Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong

GHETTO
at the Center of the World

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Hong Kong University Press

Hong Kong University Press
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong
www.hkupress.org

Printed in the United States of America
This Hong Kong University Press edition is available for sale in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, China, Australia, and New Zealand.

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 3 4 5

ISBN: 978-988-8083-36-7 (paper)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All photos are the author's own except as noted here. Frontispiece and pp. 24, 25, 42, 45, 79, 110, 122, 150, 190, and 215 courtesy of Jacqueline Donaldson; p. 65 courtesy of Jose Rojas; p. 67 courtesy of Maggie Lin; and maps courtesy of Alice Hui. The cover photo, by Shin Kusano, depicts Chungking Mansions as photographed from its third floor looking skyward.

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PRELUDE
A Note on Hong Kong

Chungking Mansions, the subject of this book, is the haunt of South Asian merchants, African entrepreneurs, Indian temporary workers, African and South Asian asylum seekers, and penurious travelers from across the globe. It is, as I discuss in the pages that follow, a ramshackle building in Hong Kong's tourist district that is a hub of "low-end globalization," tightly linked to the markets of Kolkata (Calcutta), Lagos, and Dar es Salaam, among other cities across the globe. Although Chungking Mansions is seen by many in Hong Kong as a mysterious world of otherness strangely set in Hong Kong's very heart, it is nonetheless distinctly shaped by Hong Kong. In order to properly situate Chungking Mansions, I here briefly sketch Hong Kong's history and geography in relation to Chungking Mansions.

Hong Kong was a colony of Great Britain from 1841 until its return to China in 1997. Throughout its colonial history, it served as an entrepôt between China and the world beyond—first as a settlement where British companies managed their opium shipments into China and subsequently, throughout much of its history, as a center of free trade, with minimal customs duties. Throughout its history, its population was a global mix, with

the vast majority Chinese but also including an array of other peoples. A late nineteenth-century source speaks of a downtown street as "filled with Britishers, Germans, Anglo-Indians, Chinese from Canton, Armenians from Calcutta, Parsees from Bombay, and Jews from Baghdad"[1]—a mix not utterly different from what is found in a Chungking Mansions corridor today. Another late nineteenth-century account discusses how Hong Kong is "allowed to be the most cosmopolitan city in the world. Representatives of races far in excess of the Pentecostal catalogue, may be encountered in its streets in any hour's walk; men of all shades of colour and of every religious creed live here side by side in apparent perfect harmony."[2] This is the case in Chungking Mansions today as well—although then, as now, there were ethnic tensions and ethnic discrimination.[3]

Hong Kong, throughout much of its history, was an impoverished place for most of its residents. In 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded. During this era, large numbers of Chinese fled the mainland and came to Hong Kong, leading to a massive population explosion in the territory. By the 1970s, Hong Kong had emerged as a manufacturing hub, and from the late 1980s on as a center for Chinese goods being shipped around the world. At the same time, a sense of a distinct Hong Kong identity, separate from that of China, gradually emerged.[4] By the 1990s, Hong Kong had become wealthy—far wealthier in its per capita income than China and wealthier, too, by this measure, than its colonizer, Great Britain. As of 2007, Hong Kong had a per capita income in actual purchasing power that was 93 percent that of the United States, considerably higher than that of most European nations and some eight times that of mainland China,[5] although the gap between the rich and the poor is one of the largest in the world. This makes Chungking Mansions' role, as a ramshackle home of the developing world in Hong Kong, seem incongruous. Much of the disdain and fear that many Hong Kong Chinese feel toward Chungking Mansions, as I later discuss, stems from the subliminal sense that "We Hong Kongers have recently left the developing world and become wealthy. Why should these Africans and South Asians be staying in the midst of our newly wealthy home?"

By the same token, the disdain toward mainland China expressed by some of the Chungking Mansions' merchants and traders in this book, whether African, South Asian, or Hong Kong Chinese, echoes a more general Hong Kong sense of unease toward one's fellow citizens from the north. Mainland Chinese are seen by many as Hong Kong's unchosen political masters and also as economic inferiors, although wealthy mainlanders have an increasingly visible presence in Hong Kong in recent years and the mainland increasingly seems to be overtaking and perhaps leaving behind Hong Kong as

the land of the future. Chungking Mansions, an island of otherness in Hong Kong, is nonetheless very much a part of Hong Kong in the attitudes of the people who live and work there. Indeed, the people who fled China to make a better life for themselves in Hong Kong are remarkably similar in their values to those who more recently have left South Asia and Africa to seek a better life for themselves in Chungking Mansions, even though the two groups have almost no understanding of or sympathy for one another.

Hong Kong's 150 years as a British colony have had a great impact in shaping Chungking Mansions. Most important is the prominent presence of South Asians in Hong Kong since the early days of its colonial history and remaining ever since.[6] Were it not for the initial presence of South Asians in Chungking Mansions when the building opened in 1962, Chungking Mansions would almost certainly not have evolved into the global mart that it has become. An astute journalist accompanying me to Chungking Mansions remarked that what he saw, among its many different ethnicities and nationalities, was not just globalization but also an echo of British colonialism. Indeed, while many of the different groups in the building were never the victims or beneficiaries of British colonialism, East Africans and South Asians are very prominently represented. This is partly because these people are more likely to speak English, Chungking Mansions' lingua franca, and partly because visa-free entry for an extended period is, even today, easier for members of these societies to obtain than for members of other societies. Hong Kong's colonial era lives on in this sense.

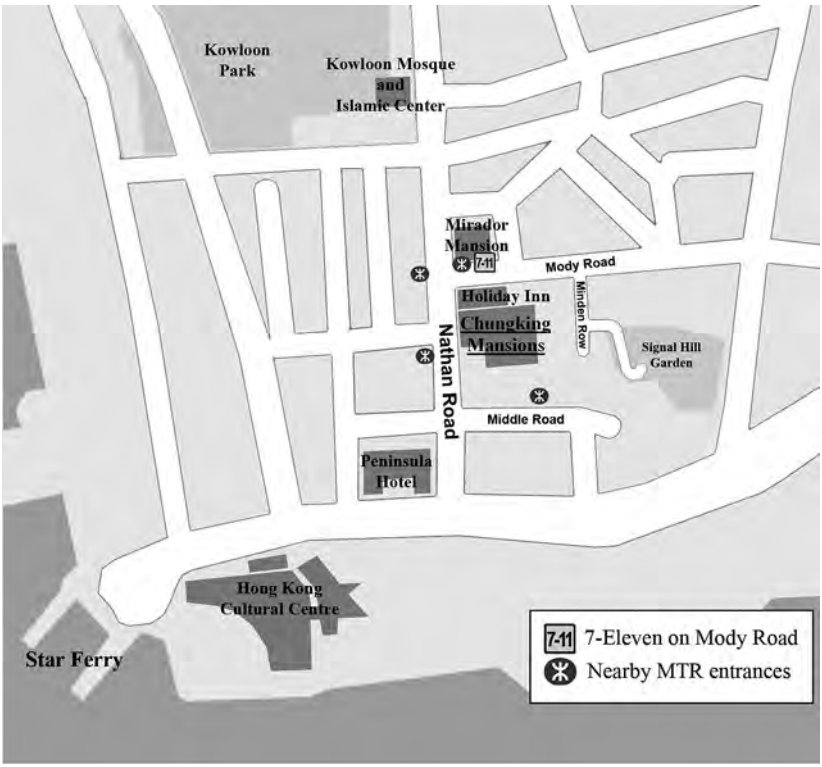
Many non-Hong Kong readers may assume that since the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, everything in Hong Kong has changed—China now controls Hong Kong. Certainly global mass media over the past several decades have focused on Hong Kong's departure from British colonial control and return to China as the single dominant theme of "the Hong Kong story." This is important, but it is also essential to remember that after the handover, life in Hong Kong has remained remarkably stable. Mass media continue to freely criticize China, although there are ongoing worries over self-censorship, and freedom of speech remains firmly ensconced. Hong Kong retains its own legal system and immigration controls. Although it is now part of China, its internal administration is largely independent. There are significant ongoing problems in Hong Kong, not least the fact that the government seems largely in the pocket of business magnates, especially property developers. However, this was true both before and after the handover. For Chungking Mansions, the return of Hong Kong to China has had very little effect. Massive changes have indeed happened to the building since 1997: the coming of African traders, which began around 2000; the

upsurge of asylum seekers; the building's improved maintenance and security; and the increase in mainland Chinese tourists. But these—even the last of these—have little to do with Hong Kong's return to China, which was a nonevent. "Chungking Mansions," as shopkeepers occasionally have reiterated to me, "is the same as it ever was."

Chungking Mansions is located in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong's major tourist district, at the tip of the Kowloon Peninsula. Hong Kong consists of four major areas: the outlying islands, including Lantau, where the airport is located; Hong Kong Island, where Hong Kong's financial center as well as many of its older buildings can be found; Kowloon, somewhat less upscale than Hong Kong Island but more heavily populated and containing Hong Kong's touristic heart as well as its most crowded districts; and the New Territories, closer to the Chinese border, where over half of the population of Hong Kong now lives. This is all in a relatively small area of a little over four hundred square miles. Because Hong Kong as a whole is so tightly linked by mass transit, these different areas are generally reachable in under an hour and are well known to many of those in Chungking Mansions.

To mention just a few of Hong Kong's neighborhoods, there is Sham Shui Po, a working-class area some two miles north of Chungking Mansions, full of cut-rate stores where African traders often go to buy clothing especially designed and manufactured for the African market and where others, such as asylum seekers, go to buy used goods for sale with no questions asked at prices that undercut even those of Chungking Mansions. There is Wan Chai, a well-known nightlife district across the harbor from Tsim Sha Tsui, where some in Chungking Mansions go in search of wine and women, and many more, intimidated by the prices, only dream of going. There is Kam Tin, a town in the New Territories that tourists go to for its walled village but that Chungking Mansions traders go to in order to buy used car parts from automobiles junked by their Hong Kong owners. And there is Lo Wu, at the Hong Kong-Chinese border, where traders go to make their passage to the marts and factories of south China and where temporary workers go to renew their visas for another few weeks. Merchants in Chungking Mansions live all over Hong Kong, but the sites just outlined are known to most of the people within Chungking Mansions, regardless of why they are in the building and what they are doing there.

In chapter 1 I describe the particular locale of Chungking Mansions in more detail, but let me provide a brief sketch here. Chungking Mansions is located at 36–44 Nathan Road, the street which is Hong Kong's main tourist drag. The building is adjacent to a Holiday Inn and a block from the Peninsula Hotel, perhaps Hong Kong's fanciest. It is little more than a hundred



yards from two of Hong Kong's newest and glitziest shopping malls, and just a ten-minute walk from the famous Star Ferry, a touristic icon of Hong Kong, taking passengers across Hong Kong harbor every few minutes. It is surrounded by entrances to the MTR, Hong Kong's mass transit trains, which whisk passengers to the Chinese border every five minutes or so, a forty-minute journey. Chungking Mansions, as this brief depiction reveals, is in the thick of downtown Hong Kong, smack in the middle of hotels, malls, and skyscrapers—some of the most expensive property in the world. Its location in the heart of Hong Kong is what makes the building's reputation as "a heart of darkness" so extraordinary.[7]

The photographs in this book, unless otherwise specified, were all taken in or around Chungking Mansions. These photographs, as a rule, do not depict the people or the businesses discussed in the text but are offered in order to provide a more generic picture of the building and what goes on within its walls.

ONE

place

Introducing Chungking Mansions

Chungking Mansions is a dilapidated seventeen-story structure full of cheap guesthouses and cut-rate businesses in the midst of Hong Kong's tourist district. It is perhaps the most globalized building in the world. In Chungking Mansions, entrepreneurs and temporary workers from South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and across the globe come to seek their fortunes, along with asylum seekers looking for refuge and tourists in search of cheap lodging and adventure. People from an extraordinary array of societies sleep in its beds, jostle for seats in its food stalls, bargain at its mobile phone counters, and wander its corridors. Some 4,000 people stay in Chungking Mansions on any given night. I've counted 129 different nationalities in its guesthouse logs and in my own meetings with people, from Argentina to Zimbabwe, by way of Bhutan, Iraq, Jamaica, Luxembourg, Madagascar, and the Maldive Islands.

Chungking Mansions is located on the Golden Mile of Nathan Road, famous, according to the guidebooks, for "its ability to suck money from tourists' pockets."[1] If you approach Chungking Mansions from across Nathan Road, you will see a row of

glitzy buildings towering on the other side of the street bearing an array of stores, including a Holiday Inn, many electronics places, several entrances to shopping arcades, a number of fashionable clothing outlets, a couple of steak houses, and several bars. This looks like the Hong Kong of postcards, particularly if you approach in the evening and are bathed in the gaudy sea of neon that Nathan Road is famous for. However, in the midst of these fancy buildings is one that looks plainer, more disheveled and decrepit. Its lower floors, seen from across the street, hardly seem part of the building since they too are fancy shops and malls, physically part of the building but inaccessible except from outside and a world away. But then, in the middle of these stores, you see a nondescript, dark entrance that looks like it belongs somewhere else. As you cross Nathan Road on a butterfly crosswalk and draw closer to this entrance, you will notice that the people standing near the entrance to this building don't look like most other people in Hong Kong, certainly not like the throngs of shoppers elsewhere on Nathan Road. As you enter the building, if you are Chinese, you may feel like a member of a minority group and wonder where in the world you are. If you are white, you might instinctively clutch your wallet while feeling trepidation and perhaps a touch of first-world guilt. If you are a young woman, you may feel, very uncomfortably, a hundred pairs of male eyes gazing at you.

If you approach Chungking Mansions from the same side of Nathan

Road walking from the nearest underground MTR railway exit on Mody Road, just around the corner from the building (see map on p. 6), you will get a somewhat fuller introduction to the place. You will first see a 7-Eleven that in the evenings may be full of Africans drinking beer in its aisles and spilling outside its entrance. You may also see a dozen Indian women resplendent in their saris who, if you are male and look at them, will offer you a price and then follow you closely for a few paces to make certain that you truly aren't interested in their sexual services. After passing the 7-Eleven, you may, if you are male, be accosted at the corner of Nathan Road by other young women, from Mongolia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and elsewhere. You will also be accosted by a number of South Asian men offering to make you a suit—"A special deal just for you." They may be joined by copy-watch sellers, offering various brands of watches for a small fraction of the price of the original. If you hesitate and show interest, they will lead you to any of the numerous shadowy emporiums in nearby buildings.

Once you cross Mody Road and are on the same block as Chungking Mansions (whose entrance is now some one hundred feet away), the restaurant touts may be in wait if it is the right time of day, shilling for a half dozen different Chungking Mansions curry places. You must either ignore them or decide to follow one tout to his restaurant; otherwise you will be mobbed. You may also—especially if you are white—find a young man quietly sidling up to you and whispering, "Hashish?" and if you query further, numerous other substances as well. Once you reach the steps at the entrance to Chungking Mansions, the guesthouse touts will set upon you if it is late afternoon or evening, with a South Asian man saying, "I can give you a nice room for HK$150" (US$19),* and a Chinese man saying, just out of earshot of the South Asian, "Those Indian places are filthy! Come to my place! It's clean"—possibly so, but at a considerably higher price.

After you have passed through this gauntlet of attention, you will find yourself in the midst of Chungking Mansions' swirl, at times more people crowded in one place than you have seen in your entire life. It is an extraordinary array of people: Africans in bright robes or hip-hop fashions or ill-fitting suits; pious Pakistani men wearing skullcaps; Indonesian women with *jilbab*, Islamic head coverings; old white men with beer bellies in Bermuda shorts; hippies looking like refugees from an earlier era; Nigerians arguing confidently and very loudly; young Indians joking and teasing with their arms around one another; and mainland Chinese looking self-contained or

* US$1 = HK$7.78 as of this writing.

stunned. You are likely to find South Asians carting three or four huge boxes on their trolleys with "Lagos" or "Nairobi" scrawled on the boxes' sides, Africans leaving the building with overstuffed suitcases packed with mobile phones, and shopkeepers selling everything on earth, from *samosas* to phone cards to haircuts to whiskey to real estate to electrical plugs to dildos to shoes. You will also see a long line of people of every different skin color waiting at the elevator, bound for a hundred different guesthouses.

You may wonder, upon seeing all of this, "What on earth is going on here? What has brought all these different people to Chungking Mansions? How do they live? Why does this place exist?" These are the questions that led me to begin my research in Chungking Mansions. I first came to Chungking Mansions in 1983 as a tourist, staying for a few nights before moving on. I came to Hong Kong to live in 1994, visiting Chungking Mansions every couple of months to eat curry and to take in the world there. In 2006, I began formally to do anthropological research in Chungking Mansions, finding out all I could about the place and the people in it and seeking to understand Chungking Mansions' role in globalization. I have been living in Chungking Mansions for one or more nights each week over the past three and a half years and have spent my every available moment there (it is a thirty-minute train ride from the university where I live), seeking to answer the questions posed above and, more than that, to understand Chungking Mansions' significance in the world.

Over the past few years I have found some answers. Let me describe a typical walk of late from the train station exit to Chungking Mansions. The Indian sex workers are already out this early evening but know that I'm not a customer, so they ignore me, except for the new ones who see in a white face the chance to make a lot of money; their seniors tell them not to bother. A copy-watch salesman friend waves hello from behind his dark glasses. He was partially blinded by the police in his South Asian country, he has told me, when they taped open his eyelids and forced him to gaze at the sun all day. But the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the arbiter of his case and his fate, may not believe him, he worries, because he cannot provide proof. So he illegally works, attempting to save up enough money to eventually be able to receive cornea transplants. Meanwhile, he looks out for undercover police as best he can and accosts every likely customer: "White people are the best. They buy more than anyone else." But sales are bad this month, and he can hardly pay his rent, let alone save for his longed-for transplants. Whether he was blinded by the police in his country, or by a congenital problem or an accident of some sort, is an open ques-

tion—how much of his account is true is not for me to judge. But it's good to come across him again.

A few steps later, a restaurant tout greets me effusively. I haven't seen him for two months because he's been back in Kolkata, his home—he is illegally working in Hong Kong as a tourist. He proudly shows me a picture of his baby son, born last month, but says that he's happy to be back in Hong Kong. "I have to support my family! . . . I miss my family, but the pay's much better here in Hong Kong, so . . ." But he spends a significant portion of his money calling home on his mobile phone, he tells me ruefully.

At the entrance to Chungking Mansions, I meet a Nigerian trader I haven't seen for six months. He says that he couldn't return to Hong Kong because the exchange rates back home were exorbitant, and he couldn't get the dollars he needed. "Now I finally can come back. I had an order for 4,000 phones, but I couldn't come here to pick them up. Now I can do that. I can make money again." He flies back home the day after tomorrow, after checking every phone as closely as he can. His friend, whom I meet for the first time, is going into south China the day after tomorrow—"It's better to buy clothes there than in Hong Kong now. I can get 30,000 shirts made following my own style"—after picking up his visa. Both are worried that exchange

rate fluctuations might kill any chance of making a profit, not to mention the vicissitudes of customs back home and the dangers of getting cheated in China and in Chungking Mansions. "It's so hard to make any money," they say, the continuing refrain of so many traders I have spoken with.

A few steps later, I meet an Indian friend standing near the guard post, He works for a large Hong Kong corporation by day and by night comes back to help his family at their guesthouse. His agony at present is not simply that he has no time, but more that he has a Hong Kong Chinese girlfriend that his parents refuse to recognize. He wonders what he should do—choose his girlfriend or his parents—but at present, he just can't decide and only waits.

I then meet a West African friend who until recently ran a business in south China. He, unlike almost every other African trader I've met, has had the capital to obtain a Hong Kong ID card in return for a US$200,000 investment, which he has made by renting and outfitting an electronics store in Chungking Mansions, one that his fellow Africans and fellow Muslims will patronize, he hopes. His wife and children have recently come to Hong Kong, and he looks forward to making a new life for them here, as against what he feels to be the lawlessness of China. "You can trust Hong Kong." Of course, whether he can make money remains to be seen, especially in the economic downturn that has affected Chungking Mansions as much as anywhere else in the world; but he believes that by being an honest Muslim merchant, he can succeed in the building.

Another few steps later, I meet a young South Asian whom I've only met once before. He tells me that he has lost his job and is desperate. "What am I going to do? I have no money! Everyone in my family depends on me!" I don't know if he is telling the whole truth, but he certainly seems frantic. I don't know him, so I only give him HK$100 and wish him luck. I hate playing God this way, but what can I do? There are so many like him. The next time I come back to Chungking Mansions, I don't see him; in fact, I have never seen him again.

These people are all denizens of Chungking Mansions, the subject of this book. In the book's first chapter, I explore Chungking Mansions as a place: its reasons for existing, its significance, and its architecture, history, and organization. In its second chapter, I depict the different groups of people in Chungking Mansions, from African traders to Chinese owners to South Asian shopkeepers to asylum seekers, sex workers, heroin addicts, and tourists, and my interviews and travels around the globe with various of these people. In its third chapter, I describe the goods that pass through the building and the shopkeepers and traders who buy and sell these goods in their

global passages. In its fourth chapter, I examine the web of laws that constrain all in the building and particularly consider asylum seekers, with their lives placed in limbo. Finally, in its fifth chapter, I explore the building's significance, for those within it and for the world as a whole, and speculate as to its future.

This book is about Chungking Mansions and the people within it, but it is also about "low-end globalization," a form of globalization for which Chungking Mansions is a central node, linking to an array of nodes around the world, from Bangkok to Dubai to Kolkata, Kathmandu, Kampala, Lagos, and Nairobi. Low-end globalization is very different from what most readers may associate with the term *globalization*—it is not the activities of Coca-Cola, Nokia, Sony, McDonald's, and other huge corporations, with their high-rise offices, batteries of lawyers, and vast advertising budgets. Instead, it is traders carrying their goods by suitcase, container, or truck across continents and borders with minimal interference from legalities and copyrights, a world run by cash. It is also individuals seeking a better life by fleeing their home countries for opportunities elsewhere, whether as temporary workers, asylum seekers, or sex workers. This is the dominant form of globalization experienced in much of the developing world today.

Chungking Mansions flourishes in a small space through which enormous amounts of energy, people, and goods flow, but this is nonetheless tiny in volume compared to the scale of the developed-world economy that surrounds it. It is one dilapidated building compared to all the financiers' skyscrapers in Tsim Sha Tsui and especially across Hong Kong harbor in the Central District, Hong Kong's concentrated wealth as a center of high-end globalization ten minutes away by train and a universe distant. This book is about Chungking Mansions, but it is also about all the world, in its linkages, its inequalities, and its wonders.

"Ghetto at the Center of the World"

Chungking Mansions is a place that is terrifying to many in Hong Kong. Here are some typical comments from Chinese-language blogs and chat rooms: "I feel very nervous every time I walk past [Chungking Mansions]. . . . I feel that I could get lost in the building and kidnapped."[2] "I am . . . afraid to go [to Chungking Mansions]. There seem to be many perverts and bad elements there."[3] "I saw a group of black people and Indian people standing in front of a building. I looked up and saw the sign 'Chungking Mansions.' Just as the legend goes, it is a sea of pitch darkness there."[4] "I went with some classmates for curry today. It was my very first time going to Chungking

Mansions. I felt like I was in another country. The curry was all right, but I was scared when I entered the building . . . because my dad told me I should never go in."[5] As this last quotation indicates, some Hong Kong Chinese, particularly young people, are attracted to Chungking Mansions because of its half dozen semifashionable curry restaurants on its higher floors, but many more are afraid to even enter the building.

This fear of Chungking Mansions extends beyond Hong Kong—it is apparent among commentators from the developed world as a whole. Consider the following passages, largely written by American and European journalists, also taken from the Internet:

> Chungking Mansions is the sum of all fears for parents whose children go backpacking around Asia. . . . In the heart of one of the world's richest and glitziest cities, its draw card of cheap accommodation has long been matched by the availability of every kind of vice and dodgy deal, not to mention its almost palpable fire and health risks.[6]

> Chungking Mansion is the only place I have ever been where it is possible to buy a sexual aid, a bootleg Jay Chou CD and a new, leather-bound Koran, all from the same bespectacled Kashmiri proprietor who can make change for your purchase in any of five currencies. It is also possible, while wandering the alleys, hallways and listing stairwells of Chungking Mansions, to buy a discount ticket to Bombay, purchase 2,000 knock-off Tag Heuer watches or pick up a counterfeit phone card that will allow unlimited calls to Lagos, Nigeria. . . . You can disappear here. Thousands have. Most of them by design.[7]

> Chungking Mansions offers very cheap accommodation for backpackers and is a hideout for illegals such as those who have overstayed their visas. It is a den of crime, of drug trafficking, prostitution and generally all the nastiness that goes on in the world you can find in Chungking Mansions. . . . Personally I go there for the curry.[8]

This dodgy reputation dates from the 1970s, when Chungking Mansions emerged as a hangout for Western hippies and backpackers. It grew during the 1980s and early 1990s, as confirmed in the dark portrayal in Wong Karwai's famous 1994 film *Chungking Express*, a film about Hong Kong Chinese postmodern romance that takes place, in part, in Chungking Mansions. The film depicted Chungking Mansions misleadingly. Hong Kong Chinese did not usually come to Chungking Mansions in the early 1990s, and those who did stuck out so obviously that they probably couldn't have engaged in

the kinds of activities the film depicts. Nonetheless, the film does accurately convey the seedy atmosphere of the place at that time. This dodgy reputation of Chungking Mansions continues today, largely because of the massive presence of South Asians and Africans in the building, as seen through the quasi-racist lenses of Hong Kong Chinese and other rich-world peoples who don't quite know how to interact with their poor-world brethren.

The biggest reason why so many people in Hong Kong and in the developed world are terrified of Chungking Mansions is simply that they are afraid of the developing world and the masses of poor people who come to the developed world for some of the crumbs of its wealth. The quotations above exaggerate Chungking Mansions' dangers—I have been told by police officials that there is less crime in Chungking Mansions than in some other buildings its size in Hong Kong, because of its central location and the prominent presence of security guards and police. Nonetheless, they do reflect a basic truth of the place. Chungking Mansions is *in* Hong Kong, but it is not *of* Hong Kong. It is an alien island of the developing world lying in Hong Kong's heart. This, not its crime and vice, is the major reason why it has been so feared. And this is why I have titled this book "Ghetto at the Center of the World."

A ghetto is defined as "a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure."[9] Chungking Mansions is a building and not a quarter of a city; its residents do not consist of a single minority group, but of members of multitudes of such groups. Nonetheless, Chungking Mansions is indeed a ghetto in the sense that the minority groups who stay there (all but the whites and Hong Kong Chinese) are to at least some extent economically blocked from Hong Kong as a whole and are socially discriminated against through racism or fear of the developing-world unknown. Chungking Mansions is seen by many, such as the authors of our earlier quotations, as a transgressive other in the heart of Hong Kong. To many Hong Kong Chinese, living in one of the world's richest cities, Chungking Mansions is a "heart of darkness."*

*Chungking Mansions has been linked in some accounts to Kowloon's Walled City, demolished in 1993. The Walled City, several kilometers from Chungking Mansions, was an area never fully under colonial British control and was throughout the twentieth century a haven in Hong Kong for illicit activity, such as prostitution and drug dealing. Largely impenetrable by police, it was long controlled by Chinese organized crime groups. Chungking Mansions has never been quite as off-limits to external authorities as the Walled City was reported to have been, and the comparison of the two sites is historically incongruent. Nonetheless, both the Walled City and Chungking Man-

But if Chungking Mansions can be characterized as a ghetto, it is an unusual sort of ghetto. Most of the people in the building, operators of the various wheels and cogs of low-end globalization, are remarkably bourgeois in their outlooks on life. They represent the striving middle class of the developing world in South Asia and Africa. Hong Kong people may see Chungking Mansions as a hellhole of danger and vice, as do some of the tourists in the building, but for most of the people residing or working in Chungking Mansions, this "ghetto at the center of the world" is a beacon of hope. It is their best chance to climb out of developing-world poverty and make a prosperous life for themselves. Among many of the Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and evangelical Christians from South Asia and Africa who work or trade in Chungking Mansions, Max Weber's "Protestant Ethic" lives on—hard work and savings, as well as a little or a lot of luck, can buy them a ticket to a better life.[10]

Why, then, does Chungking Mansions, this "ghetto at the center of the world," this island of the developing world in Hong Kong's heart, exist?

Why Chungking Mansions Exists and Why It Matters

There are three reasons for Chungking Mansions: (1) the building's cheapness, (2) the ease of entry into Hong Kong for many in the developing world, and (3) the emergence of south China as a manufacturing powerhouse.

The first and most practical reason why Chungking Mansions exists is simply that food and accommodations there cost so little. Even wealthy people from the developing world may recoil in shock at the prices of a city like Hong Kong. But Chungking Mansions itself is remarkably inexpensive, with single rooms costing as little as HK$100 (US$13) each night and with prices of meals and goods among the cheapest in Hong Kong. Why is there such a discrepancy?

For one thing, there has been no real unified ownership of Chungking Mansions. Until recently, the ownership organization has been remarkably weak, and the building has steadily deteriorated. But this explanation is insufficient—there are many buildings throughout Hong Kong that have lacked a unified ownership structure, but none has deteriorated as spectacularly as Chungking Mansions over the decades. The most essential reason for Chungking Mansions' cheapness is the play of particular historical circumstances.

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sions have been seen over the years as Hong Kong's "others"—Hong Kong's "hearts of darkness"—and in that sense there is indeed a parallel.

I will later discuss Chungking Mansions' history, but let me set forth a few factors here. The building began with a significant South Asian presence, which increased over the years—in a Hong Kong all too prejudiced against South Asians, this served as a black mark for many of the Chinese in Hong Kong, keeping most Chinese out and keeping the building's property values low. In the 1970s, the building became famous, via *Lonely Planet*, for its hippies and backpackers staying in its rock-bottom-priced guesthouses, and many Chinese living in apartments in the building began converting them into guesthouses with a dozen or so miniscule rooms. By the 1980s and early 1990s, fires and extended blackouts took place. By the early 2000s, African traders became a prominent presence in Chungking Mansions, generally seeking, like their hippie forebears, the cheapest possible prices. These factors supported a situation in which property owners could maximize profits by keeping prices low. Chungking Mansions, exactly because it is decrepit and thus cheap, remains a draw throughout much of the developed world. Mention Hong Kong in Kathmandu, Kolkata, or Dar es Salaam, as I myself have done, and there is a reasonable chance that you will hear in response, "Chungking Mansions."

A second reason why Chungking Mansions exists as an island of the developing world in Hong Kong is the territory's comparatively relaxed visa regulations.* In most developed countries, visitors from the developing world must obtain a visa prior to arrival, or they will not be allowed to board the airplane. If, upon arrival, they are found to lack a visa, they will be sent directly home. In Hong Kong, visitors from many countries in the developing world are allowed in without visas for periods of fourteen, thirty, or ninety days. This enables entrepreneurs from many countries in Africa and Asia to come to Hong Kong without prior paperwork. With a thirty- or even a fourteen-day visa-free period, they can come to Chungking Mansions, inspect various goods, conduct their business, make their purchases, and return home in good time.

Many of these entrepreneurs remain in Hong Kong, but many more seek to go into China. In Hong Kong, particularly through expeditious travel agents in and around Chungking Mansions, visas for China can generally be obtained quickly. Accordingly, developing-country entrepreneurs can go into China to visit wholesalers, come back to Hong Kong, and depart with

*China does not control Hong Kong's visa regulations; these are Hong Kong's own responsibility. Generally speaking, when matters of police, government, or laws are discussed in this book, these are matters dealt with not by China but by Hong Kong itself.

their goods in their luggage or in air freight or container, depending on the goods bought and the wealth of the entrepreneur, in a matter of a few days or weeks. Since flights to Hong Kong are more frequent and convenient than flights to most cities in China, it is easier for many businesspeople and other visitors to come to Hong Kong first, although in recent years more have been going directly into China. Because it is so cheap and because it serves as a de facto clearing house and information center, Chungking Mansions is where theycome.

In recent years, the Hong Kong government has been tightening entrance restrictions. Citizens of Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, and Nepal, among other countries, are now required to get visas as they did not in the past. In some cases, this has been due to an apparent increase in drug and other offenses among nationals coming to Hong Kong. In other cases, it has been because of an increase in nationals of these countries seeking asylum. These restrictions have had a significant effect on Chungking Mansions, with the presence of Nigerians, Ghanaians, and Bangladeshis, among others, diminishing in recent years. However, by overstaying their visas or, as is often the case for those in Chungking Mansions, applying for asylum-seeker status through the UNHCR or the Hong Kong government, those already in Hong Kong can often prolong their stay indefinitely. Because of an increase in asylum seekers in Hong Kong, there is pressure on the government to further tighten entrance restrictions. But as of this writing, this has not happened, at least not formally, and so Chungking Mansions continues to be the beneficiary of an unusual policy: a government in the developed world that allows many arrivals from the developing world to enter unimpeded, for at least a limited period. This enables Chungking Mansions to exist.

A third reason is the emergence of China, and especially south China, as a world manufacturing center. Entrepreneurs from throughout the developing world flock to Chungking Mansions so that they can buy Chinese goods, whether in Hong Kong or over the border in China. These goods range from mobile phones, used or copied, to garments to watches to building materials to furniture to such exotic products as whirlpool baths (bought by wealthy East Africans such as government ministers, I have been told) and mounted opals (mined in Australia, sent through Chungking Mansions to south China to be mounted, and then returned to Australia for sale to Chinese tourists). Hong Kong, as it has been throughout its history, continues to serve as the gateway to China for these entrepreneurs, who may either venture into south China themselves to make their orders or rely on Hong Kong middlemen to sell them made-in-China products. These goods tend

to be of cheap price and low quality, but this is what consumers in the developing world can afford.

For these three reasons, Chungking Mansions exists, but why does it matter? Why is it worth writing a book about? The simplest reason is that it contains an extraordinary array of people from throughout the world. How do they interact? More than this, what can Chungking Mansions teach us about how globalization works in the world today?

As previously noted, I am an anthropologist. The forte of anthropology as a discipline is ethnography: the on-the-ground depiction of the interactions and daily lives of a small number of people, described in great detail on the basis of many months or years of intensive fieldwork. Globalization is a vast and abstract field, analyzed most typically by economists. While anthropologists have also made important theoretical contributions, such as those of Arjun Appadurai and Ulf Hannerz,[11] their major contribution lies in their ethnographies, which serve to show how globalization's abstractions shape the lives of very particular people in very particular places.

There have been hundreds of ethnographies written about the effects of globalization on particular groups of people around the world, but there have been remarkably few written about places of global interchange. I am thinking not of international airports and big-city hotels, which, although globalized spaces, are typically full of people who do not interact. Rather, I am thinking of those sites in which people from places across the globe do indeed interact for business and pleasure, sites that embody and exemplify an "intensification of global interconnectedness" on a human-to-human scale.[12] These kinds of ethnographies, depicting sites of global interchange, are very much needed, I think, in that they can show how globalization works on the ground, in the ongoing cross-cultural give-and-take of actual people.

Chungking Mansions is, of course, exactly such a site. Despite the claims of the *Lonely Planet* guidebooks that "there is probably no other place in the world like Chungking Mansions," we should perhaps not think of it as unique.[13] Flushing in New York City, Brixton or Willesden in London, and Roppongi in Tokyo, to mention just a few neighborhoods, offer different and yet parallel depictions of globalization and certainly some of what can be seen in Chungking Mansions can be found in these neighborhoods as well.[14] But Chungking Mansions is not just a center of globalization, but rather globalization of a particular kind: low-end globalization, as I previously mentioned.

I define low-end globalization as the transnational flow of people and

goods involving relatively small amounts of capital and informal, sometimes semilegal or illegal, transactions commonly associated with "the developing world." This is the globalization of African traders returning to their homelands clutching a few hundred phones in their luggage, and of South Asian temporary workers bringing home to their families a few hundred dollars of needed money and extraordinary tales from a world their families can only imagine. Multinational corporations, and indeed a great deal of the discussion on the financial pages of the world's newspapers, have only a limited impact upon the consciousness of much of the world's population. Globalization for these people consists, in large part, of the goods, ideas, and media brought in by small traders and illegal workers, such as those living and working in Chungking Mansions.

Marts of low-end globalization can be found in sites across the globe. They can be found in Bangkok, Kolkata, and Nairobi as well as in Paris, London, and New York City. They may also be found in such places as Ciudad del Este, at the confluence of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay,[15] and, geographically closer to Chungking Mansions, in the Yuexiu and Sanyuanli districts of Guangzhou, in southern China, and in such Chinese cities as Yiwu. In the course of this research, my research assistants and I have journeyed to a number of these sites for days or weeks to talk to traders and merchants. We traveled to Guangzhou, Kolkata, Dubai, Nairobi, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, and Lagos, tracing out through multisited ethnography the webs of low-end globalization linking Chungking Mansions to the developing world across Asia and Africa.

Ethnographers in recent years have emphasized that ethnographies based in a single site may be increasingly insufficient to enable full anthropological understanding of the world; multisited ethnography is necessary in order to understand the world's interlinkages.[16] Although we have been limited by inevitable insufficiencies of time and money, we have tried, using Chungking Mansions as a base, to trace out its linkages across the globe. A global ethnography could have been written from within Chungking Mansions alone; however, our travels enriched our understanding of Chungking Mansions, in revealing how the transactions and interactions within the building are apparent in nodes across the developing world to which they are linked in complex and multilayered ways. Chungking Mansions' linkages extend throughout the world, just as the world as a whole is in Chungking Mansions.

Chungking Mansions offers a particularly concentrated milieu in which to observe all the world in its transactions and interactions. It may well be that in the vast diversity of people in such a small place and in the multi-

plicity of intercultural activities they engage in—from business dealings to philosophical conversations over chapattis to sex with the array of multicultural professionals in this line of work—there is indeed no place in the world quite like Chungking Mansions, although it no doubt has its parallels. What Chungking Mansions offers is a very concentrated picture of low-end globalization in a very small place. We need to understand the building and its people because the globalization at Chungking Mansions is, in essence, the globalization experienced by the majority of the world's people. What is really going on in Chungking Mansions? How do so many people from so many different societies get along there? How do these people make their globalized livelihoods? Where do they go and what do they do? What are their global routes, techniques, and practices? And how do they understand their transnational lives? This book is devoted to exploring these questions.

The Building

Chungking Mansions is unusual in that rather than being a global neighborhood, it is a single global building. Anthropologists have only rarely studied buildings. Gelberto Velho depicts a building in Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro and the efforts of its white-collar residents to escape stigmatization; Laura Ring explores how "everyday peace" is maintained between families living in an apartment building in Karachi, Pakistan; and Theodore Bestor depicts a building in some respects parallel to Chungking Mansions, the Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo, Japan, in all its global linkages.[17] Despite these notable exceptions, anthropologists have generally neglected buildings, simply in that it is unusual for a single building to be analytically noteworthy. Like the buildings mentioned above, Chungking Mansions is an exception.

The building has a first and second floor—or ground floor and first floor in the British locution generally used in Hong Kong (I will use this British locution from here on out)—of 280 by 190 feet, which are retail and wholesale shopping areas. On the second floor of Chungking Mansions is a shopping mall consisting of various boutiques called "Chungking Express" that is physically part of the building but in all other senses a world apart. Shoppers enter it via an escalator from the crowded sidewalks of Nathan Road; it is linked to the rest of Chungking Mansions only through always-locked back doors. An upscale basement mall opened in 2009 is similarly physically part of and yet closed off from Chungking Mansions. Then, from the third floor up, there are three blocks rising up to the seventeenth floor, reachable

TWO

people

In this chapter, I discuss the different groups of people in Chungking Mansions: traders, largely from Africa; owners, largely from China; managers, often from South Asia; and tourists, from the world over. I consider each of these groups in turn, along with the various other groups, including sex workers and heroin addicts, who frequent the building.

Traders

In chapter 3, I focus on goods and those who trade in them, but let me now briefly outline who these traders are and what they do. For most of the year, traders make up the majority of the people one sees in Chungking Mansions. At their peak—during the trade fairs of October and April in Hong Kong and Guangzhou—they occupy almost every available bed in the building. Most traders at most times of year—except in January and February, the Chinese New Year season during which south China factories are closed—are from sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past decade there has been a massive increase in the number of African traders traveling to south China. They buy goods

in Hong Kong or in China and sell them, typically, in their home countries, dealing in a vast range of products: mobile phones and clothing are most prominent, but also watches, electronic goods, computers, TV game consoles, building materials, and used cars and car parts, among innumerable other products. A small minority trade in the other direction, bringing gemstones from their homes to Hong Kong and China to sell. Hong Kong prices are more expensive, but goods obtained in Hong Kong, especially electronic goods and mobile phones, are often perceived to be more reliable—although this has been changing bit by bit, as Chinese goods and business practices become better and more traders go to China. Almost all the goods sold in Chungking Mansions—with the exception of many of the mobile phones—are made in China, even if their labels may sometimes indicate they were made elsewhere.

These traders sometimes come to Hong Kong on business visas obtained in their home countries—necessary for those countries that have been denied visa-free access to Hong Kong—but more often they are admitted at the airport in Hong Kong. They may be admitted for fourteen-day, thirty-day, or ninety-day visa-free access, as discussed in chapter 1, depending on their country of origin and their cash on hand, as well as the extent of their previous experience in Hong Kong. Those who have previously come to Hong Kong and not overstayed the permitted limits of their stay are often treated in a more relaxed way by Immigration than are first timers. Some traders stay in Hong Kong and in Chungking Mansions for the period that their business requires—a buyer of mobile phones might hardly leave the building for a week. Other traders stay in Hong Kong only long enough to get a visa into China, after which they may take a train from directly outside Chungking Mansions to the Chinese border. Some traders come to Hong Kong or China just a few times every year or less, while others seem to be in constant motion, bouncing between Hong Kong, China, and their home countries every week or two.

The lure for the traders is China, with its cornucopia of cheap manufactured goods. These traders buy China-made goods to transport back to their home countries because their home countries do not make these goods, at least not at competitive prices. Some of the goods these traders buy, such as mobile phones, are carried back home in the trader's own luggage, often 32 kilos per bag allowed by such airlines as Ethiopian and Emirates, with extra kilos permitted if the trader belongs to a frequent flyer program, as many do. Bigger traders also pay the extra costs of air freight for additional bags. These traders are bringing back mobile phones or electronics, particularly delicate, or else clothing, particularly light, especially when vacuum packed. Other

traders rent or share containers, expensive but necessary for goods such as tiles or car parts.

These traders must decide whether to venture into China, potentially lucrative but risky, or to do their business in Hong Kong, perceived to be safer and more reliable. But the entrepreneurial activities of these traders carry high risk, not only in China but throughout their global circuits. One risk is that they will get cheated in China or in Hong Kong, buying goods that have been misrepresented to them that they cannot sell back home. Alternately, they may simply miscalculate, buying goods that won't sell at home. Another risk is that the copy goods traders buy in China (many goods traders buy are genuine, but many are not) may be confiscated by authorities in China or in Hong Kong. An even greater risk is in the customs of their own countries, which may be a huge barrier, one that they can traverse through legal payments, luck, or bribery. A Nigerian trader told me that he can make 60 percent gross profit on the goods he brings back with him, but must give half of that back as bribes to various government officials. This varies from country to country, but since corruption is common and customs regulations are often unclear to traders, their transitions back into their home countries are fraught with peril.

Because many African and South Asian countries' banks do not offer letters of credit or other financial instruments accepted in Hong Kong or Chinese banks, many traders carry tens of thousands of dollars in cash—up to US$50,000 or even US$100,000. As an East African trader told me, "These traders are all carrying cash—of course! Hong Kong is the safest place in Asia to do business. I've never known a person who was robbed." Some of the African traders I have encountered hold more cash in their hands at one time than some Americans may have held in their entire lifetimes and feel secure doing so in what they perceive to be the safety of Chungking Mansions and Hong Kong (although as of 2009, more traders were wiring money or sending remittances).

It is not uncommon to see traders leave thousands of dollars in cash on a Chungking Mansions counter. Although they may get cheated in more subtle ways, their money is in this sense safe, except in unguarded moments. A popular story making the rounds in Chungking Mansions (perhaps true, although I've yet to find anyone admitting to being a victim) is of the African trader hiding US$50,000 in his underwear, who goes with a Chinese sex worker back to his room. He showers and she, finding a fortune in his drawers that might support her family for a decade, flees on the train departing every five minutes to the Chinese border. He sees his loss and follows in hot pursuit, but never sees her or his money again.

Overwhelmingly these traders are men, although there are some women dealing in garments. These traders tend to be among the wealthy in their home societies. As earlier noted, not all the entrepreneurs are African, although the large majority are. Many are Indian, often involved in the garment trade, and still others are Eastern European or Russian, often involved in mobile phones or electronics. There are also Yemenis, Filipinos, Saudis, and French—I've met people from an array of different countries involved in a mind-boggling assortment of trade. But African entrepreneurs are the most prominent in Chungking Mansions and, for that matter, in south China as well.

I occasionally have met with African traders who have come to Hong Kong for the first time. I conducted an informal evening tour of Hong Kong for two female Tanzanian traders, who expressed amazement at the tall buildings and the trains. One said, "I've never been in a train that ran through electricity before. Where I come from, trains are run by oil." She also spoke with amazement at all the "sliding stairs"—escalators—which she had seen only once before at the airport in her home country. But these traders were by no means removed from the contemporary world's technology. Throughout much of our tour, they were on their mobile phones calling their friends back in Dar es Salaam. As one of them explained to me, "Yes, I was telling my friends back home about what I was seeing, about the sliding stairs and the malls. But how can there be so many malls? Why do Hong Kong people buy so many things?"—a wise question I couldn't begin to answer, after which we had an animated discussion about the nature of capitalism.

A story I've heard from several people concerns China's National Day in Hong Kong, which features a fireworks exhibition over Hong Kong harbor to thrill the crowds of tens of thousands. Apparently a number of African traders heard the booms, saw all the people outside, and ran to the elevators for shelter, thinking that a war had started and Hong Kong was being bombed.

These African entrepreneurs have little linkage to Hong Kong, for the most part, except, perhaps, for their business forays into Sham Shui Po or other Hong Kong neighborhoods where wholesale goods are sold. Subtle racism is sometimes apparent in the 7-Eleven around the corner from Chungking Mansions. I have seen Hong Kong people enter the 7-Eleven to simply stand and stare at the Africans for thirty seconds before walking out, buying nothing. Many younger traders have tried to pick up Hong Kong women, but with little success. Some have come to know from bitter experience that, aside from simple racism, the way they are used to accosting women in Af-

rica is considered aggressive in Hong Kong, perhaps adding to the fear with which these traders are regarded by many Hong Kong people.

All in all, it is difficult for African traders in Hong Kong. They inevitably stand out in a city that is 95 percent Chinese and are, if not necessarily victims of racial discrimination, certainly the strange and feared "other" in a Hong Kong context. This is why Africans tend to stick together in Chungking Mansions and in places like the nearby 7-Eleven. Only in these places can they gain security in numbers, and in being with people like themselves. Some of these African traders are naïve in not knowing quite what they are getting into, but all are brave in leaving their homes to seek their fortunes in a foreign land. Many will lose their shirts and never come back. Some will make tidy profits and become regular traders, passing through Chungking Mansions a half dozen or a dozen times a year. A smart, lucky few will make fortunes.

The African traders I have met in Hong Kong have global links that spread far beyond Hong Kong—these traders often follow a long and complex path, ranging from their home and neighboring countries in Africa, to Dubai, to Bangkok and other southeast Asian destinations, to Hong Kong, to south China, and back again. As discussed in the previous chapter, my research assistants and I accompanied traders on parts of their global rounds out of Chungking Mansions.

Many of the African traders staying in Chungking Mansions go to Guangdong Province, the south Chinese industrial area most immediately accessible to Hong Kong, as well as to other cities in China, such as Yiwu.[1] African traders in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province, are present in several different neighborhoods. There is the Tianxiu Building and its environs, a high rise devoted entirely to goods for sale to African and Middle Eastern merchants, an area where many Muslim traders go. There is also the Sanyuanli area, the haunt of Nigerian Igbo among others, who have regular Catholic services in Igbo at Guangzhou's Sacred Heart Cathedral. In Guangzhou, unlike Chungking Mansions, traders of different backgrounds tend to go to different areas of the city to do their business and typically sleep in apartments or hotels in the city's outskirts—there is no common place where all live and intermingle, such as Chungking Mansions. Unlike Chungking Mansions, many traders in Guangzhou do not speak English. They get by with their knowledge of a few words of Mandarin, or by hiring one of the dozens of young Chinese women—college students, I am told—offering their services as interpreters in Guangzhou trading marts (such as the one depicted on p. 62).

In Guangzhou, more than in Hong Kong, there are extremes of poverty and wealth and a division of legality and illegality, among African traders. On the one hand, there are Nigerians and other Africans living illegally who are sometimes involved in the drug trade, whether transporting drugs from Africa to China or selling in Guangzhou at street level, but this is only rarely seen in Hong Kong. Because of the sheer number of Africans in Guangzhou—20,000 is one estimate, other estimates are far higher[2]—they may remain largely unnoticed if they overstay their visas. On the other hand, there are many established and wealthy African as well as Middle Eastern entrepreneurs in Guangzhou. Some have had the capital to bypass Chungking Mansions and order directly from factories in south China with which they have established relations, typically over years. They may have long-term work visas in China.

Others are agents, or "fixers," some of whom speak fluent Mandarin, who negotiate deals for their fellow Africans. I have been in a high-end Brazilian barbeque restaurant in Guangzhou containing a hundred or more African entrepreneurs and agents in their expensive Saturday-night revels. I also stayed with a Congolese agent in his high-rise Guangzhou apartment, a place that in all its accoutrements would have been the envy of virtually

all the Chinese living in the city. Some of these people have managed to legally stay in China, through favorable visas or through marriage to a Chinese woman, but their visas still may require regular renewal. They often make a regular cycle of going back and forth between Guangzhou and Chungking Mansions in order to renew their visas every thirty days. Others, especially those with less to lose, take the more risky path of overstaying their visas, enabling them to stay in Guangzhou indefinitely, but subjecting them, if caught (and if unable to pay the requisite bribe, I am told) to jail terms and deportation.

Aside from Guangzhou, many of the African traders in Chungking Mansions speak of Dubai, and particularly the Dubai neighborhood of Deira, as a place of trade. The African traders I met in Dubai in 2009 were sometimes on a circuit from East Africa to Hong Kong and China and back. As a Zambian trader told me, he often meets fellow African traders he knows from Chungking Mansions on the streets of Deira, and vice versa. Each place has its advantages and disadvantages. As a Tanzanian trader said, "Usually goods are cheaper in China, since all the China-made goods have to be shipped from China to here [Dubai]. But occasionally you find bargains here, even though the hotels are really expensive compared to Chungking Mansions." A Nigerian phone trader noted that while Dubai has many warehoused European-made phones sold at discount prices (known as fourteen-day phones), China-made phones are cheaper in Hong Kong and China.

African traders (such as the ones depicted on p. 64) choose Dubai for various reasons. Some come because of problems they encounter getting visas for China. Others are on no such global circuit, at least not yet. Hong Kong and China are places they dream of going to do business, but for now they have settled for the geographically closer and culturally more familiar world of Dubai, with its strong presence of Islam and its many Somali shopkeepers. "Yes, I want to go to China, but you can lose everything in China, I've heard," one trader told me. "You have to be very careful there."

I spent an afternoon in Dubai in an Internet café with a Zambian trader who sought to get to the Chinese source of the copy electronic goods he was buying, so that he could eliminate the middleman. He insisted that the company must have a website, but of course we only found the real European company's website, not the company manufacturing copies using the real company's name. It took me hours to convince him that a company making copy goods is unlikely to advertise itself on the Internet, and that rather than seek out this company's shadowy source, he might do better to stay and buy in Dubai (although some of his suppliers in Dubai may know exactly where these goods come from), or perhaps go to Chungking Mansions

or to Guangzhou, as close as he is ever likely to come to the source of those goods.

My research assistant, Jose Rojas, traveled to Lagos, Nigeria, to experience the daily rounds of several Nigerian traders he had met in Chungking Mansions. He found that many of the shops in Lagos are dependent upon a constant flow of new shipments from China, shipments arriving every two days, generally through Hong Kong and Chungking Mansions. These China-made goods, often copies that are disdained by well-off Nigerians who seek Japanese or European goods, are sought after by the great mass of Nigerians who can afford nothing else (see the Lagos scene on p. 65).

The traders from Hong Kong he traveled with are admired by many young people in Lagos, who suffer from an astronomically high unemployment rate. But as these traders themselves are well aware, they make only a little money, and often the money with which they buy their goods is not their own money but that of their bosses in Nigeria, Hong Kong, or China. Jose went with traders along the potholed road from Lagos to the market town of Onitsha and experienced the frequent roadblocks of soldiers seeking payoffs for allowing contraband clothing past—he himself was shaken down. With constant electrical blackouts and endemic corruption, Nigeria

cannot make its own goods, from phones to clothes to electric generators. All must be imported from places like China, but many of these imported goods, not least clothing, are declared illegal by the Nigerian government.

Despite this illegality, China's presence lurks everywhere. Along many of the streets of the Lagos clothing market, goods are displayed on plastic bags bearing Chinese characters, the bags that most Chinese factories use to wrap their manufactured clothes. All in all, Jose found that however hard these traders' lives may be in Hong Kong, Nigeria is harder; this is why many Nigerian young people seek to leave and try their luck, not least for the far-off and foreign, yet also familiar, Chungking Mansions. These traders seek not to live in Hong Kong or China—Europe or the United States is much more the land of their dreams—but rather to see if they can make a fortune or at least a profit at trading, which may eventually enable them to leave Nigeria for good.

My research assistant Maggie Lin followed female Kenyan traders from Chungking Mansions back to Mombasa and Nairobi, through Bangkok. Some of these traders have made extensive profits from their clothing business and have started other businesses in Kenya, such as hair salons and minibus services; they too are looked up to by many of their fellow Kenyans,

especially with an unemployment rate of some 40 percent. Some are clearly of the middle class in the country, owning cars and employing many staff, but others now only aspire to that. Maggie was told by one struggling trader in Kenya that after a few more trips to China, she hoped to build a new house on her plot of land, where she can rent out the upper floors while she and her family live on the lower floor. After she has built the new house, she hopes to have the money to finance a container filled with everything from China, from tiles to sofas, a container that she hopes will help make her wealthy (see one up-and-coming Kenyan shop on p. 67).

Maggie found souvenir t-shirts, khaki pants, and *kikoys* and *khangas*, the traditional pieces of cloth women wrap around their bodies (a popular souvenir for tourists), as the only clothing items actually produced in Kenya. Despite the tax imposed on imported products, most clothing is brought from outside the country: the "made in China" label is omnipresent from more prestigious shops to street-market stalls. For the clothing made in China, her informants told her, the design is often trendy, but due to suspicions that customers may have about quality, they need to work to convince customers that these goods are worth buying. Not all China-made products are poor quality—some are superb—but these traders are buying the very cheapest items in China, and so customers in Kenya may tend to associate Chineseness with shoddiness.

These are some of the routes and stories of the traders one encounters in Chungking Mansions, linking these traders, beyond a single Hong Kong building, to sites across the globe.

Owners and Managers

I now turn to Chinese and South Asian owners and managers in Chungking Mansions. The dominant class of owners today arrived in the 1970s and the 1980s from Shanghai or Fujian Province in mainland China, buying the cheapest property they could find—that of Chungking Mansions. Most are all but invisible in the multiethnic kaleidoscope that is Chungking Mansions; many come to the building only rarely. However, they and their children have been living out "the Hong Kong dream." Most came to Hong Kong and Chungking Mansions in more or less difficult financial straits, but through hard work over the years, they have become modestly affluent and have raised children who now have university degrees and are accountants or teachers, like Andy Mok whom we saw in chapter 1.

The children of these owners often want nothing to do with Chungking Mansions. As one university student who grew up in Chungking Mansions

THREE

goods

The Passage of Goods in Chungking Mansions

Chungking Mansions would not exist as a center of low-end globalization were it not for the passage of goods through its corridors; it functions today to enable the trading and transferring of goods from China to the developing world of Africa and South Asia and elsewhere. How do these goods circulate? Who are the merchants and traders who sell and buy these goods, and how do they do business?

The traders in Chungking Mansions embody low-end globalization, as we discussed in chapter 1, globalization that takes place not through the dealings of large corporations, but rather through individuals dealing with one another largely on the basis of trust and working with a high degree of risk, often carrying their goods themselves across the globe. This form of business migration is neither new nor unprecedented—consider, for example, the "informal commercial importers" in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean and the street entrepreneurs in Ciudad del Este in Paraguay, as well as the Congolese traders in Paris and African street vendors in New York.[1] But what may be unprecedented is the sheer scale of their activity in such a concentrated place.

It is impossible to know for certain the scale of trade in Chungking Mansions. My rough estimate is that some 20 percent of the mobile phones recently in use in sub-Saharan Africa have been sold in Chungking Mansions, judging from sales in 2007 and 2008. Phone stalls sold an average of 15,000 to 20,000 phones a month, I am told, averaging out the wide variations from month to month over the year, with established phone stalls selling 20,000 to 30,000 a month and smaller stalls selling 5,000 to 10,000 per month. These are whispered figures given to me by store employees—sales figures are secret information, given the intense competition between phone stalls in Chungking Mansions—but seem reasonable. There were approximately ninety phone stores in Chungking Mansions in 2007 to 2008. If we assume 18,000 to be an average sales figure, then 1,620,000 phones were sold per month, or 19.4 million phone sales per year, in Chungking Mansions. There were 126 million mobile phone subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa in 2007, with many individuals having multiple subscriptions.[2] This makes the assumption of 20 percent seem broadly plausible.

Phone traders have told me that, if anything, this percentage is too low. Beyond this, there is a stream of phones that transit through Chungking Mansions, on the path from south China to Africa and elsewhere, and are

stored in warehouses in and around Chungking Mansions while traders organize transport. If we include these phones as well, then the number of phones bound for sub-Saharan Africa that pass through Chungking Mansions would be much higher. All in all, the phone trade through Chungking Mansions is a significant chunk of the global economy of mobile phones in the developing world.*

For other goods, such as clothing and watches, the percentage of goods passing directly through Chungking Mansions is no doubt smaller, although by no means insignificant. However, sales information for clothing, watches, and electronic goods seems to be even harder to acquire than that for mobile phones. Given the variety of sources for these goods, including small south China factories with highly hidden records, there is simply no way this information can be known. Chungking Mansions is a significant node in the developing world economy, but exactly how much of a node is anyone's guess.

Throughout the world, the passage of goods takes place to an extraordinary degree beyond governmental control; less than five percent of the goods passing through the world's ports are ever inspected.[3] In the developing world, this lack of government control over the passage of goods happens because governments lack the capability to fully control the economy. The state seeks to exert control but cannot—its reach exceeds its grasp, because its citizens can easily evade it. In Hong Kong, this happens in part not simply because the state can't control it, but because it won't.

Hong Kong has consistently been rated as the world's freest economy, the economy most unbound by the strictures of state bureaucracy, by the Heritage Foundation and the *Wall Street Journal*.[4] The freedom of the Hong Kong economy is to some extent mythical: property developers and other magnates in fact have inordinate influence on government policy.[5] Nonetheless, economic freedom has long been the dominant ideology of Hong Kong.[6] While the state does in part control the economy in many areas—for example, in its regulation of street hawkers[7] as well as its clampdown on large-scale production of copy goods—it is fair to say that by and large the

*Because of the dire state of landlines in most of sub-Saharan Africa, phone cards don't tend to be used with landlines but with mobile phones instead. Many Africans still go to local phone stalls when they need to use the telephone, but these places' high rates makes owning a mobile phone far more economical in the long run, which is one reason why mobile phones are so keenly desired in Africa. In 2009, due to the global economic downturn, the figure I've given for monthly sales in Chungking Mansions phone stalls is substantially lower. I have heard that in late 2009 the average phone stall sold under 10,000 phones per month.

Hong Kong government is the embodiment of laissez-faire and of neoliberalism, the doctrine that the government should get out of the way and let the market have free rein.

To use an earlier era's parlance, Hong Kong is a first-world island between two third-world economic blocks: China, which is rapidly developing but still lacks full rule of law in its economic activities, and Africa. Chungking Mansions, in turn, embodies a third-world informal economy that is made possible by the first-world neoliberalism of the society in which it is located.

Selling Goods

In chapter 1, I discussed how businesses such as guesthouses and restaurants are run in Chungking Mansions; let me in this section specifically consider businesses selling goods. The shops in Chungking Mansions sell many different kinds of goods, and each has its own particular way of doing business. The souvenir shop on the ground floor must sell goods every few minutes or hours, as is also true for retail electronics shops and luggage shops—they depend on a steady flow of customers. The wholesale phone and clothing stores, on the other hand, depend on far fewer customers—a dozen customers each buying a few hundred suits or phones each week may be more than enough to pay the rent and make a profit—but if those customers don't show up for a few weeks, it may mean ruin. As one wholesale phone-stall proprietor told me, "I might get 25 or 30 customers a day coming in to ask about prices and models, but if I can make just one sale a day, I'll do well." I focus here on stores selling goods wholesale, because this is Chungking Mansions' major significance as a node of developing-world trade.

Why do these proprietors set up stores in Chungking Mansions? For some, particularly South Asians, as discussed in chapter 2, Chungking Mansions may seem to be one of the few places in Hong Kong where they can comfortably live and work. A Pakistani with Hong Kong residence rights can set up a phone stall on the first floor of Chungking Mansions and feel at home with his fellow Pakistanis, who are competitors but also may be friends or acquaintances, as he could not feel at home in any other business environment in Hong Kong. Pakistanis, partly for this reason, overwhelmingly dominate the trade in mobile phones, managing, as of 2008, some 80 percent of phone stalls in Chungking Mansions—although this percentage has been declining somewhat in subsequent years, with the influx of mainland Chinese.

Others wind up in Chungking Mansions because it makes sense given

FOUR

laws

The Omnipresent Shadow of the Law

Chungking Mansions would not exist as it is today if not for the flow of goods in and out its doors, as we have just seen. But these goods are traded against the backdrop of a matrix of laws, laws that can be transgressed only by taking a degree of risk. The backdrop of law is the case not just for traders. Whether it is the restaurant owner concerned about Chungking Mansions' lawless image, the temporary worker seeking to be seen only as a tourist, the trader with copy goods that just might get confiscated, the traveler concerned about the safety of his cash, or, a major focus of this chapter, the asylum seeker dreaming of a home in a new country, the law, as embodied by the police in Chungking Mansions, is ever present and inescapable.

Most people in Chungking Mansions need to worry about the law in at least some aspects of their livelihood. Many storekeepers understate sales on their annual income taxes (as is true throughout Hong Kong). Many stores sell copy goods that can always, at least in theory, be confiscated. Many businesses hire illegal workers, which, if found out, could subject them to severe legal penalties, and these workers themselves live an existence

that is legally precarious—their lives could be completely disrupted at any time by the police.

All these people are by and large safe from prosecution: all this is more or less tolerated. Drug dealers are often prosecuted; overt thieves are prosecuted; visa overstayers may be caught and jailed; and copy-watch sellers hawking their goods on the sidewalk in front of Chungking Mansions are occasionally prosecuted, as are sex workers. But all in all, Hong Kong is a relatively safe place for these businesses and workers to do what they do outside the letter of the law. For most low-end traders, complete adherence to the law in all its different manifestations across the globe is economically suicidal—the law limits traders at every step of their journeys. But for traders in Chungking Mansions, as with every other occupational group in the building, the law can be at least partially ignored.

One example taught me how much Chungking Mansions is outside the law. Early in my research, I was contacted by a newspaper reporter who sought to interview some of the people who worked in Chungking Mansions. After a half hour of talk, I trusted her and sought to help, but then I realized that none of the dozen people I knew best at Chungking Mansions would be available for her to interview, at least not with their names made public. Several were asylum seekers, whose names and identities cannot be publicized. Several others were temporary workers. Others were restaurant or guesthouse managers who either employed illegal workers or operated premises that were unlicensed or that had sundry other violations that might come to light and thus sought to remain unnamed and unquoted. No one wanted to talk on record, perhaps confirming this reporter's sense that Chungking Mansions is indeed a den of iniquity.

Chungking Mansions is not a den of iniquity, as should be clear by now; the legal violations of my informants were generally less matters of morality than of legal technicality. There is great exploitation of poor, low-level workers by rich owners and managers, but this is a feature not of Chungking Mansions alone, but of Hong Kong and the capitalistic world as a whole.

There are gross injustices taking place in the corners of Chungking Mansions—I have seen, before I could understand what was going on, an Indonesian maid who had lost her job being raffled off to the highest bidder for sex. I have spoken briefly, before being hustled away, to a Pakistani asylum seeker forced to work as a slave for his employer, on pain of being turned in to police and deported if he spoke up. I have seen an African, passed out from drink, repeatedly kicked in the head by Nepalese who felt he had insulted them. But these are exceptions: Chungking Mansions is by and large a civil, peaceful, and even a moral place.

I believe that this is the case because of Islam, with its stern moral codes governing some half of the people in Chungking Mansions, coupled with Hong Kong's own tolerance toward human diversity, preventing the intolerance toward non-believers sometimes apparent in places like Pakistan from being imported into Chungking Mansions. I also believe that this is the case because of the Hong Kong government's neoliberalism—its emphasis on business over all else—which I view as having a largely positive effect on the building. The illegalities my informants were engaged in were, again, technical more than moral matters. But these illegalities form a pervasive background to their day-to-day lives, marking what they need to look out for. They cannot forget the law, in all its potential intrusions into their lives.

Conflicts Within and Beyond the Law

One of the more interesting aspects of life in Chungking Mansions is the lack of overt police interference in most areas of business. In fact, the police are almost always somewhere around Chungking Mansions. In cases of overt robbery or violence, they very rapidly show up. But in many of the conflicts I have seen in Chungking Mansions, the police are kept distinctly out, or are in any case ineffective.

Indeed, the law is not often invoked by those who have grievances. I know of several cases where owners of property in Chungking Mansions took their dispute to small claims court, but this is unusual. Except for the owners of Chungking Mansions property, few people in Chungking Mansions ever seek judgment from the courts. One reason for this is that both the seller and the buyer of goods may not be Hong Kong residents. Another reason is that business dealings in Chungking Mansions sometimes leave no paper trail.

A salesman of Indian background, a long-term Hong Kong resident, told me that he was having a difficult time because he had borrowed money from his Hong Kong Chinese friend to invest with an East African businessman in years past. The African absconded with his money; he has the phone number in Africa, but when he calls, he's told "I'm sorry, he's not home," and lately, "He's gone. I don't know where he is." When he sees his Hong Kong Chinese friend during the Chinese New Year, a time when debts are traditionally repaid, he feels particularly bad, being reminded of the money he owes but cannot return. He said to me, "I've learned my lesson. When I was young, I was a nice guy, but I've learned not to be a nice guy anymore."

Given the fact that so many Chungking Mansions' traders come once or twice or a half dozen times and then never appear again, there are no doubt many debts left unpaid. Like Ahmed in chapter 2, who had lost all his money

FIVE

future

We have examined Chungking Mansions as a place as well as the people within it, the goods and trade that define it, and the laws that circumscribe it. Let us now, in this book's last few pages, examine the changing imaginations of Chungking Mansions, the ultimate effect of the building on the people who live and work there, and the global significance and possible future of the building.

Changing Imaginations of Chungking Mansions

As has been shown throughout this book, Chungking Mansions is viewed in very different ways by different groups of people involved with the building. It continues to be imagined as a dark and evil place by many Hong Kong Chinese. Many tourists who come to Chungking Mansions choose their lodgings from the Internet on the basis of price alone and do not know where they are going until they arrive and may be shocked. For other tourists, Chungking Mansions is "the exotic third world in a safe first-world city," as we earlier saw, an image that may thrill, titillate, or terrify them.

On the other hand, Chungking Mansions continues to be imagined by many in the developing world of South Asia and Africa not as a hellhole of vice or a paragon of exotic otherness, but rather as a beacon of dreams, a place where one might make one's fortune and never again be poor—dreams that, for a few, come true, but for most remain dreams. For the Indian temporary workers, Chungking Mansions represents the attempt to become middle class, making far more money than one's white-collar peers back in Kolkata. For many young African traders, success in Chungking Mansions and, more broadly, in south China represents their transition to adulthood. If they fail, they are shamed and humiliated, but if they succeed, they are on their way to becoming respected members of their family and community. For many asylum seekers, Chungking Mansions symbolizes the allure and danger of home—it is not only where they can go to enjoy food and friends from the world they have left behind, but also where some feel they must protect themselves from potential spies among traders, who may bring word of their whereabouts back to their home-country governments.

These imaginations of Chungking Mansions are to some extent changing. For many African traders, Chungking Mansions has been replaced by mainland China as the cornucopia of their dreams. Chungking Mansions has instead become for them a sort of comforting way station, a place where they must renew their mainland visas but can otherwise relax, as is more difficult for them to do in mainland China given the tensions of their work lives there. Chungking Mansions, for many of these traders, is basically a mandated vacation spot. The fact that racial prejudice has apparently diminished in Hong Kong over the past several years, as it has not, by many accounts, in China, improves Hong Kong's attractiveness for some, less as a site of business than of relaxation. Chungking Mansions, for some African mainland-based traders, has become the developing-world equivalent of a gentlemen's club.

Views also seem to be changing among tourists. In 2009 I met a number of travelers who expressed their disappointment to me about Chungking Mansions. In one French traveler's words, "It used to be so crazy here, when I was here in the early 1990s. And now it seems so normal, so bourgeois." An American who had returned to Chungking Mansions after twenty years told me, "Chungking Mansions looks much nicer now than before, these elevators are so much better! . . . But you know, it was better before! Now it's middle class!" While the building has been cleaned up in recent years, no one would confuse Chungking Mansions with the bright, upscale stylings of Chungking Express, the mall on its second floor a world away. However, it nonetheless does look more spiffed-up than it was a few years ago, with televi-

sion screens broadcasting cheery messages at points on the building's ground floor. Chungking Mansions continues to be an "exotic" mixture of peoples the world over. But maybe, bit by bit, it is indeed becoming "normal," as the world as a whole becomes progressively more "exotic" in the ordinary interactions of people of different cultures and religions from across the globe.

The biggest change in the imagination of Chungking Mansions over the past few years has been on the side of Hong Kong people. Mass media, in the years since I began studying Chungking Mansions has said little that is negative about the place, unlike preceding years when coverage, as a rule, was overwhelmingly negative. Mass media may acknowledge illegal workers and copy goods but tend not to play these up anymore: the dominant message is that Chungking Mansions is a more or less friendly place. Restaurant reviews in Chinese-language media in Hong Kong have given the impression that Chungking Mansions is a reasonable place to take one's family for a meal. The presence of Chinese security guards on the ground floor solidifies this view. Thus, increasingly, I have seen young Hong Kong Chinese walking through the building and on occasion casually talking with the South Asians and Africans there in a way that would have been difficult to imagine a few years ago.

Two examples from early 2009 demonstrate this point. On a Sunday morning I encountered a Hong Kong Chinese secondary school teacher with a flock of twenty or so students. She was asking her students to interview people from as many different countries as they could find, and so they had scattered throughout the ground floor of Chungking Mansions, asking questions of any and all who might answer their queries: fresh-faced and earnest Hong Kong teenagers asking, "What do people in your country eat for breakfast? What do they eat for lunch? What do they eat for dinner?" However inane these questions may be, this benign cross-cultural exchange in the erstwhile den of iniquity that is Chungking Mansions astonished me. Since then, I have occasionally seen several other teachers and gaggles of students following suit.

A second example I found even more astonishing. On Valentine's Day, I saw the West African clerk at a guesthouse finding, in the early afternoon, a shy young Hong Kong Chinese couple, perhaps in their late-teenage years standing before him. "Why are you here?" he asked. "Are you looking for a restaurant?" The young man, summoning up his courage, stammered, "We want a room," which was promptly provided and into which they promptly entered and shut the door. My subsequent enquiries at various guesthouses showed that this is becoming increasingly common. Unmarried Hong Kong couples, living with their parents, have no privacy and cannot afford ex-

pensive hotels, so increasingly they are coming to Chungking Mansions. A few years ago, the idea of young Hong Kong Chinese lovers using Chungking Mansions for their intimacies would have been unthinkable; any right-thinking young woman would have become enraged at the suggestion that her boyfriend take her to a place of dereliction and darkness for such a purpose. But today, for at least some young Hong Kongers, this is no longer the case.

Views of Chungking Mansions are changing, it seems, among the more adventurous young, but also, perhaps, among Hong Kong Chinese as a whole. These observations I make are tentative, since three-plus years of fieldwork are all too brief. A dramatic event in Chungking Mansions or in the world—whether a shocking crime, a global depression, or a property developer's plans—could change everything. Indeed, this may already be happening to at least a small extent. The crime novelist Michael Connelly has portrayed Chungking Mansions in a recent bestseller in a dark and unrealistic way, which may have an effect on perceptions of Chungking Mansions.[1] Ani Ashekian, a 31-year-old Canadian tourist in Hong Kong, vanished in November 2008 in a case to some extent echoing Connelly's novel,[2] but no evidence has been found linking her puzzling disappearance to Chungking Mansions, where she was staying; she was last seen in a shopping district miles away from the building. But for now, anyway, the popular image of Chungking Mansions remains as I have described it.

How Chungking Mansions Transforms People

If imaginations of Chungking Mansions are changing, so too are the imaginations of the people who stay in the building. How does Chungking Mansions change the people who stay there? Of course, there are huge differences in Chungking Mansions' impact on those who stay there a few days, such as the casual tourist, and those who stay there for decades. But cross-cutting these differences are those who are transformed by the cultural diversity of Chungking Mansions and those who are apparently unaffected by this diversity.

Some people are not at all changed by Chungking Mansions. A Nigerian trader, when I asked him if his experiences in Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong, and China had changed him in any way, replied, "No, of course not. My purpose in coming to this part of the world is to make money, not to make friends"—even if he did consent to talk to a foreigner like me for several hours about his life as a trader. He maintained that none of the new things he had experienced in these overseas places would have any bear-

NOTES

Prelude

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2. Smith 1883, 48; quoted in Sandhaus 2010, 121.
3. Welsh 1993, 378–86; Tsang 2004, 47–55; Ku et al. 2003.
4. Mathews, Ma, and Lui 2008, 32–39.
5. *Economist* 2009, 29, 132.
6. White 1994.
7. See also Knowles and Harper (2009, 116–31) for a discussion of Chungking Mansions in the context of Hong Kong migration.

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2. IrisC's Flickr page, "Chungking Guesthouse," February 4, 2008, http://www.flickr.com/photos/pahud/2242268104/ (accessed March 6, 2009).
3. Li-jing Zhu, Annie Gu's Blog, Chungking Mansions, June 28, 2008, http://anniegwj.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!503FF852A409141B!7073.entry (accessed March 9, 2009).
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13. Fallon 2002, 198.

14. Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck (2005) discuss one such globalized neighborhood in Ghent, Belgium, no doubt one of numerous globalized neighborhoods worldwide.

15. Ribeiro 2006.

16. Marcus 1998; Hannerz 2003.

17. Velho 1978; Ring 2006; Bestor 2004.

18. Jäggi et al. 2008.

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20. Wordie 2007, 26.

21. Richard Cook, "Miles Apart," *South China Morning Post*, September 28, 1997.

22. Mathews, Ma, and Liu 2008, 27.

23. White 1994.

24. Xuxi 2002, 5.

25. Wheeler 1981, 47; italics in original.

26. Caroline Dewhurst, "Gold Smuggling Rings Exposed," *South China Morning Post*, February 8, 1987.

27. "High-Rise Menace Needs Urgent Action by Govt," *Hong Kong Standard*, August 30, 1988; Mariita Eager and Jimmy Leung, "Chungking 'To Remain a Fire Trap,'" *South China Morning Post*, June 18, 1992; Samantha Rosich, "Facelift Fails to Improve Fire Safety at Chungking," *South China Morning Post*, February 9, 1992.

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35. See also Incorporated Owners of Chungking Mansions 2008, 52.

36. Mathews, Ma, and Liu 2008, 63–66, 73–76.

37. Stone, Chen, and Chow 2010, 242.

38. But see Bodomo (2007), who does describe Chungking Mansions as a community.

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6. Martin Wong, "Officers Go Undercover to Nab Illegal Workers," *South China Morning Post*, December 27, 2006.

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11. This parallels what Stoller (2002) has found among African street vendors in New York: the common desire to make money and support one's family trumps political, ethnic, and religious differences.

Chapter Three

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12. Lo 2006, 52.

13. Rojas 2009.

14. Lo 2006, 53–54, 59–60.

15. See Chalfin 2004.

16. Alden 2007; Rotberg 2008; Tull 2006.

Chapter Four

1. Foucault 1995, 116–31.

2. Michael Connelly, "When Fact Meets Fiction, the Cases Are Harder to Solve," CNN, October 29, 2009, http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/29/michael.connelly.fact.fiction/index.html (accessed October 30, 2009).

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8. Chan 2003.

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12. Barclay Crawford and Yvonne Tsui, "Reopen Refugee Camps, Say South Asians," *South China Morning Post*, March 8, 2009.

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14. Knudson 1995, 22.

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16. Kang-chung Ng, "Asylum Seekers on 3-Day Hunger Strike," *South China Morning Post*, October 17, 2007.

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18. Yvonne Tsui, "Asylum Seekers Allowed to Work," *South China Morning Post*, March 3, 2009.

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2. Christopher Shay, "U.S. Crime Writer Tackles a Real Hong Kong Cold Case," *Time*, November 10, 2009, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1937140,00.html (accessed November 12, 2009).

3. Wong (1997) depicts some of the negative ways in which Chungking Mansions' residents view Hong Kong people, a depiction that remains true today as well.

4. Mathews 2000, 121–65, 192–93.

5. Mathews 2000.

6. Wallerstein 2004; Arrighi 2005; Hall 2000.

7. Allen and Hamnett 1995, 2; see also Ferguson 2007, 25–49.

8. Sassen 2007, 57, 81.

9. For example, Santos 2004, 297.

10. Tehranian 2004, 22.

11. Harvey 2005; Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005.

12. Ong 2006.

13. Phyllis Tsang, "Torture Claimants 'A Ticking Bomb': Refugees Without ID Difficult to Remove," *South China Morning Post*, November 29, 2009.

14. Harvey (2005), to take just one example, largely holds this view.

15. See Nashashibi 2007.

16. Pecoud and Guchteneire 2004; Hayter 2004; Marfleet 2006; Bacon 2008.

17. For example, Kevin Sinclair, "A Disaster Lies Waiting," *South China Morning Post*, September 22, 1997; BWG, Chungking Mansions, April 16, 2002. http://www.bigwhiteguy.com/archive/2002/04/chungking_mansions/ (accessed June 25, 2010).

18. Joshua Fellman, "Eason Calls for Faster Approvals," *Hong Kong Standard*, August 4, 1993.

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