Singapore – occupying an economic, political and social space between European elites and 'lazy natives' – and wished to replicate such an effective system of production Australia.

Davidson promoted his migration scheme in June and July 1837. After approaching investors through the 'Sydney Banks', Davidson published nine copies of an advertorial titled 'Chinese Mechanics and Labourers' in the *Colonist*, *Sydney Gazette*, *Sydney Herald* and *Hobart Town Courier*.¹⁸⁵ These articles were followed up by further notices from 31 July

¹⁸² Davidson, *Trade and Travel in the Far East*, p. 204.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 204.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 205.

¹⁸⁵ Article copies located through digital search of "Davidson" in the National Library of Australia Newspaper Archive (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>), accessed 27 September 2015.

1837 reminding subscribers to pay their deposits. The scheme Davidson laid out in this article was a direct extension of the credit-ticket migration system to Singapore:

My plan is to write to Singapore, in the early part of August, for four or five hundred Chinese, to be hired from the annual supply by the Junks from various ports in China, which arrive there in December and January in large numbers, and may be hired for this or any other country with very little trouble ... From a calculation I have made. I feel convinced I can land the men in Sydney at £10 a head, say £11, and add £1 for commission to my Singapore agent, for this the men would serve twelve months after their arrival in the Colony, getting fed of course, and they would serve a second year for £1 per month and rations; after the second year they would expect wages something nearly equal to what free Europeans get here.¹⁸⁶

The initial advance required by subscribers was £5, with the additional £6 payable on the arrival of the Chinese labourers. The subscriber's payments would be recouped, as they were in Singapore, from the wages of the Chinese employees. His advert for subscribers reveals Davidson's lofty expectations of his scheme's initial scope and its continued success: 'I would not begin with fewer than four hundred men, as it would require that number to fill a ship, and make it worthwhile. As many more as I can get subscribers for and I have no objections to contract for an annual supply'.¹⁸⁷ The single shipment of 400 labourers was significantly larger than the shipments of fifty or sixty specialist workers the EIC required from Jardine Matheson. This was not only due to the skillset of the Assam labourers, but also the fact that Davidson's scheme involved numerous capital investors and therefore spread potential risk. Davidson's advertisement was accompanied by a list of subscribers and the number of Chinese workers required by each – Davidson himself had subscribed and paid for five labourers.¹⁸⁸ The list amounted to 335 labourers, a sizeable portion of Davidson's planned total of 400, after just two months of advertising.

In advertising the scheme, Davidson played heavily on his own expertise from Singapore and his first-hand experience of Chinese labour. In particular Davidson emphasised the versatility of Chinese labourers:

From my long experience amongst Chinese, I have no hesitation in recommending strongly to the settlers of New South Wales, the importation of them into this country; as Carpenters, Cabinet-makers, Wheelwrights, Millers, Blacksmiths, Bricklayers and Brick-makers, Gardeners, Cooks, growers of Maize, Sugar, and Tobacco, and general labourers, I can with perfect safety recommend them.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ *Sydney Herald*, 26 June 1837.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ For a full list of subscribers see Appendix B, p. 223.

¹⁸⁹ *Sydney Herald*, 26 June 1837.

Unlike the precise needs of tea cultivation in Assam, Davidson's wide ranging list of Chinese professions is more reminiscent of the various Chinese occupational classes found in Singapore, as described by Seah Eu Chin. Davidson's knowledge of the Singapore labour market was key as he confidently stated that the colonists of New South Wales would be able to attract workers: 'If they get £15 a year and rations, it will be double what they earn in and about Singapore, and, in my opinion, will be sufficient to keep up a constant supply of Chinese labour in this market'.¹⁹⁰ Davidson was explicit in his desire to establish a seasonal migration scheme that replicated and competed with Singapore.

A crucial component of the appeal of Chinese migration in 1830s Australia was that China was a source of free, or voluntary, labour. Groups that had been victims of coercive employment, in the form of convict and slave labour, were perceived as responsible for their own bondage.¹⁹¹ In a cyclical fashion not only were specific ethnic or social groups subjected to bondage because they were inferior, but their perceived tolerance of their lack of liberty was further indication of their inferiority. Notions of free labour were innately connected to notions of civilizational hierarchy. In Davidson's view the Chinese, more so than Aboriginal Australian labourers, would be able to resist poor treatment at the hands of the Australian ex-convict squatter class.¹⁹² On the subject of 'ill-treatment' from employers Davidson cautioned that 'a Chinaman will not put up with it, and will spread such reports about it as will tend to prevent future supplies reaching this part of the world'.¹⁹³ This resistance to 'ill-treatment' from Chinese labourers made them the perfect group to replace coercive forms of labour. Labour relations in settler Australia highlight a contrast between the 'detailed employment of Indian and Chinese labourers on the one hand, and the infantilized employment of Aboriginal workers on the other'.¹⁹⁴ In lieu of white settlers the Chinese would provide a stable, effective and cheap workforce, whilst fulfilling the political imperative for free labour. Davidson's optimism and belief in the suitability of Chinese labour for an Australian context was bolstered by the success of the scheme in attracting subscribers. In terms of planning and preparation, the project had started with promise.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ In later regulation of the Chinese passenger trade it was argued that the Chinese did not require legal protection as they possessed the necessary faculties to avoid slavery. See chapter five on the passenger trade.

¹⁹² Land squatters were largely responsible for violence towards Aboriginal peoples, as discussed in Wood, 'Frontier Violence and the Bush Legend', pp. 1-19.

¹⁹³ *Sydney Herald*, 26 June 1837.

¹⁹⁴ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 173.

Resistance to Chinese Labour in Australia and Davidson's Failure

The shortage of labour was a widespread concern in 1830s Australia, but Australian colonists were not united in support of Davidson's proposed scheme. The mid-nineteenth century would see the development of white, working-class unionism against Asian migrant labour.¹⁹⁵ As Tony Ohlsson has suggested, the opposition towards Chinese and Indian labour schemes from British settlers in the 1830s can be seen as the genesis of the 'White Australia' policy created through exclusionary legislation in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹⁶ The views of the Secretary to the Emigration Commission, T. F. Elliot, underline the main points made by opponents to Davidson's scheme:

There must be a vast superiority in our well-assorted parties of European Families, including a carefully secured equality of females, as compared with any importations that could be made of Chinese, who only come to go away, or of Indian coolies, who are accompanied by a scanty proportion of Women, and who also stipulate to be returned to their own country.¹⁹⁷

The argument that Asian labour was unreliable, particularly that of the sojourning Chinese, and was morally undesirable, due to the gender imbalance, would be repeatedly made in opposition to non-white immigration in nineteenth century Australia.¹⁹⁸ That the planned migration to Australia was by private, not state, arrangement and consequently was almost entirely undertaken by single men allowed Chinese migrants, without families to support, to undercut the wages of white Australian settlers. The perceived causes of wage disparity were not limited to family, but included racial tropes, such as the suggestion that Chinese workers could subsist solely on rice, unlike white workers who required meat, and therefore required less money.¹⁹⁹ The undercutting of wages would be a major factor in white Australian resistance to Asian migration throughout the nineteenth century, whether based on economic reality or racialised fantasy.²⁰⁰

The New South Wales press was also critical of Davidson's plan.²⁰¹ The *Sydney Monitor* hoped for the failure of Davidson's scheme and warned that, 'to introduce Chinese men by the thousand without women, (they being a gross and sensual people, and addicted to

¹⁹⁵ Ohlsson, 'The Origins of a White Australia', p. 205.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Elliot to Stephen, 1 December 1837, in Australian Parliament: Joint Library Committee, *Governors' Despatches to and From England, Volume XIX, July 1837-January 1839* (The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1915), p. 205; Margaret Ray, 'Elliot, Sir Thomas Frederick (1808-1880)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41086>, accessed 27 September 2015].

¹⁹⁸ Peffer, *If they don't bring their women here*.

¹⁹⁹ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, p. 30.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-50.

²⁰¹ Ohlsson, 'The Origins of a White Australia', pp. 205-209.

a nameless vice) would be to pollute this land with crimes, which, with all its vices, New South Wales is at present free from'.²⁰² This suggestion of Chinese criminality, and specifically the threat of sexual violence, notably complemented contemporary criticisms of convict or ex-convict labour. This article was littered with sensational, hyperbolic racism, with Davidson's proposed immigrants described as 'a most outrageous evil' and 'seed of moral pestilence'.²⁰³ The article repeatedly presented Chinese men, who would be without accompanying wives or families, as sexually threatening. As in Singapore, it was precisely because migrant labourers were overwhelmingly single men, that they were able to provide cheap labour.²⁰⁴ In colonial imagery the white settler family was emerging as an idealised social unit, in contrast to the threatening single male Chinese sojourner.²⁰⁵ The *Sydney Monitor's* stance reflected the editor Edward Smith Hall's avowed aim to represent the interests of the 'poor and labouring classes' through the editorial line of his paper.²⁰⁶ Hall realised the potential resentment towards competing, cheaper sources of manual labour. In spite of Davidson's success in attracting subscribers, the opposition to his scheme revealed the social and economic fissures forming in colonial Australia, which would later become much more overt and politically charged in opposition to Chinese migration to the gold fields from the 1850s. The political disharmony amongst Australian colonists around issues of labour and migration placed additional pressure upon imperial planners to find an adequate solution.

Ultimately, and to the benefit of Davidson's detractors, the scheme failed to bring any Chinese labourers to New South Wales. A letter published in both Australian and Singaporean newspapers in May 1839 explained that the advanced money would be returned and the project would be abandoned 'temporarily'. In this letter Davidson explained that,

Shipping having been so scarce this season, and freight to England so high, has rendered it quite impossible for me to procure a vessel to go to your port with Chinese, and there being still not the latest prospect of my being able to get a vessel, I beg to return, as desired, the first, second, and third of the Treasury Bills for £1,500 sterling.²⁰⁷

Despite this setback Davidson did suggest that the project could be successful in the future. He provided details of future prices and contracts 'in case it should be wished to import

²⁰² *Sydney Monitor*, 19 June 1837.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Peffer, *If they don't bring their women here*, pp. 8-9.

²⁰⁵ Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 81.

²⁰⁶ M. J. B. Kenny, 'Hall, Edward Smith (1786–1860)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hall-edward-smith-2143/text2729>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 27 September 2015.

²⁰⁷ *Sydney Gazette*, 4 May 1839.

Chinese from this place next year'.²⁰⁸ The next year saw the outbreak of Anglo-Chinese hostilities in the First Opium War. As a result, Davidson's scheme was never put into practice. As seen in Matheson's correspondence with Wallich over the recruitment of tea cultivators, the conflict brought complications for existing migration systems. That Davidson failed completely where Matheson was able to recruit migrants can be explained by Matheson's exclusive commercial networks and access to the China coast. Davidson lacked the resources of Jardine Matheson, with their opium network allowing them to bypass the restrictions of the Chinese authorities, and any significant connections with the Chinese middlemen brokers who were essential for facilitating migration from China to Singapore.²⁰⁹

Davidson's failure can also be attributed to financial mismanagement. In contrast to the riches of Jardine Matheson, Davidson's commercial activities, both through his firm and private account, were much more limited. Davidson appears to have been largely unsuccessful in his investments during his time in Asia as he declared bankruptcy on his return to Britain.²¹⁰ Furthermore, a letter from Alexander Matheson in 1843 signalled the end of Jardine Matheson's business dealings with Davidson. Citing a loan Davidson took from the firm to purchase a house, which he instead invested in opium, Matheson explained, 'I have made up my mind to have no further transactions with you ... Our firm has suffered so much from granting credit and procuring advances, that we are quite sick of the system. I have determined never again to incur similar risks.'²¹¹ By the 1840s Davidson was no longer part of the firm's commercial or information networks.

Davidson's project had failed, and the beginning of the Opium War and his return to Britain prevented any repeat attempts. However, Davidson's attempt to establish such a scheme does show how his experience of Chinese migration in Singapore informed his attempts to procure Chinese labourers for Australia. Davidson was drawing on both the stereotypes and ideas about Chinese labourers that were circulated in print media, as well as his personal experience of Anglo-Chinese society in Singapore. As a result, Singapore fulfilled two functions. It was important both as a representative model of Chinese migration and as a site of onward migration from which Davidson could recruit migrants. Furthermore the long list of subscribers Davidson attracted, and the criticism his scheme faced, show a conflict in Australian society between the need for cheap labour, the economic interests of the white working class and the desire for racial homogeneity in the colony. Davidson's scheme

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 63.

²¹⁰ *The Examiner*, 16 November 1844.

²¹¹ Alexander Matheson (Macao) to G. F. Davidson (Hong Kong), 8 November 1843, in in MS JM/C6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

was the first attempt to introduce a significant number of Chinese labourers into a colony with a sizeable white-settler population. Its failure shows the limitation of the idealised narrative of Chinese migrant labour. Whilst Chinese labour was desired by employers and colonial authorities in both Singapore and New South Wales, in Australian colonies there was a growing class of settlers who were opposed to cheap, non-white labour. Even so, this well publicised attempt to set up a system of Chinese migration to Australia from Singapore does demonstrate the desire for Chinese migrant labour amongst many colonists and the intersection between concepts of ethnic hierarchy, land ownership and labour in colonial Australia.

Conclusion

Both of the case studies examined in this chapter show attempts to utilise Chinese migrant labour in new colonial contexts in the 1830s. Though efforts in both Assam and New South Wales failed in replicating the success of Anglo-Chinese society at Singapore they drew heavily on concepts formulated in the contact zone and circulated through imperial publishing systems. Ideas about the Chinese character – highlighted in chapter two and dominated by Jardine Matheson and their connections – were vital concepts that lay behind these migrations within the British Empire. Of particular importance was the idea that the Chinese people lived under a despotic regime, which perpetuated their current state of barbarism. Thus the Chinese had the potential to become civilized were they liberated from the authority of the Qing Empire. The example of early colonial Singapore further underlined the potential of Chinese labour and citizenship under British, rather than Chinese, governance.

Ultimately both of these experiments with Chinese labour failed on a practical level. The sense of failure also affected perceptions of Chinese labour. The movement away from the use of Chinese cultivators in Assam was part of the Tea Committee's plan from the outset. It can also be attributed to the growing use of the local Assamese labour force and the problems faced by the Assam Company shipments from the Straits Settlements. The Assam experiment drew on information about the Chinese character, as well as being influenced by observations of Singapore and the China coast. It also highlighted difference within the Chinese community with the experiment's need for skilled workers, and consequently led to the identification of types of 'genuine' Chinese. It is a particular imperial irony that the 'genuineness' of Chinese migrants should be determined by British agents in India who were entirely reliant on the knowledge and expertise of skilled Chinese tea cultivators. The distinctions raised in Assam between different types of Chinese labourer, prevented a broader critique of Chinese migrants.

Davidson's New South Wales scheme aimed to transplant the success of Chinese labour in Singapore into a different colonial context. Both the Assam and New South Wales examples point to the importance of experts and information networks – topics discussed in chapter two. The failure of Davidson's scheme, whether caused by a lack of shipping or a lack of capital, did not harm the standing of Chinese migrant labour in the eyes of employers or colonial authorities. However it did raise awareness of the opposition of white Australian settlers to cheap Chinese labour. This was an entirely new, yet significant, political dynamic in discussions of Chinese migration in the British Empire. These forces would not be fully mobilised until the gold rush era of the 1850s. In the meantime, Davidson's scheme had alerted Australian land-owners to the vast, untapped supply of labour that China offered.

These experiments with Chinese migration took place during a deterioration of Anglo-Chinese relations over the 1830s. Following the removal of the EIC monopoly in 1833 and the failure, and death, of William Napier in 1834 the relationship became ever more fractious.²¹² Over the 1830s the opium trade grew in value and volume, and Chinese government edicts against the opium trade grew in regularity. That Jardine Matheson were at the forefront of growing diplomatic tensions in the 1830s but were simultaneously involved in the procurement of Chinese labour, particularly for Assam, shows the multifarious Anglo-Chinese exchanges taking place. At the same time there was a growing labour crisis across the British Empire. Over the 1830s the abolition of various forms of coercive labour created new debates about what types of labour and colonization were desirable. As new demands for Chinese labour emerged, perceptions of the Chinese character were tested and negotiated in different contexts. This process was made possible by Jardine Matheson's access to China.

²¹² Napier, *Barbarian Eye*.

Chapter Four: Ceylon: Chinese Migration and Governor James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie, 1837-1843

Introduction

By the late 1830s China had acquired a reputation amongst imperial planners and colonial authorities in Asia as a potential source of cheap and industrious labour. At the same time the issue of labour in the British Empire was subject to intense debate. The phasing out of coercive forms of employment – slave labour, convict labour and the suspension of Indian indentured labour – left questions about how labour shortages could be filled. This had a significant impact on British colonies in the Indian Ocean, which were moving towards mass plantation production to ensure their solvency and compete economically with West Indian possessions.¹ This transformation required cheap, reliable and free labour, which was in short supply. Within this context of an imperial shift to free labour and systematic colonization, this chapter investigates the use of Chinese migrants as a solution to economic problems in the developing plantation economy of Ceylon.² The assessment of Ceylon will demonstrate the preference for Chinese immigrants as agents of economic improvement. Moreover, as in the 1830s, the role of Jardine Matheson's commercial infrastructure was essential to the possibility of procuring Chinese labourers from China. The close relationship between James Matheson and Ceylon Governor James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie serves to illustrate the importance of personal as well as commercial, official and publishing networks in facilitating Chinese migration. Crucially, this chapter reveals how the ideas about Chinese migrants that developed over the 1830s had an impact on colonial planning in Ceylon between 1837 and 1843. It also examines how these ideas were informed by wider imperial debates and issues.

Interest in the introduction of Chinese emigrants to Ceylon has been neglected in the colony's history. This is in stark contrast to other comparable Indian Ocean colonies, such as Mauritius. During the nineteenth century, labourers migrated to Mauritius from Southern India, Madagascar, Eastern Africa, China and the Straits Settlements. Many of these immigrants to Mauritius settled permanently to create a visibly multi-ethnic colonial and post-colonial society.³ In contrast, labour migration to Ceylon was dominated by emigrants from Southern India, a pattern which has formed the basis of research into the labour policy of

¹ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 102; Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire', pp. 749-768.

² Throughout this chapter the British colonial term Ceylon will be used, as opposed to Sri Lanka, to reflect contemporary usage and maintain consistency with primary documents.

³ Marina Carter and James Ng, *Forging the Rainbow: Labour Immigrants in British Mauritius* (Mauritius: Alfran & Co., 1997).

colonial authorities.⁴ The historiography of society in colonial Ceylon has focused on the different ethnic groups on the island and the perceived issues they caused for the colonial state. In particular Sujit Sivasundaram's *Islanded* discusses at length the role of British policy in exacerbating ethnic division between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority.⁵ Indeed, colonial interest in classifying and categorising the ethnic groups that made up the colony's population was at a peak in the 1830s, and is therefore of particular relevance here.

This chapter focuses on the attempts to introduce Chinese colonists to Ceylon in a period notable for increased metropolitan and economic pressure on Indian Ocean plantation colonies. The career and motivation of Governor James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie is a central concern. In particular, the labour shortages on the island and the desire of Stewart-Mackenzie to enact various forms of colonial improvement are discussed. His attempts to acquire labourers through James Matheson provides a unique personal connection between the China coast and the colonial context of Ceylon, which was heavily affected by imperial changes. That Stewart-Mackenzie turned to Matheson illustrates the continual involvement of the firm in extracting labour from the China coast during the Opium War. The repeated efforts to introduce Chinese labourers into Ceylon in the late 1830s and early 1840s reflected the impact that the British concepts of Chinese character and access to the China coast had on labour migration. Finally, the role of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (hereafter CLEC) – formed in January 1840 – in overseeing migration policy generally and filling colonial labour needs are discussed. The Empire-wide interest in labour and migration led to efforts to replicate existing systems of migration to new colonial destinations, such as Mauritius and the West Indies. As demand for cheap, voluntary labour increased across the British Empire Jardine Matheson provided a solution through their ability to extract labour directly from the China coast.

James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie

James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie only briefly served as Governor of Ceylon from his appointment in March 1837 to his departure in April 1841, when he left to take up the post of Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands. Stewart-Mackenzie's time as Governor has received little attention from historians; most have focused instead on his predecessor Robert Wilmot-Horton's longer governorship, due to its significance in terms of colonial reform. Beyond broad survey texts of Sri Lankan history, which cover his governorship briefly,

⁴ Roland Wenzlhuemer, 'Indian Labour Immigration and British Labour Policy in Nineteenth-Century Ceylon', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 41, Issue 3 (May 2007), pp. 575-602.

⁵ Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Stewart-Mackenzie has been neglected by histories of colonial Ceylon.⁶ An overview of Stewart-Mackenzie's governorship will draw out his attempts to address labour shortages and enact colonial improvements in Ceylon. An examination of Stewart-Mackenzie's relationship with James Matheson and their lengthy correspondence on the topic of Chinese immigration will then demonstrate how perceptions of the Chinese ethnic character interacted with Empire-wide labour shortages in the 1830s and 1840s. The close personal relationship between Matheson and Stewart-Mackenzie has never been discussed before, either in the histories of Jardine Matheson or of colonial Ceylon. In order to give this relationship the focus it deserves, it is necessary first to briefly consider how Stewart-Mackenzie came to be appointed to this pivotal role.

In late February 1837 it was reported in newspapers across Britain that James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie was to be appointed Governor of Ceylon.⁷ James Alexander Stewart was a Scottish aristocrat, educated in England and raised by his uncle, the 7th Earl of Galloway.⁸ In 1817 he married Lady Hood (Mary Mackenzie), the daughter and heiress of the 1st Lord of Seaforth, thereby gaining both the Mackenzie surname and extensive estates in Ross-shire. At the general election in December 1832 Stewart-Mackenzie won the Ross and Cromarty seat as a moderate Whig, and defended the seat successfully in 1835.⁹ Stewart-Mackenzie was an unremarkable choice for a colonial governorship considering his parliamentary experience and social status. Moreover the Galloway family had an imperial background. The 9th Earl of Galloway, Randolph Stewart, was a backer of the Upper Canada Clergy Society and his uncle, Charles James Stewart, served as Bishop of Quebec from 1826 to 1837.¹⁰ Stewart-Mackenzie, like William Jardine and James Matheson, was a product of a Scotland where an imperial career offered a field of opportunity for well-heeled, well-connected, ambitious men.¹¹ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie was an archetypal first-time colonial official with the requisite connections, and metropolitan social and political background, to manage Ceylon through a period of economic transformation.¹²

Despite having no direct experience of imperial administration in Asia, an examination of Stewart-Mackenzie's private papers from the early 1830s reveal his connections to

⁶ See Lennox A. Mills, *Ceylon under British Rule, 1795-1932* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) and G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005; first published 1952). Or, more recently, Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, pp. 301-302.

⁷ *Morning Post*, 25 February 1837.

⁸ Fisher, 'James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie'.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Joseph Hardwick, *An Anglican British World: The Church of England and the Expansion of the Settler Empire, c.1790-1860* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 35.

¹¹ Grace, *Opium and Empire*, p. 9.

¹² New research into Scottish migration to colonial Ceylon is underway: Professor Angela McCarthy, *University of Otago* (<http://www.otago.ac.nz/historyarthistory/staff/otago036861.html>), accessed 27 September 2015.

prominent British merchants and his political interest in metropolitan oversight of the EIC. Stewart-Mackenzie had a particularly close relationship with James Matheson. In a letter to John Lyall in 1838, Matheson wrote of his personal ties to the new Governor, describing him as a 'great friend of our uncle and aunt on which account I am showing him every attention'.¹³ Throughout Stewart-Mackenzie's private papers there are numerous insights into his close relationship with the Matheson family. For example, the purchase of land from Stewart-Mackenzie by James Matheson and correspondence between Mary Stewart-Mackenzie and Alexander Matheson on the plight of the Kintail poor.¹⁴ When Stewart-Mackenzie served on the EIC's Board of Control in 1834, James Matheson forwarded him a 'statement of Objection to the Continuance in China of a part of the East India Company's Factory for the Purpose of selling bills on India and purchasing bills on England'.¹⁵ Stewart-Mackenzie was particularly sympathetic to Matheson's objections. In forwarding Matheson's correspondence to the Board, Stewart-Mackenzie described Matheson as 'a leading partner in the House of Jardine, Matheson & Co., now perhaps one of the greatest commercial establishments in the world'.¹⁶ The family connections and networks that James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie was part of in the Scottish highlands and the metropole were utilised and further developed in Ceylon.

Imperial histories have increasingly used individuals, such as Governor Stewart-Mackenzie, to connect different colonial contexts. Such 'imperial careers' can be used to 're-imagine the geographies of the British Empire'.¹⁷ By studying individuals who moved between different locations, or had their own connections with different colonial sites, historians are able to trace processes that are neglected by conventional approaches that employ geographical or chronological boundaries. Importantly, Stewart-Mackenzie was able to 'assume, discard, reconfigure, merge, and disassociate multiple identities and roles'.¹⁸ Stewart-Mackenzie was simultaneously a colonial official, colonial reformer and a Scottish

¹³ James Matheson (Canton) to John Lyall (Calcutta), 12 June 1838, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University). Lyall was a partner in Lyall, Matheson & Co. with Hugh Matheson.

¹⁴ Copy of an act for vesting in trustees certain parts of the entailed estate of Seaforth, viz. the lands of the barony of Lewis to be sold to James Matheson of Achany and the price to be applied in payment of the entailer's debts and other purposes (1844). As a consequence of this purchase James Matheson became a perpetrator of the highland clearances. Notably involvement in the highland clearances, and the implied desire for 'improvement' is reflected in Stewart-Mackenzie's governance in Ceylon. See letter by Alexander Matheson to Mrs Stewart Mackenzie relating to measures of relief for the Kintail poor and urging assistance towards emigration (18 February 1847).

¹⁵ Letter by James Matheson, Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce, Canton, to J. A. Stewart Mackenzie, MP, Board of Control (10 November 1834), in GD46/8/23, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland).

¹⁶ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie to John Mackay, Glasgow, 7 April 1835, in GD46/8/23, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland).

¹⁷ Lester and Lambert, *Colonial lives across the British Empire*, p. 1.

¹⁸ David Nasaw, 'Historians and Biography: Introduction', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 3 (2009) pp. 573-578.

aristocrat, who was connected through family and friendship to individuals in various parts of the Empire. All of these roles and identities featured in his attempts to recruit Chinese labour. James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie's connection to James Matheson provides a unique connection between Ceylon and Canton that was contingent on a specific colonial and imperial conditions, as well as being simultaneously personal and unique.

The importance of family connections has been identified in histories of British colonial control in India. Both Margot Finn and Elizabeth Buettner have illustrated how family was crucial both socially and politically in the nineteenth century Empire, and in Asia in particular.¹⁹ This was particularly the case for Stewart-Mackenzie given his son's reliance on the firm Jardine Matheson during his service in the Opium War. The work of Zoe Laidlaw has emphasised how the 1830s was a decade of particular significance in terms a negotiation between the former reliance on personal networks and growing agendas for imperial reform.²⁰ The intersection here between broad themes of imperial reform and intimate personal connections illustrates the significance of Stewart-Mackenzie's short governorship. Notably, though Stewart-Mackenzie was a colonial official his communication with Matheson and his attempts to secure Chinese labour did not feature in his official correspondences, legislative council minutes or executive council reports. He was not acting in his official capacity. In Governor Stewart-Mackenzie's short, and fundamentally ineffective, time in Ceylon he utilised his personal, imperial connections in order to try and enact the colonial improvement that was expected in the metropole.

British Rule in Ceylon

The British took control of the Dutch possessions on the island of Ceylon in 1795 in what was meant to be a 'temporary' response to the threat of French territorial expansion in the region. By 1815 the Ceylon was a British Crown Colony. This colonial unification was achieved by a series of wars with the inland Kandyan Kingdom, through which British control had been extended to the entire island.²¹ The unification of the island under British rule has been identified by histories of Ceylon as the starting point of the island as a modern colonial state.²² Similarly to when the British seized control of Java from the Dutch in 1811, the new administration saw an opportunity to 'modernize' the island's economy and to break down

¹⁹ Margot Finn, 'Family Formations: Anglo India and the Familial Proto-State', in David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (eds.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 100-117; Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, p. 5.

²¹ Alicia Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka, 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 157.

²² *Ibid*, p. 4.

traditional social hierarchies.²³ Once the Kandyan Kingdom's political authority in the island's interior was eroded the British divided the island into five provinces: Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central.²⁴ As a result, the previous ethnic or political divides of the island were disregarded and replaced by geographical divides by colonial authorities. British rule over the entire island would lead to the creation of different ethnic hierarchies and the disruption of traditional, alternative forms of authority in the islands interior. For British colonists, Ceylon was an island of economic potential. However, the question of how to transform Ceylon into a plantation economy without an adequate supply of labour was a problem for colonial authorities over the 1820s and 1830s.²⁵

Developing a competitive export economy was a priority for British colonial administrators in Ceylon. In the late 1820s Ceylon was the subject of a Commission of Eastern Inquiry led by William Colebrooke, who resided on the island from 1829 to 1831.²⁶ The Commission's Report, published in 1833, had some significant implications for the colonial government and led to clashes with Governor Sir Robert Wilmot-Horton.²⁷ The key disagreement was over the Commission's suggestion that the colony had to become financially independent. In contrast, Wilmot-Horton believed that British colonies ought to be retained even if it meant a significant expense to the metropole. For Wilmot-Horton the civilizing mission of Empire was more important than its economic utility. Colebrooke's other recommendations included checks on the executive powers of the Governor, the centralization of the island's judicial system and integrating the different ethnic groups (including both settled-Dutch and indigenous populations) into the colonial legislative council. That the Commission's report was endorsed by the Colonial Office meant that Wilmot-Horton was compelled to increase production and exports, in order to pay for infrastructure spending, whilst the impending abolition of slavery created a labour crisis. Simultaneously, the late 1830s and early 1840s have been described as 'coffee mania' in Ceylon as there was sizeable private investment in coffee plantations, heightened by anticipated impact of abolition on West Indian coffee production.²⁸ By the mid-1830s British

²³ Donald W. Fryer and James C. Jackson, *Indonesia* (London: Ernest Benn, 1977), pp. 47-49.

²⁴ Mills, *Ceylon under British Rule*, p. 68.

²⁵ John D. Rogers, 'Early British Rule and Social Classification in Lanka', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2004), p. 626.

²⁶ Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire', p. 757; C. A. Harris, 'Colebrooke, Sir William Macbean George (1787-1870)', rev. Lynn Milne, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5867>, accessed 27 September 2015]; Report of Lieut.-col. Colebrooke, one of His Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry, upon the Administration of the Government of Ceylon (24 December 1831), in Parliamentary Papers, *Slave trade (East India).--Slavery in Ceylon. Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 1 March 1838*, 1837-38 (697).

²⁷ Vijaya Samaraweera, 'Governor Sir Wilmot-Horton and the Reforms of 1833 in Ceylon', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1972), pp. 209-228.

²⁸ Wenzlhuemer, 'Indian Labour Immigration and British Labour Policy in Nineteenth-Century Ceylon', p. 577.

metropolitan and colonial administrators were committed to transforming Ceylon's economy.²⁹

As with Britain's other Asian colonies, colonial observers were also concerned with documenting the island's history and contemporary ethnic composition.³⁰ Notions of ethnic stratification in Ceylon influenced Stewart-Mackenzie's governorship. Many nineteenth-century accounts of the island drew heavily on Robert Knox's seventeenth-century *Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon in the East Indies*, which laid the foundations of British understanding of the Kandyan Kingdom and the ethnic divisions of Ceylon.³¹ The influence of Buddhism in colonial Ceylon led British authors such as Henry Charles Sirr, William Knighton and Horatio John Suckling to emphasise the Chinese origins of human habitation.³² But more important than the origins of Ceylon's settlement, was how to define the different ethnic groups that inhabited the colony. Simon Casie Chitty – a linguistic expert and the first Singhalese member of the Legislative Council – in his version of the 1831 census, distinguished these groups and the European settlers according to whether located in the Singhalese Districts, Malabar Districts or the Kandyan Provinces.³³ In the later 1830s the official census was divided the population first by location (much like Chitty) and then by ethno-economic criteria. Within the eighteen 'Maritime' and 'Kandyan' provinces the population was divided into male or female 'Whites', 'Free Blacks', 'Slaves' and 'Aliens and Resident Strangers'.³⁴ These groups were then further divided into those employed in 'Agriculture', 'Manufacture' and 'Commerce', with the census of 1832 giving a total population for Ceylon of 1,009,008.³⁵ For colonial authorities in Ceylon ethnicity and economic utility were comparable and interconnected methods of categorisation.

The ethnic composition of Ceylon was considered important by colonial authorities for two reasons. First, the British were aware that before their conquest of the island's interior the different ethnic groups and regions had been independent and autonomous. They were also aware that despite the unification of the island Ceylon remained a 'plural society'.³⁶ Second, given the pressures put on colonial finances by the Colebrooke Commission and the

²⁹ Frank Broeze (ed), *Gateways of Asia: Port Cities of Asia in the 13th-20th Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 191.

³⁰ This can be compared to the work of John Crawford in Southeast Asia, as discussed in chapter one.

³¹ Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon In the East Indies* (London: Royal Society, 1681).

³² Henry Charles Sirr, *Ceylon and the Cingalese* (London: William Shober, 1850); Horatio John Suckling, *Ceylon; a general description of the island* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1876); William Knighton, *The History of Ceylon* (London: Longman, 1845).

³³ Simon Casie Chitty, *The Ceylon Gazetteer* (Ceylon: Gotta Church Mission Press, 1834), p. 48.

³⁴ Ceylon Blue Book (1839): CO 59/50 (National Archives); Ceylon Blue Book (1840/1): CO 59/52 (National Archives); For an example of a comparable colonial census see Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the British possessions in the Indian & Atlantic oceans* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1837), pp. 58-59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Broeze, *Gateways of Asia*, p. 200.

resulting necessity for a cheap, productive labour force, the capacity of the ‘native’ population to fulfil this need was subject to debate. In keeping with the dismissive attitude seen across the Empire in Asia, Governor Wilmot-Horton was also resistant to Colebrooke’s recommendations for indigenous representation on the legislative council.³⁷ Despite acknowledgement of ethnic difference within Ceylon’s population, some colonial observers still dismissed the ‘native’ population as a whole. British resident Sampson Brown summarised such a view in the *Ceylon Magazine*: ‘I have had some rather long chats about the natives and their moral character. They certainly are a most repelling race: there’s no making anything of them as yet, and I doubt if we ever shall.’³⁸ The views of Wilmot-Horton and Sampson Brown reflect the dismissive attitude of British colonial observers to the different ethnic groups of Ceylon, specifically played out in decisions around political representation and alternative forms of indigenous authority.

In addition to the dismissal of the ‘natives and their moral character’ colonial governors also faced pressures around labour shortages, particularly as Ceylon was affected by the abolition of slavery in the 1830s. Comparatively little is known about the origins of slavery in Ceylon as slaves on the island were often sourced domestically and scholarly literature on Indian Ocean slavery has been focused on imported slaves from the East Coast of Africa.³⁹ Though slavery in the Indian Ocean predated European involvement, the movement of slaves to Ceylon vastly increased under Portuguese and Dutch colonial governance as European capital and networks led to the increased importation of un-free labourers.⁴⁰ Under British governance the institution of slavery on the island was gradually eroded. In 1816 an Executive Act was passed that declared ‘all children who may be born of slaves from and after the 12th of August 1816 inclusive, shall be considered free’.⁴¹ Following the liberation of slave children and the prevention of slave imports, existing slaves were gradually emancipated. However, abolitionist moves by the British authorities were only reluctantly accepted by planters. In response to the emancipation of slave children a petition was sent to the Prince of Wales by ‘his Majesty’s loyal subjects, the Dutch inhabitants and native castes’ advocating that abolition be gradual so as not to subject the island’s inhabitants to excessive

³⁷ Michael Roberts, ‘Problems of Social Stratification and the Demarcation of National and Local Elites in British Ceylon’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (1974), p. 553.

³⁸ Sampson Brown, ‘Life in the Jungle, or letters from a planter to his cousin in London’, *Ceylon Magazine*, Vol.11, No.17 (January 1842), p. 234.

³⁹ Richard B. Allen, ‘Satisfying the “Want for Labouring People”: European slave trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2010), p. 73.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 73.

⁴¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Slave trade (East India).--Slavery in Ceylon. Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 1 March 1838, 1837-38 (697)*.

‘privations, losses and expenses’.⁴² The opposition from the planters – seen as essential to boosting the colony’s economy – placed additional pressure on colonial authorities to find an alternative source of labour.

There were limits to the extent of British abolitionism in Ceylon. In taking control of Kandy the British had gained access to the region with the greatest ‘economic potential’, specifically from agriculture.⁴³ The management of the Kandyan Kingdom also demonstrated the frustrations and contradictions of abolitionism. By the time slavery was abolished across the Empire in 1833 slave numbers in Ceylon were already on the decline due to earlier legislation. A despatch from the Colonial Secretary Baron Glenelg to Governor Stewart-Mackenzie in 1837 gave the total figure at that time of 27,397 slaves.⁴⁴ The limits of colonial control in Kandy were highlighted by the issue of emancipation. Rather than a plantation system, Kandyan slavery tended towards household or personal slavery with slave masters tending to own single individuals or small families. In correspondence from 1829 the colonial government estimated 2,113 people were still held in personal bondage in Kandy, but laws regulating personal slavery on the rest of the island were not extended to Kandy until the late 1830s.⁴⁵ That is not to say that the British authorities were entirely opposed to forced labour. Wilmot-Horton’s administration only abolished the *Rajakaria* – which was the government right to extract labour from land tenants as rental payment – after the labour extracted through the system was used to complete the Colombo-Kandy Road.⁴⁶ By the late 1830s Ceylon was on a trajectory of transformation into a post-slave plantation economy that would rely on free labour. Where this labour would come from was not clear. For Governor Stewart-Mackenzie, Chinese migrant labour was the preferred solution.

Governor Stewart-Mackenzie in Ceylon

James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie departed Britain to take up his Governorship in July 1837. Upon arrival he had to operate within the framework of the Colebrooke Commission’s recommendations and the policies of Governor Wilmot-Horton. The Colebrooke Commission had two major legacies for Stewart-Mackenzie. First, it had limited the executive power of the Governor by making the executive council answerable to the legislative council and by

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 575.

⁴³ Wenzlhuemer, ‘Indian Labour Immigration and British Labour Policy in Nineteenth-Century Ceylon’, p. 575.

⁴⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Slave trade (East India)*, p. 598.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 569.

⁴⁶ Mills, *Ceylon under British Rule*, p. 73.

establishing an independent judiciary.⁴⁷ Second, the Commission had set out expectations of the Colonial Office that limited the autonomy of the Governor in managing the island economy. It decreed that the colony would become economically self-sufficient, whilst ending compulsory labour and dismantling government monopolies.⁴⁸ The Commission's reforms also stressed that the colonial government should disregard social and cultural differences between ethnic groups, but pursue what metropolitan planners believed to be universal ideas of civilization and progress. To this end three 'Ceylonese' seats were created on the legislative council in 1835.⁴⁹ The main policy issues that Stewart-Mackenzie faced all related to change: the transformation of the island economy into a profitable, privatised plantation system; the complete abolition of slavery and other forms of compulsory labour; and, to borrow a phrase from his advisor Simon Casie Chitty, the improvement of the 'native character'.⁵⁰

These different challenges can be grouped under the umbrella notion of colonial improvement. Peter Marshall has distinguished between 'intellectual improvement', centred around education, and 'moral improvement', which was to be achieved through the advancement of Christianity.⁵¹ Notably, these forms of improvement were often enacted in combination. For example, missionaries played a key role in providing colonial education, covering both intellectual and moral improvement simultaneously. In Jayeeta Sharma's work on interactions between the British state and Assamese tribes, the 'improving regime' encompassed both economic productivity in the form of tea production and missionary activity to 'elevate the character of the people'.⁵² Similarly, Stewart-Mackenzie's main concern was to bring about economic improvement or 'modernization', which was simultaneously distinct from, and connected to, notions of moral or intellectual improvement. A change like the abolition of slavery is an example of the type of reform that fell under both economic and moral forms of colonial improvement. As in Assam, the transformation of Ceylon under British rule had significant implications for indigenous communities. Having lost political control, previously autonomous groups would either have to adapt to new forms of land ownership and employment relationships or, to facilitate 'economic progress', be removed or replaced.

⁴⁷ Rogers, 'Early British Rule and Social Classification in Lanka', p. 643; Vijaya Samaraweera, 'The Ceylon Charter of Justice of 1833: A Benthamite Blueprint for Judicial Reform', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 2 (1974), p. 274.

⁴⁸ Rogers, 'Early British Rule and Social Classification in Lanka', p. 639.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 639-643. These were seats specifically reserved for 'non-European' residents.

⁵⁰ Chitty, *The Ceylon Gazetteer*, p. 257.

⁵¹ Marshall, 'British-Indian connections', p. 52.

⁵² Sharma, 'Old Lords and "Improving" Regimes', in Sharma, *Empire's Garden*, pp. 119-147.

Due to the Colebrooke Commission and changing Colonial Office expectations Ceylon was under metropolitan pressure to become an efficient and profitable ‘resource pool’ for the Empire.⁵³ Following the privatization of the Dutch cinnamon monopoly, the development of coffee plantations in Ceylon in the late 1830s was an all-consuming economic project.⁵⁴ In 1837 the English import duty on Ceylon coffee was reduced to the same level as West Indian coffee, which led to a vast increase in investment in coffee cultivation.⁵⁵ The boom of private investment transformed the island. In 1834 the colonial government sold forty-nine acres of crown land for coffee cultivation, yet by 1841 the annual sales figure was 78,685 acres with a total capital investment in coffee cultivation of around £3 million between 1837 and 1845.⁵⁶ The prospects of coffee cultivation seemed so bright that the ‘Governor [Stewart-Mackenzie] and the Council, the Military, the Judges, the Clergy, and half of the Civil Servants’ were amongst the buyers.⁵⁷ The coffee plantations were not sustained long-term – they were replaced by commercial tea cultivation from the 1880s onwards – but their proliferation in the 1830s exacerbated existing labour shortages.⁵⁸ Contemporary writers noted how the labour supply and the capital available for labour was not equivalent to the demand created by the new coffee-plantations – in addition the cost of agricultural labour in Ceylon quadrupled over the 1830s.⁵⁹

Migrant labour from India was the obvious solution to Ceylon’s shortage. The Indian Ocean colony of Mauritius saw the first large scale importation of Indian ‘coolie’ labourers as indentured labourers, and the colony would act as a model for the later migration of indentured Indian labourers to the West Indies and around the Empire.⁶⁰ However, a spate of cases in which Indian labourers were killed in attempting to avoid passage to Mauritius in 1838 was a cause for concern to both the Colonial Office and the Indian government, and led the system’s suspension.⁶¹ Act XIV of 1839 enacted by the Government of India prohibited all private Indian emigration pending further investigation.⁶² A ‘Petition of the Planters, Merchants, Traders and other Inhabitants of the Island of Mauritius’ from May 1839 claimed

⁵³ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 102.

⁵⁴ Wenzlhuemer, ‘Indian Labour Immigration and British Labour Policy in Nineteenth-Century Ceylon’, p. 577.

⁵⁵ Mendis, *Ceylon under the British*, p. 66.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁵⁷ Mills, *Ceylon under British Rule*, p. 229.

⁵⁸ Rhoads Murphey, ‘Colombo and the remaking of Ceylon: A Prototype of Colonial Asian Port Cities’, in Frank Broeze (ed), *Gateways of Asia: Port Cities of Asia in the 13th-20th Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 201; As will be seen in this chapter the first experiments with tea planting were conducted in 1841 under Stewart-Mackenzie.

⁵⁹ Lieut. de Butts, *Rambles in Ceylon* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1841), p. 185.

⁶⁰ Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism*, p. 14; See Irick, *Chi'ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade*, p. 3, for the origins of the term ‘coolie’.

⁶¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Mauritius*, p. 13.

⁶² Nancy Gardner Cassels, *Social Legislation of the East India Company: Public Justice versus Public Instruction* (Ontario: Sage, 2011), p. 210.

to have recruited upwards of 20,000 ‘native Indian labourers’ in the four years between 1835 and 1839.⁶³ Ceylon was harmed by such prohibition of Indian emigration due to the fears about onward migration to colonies like Mauritius. This ordinance specifically aimed to prohibit migrants entering into contracts for other colonies, where they might be subject to abuse.⁶⁴ Although emigration was managed by the Indian Government from the 1840s to protect against abuses, only Act XIII of 1847 repealed the prohibition with respect to Ceylon due to concerns over coercive onward migration to other destinations.⁶⁵

This was the context in which Stewart-Mackenzie took control. He was expected, by the Colonial Office, to engineer significant economic change, using effective, cheap and voluntary labour, without using Indian immigrant labour. Upon taking the post of Governor, Stewart-Mackenzie wrote to a friend in Scotland giving his early opinion of Ceylon:

I have been banished to the most interesting island, the Lewis of the East, in point of civilization, cultivation and means of moving about in it. But then, how different in every other respect, such a lavish profusion of natives, most luminescent riches within the tropical regions, such heat, moisture and vegetation.⁶⁶

Stewart-Mackenzie’s feelings about his ‘banishment’ to Ceylon were revealed in his private correspondence to family and friends in Scotland. Boosting productivity in the colony, a requirement that had been emphasised by the Colebrooke Commission, was a top priority. Specifically, Stewart-Mackenzie repeatedly corresponded with the Indian government and Colonial Office on the necessity of steam powered boats for transport and the implementation of advanced agricultural techniques and technologies.⁶⁷ As well as coffee cultivation Stewart-Mackenzie was also interested in sugar production, and appealed to London for equipment as ‘we are greatly in want of the most powerful machinery’.⁶⁸ Stewart-Mackenzie maintained his personal and political networks in London and Scotland through his correspondences from Ceylon. His letters gave his views on metropolitan political issues as well as support and

⁶³ Parliamentary Papers, *Mauritius*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ The Secretary of the Government of India to Colonial Secretary for Ceylon (Fort William) 29 June 1839, in Papers regarding the employment of Indian indentured labourers overseas, correspondence of the government of Ceylon with the Government of India, IOR/F/4/1846/77642, Boards Collection (British Library).

⁶⁵ Ceylon, Repeal of Act XIV of 1839 respecting emigration to, IOR/Z/E/4/19/C671, Boards Collection (British Library).

⁶⁶ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Queen’s House Colombo) to Bawas, 31 December 1837, in GD46/9/6, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland). As an aside, the Isle of Lewis was purchased by James Matheson in 1844.

⁶⁷ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Queen’s House Colombo) to G Baillie Esq. (Agent for the Island of Ceylon, London), 17 February 1838; James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Queen’s House Colombo) to Bentinck, 12 March 1838; James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Queen’s House Colombo) to Brickham, M.D., 25 January 1839, in GD46/9/6, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland).

⁶⁸ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Queen’s House Colombo) to William Fairburn (Mill Bank, London), 25 April 1840, in GD46/9/6, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland).

resources for his projects in Ceylon. The developing of the colony's production technologies formed part of a wider drive by Stewart-Mackenzie to improve the productivity of the colony and, by extension, its inhabitants.

An examination of executive and legislative council proceedings, and Ceylon's government gazettes, reveals Stewart-Mackenzie's interest in improving the 'natives'. Such sources display his scepticism about the indigenous capacity for self-representation. Stewart-Mackenzie wrote to London, as his predecessors did, to warn against admitting locals to the civil service.⁶⁹ In his first full-length speech to the legislative council Stewart-Mackenzie promoted legislation which had been 'calculated to improve the morality and reduce crime among the lower orders generally'.⁷⁰ Improving the 'moral' character of the colony's inhabitants was a particular priority. A Government Ordinance of 1840 enacted fines or, failing that, hard labour for 'promiscuous Gaming, at cockfighting, or with any Table, Dice, Cards or other Instrument for Gaming', or for being 'convicted a third time or more often of being idle and disorderly'.⁷¹ As in Assam, the perceived Asian predilection to opium addiction was also identified by British observers in Ceylon.⁷² Notably, as in colonial Singapore, morality and industriousness were equated by colonial authorities in Ceylon. Legislation was announced by Stewart-Mackenzie's administration in November 1839 'for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons and Rogues and Vagabonds' and was followed in 1840 with an 'Ordinance for the better regulation of Servants, Labourers and Journeymen Artificers under Contracts for Hire and Service'.⁷³ Such measures can be compared to similar vagrancy legislation in the Cape Colony, which was aimed at forcing the Khoikhoi peoples into labour relationships that benefitted Western production owners.⁷⁴ Across the British Empire, and in Britain itself, legislative efforts were simultaneously made to punish unemployment and limit worker's rights. In Ceylon, both pieces of legislation were designed to prevent workers from leaving employment, through enforcing proper contracts and, ultimately, to deter 'idleness'. Through such provisions the enforced economic activity of the indigenous population was directly related to notions of moral improvement.

It was not purely through punitive legislation that Governor Stewart-Mackenzie aimed to transform Ceylon's population. Singhalese islander Simon Casie Chitty was a particular

⁶⁹ Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, p.291.

⁷⁰ Ceylon Legislative Council (1839-1841), December 5th 1839: CO 57/8 (National Archives).

⁷¹ Ceylon Legislative Council (1839-1841), October 27th 1840: CO 57/8 (National Archives).

⁷² C. G. Urugoda, 'History of Opium in Sri Lanka', *Medical History*, 27 (1983), pp. 69-76.

⁷³ Ceylon Government Gazettes (1839): CO 58/18 (National Archives); Ceylon Government Gazettes (1840): CO 58/19 (National Archives).

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Elbourne, 'Freedom at issue: Vagrancy legislation and the meaning of freedom in Britain and the Cape Colony, 1799 to 1842', *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1994), p. 117.

ally of Stewart-Mackenzie. Chitty was an orientalist author who wrote for the *Ceylon Gazetteer* and *Tamil Plutarch*, and published in the first issue of the *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1845.⁷⁵ Within weeks of his arrival Stewart-Mackenzie wrote to the Colonial Office proposing that Chitty be made one of the ‘natives’ on the Legislative Council, a post that he held until 1845.⁷⁶ Chitty also gave church services in Tamil and acted as Stewart-Mackenzie’s guide over much of the island. Education and religion were key components of Stewart-Mackenzie’s philosophy of improvement. Despite the Colonial Office’s preference for English-language education, Stewart-Mackenzie established a Translation Committee to distribute Sinhala language books in rural areas and he prioritised ‘native language’ schooling.⁷⁷ Stewart-Mackenzie also began the process of disassociating the colonial state from Buddhism on the island – a relationship that had been inherited from the Kandyan model of governance – and moving towards a new model of church-state relations based on religious freedom – specifically religious freedom for different Christian denominations. Though he was unable to completely eliminate the role of the Buddhist temples in tax collection, his successor, Governor Colin Campbell, was able to complete the separation of the traditional bonds between the temples and the state.⁷⁸ Efforts to cut the ties between colonial government and ‘idolatry’ were also underway across India in the 1830s as part of a wider process of reform under Governor-General Bentinck.⁷⁹

For Governor Stewart-Mackenzie, the issue of labour was just part of a broader programme of colonial improvement. Stewart-Mackenzie’s interest in Chinese migration would contribute to colonial improvement in two ways. Stewart-Mackenzie’s first attempt to source ‘Chinese with capital’ was an attempt to replicate the Chinese merchant elite of Singapore.⁸⁰ In this context the Chinese would fulfil a role of ‘economic improvement’ in which they would act as a collaborative force with colonial authorities. As in Singapore, such figures could also act as philanthropic moral improvers who subsidised schools, temples and hospitals. The second attempt to acquire Chinese migrants – in the form of skilled Chinese tea cultivators – was more focused on knowledge transfer, as in Assam. This attempt at recruitment was fundamentally opportunistic. Stewart-Mackenzie was connected to James Matheson who was able to recruit tea cultivators from China. This connection was not contingent on any official position or channel of communication but on links that had been exported from the Scottish highlands to Ceylon and Canton. Stewart-Mackenzie hoped to use

⁷⁵ Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, p. 292.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 292.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 303.

⁷⁸ Mills, *Ceylon under British Rule*, p. 127.

⁷⁹ Carson, *The East India Company and Religion*, p. 4.

⁸⁰ See page 161 for details of the letter that outlined this request.

Chinese labour, which he had access to through Matheson, as a tool to create resources in Ceylon. As tea cultivators the Chinese would act as agents of economic improvement and would play a role in the transformation of Ceylon into a lucrative plantation colony.

James Matheson and Chinese Migration to Ceylon

Governor Stewart-Mackenzie's attempts to source Chinese labour through his connections to Jardine Matheson have been entirely omitted from both histories of Chinese migration and colonial Ceylon. Stewart-Mackenzie's interest in Chinese labour motivated by necessity, rather than choice. He needed to boost the colony's economy without recourse to Indian immigration or forced labour.⁸¹ Most important in Stewart-Mackenzie's multiple attempts to recruit Chinese labourers and tea cultivators was his relationship with the Matheson family, which predated his time in Ceylon. The influence of Chinese migrations to Singapore and Assam can also be seen in Stewart-Mackenzie's attempts to acquire Chinese labour. At different times in his governorship Stewart-Mackenzie sought to replicate both the Chinese merchant elite of colonial Singapore and the Chinese-led tea plantations of Assam.

Examining Stewart-Mackenzie's private papers demonstrates how he developed his relationship with James Matheson after arriving in Ceylon. The two men shared regular correspondence, which can be traced through both the Stewart-Mackenzie papers and the Jardine Matheson archive. These sources show that the exportation of familial links from Scotland into the Empire, something which has been chronicled in both India and the 'Atlantic world'.⁸² Given the context of the Opium War, relations with China were a major theme in their correspondence. In Matheson's letters to Stewart-Mackenzie he gave details of events on the China coast: military movements, such as the arrival of HMS *Larne* to intimidate the Chinese government; dismissing Chinese government edicts as 'waste paper'; and regular updates for Stewart-Mackenzie on 'public affairs' in Canton.⁸³ Given that Stewart-Mackenzie had previously described Jardine Matheson as 'one of the greatest commercial establishments in the world' and had close links to the Matheson family, it is of little surprise that he defended opium smuggling.⁸⁴ In a letter of May 1839 Stewart-Mackenzie suggested that the prohibition of opium in China was futile. It was, he wrote, unbelievable that the 'whole nation will be brought, by a mere edict, to forgo the use of any

⁸¹ Cassels, *Social Legislation of the East India Company*, p. 210.

⁸² See Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) and Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world* for more on this.

⁸³ James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 12 June 1838; James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 26 January 1839, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁸⁴ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon) to John Mackay (Glasgow), 7 April 1835, in GD46/8/23, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland).

drug'.⁸⁵ In his personal letters Stewart-Mackenzie also acknowledged that 'the revenue of Bombay can't do without that derived from opium'.⁸⁶ Such a concession demonstrates his contemporary awareness of the interconnection between British imperial interests in India and the activities of Jardine Matheson on the China coast. Stewart-Mackenzie, as governor of a relatively new Indian-Ocean colony also had a vested economic interest in the expansion of British trade with China.

Stewart-Mackenzie's interest in affairs on the China coast was also linked to his immediate family. His son Keith William Stewart-Mackenzie served as a Lieutenant during the Opium War, having previously been appointed as an aide de camp to British commanders in Ceylon by his father in 1837.⁸⁷ During the conflict James Matheson acted as connection between Governor Stewart-Mackenzie and his son. For example, in June 1840 Keith Stewart-Mackenzie sent a letter to James Matheson with 'two letters for my father' enclosed.⁸⁸ Governor Stewart-Mackenzie thanked Matheson repeatedly in his letters for passing on these communications. He implored Matheson to pay special attention to the welfare of his son and emphasised how grateful both he and Mary Stewart-Mackenzie were for his service.⁸⁹ Keith Stewart-Mackenzie's time in China came to an abrupt end in June 1841 when he contracted a fever, from which he recovered at the residence of James Matheson in Macao, before his return to Britain.⁹⁰ The *Narrative of the Second Campaign in China*, written and published by Keith Stewart-Mackenzie in 1842, focused on the military operations and manoeuvres during the war.⁹¹ As well forwarding letters from his son, Matheson also sent Governor Stewart-Mackenzie copies of the *Canton Register* and the *Chinese Repository*, about which Stewart-Mackenzie was greatly appreciative as China was a 'subject of great interest'.⁹² Matheson acted as Stewart-Mackenzie's primary source of information on affairs in China and the activities of his son, who in turn was grateful for Matheson's 'friendship'.⁹³ In contrast to examples from Assam or Sydney, attempts to introduce Chinese labour to Ceylon were

⁸⁵ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pavilion Candy) to James Matheson (Canton), 17 May 1839, in MS JM/B1/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Ceylon Government Gazettes (1836-8), November 25th 1837: CO 58/17 (National Archives).

⁸⁸ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon) to James Matheson (Canton), 5 June 1840, in MS JM/B11, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁸⁹ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon) to James Matheson (Canton), 10 October 1840; James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pales Confac) to James Matheson (Macao), 12 July 1841, in MS JM/B6/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁹⁰ Medical records of Keith Stewart Mackenzie, Macao, 18 June 1841, in GD46/6/89, Mackenzie Papers (National Archives of Scotland).

⁹¹ Keith Stewart-Mackenzie, *Narrative of the second campaign in China* (London: Bentley, 1842).

⁹² James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pavilion Candy) to James Matheson (Canton), 17 May 1839, in MS JM/B1/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁹³ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pavilion Candy) to James Matheson (Canton), 20 April 1841, in MS JM/B1/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

facilitated by personal, family networks, as opposed to connections between companies or colonial and imperial government.

In their correspondence, Governor Stewart-Mackenzie also expressed interest in using Matheson's expertise to assist his trials with new plantation crops in Ceylon. As a result Matheson wrote to his business partner John Lyall in Calcutta in order to 'obtain a selection of the best vegetable seeds with directions as to their cultivation and a few melon ground seeds' for Stewart-Mackenzie at his own expense.⁹⁴ Stewart-Mackenzie used Matheson's business connections across both Eastern and Southern Asia to procure different plants for experimental cultivation. On multiple occasions Matheson referenced plants and seeds that had been sent to Stewart-Mackenzie.⁹⁵ In particular, Stewart-Mackenzie was interested in experimenting with tea cultivation in a replication of the Assam project. It is worth noting that these experiments with tea in Ceylon coincided with the successful first sale of the Assam tea in London. In an 1839 letter Stewart-Mackenzie asked Matheson for tea plants: 'I shall therefore be extremely obliged to you if, when an opportunity offers, you can send me a supply of plants ... and if, at the same time, you can procure and send me a plain, intelligible account of the culture of the plant'.⁹⁶ As with the Assam experiment Stewart-Mackenzie was reliant on the expertise and connections of Jardine Matheson, and James Matheson specifically, to source the necessary materials.

Stewart-Mackenzie's first enquiries into using Chinese migrant labour in Ceylon began at the very start of his governorship. This was linked to his broader interest in the cultivation of cash crops. Unfortunately the original correspondence from Stewart-Mackenzie is not available through the Jardine Matheson archive or the Stewart-Mackenzie papers, it is possible to deduce the nature of his requests from James Matheson's responses to them. For example, in April 1838 Matheson forwarded Stewart-Mackenzie a letter from Alexander Lawrie Johnstone – the prominent Singapore merchant and lead partner in A. L. Johnstone & Co. – 'respecting Chinese emigrants to Ceylon'. Johnstone responded by stating that 'I do not think there is any probability of Chinese with capital emigrating to Ceylon. But I have little doubt they might be induced to go over as labourers'.⁹⁷ From this response, it can be deduced that Stewart-Mackenzie had specifically been seeking 'Chinese with capital', presumably as

⁹⁴ James Matheson (Canton) to John Lyall (Calcutta), 12 June 1838, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁹⁵ James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 12 June 1838; James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 26 January 1839, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁹⁶ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon) to James Matheson (Canton), 19 July 1839, in MS JM/B1/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁹⁷ James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart Mackenzie (Ceylon), 11 April 1838, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

investors in cinnamon and coffee cultivation like in Singapore. Johnstone, drawing on his own experience in Singapore, elaborated that although unlikely, it would be preferable for Stewart-Mackenzie to attract self-employed Chinese migrants, rather than labourers:

The Chinese would be found most useful to the colony, their improvement would be infinitely greater when they were interested themselves, than working as labourers for others ... All the cultivation in the interior of Singapore Island has been made by Chinese.⁹⁸

In this correspondence, the language of 'improvement' is present, though it is unclear whether it was first used by Stewart-Mackenzie or Johnstone. That Matheson turned to Johnstone's expertise demonstrated an acknowledgement of the success of Chinese emigration to Singapore. It also demonstrated a personal rather than commercial connection between the largest British merchant house in Canton and Singapore's premier firm, A.L. Johnstone & Co., which prospered in the Straits Settlements until its closure in the 1890s.⁹⁹ Again, commercial or colonial connections were supplemented and influenced by personal ties. Notably, when Matheson was asked about Chinese emigration by Stewart-Mackenzie, he turned to the 'imperial template' of Singapore.

Matheson's involvement in recruiting Chinese labourers also allowed him to claim personal expertise on the topic of Chinese emigration. He found space in the form of a lengthy 'additional memoranda' to share his own expertise on Chinese emigration.¹⁰⁰ Matheson gave Stewart-Mackenzie an overview of the 'great numbers' of Chinese who emigrated annually to 'Singapore, Malacca and Penang'.¹⁰¹ He also weighed up the positives of Chinese migration to Ceylon, such as the cheap price of sustenance given by Ceylon's 'rice' production, against possible negatives, such as the sojourning nature of Chinese migration that limited settlement.¹⁰² Matheson's recommendation for a system of emigration was for Chinese migrants to be landed in Ceylon by British and Portuguese vessels passing from China to Bombay. Furthermore Matheson foresaw that to give this plan 'stability' it would be,

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Roland Braddell et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore, 1819-1919, Vol. II* (London: John Murray, 1921); W. H. Read, *Play and Politics: Recollections of Malaya by an Old Resident* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 1901).

¹⁰⁰ Notably this 'memoranda' was enclosed in this private letter, it was not written for a wider audience.

¹⁰¹ James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 11 April 1838, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Found advisable to hold out encouragement for some families to remove from the Straits of Malacca, who would serve as a managers for new operations. Some individuals of good character accustomed to intercourse with the English, would be also desirable to act as overseers and interpreters.¹⁰³

As in previous chapters the notion of ‘good character’ is significant. There are clear similarities with the Assam experiment in terms of importance put upon ‘overseers’ and ‘interpreters’ in the recruitment and management of Chinese labourers. Judging by the comments of both Matheson and Johnstone, the focus of Stewart-Mackenzie’s request appeared to be for a moneyed class of Chinese migrants who would comply with British colonial authority to create a plantation economy, as in Singapore. A community leader like Seah Eu Chin – who was a notable figure in colonial Singapore as a major employer and plantation owner – would have been exactly the type of migrant Stewart-Mackenzie was looking to attract alongside a larger labouring population. In late 1838 Stewart-Mackenzie suggested to Matheson that his memoranda had been ‘interesting’ and pledged to forward any future news on the subject.¹⁰⁴

Governor Stewart-Mackenzie next approached Matheson over the issue of Chinese migration in February 1840. Stewart-Mackenzie was now specifically interested in facilitating tea cultivation in Ceylon. The timing of this project was important. The first batch of Assam tea was successfully sold in London in 1839, but the problems with the Assam Company’s recruitment of Chinese labour were not known publicly until late 1840. Stewart-Mackenzie was acting during a period of optimism about the prospects of Chinese tea cultivation in Assam. He asked James Matheson for the ‘acquirement of the common labourer who would look after a tea plantation about to be established’.¹⁰⁵ Despite having grandiose plans for a system of tea cultivation that would provide ‘employment for a very large number’, Stewart-Mackenzie initially requested ‘good labourers’ numbering ‘50 to 100’.¹⁰⁶ As well as Chinese tea cultivators, Matheson was also asked for a ‘large supply of tea seed ... packed in boxes with light sand’ and, in contrast to the 1838 correspondence, specified that these migrants need be ‘single men, and in the prime of life, stout and able bodied’.¹⁰⁷ This request for Chinese tea cultivators for Ceylon, using the resources of James Matheson on the China coast, was an almost direct replication of the Assam experiments of the 1830s. Stewart-Mackenzie’s request for ‘stout and able bodied’ men was also reminiscent of the language of systematic

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ James Matheson (Canton) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 24 September 1838, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁰⁵ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon) to James Matheson (Canton), 7 February 1840, in MS JM/B1/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

emigration and colonization in general. This appeal came just six months after James Matheson had agreed the final contracts with tea cultivators for Assam. In this instance the specific pressures on Governor Stewart-Mackenzie to create a plantation economy – rather than a vague desire for colonial improvement – necessitated his interest in procuring Chinese tea cultivators.

Ultimately, however, Stewart-Mackenzie's plans for Chinese managed tea cultivation went unrealised. Stewart-Mackenzie was a divisive figure in Ceylon due to his role in religious and educational reforms, and he was reassigned by the Colonial Office as High Commissioner to the Ionian Islands in 1841.¹⁰⁸ As such, Stewart-Mackenzie informed Matheson that he would be returning to Europe in April 1841, asking Matheson to give 'good advice' to his son and expressing 'regret' that he was unable to undertake the 'cultivation of tea'.¹⁰⁹ In anticipation of this news Matheson had already delayed transporting tea cultivators to Ceylon:

I have been hesitating a good deal whether to send you Chinese Tea Cultivators by the *England* - having them here ready - but on showing your letter to your son the both of us came to the conclusion that it had better be deferred for the present.¹¹⁰

With this Matheson enclosed copies of the contracts signed by tea cultivators as part of the Assam experiment. Because of the problems with Chinese migrants in Assam in 1840 he warned Stewart-Mackenzie that 'you have considerable risk of finding them not qualified, a point we have no means of ascertaining here'.¹¹¹ In addition to the problem of unqualified recruits in Assam, we can see here the limiting effects of the Opium War on access to labour from China. This would be Matheson's last personal involvement in the recruitment of Chinese workers. In response, Stewart-Mackenzie was 'well satisfied' that the Chinese cultivators recruited by Matheson had not been sent because he would not be able to oversee the project personally.¹¹²

Stewart-Mackenzie's later correspondence with Matheson provides further evidence of the conceptual link between economic development and colonial improvement, similar to that seen in Assam. As seen in his ordinances as Governor, Stewart-Mackenzie was particularly

¹⁰⁸ Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, p. 301.

¹⁰⁹ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pavilion Rundy) to James Matheson (Canton), 20 April 1841, in MS JM/B6/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹¹⁰ James Matheson (Macao) to James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon), 9 January 1841, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Ceylon) to James Matheson (Canton), 16 May 1841, in MS JM/C5, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

interested in discouraging 'idleness' amongst the island's population. In his letter to Matheson expressing regret at his failure to institute Chinese-run tea cultivation on the island, Stewart-Mackenzie explained his self-appointed task as governor:

The great work which I had down to myself, of endeavouring systematically to improve and advance the mental resources of the varied population of the island, an attempt of which I confess I would not have despaired to lay the foundations, had I been fortunate enough to remain in the Government 3 or 4 years longer.¹¹³

This quest to 'improve and advance the mental resources' of the Ceylon's population gives a clue as to why Stewart-Mackenzie, like colony-builders in Singapore in particular, had initially sought to introduce 'Chinese with capital' to Ceylon in place of indigenous investors. The request for Chinese tea cultivators, as in Assam, was born out of necessity. Notably, Stewart-Mackenzie had not sought a few overseers but a significant number of 'good labourers'. His two different attempts to source Chinese labour, born of different motivations and circumstances, display how Chinese migrants were deemed useful in the economic transformation of Ceylon. Despite the abandonment of the tea planting project, Stewart-Mackenzie left a legacy for large-scale tea cultivation in Ceylon.

Stewart-Mackenzie's short governorship and his death in 1843, means that little evidence of his broader ideas about 'Chinese character' exists. Unlike figures such as John Crawford or Gordon Forbes Davidson, it is unclear whether or not Stewart-Mackenzie was especially interested or engaged with contemporary discourse on the Chinese character, other than through his correspondence with James Matheson or his reading of the *Canton Register*. Prospects of using Chinese labour in Ceylon were contingent on a specific context at a specific time. In Stewart-Mackenzie's obituary in the *Ceylon Herald* he was praised for his devotion to 'Christian philanthropy' and lauded as a 'martyr'.¹¹⁴ The way that Stewart-Mackenzie was eulogised in the *Herald* reflected his preoccupation with improvement. His governorship was remembered fondly as defined by 'good intention, combined with liberal views' and the deep interest 'he took in every cause which had civilization or Christianity for its object'.¹¹⁵ Stewart-Mackenzie believed that Chinese migrants of different social classes and economic roles had a part to play in the spread of 'civilization' in Ceylon, though he did not remain in office long enough to personally implement such change.

The brevity of Stewart-Mackenzie's governorship not only limited his ability to recruit Chinese labourers and implement his desired changes, but it also causes a problem for

¹¹³ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pavilion Candy) to James Matheson (Canton), 20 April 1841, in MS JM/B6/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

¹¹⁴ *Ceylon Herald*, 1 December 1843.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

historians. Whilst Sivasundaram has detailed the problems Stewart-Mackenzie faced with the English-language press in the colony, his administration has been generally ignored by scholars.¹¹⁶ His failure to implement any significant policy of colonization contrasts with the Assam tea plantation or the debates over the nature of labour in Australia, which lasted decades. Despite Stewart-Mackenzie's failure, his attempts to source Chinese labour from Jardine Matheson provide a significant insight into issues of labour and ethnicity in the British Empire in Asia in the late 1830s. Again, colonial officials had advocated the replacement of indigenous populations with Chinese migrant labour. This was an emerging pattern in colonial development in Asia, and was connected to the access to the Chinese labour market that Jardine Matheson were able to provide.

Although Stewart-Mackenzie failed to establish a Chinese-run tea industry in Ceylon, tea cultivation did eventually prosper and surpassed the 'coffee mania' that had gripped investors in the late 1830s. The development of the Ceylon tea industry was modelled on the success of Assam. The Ceylon Agricultural Society was founded in 1841 and, by the 1870s, Ceylon had established a reputation of as a centre of 'scientific agriculture'.¹¹⁷ The 'Belfast Chameleon' Sir James Emerson Tennent, one of the primary chroniclers of the colony's development over the nineteenth century, remarked that 'should it ever be thought expedient to cultivate tea in addition to coffee in Ceylon, the adaptation of the soil and climate has thus been established, and it only remains to introduce artisans from China to conduct the subsequent processes'.¹¹⁸ In the 1860s a small number of Chinese artisans were brought to Ceylon and the suitability of Ceylon as a centre for tea production was firmly established amongst the colonial planting community.¹¹⁹

The development of a plantation economy was connected philosophically to improving both the population and economic performance of the colony. Stewart-Mackenzie's self-appointed task of improving the 'mental resources of the varied population' was continued by his successors.¹²⁰ Educational and religious reform remained a core part of colonial governance. For example, British authors in the late nineteenth century described Buddhism in Ceylon as 'Protestant Buddhism' while 'improvement societies' such as the YMCA were

¹¹⁶ Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, pp. 305-308.

¹¹⁷ T. J. Barron, 'Science and the Nineteenth-Century Ceylon Coffee Planters', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 16 (1987), pp. 9-17.

¹¹⁸ J. Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon: an account of the island physical* (London: Longman, 1859), p. 251; Jonathan Jeffrey Wright, "'The Belfast Chameleon': Ulster, Ceylon and the Imperial Life of Sir James Emerson Tennent', *Britain and the World*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2013), p. 196.

¹¹⁹ Barron, 'Science and the Nineteenth-Century Ceylon Coffee Planters', p. 18.

¹²⁰ James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie (Pavilion Candy) to James Matheson (Canton), 20 April 1841, in MS JM/B6/9, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

active in Ceylon from the late 1850s.¹²¹ Importantly, the urban indigenous populations, not those who would be expected to form a rural plantation labour force, were co-opted easily into British colonial authority.¹²² A solution to the perceived inability of the indigenous population to form a colonial labouring class was to induce mass immigration from Southern India. This system was deregulated from 1847 and encouraged by colonial investors such as John Ferguson in response to the economic crisis of the 1880s.¹²³ The legacies of the colonial era on concepts of ethnicity in Ceylon have been understandably side-lined by a focus on ethnicity following Sri Lankan independence.¹²⁴ Yet it is important to note the role of British governance in forging the connection between ideas about ethnicity and certain forms of labour in Ceylon. Lieutenant de Butts' comments in his 1840 writing about the extension of the coffee estates reflected the British view that the benefits of plantation agriculture went beyond finance. He wrote of plantation agriculture that 'an immense alteration will be effected in the heretofore desert wastes of the island, and, as a necessary consequence, in the moral character and intellectual advancement of its inhabitants'.¹²⁵

Imperial Labour Shortages and Chinese Migration in the 1840s

The issues Stewart-Mackenzie faced in Ceylon were both local and imperial in nature. Notions of colonial improvement – whether economic, moral and intellectual – were not confined to Ceylon. They were increasingly attached to issues of colonization and labour migration across the British Empire. The creation of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (hereafter CLEC) resulted from both the growing interest in centralized imperial colonization policy and an Empire-wide labour shortage. The CLEC became increasingly aware of the possibility of using Chinese labour in new colonies to address labour shortages on an imperial scale. Zoe Laidlaw's *Colonial Connections* highlights the 'information revolution' taking place in the Empire, which made use of the 'blue books' compiled annually by colonial governors from 1822.¹²⁶ New information available in the metropole greatly informed calls for a more organised migration policy to meet the needs of the colonies.

¹²¹ Elizabeth J. Harris, *Theravada Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, Missionary and Colonial Experience in Nineteenth-Century Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Yasmine Gooneratne, 'The Two Societies: A Study of Town Life in Nineteenth-Century Ceylon', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 3 (1966), pp. 338-359.

¹²² Roberts, 'Problems of Social Stratification and the Demarcation of National and Local Elites in British Ceylon', p. 577.

¹²³ John Ferguson, *Ceylon and Her Planting Enterprise* (Colombo: Ceylon Observer Press, 1885), p. ix; Ceylon, Repeal of Act XIV of 1839 respecting emigration to, IOR/Z/E/4/19/C671, Boards Collection (British Library), p. 467.

¹²⁴ Damien Kingsbury, *Sri Lanka and the Responsibility to Protect: Politics, Ethnicity and Genocide* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012).

¹²⁵ De Butts, *Rambles in Ceylon*, p. 5.

¹²⁶ Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, p. 171.

One of the loudest and most consistent voices calling for an improved system of colonization was that of Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Wakefield's primary concern was that free migrants, not slaves or convicts, should be procured for the Australian colonies by the imperial government in London.¹²⁷ He disseminated his ideas through texts such as *Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australasia* and a *Sketch of a Proposal for Colonising Australia*, and in 1830 Wakefield established the National Colonization Society.¹²⁸ This society became influential. For example, Robert Torrens chaired the society and was made a CLEC Commissioner in 1840. Having helped to float the South Australian Land Company in 1832, Torrens was a supporter of 'self-supporting colonization', which encouraged peasant proprietorship, and was able to exert his influence through the CLEC.¹²⁹ The clout of Wakefield's supporters of free labour and assisted emigration meant that their ideas affected imperial policy. By the beginning of the 1840s the empire in Asia and Australasia was seen as a tempting field for state managed colonization.¹³⁰

As measures were taken to increase voluntary migration by the Colonial Office, specifically to Australian colonies, a framework to manage the bureaucracy of emigration became increasingly necessary. For example, Thomas Frederick Elliot, one of the original three Commissioners, worked with the London Emigration Committee from 1831 and was Agent-General for Emigration from 1837. Elliot's management of emigration, originally focused on South Australia, soon broadened.¹³¹ The growing involvement of the Colonial Office in migration led to the creation of the CLEC by the Colonial Secretary Lord Russell in January 1840.¹³² The Commission consisted of three members – Thomas Elliot, Robert Torrens and E. E. Villiers – who were appointed to serve as 'the connecting link between the disposal of Crown Lands and the conveyance of immigrants'. They were also engaged in distributing funds designated by the Colonial Office for the promotion of emigration.¹³³ Elliot, who had strong expertise in the field of emigration, was made the chairman of the CLEC and took the lead on Empire-wide migration policy.¹³⁴

Insight into the work of the Commission can be best gained from the 'General Reports'. The 1842 report gives some insight into the scope of the Commission's early

¹²⁷ Moss, 'Edward Gibbon Wakefield'.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Peter Moore, 'Torrens, Robert (1780?–1864)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27565>, accessed 27 September 2015].

¹³⁰ Morrell, *British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell*, p. 5.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Hitchens, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 1840-78*, p. 308.

¹³⁴ Margaret Ray, 'Elliot, Sir Thomas Frederick (1808–1880)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41086>, accessed 27 September 2015].

activities.¹³⁵ The first section dealt with the ‘Diffusion of Information’, which included both information from the colonies (such as population statistics) and from parliament (such as details of schemes for assisted emigration).¹³⁶ The second section was concerned with the ‘Disposal of Lands’ in the colonies. These included Antipodean colonies, such as New South Wales, Van Diemen’s Land, Western Australia and New Zealand; Central and North American possessions, including Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and the West Indies; and ‘additional colonies’, such as the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon and the Falkland Islands.¹³⁷ Importantly, though the desire to manage issues of labour on an imperial scale was stimulated by the specific issues of the abolition of convict transportation and slavery, the institutions that emerged dictated policy beyond these specific colonial contexts. The ‘Disposal of Lands’ supplemented the third section of ‘Emigration’ as land available in the colonies was seen as the primary method of inducing free migration. The ‘Emigration’ section gave an overview of migration levels to the colonies, emigration levels from the United Kingdom, and discussed legislation for the regulation of and encouragement of migration.¹³⁸ The scope of the CLEC’s work over the 1840s became increasingly broad – encompassing control over the disposal of crown lands and emigration, as well as the collection and dissemination of information.¹³⁹

In response to the imperial labour crisis the CLEC sought more information on China as a possible source of immigrants. In order to discover more, the CLEC drew on existing information about Chinese migrant labour and the expertise of British observers from across Britain’s Asian Empire. Indeed, Elliot had already compiled much information detailing his involvement in Australian migration on the ‘Capabilities of the Chinese to become good emigrants to the colony of New South Wales’.¹⁴⁰ The 1843 General Report included a ‘Proposal to obtain emigrants from the Straits of Malacca’ for British plantation labour in the West Indies. This was based on the contemporary accounts of the competence of Chinese labour and the ‘number of emigrants who arrived at Singapore in 1842 and 1843’.¹⁴¹ The work of the CLEC was essential in identifying Chinese labourers as a suitable source of replacement labour for former slave-holding colonies.¹⁴² For information on the utility of the

¹³⁵ Though their work began in 1840, the first General Report was not published as a Parliamentary Paper until 1842.

¹³⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *Colonial Land and Emigration. General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners*, 1842 (567).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, p. 192. By 1849 the report covered many of the same issues, but with an increasing interest in cross-colonial migration, Parliamentary Papers, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission. Ninth general report of the Colonial Land and emigration Commissioners*, 1849 (1082).

¹⁴⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *Capabilities of the Chinese to become good emigrants to the colony of New South Wales*, 1838 (389), p. 49.

¹⁴¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission. Report*, 1843 (621), pp. 32-33.

¹⁴² Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism*, p. 10.

Chinese in the Straits Settlements, Elliot turned to the expertise of John Crawfurd. In response to a list of questions about the nature of Chinese labour from the Commission, Crawfurd extolled the virtues of the Straits Chinese.¹⁴³ Importantly for the planned scheme, Crawfurd assured Elliot that the Chinese would be able to fulfil the requirements of the plantation system as they were ‘a sort of ambidextrous people who can turn their hands to anything’.¹⁴⁴ Again, it was the knowledge of experts like Crawfurd, coupled with the experience of Chinese colonists in the Straits Settlements, which provided metropolitan planners with a possible solution to the Empire-wide labour shortage.

Like Singapore, another British colony, Mauritius, became a template of the utility of Chinese labour in developing plantation colonies. The possibility of using Chinese labourers on Mauritian sugar plantations had been raised as a possibility from the beginning of British rule. Robert Townsend Farquhar, who served as Governor of Mauritius from 1810 to 1817 and again between 1820 and 1823, was the first colonial administrator to experiment with Chinese. Farquhar had witnessed the economic benefits of using Chinese emigrant communities as Lieutenant-Governor of Penang in 1804.¹⁴⁵ Between 1788 and 1810 the Chinese population in Penang increased from 537 to 5,088.¹⁴⁶ As a result of his time in Penang, Farquhar wrote *Suggestions for counteracting any injurious effects upon the population of the West India colonies from the abolition of the slave trade* in 1807, in which he advocated a scheme for encouraging Chinese labourers to migrate to the West Indies as a replacement for African slave labour.¹⁴⁷ This suggestion led to the establishment of a select committee to report into the possibility of using Chinese labourers in the West Indies in 1811. The committee ultimately decided against the scheme due to concerns over its practicality in terms of distance.¹⁴⁸ Disappointed by the Committee’s decision Farquhar despatched a Chinese immigrant in Mauritius (Hayme) to recruit more Chinese labourers for the colony in 1821.¹⁴⁹ Notably, despite Farquhar’s experience, he was reliant on a Chinese intermediary already resident in Mauritius. Hayme returned in 1826 with a select group of carpenters –

¹⁴³ Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration. West Indies and Mauritius. Correspondence relative to emigration of labourers to the West Indies and the Mauritius, from the west coast of Africa, the East Indies, and China, since the papers already laid before the House*, 1844 (530) pp. 269-271.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 270.

¹⁴⁵ For more on Farquhar’s time in Penang see Anthony Webster, ‘British Expansion in South East Asia and the Role of Robert Farquhar, Lieutenant-Governor of Penang 1804-5’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 1995), pp. 1-25.

¹⁴⁶ Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka*, pp. 185-187.

¹⁴⁷ G. B. Smith, ‘Farquhar, Sir Robert Townsend, first baronet (1776–1830)’, rev. Lynn Milne, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9180>, accessed 27 September 2015].

¹⁴⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the committee appointed to consider of the practicability and expediency of supplying our West India colonies with free labourers from the east*.

¹⁴⁹ Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo Huguette, *Chinese Diaspora in Western Indian Ocean* (Mauritius: MSM, 1985), p. 69.

Whampoo, Hankee, Nghien, Hakkim and Ahim – and in 1829 the Planter’s Association recruited a small group of agricultural labourers meaning that by 1830 the Chinese community in Mauritius numbered twenty-six.¹⁵⁰ Huguette’s work on Chinese communities in the Indian Ocean projects an average of twelve new Chinese arrivals per year over the course of the 1830s. As such, by the time Indian indentured labour was suspended in 1839 the planters of Mauritius were already familiar with the systems through which Chinese labourers could be acquired. Between 1837 and 1843 more than 2,100 Chinese labourers arrived in Mauritius, with most shipments coming from the Straits Settlements of Penang and Singapore.¹⁵¹

Chinese migration to Mauritius in the early was seen as template for the wider Empire. Specifically, systems of Chinese indentured labour were later replicated in the West Indies, with supply established through Jardine Matheson and connected firms in the late 1840s. One of the main challenges facing the imperial planners and colonial planters was filling the labour shortage created by abolition.¹⁵² The challenge was to secure a workforce that was both cheap and productive. The CLEC saw Chinese labourers as a solution in the similar plantation context of the West Indies. Lord Stanley was sent copies of the agreements entered into by Chinese labourers in Mauritius by the CLEC when he was determining the details for state managed indentured agreements between Chinese migrants and the West India Committee.¹⁵³ The CLEC Report of 1843 praised Chinese migrants as ‘by far the most industrious and most hardy of oriental labourers’.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, when the CLEC’s *Colonization Circular* of 1843 gave the bounty rules for Chinese Emigration to the West Indies it was suffixed by John Crawford’s ‘paper on Chinese labourers’ which detailed the terms of Chinese labour migration to the Straits Settlements and again praised the Chinese character.¹⁵⁵ It is notable that even after having returned to Britain permanently in 1827 Crawford’s expertise was invoked by the CLEC sixteen years later. The CLEC saw Chinese labour migration to the Straits Settlements, and subsequently Mauritius, as something replicable in the post-slave economy of the West Indies. As British access to the China coast increased after 1842,

¹⁵⁰ Carter and Ng, *Forging the Rainbow*, p. 4; Huguette *Chinese Diaspora in Western Indian Ocean*, pp. 23-73.

¹⁵¹ Chinese arrival figures from ‘An Overview of the History of Indenture’, Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site (<http://www.aapravasighat.org/English/Resources%20Research/Documents/History%20of%20Indenture.pdf>) accessed 27 September 2015. Original figures available from PE 159, *Register of Chinese Immigrants* (Mauritius National Archives, 1843).

¹⁵² Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission*, p. 309.

¹⁵³ Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration. West Indies and Mauritius*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Colonial Land and Emigration Commission Report of 1843*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁵⁵ Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, *Colonization Circular* (30 October 1843), pp. 34-37.

Chinese indentured migration to the West Indies developed into a highly organized system that transported thousands of labourers annually.¹⁵⁶

This new system of labour importation resulted from the abolition of slavery, and the subsequent reluctance of freed slaves to take work as waged labourers on their former plantations. The British state was therefore desperate to assist the West India planters in sourcing labour in order to maintain the colony's economic output. There had been a solitary, unrepeated, experiment with 200 Chinese contract labourers in 1806 and the report on the possibility of Chinese labour as a replacement for slave labour, instigated by Farquhar, in 1810. However, the 1840s saw a new wave of interest in solving the labour crisis in the West Indies.¹⁵⁷ The practicalities of using both Chinese and Indian labour were explored repeatedly in Colonial Office correspondences, CLEC reports and select committee reports.¹⁵⁸ Lord Stanley permitted the immigration of Chinese labourers to the West Indies from 1843 provided that the system be regulated through government licences to avoid the types of abuses seen in the Indian indenture system. Additionally, Stanley stipulated that labourers had to be procured from the British Straits Settlements, as opposed to the Chinese treaty ports.

Table 4.1. Licenses for Chinese Labourers from the Straits Settlements to the West Indies

| Date of License | To Whom Granted | Colony | Number of Labourers |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 3 November 1843 | Cavan Brothers & Co. | Trinidad | 150 |
| 3 November 1843 | Reid Irving, & Co. | Trinidad | 150 |
| 3 November 1843 | Cavan Brothers & Co. | British Guiana | 400 |
| 4 November 1843 | G. Anderson, Esq. | British Guiana | 500 |
| 4 November 1843 | Neill Malcom, Esq. | Jamaica | 400 |
| 13 November 1843 | Cavan Brothers & Co. | British Guiana | 250 |
| 13 November 1843 | G. Labalmondriere | British Guiana | 500 |
| 30 November 1843 | H. Barkly, Esq. | British Guiana | 250 |
| 1 January 1844 | Bosanquet & Naghton | British Guiana | 250 |
| | | | 2850 |

Source: Licenses granted for the conveyance of Chinese Labourers from the British settlements in the Straits of Malacca to Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad, Colonial Office, 6 March 1844: CO129/4 (National Archives).

¹⁵⁶ Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism*, p. 55; This issue of British access to the China coast after the Treaty of Nanking leading new systems of migration will be discussed in chapter five.

¹⁵⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the committee appointed to consider of the practicability and expediency of supplying our West India colonies with free labourers from the east*; Walton, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean sugar*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration. West Indies and Mauritius*; Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on West India Colonies*, 1842 (479); Parliamentary Papers, *West Indies. Copies or extracts of correspondence relative to the labouring population in the West Indies*, 1845 (642).

The uptake of the license system, shown in Table 4.1, demonstrates the early interest in the use of Chinese labour in the West Indies. Abolition had not led to a significant decrease in the number of coffee plantations in the West Indies, which was an anticipated response to emancipation that would have mitigated some of the demand for imported labour.¹⁵⁹ However, the lifting of the ban on Indian emigration shortly after the licenses were granted meant there was no further state managed immigration from China until an order for 5,000 labourers from the newly established British firm Syme, Muir & Co. in 1849.¹⁶⁰

It was not until 1851 that a regular system of Chinese emigration to the West Indies emerged. Emigration agent James T. White was dispatched from Calcutta to the Chinese treaty port of Amoy to oversee the government managed emigration system directly from the China coast. White's recruitment efforts on the China coast, especially in Hong Kong, have been dismissed by historians as a failure. In particular he faced competition for ships, which preferred to take lucrative credit-ticket passengers to California. He did enjoy some success through the British firm Tait & Co., as indicated by his records which provide the most detailed Chinese emigration figures available.¹⁶¹ By January 1853 White had secured 1,022 labourers for Trinidad aboard the *Australia* (445 migrants), *Clarendon* (257 migrants) and *Lady Flora Hastings* (320 migrants), with arrangements for a further 800 labourers for Demerara and 700 for Trinidad.¹⁶² Despite later Chinese resistance and problems with the passenger trade, which are outlined in chapter five, the labour shortages in the West Indies was so severe that the CLEC and the Colonial Office were unwilling to stop the trade.¹⁶³ Chinese migration to the West Indies in the 1850s demonstrates how metropolitan planners had replicated systems of Chinese migration to Mauritius, which were themselves replications of migration to the Straits Settlements. The drive for colonial improvement, exemplified by the economic transformation of Ceylon, played a pivotal role in the extension of systems of Chinese migration to new destinations in the British Empire.

Conclusion

Experiments with Chinese migrant workers to the Indian Ocean Colonies of Ceylon and Mauritius in the late 1830s and early 1840s both built on and modified existing systems of Chinese labour migration. The development of a plantation economy in Ceylon was directly

¹⁵⁹ John M. Talbot, 'On the Abandonment of Coffee Plantations in Jamaica after Emancipation', *Journal of Imperial Commonwealth History*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2015), pp. 38-39.

¹⁶⁰ Governor George Bonham (Hong Kong) to the Earl Grey, 10 November 1849. For more on Syme, Muir & Co. see chapter five.

¹⁶¹ Skeldon (ed.), *Emigration from Hong Kong*, p. 23.

¹⁶² James T. White to E.A. Blundell (Straits Settlements), 19 January 1853.

¹⁶³ Irick, *Chi'ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade*, p. 101. See chapter five for more on the problems with the Chinese passenger trade from China's 'treaty ports'.

modelled on the experiment with tea cultivation in Assam. Likewise migration to Mauritius was informed by Robert Townsend Farquhar's experience in the Straits Settlements. The replication of Chinese labour systems in different colonies was influenced by a growing metropolitan interest in ethnicity and labour migration. The involvement of the CLEC was an example of the interplay between imperial and colonial concerns. It is also important to emphasise the role that individuals played. Stewart-Mackenzie's attempts to bring Chinese labourers to Ceylon, like the Assam experiment, drew upon the resources and networks of Jardine Matheson. Stewart-Mackenzie's preconceptions about the possible impact of Chinese migration in Ceylon demonstrated the impact of ideas about Chinese character that had been developed over the 1820s and 1830s in contact zones like Singapore. In Ceylon, in the late 1830s, ideas about Chinese character and the access to China itself offered by Jardine Matheson intersected with broad imperial conversations about labour and ethnicity.

The example of Ceylon demonstrates the different factors that stimulated interest in Chinese labour. First, the transition to plantation economies based on 'free' labour was a major catalyst for a serious pan-imperial examination of the possibilities of sourcing labour from new locations. In addition, the specific limits placed on Indian emigration meant that the Chinese, perceived to be a cheap and reliable alternative, were increasingly sought. Governor Stewart-Mackenzie's repeated attempts to attract different types of Chinese migrants – including migrants with capital, general labourers, and tea cultivators – demonstrates the link between ethnicity and labour more clearly than our previous examples. Stewart-Mackenzie's interest in colonial improvement and his legislative commitment to dissuading 'idleness' demonstrated a clear connection between a propensity to labour and the relative value of different ethnic groups. Crucially, the economic issues Stewart-Mackenzie faced in Ceylon were replicated elsewhere. As demonstrated by the increasingly broad brief of the CLEC, issues of 'economic improvement' were placed at the forefront of imperial planning. Theorists, such as Wakefield, advocated assisted emigration from Britain as an ideal approach to colonization. However, the realities of supplying cheap, effective labour for a vast and distant range of colonies meant that Chinese labour emerged as a solution. As in previous examples, the demand for labour from China was contingent on the assumed superiority of skilled and unskilled Chinese workers in comparison with other Asian ethnic groups.

The second factor at play in Ceylon was the personal connection that provided Governor Stewart-Mackenzie with access to Chinese labour, even if he was unable to utilise it. Networks that had their origins in the Scottish highlands allowed for new systems of migration to be examined and explored. Stewart-Mackenzie, like the Assam Tea Committee, was reliant on Jardine Matheson's resources to recruit Chinese tea cultivators. As seen in

chapter three, George J. Gordon's connection to Jardine Matheson had been through his experience with Mackintosh & Co. and consequently through James Matheson's family ties. The Stewart-Mackenzie example again shows the importance of personal, as well as commercial or official, networks in sharing information about Chinese emigration. It also shows how different commercial, official and personal networks often overlapped and intersected – particularly amongst the community of wealthy Scottish men who were forging imperial careers in Asia.

Although Stewart-Mackenzie's attempt to recruit Chinese migrants ultimately, like Davidson's project in New South Wales, failed, it remains significant for two reasons. First, it shows the continued belief in the Chinese as agents of colonial improvement in the British Empire in Asia. Second, it demonstrates how wider imperial conditions, specifically the growing focus on productivity and corresponding labour crisis (which persisted into the 1840s), led to an increased interest in the potential of Chinese labourers as colonists for the British Empire. As the next chapter will demonstrate, these wider imperial conditions were matched by an unprecedented access to the China coast for British merchants in the 1840s.

Chapter Five: Hong Kong and Amoy: the Treaty Ports and the Dawn of Mass Migration, 1843-1853

Introduction

His Majesty the Emperor of China agrees that British Subjects shall be allowed to reside ... at the Cities and Towns of Canton, Amoy, Foochow-fu, Ningpo, and Shanghai ... the Island of Hong-Kong [is] to be possessed in perpetuity by her Britannic Majesty.¹

The Treaty of Nanking was the ‘opening’ of China that Jardine Matheson and their contemporaries had so vehemently lobbied for throughout the 1830s.² The treaty has been identified by historians as the start of a new age in Anglo-Chinese economic, political and military relations. It is known in Chinese history as the start of China’s ‘century of humiliation’ at the hands of foreign imperialism.³ In terms of emigration too, the newly opened ports and acquired territory listed in the treaty provided new opportunities for Chinese workers seeking to circumvent the imperial ban on emigration. Historians of Chinese emigration have taken 1843 as the start of a new era and have emphasised changes from, rather than continuities with, the 1830s.⁴ This chapter will situate Chinese emigration in the wake of the Treaty of Nanking as connected to systems and perceptions of Chinese emigration developed over the 1830s. From their base in Hong Kong, Jardine Matheson established new systems of Chinese migration from different departure points and to new, global destinations.

First, the role of Hong Kong as an Anglo-Chinese contact zone, as well as a destination and departure point for migrants is examined. Colonial authority in Hong Kong, much like Singapore previously, was simultaneously reliant on Chinese elites and intermediaries, whilst being threatened by the size and organization of the Chinese labour force. As some of the colony’s most powerful and influential residents, and as proprietors of the renamed *Hong Kong Register*, Jardine Matheson were again actively involved in characterising the Chinese population. Hong Kong was also important as it provided a base from which the firm could facilitate onward migration to destinations around the globe. The establishment of British judicial hegemony on the China coast, combined with the firm’s

¹ Treaty of Nanking (Great Britain – China) available in G. E. P. Hertslet & Edward Parkes, *Hertslet’s China Treaties. Treaties between Great Britain and China and between China and Foreign Powers, etc.*, 3rd ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, for H. M. Stationery, 1908).

² For more on the belief in the necessity to ‘liberate’ the Chinese see chapter two.

³ See Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, pp. 5-7, for a description of Chinese nationalist historiography.

⁴ For an overview of these histories see the section ‘Chinese Migration in the British Empire’ in the introduction.

extensive shipping connections and the development of Hong Kong as an emigrant hub, meant that the mass migrations to the goldfields of Australia and California provided a lucrative business for Jardine Matheson as demand shifted from technically skilled migrants to cheap and high-volume labour.⁵ The centrality of the firm's position in Hong Kong, and its ability to adapt to new situations and markets, made it a major profiteer from the mass migration of Chinese emigrants in the 1850s.

Second, the role Jardine Matheson played in assisting the Western 'coolie' firms of Tait & Co. and Syme, Muir & Co., who established contract migration routes from Amoy, is explored.⁶ Within the system of contract emigration, problems of coercion and kidnap were endemic, leading to contemporary and historical comparisons with slavery.⁷ The passenger trade from Amoy has been treated as a new and distinct phenomena in histories of Chinese migration, yet links to Jardine Matheson reflect how new systems developed in the 1840s were contingent on the expansion of Western commercial networks in the 1830s. As discussed in chapter four, Indian and Chinese migrants on long-term contracts were used to cover labour shortages in the wake of emancipation in the British Empire, but such demand was also outstripped by the new phenomena of free migrants seeking passage to make their fortunes in the Australian and California gold rushes.⁸ The capital reserves, networks and commercial connections that Jardine Matheson had built up in the wake of the EIC Charter Act in 1833 were essential in supporting the new British firms establishing these coercive emigration systems at Amoy. The role of the firm in the cases of the emigrant ships the *Duke of Argyll*, the *Nimrod* and the *Lady Amherst* will be explored in detail.

The Amoy riots (1852) and the regulation of the Chinese migration that resulted in the Chinese Passenger Act (1855) will act as an end point for this study. Specifically, by January 1853, Governor John Bowring's inquiry into the passenger trade and James T. White's recruitment of Chinese migration labour for the West Indies marked the beginning of the British state starting to exercise some form of control over these new private firms. Resistance and reaction to the new regulations of the 1850s provides additional insight into the involvement of Jardine Matheson in new coercive systems of extracting labour. Significantly, 1853 also saw a growth in the number of Chinese migrants moving from Amoy to Singapore aboard Western vessels. Migration to destinations already examined in this

⁵ Sinn, *Pacific Crossings*, p. 143.

⁶ The use of 'coolie' in this context was a pejorative term for Asian contract labour. Derived from the Tamil word 'Kuli', meaning wages or hire, the term 'coolie' will be seen frequently in primary sources throughout this chapter, but its use will be avoided in analysis due to the use of the term as racial slur in various colonial and post-colonial societies. 'Amoy' will be used as opposed to Xiamen to maintain consistency with contemporary usage. See Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: Hurst & Co., 2013), p. xx.

⁷ Siu and Ku, *Hong Kong Mobile*, p. 20.

⁸ Walton, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean sugar*, p. 38.

thesis, most notably Singapore and Australia, was heavily impacted by emerging post-1842 systems of trade and shipping. The analysis of Jardine Matheson's role in assisting emigration from Hong Kong and Amoy shows how new forms of voluntary and forced emigration were contingent on the physical networks and conceptual frameworks established in the 1830s and 1840s.

Chinese Emigration and Hong Kong

The cession of Hong Kong to Britain in 1842 had implications for systems of Chinese emigration through both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hong Kong became both a point of onward migration to various global locations and a destination for migrants from across southern China. Hong Kong acted as a contact zone in which existing concepts of the Chinese character were further developed by both experienced and new Western observers. For the small indigenous population, seizure of the island and its colonization by the British would completely change the geographic, economic, social and cultural fabric of Hong Kong.⁹ The immigration of thousands of people from across southern China as well as the establishment of a wealthy and powerful foreign merchant elite led to new formations of colonial identity.¹⁰ The mainland Chinese who moved to Hong Kong were criticised by Western observers, such as Robert Montgomery Martin who referred to them as the 'scum of Canton'.¹¹ In addition to Hong Kong's role as a contact zone it also became an important base for Jardine Matheson's operations on the China coast. Jardine Matheson were also an important political, economic and social force in Hong Kong. As Hong Kong became a busy colony and key site of onward migration globally, the significance of firms like Jardine Matheson and Dent & Co. provides a connection to the pre-Opium War context of Anglo-Chinese exchange.

Frank Welsh's description of Hong Kong as a 'Chinese colony that happened to be run by Britain' is useful as it brings attention to the fact that twentieth-century histories of colonial rule often ignored or over-simplified the role of the island's Chinese inhabitants.¹² Hong Kong's significance in migration history is derived from its Chinese majority. That a large Chinese population overtly operated outside of the judicial control of the Qing Empire from 1842, both highlighted the ineptitude of existing emigration restrictions and created an environment in which new systems of migration could be established. Two historical

⁹ Bird, *Traders of Hong Kong*, p.19. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, p. 19, gives an estimated population of 5,000-7,000 prior to British occupation.

¹⁰ Namely the developing 'Hong Konger' identity, which is discussed repeatedly in Siu and Ku, *Hong Kong Mobile*.

¹¹ Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society*, p. 49.

¹² Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 8.

approaches have resulted in the Chinese being largely written out of the history of Hong Kong. Early Western historiography focused on the Western residents and Hong Kong's success story as a liberal, capitalist, free trade port. In contrast, Chinese scholars had maintained that Hong Kong was a symbol of imperialism, with the Chinese islanders either being described as captives or collaborators.¹³ More recent work by Christopher Munn and John Carroll has focused on the Chinese majority and their relationship with colonial authority and mercantile elites. Munn's *Anglo-China* sets out to redress this balance by dismissing the notion of Chinese inhabitants as passive victims of 'colonial machinery'.¹⁴ Similarly, Carroll has emphasised the close business relationships between Western merchants and their Chinese employees known as compradors, highlighting co-operation over conflict.¹⁵ Jardine Matheson's reliance on Chinese employees and intermediaries re-enforces this perspective. These texts build on an increasing body of work that highlighted the different social and economic roles played by Chinese migrants – whether labourers, artisans or merchants – in Hong Kong.¹⁶

Hong Kong's Chinese population was essential to the colony's economic development in the 1840s and 1850s. Initial population counts at the point of Hong Kong's cession to Britain estimated a community of 15,000 at Victoria, of whom more than 12,000 were Chinese.¹⁷ This population increased rapidly over the 1840s, a process that was encouraged by European capital and poor economic conditions in Guangdong Province due to the opening of the treaty ports.¹⁸ Contemporaries like Arthur Cunynghame described how 'it was almost impossible to prevent the people from the opposite coast from flocking to us'.¹⁹ Early colonial blue books did try to quantify the growing Chinese population in the 1840s.²⁰ The first such measure in 1845 gave the 'coloured' population, as 23,748 (only 4,809 of whom were female).²¹ By 1849 'Chinese' had been written in pencil over the term 'coloured', which was printed in the blue book, and the total 'Chinese' population was given as 28,956 (with a similar gender disparity) and was now further split with the subcategory of 'boat people'.²²

¹³ Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Munn, *Anglo-China*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Carroll, 'The Canton System', p. 54. For more on the role of Chinese compradors in see chapter two.

¹⁶ For example see Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity: a Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society*; Jung-fang Tsai, *Hong Kong in Chinese History: Community and Social Unrest in the British Colony, 1842-1913* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong*, p. 139; These figures were the estimates of Governor Pottinger's new, under-resourced colonial administration.

¹⁸ Skeldon, *Emigration from Hong Kong*, p. 21.

¹⁹ Cunynghame, *The Opium War*, p. 40.

²⁰ Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society*, p. 65.

²¹ Hong Kong Blue Book (1845): CO133/2 (National Archives).

²² Hong Kong Blue Book (1849): CO 133/6 (National Archives).

The Tanka ‘boat people’ were placed at the foot of social stratification by many mainland Chinese contemporaries, but had been extremely useful to the British merchants and colony builders by providing provisions during the Opium War.²³ As a consequence of British colonization, many Tanka relocated to Hong Kong in search of economic opportunities. The census information points to the problems local government faced when it came to categorising different Chinese ethnic groups. It was not until 1845, three years into British governance, that a ‘Registrar General’ was appointed to take responsibility for a Chinese community that constituted ninety-five per cent of the total population.²⁴ Colonial authorities were aware that the Chinese migrant population was essential to the colony’s success.

The Western firms that relocated to Hong Kong during the Opium War were dependent on Chinese employees. As an example, Jardine Matheson employed a large staff of Chinese compradors, interpreters and clerks in their head office and warehouses (buildings which themselves were erected by Chinese labour) at East Point – a prime location in Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbour.²⁵ Other trading operations required Chinese intermediaries, with each opium ship employing at least one comprador and interpreter.²⁶ Another draw for migrants were the opportunities for entrepreneurship that Hong Kong presented. Early occupational data is as limited as census data, but sporadic attempts were made to gauge Chinese employment in the 1840s. In March 1842 the *Canton Register* published a table listing the various occupations of Chinese inhabitants. The largest ‘shop-based’ categories included 566 carpenters, 439 prostitutes, 402 chandlers and 380 masons.²⁷ In contrast there were also non-‘shop-based’ employment categories, such as 1,366 labourers, 500 bricklayers and 500 ‘having no ostensible employment’.²⁸ The increasingly varied nature of Chinese employment can be seen if we compare this crude list and the *Hong Kong Almanac* of 1846. The 1846 list of ‘Chinese traders’ covers more than seventy specialist trades, the most popular being forty chandlers, thirty lodging house keepers, nineteen carpenters and eighteen druggists.²⁹ Crucially, the growing Chinese population of Hong Kong created new social and economic relationships. The immigrant population brought connections that were essential in turning Hong Kong into a base for later mass migrations to destinations like Australia and

²³ Carroll, *Edge of Empires*, p. 23.

²⁴ Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p. 24.

²⁵ LeFevour, *Western Enterprise in Late Ch’ing China*, p. 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁷ *Canton Register*, 29 March 1842.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ A.R. Johnston, *Hong Kong Directory/Almanac* (Hong Kong, 1846); for full lists from the *Canton Register* and *Hong Kong Almanac* see Appendix C, p. 225.

California. Hong Kong was a transmission point for money, information and people between southern China and overseas destinations.³⁰

As in Singapore in the 1820s and 1830s there was recognition by colonial authorities and Western merchants that co-operation with elements of the Chinese community was necessary to ensure the colony's success.³¹ Hong Kong also provided a space for new Chinese entrepreneurs to acquire social status and become economically powerful. Examples included figures like Loo Aqoi of the Tanka community who was given land in recognition of the provisions he gave to the British during the Opium War and became an extremely wealthy community leader.³² Whilst the British had referred to the Tanka as 'boat people' in their early census data, colonial Hong Kong provided opportunities for previously marginalised people like Loo Aqoi to acquire wealth and power through collaboration. The formation of the Tung Wah Hospital in the late 1860s has been highlighted as an example of the Chinese elite becoming incorporated into the formal political structure of the colony.³³ Indeed Governor John Bowring's failed proposals of 1855, which would have enfranchised propertied Chinese residents and included Chinese representation on the legislative council, did signify an awareness of class distinctions and opportunities for collaboration within the Chinese community.³⁴

Hong Kong also offered a new colonial contact zone in which Chinese migrants could be critiqued by British observers. A common early observation of Western residents and visitors to the colony was the supposedly poor character of the Chinese inhabitants. As in Singapore, Westerners made distinctions between a threatening mass of conniving Chinese workers and complicit Chinese merchants who were crucial to colonial rule. Importantly, these Chinese and British elites were less well integrated than in Singapore.³⁵ The early years of the colony were blighted by high rates of violent crime. The cause of this, according to observers such as Charles Gutzlaff and Robert Montgomery Martin, was the poor class and character of the Chinese immigrants, which was believed to be exacerbated by the lack of females to act as a pacifying force.³⁶ 'Disturbances', 'affrays' and 'secret sects' were regularly reported in the pages of the (now re-named) *Hong Kong Register*.³⁷ Christopher Munn has discussed how allegations of criminality allowed the colonial government to pass

³⁰ Michael Williams, 'Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta Qiaoxiang', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2004) p. 260.

³¹ Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, p. 20.

³² *Ibid*, p. 17.

³³ Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society*, p. 105.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ For more on the relationship between Chinese elites and colonial authority in Singapore see chapter one.

³⁶ Bird, *Traders of Hong Kong*, p. 39.

³⁷ *Hong Kong Register*, 17 October 1843; *Hong Kong Register*, 7 May 1844; *Hong Kong Register*, 17 September 1844.

law and order legislation that strengthened colonial authority.³⁸ Hong Kong's vast class of criminal Chinese, whether real or imagined, were particularly maligned as the worst examples of the Chinese character.

Importantly, in Hong Kong in the 1840s the interests and personnel of the colonial state and elite merchant houses overlapped. For example, Alexander Matheson – who became head of Jardine Matheson on the China coast following James Matheson's return to Britain in 1843 – was made an unofficial member of the legislative council.³⁹ Western elites specifically highlighted distinctions between themselves and the 'criminal' Chinese majority. The early years of the *Hong Kong Register* carried a litany of Chinese crimes, ranging from 'serious disturbances' to illegal gambling establishments.⁴⁰ Often these events were distinctly personal. For example, the *Register* gave extensive coverage of the trial of 'Wang Acho', who had committed forgery 'with the intention of defrauding A. Matheson Esq.'. ⁴¹ Existing in the midst of a Chinese colonial population, the *Register's* previous critique of the Chinese authorities was broadened to include Chinese migrants to Hong Kong. The proximity of the powerful Western merchant elite to the colonial authorities meant that legislative action was focused against the 'criminal' Chinese. An article titled 'The Secret Sects of China and Hong Kong Legislation' covered how the first ordinance of 1846 allowed the authorities to 'imprison', 'brand' and 'expel' members of the 'Triad, or other secret societies'.⁴² For both elite firms like Jardine Matheson and colonial authorities the criminal character of the Chinese population was a concern.

A revealing solution that was proposed for controlling the Chinese population, and one which was conflated with a 'defence' of Western property, came in the form of a letter to the editor of the *Register* signed 'Senex':⁴³

I wish to offer some suggestions respecting a new body of police, to be called the Hong Kong Rangers, so alert and watchful that no bands of robbers, or petty pilferer, will longer dare to move abroad. The rangers shall be so numerous and strong, that, on all ordinary occasions, the military will not be required for nightly patrol, and consequently will be saved from one of the many causes of mortality among them.⁴⁴

Of course, 'Senex's' proposals envisaged the rangers – notable for their exceptional powers of crime prevention – as a largely European force. The policing of the colony provides a good

³⁸ Munn, *Anglo-China*, p. 16.

³⁹ Endacott, *A Biographical Sketch-Book of Early Hong Kong*, p. 160.

⁴⁰ *Hong Kong Register*, 7 May 1844; *Hong Kong Register*, 23 September 1845.

⁴¹ *Hong Kong Register*, 8 October 1844.

⁴² *Hong Kong Register*, 20 May 1845.

⁴³ Presumably 'Senex' here is a reference to the Latin usage of 'old man'.

⁴⁴ *Hong Kong Register*, 17 October 1843.

example of how criminality was intensely racialised by the colonial authorities. The Hong Kong Police Force in 1845 was formed by seventy-one Europeans, fifty-one Chinese and forty-six Indians, with the Chinese component reduced to twenty-three by 1847 and thirteen by 1849 as Chinese officers were believed to be ‘untrustworthy’ and were accused of having connections to triad societies.⁴⁵ It was the view of colonial authorities that the Chinese of Hong Kong were especially prejudiced against Western residents. This view of an ‘ill feeling of people of Hong Kong towards foreigners [Westerners]’ also surfaced during the 1847 Select Committee on *Commercial Relations with China*, and played a role in the Colonial Office’s decision to limit representative government in the 1850s.⁴⁶

Concerns about Chinese criminality in Hong Kong can, in many ways, be compared to political and social attitudes to Chinese labourers seen in early colonial Singapore. As discussed by Anthony Webster, the extent to which the European community were outnumbered by the Chinese meant they were viewed as an ‘intimidating presence’ by colonial authorities.⁴⁷ This intimidation was exacerbated by concerns about secret society membership and increasing rates of opium consumption. The Chinese in Hong Kong were viewed as especially subversive. The contrast between the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong was most vividly illustrated by the shipment of Chinese convicts from Hong Kong to Penang, via Singapore, aboard the *General Wood*.⁴⁸ Jardine Matheson used the ship during the Opium War, and it was used to transport opium between Bombay and China by Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy over the 1840s.⁴⁹ In November 1847 the *General Wood* was chartered by the Hong Kong government to transport ‘92 convicted pirates’.⁵⁰ A passenger uprising whilst the ship was harboured at Singapore served to further underline the perception of Hong Kong’s criminal underclass as the ‘scum of Canton’.⁵¹

It is worth noting some of the wider motivations for the emphasis placed on Chinese criminality in Hong Kong. Palmerston famously described the island as a ‘barren rock’ after Elliot’s acquisition of it during the Opium War and many British observers would have preferred the island of Chusan, temporarily held in the 1840s as collateral by British forces, as a colony.⁵² Charles Gutzlaff acted as an administrator in Chusan and echoed the common opinion that the Chinese in Hong Kong, in contrast to the Chinese of Chusan, were of the

⁴⁵ Norman Miners, ‘The Localization of the Hong Kong Police Force, 1842-1947’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1990), pp. 299.

⁴⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on Commercial Relations with China*, p. 552.

⁴⁷ Webster, ‘The Development of British Commercial and Political Networks in the Straits Settlements’, p. 911.

⁴⁸ Williamson, *Eastern Traders*, pp. 164-165.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 162.

⁵⁰ Clare Anderson, ‘The age of Revolution in the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and South China Sea: a Maritime Perspective’, *IRSH*, 58 (2013), p. 239.

⁵¹ Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society*, p. 49.

⁵² Bird, *Traders of Hong Kong*, p. 39.

‘lowest moral standard’. Nobody was more critical than Robert Montgomery Martin.⁵³ Martin was appointed Treasurer of Hong Kong in 1844 and whilst spending time in Chusan recovering from illness wrote a report on the advantages of Chusan over Hong Kong.⁵⁴ Martin famously wrote that there was not ‘one respectable Chinese inhabitant’ in Hong Kong and he lamented how the ‘migratory, predatory, gambling and dissolute habits’ of the Chinese had made them ‘not only useless but highly injurious subjects in the attempt to form a new colony’.⁵⁵ Published as the *British Position and Prospects in China*, Montgomery Martin’s work was criticised in the Hong Kong newspaper press. Key figures such as Alexander Matheson privately agreed that Chusan would be a preferable location for a colony, but the firm had invested so much capital in Hong Kong they did not publicly advocate relocation.⁵⁶ Martin’s general criticisms of Hong Kong – its limited size, disadvantageous geographical position, lack of natural resources and unfitness for European habitation – gained some currency in London as evidenced by the stir his resignation in Hong Kong caused in Parliament and the Colonial Office.⁵⁷ Though his advocacy of Chusan was in vain, Martin’s writing had further promoted the opinion that the Chinese migrants to Hong Kong were of an especially poor character.

As well as being a destination for migrants, Hong Kong developed into a ‘clearinghouse’ between the *qiaoxiang* region of Guangdong Province and various global locations.⁵⁸ Jardine Matheson played a crucial role in both facilitating the movement of people from Hong Kong and supplying support services that allowed for the remittance of goods, money and information. The firm also facilitated mass emigration from Hong Kong through the publication of news from the goldfields that drew thousands of migrants each year. The *Register* published numerous original articles and extracts on ‘The California Gold Rush’, ‘Report from the Gold Coast of California’, ‘The California Trade’ and the ‘Discovery of Gold in Australia’.⁵⁹ Importantly these new pull factors for emigrants drew on the labour pool supplied by the increased Chinese population of Hong Kong over the 1840s. Elizabeth Sinn has discussed three groups that were targeted by emigrant recruiters: those who had

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 39; Christopher Munn, ‘The Chusan episode’, pp. 82-112.

⁵⁴ King, *Survey Our Empire!*, p. 232.

⁵⁵ Endacott, *A Biographical Sketch-Book of Early Hong Kong*, p. xvi.

⁵⁶ *Friend of China*, 26 September 1846; *Hong Kong Register*, 6 October 1846.

⁵⁷ The details of Martin’s resignation were debated in the metropole and correspondence over the issue was published as a parliamentary paper; Robert Montgomery Martin, *Reports, Minutes and Despatches on the British Position and Prospects in China* (London: Harrison, 1846); Parliamentary Paper, *Mr. Montgomery Martin. Copy of correspondence of Mr. Montgomery Martin with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, relating to his resignation of the office of Treasurer of Hong Kong, 1847* (743).

⁵⁸ Williams, ‘Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta Qiaoxiang’, p. 360. See page 81 for the different uses of *qiaoxiang*.

⁵⁹ *Hong Kong Register*, 5 June 1849; *Hong Kong Register*, 24 July 1849; *Hong Kong Register*, 4 June 1850; *Hong Kong Register*, 12 August 1851.

settled in Hong Kong and decided to re-migrate; those who had arrived in Hong Kong with the intention to migrate elsewhere; and indigenous villagers from rural Hong Kong.⁶⁰ The migration of southern Chinese to Hong Kong in the 1840s was crucial in creating the context for mass emigration from Hong Kong to new destinations in the 1850s.

By the mid-1850s Hong Kong had developed into a major departure point for Chinese emigrants. Table 5.1, created using the Victoria Harbour Master's list between 1 November 1854 and 30 September 1855, shows the significance of Hong Kong as an emigrant port:

Table 5.1. Departures of Chinese passengers from Hong Kong

| Destinations | Total Number of Passengers |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Amoy | 871 |
| California | 743 |
| Canton | 40 |
| East Coast | 88 |
| Foo-Chow-Foo | 26 |
| Hobson's Bay | 1,942 |
| Macao | 4 |
| Manila | 11 |
| Melbourne | 1,980 |
| Port Philip | 6,544 |
| San Francisco | 2,299 |
| Shanghai | 305 |
| Siam | 50 |
| Singapore | 46 |
| West Coast | 16 |
| Whampoa | 24 |
| Total | 14,991 |

Source: 'List of vessels cleared outwards with Chinese passengers from 1 November 1854 to 30 September 1855', Thos. V. Watkins, Harbour Master. Harbour Master's Office, Victoria, Hong Kong, 5 October 1855.⁶¹

Australian and Californian ports were the destinations for more than ninety per cent of the passenger traffic from Hong Kong due to the gold rushes that had been reported in the *Register*. Elizabeth Sinn has detailed the way that these new, large migration systems were extremely profitable for Jardine Matheson. The Chinese communities that became resident in various destinations were connected to their homeland through Hong Kong. Jardine Matheson

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Sinn, 'Hong Kong as an In-between Place in the Chinese Diaspora, 1849-1939', in Donna Gabaccia and Dirk Hoerder (eds), *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 225-251.

⁶¹ 'List of vessels cleared outwards with Chinese passengers from 1 November 1854 to 30 September 1855', Thos. V. Watkins, Harbour Master. Harbour Master's Office, Victoria, Hong Kong, 5 October 1855, in Parliamentary Papers, *Hong Kong. Copies or extracts of correspondence between the Colonial Department and the governor of Hong Kong, and between the Colonial Department and the Foreign Office, on the subject of emigration from Hong Kong and from the Chinese Empire to the British West Indies and to foreign countries and their possessions, since the 1st of January 1853, 1857-58* (481), p. 31.

were able to profit through their involvement in the growing shipping traffic to the lucrative gold-fields, as well as the supplementary postal, goods and financial remittance industries.⁶²

The cession of Hong Kong to Britain in 1842 had two main implications for Chinese migration in the British Empire. First, Hong Kong was a new colonial contact zone in which the Chinese character was debated. As before, British colonial authority was contingent on complicit Chinese elites, who often worked with Jardine Matheson, but Hong Kong also became home to a large Chinese population that was dismissed as a criminal underclass by observers such as Robert Montgomery Martin. Jardine Matheson's economic and political power in Hong Kong ensured that, whilst the character of the Hong Kong Chinese might be criticised, the colony was retained. Second, Hong Kong in the 1840s was an environment in which the firm could profit from both Chinese immigration to Hong Kong and Chinese emigration from Hong Kong to new, global destinations. As seen in the next section, Hong Kong acted as a staging point from which Jardine Matheson would become involved in new migration systems from the China coast.

Jardine Matheson and the Chinese Passenger Trade from the Treaty Ports

The Chinese 'coolie trade' began life inauspiciously, with a shipment of Chinese labourers from Amoy to Reunion aboard a French ship in 1845.⁶³ Large scale emigration from Amoy began in earnest in 1847 through the British firms Tait & Co. and Syme, Muir & Co.⁶⁴ The details of these firm's nefarious activities are known largely due to parliamentary interest stimulated by comparisons between Asian indentured labour and the recently abolished system of African slavery by political heavyweights like Lord John Russell.⁶⁵ These firms operated in a confusing legal space as, thanks to the extraterritoriality afforded by the Treaty of Nanking, they were bound by British, not Chinese, laws. However, they utilised a network of Chinese brokers (*ketou*) who operated outside of Chinese law.⁶⁶ Though neither firm hid their activities from British authorities the records of their migrant shipments are confusing at best. Crucially, Jardine Matheson were active in establishing these new, controversial forms of Chinese emigration. The firm's role in shipping migrants to new colonial destinations will be explored.

⁶² Sinn, *Pacific Crossings*, p. 143.

⁶³ Murakami, 'Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in mid-nineteenth-century Southern China', p. 154. The 'coolie trade' will be referred to as the passenger trade as outlined at the start of the chapter.

⁶⁴ Irick, *Chi'ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade*, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Russell's phrase 'A new system of slavery' was borrowed for the title of Tinker's, *A New System of Slavery*.

⁶⁶ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 61.

The scale of involvement of Jardine Matheson in the Chinese passenger trade has been neglected by historians of Chinese emigration from Amoy.⁶⁷ The new British firms at Amoy have generally been studied in isolation. Whilst Elizabeth Sinn has catalogued Jardine Matheson's involvement in emigration and the export trade from Hong Kong to California, knowledge of the firm's involvement in emigration from Amoy has been more speculative.⁶⁸ The only specific references in texts on the contract trade have been Arensmeyer's accusation of 'ad hoc' participation through personal relationships and money loaned to Tait & Co., and Meagher's vague reference to the trade evolving 'in the footsteps of the opium trade'.⁶⁹ In this section the scale of Jardine Matheson's involvement in the trade is based on a cross referencing of ships discussed in colonial office correspondence on Chinese emigration and the various reports on the passenger trade, with shipping lists constructed from the *Hong Kong Register*, the *China Mail* and the *Friend of China*. These shipping records provide limited details on ship cargoes. Ships departing from Amoy were largely recorded as carrying 'ballast' to stabilise the ship having deposited their imports, but both goods and human passengers could be used as ballast. Correspondence from the British Consulate at Amoy to Hong Kong Governor George Bonham demonstrates the difficulties in tracking the firms' activities: 'Two other British vessels, the *Inchinnan* and *Eleanor Lancaster*' have cleared from Amoy in ballast, with the intention of taking coolies on board at Namoa or some place in its vicinity.'⁷⁰ However, in spite of these issues, such records do reveal the extent to which Jardine Matheson acted as 'agents' or 'consignees' for vessels identified as emigrant ships by British authorities. Table 5.2 shows such these Chinese passenger ships, as well as the acting agents and destinations.

⁶⁷ Amoy was a natural centre for the new systems established by Western merchants given the existing links between merchants in Amoy's and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, see Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, p. 64.

⁶⁸ Sinn, *Pacific Crossings*, p. 144.

⁶⁹ Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese Coolie Labour Trade and the Philippines', p. 193; Meagher, *The Introduction of Chinese Laborers to Latin America*, p. 92.

⁷⁰ Consul J. Backhouse (Amoy) to Governor John Bowring (Hong Kong), 24 December 1852, in Parliamentary Papers, *China. Correspondence with the Superintendent of British trade in China, upon the subject of emigration from that country, 1852-53* (1856).

Table 5.2. Chinese passenger vessels for which Jardine Matheson acted as agents

| Vessel | Agents/Consignees | From | To |
|--|---|-------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Adelaide</i> | Jardine Matheson (Syme, Muir & Co. from 30 July 1850) | Hong Kong | Amoy |
| <i>Alfred</i> | Jardine Matheson | Hong Kong | San Francisco; Melbourne |
| <i>Ann</i> | Jardine Matheson | Hong Kong | Amoy |
| <i>Arabia</i> | Jardine Matheson | Amoy | Sydney |
| <i>Audax</i> | Jardine Matheson | Hong Kong | East Coast |
| <i>Blenheim</i> | Jardine Matheson (Syme, Muir & Co. from 26 October 1852) | Amoy | Havana |
| <i>Confucius</i> | Jardine Matheson | Hong Kong | Amoy |
| <i>Duke of Argyll</i> | Jardine Matheson | Amoy | Havana |
| <i>Gazelle</i> | Jardine Matheson | Amoy | Sydney |
| <i>Lady Amherst</i> | Jardine Matheson (Syme, Muir & Co. from 26 October 1852) | Amoy | Havana |
| <i>Lady Hayes</i> | Jardine Matheson | Hong Kong | Port Philip |
| <i>Lady Montagu</i> | Jardine Matheson | Amoy | Lima |
| <i>Lord Warriston</i> | Jardine Matheson | Amoy | Demerara |
| <i>Nimrod</i> | Jardine Matheson (Tait & Co. from 27 June 1848) (Jardine, Matheson again from 31 July 1849) | Amoy | Sydney |
| <i>Palmetto</i> | Jardine Matheson | Hong Kong | San Francisco |
| <i>Rosa Elias (Formerly the Sarah)</i> | Jardine Matheson Tait & Co. (from 25 January 1853) | Amoy | Lima |
| <i>Statesman</i> | Jardine Matheson (Tait & Co. 28 October 1851) (Jardine Matheson again from 26 July 1853) | Amoy | Sydney |

Source: *Hong Kong Register* (1844-1853), CO 885/1/20: Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853) and Hong Kong Harbour Master's Report (1855).⁷¹

As seen in Table 5.2, not only did Jardine Matheson transfer agency between themselves and firms at Amoy, but they also acted independently as agents for emigrant vessels. It reveals the extent of the firm's involvement in Chinese emigration from Amoy and Hong Kong. Notably, three main types of involvement are shown here: shipments of passengers for which Jardine Matheson acted as agents; shipments of passengers for which agency was transferred to the

⁷¹ Ships listed as emigrant vessels in Colonial Office correspondence for which Jardine Matheson acted as agents. Agency of Jardine Matheson collated from the shipping lists of the *Hong Kong Register* between 1844 and 1853, also from correspondences in Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853): CO 885/1/20 (National Archives), and the Hong Kong Harbour Master's Report of 1855.

Amoy firms temporarily and then back to Jardine Matheson; and shipments of passengers that were arranged by Jardine Matheson before agency was transferred to Amoy firms and not transferred back. The variable migrant destinations of these shipments means it would be misguided to describe Jardine Matheson as involved systematically in the passenger trade to any specific location. Instead, through their broader involvement in shipping and trade on the China coast, the firm became entangled, consciously, in emerging migrant routes. In order to outline the nature of Jardine Matheson's involvement in the growing and diverse Chinese passenger trade over the 1840s and 1850s three ships – *Duke of Argyll*, *Nimrod* and *Lady Amherst* – are examined in detail. These vessels have been chosen for two reasons. First, they each reflect different migrant destinations, contractual arrangements and issues that blighted the Chinese passenger trade. Second, of the ships listed these vessels are amongst the best documented, with various Colonial Office reports, private correspondence and newspaper sources available.

It is again worth highlighting that the records provided by the *Register*, as in previous chapters, indicate the premium put on information by the firm.⁷² The owner of the newspaper, Alexander Matheson, and the editor, John Cairns, made arrangements with the Singapore-based title the *Straits Times* to publish European news whilst the mail ships were still in Singapore harbour, giving the *Register* an advantage over Hong Kong rivals the *Friend of China* and *China Mail*.⁷³ John Cairns offered a free copy of the *Register* to incoming ship captains provided they 'immediately on their arrival, forward to him the latest papers, and to communicate to him the dates of their sailing from their ports of departure and arriving in China' as such information conferred 'a great benefit on the whole of the civilised world'.⁷⁴

Jardine Matheson were a dominant force in China coast shipping in the 1840s. Elizabeth Sinn has described the firm, along with other established firms such as Russell & Co., as 'natural choices for ship-owners looking for agents'.⁷⁵ The firm became particularly connected to the new Amoy merchant firm Tait & Co. through its head James Tait. Arensmeyer has noted the frequent correspondence between Tait and the Jardine Matheson agent at Amoy, Robert McMurdo, who gave extensive evidence on the cause and events of the Amoy riots in 1852.⁷⁶ James Tait also shared information with the head of the firm on the China coast, Alexander Matheson, from 1845 onwards. These exchanges can be noted for their cordial nature as Tait, in a direct repetition of the language used between William

⁷² Connell, *A Business in Risk*, p. 30.

⁷³ King, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers*, p. 53-57.

⁷⁴ *Canton Register*, 1 February 1842.

⁷⁵ Sinn, *Pacific Crossings*, p. 100.

⁷⁶ Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese Coolie Labour Trade and the Philippines', p. 193; See page 210 for an excerpt of McMurdo's evidence.

Jardine and James Matheson, routinely opened letters with ‘My Dear Matheson’.⁷⁷ Correspondence between the two also openly discussed the emigration of Chinese labourers. Tait assured Matheson of the conduct of one shipment of labourers by suggesting that ‘we believe these to be of a better class than those that generally leave for the Straits’ and Matheson made reference to ‘having provided insurance on three of the coolie ships to Havana’.⁷⁸ The firm also acted as insurers on the risk of goods to San Francisco for the other emigration firm Syme, Muir & Co., though this business relationship was not nearly as close.⁷⁹ Jardine Matheson routinely acted as agents for Tait & Co.’s early passenger shipments and the firm’s support was crucial in the establishment of Tait’s emigration business at Amoy. As the examples of the *Duke of Argyll*, *Nimrod* and *Lady Amherst* demonstrate, James Tait would have been unable to establish a new Chinese passenger trade from Amoy without the support of the firm that still dominated the China coast: Jardine Matheson.

The Duke of Argyll

On 7 November 1846 the *Duke of Argyll* arrived in Hong Kong.⁸⁰ The ship was docked in Victoria Harbour with no listed agent until Jardine Matheson stepped in on 8 December 1846.⁸¹ A letter from the firm to James Tait in January 1847 revealed why the firm had acquired agency of the ship:

In accordance with the letters which have passed between you and our own Mr Matheson with reference to the charter of a vessel on your account for the Havana we now beg to enclose a Signed Copy of agreement entered into between us & the commander of the ship 'Duke of Argyle' Capt. Bristow, which we trust will be found in conformity with your wishes on the subject.⁸²

This encapsulated the role of the shipping agent, acting as a ‘middle-man’ between ship owners and ship charterers. In 1846 Tait & Co., a fledgling British firm at Amoy, had neither the expertise, connections nor resources to secure a vessel of the necessary specifications for

⁷⁷ James Tait (Hong Kong) to Alexander Matheson (Macao), 7 February 1845; James Tait (Amoy) to Alexander Matheson (Hong Kong), 24 March 1848, in MS JM/B6/6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University). If we compare this with correspondence with G. F. Davidson, seen in chapter three, the language used reflected that this was a much closer relationship.

⁷⁸ Tait & Co (Amoy) to Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Hong Kong), 3 June 1852, in MS JM/B6/6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University); Alexander Matheson (Hong Kong) to Tait & Co. (Amoy), 21 March 1853, in MS JM/C36/14, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁷⁹ Jardine Matheson & Co. (Hong Kong) to Syme, Muir & Co., 1 May 1849; Jardine, Matheson & Co., to Syme, Muir & Co., 9 July 1850, in MS JM/C36/8, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University).

⁸⁰ *Friend of China*, 7 November 1846.

⁸¹ *Friend of China*, 8 December 1846.

⁸² Jardine Matheson, & Co. (Hong Kong) to James Tait. (Amoy), 2 January 1847, in MS/JM/C13/4, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University)

carrying large number of Chinese passengers.⁸³ On 13 January 1847 the *Duke of Argyll* proceeded to Amoy from Hong Kong and, after spending time ‘seeking coolies’, was despatched to Havana by James Tait with 420 Chinese passengers on 10 March 1847.⁸⁴

The impact of the *Duke of Argyll* as the first of Tait & Co.’s migrant shipments would be felt throughout the initial evolution of the passenger trade. Most significantly the *Duke of Argyll* was identified as a legal precedent. In spite of concerns about coercion the British Consul at Amoy, T. H. Layton, had been reluctant to prevent the shipment until he had clarification on the extent of his legal authority.⁸⁵ James Tait was also insulated from British consular authority as he was the acting consul for Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands at Amoy.⁸⁶ That the *Duke of Argyll* was allowed to travel from Amoy to Havana meant that both Tait & Co. and Syme, Muir & Co. could reference it as evidence of the legality of the trade, or more commonly argue that the prevention or regulation of emigration was the responsibility of Chinese officials. In particular, if such emigration to a Spanish ‘slave colony’ was deemed legal, or was not objectionable to the British consul, then similar migrant voyages to ‘free’ British colonies were definitely legal.⁸⁷ It also set a standard for passenger conditions. ‘The allotment of space was nine superficial feet, or about one ton and a-half to each man; whereas the English rule is two tons, with ten superficial feet’ the allowance of water – which was of ‘essential importance’ – was ‘two pints more than the allowance of vessels carrying English emigrants’.⁸⁸ Most significant for future Chinese migrants was news of the poor treatment of the Chinese labourers in Cuba, which had been remitted to Amoy by Spanish doctor Jose Villate from Havana. This reduced the attractiveness of contract emigration in general and contributed to increased coercion of the trade as Chinese recruiters struggled to attract willing labourers.⁸⁹

⁸³ The failure to acquire ships for passage had previously prevented Davidson’s emigration scheme from taking place.

⁸⁴ *Hong Kong Register*, 12 January 1847; James Tait (Amoy) to Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Hong Kong), 20 February 1847, in MS JM/B6/6, Jardine Matheson Archive (Cambridge University); *Hong Kong Register*, 10 March 1847.

⁸⁵ Consul T. H. Layton (Amoy) to Governor J. G. Bonham (Hong Kong), 17 July 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration (North American and Australian Colonies)*, 1849 (593). This was the ‘benign neglect’ of the British state that allowed British observers to act with autonomy in the treaty ports, see Robert Bickers, ‘Shanghaiers: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai, 1843-1937’, *Past and Present*, Vol. 159, No. 1 (May 1998), p. 175.

⁸⁶ Margaret Slocomb, *Among Australia’s Pioneers: Chinese Indentured Pastoral Workers on the Northern Frontier 1848 to c.1880* (Queensland: Balboa Press, 2014), p. 91. Notably the use of an official position on behalf of other European powers as an insurance policy was a method of James Matheson’s from the early 1820s.

⁸⁷ *Melbourne Argus*, 5 May 1848.

⁸⁸ ‘Note by Dr. Winchester’, Governor Bowring to Earl of Malmesbury (25 September 1852, Hong Kong), in Parliamentary Papers, *China. Correspondence upon the subject of emigration from China, 1854-55* (0.7).

⁸⁹ Murakami, ‘Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in mid-nineteenth-century Southern China’, p. 158.

Within the passenger trade there were two main groups of migrants: contract and free. The term contract refers to indentured labourers who would agree to contracts of a set length – examples usually ranged from five to eight years – with emigration brokers who would either have a prior arrangement with specific employers or planned to ‘auction’ labourer’s contracts at their destination. It is clear how this system could be compared to slavery, especially given the visceral image of the ‘auction’ of labourers. It is also worth noting that in contemporary discourse, free migrants – usually, in the 1850s, using arrangements similar to the credit-ticket system or paying for passage in advance in order to access goldfields in Australia or California – would often be conflated with contract labourers under the pejorative term ‘coolies’.⁹⁰ The British Consul at Amoy, T. H. Layton, explained to Hong Kong Governor George Bonham that ‘there is a wide distinction between voluntary emigration to Singapore and “buying men” for terms of years’.⁹¹ In particular the concept of ‘buying men’ was a direct reference to the *Duke of Argyll’s* landing in Havana where contracts were auctioned upon arrival.⁹² The following contract, entered into at Amoy for five years labour in British Guiana, demonstrates some of the common terms of these indenture agreements:

I ___ native of the village of ___ in the province of ___ in China, of the age of ___ years, have agreed to embark in the vessel with the object of proceeding to the colony of British Guiana, obliging myself from and after my arrival, to dedicate myself there to the orders of the honourable the Immigration Agent of that colony, to whatever class of labour I may be destined, whether in plantations or other estates, during the customary hours of work in that colony, or even at other than plantation labour, as may be most convenient to the honourable Immigration Agent, or whoever may become the holder of this engagement, and to perform said work for ___ of monthly salary, maintenance of eight ounces of beef, one and a half pounds of other alimentary food daily medical assistance and medicines, two suits of clothes, one blanket, and one flannel shirt annually ... that I shall find myself in all provisions and other necessities, fulfilling these obligations for five years continuous, which are fixed for the term of this engagement, during which it shall not be permitted me to leave the colony, nor deny my services to the persons to whom this engagement may be transferred; at the end of that period, I shall be at liberty to act as may seem to be best...⁹³

Importantly, from the perspective of those looking to hire contract migrants (in the case of British Guiana to replace slave labour), the contract’s vagueness about future employers as well as its limiting of migrants to plantation work ensured a fixed labour market, which, by

⁹⁰ Arensmeyer, ‘The Chinese Coolie Labour Trade and the Philippines’, p. 194; Meagher, *The Introduction of Chinese Laborers to Latin America*, p. 104.

⁹¹ Consul T. H. Layton (Amoy) to Governor J. G. Bonham (Hong Kong), 17 July 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Consul Charles A. Winchester (Amoy) to Governor John Bowring (Hong Kong), 26 August 1852, in Parliamentary Papers, *China. Correspondence upon the subject of emigration from China, 1854-55* (0.7).

suppressing entrepreneurial self-employment, benefitted employers. After entering into such an agreement indentured migrants would then undertake passage, arranged by a firm like Tait & Co., and the contract would be auctioned at the destination. As an example, the British Consul General in Cuba, Jos. J. Crawford detailed a scheme by which Villoldo, Wardrop & Co. contracted 8,000 labourers from the Amoy firms and then planned to auction the labourers to employers using the following method: '8,000 colonists of this contract shall be divided into series of eight Chinese each. 800 tickets, numbered from 1 to 800, shall be made and put into an urn, from whence they shall be drawn by the proprietors'.⁹⁴ These types of contracts and distribution arrangements were the speciality of the Amoy firms.

The contract passenger trade was blighted by the coercion of migrants. Both Tait & Co. and Syme, Muir & Co. used Chinese brokers who outsourced recruitment to local recruiters ignominiously referred to as 'crimps'. The recruitment network also encouraged kidnapping as foreign merchant firms hired 'great' brokers who used subordinate brokers to recruit workers. If brokers could not fill ship capacities they had to pay the firm's expenses.⁹⁵ The threat of debt to foreign merchants meant that brokers enforced strict quotas on subordinate brokers who resorted to kidnap in order to fill them. As well as kidnap, debt exploitation was a common method of recruitment. Wages offered on indenture contracts, normally around two to four dollars per month or eighty to 120 *wen* per day, were relatively low and unattractive to skilled labourers. 'First-class' agricultural labourers in the vicinity of Amoy could expect to earn 160 *wen* per day.⁹⁶ As a result only the most desperate or indebted emigrants took up these contracts. In particular, opium or gambling addicted workers were most vulnerable to being press-ganged by aggressive crimps.⁹⁷

British authorities were well aware of accusations of kidnap. In Consul Layton's correspondence with Bonham he made reference to a petition for liberty that had been placed in his hands 'from the father of one of the boys' due to be shipped aboard the *Duke of Argyll*. As mentioned previously, Layton could not grant the request until he had clarity over his legal right to interfere as consul.⁹⁸ Contract migrants were kept in secure pens prior to embarkation. The utility of these enclosures was ostensibly to prevent potential migrants collecting advance payments and absconding. In reality, the British firms were aware of some of the more questionable recruitment methods of their Chinese brokers and feared those who were held

⁹⁴ Consul Jos. J. Crawford (Cuba) to Lord Stanley (London), 7 August 1852, in Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853): CO 885/1/20 (National Archives).

⁹⁵ Murakami, 'Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in mid-nineteenth-century Southern China', p. 157.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 157.

⁹⁷ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 61.

⁹⁸ Consul T. H. Layton (Amoy) to Governor J. G. Bonham (Hong Kong), 17 July 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*.

without their consent breaking free. The conditions within which coerced migrants were held led to the passenger trade being contemptuously referred to as the 'pig trade' in Amoy and the surrounding area.⁹⁹

The Qing Empire's prohibition on emigration technically rendered Tait's passenger shipment illegal, but the firm's international connections helped to insulate them from British authority. As Governor Bowring remarked 'the principal shipper of coolies is Mr. Tait, a British subject, who has all the advantages and influence which his being Spanish, Dutch and Portuguese Consul gives him'.¹⁰⁰ The firms acted in an ill-defined legal space, where their early shipping activities were used to justify their later shipping activities. In correspondence between Syme, Muir & Co. and T. H. Layton the firm referenced Layton's early allowance of a shipment of Chinese passengers to justify the legality of their proposed shipments to Australian colonies: 'as we need hardly remind you that within a short period back the *Duke of Argyle* left this for Havana with upwards of 400 on board, that she did so with your cognizance, and carried with her your port clearance, stating her cargo and destination'.¹⁰¹ The British firms operated comfortably within a network of Western mercantile and shipping interests but exploited the poorly defined role of British authority in the treaty ports.

The emigrant destinations most commonly linked to the abuses of the passenger also sat outside of the British Empire. Notably, the *Duke of Argyll's* destination was Havana. The Spanish, and former Spanish, colonies of Cuba and Peru became common emigrant destinations in the late 1840s.¹⁰² Between 1853 and 1860, 6,000 Chinese workers were brought annually to Cuba, not necessarily to replace the slave population but to provide additional labour for the expansion of the sugar trade and mill construction.¹⁰³ The emigration agent James T. White, who had been dispatched to the China coast by the West India Committee to arrange contract labour for the West Indies, catalogued Chinese emigration from Amoy and Namoa to Cuba between 1847 and 1853:

⁹⁹ Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ John Bowring (Hong Kong) to the Earl of Malmesbury, 3 August 1852, in in Parliamentary Papers, *China*.

¹⁰¹ *Melbourne Argus*, 5 May 1848.

¹⁰² Siu and Ku, *Hong Kong Mobile*, p. 39.

¹⁰³ Laird W. Bergad et al., *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Table 5.3. Chinese contract labourers from China to Cuba

| Date | Colours | Ship's Name | Where from | Number | Mortality |
|------------|---------|--------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| 1847, Jan. | Spanish | <i>Oquendo</i> | Amoy | 220 | 12 |
| 1847, Mar. | English | <i>Duke of Argyll</i> | Amoy | 420 | 38 |
| 1852, Aug. | English | <i>British Sovereign</i> | Amoy | 313 | -- |
| 1852, Sep. | English | <i>Panama</i> | Amoy | 349 | -- |
| 1852, Oct. | English | <i>Gertrude</i> | Amoy | 350 | -- |
| 1852, Oct. | English | <i>Blenheim</i> | Amoy | 453 | -- |
| 1852, Nov. | English | <i>Inchinnan</i> | Namoa | 355 | -- |
| 1852, Dec. | English | <i>Lady Amherst</i> | Amoy | 275 | -- |
| 1852, Dec. | English | <i>Sir T. Gresham</i> | Namoa | 347 | -- |
| 1853, Jan. | Spanish | <i>Julian d'Unzeuta</i> | Namoa | 350 | -- |
| 1853, Jan. | English | <i>Columbus</i> | Amoy | 300 | -- |
| 1853, Feb. | Spanish | <i>Bella Gallega</i> | Namoa | 390 | -- |
| 1853, Feb. | Spanish | <i>San Andres</i> | Namoa | 383 | -- |

Source: James T. White to S Walcott Esq., Emigration of Contract Labourers to Cuba, from 1847 to date (April 16 1853), from Fohkien province.¹⁰⁴

It is notable that the mortality figures for most of these voyages are unrecorded. This suggests poor conditions and, potentially, high levels of passenger fatalities. Peru, despite gaining independence from Spain in 1824, was also supplied with labour by Tait & Co. and their Spanish business partners.¹⁰⁵ Peru's geographical location favoured a trans-pacific Chinese contract labour supply rather than the increasingly precarious – given the fledgling state's geopolitical situation – African labour supplies.¹⁰⁶ Layton's replacement as consul at Amoy, Adam Elmslie, reported that by 1852 'about 2,025 coolies' had been hired out to the Peruvian Government. As demonstrated by the *Duke of Argyll*, the direct support of Jardine Matheson was essential in allowing the Amoy firms to supply Chinese labourers for these new destinations that lay outside the British Empire.

The *Nimrod*

The *Nimrod* was a ship chartered by Tait & Co. under similar circumstances to the *Duke of Argyll*, but for a different colonial destination. Jardine Matheson acted as agents for the

¹⁰⁴ James T. White to S Walcott Esq., Emigration of Contract Labourers to Cuba, from 1847 to date (April 16 1853), from Fohkien province, in Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853): CO 885/1/20 (National Archives).

¹⁰⁵ Christon I. Archer, *The Wars of Independence in Spanish America* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2000), p. 243.

¹⁰⁶ Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, and Hawaii 1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001).

Nimrod from May 1847 into the 1850s. Tait & Co. chartered the ship from June to August 1848 in order to despatch the passengers to Sydney in July. The cargo of the *Nimrod* was 120 Chinese labourers under indenture contracts on account of Captain Thomas Larkins, formerly of the EIC maritime service. These contracts were for five years labour in New South Wales at a rate of \$2.50 per month for the men and \$1.50 for the boys.¹⁰⁷ Larkins was closely connected to Jardine Matheson as a long-time associate of James Matheson. Their correspondence date back to Matheson's time at Yrissari & Co. in 1825, when Larkins was working as a ship captain for private merchant firms. Larkins arranged the shipment to New South Wales through Jardine Matheson and Tait & Co. from Hong Kong in 1848.¹⁰⁸ Here Jardine Matheson acted as a connection, not just between charterers and ship owners, but between emigrant brokers and employers. It should also be emphasised that the firm's new centre of operations in Hong Kong was essential to connecting them to both Larkins, who had lived in Hong Kong, and Tait & Co., who were reliant on Hong Kong as a centre of shipping on the China coast.

Given the age of many of the emigrants and official concerns about the lack of consent, the British Consul T. H. Layton saw that the passengers were interviewed by an interpreter before the ship's departure.¹⁰⁹ In particular, Layton was concerned that twenty-one of the 120 contract labourers aboard the *Nimrod* were found to be boys below the age of thirteen. In a foreshadowing of the Amoy riots of 1852 Hong Kong Governor Bonham, who was nominally responsible for overseeing British subjects at Amoy, informed Palmerston that the 'consul considers it probable that these shipments may give rise to a popular outbreak' in a specific reference to the passage of the *Nimrod*.¹¹⁰ On arrival in Sydney, on 3 October 1848, the Chinese labourers were described in the Australian press as young men who 'appear in sound health' and were suited for work under the supervision of shepherds.¹¹¹ In contrast to Layton's description of the arrangement between Jardine Matheson and Larkins, not all of the Chinese labourers had pre-arranged employment. Articles in Australian newspapers between 17 October and 24 November 1848, posted by an 'agent' named Henry Moore, advertised that 'some' of the Chinese immigrants were 'still open for engagement'.¹¹² These adverts detailed the contracts the labourers had entered into, which were available to be purchased. The

¹⁰⁷ Consul T. H. Layton (Amoy) to Governor J. G. Bonham (Hong Kong), 17 July 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*. This rate was below average for the Australian colonies at this time.

¹⁰⁸ Consul T. H. Layton (Amoy) to Governor J. G. Bonham (Hong Kong), 17 July 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*. Letters from Larkins appears frequently in the Jardine Matheson Archive.

¹⁰⁹ Consul T. H. Layton (Amoy) to Governor J. G. Bonham (Hong Kong), 17 July 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*.

¹¹⁰ Governor Bonham (Hong Kong) to Viscount Palmerston (London) 10 October 1848, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*.

¹¹¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 1848.

¹¹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1848.

contracts covered five years, with provisions for food and clothes, and were estimated to provide one labourers hire at a total cost of less than £11 per annum for employers.¹¹³

Much like Davidson's attempted project in 1837, the arrival of the *Nimrod* divided press opinion in Australia. The reaction of the *Goulburn Herald* reflected the criticisms. The newspaper opined, 'we much dislike this copper-colored, anti-Christian emigration'.¹¹⁴ Whilst the necessity for labour in the colony was recognised – Australian colonies faced many of the same problems with labour shortages in 1848 as they had in 1837 – the critics preferred for the necessary labour to be sourced from the 'virtuous and enlightened' population of 'Christians and born subjects of the British Crown'.¹¹⁵ In settler society it was one thing for Asian migrants to do jobs that whites would not, but quite another for them to actively compete in the labour market.¹¹⁶ The origins of the exclusionary, racialised, white-working-class resistance to Chinese immigration that became politically mobile in Australia from the mid-1850s onwards can be seen in the criticism of the Chinese labourers who arrived aboard the *Nimrod* in 1848. Angela Woollacott has discussed how newspaper discourse in the 1840s advocated government funded migration schemes from Britain as opposed to Asian 'coolie' labour, which would lead to a multi-ethnic colonial population that was deemed undesirable.¹¹⁷ The threat of Asian immigration led to the self-definition of Australia as a 'white' country. Ethnic groups, such as the Irish, who were subject to discrimination in Britain were incorporated, by virtue of their skin colour, into a vision of colonial labour that excluded non-whites and the Chinese in particular.¹¹⁸

In spite of settler protests, demand for Chinese migrant labour was been driven by the continued Australian employment crisis. The labour shortages that had created demand for Davidson's 1837 scheme had not abated by the late 1840s, in many ways that had been exacerbated by continued colonial, pastoral expansion. In contrast to the criticisms made in the *Goulburn Herald*, an 1847 letter from the entrepreneurial Australian settler Adam Bogue praised the Chinese and their potential as labourers in New South Wales. Following a visit to Amoy, Bogue's letter was published in both the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Canton Register*:

¹¹³ *Melbourne Argus*, 24 November 1848.

¹¹⁴ *The Goulburn Herald*, 7 October 1848.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Rachel Bright, 'Asian Migration and the British World, c.1850-1914', in Kent Fedorowich and Andrew Thompson (eds.), *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 130.

¹¹⁷ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 89. The exclusionary attitude towards Asian immigrants in Australia was, in many ways, borne from the attitudes of racial superiority implicit in the expansion of British colonial control and land ownership, and explicit in campaigns of frontier violence against Aboriginal Australians.

¹¹⁸ Huttenback, *Racism and Empire*, pp. 17-21.

The great poverty of the majority of the inhabitants, their civility and kindness to Europeans, their general quiet and inoffensive manners, the tractability of their character, and their indomitable industry in agricultural and other pursuits, induced me to suppose that it would be of the first advantage to New South Wales in her present condition, if she could be supplied with labourers from that province.¹¹⁹

Note here how Bogue's praise invoked many of the common perceptions of the Chinese character discussed in the 1830s. Again, notions of Chinese 'character' and 'industry' made China a particularly desirable source of labour. This was exacerbated by the 'present condition' of New South Wales. The difference between 1847 and 1837 was not the demand for labour in New South Wales, but the easy access Adam Bogue had to China and Chinese labour in contrast to Davidson.

Investors in the *Nimrod* scheme also responded to press criticism. This response came in the form of vociferous praise of the Chinese workers. An advert published 24 November 1848 was accompanied by a letter from 'an influential settler and magistrate' who had Chinese labourers in his employ. The mystery settler wrote that the Chinese workers, who had been working as shepherds, 'do the same work as Europeans, with whom they are equally intelligent and hardy'.¹²⁰ Aside from the specifics of the author's recruits, praise was extended to other potential forms of employment: 'they are careful ... honest, and exceedingly cleanly, and would doubtless answer well for cooks and in-door servants ... by their civility and tact they have avoided all quarrelling, and are individually liked by their white fellow servants'.¹²¹ This promotion of Chinese labour is notable for the comparisons and importance placed on the 'European' and 'white' servants, as opposed to comparisons with other Asian ethnic groups seen in previous chapters. Evidently this letter was constructed in the context of the contemporary clamour for migrants from Britain, which in Australia was grounded in a desire for homogeneity.

The *Nimrod* shipment was particularly significant as it became a model for importing Chinese labour in Australia in the late 1840s. In May 1849 an advertisement was circulated to try and attract employers who interested in recruiting Chinese labourers. The advertisement was placed by 'parties who hired the Chinese immigrants per *Nimrod*, from Amoy, for a further number of those men'.¹²² The continuing expansion of the pastoral industry in the late 1840s and the paucity of labour meant that in spite of criticisms Australian newspapers were aware of the necessity of Chinese labour to fuel the colony's economic development. Articles

¹¹⁹ *Canton Register*, 15 June 1847.

¹²⁰ *Melbourne Argus*, 24 November 1848.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Moreton Bay Courier*, 19 May 1849.

spoke of how the importation of cheap Chinese labour would lead the river banks ‘to be diversified by plantations of sugar-cane, cotton, coffee, rice etc.’ and how ‘Chinese labourers will be required to colonize the northern and tropical portions of New Holland’.¹²³ By March 1849 the importation of Chinese labour was referred to as ‘not a mere matter of experiment, but a regular and systematic trade’ in the colonial press.¹²⁴ Before the discovery of gold in 1851 – from which point Chinese migrants tended to be self-funded, free migrants – schemes that involving Chinese contract labour brought an estimated 3,000 migrant workers to Australia.¹²⁵

Australian demand for labour in the late 1840s also combined with increased supply from China. In particular, colonial observers noted that the proximity of Australia to China – as compared with destinations like the West Indies – encouraged immigration as migrants ‘could have frequent communication with their friends in China’.¹²⁶ Due to J. T. White’s investigation into emigration on behalf of the West India Committee, numbers of Chinese passengers from Amoy and Namoa between 1848 and 1853 were recorded. Table 5.4 gives details of migrant shipping to Sydney in this period:

¹²³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1845; *Melbourne Argus*, 5 May 1848.

¹²⁴ *The People’s Advocate*, 10 March 1849.

¹²⁵ Pan, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, p. 274.

¹²⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 January 1847.

Table 5.4. Chinese contract labourers from China to Sydney

| Date | Colours | Ship's Name | Where from | Number | Mortality |
|------------|---------|--------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| 1848, Jul. | English | <i>Nimrod</i> | Amoy | 120 | 0 |
| 1849 | English | <i>Cadet</i> | Amoy | 150 | -- |
| 1850, Mar. | English | <i>Gazelle</i> | Amoy | 134 | 3 |
| 1850, Nov. | English | <i>Duke of Roxburgh</i> | Amoy | 272 | 16 |
| 1851, Aug. | English | <i>Duke of Roxburgh</i> | Amoy | 240 | -- |
| 1851, Sep. | English | <i>Ganges</i> | Amoy | 224 | 13 |
| 1851, Sep. | English | <i>Arabia</i> | Amoy | 196 | 10 |
| 1851, Oct. | English | <i>General Palmer</i> | Amoy | 335 | 70 |
| 1851, Nov. | English | <i>Statesman</i> | Amoy | 180 | 0 |
| 1851, Dec. | English | <i>Amazon</i> | Amoy | 303 | 13 |
| 1852, Jan. | English | <i>Eleanor Lancaster</i> | Amoy | 240 | 10 |
| 1852, Jan. | English | <i>Spartan</i> | Amoy | 250 | 10 |
| 1852, Nov. | English | <i>Eleanor Lancaster</i> | Namoa | 260 | -- |
| 1852, Nov. | English | <i>Royal Saxon</i> | Amoy | 227 | -- |
| 1853, Jan. | English | <i>Spartan</i> | Amoy | 254 | -- |

Source: James T. White to S Walcott Esq., Emigration of Contract Labourers to Sydney, from 1848 to date (April 16 1853), from Fohkien province.¹²⁷

These emigrants were largely contracted for roles in agriculture (including vineyards and olive groves), the wool industry and, causing the increase in the 1850s, gold and tin mining.¹²⁸ The discovery of gold, first reported in Hong Kong in 1851, changed the nature of emigration to Australia as the contract labour catalogued above was replaced by free migrants to the goldfields.¹²⁹ British authorities were less able to catalogue migrant passages during the gold-rush as they were arranged by a wide array of private Western and Chinese firms. Between 1855 and 1867 an estimated 62,000 Chinese miners were shipped from Hong Kong to Australia.¹³⁰

The story of Chinese mass migration to the Australia gold fields in the 1850s is well known, but the origins of the Amoy to Sydney passenger route – trail blazed by the *Nimrod* – is less so. The success of the *Nimrod* shipment, and the subsequent shipments of agricultural labourers, stood in contrast to Gordon Forbes Davidson's failed experiment in 1837. Here we see the importance of Jardine Matheson as a connection between Sydney, Hong Kong and

¹²⁷ James T. White to S Walcott Esq., Emigration of Contract Labourers to Sydney, from 1848 to date (April 16 1853), from Fohkien province, in Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853): CO 885/1/20 (National Archives).

¹²⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration (North American and Australian Colonies)*, 1849 (593); Connell, *A Business in Risk*, p. 29.

¹²⁹ *Hong Kong Register*, 12 August 1851.

¹³⁰ Slocomb, *Among Australia's Pioneers*, p. 92.

Amoy, and again supporting new systems of Chinese contract labour. The discovery of gold in Australia in 1851 fundamentally changed the nature of Chinese migration to Australia. In search of a quick fortune on the goldfields, passengers either paid for their own passage or moved under a version of the credit-ticket system, one where they had their passage paid and repaid the debt to their sponsor.¹³¹ Various histories have emphasised the role of Chinese migrants on the Australian goldfields in economic and social terms, as well as resistance to immigration as a significant force in Australian political discourse in the late nineteenth century.¹³² For example, John Fitzgerald has discussed how Chinese workers formed the second largest ethnic group in mid-nineteenth-century Victoria and how the majority of the population of Darwin was Chinese until the 1920s, in order to outline the significance of the Chinese population.¹³³ The fact that these migrations followed in the tracks of the *Nimrod*, which itself was arranged by Jardine Matheson, reveals an extended lineage. Nobody illustrates this sense of continuity in an era of rapid change better than John Dunmore Lang who, after first employing Chinese migrants in Sydney in 1827, took the lead in arguing for the repeal of New South Wales' anti-Chinese legislation in 1867.¹³⁴

The *Lady Amherst*

As evidenced by the different funding methods, the different commercial organisations involved and the various migrant destinations, the Chinese passenger trade that evolved in the treaty ports was not standardised. The case of the *Lady Amherst* demonstrated the versatility of shipping vessels on the China coast. Initially used by Jardine Matheson for shipments to Java and Liverpool the vessel was shipping cargo to San Francisco by 1852 and by the end of that year it had been chartered by Syme, Muir & Co.¹³⁵ This transition between different types of cargo, including large numbers of human passengers, was also echoed by Jardine Matheson's own ships, such as the *General Wood* which moved from transporting opium to transporting Chinese convicts from Hong Kong to the Straits Settlements.¹³⁶

The *Lady Amherst* departed Amoy for Havana with 275 officially registered emigrants on 3 December 1852 (the real figure was estimated to be closer to 350 by consular

¹³¹ Walton, *Indentured Labour*, p. 45.

¹³² Jonathon Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself White', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1999), pp. 398-421; Barry McGowan, 'The Economics and Organisation of Chinese Mining in Colonial Australia', *Australian Economic History Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, (2005) pp. 119-139.

¹³³ John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. xii-43.

¹³⁴ Schreuder and Ward, *Australia's Empire*, p. 366.

¹³⁵ *Hong Kong Register*, 9 January 1844; *Hong Kong Register*, 2 August 1844; *Hong Kong Register*, 25 May 1852.

¹³⁶ Williamson, *Eastern Traders*, p. 164.

authorities).¹³⁷ The *Straits Times* recounted how the ‘happy demeanour’ of the ‘coolies’ was a cover for an attack on the captain and crew of the ship who fired upon the passengers to regain control of the vessel before stopping at Singapore to ‘rid the ship of the worst characters on board’.¹³⁸ The editorial reflected the increasing concerns over the Amoy contract trade: ‘looking at the character of the persons shipped as coolies, and the means resorted to in procuring them, we need not be surprised at the melancholy results which have attended this pernicious trade’.¹³⁹ Here both the perceived criminal character of the Chinese emigrants from Amoy and the coercive practices of labour recruiters were combined into a single damning assessment of a trade that was becoming increasingly unpopular in both Britain and China.

Upon stopping for supplies at St. Helena, the *Lady Amherst* was inspected by Naval Officer W. Rowlatt who concluded that the uprisings against the crew could be attributed to ‘a small portion [of passengers] who seem generally to have been entrapped into going ... the remainder belonging to the dangerous classes’.¹⁴⁰ Rowlatt also noted that of the twenty-seven passengers who had died, ‘three or four had been drowned by jumping overboard’.¹⁴¹ In both Singapore and St. Helena the indolent character of the passengers was acknowledged but official suspicions were raised over the lack of consent. British observers increasingly echoed John Hurst’s comments to emigration agent James White that ‘the coolies must be misled in some way or they never would prefer going to a slave country to going to a good English free settlement.’¹⁴² Whilst Hurst’s observation contained a particular irony – in that the West India Committee White represented had been resistant to abolition – his view was representative of most colonial commenters in that he saw the destinations of the passenger shipments, arranged by British firms, as their most problematic aspect.

The *Lady Amherst*’s departure point was a Chinese treaty port and its final destination was a Spanish colony, but British colonial, shipping and mercantile involvement demonstrates the trans-imperial context of Chinese emigration. The example of the *Lady Amherst* indicates the significance of supply ports in tracking the abuses of the contract trade. The stopping of the ship at Singapore and St. Helena allowed for its story to be catalogued. The Spanish port of Manila was also particularly important in this regard as it was a regular stopping point on trans-Pacific, trans-Atlantic and Australian voyages. Cases of high mortality through

¹³⁷ J. Backhouse (Amoy) to Dr. Bowring (Hong Kong), 20 November 1852, in Parliamentary Papers, *China*.

¹³⁸ *Straits Times*, 21 December 1852.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ ‘Report of W. Rowlatt’ (St. Helena, April 5 1853), Governor Thomas Gore Browne (St. Helena) to Duke of Newcastle (London), 22 March 1853, in Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853): CO 885/1/20 (National Archives).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Parliamentary Papers, *Chinese immigration*, p. 110.

overcrowding, such as the *Inglewood*, which involved more than 200 deaths, were routinely discovered at locations such as Manila and Singapore as opposed to their final destinations.¹⁴³ Of course these ports offered a cover to illicit shipments as they were pre-existing destinations for Chinese migrants, with large and diverse Chinese communities. As a result, legislation, such as the Chinese Passengers Act of 1855, was not applied to these ‘short’ voyages as ‘the passengers are not ignorant Coolies but mechanics, who have either made the passage before, or are acquainted with the circumstances of it from others’.¹⁴⁴

The passenger trade that emerged from Amoy in the 1840s not only relied on the pre-existing shipping networks of firms like Jardine Matheson but also pre-existing migration networks that had been established by the Chinese junk trade centuries before. Official records from Singapore showed that of a total of 11,484 Chinese immigrants between June 1852 and June 1853, 3,456 Chinese migrants arrived from Amoy aboard European-owned vessels.¹⁴⁵ Over the same period only 330 migrants arrived from Amoy aboard the Chinese junks that had been carrying passengers along this familiar route.¹⁴⁶ The very system of migration that had alerted British colonial observers to the possibility of using Chinese labour came to be directly replicated and controlled by private Western firms. Of the twenty-eight European vessels involved in this new passenger trade route, nineteen were British.¹⁴⁷ In the post-Opium War era systems of Chinese migration to Singapore were extremely similar to those that had developed over the 1820s, the crucial difference was that the British were no longer reliant on Chinese intermediaries to secure a supply of labour from China itself.

Over the late 1840s and early 1850s the increasing number of deaths and uprisings on passenger ships brought the issue to the attention of colonial authorities. Deaths were largely caused by cramped conditions and a shortage of provisions. The death of 170 migrants aboard the *Lady Montagu* in 1850 was attributed to an ‘insufficient supply of food and water’.¹⁴⁸ Poor on-board conditions, combined with widespread kidnapping, caused a high frequency of ships to be overrun by passengers. An Australian title, the *Inquirer*, blamed poor provisioning for such an incident in 1853: ‘Another vessel has been captured by her coolie passengers, and the captain murdered. She was bound for Havannah, with 200 Chinese coolies and a Malay

¹⁴³ Arensmeyer, ‘The Chinese Coolie Labour Trade and the Philippines’, p. 192; *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 February 1853.

¹⁴⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Hong Kong*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁵ *Hong Kong Register*, 16 August 1853.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 11 October 1850.

crew. The cause of the riot was a deficiency of water'.¹⁴⁹ Given the combination of factors at play many voyages were interrupted or abandoned due to passenger uprisings.

In spite of the growing awareness of duplicitous recruitment practices, uprisings on passenger ships were commonly described as 'piracy' in official communications and newspapers across the empire. The accusation of piracy lay within a broader British concern with establishing legal and economic hegemony of the China coast.¹⁵⁰ Piracy was discussed regularly in correspondence with the Colonial Office and was the subject of early colonial ordinances.¹⁵¹ Throughout the 1840s and 1850s the Royal Navy would commit vast resources to preventing piracy on the China coast, under the command of celebrated Admirals like Thomas Cochrane and Henry Keppel, and the issue was raised repeatedly in parliamentary discussions on the China trade.¹⁵² For example, the seizure of the *Rosa Elias* (a ship chartered by Tait & Co.) on its voyage to Peru was reported as the torrid tale of 'piracy and murder of an English captain and crew' who were killed by '200 Chinese coolies'.¹⁵³ The testimony of surviving ship crews confirmed suspicions that the cause of these uprisings was the dishonesty and criminality of the migrants. The frequency of piracy among Chinese passengers was commonly attributed to the emigrants being of the 'most vicious classes in Amoy' as opposed to the lack of informed consent in recruitment for labour contracts.¹⁵⁴ There were clear parallels between the accusations of criminality in Hong Kong and amongst Chinese ship passengers as evidence of innate ethnic duplicity.

Crisis in the Chinese Passenger Trade

The event that forced the Colonial Office to seriously investigate coercive recruitment practices was the Amoy riot of November 1852.¹⁵⁵ The flashpoint that led to violence was the attempt by Syme, Muir & Co. to free a migrant recruiter, who had been accused of kidnap, from jail.¹⁵⁶ The riot was the culmination of building local anger at the kidnap that supplied the contract trade and the poor pre-departure conditions of the 'pig pens'. Additionally, news of fatalities aboard passenger ships and reports of poor working conditions at emigrant destinations had fed back to China itself. Syme, Muir & Co. and Tait & Co. were specifically

¹⁴⁹ *Inquirer*, 17 August 1853.

¹⁵⁰ Robert J. Antony (ed.), *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers: Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

¹⁵¹ 'Ordinance on the Prevention of Piracy', in Hong Kong Blue Book (1847): CO 133/4 (National Archives).

¹⁵² Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on Commercial Relations with China*; Parliamentary Papers, *Piratical Vessels*, 1850 (367).

¹⁵³ *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 July 1853; *Adelaide Observer*, 23 July 1853.

¹⁵⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1851.

¹⁵⁵ Murakami, 'Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in mid-nineteenth-century Southern China', p. 160.

¹⁵⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *China. Correspondence with the Superintendent of British trade in China, upon the subject of emigration from that country*, 1852-53 (1686), p. 48.

named by rioters who raised placards explaining that ‘if persons among themselves should trade with these hong their houses would be pulled down, their goods plundered and their lives taken’.¹⁵⁷ The severity of the riot, which threatened not only the merchants concerned but all Western residents in Amoy, led to the republishing of Colonial Office correspondence on emigration as a parliamentary paper. The evidence of Robert McMurdo, Jardine Matheson’s agent at Amoy, highlighted the implications of coercive emigration for British property and trade, as well as the necessity for regulation and imperial oversight of the trade:

Q - What in your opinion would have been the consequences of deferring to fire?

A - The consequences would have been most serious; general plunder of the British hong, if not murder. I may add I saw a blow aimed at Mr. Thompson, my assistant, with an axe ... He escaped only by tripping, and got safely into Mr. Syme’s hong.

Q - Do you think it would conduce to the safety of property if Mr. Syme’s sheds were discontinued as coolie-sheds? A - Yes; I think it would be beneficial, and would conduce to the safety of property.

Q - Effect of coolie trade upon the general trade of the port? A - It has had a depressing tendency since the commencement of this riot.

Q - Do you think a well-regulated system of emigration would affect the trade injuriously? A - Not the least I think.¹⁵⁸

Evidence such as this demonstrates how Jardine Matheson were aware of Chinese criticisms of the passenger trade that they had been involved in establishing. The riot lasted for days and resulted in the death of several local people, and suppression of the riot even required the assistance of British marines.¹⁵⁹

The riot marked the decline of the passenger trade from Amoy. It also laid the groundwork for British legislation to regulate the trade in 1855. As a result of the riot the Governor of Hong Kong, John Bowring, instituted a court of inquiry in December 1852. In the short term F. D. Syme was fined \$200 (roughly £40) for his role in creating the conditions for the riot, even though in his evidence to British officials in Amoy he feigned innocence: ‘Q - How do you account for the fact of your house and that of Tait and Co. being mentioned in the hostile placard? A - I cannot account for it’.¹⁶⁰ As a consequence of the Amoy riot the passenger trade became spread more evenly across the treaty ports by the late 1850s.¹⁶¹ The ‘opening’ of Amoy and Hong Kong to British merchants had led to a new, more overtly politically problematic, framework of Chinese emigration.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 48.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 71.

¹⁵⁹ Slocomb, *Among Australia’s Pioneers*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *China*.

¹⁶¹ Irick, *Chi’ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade*, p. 8.

The examples given in this chapter demonstrate Jardine Matheson's involvement and knowledge of the contract trade, but given the high levels of mortality, 'piracy' and political disruption, the firm was careful to not be publicly connected to the Amoy firms. When the firm's Amoy agent, Robert McMurdo, gave evidence citing the trade as the cause of the Amoy riots he omitted any information on Tait's connection to his firm.¹⁶² The abuses and criticisms of the trade were also printed in the *Hong Kong Register*. For example, an 1852 letter to the editor signed 'the unfortunate pig' told the story of an emigrant who escaped despotism in China before finding himself in chains in Hong Kong and coming to the conclusion that 'justice then is not to be had in this land without exertion, any more than in other lands'.¹⁶³ The firm's unwillingness to defend the trade, much like their previous silence on the legalisation of opium, may have been partly motivated by the fact that it remained more profitable as a trade that operated outside, or at least at the edge, of the law.¹⁶⁴

Jardine Matheson's involvement in coercive migration was much more than the 'guilt by association' posited by Arensmeyer.¹⁶⁵ As state intervention in the trade intensified after the Chinese Passenger Act, the firm tried to claim that as mere shipping agents they bore little responsibility for the abuses of the trade. In 1857, in response to enquiries about fatalities aboard the *Duke of Portland*, they explained:

We were mere agents for the ship which we chartered to Lyall, Still and Col., who had afterwards everything to do with the shipment of the coolies &., and who are therefore much more likely to be in a position to afford you information regarding the voyage than we are; indeed we have not heard of or from the vessel since her departure, and consequently know nothing whatever of the mortality on board to which you allude.¹⁶⁶

Despite claims of innocence, the firm was quick to defend the guilty parties. When Syme, Muir & Co. were fined £1,000 for breaking the terms of the Chinese Passengers Act on the *John Calvin* in 1856 – a case of ship overloading in which 110 passengers lost their lives – Jardine Matheson were joined by other major Hong Kong firms, such as Dent & Co. and Gibb, Livingston & Gilman, in successfully petitioning the Governor to reduce the penalty to £50.¹⁶⁷ However, other firms also took precautions to avoid being implicated in such

¹⁶² Parliamentary Papers, *China*, p. 48.

¹⁶³ *Hong Kong Register*, 6 July 1852.

¹⁶⁴ LeFevour, *Western Enterprise in Late Ch'ing China*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese Coolie Labour Trade and the Philippines'.

¹⁶⁶ Jardine, Matheson & Co. (Hong Kong) to William Thomas Bridges, Acting Colonial Secretary, 21 February 1857, in in Parliamentary Papers, *Hong Kong*.

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth Sinn, 'Emigration from Hong Kong before 1941: Organization and Impact', in Ronald Skeldon (ed.), *Emigration from Hong Kong: Tendencies and Impacts* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995), p. 43; Parliamentary Papers, *Chinese, &c., emigrants. Copies of recent communications to or from the Foreign*

shipments. Lancelot Dent, head of Dent & Co., turned down the proposed position of emigration agent, to be financed by the West India Committee, due to apprehension at the abuses of the trade.¹⁶⁸ Jardine Matheson's involvement was not inevitable. As can be seen from the cases of the *Duke of Argyll*, *Nimrod* and *Lady Amherst*, senior members of Jardine Matheson were entirely complicit in the establishment of the treaty port passenger trade on the China coast.

By the early 1850s the catalogue of abuses in the Chinese contract trade made state regulation of Chinese migration inevitable. In an article on the case of the *Lady Amherst* in December 1852 the *Straits Times* claimed that it was the 'eleventh vessel' to be the scene of 'coolie violence'.¹⁶⁹ Such a pattern caused concern in the metropole. The high frequency of fatalities and passenger uprisings on British ships, combined with the threat to British trade posed by the Amoy riots, was well known to the Colonial Office. These issues were exacerbated by the perceived poor character of emigrants who were generally young, single, unskilled, male labourers. As before, the character of the Chinese was a ubiquitous topic in correspondence on emigration from China, though in references to the treaty port passenger trade it was overwhelmingly negative.¹⁷⁰ The international context also put pressure on imperial policy makers. The mutiny on the American ship *Robert Browne* on its voyage to San Francisco was arguably the most widely reported incident and applied international pressure on the British state to act, as Syme, Muir & Co. had acted as brokers and agents.¹⁷¹ The biggest issue facing consular and colonial authorities was the extra-legal space in which the trade operated. The *Lady Amherst* demonstrated this issue as the inspection from Rowlatt had held the ship to the standards of the existing British Passengers Act, but as the ship was transferring Chinese subjects (emigrating illegally under Chinese law) from an extra-territorial treaty port to a Spanish colony it is unclear whether this Act for British passengers was actually applicable.¹⁷² As urged by Governor Bowring, legislation was needed that would simultaneously 'control the cupidity of brokers and captains' in the contract trade and respond

Office, Colonial Office, Board of Trade, and other departments of Her Majesty's government, on the subject of mortality on board British ships carrying emigrants from China or India, 1857-58 (521), p. 31.

¹⁶⁸ Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners to Herman Merivale, 4 August 1852, in Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*.

¹⁶⁹ *Straits Times*, 21 December 1852.

¹⁷⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *China. Correspondence upon the subject of emigration from China, 1854-55 (0.7)*.

¹⁷¹ *Hong Kong Register*, 25 May 1852; Irick, *Chi'ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade*, pp. 15-36.

¹⁷² 'Report of W. Rowlatt' (St. Helena, April 5 1853), Governor Thomas Gore Browne (St. Helena) to Duke of Newcastle (London), 22 March 1853, in *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Coolies (1853): CO 885/1/20 (National Archives)*.

to the overcrowding of credit-ticket passengers headed to goldfields in Australia and California.¹⁷³

An Act for the Regulation of Chinese Passenger Ships was passed by Parliament in 1855 to counter the ‘abuses [which] have occurred in conveying Emigrants from Ports in the Chinese seas’.¹⁷⁴ In order to cover the different departure points and shipping arrangements the Act defined a ‘Chinese Passenger Ship’ as ‘every ship carrying from any port in Hong Kong, and every British ship carrying from any port in China or within one hundred miles of the coast thereof, more than twenty passengers, being natives of Asia’.¹⁷⁵ The act stipulated that Chinese passenger ships required certificates before embarkation.¹⁷⁶ The granting of the certificate required an inspection of the ship by an emigration officer to ascertain the ship’s sea-worthiness, whether the ship held adequate medical provisions and if the passengers understood the terms of their emigration.¹⁷⁷ The Passengers Act did not stop accusations of abuse and coercion, but it did provide a framework for Parliamentary enquiry into abuses as emigration numbers increased throughout the 1850s. The decade saw a vast increase in emigrant numbers motivated by the Taiping Rebellion at home and the increased promise of mineral riches abroad.¹⁷⁸ Ultimately the contract trade from Amoy declined following the riots of November 1852. In 1859 Shanghai was affected by similar riots in response to kidnapping in order to fill the quotas of emigration brokers.¹⁷⁹ In the long-term Hong Kong became the centre of Chinese emigration. By the twentieth century the island acted as a departure point for ninety per cent of Chinese emigrants.¹⁸⁰ This re-centring of the trade, as well as the stipulations of the Passengers Act, allowed for more detailed emigration statistics, which have supplemented the work of scholars examining Chinese migration from the 1850s onwards.

Conclusion

The mass migrations of the 1850s, which relied on new systems of Chinese emigration from Hong Kong and Amoy in the 1840s, can be connected to the pre-Opium War context of Anglo-Chinese relations. Hong Kong and Amoy not only acted as new departure points for emigrants, but also as new locations for changing interpretations of the Chinese character.

¹⁷³ Bowring to Duke, 21 April 1854, in Chinese Emigration (1854): CO 129/45 (National Archives); Skeldon, *Emigration from Hong Kong*, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Chinese passenger ships*.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Chinese, &c., emigrants*; Parliamentary Papers, *Hong Kong*.

¹⁷⁹ Murakami, ‘Two Bonded Labour Emigration Patterns in Mid-nineteenth-century Southern China’, p. 161; Irick, *Chi’ing Policy towards the Coolie Trade*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, p. 3.

Hong Kong in particular acted as new contact zone in which representations of the majority of Chinese emigrants as criminal and untrustworthy were again constructed in an environment in which colonial authority was contingent on a complicit Chinese merchant elite. Additionally the treaty ports and new migrant destinations acted as new contact zones. The vessels on which migrants travelled even became locations in which assessments of the Chinese character were made in the accounts of passenger uprisings and piracy. Jardine Matheson again played a role in discussion of the Chinese character through the *Hong Kong Register*, which supplemented the firm's economic, social and political dominance in colonial Hong Kong.

On a practical level these systems of emigration drew on previous experiences. The credit-ticket arrangements entered into by some migrants heading to the Australian and Californian goldfields mirrored those that had been used to reach various locations in Southeast Asia, aboard both European vessels and Chinese junks. Migrant journeys from southern China to Southeast Asia itself were also increasingly undertaken aboard Western vessels. The new shipping networks that emerged in the treaty ports were essential to this. Additionally the indenture contracts signed in Amoy were extremely similar to those used to supply Indian labour for Mauritius and mirrored the contracts from the Assam experiment in terms of duration and conditions, if not pay. Ironically, systems of Chinese migration that emerged from a colonial need for free labour in the wake of abolition were criticised for their similarities to slavery. Debates about desirable forms of labour and ethnic hierarchy in the British Empire persisted, and continued to affect perceptions of Chinese migrants, in the post-Opium War period.

That Jardine Matheson positioned themselves as major players in China coast shipping over the 1830s enabled them to gain prime position in Hong Kong and key connections with the treaty ports. Their ubiquitous presence in China coast shipping meant that their involvement in such schemes was inevitable. Most significantly, Hong Kong and the treaty ports provided a space in which firms could conduct business beyond the reaches of the Qing, something that the firm had lobbied for vigorously over the 1830s. Histories of Chinese migration often accept this new context as a given, yet it was decades in the making. These emigrations relied on existing systems and networks, but the presence of the British firms Tait & Co. and Syme, Muir & Co. in the treaty ports was a new factor. China had, in the words of Gutzlaff, been 'opened'. As seen in the example of Tait & Co., the firm was initially reliant on Jardine Matheson for support, especially in terms of shipping. The involvement of Jardine Matheson connects the emergence of these new systems of migration in the 1850s to the experiments with Chinese labour in the 1830s.

Conclusion

Over the 1830s and 1840s Jardine Matheson provided unparalleled access to the China coast. This allowed for the recruitment of Chinese labour for expanding British colonies. The 120 Chinese migrants who arrived in Sydney aboard the *Nimrod* in October 1848 were treading a new and unfamiliar path. These labourers were followed by around 100,000 more Chinese migrants to Australia by 1901.¹ In 1879 some of these men – Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Chong and Louis Ah Mouy – linked the Opium Wars and Chinese immigration in a response to the anti-Chinese political rhetoric sweeping Australia:

This outflow of our population was never sought by us. Western powers, armed with the formidable artillery with which modern science has supplied them, battered down the portals of the empire; and, having done so, insisted upon keeping them open.²

Chinese migration and perceptions of Chinese labour in the British Empire were connected to the broader context of Anglo-Chinese contact and exchange in the 1830s and 1840s. Lowe Kong Meng in particular typified this connection. Born in the Straits Settlements, and therefore a British subject, Meng arrived in Melbourne in 1853, ahead of the 10,000 Chinese fortune seekers who arrived in 1854, and set up a business selling tea and other provisions to Chinese gold diggers.³ A wealth of literature exists on these growing Chinese communities in the second half of the nineteenth century and their significance in the globalisation of border control in the twentieth century.⁴ Yet it is the start of these migrations, and in particular the transitional period from the 1830s to the 1850s, that requires further study. Not only does the life story of Lowe Kong Meng bridge this period, but concepts of Chinese character constructed in the contact zones of the Straits Settlements and China coast were re-configured and re-applied in colonial Victoria. The activities of Jardine Matheson connected these contexts.

Jardine Matheson's involvement in establishing new systems of Chinese migration demonstrates three main points. First, it has shown how Chinese mass migration from the 1850s onwards, to locations like Australia and California, would have been impossible without the networks cultivated by private merchant firms in the 1830s. The case studies examined show how experiments with Chinese labour in the British Empire in 1830s and 1840s were dependent on the resources and networks of Jardine Matheson for recruitment on

¹ Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*, p. 13.

² L. Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Chong, and Louis Ah Mouy, *The Chinese Question in Australia 1878-9* (Melbourne: F. F. Bailliere, 1879), p. 4.

³ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 16-17.

⁴ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, p. 2.

the China coast. The economic, diplomatic and spiritual openings of China – in which Jardine Matheson were so heavily involved – were intertwined with the physical opening of China to emigration, both through the firm’s illicit opium networks the opening of the treaty ports. In addition to the new networks established by commercial firms, Anglo-Chinese contact zones that developed in this period were crucial to global migration systems in the later period. The trade entrepôts of Singapore and Hong Kong were dominated by British firms and connected to global trade networks. They became particularly important points of onward migration as they combined large Chinese populations with the liberal attitude towards the free movement of labour advocated by British colonial authorities.

Second, the 1830s and 1840s were also vitally important for the ranking of Chinese migrants in ethnic hierarchies that were constructed in British colonies. Whilst some migrants were able to shape how they were perceived and define their role in colonial society, many Chinese labourers had little agency when evaluated by Western observers. There were two main drivers of the British obsession with defining who the Chinese were and what they were like. Concern over British commercial access to China and concerns over the shortage of labour in British colonies. Many of the stereotypes about the Chinese character, which would become widespread in the West over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were formed in the 1830s. Both emerging China ‘experts’ and Jardine Matheson’s publishing network were essential in confirming common tropes about Chinese migrants that would be reproduced in anti-immigration rhetoric from the 1850s onwards. Many of these perceptions were riven with contradictions. For example, James Matheson simultaneously criticised Chinese deceitfulness and praised Chinese industry, and both of these views were manifest in the anti-immigration discourse of the late nineteenth century. It is also misguided, though common in existing literature, to see such characterisations as fundamentally positive or negative. Chinese immigrants in the British Empire in Asia were viewed as a useful economic and political tool of colonial governance.

Third, within the context of changes in terms of labour and economic relationships in the British Empire, China and globally, Jardine Matheson proved remarkably adaptive. The firm thrived in both post-EIC monopoly Canton and in the post-Opium War Hong Kong. In this era of change the firm was able to maintain access to the China coast and, as a result, could respond to changing demand for labour by making use of existing Chinese recruitment networks. Simultaneously, Jardine Matheson were agents for change. The activities of the firm fundamentally changed how Western firms and governments were able to extract labour from China. That Jardine Matheson were at the forefront of opening China to opium, biblical literature and ultimately war, is readily acknowledged and discussed in historical literature.

That the firm was also engineering change through the extraction of Chinese migrant labour to be employed in new destinations has been missing from this narrative.

Chinese Migration in the British Empire, 1833-1853

The development of Singapore over the 1820s and 1830s and the removal of the EIC monopoly in 1833 changed the economic, political and social dynamics of the British Empire in Asia. Emerging commercial, personal and information networks filled the void left by the absence of the EIC in Anglo-Chinese exchange from 1833 onwards. Discussions of Chinese character in the debate around the Charter Act demonstrate why historians of Chinese migration into the British Empire must ground their work in the broader context of Anglo-Chinese relations and British economic and imperial expansion in Asia. At the same time, Singapore was identified as an imperial template – with a dynamic combination of British colonial leadership working in tandem with a Chinese merchant elite to control the large Chinese labour force. Both colonial and imperial debates enabled some, like John Crawfurd and James Matheson, to become recognised as experts on China and the Chinese in the metropole. Importantly, Singapore did not just act as a template, but continued to be a popular destination for Chinese migrant labour. Southeast Asia had attracted Chinese migrants prior to the British imperial presence and continued to attract Chinese migrants after decolonization. As of the 2010 census, Singapore was home to 2.8 million residents who were Chinese nationals or identified as Chinese (seventy-four per cent of the resident population).⁵ Whilst Chinese migration to Singapore in the nineteenth century was not a uniquely ‘British’ phenomenon, the systems, arrangements and economic value of Chinese labour in Singapore had a significant impact on colonial observers and imperial planners.

The role of Jardine Matheson in spreading and coordinating ideas about the Chinese as an ethnic group in the 1830s was vital. The firm was part of a broader growth of publishing on China stimulated by an increasing number of individuals gaining direct experience of China and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. This was matched by metropolitan interest in the increasingly tumultuous and lucrative China trade. The broad narrative in the publications of Jardine Matheson and connected individuals was that of a fundamental division. This division was between an enterprising, industrious, liberty-deserving, southern Chinese population and a despotic, insular, tyrannical, northern Manchu state. Not only did this division justify the firm’s questionable economic activity on the China coast but it also acted as an implicit, and sometimes explicit, advocacy of Chinese emigration. Criticism of the

⁵ Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010 (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest-data#7>), accessed 27 September 2015.

Qing was persistent and intensified over the nineteenth century. The Second Opium War, and consequent legalisation of Chinese emigration, again demonstrates the connection between freedom of movement and the defiance of Qing authority. The burning of the Summer Palace was a further punishment of the non-compliant Qing Empire and the Convention of Peking was a continuation of the ‘opening’ of China for which Jardine Matheson and others had so vigorously pushed in the 1830s. Notions of Chinese character remained important as Western economic incursions into China continued unabated.

The 1830s was also a crucial period for establishing new systems of migration. The procurement of Chinese labour for Assam demonstrated the specific utility of Jardine Matheson’s opium network in terms of facilitating migration. The failure of Chinese recruitment under the Assam Company underlined the significance of Jardine Matheson’s unique access to labour from China. This was also illustrated by Gordon Forbes Davidson’s failure to replicate systems of credit-ticket migration to Singapore in New South Wales. Crucially, these were also early attempts to extend the limits of existing migration systems to new destinations. In Assam, the experiment had a vast economic, ecological and social impact. The success of tea planting in Assam changed the region, trade in the British Empire and the commodification of tea globally.⁶ At the same time, Davidson’s scheme gave an early indication that the white settlers of Australia would politically mobilise in resistance to cheap Chinese labour. A commonality of these experiments was that both the indigenous Assamese and Australian populations were seen as candidates for replacement by industrious Chinese workers. The pattern of replacement of indigenous peoples was replicated across the British Empire and beyond. In particular, Aboriginal Australian communities were subject to such marginalisation repeatedly over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷ This destruction of Aboriginal Australian society was driven by the same notions of economic progress and ethnic hierarchy that had created a demand for Chinese labour in the 1830s.

Demand for Chinese workers also reveals the far reaching impact of contemporary debates over labour and colonization in the British Empire. Chinese migrations were taking place in a patchwork of colonial contexts, many of which were afflicted by labour shortages. The phasing out of coercive forms of employment – slave labour, convict labour and the suspension of Indian indentured labour – left questions about how shortfalls could be covered by free, or voluntary, labour. Chapter four demonstrated different ways in which industrious Chinese labour could be sourced to fill colonial demands. Governor of Ceylon James

⁶ Ellis, Coulton and Mauger, *Empire of Tea*, pp. 202-221.

⁷ For more on this process of destruction see Stuart Macintyre, *The History Wars* (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2004); Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in our Hearts* (St. Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1998); Tom Lawson, *The Last Man: a British Genocide in Tasmania* (London: B Tauris, 2014).

Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie twice approached his fellow Highlander and family friend, James Matheson, regarding the possibility of introducing Chinese migrants to Ceylon. In contrast a new layer of imperial bureaucracy, the CLEC, was formed in London to attempt to address problems with labour, colonization and land distribution across the Empire. The establishment of migration systems to Mauritius and the West Indies, managed by the CLEC, demonstrated the replication of existing Chinese migration systems by official structures. In the wake of the abolition of slavery it was still unclear what free labour – especially free labour that was cheap and effective – was or looked like. Different forms of convict and indentured labour were used in various locations well into the late nineteenth century. From the 1850s onwards roughly 18,000 Chinese labourers migrated to the West Indies.⁸ Such systems were continually compared to slavery which, in the post-abolition era, was an evil that came to represent the antithesis of British liberty. More broadly, migration to new colonial contexts, such as the West Indies or the United States, saw Chinese migrants becoming part of new multi-ethnic societies. In these intensely racialised societies, Chinese migrants were compared and critiqued alongside Indian, African and European labourers.

British commercial, and military, aggression on the China coast over the 1830s culminated in a new context of Anglo-Chinese exchange from 1842. The cession of Hong Kong, the opening of the treaty ports, the granting of legal extraterritoriality – these changes all had an impact on Chinese migration into the British Empire. Colonial authorities in Hong Kong, much like Singapore previously, simultaneously praised Chinese elites and were wary and critical of the Chinese majority. Most importantly, Hong Kong acted as a point of onward migration to destinations around the globe and a strategic base for Western firms looking to extract labour from China. Notably, Jardine Matheson were intimately tied to both colonial authority and global shipping networks in nineteenth-century Hong Kong. Chapter five also detailed the role Jardine Matheson in assisting the Western ‘coolie’ firms of Tait & Co. and Syme, Muir & Co., who established new, coercive contract migration systems from Amoy. These ‘new systems of slavery’, alongside mass migration to the goldfields in the 1850s, have been discussed as the two main systems in the vast body of literature on Chinese migration in the nineteenth century. The passenger trade established by these firms has been treated as a new and distinct phenomena, yet their links to Jardine Matheson reflect how new systems developed in the 1840s were contingent on changes occurring in the 1830s. Further study of the links between the movement of people from Hong Kong and the treaty ports to the British Empire, the United States and Spanish colonies is needed.

⁸ Marjory Harper, ‘Exile into Bondage? Non-White Migrants and Settlers’, in Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 152.

Legacies of Migration

Jardine Matheson's involvement in sourcing Chinese migrant labour has a bearing on several areas of historiography. In terms of source material, this study of Chinese migration in the British Empire has largely dealt with the colonial lives of powerful individuals and the development of a wealthy multi-national corporation. John Crawford, James Matheson, Gordon Forbes Davidson, James Alexander Stewart-Mackenzie, and others, were bound together by their imperial careers in Asia. All were white, British men with power and wealth. Notably, many were also moneyed products of post-enlightenment Scotland. They viewed the British Empire as both a conduit for civilization and as a space in which to advance their careers and seek a personal fortune. A focus on such individuals in histories of empire is increasingly unpopular as scholars seek to tell the story of voiceless groups that have been omitted from the historical record. A study of these men does not directly tell us the story of the Chinese migrant experience. But this does tell us about how migrants were perceived, and the ideas that shaped the colonial contexts in which migrants lived. Importantly, these men had agency. They were not just reacting to change, but actively changing the British Empire in Asia. Crucially, the examination of Chinese migration through these individuals has allowed for a subversion of some of the methodological binaries that often exist in studies of migration. A focus on a specific time or place can often cut histories of migration off from other areas of imperial history or wider historical processes. The focus on Jardine Matheson means that Chinese migration between 1833 and 1853 can be placed in the broader context of change taking place in the British Empire. The firm has allowed for the examination of different movements of people that would otherwise be studied in isolation. Historians who dismiss colonial officials, wealthy merchants and powerful organisations as over-examined or disconnected from the realities of migration are failing to utilise a rich resource.

The centrality of perceptions of Chinese migrants in this thesis also points to the importance of information networks and the acquisition and transfer of knowledge. In recent decades, the role of information networks in the development of the British Empire has been a keen focus of scholarly work.⁹ Jardine Matheson's involvement in the dissemination of information about China emphasises the different types of organisations that were concerned with information exchange. In this respect this private firm echoed the activities of the EIC in India. For both commercial organisations the information business was a core activity. Crucially, such information networks were utilised by different actors, with different agendas. Missionaries, private merchants and colonial officials, whilst often broadly aligned, had fundamentally different motivations and aims. However, the central agenda of the firm was to

⁹ Lester, *Imperial Networks*; Potter, 'Webs, Networks and Systems'; Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*.

discredit the Qing Empire. Praise of the Chinese people and criticism of the Qing's prohibition on emigration were part of a broader rhetorical attack. These information networks were also often contingent on personal connections, which operated outside of the official or uniform structures of empire or commercial systems. The different ways in which merchant firms fitted into non-commercial information networks requires further study.

Perceptions of Chinese migrants formed in colonial contact zones have significant implications for histories of immigration restriction and white, working class anti-Asian movements in the late nineteenth century. The narrative of these movements is often straightforward. After large amounts of Chinese, as well as Indian and Japanese, immigration into settler colonies – namely Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada – and the United States from the 1850s onwards, white working class movements emerged that agitated for the exclusion of cheap Asian labour.¹⁰ This political pressure meant that a legislative framework for exclusion was in put in place across these nations, forming the basis of modern-day systems of border control.¹¹ These political processes, and associated prejudices, have been interpreted as a reaction to Asian immigration. However, they were actually informed by perceptions of the Chinese that had been formed much earlier in Asian contact zones. Intensely racialised, sensationalist anti-Chinese rhetoric appeared in late nineteenth century Australia and Chinese migrants were criticised as strikebreaking criminals. As shown in this thesis, notions of the Chinese as a cheap labour force – who were also flawed opium addicts, gamblers and thieves – were constructed in colonial Singapore in the 1820s and 1830s. These traits re-emerged in the late nineteenth century as criticisms of Chinese immigrant labour. Anti-immigrant discourse clearly drew on the narratives of a much longer tradition of Anglo-Chinese exchange.

Additionally, there is broad scope for a comparative analysis of perceptions of Chinese migrant labour in new, multi-ethnic contexts. Donna Gabaccia has discussed how Italian immigrants in North America were labelled the 'Chinese of Europe'.¹² Notions of Italian and Chinese labour sat uneasily between the dichotomy of 'free white' and 'unfree black' labour.¹³ Further comparison with different ethnic groups that migrated from Europe is possible. This thesis has demonstrated how Chinese labour was simultaneously viewed as uniquely effective and as part of a broad category of harmful Asian labour. Such perceptions

¹⁰ Victoria in 1854 is often cited as the start of such movements in the British Empire: Hollinsworth, *Race and Racism in Australia*, p. 101; Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself White', pp. 398-421.

¹¹ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, p. 2; Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws as Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

¹² Donna Gabaccia, 'The 'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe': Global Perspectives on Race and Labour, 1815-1930', in Jan Lucassen, *Migration, migration history, history: old paradigms and new perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 177-197.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 196.

were contingent on specific local circumstances and similar distinctions were applied to other migrant groups. For example, Irish immigrants often faced discrimination in Britain and the United States but, in the exclusionary rhetoric of ‘white’ Australia, were preferred to non-white immigrants. Migrants from Europe, Asia and elsewhere, were all part of and subject to confused notions of ethnic hierarchy as settler colonies developed.

Most importantly, Chinese migration into the British Empire must be situated in the wider context of Anglo-Chinese relations. Chapter two discussed how the *Canton Register* incorporated Chinese emigration into its broader criticism of the Qing Empire. In 1834 the *Register* published an editorial concerned with the surplus population of China. The article criticised the Qing Empire ‘which caused them [the Chinese people] to abhor foreigners and to crowd under the protection of their native leaders’.¹⁴ This criticism fitted with the firm’s broad critique of the tyranny of the Chinese Emperor, but also served to advocate the legalisation of Chinese emigration. The exportation of labour was advanced as a humanitarian solution to the country’s impending Malthusian crisis. Jardine Matheson’s mouthpiece wished that ‘excess finds an outlet in emigration, we fondly hope the threatening evil may be averted from this empire’.¹⁵ The firm’s desire for China to open its borders meant the movement of labour and capital out of China as much as it meant the movement of missionaries, Western imports and foreign merchants into China. In the pre-Opium War context of the 1830s a warning was offered for the cost of Chinese isolationism: ‘if they do not advance with the world they will sooner or later fall a sacrifice to their stubbornness’.¹⁶ China was to be opened in various ways, using various means.

In the post-1842 era, when China had been opened, Jardine Matheson helped to establish entirely new systems of migration from treaty ports like Amoy. These new systems brought the British experience of Chinese migration full circle. As discussed in chapter five, records of Chinese immigrants to Singapore in 1852-1853 showed that of 11,484 Chinese arrivals 3,456 came from Amoy aboard British-owned vessels.¹⁷ The pre-existing systems of Chinese migration to Southeast Asia, which the examples in this thesis attempted to replicate in new contexts, eventually became directly replicated by British merchant firms themselves. Between the 1830s and 1850s experiments with and systems of Chinese migration into the British Empire were connected to the growing, private, British commercial networks on the China coast. Simultaneously the Chinese as an ethnic group were celebrated as innately predisposed to providing cheap colonial labour. The period 1833 to 1853 was crucial in

¹⁴ *Canton Register*, 7 October 1834.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

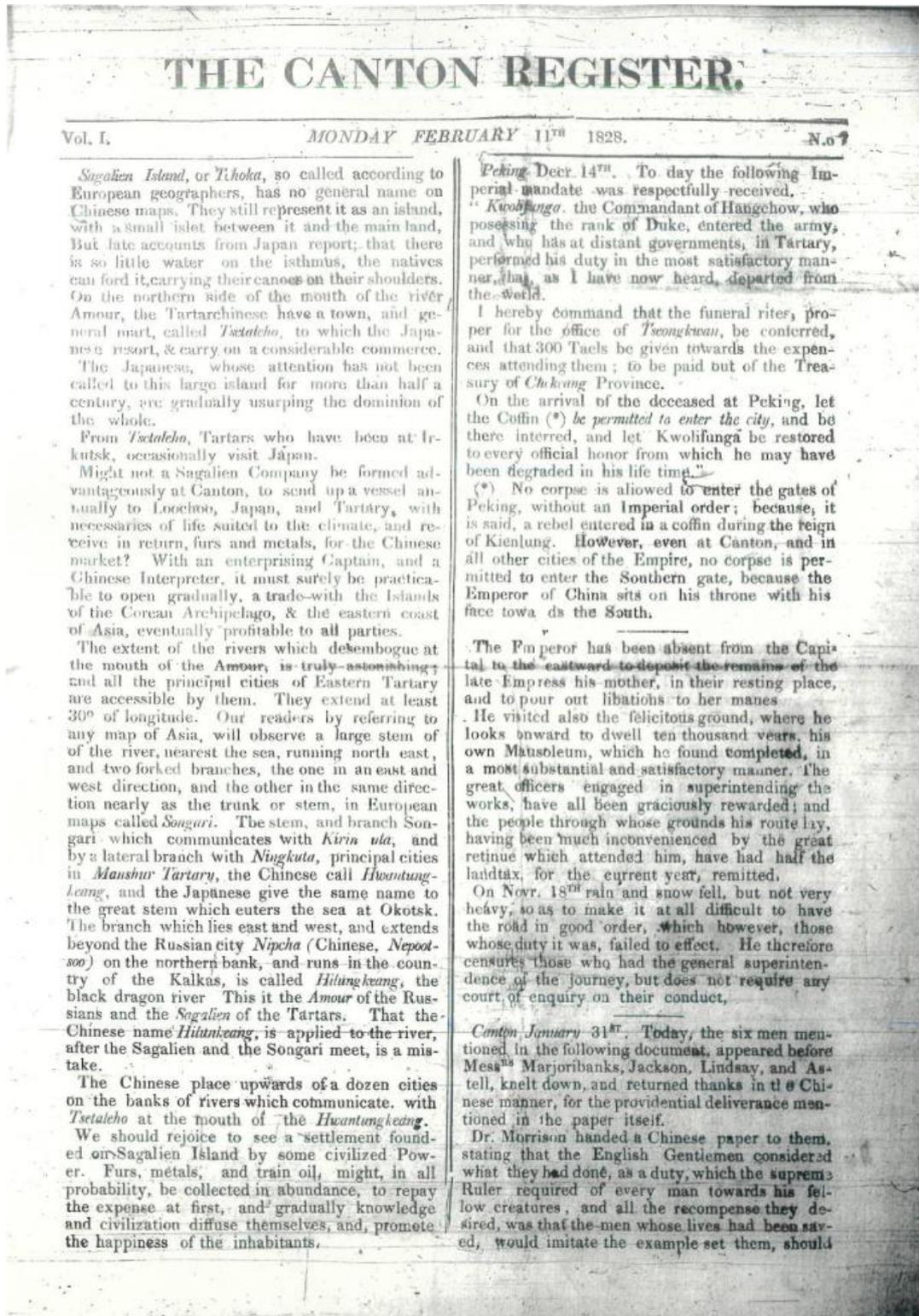
¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Hong Kong Register*, 16 August 1853.

shaping the view of China as a source of high quality, low cost labour for colonial shortages. Both physically and conceptually, the foundations of Chinese migrations that would change the British Empire, and the world, in the second half of the nineteenth century were built in this period of upheaval.

Appendices

Appendix A: Canton Register Covers



THE CANTON REGISTER.

Vol. I.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 11TH 1828.

No. 7

Sagalien Island, or *Yihoka*, so called according to European geographers, has no general name on Chinese maps. They still represent it as an island, with a small islet between it and the main land. But late accounts from Japan report; that there is so little water on the isthmus, the natives can ford it, carrying their canoes on their shoulders. On the northern side of the mouth of the river Amour, the Tartarchinese have a town, and general mart, called *Tsetaleho*, to which the Japanese resort, & carry on a considerable commerce. The Japanese, whose attention has not been called to this large island for more than half a century, are gradually usurping the dominion of the whole.

From *Tsetaleho*, Tartars who have been at Irkutsk, occasionally visit Japan.

Might not a Sagalien Company be formed advantageously at Canton, to send up a vessel annually to Loochoo, Japan, and Tartary, with necessaries of life suited to the climate, and receive in return, furs and metals, for the Chinese market? With an enterprising Captain, and a Chinese Interpreter, it must surely be practicable to open gradually, a trade with the Islands of the Corcan Archipelago, & the eastern coast of Asia, eventually profitable to all parties.

The extent of the rivers which desembogue at the mouth of the Amour, is truly astonishing; and all the principal cities of Eastern Tartary are accessible by them. They extend at least 30° of longitude. Our readers by referring to any map of Asia, will observe a large stem of the river, nearest the sea, running north east, and two forked branches, the one in an east and west direction, and the other in the same direction nearly as the trunk or stem, in European maps called *Songari*. The stem, and branch *Songari* which communicates with *Kirin ula*, and by a lateral branch with *Ninghuta*, principal cities in *Mansur Tartary*, the Chinese call *Hosungkeang*, and the Japanese give the same name to the great stem which enters the sea at Okotsk. The branch which lies east and west, and extends beyond the Russian city *Nipcha* (Chinese, *Nepootsoo*) on the northern bank, and runs in the country of the Kalkas, is called *Hilungkeang*, the black dragon river. This is the Amour of the Russians and the *Sagalien* of the Tartars. That the Chinese name *Hilungkeang*, is applied to the river, after the Sagalien and the Songari meet, is a mistake.

The Chinese place upwards of a dozen cities on the banks of rivers which communicate with *Tsetaleho* at the mouth of the *Hwantungkeang*.

We should rejoice to see a settlement founded on Sagalien Island by some civilized Power. Furs, metals, and train oil, might, in all probability, be collected in abundance, to repay the expense at first, and gradually knowledge and civilization diffuse themselves, and promote the happiness of the inhabitants.

Peking Decr 14TH. To day the following Imperial mandate was respectfully received.

Kwohfungo, the Commandant of Hangchow, who possessing the rank of Duke, entered the army, and who has at distant governments, in Tartary, performed his duty in the most satisfactory manner, has, as I have now heard, departed from the world.

I hereby command that the funeral rites, proper for the office of *Tseongkwon*, be conferred, and that 300 Taels be given towards the expenses attending them; to be paid out of the Treasury of *Chikwang* Province.

On the arrival of the deceased at Peking, let the Coffin (*) be permitted to enter the city, and be there interred, and let *Kwolifungo* be restored to every official honor from which he may have been degraded in his life time.

(*) No corpse is allowed to enter the gates of Peking, without an Imperial order; because, it is said, a rebel entered in a coffin during the reign of *Kienlung*. However, even at Canton, and in all other cities of the Empire, no corpse is permitted to enter the Southern gate, because the Emperor of China sits on his throne with his face towards the South.

The Emperor has been absent from the Capital to the eastward to deposit the remains of the late Empress his mother, in their resting place, and to pour out libations to her manes.

He visited also the felicitous ground, where he looks onward to dwell ten thousand years, his own Mausoleum, which he found completed, in a most substantial and satisfactory manner. The great officers engaged in superintending the works, have all been graciously rewarded; and the people through whose grounds his route lay, having been much inconvenienced by the great retinue which attended him, have had half the landtax for the current year, remitted.

On Novr. 18TH rain and snow fell, but not very heavy, so as to make it at all difficult to have the road in good order, which however, those whose duty it was, failed to effect. He therefore censures those who had the general superintendance of the journey, but does not require any court of enquiry on their conduct.

Canton January 31ST. Today, the six men mentioned in the following document, appeared before Mess^{rs} Marjoribanks, Jackson, Lindsay, and Astell, knelt down, and returned thanks in the Chinese manner, for the providential deliverance mentioned in the paper itself.

Dr. Morrison handed a Chinese paper to them, stating that the English Gentlemen considered what they had done, as a duty, which the supreme Ruler required of every man towards his fellow creatures, and all the recompense they desired, was that the men whose lives had been saved, would imitate the example set them, should

Canton Register, 11 February 1828.

THE CANTON REGISTER.

"The free traders appear to cherish high notions of their claims and privileges. Under their auspices a free press is already maintained at Canton; and should their commerce continue to increase, their importance will rise also. They will regard themselves as the depositaries of the true principles of British commerce."

CHARLES GRANT.

VOL. 7.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26th, 1834.

NO. 34. PRICE 50 CENTS.

FOR LONDON DIRECT.

THE new and fast sailing ship, *ELIZ. SWEART*, Capt. R. Miller, 423 tons burthen, having about $\frac{1}{2}$ of her cargo engaged, will meet with early despatch. Apply to **R. TURNER & Co.**

FOR BOMBAY.

THE *LOWRIE FAMILY*, Captain Johnson, to sail on the 1st of August. For freight apply to **THOMAS DENT & Co.**

FOR BOMBAY.

THE *PUTTAY SALAM*, J. Keys commander, will leave Whampoa on the 1st of September next. For freight apply to **DADABHOY & MANACKJEE RUSTOMJEE.**

FOR SINGAPORE AND CALCUTTA.

THE *ALLALEVIE*, Captain Andre, will leave Whampoa on the 25th of September next. For freight apply to **DADABHOY & MANACKJEE RUSTOMJEE.**

FOR THE STRAITS AND CALCUTTA.

THE *BOMBAY CASTLE*, Capt. Wemyss, will receive freight at Lintin or Mouzo: To sail in all this month. Apply to **JARDINE, MATHESON & Co.**

FOR SINGAPORE AND BOMBAY.

THE well known fast sailing ship *LORD CASTLEREACH*, Captain P. Tunks, to sail early in October. For freight apply to **DORABJEE HORMUJEE, No 7 French Hong.**

FOR ABERDEEN DIRECT.

THE British Brig, *CITY OF ABERDEEN*, Ja Monro Captain, will leave Whampoa early in October; burthen (per Register) 260 Tons. For freight apply to **JA INNES.**

FOR SINGAPORE & BO

THE ship *CHARLOTTE*, Captain Malyille, v in the 20th of September. For freight apply to **JA INNES.**

FOR SINGAPORE AND BOMBAY.

THE *HELEN*, Captain G. Langley, will sail on the 20th of September next. For freight apply to **CURSETJEE SAPOORJEE PARROW, No. 1, American Hong.**

NOTICE.

THE subscriber having, been appointed agent for **Franjee Nasserwanjee & Co's Insurance Office Bombay**, is prepared to receive applications for insurance on such risks as by the regulations of the office he is permitted to take. **BURJEE FURNOOJEE, No. 3, Pownan Hong.**

NOTICE.

RISKS will be taken in **Vicentee Merjee's Constituents Insurance Office of Bombay**, on the same terms as heretofore. **RUSSELL & Co. Agents.**

NOTICE.

THE **ANGLO-CHINESE KALENDAR for 1834**.—Price 50 cents. Published March 31st, 1834, and for sale at the **Albion Press Office, No. 6 Danish Hong.**

NOTICE.

Horsburgh's Charts are always on sale at **R. MARKWICK & Co's.**

CANTON.

We have not received any reports of arrivals since our last, which is probably owing to the boisterous state of the weather for the last few days, squalls, increasing to strong gales have been blowing, with heavy and constant falls of rain. The streets in the suburbs of Canton have again, for the last fortnight, been daily Hooded.

POST OFFICE REGULATIONS.

At a meeting of British merchants, held at the Office of H. M. Superintendents this 8th day of August, 1834, for the purpose of reconsidering the preliminary Resolutions of the 4th Instant regarding the formation of a Post office establishment at Canton and Macao, The following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to regarding the Receipt of Letters and Parcels.

1. Mr. Markwick is recommended as a fit and proper person to take charge of a Post office.
2. A Post office is to be established at Macao and Canton.
3. Authority to be given to Mr. Markwick or his Deputy to receive all letters from British ships arriving in China, such authority to be shown to the masters of vessels, on application.

4. To defray the expense and leave a fair remuneration to the Post Master, a postage must be levied on all letters, as follows;

Five cents on each ship letter;

Twenty cents on Parcels not exceeding in weight one lb, and five cents additional per lb, the maximum to be one dollar.

Newspapers, and Parcels containing News papers, to be delivered free.

5. A receipt to be given for all Letters and Parcels, stating ships name, and day and of hour receiving them.

6. After selecting the Macao and Lintin letters, those for Canton to be immediately forwarded by an Express Boat.

7. A Printed form to be sent with each ships letter, stating ships name, number of letters, date of arrival at, and despatch from Macao.

Regarding the despatch of Letters.

1. The intended departure of British vessels, either from Whampoa or outside the Bogue, is to be made known to the Post Master, in order that he may make up a Packet for transmission thereby: the same to be delivered to the master of the ship, or the Agent as may be most convenient.

2. Letters to and from Macao to be forwarded on Wednesdays and Saturdays; the hour of starting to be regulated by the tide, of which due Notice is to be given by Circular, and by advertisement at the Post Office. Letter to be charged ten cents, payable on delivery.

All other Foreign merchants, connected with the commerce of China, are invited to give their authority to Mr. Markwick, according to the above Resolutions, as far as may be consistent with their own convenience.

As the foregoing Plan is only to be considered experimental, and may be liable to future arrangements, the following Gentlemen were requested, and agreed, to form themselves into a Committee, namely; Messrs J. C. Whiteman, T. Fox, And. Johnstone, Alex. Matheson and W. S. Boyd, any three of whom to be considered a quorum. All future matters relating to the P. O. Establishment to be conducted by these Gentlemen, who are to report their proceedings to H. M. Superintendents, as may be necessary.

[Signed.]

J. H. Astell.

on the part of H. M. Superintendents.

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Jardine, Matheson & Co. | Bomanjee Manackjee. |
| Thomas Dent & Co. | Barjorjee Paradoonjee. |
| Fox, Rawson & Co. | J. Henry. |
| Whiteman & Co. | Hbery & Co. |
| James Innes. | John Watson. |
| T. R. Colledge. | A. S. Keating. |
| Richard Turner & Co. | R. Browne. |
| Jas. Goddard. | Nich. Crooke. |
| John Templeton & Co. | John Slade. |
| Dadabhoj Rustomjee. | C. A. Vertannes. |
| Dossabhoj Hormajee. | Andrew Jardine. |
| Muncherjee Jamsetjee. | Robert Thom. |
| Dossabhoj Rustomjee. | Tho. Allport. |
| Hormuzjee Byramjee. | Joseph Cragg. |
| Alex. Matheson. | H. Wright. |
| W. S. Boyd, for self and | Franjee Muncherjee. |
| Douglas McKenzie & Co. | Dorabjee Hormajee. |
| J. S. Mendes. | Franjee Jamsetjee. |
| E. W. Brightman. | Bapoojee Vicoojee. |
| J. R. Morrison. | Manackjee Rustomjee. |
| Nanabhoj Framjee. | Ardiseer Paradoonjee. |
| Cursetjee Sapoorjee Pureck. | Jummojee Nusservanjee. |

Appendix B: List of Subscribers for G. F. Davidson's Migration Scheme

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| J. E. Manning, Esq. | 10 |
| George Townshend, Esq. | 20 |
| J. Blaxland, Esq. M. C. | 10 |
| G. Blaxland, Esq. | 2 |
| J. Blaxland, junior, Esq. | 5 |
| C. Campbell, Esq. | 2 |
| Thomas Icely, Esq. | 4 |
| J. King, Esq. | 4 |
| A. Park, Esq. | 3 |
| H. O'Brien, Esq. | 10 |
| W. Dumaresq, Esq. | 3 |
| G. B. White, Esq. | 2 |
| E. D. Day, Esq. | 2 |
| G. T. Palmer, Esq. | 3 |
| J. Verge, Esq. | 3 |
| E. W. Hardy, Esq. | 4 |
| A. Seymour, Esq. | 4 |
| G. F. Davidson | 5 |
| Mr. J. H. Lyon | 3 |
| W. Dangar, Esq. | 5 |
| J. Robertson, senior, Esq. | 4 |
| T. W. Ryder, Esq. | 5 |
| H. H. M'Arthur, Esq. | 10 |
| Captain P. P. King | 10 |
| Dr. James Mitchell } | |
| R. and H. Scott } | 25 |
| A. W. Scott } | |
| R. C. Lethbridge, Esq. | 4 |
| R. T. Futter, Esq. | 6 |
| T. M'Quoid, Esq. | 5 |
| Alexander McLeay, Esq. | 8 |
| T. L. Campbell, Esq. | 2 |
| A. C. Innes, Esq. | 4 |
| Leslie Duguid, Esq. | 10 |
| J. Larnach, Esq. | 4 |
| Edye Manning, Esq. | 10 |
| W. Braidwood Wilson, Esq. | 10 |
| F. M'Kenzie, Esq. | 2 |
| J. B. Bloomfield, Esq. | 4 |
| Thomas Gore, Esq. | 8 |
| A. B. Spark, Esq. | 5 |
| Thomas Smith, Esq. | 2 |

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Sir John Jamison, M. C. | 5 |
| J. W. Russell, Esq. | 4 |
| Thomas Wiils, Esq. | 5 |
| Thomas Shadforth, Esq. | 4 |
| Thomas Stubbs, Esq. | 1 |
| A. L. Brown, Esq. | 5 |
| Henry Smyth, Esq. | 2 |
| William Redfern, Esq. | 5 |
| John Coghill, Esq. | 10 |
| C. Boydell, Esq. | 12 |
| W. Hirst, Esq. | 5 |
| W. H. Moore, Esq. | 3 |
| W. Ogilvie, Esq. | 10 |
| Captain S. Wright | 10 |
| John Pike, Esq. | 12 |
| Total | 335 |

Sydney Herald, 26 June 1837

Of the listed subscribers eighteen were also signees of a public letter to the colonial government on the subject of emigration: *Opinions of the Colonists as to raising money by loan for assisting emigration. To the honourable committee of the legislative council appointed to consider the question of Immigration* (New South Wales, September 1838).

Appendix C: Chinese employment and business interests in colonial Hong Kong: *Hong Kong Almanac* (1846) and *Canton Register* (1842).

| Industry | Number of Chinese Traders |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bamboo workers | 3 |
| Bakers | 4 |
| Barber | 7 |
| Bird Dealer | 1 |
| Blacksmiths | 3 |
| Bookbinders | 4 |
| Bonnet Maker | 1 |
| Cabinet Maker | 11 |
| Carpenters | 19 |
| Carver | 1 |
| Chandlers | 40 |
| Cigar Maker | 1 |
| Clothiers | 4 |
| Comprador | 2 |
| Copper Smith | 1 |
| Cow Keepers | 6 |
| Curiosity Dealers | 2 |
| Druggists | 18 |
| Dyer | 1 |
| Earthenware and Porcelain | 7 |
| Eating House | 5 |
| European Goods | 12 |
| Firework Seller | 1 |
| Fruiterers | 3 |
| General Dealers | 8 |
| Glaziers | 3 |
| Grasscloth Dealers | 2 |
| Greengrocers | 2 |
| Grocers | 4 |
| House Painter | 1 |
| Iron Mongers | 5 |
| Ivory Workers | 2 |
| Japaner | 1 |
| Lantern Maker | 1 |
| Lodging House Keepers | 30 |
| Manchester Goods Vendors | 8 |
| Mast Seller | 1 |
| Mat House Builders | 3 |

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Matrass Maker | 1 |
| Money Changers | 3 |
| Old Clothes Dealer | 1 |
| Opium Dealers | 5 |
| Opium Refiners and Retainers | 11 |
| Pawn Brokers | 5 |
| Pewterer | 1 |
| Printer | 1 |
| Poulterer | 2 |
| Rice Dealers | 3 |
| Rice Paper Printers | 2 |
| Rope Maker | 1 |
| Sam-shew Venders | 15 |
| Tea Dealers | 1 |
| Sail Maker | 1 |
| Shoe Makers | 10 |
| Shoe Sellers | 4 |
| Slop Sellers | 2 |
| Silversmiths | 13 |
| Silk Dealers | 11 |
| Sheep Dealers | 2 |
| Sweetmeat Dealers | 1 |
| Tailors | 22 |
| Timber Stainer | 1 |
| Timber Dealers | 8 |
| Tinsel Paper Sellers | 1 |
| Tinsmiths | 5 |
| Toy Seller | 1 |
| Turner | 1 |
| Umbrella Makers | 2 |
| Washermen | 16 |
| Total | 381 |

A. R. Johnston, *Hong Kong Directory/Almanac* (Hong Kong, 1846)

| Business | Shops | Souls |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Chandlers | 67 | 402 |
| Butchers | 7 | 56 |
| Bakers | 6 | 39 |
| Confectioners | 1 | 10 |
| Greengrocers | 4 | 31 |
| Fishmongers | 3 | 17 |
| Rice dealers | 1 | 9 |
| Eating houses | 3 | 28 |
| Apothecaries | 6 | 22 |
| Carpenters | 17 | 566 |
| Blacksmiths | 7 | 53 |
| Silversmiths | 2 | 14 |
| Boat-builders | 6 | 59 |
| Masons | 1 | 380 |
| Bamboo workers | 3 | 43 |
| Tailors | 14 | 89 |
| Shoemakers | 5 | 28 |
| Drapers | 4 | 36 |
| Barbera | 11 | 66 |
| Stationers | 1 | 2 |
| Pawnbrokers | 1 | 8 |
| School masters | 2 | 10 |
| Tanners | 2 | 17 |
| Washermen | 6 | 42 |
| Shroffs | 2 | 12 |
| Opium sellers | 24 | 131 |
| Prostitutes | 23 | 439 |
| Compradors | 8 | 100 |
| Bricklayers | | 500 |
| Brickmakers | | 50 |
| Limeburners | | 120 |
| Ropemakers | | 10 |
| House painters | | 30 |
| Labourers | | 1366 |
| Hawkers | | 600 |
| In the employ of Europeans | | 200 |
| Having no ostensible employment | | 500 |
| Boat population | | 2100 |
| Total | 237 | 8,181 |

Canton Register, 29 March 1842

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